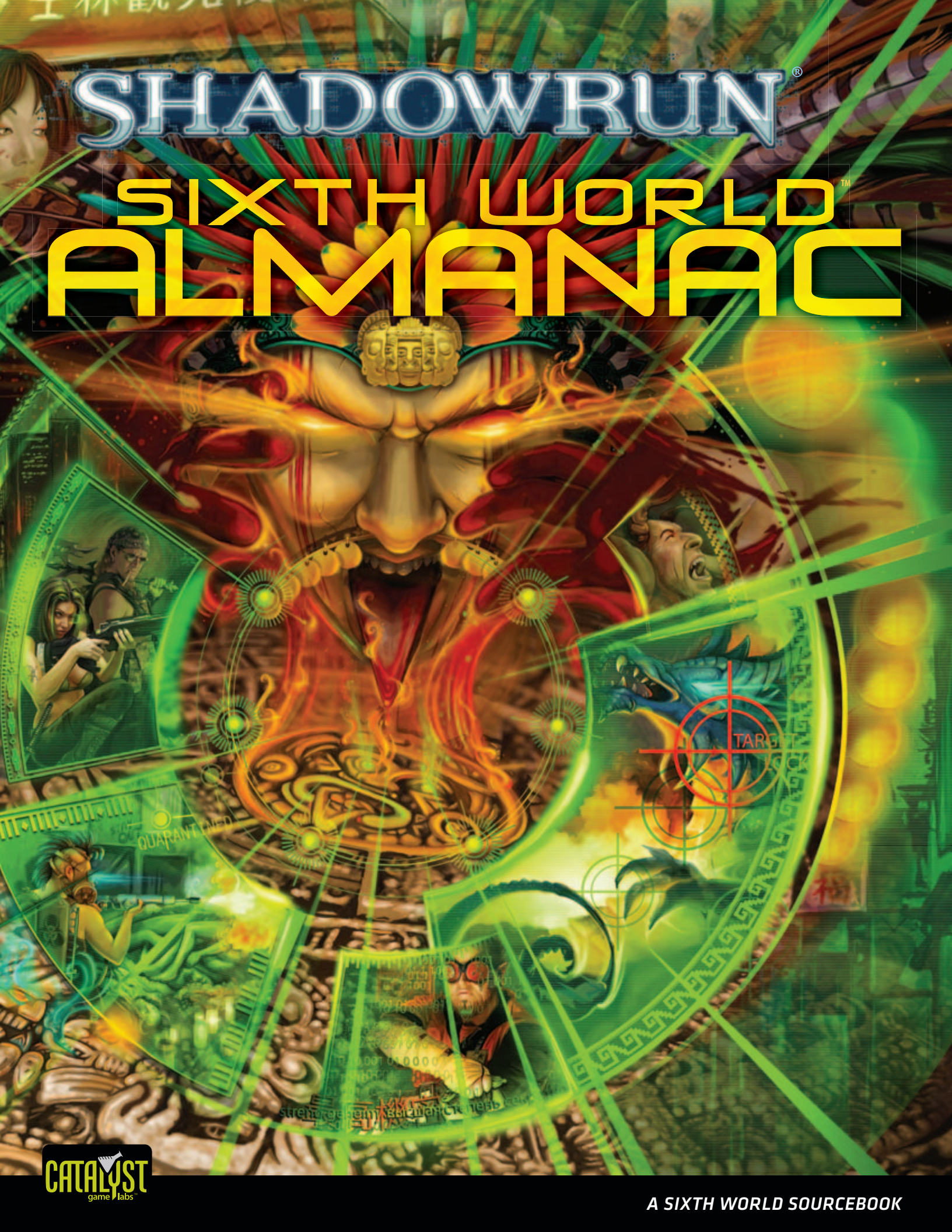


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SIXTH WORLD ALMANAC™

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SHADOWRUNNING

Anyone who's been in the business for more than a decade is either very skilled or very meek. Those last ones often don't make it far into the second decade. They survived the first ten years by avoiding trouble, avoiding danger, and staying away from any situation that might eventually involve live fire. It isn't easy for them to get jobs, because when you have a rep of being meek, most Johnsons haven't heard of you, and those who have don't want to hire you. The meek ones don't make a great living in their first decade, and the second decade can be worse. In that second decade, they either become meeker and meeker until they pretty much fade away like ash at the end of a cigarette, or they get sick of the desperate, fearful life and decide to change everything and go on a big, risk-taking score that is entirely unlike anything they've ever done, and then they go and get themselves killed because their first ten years never prepared them for what they just got themselves into.

So it's the runners who've been at it for twenty years who are the really good ones. The wise ones. You talk to them, and they come up with ideas and plans that seem new and brilliant and revolutionary, but they're not new, they're just standard techniques from fifteen years ago that today's young turks have never heard of.

That's what gave Derbyshire his great idea. Maybe, he thought, he could make a living just by sharing his knowledge. He could stay in the action, but get off the streets. He could become a consultant.

He started putting out word that he could help a whole lot of runners become better, faster, more efficient. He called himself a kind of plumber—when your works get jammed up, call Derbyshire and he'll unclog 'em for you. Sure, he'll take a percent of your cut, but it was well worth it if it helped you finish your job well, on time, and alive.

He started working with a few clients in mind, and his first five weeks was a crush of hard work and optimism, but then those first jobs were over and no new ones had popped up, it was time to figure out what to do next. But he'd looked for work before. He knew how to do it. He spent more times at bars than normal, but drank less. He talked to people he didn't know, he offered ideas to people who didn't ask for them, and he acted bright and lively in that annoying, salesperson way.

That was how he met Warthog. Warthog was so sincerely impressed by every little bit of wisdom that Derbyshire had to offer that Derbyshire knew it had to be an act. That was one of his personal rules—if someone's trying hard to appear as one particular thing, that's the thing they're least likely to be. So the ork, with his round face and crooked tusks, was not likely to be as green and easily impressed as he acted.

"So you think this Johnson could be screwing me?" Warthog said as they sat in a bar plopped in the middle of a cool basement in an unused warehouse. The joint was



A TO Z

JASON HARDY

only open sporadically and the drinks were merely adequate, but there was no cheaper way to beat the summer heat.

"You always go into a job figuring you might be screwed," Derbyshire. "SOP?" Thankfully, Warthog didn't ask what "SOP" stood for.

"So when does it go from being a possibility to being a problem?" Warthog asked. "When do you have to take actions instead of precautions?"

"If you're asking, it's because you've seen something. What have you seen?"

So Warthog told his story. He'd been hired on a simple bump and thump—"accidentally" bumping into a football player while said player was out hitting the clubs, aggravating the his security entourage a little, and then, when the security boys got chippy, roughing them up. Once this was done, Warthog was to gently encourage the football player that it would probably be best for everyone if his team did not play well that coming weekend. The basic pitch had sounded fine to Warthog, but at the end the Johnson got squirrely.

"Last thing," the Johnson had said. "Don't think about getting a little extra for yourself. Don't you put any money down on this game. You just stay out of it."

Warthog, who had in fact planned on making a side bet, frowned. "Why?" he asked.

And the Johnson had lost control, leaping to his feet, pounding the table so hard that everything on it jumped and one drink spilled. "Because I said so!" he screamed. "If that's not enough, get the hell out of here!"

Warthog said that he didn't feel like making a big deal about this. It wasn't worth it—if he made a side bet, there was little chance the Johnson would know about it, unless he was somehow monitoring every bookie in the Seattle metroplex. If he wanted to do it, he could still do it. So he nodded and said he'd do what the Johnson wanted. All in all, the whole thing wasn't a big deal, but it was enough to raise a small flag in Warthog's mind.

Then there was the fact that the Johnson had control issues. There are hands-on Johnsons and hands-off Johnsons, but this one seemed to be a hands- and feet-on Johnson, checking in on Warthog and his crew more often than a first-time mother checks in on a newborn. Like the whole betting thing, it might not be that big of a deal, but two little warning flags combined into one medium flag, and that was why Warthog humbly requested Derbyshire's input on the matter.

Derbyshire leaned back, his chair shifting, metal legs screeching on concrete. "There's something hinky going on," he said, "but with Johnsons there almost always is. The question is whether it's hinky in a way you can work with."



Warthog furrowed his brow, an impressive feat given how bumpy and wrinkled his forehead already was. He was trying to look deeply interested and thoughtful, and Derbyshire both appreciated and was suspicious of the effort. "Interesting," Warthog said. "So how do I play it?"

"You ever play golf?" Derbyshire asked.

Warthog snorted. "Does it look like I play golf?"

"Fair enough. There's a simple rule for playing a hole with a big hazard—you move your ass toward the trouble, then let it fly."

Warthog lowered his chin and frowned, possibly wondering whether Derbyshire was being wise or borderline insane. It was the first unforced expression Derbyshire had seen on his face.

×

The golf analogy wasn't perfect. You may move your ass in the direction of the hazard, but you shoot away from it. Derbyshire, by contrast, had told Warthog that he essentially should fire his ball right into the drink. It was another one of his rules—don't wait around for trouble to come looking for you.

Three days later, Warthog placed a bet on the football game in question, and he did it in as public a manner as possible, walking up to a window in the Gates Casino and talking loudly. The Gates Casino always swore that it never gathered personal information about individual gamblers, that the omnipresent cameras were there for security and not information gathering, and that any information the casino happened to gather in the course of business would be kept strictly private. Of course, the Gates Casino also swore up and down that they had no connection whatsoever to any of Seattle's organized crime outfits, so their guarantees were only worth so much.

Once the bet was placed, Derbyshire spent a lot of time with Warthog, and found out that when the ork wasn't trying too hard he was pleasant company—honest, blunt, and with an appealing bawdy streak. Derbyshire's decades of work had taught him several volumes' worth of dirty jokes, and they proved a fine conversational lubricant during his time with Warthog.

"... and the old man says, 'I didn't have the heart to tell her that it wasn't my cane,'" Derbyshire said one night, and Warthog chortled. It was a natural laugh—Warthog had dropped most of his wide-eyed naïf act and was acting more like a colleague, which relieved Derbyshire to no end. They were at a place called Three Biscuits, Derbyshire leaning back in a battered recliner he'd been using on and off for more than a decade. He had a long list of places that were not home but were almost as comfortable (or, during times when he didn't have a lot of money to spend on housing, more comfortable), and Three Biscuits was at the top of the list. You could stay there for most of the day for the price of a cup of coffee—well, not coffee, not really, but something that looked kind of like it and tasted vaguely like it if you added enough cream and sugar. Warthog and Derbyshire had been there for a while,

because most of what they needed to do at the moment involved waiting.

But right after Derbyshire delivered his punch line, Warthog's eyes lost focus and he pressed a button near his waist, responding to some signal only he could see. He subvocalized the whole conversation, so Derbyshire had to wait to find out what was happening.

Finally, Warthog's eyes focused on him again, and he smiled.

"So?" Derbyshire said.

"That was Mr. Johnson," Warthog said. "He wants to talk. He's not happy about something."

×

Mr. Johnson already had his gun out when Derbyshire and Warthog walked into the back room of a rent-a-desk center, and Derbyshire didn't feel threatened at all. Pulling a gun before a conversation even starts, his rules told him, isn't a threat at all. It's a cry for help. It's standing on a rooftop ledge, begging to be talked down.

Derbyshire had been coaching Warthog about this conversation on the trip over, so the ork was well prepped. He raised his hands, but he kept his movements light and casual. His voice stayed mild, which is not easy since what sounds mild to an ork's ears is very similar to a crazed-with-anger tone from a human.

"Hey, hey, all right," Warthog said. "All right, so it's going to be one of those conversations. That's fine. It's cool."

"You're a disloyal smartass," Mr. Johnson said. "And you're an idiot, too. You think I wouldn't find out? Did you think you could do that without me knowing about it?"

"No," Warthog said. "You were supposed to find out."

It was a small moment before the Johnson spoke, but Derbyshire noticed it. The Johnson was a little off balance. Perfect.

"So I was supposed to find out?" the Johnson said, working hard to bring his voice under control. "You're playing games now?"

"I'm placing a bet," Warthog said. "That's all." He was staying nice and calm, just as Derbyshire had coached him. The calm one almost always comes out better in a dispute, Derbyshire had found. Acting psychotic usually only impresses posers and teenagers.

"Well, you just blew it, pal, you just totally blew it," the Johnson said. "You think you're the only team in town? I could fire a shotgun on any street in the Barrens and hit a half-dozen runners just as good as you. I gave you the first shot at this, you screwed it up, so you're done. You're fired."

"That's too bad," Warthog said.

"Yeah, well, learn to listen to orders, and maybe someday you'll see a job through to the end."

"That's the thing," Warthog said. "I already did it. It's done."

Then there was the delicious silence that comes when someone is hit

with information they knew nothing about. Derbyshire had to work to keep from smirking—Warthog seemed to have an easier time keeping his thick, rough face impassive.

“What are you talking about?” the Johnson said. “When did this happen?”

“Last night,” Warthog said. “Didn’t you get my message? I sent you all the details.”

“What message? I didn’t get any ... hold on.” The Johnson’s eyes glazed over as he engaged in some AR activities. Then his eyes refocused, and the gun in his hand twitched. “You two, both of you, stay right where you are. I’m going to sort this out, and you two aren’t going anywhere.”

“Okay,” said Warthog, and he and Derbyshire sat back and waited.

The Johnson would find that everything was on the level. Well, most everything. The job had been done, just as he had requested, and it had gone rather smoothly, if a few days early. There was video footage from two different sources—the nightclub’s security cameras and a Knight Errant camera perched on the street nearby—and none of it was faked. The Johnson could test the data all he wanted, and the only thing he’d find was that it was pure and unaltered.

The only tampering had occurred on the message that had been sent to the Johnson. Its timestamp said it had been sent last night, when in fact it had not been sent until just before Warthog and Derbyshire arrived at the rendezvous. It was a simple bit of tinkering, and even if the Johnson decided to look at it, he probably wouldn’t find a trace of funny business.

They sat for a good half-hour, saying nothing. Then the Johnson finally exhaled.

“You’re a son of a bitch, but you got the job done.” He flicked a credstick across the table. “Take it and get the hell out of here.”

Warthog smiled, stood, and grabbed the credstick. “Thank you,” he said, and to his credit he resisted the urge to leave with a smart remark. Derbyshire casually followed him to the door.

The Johnson, though, wasn’t done talking.

“I’m going to make sure you never work in this city again.”

Warthog smiled. Derbyshire had told him that he shouldn’t bait the Johnson, but that he could respond to a threat if he felt like it. And it seemed that Warthog felt like it.

“You can try to keep me from working,” Warthog said, “but you couldn’t even stop me from making a bet.”

Then they left.

So far, so good. But a humiliated Johnson was a Johnson who’d be looking to even the score. Their work wasn’t quite done yet.

×

Derbyshire was disappointed, but not necessarily surprised by the Johnson’s next move. Word trickled down through various networks that this particular Johnson had hired a small team for a bit of wetwork—namely, eliminating an ork named Warthog. Derbyshire gave him credit for following through on his threat, but a hit was so unimaginative and crude. And Derbyshire was further disappointed that he was not included in the hit, but then he hadn’t done much to give the Johnson anything to dislike about him. At least, he hadn’t done much that was above board.

There are times when the very best response to having a hit put out on you is to have the hitters bring it on and then to wipe the floor with them. It makes Johnsons think twice about spending more money to wipe you out, and it makes hitters think twice about taking any future offers on you. A good move, but risky. And it wasn’t a risk Derbyshire thought Warthog should take right now. There were other ways.

It didn’t take much. Derbyshire knew Warthog had a good hacker at his disposal, so he provided a few extra hints on how to use her. While Warthog laid low, the hacker dug around and managed to uncover the Johnson’s real name—or at least an alias more personal than “Mr. Johnson”—and his employer. Then the hacker made certain that the employer understood that this particular Mr. Johnson was not only doing a little freelancing with corporate money, but was doing the type of pissant wetwork that tends to give corporations black eyes.

And just like that, Mr. Johnson was out of a job. That put an end to the hit—since most wetwork jobs are set up to have half the payment delivered after the job is done, and Mr. Johnson no longer had the resources to make that payment, the team decided not to bother finishing the work. That might change someday. It could be that Mr. Johnson would find another job before too long. Maybe he’d be lining up jobs for someone else soon, and maybe he’d resurrect that hit as one of his first matters of business. But Derbyshire didn’t think so. Something about scrambling around for a while looking out for your own well-being made you forget about the kind of petty grudges like the one the Johnson had for Warthog. Warthog would be well advised to stay on his toes, just in case the Johnson was the type with a long memory, but that should be SOP anyway—a runner who is not on his toes most of the time is a runner who will soon be dead.

That was pretty much that for that job, and while Derbyshire was not paid as well as he would have been if he was an actual runner, he was paid pretty well for a job where he didn’t stick his neck out much. It felt a little like a scam, really. Sure, he had little individual rules and guidelines that could fill the drives of a hundred servers, but all of them, pretty much every single one of them, boiled down to a single rule, the rule that had kept this particular Mr. Johnson off-balance and eventually put him out of a job.

Rule number one: Always know more than the other guy.

- History is a damn fine teacher—take it from a guy who lived through a lot of it. And I'm not just talking about the obvious lessons like "Never get involved in a land war in Asia." I'm talking about the subtle stuff.

If you want to understand how something works you don't just look at it from the outside. You tear it open and see how it ticks. History is the source code behind the user interface of the modern world. Tear it open, master that code, and you hold all the cards.

Since I'm sure half of you are rolling your eyes right about now, let me give you a concrete example. If a Johnson from S-K hires you to go to Iran, it's not enough to know that Islamic hardliners run the show. You've got to know that the catalyst for the current state of affairs was the attack on Tehran by the great dragon Aden. Aden represented a literal assault on the hardliners' core beliefs—a threat both physical and spiritual. Know that, and you'll know it won't matter how closely you adhere to Islamic law or how much nuyen you throw around, it won't be enough if anyone finds out you're working for a dragon.

I pulled most of this from Aetherpedia so it comes with all the usual warnings, although some of it came from a publication called, *Dumpshock: A Brief History of the Awakened World*. If you haven't read it, read it! Pay for a copy of it even, since Professor Maniha, the guy who compiled the thing, is working on an educator's salary. You'll be a better person for it. I also included some of Aetherpedia's recommended media—articles that give another perspective on the events of that year.

And if you ignore all of this, that's real independent of you, but don't say I didn't warn you.

- FastJack

1999—A WHIFF OF CORPORATE INDEPENDENCE

Excerpts from Justice Sessenbrunner's Dissent, *The United States vs. Seretech Corporation*

In deciding this case through the lens of the now and focusing only on Seretech's right to conduct its own business, we gravely risk missing the larger picture and overlooking the powerful, most likely negative effects this decision could have in years to come ...

Democracies are based upon the idea that force should be an option of last resort and should only be applied in an even-handed,

impartial manner. Corporations, by their very nature, cannot be impartial. They are designed to monitor and enforce their own good, not the common good. By granting them the right to use deadly force, we are taking the first step toward the feudal idea of might making right.

Some will complain that this position is alarmist, believing that, as in the case currently before the Court, corporations will only desire to use this power to defend their right to conduct business. This view, however, ignores the rider often attached to this phrase, and that is that corporations will use this power to defend their right to conduct business *as they see fit*. In the current case, Seretech saw the need to have their trucks move into and out of New York City without being hindered by angry mobs, and in this their cause is fairly sympathetic. But by granting corporations the right to maintain an army without setting well-defined rules for the use of that force, we have opened a Pandora's Box that will give rise to corporate armies being deployed in any way imaginable. For if history has taught us anything, it is that as soon as a particular right or freedom is endowed on a people, there are inevitably and immediately those who push that right or freedom to its furthest extent ...

When we grant corporations the same rights as nations, we can only expect them to behave as nations have. No nation has been perfect in its decisions of when to use force; how much more imperfect will corporations be?

- Justice Sessenbrunner probably didn't think putting his finger in the dyke would do any good, since he was no doubt aware of the dozens of other holes springing up around him, but he did it anyway. His dissent would seem eerily prophetic if it wasn't for the fact that the end result was pretty easy to see—corporations had been covertly angling for extraterritoriality for years, and just before the turn of the millennium they became much more open about it. You didn't need any special psychic gift to see where it would all end up.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I don't think the Seretech decision is that big of a deal. Does anyone really believe if the decision went the other way, the corps would have disbanded the armies they were already starting to build? No, they would have just refused to recognize the Supreme Court's authority over them and proceed to do whatever the hell they wanted anyway.
- Snopes

1999

January 8—USA: Members of the Teamsters Union reject a final government contract offer and go on strike. The resulting work stoppage leads to a severe food shortage in New York City.

February 2—CANADA: After years of simmering conflict and well after the completion of a profitable natural gas pipeline, the Dene tribe in Northwestern Canada is pushed off its land. They had submitted a land claim that had been sitting in Canadian government halls for a considerable amount of time, which the Dene took as tacit approval of their presence. The government removed that approval and the Dene were forced to leave their land, clearing the area for further business development. Though not an earth-shaking incident, the event is a good indicator of the general direction of world events in the years to come.

April 12—USA: During the strike-caused food shortage in New York City, a Seretech medical research truck is mistaken for a food shipping vehicle and is attacked. In the ensuing combat and riots, twenty Seretech employees and two hundred rioters are killed.

May 6—USA: In the aftermath of the New York City riots, state and federal governments sue Seretech for criminal negligence tied to the actions of its security forces.

October 26—USA: The United States Supreme Court issues the landmark *The United States vs. Seretech Corporation* decision, finding that corporations have the right to maintain a private army. Governments do not immediately cede power, but the writing is on the wall.



2000— THE FIRST SHIAWASE DECISION

Excerpt from Victory Speech of President-elect
Martin Hunt
NOVEMBER 7, 2000

The greatness and glory of the American people and the American nation has always been its openness to the benefits of freedom. We know that when our people are left to their own devices, when they are allowed to invent and build and grow on their own, they inevitably come up with the great ideas and the marvelous innovations that define us as a people. While it is true that government has acted as a force for good at times, when it has brought benefits to a wide swath of the American people, it is perhaps even more true that government has most blessed our nation when it stands aside and allows the innovators, the builders, and the inventors to use their God-given talents to improve us as a nation.

We are blessed to have the most industrious, most ingenious people on the planet. Throughout our history, the inventions and innovations our people have developed have benefited not just us, but the entire world. We have invented not only new products, but also new ways to do business, new standards of treatment for workers, and new ways to build a national infrastructure that supports the business of doing business. In all this, we have led the globe and made our national economy the strongest the world has ever seen.

I promise you, the American people, that my administration will be one of freedom. We will once again have a nation that has as its first and foremost ideal the concept of opportunity, the idea that you can go as far as your ingenuity, your ideas, and your hard work will take you. We will not limit you. We will, when we can, aid your rise upward, and then we will stand out of your way because it is you, the builder, who truly spurs American progress.

I started this campaign because of my faith in you, the American people. Not just a faith that you would vote for me—though I certainly hoped that would be the case [laughter]—but the faith that you, not Washington, know what is best for your nation. You know what your nation and its citizens need, and you know how to deliver it. I look forward, in the next four years to seeing your ingenuity, your energy, and your perseverance in action. I look forward to watching you continue to make America great!

May 26—AUSTRIA: Blame for the rapidly deteriorating Austrian economy falls on the government due to several central banking decisions. The Austrian president dissolves Parliament, handing its power over to the Stahlmänner, a small council led by Austria's foremost corporate figures.

July 10—USA: The United States Supreme Court allows the Shiawase Corporation to build their own nuclear power reactor with limited Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight.

November 7—USA: Martin Hunt is elected President of the United States after campaigning heavily on a theme of "Smaller Government, More Freedom."

November 8—USA: Shiawase's nuclear plant goes online, freeing the corporation from the public utility power grid.

December 14—USA: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, undeterred by their previous courtroom defeat, initiates a new lawsuit against Shiawase after an assault by a TerraFirst! team penetrates the exterior security of Shiawase's new nuclear power plant. The NRC insists that the attack demonstrates that Shiawase cannot adequately protect its plant. Shiawase responds that their defense was hindered by federal laws placing limits on what private security forces can and cannot do.

2000

- What a tool. “Watch” was about all he did during his administration while just about everyone ran roughshod over the United States. So the big guys were free, but the actual people Hunt always talked about never had a chance. His speech makes him sound like he was all about power to the people, but in fact it was the same-old, same-old—more power to those who’ve already got it.
- Aufheben
- Don’t be too hard on Hunt. The seeds of most of what happened during his administration were already planted before he took office. He didn’t appoint any of the Supreme Court justices that made the Shiawase decisions, and while he might have been a little slow to react to the rampant corruption in D.C.’s city government, it’s not like he had anything to do with setting up that government. I wouldn’t argue that he was a great president, but he wasn’t terrible, either. He just happened to be in office at a time when current events were much bigger than he was, and he was incapable of rising to meet them.
- Mr. Bonds

2001—THE INTRODUCTION OF EXTRATERRITORIALITY

Statement from the Shiawase Board of Directors FEBRUARY 14, 2001

Today the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Shiawase Corporation and granted it extraterritoriality. We are grateful for their decision and humbled by the responsibility and trust the Court has placed in us.

At Shiawase, we recognize that the quest for profit goes far beyond mere finances. It has always been true that a rising tide lifts all boats, and we are acutely aware that business always fares better when conducted in a climate of peace and prosperity. War, economic strife, poverty, and other social ills are bad for business—and bad for humanity. It is a simple fact that what benefits Shiawase the most are the same things that benefit humankind the most, a fact that the Court recognized in its ruling.

There has been much speculation that, should a corporation such as Shiawase gain extraterritorial status, it would use it aggressively, waging war, whether through traditional corporate means or through armed combat, to expand its empire and grow its profits. Nothing could be further from our intent. If we are to take one

lesson from the twentieth century, it is that business fares the best in stable, open democracies. If we engage in the sort of behavior that our critics fear will become commonplace, we will only be harming ourselves. We do not seek to institute unfounded aggression or to introduce more chaos into the world. We simply seek what any nation wants—the ability to conduct our affairs, and work with our people, in peace.

Shiawase has always put the customer first, and that philosophy will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. That policy



Chief Justice Terence Ordell

2001

January 4-18—MEXICO: Tensions in the southern states of Mexico increase, and in a two-week period governors of three states (Chiapas, Campeche, and Quintana Roo) are assassinated. Two of the three assassins are eventually caught and judged to have been working alone.

February 14—USA: Using the Seretech decision as precedent, the second Shiawase decision once again goes in favor of Shiawase. As far as United States law is concerned, corporations become equivalent to governments—a rationale that other nations soon adopt.

February 20—FRANCE: The French government refuses to recognize Shiawase’s extraterritoriality. While they hope to be at the forefront of the backlash against growing corporate power, they instead find themselves alone, fighting a hopelessly quixotic battle. This begins nine long years of corporate sanctions against France.

March-May—EASTERN EUROPE: Severe environmental contamination hits Europe. Germany’s eastern Länder are evacuated due to groundwater contamination, and the ecology of the Baltic Sea collapses due to chemical sludge. Hundreds of thousands of people are relocated as governments try to address these troubled areas.

July 20—ITALY: During the G8 summit in Genoa, private security forces open fire on anti-corporate protestors, killing twelve. The pro-corp Italian media describes the shootings as a “defense against an act of terrorism,” and protestors are forced to change their tactics in the light of the corporate crackdown.

August 15—USA: The FDA approves P4M0, a synthetic blood replacement, for general use.

makes us more responsive than any government, for we are constantly held accountable by our customers. We only prosper when we provide what is best for them. That is our goal, and as we look to the future, that is undoubtedly how we will use our new status—to build peace and prosperity for our employees, our customers, and the entire world.

- Okay, so all that's clearly bullshit, but the question is, did they know it was bullshit when they wrote it, or did they really have high ideals at first, only to watch them go up in flames as time went on?
- Turbo Bunny
- The former. Show me a corporation that's really aimed at high ideals and benefits for all humanity, and I'll show you a "closed for business" sign. While it's true that stability and democracy and so on is better for business in general, chaos and tumult can be better for individual businesses as long as they're the ones who come out on top. Shiawase knew this, and they never intended to use their extraterritoriality to play nice with others. They wanted to move quickly to make sure they were one of the winners in the upcoming fights. They knew there was no chance of the peace and prosperity they were talking about actually happening, because they planned against it from the start. Other corps would be gunning for them right away, and Shiawase was going to fight back with everything they had and come out on top.
- Sunshine

2002— RESOURCE RUSHES, FLOOD FLASHES

Excerpt from "The Gorilla in Our Backyard: How Ares Industries Dwarfs Everything Else in the Corporate World"
DETROIT BUSINESS WEEKLY—06/20/02

Nicholas Aurelius says that his formation of Ares Industries was a simple decision. The fact that it might be a decision that changes the world was secondary to the idea that it was good business, plain and simple.

"There's not a businessman today who isn't looking for ways to be more efficient," Aurelius said in an exclusive interview. "I reviewed what I had, saw plenty of redundancies, and knew it made sense to combine a lot of operations."

Ares Industries might bring more to its founder than simple business efficiencies. President Hunt has put Ares on the fast track for extraterritoriality, the status that has made Shiawase the envy of the corporate world.

Aurelius himself is frank about extraterritorial status. "Why wouldn't I want it?" he said. "We have thousands of pages of business textbooks telling you how to manage risk when it comes to things that are out of your control. I've always thought the best way to manage risk is having as few things as possible that are not in your control, and extraterritoriality is quite helpful in that regard."

While he recognizes the benefits extraterritoriality will bring, Aurelius is quick to point out some of the problems that come with it as well.

"It's no secret that once Shiawase got extraterritoriality, plenty of other CEOs started thinking about how they could get it for themselves. Everyone thinks that it's such a great thing, that you get to be like a king, and there are good things about it. But I think a lot of people out there are forgetting the work involved. The more control you have over things, the more work you need to put in to make sure things stay in control. This isn't something I'm doing for fun, because I won't be having that much fun, believe me. It's something I'm doing because it's best for my business," Aurelius said.

- Plenty of people, including myself, have second-guessed Aurelius and some of the chances he took, but in the end I can't help liking the guy because of the results he got. He didn't walk into anything in life—Ares achieved its success because Aurelius made it happen. He never seemed to have much of an expectation of privilege, and he didn't get caught up in some of the etiquette games that some of today's corporate ruling class spend way too much time on. He had two questions in his head all the time—"What opportunities are out there?" and "How can I take advantage of them?" and he spent pretty much every waking hour finding answers to them. He played a lot of games, but he won most of them. You have to admire that.
- Mr. Bonds
- No I don't. He lucked his way through a lot of choices that could have brought disaster, and in the end he made the world better for himself and worse for a whole lot of other people. Not sure just what it is I'm supposed to admire.
- Ecotope
- Spoken like someone who's never tried to build something.
- Mr. Bonds

January 21—USA: The "Resource Rush" begins when the United States government seizes millions of acres of land from various Native American reservations and turns it over to a handful of corporations intent on squeezing every last bit of oil, natural gas, coal, iron, and anything else they can find out of the ground. The Rush continues for years, as President Hunt is willing to give corporations just about any piece of land they ask for.

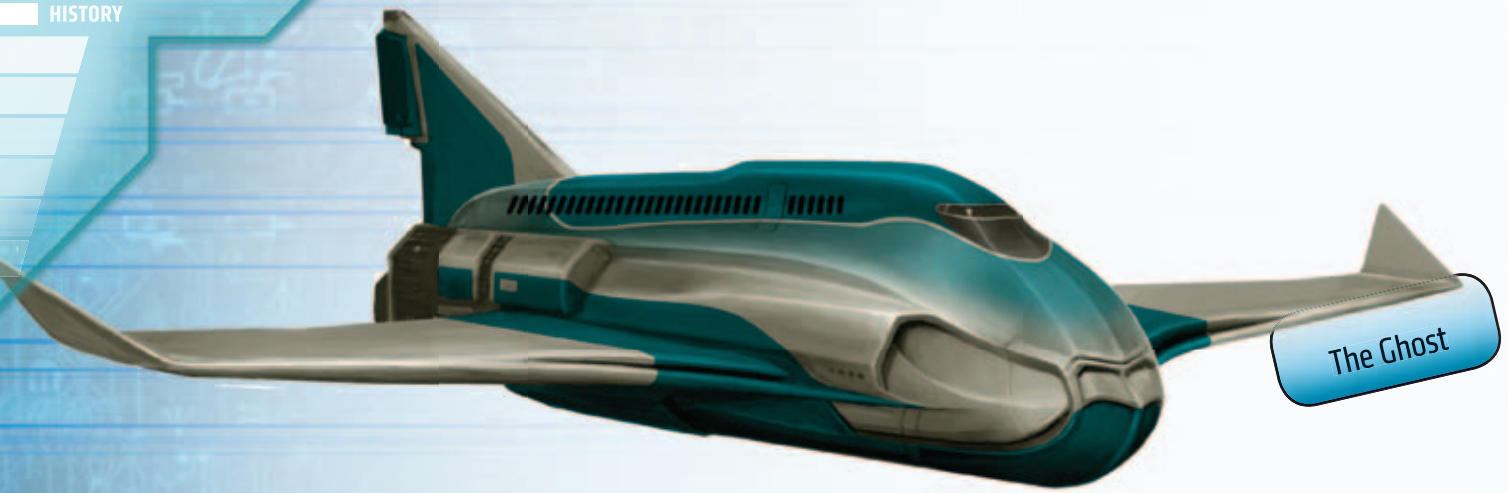
April 5—USA: No strangers to mistreatment from the United States government, the more radical elements of several Native American nations band together in Denver to form the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM), with the goal of ridding themselves of foreign intrusion once and for all so that they can be free to rule themselves.

June 14—USA: Nicholas Aurelius takes almost every single business asset he owns and condenses it into a single corporation, which he bases in Detroit and names Ares Industries. President Hunt quickly grants the corporation extraterritoriality, and Ares becomes one of the largest corporations on earth.

July 8—GERMANY: Ecologies in both the Baltic and North Seas collapse due to chemical sludge. Hundreds of thousands of people are relocated as governments try to address these troubled areas.

September 23—GERMANY: After the horrible ecological disasters that have hit Europe, the Bündnis 2000 party sweeps to power in Germany's federal elections. The party promises ecological restoration, a reduction in pollution, and other measures aimed at preventing more disasters. Naturally, corporations are not overly enthusiastic about this turn of events.

2002



2003—A SHRINKING WORLD AND A DISAPPEARING GOVERNMENT

“A Call to Arms”

ANONYMOUS BROCHURE, WIDELY DISTRIBUTED IN WASHINGTON, D.C., 2003

So the government's taken more land. Your land this time. Are you surprised? We hope not. Because if you are, where have you been? Were you blind and deaf for the last year, as the government grabbed every bit of land it could from the Natives out west? What made you think they wouldn't do it to you?

Sure, they aren't kicking us out of our homes yet, like they did to so many people out west. But that's only because we aren't sitting on barrels of oil or tons of metal. If we had something they wanted, you better believe we'd be out on our asses. But they never given much to our city anyways, so there's not much for them to take right now. But they still want it anyway.

So what you going to do, Washington? You got told you can't take care of yourself, your government is no good, and the Big Daddy federal government is going to take care of you now. You believe that shit? You believe that there is anyone out there who really cares what happens to you? Didn't think so. So what you going to do about it?

People out west, they got together. They look out for themselves now, tell Uncle Sam that he can go his own way and that he don't need to concern himself with them anymore. Now, Uncle Sam won't like that, because he don't let anything go easily. But they're working on that. They know they haven't been strong enough in the past to convince him to go away, but they'll do it this time.

Will you? Will you tell your Uncle, your racist, child-molesting, shithead Uncle to get the hell out of here and leave you alone? That's what we're going to do. So join us. Pick up a gun, a knife, whatever you got. Don't think you can do it with just words. Uncle Sam never listened to us much anyway, so he's not going to start now. But we'll convince him. He'll know he can't push us around anymore. We'll beat that point into his brain until he gets it.

Join us, and join us now, because we're not waiting.

- Not a bad example of rabble-rousing literature, but it's got one glaring flaw—it didn't do anything. Any of you remember hearing about the people of D.C. rising up in open revolution? Me neither. Once again, all they did was use words, and once again the words didn't do the job.
- Aufheben
- Screw them. Let's talk about the Ghost. There's people who think the Ghost wasn't that big of a deal, because everything was starting to become virtual anyway, and people could teleconference and share information easily over the Matrix and so on. Those people are idiots. I know the “Great Man” theory of history isn't always popular, but don't tell that to the people who make history wherever they go. All the Ghost does is help them go more places, get their face in front of as many people as possible. Even once VR was perfected—and it wasn't even close to that in 2003—there are some things that need to be done face-to-face. It's a lot easier to charm or intimidate someone in person, and you can never underestimate how important charm and intimidation are to doing business.
- Clockwork
- Strong words from a guy who has never charmed or intimidated anyone.
- Netcat

2003

March 24—UK: An already-shrinking world gets smaller with the introduction of the Ghost, a suborbital plane jointly developed by BAE Systems and the Japanese Aerospace Corporation. The Ghost can go from London to Boston in 76 minutes and from London to Tokyo in a few hours. Within weeks of its introduction, corporations have placed enough orders for the aircraft to make a several year waitlist.

May 13—NORTH AMERICA: Biotech comes to the pet store in the form of the GloFish. Originally bred to detect water pollutants, the fish glows red under blacklight, and it becomes a common sight in aquariums across the continent.

July 8—USA: The United States government dissolves the municipal government of Washington, D.C., replacing it with federal control. Widespread

corruption had left the city with escalating debts, crumbling infrastructure, and a climate where no one believed the government was watching out for the common good. While the citizens were disgusted with the municipal government, they are not inclined to see the federal government in any better light, especially since they have lacked meaningful federal representation for so long. Most residents see the move as nothing more than a naked federal power grab.

November 19—GERMANY: A flash flood in the North Sea regions of the country gives the new government its first real test. All nuclear plants in the nation are shut down after some on the coast approach meltdown.

2004—GOOD NUKES GONE BAD

Excerpts from Eyewitness Accounts of the Dungeness Meltdown

Elizabeth Franks, 57: God forgive me for saying so, but it was beautiful. I've seen many colors of flames before, but never that deep, rich red. I wanted to stare, but the light and the heat were so intense I had to turn away. I slowly started to comprehend what was happening, what I had seen. First, I realized that something terrible had happened at the nuclear plant. Second, I understood that what I had seen had just killed me.

Thomas Michaels, 19: We were annoyed at first, if you can believe it. The ground shook, the whole convention room bucked upward, and pieces scattered. If you know gamers, you know they don't like having their pieces scattered. So there were curses and mutterings, as if the earth had conspired on purpose to disrupt their games. Then the wave of heat arrived, and we started to understand that we were in for more than just a little annoyance.

Matthew Chadwick, 45: I've been to metal foundries, where you walk by all that liquid metal, and you inhale and you catch the heat of it and the heavy scent. It's very indistinct, but it's there. When you smell it, you can imagine these small particles of steel entering your nose and settling into your lungs, and you feel heavier. Breathing becomes more difficult, and I don't know if that's because of the heat or just the mind playing tricks on you. But that's what it was like. The smell, the heat, and all. It was like that.

Meredith Adams, 39: How can you explain the decisions you make after something like that? It's new, so you can't base your decisions on any previous experiences. So you do something, and you may not know why, and it's very possible that it won't take you long to understand that what you're doing is incredibly stupid, but you don't understand that at first because you don't understand *anything* about the situation at first. I know I should have left, I should have gotten far away, and instead I went to the middle of town.

It was so quiet, like an invisible blanket of snow had fallen over everything. There were no birds singing, no cars, no people talking, nothing. It was like walking on a movie set once the filming has been completed. It was completely eerie but oddly soothing. I felt calm and

unhurried. There was nowhere to go, nothing I had to do, because nothing was happening anywhere.

- I suppose this would be a good place for a haughty lecture about the damage humanity inflicts on the environment, but the Dungeness testimonies suck the energy right out of me. The more detailed the account, of course, the more likely it is that the teller died soon after they shared their experience. They made sure someone heard them; most of them were desperate for someone to listen to their description of what killed them before they died. I think about these people, then I hope that, whatever it is that finally gets me, I don't see it coming.
- Ecotope
- Some say that the rise in magic has somehow affected the stability and reliability of nuclear reactions. Certainly, many more meltdowns and "incidents" have been reported since the Awakening began, even as some nuclear weapons failed to detonate ... in total, some 18 meltdowns have occurred since 2001, and the only recorded successful detonations of nuclear weapons were in Libya and the big Cermak Blast in Chicago.
- Beaker
- Nice try, but magic should not be a scapegoat for human incompetence and aggression. The leak at Biblis was due to criminal negligence on the part of the plant's owners, and the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict for only the second time in the history can be laid square at the feet of the Israeli prime minister and his chief of staff.
- Aufheben
- So what about the meltdown at Dungeness? A perfectly normal plant suddenly experiences an unaccountable criticality accident. Anyone want to explain that?
- Baka Dabora
- In the astral, where all those people died, there are twisted, blackened caricatures of men and women, shadow things that are always burning, mouthing silent screams. I do not believe they caused the accident, but rather that they were attracted there. Like called to like.
- Man-of-Many-Names.

April 26—USA: News outlets across the country report the revelation that United States President Martin Hunt has been making regular payments to Mexican President Miguel Ávila in exchange for letting certain corporations continue the Resource Rush south of the border. Hunt's laissez-faire governing style had left him with a middling approval rating at best, and the ongoing stories about the payments, while never confirmed (and dismissed as agitprop in some quarters) push his approval ratings lower.

June—GERMANY, UK: Germany's rush to shut down all its nuclear plants creates a problem when an accident at Biblis releases radioactive gas into the air. Corporations point to this as evidence that the shutdown program either be slowed or canceled, but they are forced to mute their complaints somewhat when a disaster in Dungeness, England, shows what happens if nuclear power goes bad. A partial

meltdown irradiates a section of Kent and kills 6,000 people, and for a time thereafter Europeans are somewhat more tolerant of pro-environmental restrictions.

September 10—ISRAEL, LIBYA: The 10 Minute War. After Libya attacks Israel with chemical weapons, Israel responds with enough three nuclear bombs dropped on major cities, beating Libya into submission. The seeds of Libya's eventual collapse are planted.

October 12—SWITZERLAND: France finally finds a partner in resisting corporate extraterritoriality. Switzerland revives the famous Rütli Schwur Oath, which vows common action in defense of freedom, and uses it to bolster their effort to resist the growing power of corporations.

November 2—USA: Philip Bester defeats Martin Hunt and is elected president of the United States.

2004

2005—SHAKEUPS IN POLAND AND MANHATTAN

From the “Border Wars” chapter in *Adventures in History*, Schoolhouse Press

A common theme in many European conflicts is their seeming inevitability. If Archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated in 1914, the nations of Europe would likely have used an alternate excuse to come into conflict. Similarly, the economic damage and deep-seated resentment that occurred in the wake of World War I made another conflict inevitable, and so World War II followed little more than twenty years later.

While the Border Wars mirrored the build-up of tensions leading to World War I to some degree, the same sense of inevitability was not there. Some of this is due to the lessons that were supposedly learned from World War I—that global conflict was incredibly wasteful, and that alternatives should be found at all cost. While the ethnic and social conflict rippling through Belarus in the early part of the twenty-first century was significant, most observers assumed that the nation would find some way to avoid conflict.

The mistake most observers made was in assuming that because Belarus did not *have* to go to war, that they would not then *choose* to go to war. Outside observers, however, did not have the same perspective as the leaders of Belarus, who believed that the only way they could cling to their crumbling power was by uniting the nation and bringing in new resources through conquest.

Discussion Question: Why might a nation opt to go to war? What benefits could that nation realize from overt hostilities?

Following the example of many of its predecessors in war, Belarus opted to begin the Border Wars through a series of quick, devastating strikes designed to intimidate any opposition. The tactic worked. While many Western European nations condemned Belarus’ actions, those were not the opinions that mattered to Belarus, as those more distant nations were not likely to strike back. It was the nearby nations that truly concerned them, and most of them responded by becoming more isolationist, wishing to protect themselves and not get caught in an alliance that would drag them into a war they were not inclined to fight. While much of the world had come together to fight against common enemies

in World Wars I and II, the Border Wars saw many nations scattering from each other and even splintering from within as different elements looked to find ways of keeping the conflict away from their doorstep.

- One of the things we’re missing by focusing on individual events was the apocalyptic viewpoint that was spreading rapidly among the world’s faithful (had some of these things happened *before* the turn of the millennium, this tendency would only have been stronger). New churches popped up everywhere, and existing churches started taking a more end-of-the-world approach to their teachings. Some of the new groups, like the Church of the Whole Earth, took the devastation being wrought as an excuse to focus on healing the planet, but they were surrounded by hordes of churches that mainly told their parishioners to hunker down and try to hold on as God’s wrath kept spreading. Of course, they had no way of knowing what was really approaching.
- Goat Foot

2006—SALVAGING HONOR

Note left by Joseph Tateoka, Vice President of Internal Affairs, Miroyama Electric, and discovered after his death

I am aware that people in a situation such as mine often worry that an act similar to the one I am about to perform may be construed as an admission of guilt. I am writing this note so that there may be no doubt about this fact, and so that people do not spend any time debating the meaning of my action. Its meaning should be clear: I am guilty.

In saying this, I do not mean to say that I am directly guilty of patent violations or any of the other ephemera with which the lawsuit was concerned. It is true that the result of the lawsuit has led us to where we are now, but the events of the lawsuit are symptomatic of a larger issue, and it is this issue that has brought me to this point. That issue is our failure to protect the corporation.

In our time with Miroyama Electric, all of us who held positions of responsibility were honored to play a role in something larger and more important than our own selves. We were given a great trust, and the present state of affairs is a very clear indication that we have violated that trust, and thus forfeited our honor.

I have words and thoughts on my current situation that I will convey to my family separately, but I will not concern myself with that now, as business communications must always be distinct from familial issues. Instead, I would address some thoughts to the corporate family with whom I have labored these many years.

2005

March 25—USA: Though he pledged to reverse many of President Hunt’s policies, President Phillip Bester continues his predecessor’s corp-friendly policies by eliminating public funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting System breaks up shortly thereafter, and private broadcasters quickly consume its resources.

May 13—EUROPE: As has often been the case, increasing European tensions result in the invasion of Poland. This time Belarus does the honors, also moving against the Ukraine and some other Baltic states, and beginning the Border Wars.

August 12—USA: An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale hits Manhattan. While Californians might scoff at such a relatively low number,

the quake is strong enough to severely damage a city that wasn’t built to withstand such an event. Most skyscrapers besides the Empire State Building collapse and more than 200,000 people are killed.

September 19—USA: After the tremendous damage of the Manhattan quake, the East Coast Stock Exchange moves to Boston, which helps turn Boston’s economy around.

September 2—SOUTH KOREA: The assassination of South Korean President Dae-Jung Rhee leads to Commander of the Army General Kyung Han Yoon taking power. Yoon uses the fact that the assassin was a Communist to declare war against North Korea. Japan strongly supports Yoon’s actions, and the Second Korean War begins.



I, along with the other executives of Miroyama Electric, am taking this action so that it may be clear that the dishonor falls upon us and not upon you. We greatly regret the situation our actions have created, but we want to assure you that you do not bear guilt for the fate of Miroyama. We wish you to continue your lives with honor and dignity, and we are fully confident that you will carry the Miroyama standard of excellence wherever you go. Perhaps our greatest regret in the actions we are about to take is that we will no longer have the fellowship of such excellent co-workers.

The time has now arrived. The cleaning staff will be instructed on how to properly deal with the aftermath of what I am about to do.

- Looking back over the news coverage of the end of Miroyama, what strikes me is how unsurprised everyone was by the mass suicide. There were no screaming headlines, since the essence of a major news story is the surprise of the unexpected, and what the executives did was hardly unexpected. No one really condemned it, either—I'm not saying that the Japanese ideas of honor have permeated all societies, but some of their impressions of the critical importance of the corporation in one's life certainly have.
- Mr. Bonds
- That's why this article is here. It's not like the Miroyama-TI dispute plays a crucial role in today's society—Miroyama's gone, of course, and TI is far from a major player in the electronics market. What matters is what Bonds was saying about this not being unexpected. There was a time when this would have been bigger news, but as the 21st century limped along, this kind of behavior became more and more expected. Now it's the norm—the idea that the corporation is bigger than the individual is an all-too-common belief. It's one of the big reasons I'm out here in the shadows instead of buried in all that bright corporate fluorescent light.
- Snopes

April 10—JAPAN: Japan makes a strong statement to the rest of the world by launching a series of solar-power-collecting satellites that beam power to Earth via microwave.

May 12—USA: Though not as impressive as the Ghost, Boeing's High Speed Civil Transport completes a successful test flight. In six years, the craft will be the key to a profitable Seattle-to-Japan route.

July 27—AUSTRALIA: The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) announces the birth of a healthy Tasmanian tiger cloned from frozen DNA samples of one of the previously extinct beasts.

October 17—JAPAN: The struggling Texas Instruments Corporation essentially wagered its entire future on a patent violation lawsuit against Miroyama Electric, and after years of court proceedings, they finally receive a favorable verdict. The Japanese courts turn over all of Miroyama's assets to Texas Instruments, revitalizing the corporation, and every single Miroyama executive commits *seppuku*.

November 17—NORTH KOREA: AN attempted nuclear attack by North Korea on Japan backfires when the crude warheads fail to detonate. The attacks spur Japan to greater involvement in the Second Korean War, North Korea eventually falls, and Japan goes on to switch to an imperial government.

2006

2007—WHO'S TO SAY WHAT'S LEGITIMATE, ANYWAY?

Excerpts from “The Legitimacy of Business”

SAMANTHA DUNNING, *THE HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW*, OCTOBER 2007
Increasingly, then, what we are seeing is a redefinition of “legitimacy” to mean “any activity that supports the corporation’s bottom line.” There have always been gray areas in the business world, but current conditions seem to be shifting so that there is a tremendous gray middle with only a touch of black and white at each end of the spectrum.

This gives rise to the question of whether the Mexican drug cartels simply acted too soon in their quest for legitimacy. Some have asserted that rather than take the effort to move into activities currently deemed as legitimate by existing cultural norms, the drug cartels would have been better served simply waiting for their activities to be seen as legitimate in the common consensus, and then continued on in their normal actions.

There are several flaws with this notion, one being the unlikelihood that the entire spectrum of narcotics activities will ever be completely accepted and integrated into the general economy ...

Perhaps a more pressing issue is whether or not businesses that are engaged in legitimate industries will increasingly use illegitimate practices to support their normal activities. The concern has been voiced many times that large corporations will use their extraterritoriality to free themselves from the hindrances of conventional laws and use any means they have at their disposal to advance their goals. Thus, while most corporations have relied on the twin incentives of salary and benefits to lure promising personnel away from other companies, the new era of redefined legitimacy could open up a new box of tools for them to use. Will corporations continue to haggle and negotiate to get the employees they want, or will they use the forces that are now at their disposal and the loosening of restrictions to simply extract personnel from a rival corporation and place them in their own?

Continuing down this line of speculation, we can see a myriad of ways in which corporations could exploit these broad gray areas. Corporate espionage is already a long-established practice, but the new climate would likely see it increase tenfold, particularly since there would be far fewer repercussions for getting caught. Additionally, the cold wars of espionage could occasionally flare into open conflict. As more corporations support their own armed forces, corporate competition may take on a new aspect as CEOs begin to consider ways they can directly harm or even cripple their opposition. Trying to outsell an



Spring—AFRICA: Some of the seeds of what Africa will become are planted when two nations, Ghana and the Côte d'Ivoire, begin the two year process of removing themselves from the United Nations and step back from the international community. Given that the international community has not always been kind to African nations, the withdrawal is met with general approval by residents of both nations.

August 14—MEXICO: Three major drug cartels take several steps designed to bring their enterprises more into the legitimate business world through the foundation of ORO Corporation.

November 2—USA: President Philip Bester wins a Pyrrhic victory when the United States Supreme Court decides not to review the government's decision to disband the municipal government of Washington, D.C. While Bester had opposed many of his predecessor's policies, he supported the move in D.C. The general public, however, was growing increasingly disenchanted with the handling of the situation, and Bester's approval ratings start a decline from which they never recover.

opponent's products becomes much easier if many of your competition's products fail to make it to retail locations, or if manufacturing is disrupted before goods have the chance to leave the factory. Should corporations begin behaving with open hostility toward one another, retaliation is more than likely—it is inevitable. If corporations wielding their own armies get caught in a continuing cycle of violence and reprisal, who will be able to step up and bring these bodies to peace?

- This is, as you see, an incredibly prescient article. Dunning lays out the entire rationale for corporate shadowrunning, as well as outlining most of the major activities shadowrunners will be involved in, well before the term “shadowrun” was invented. The fact that she could foresee this is increasing evidence that human beings are, in fact, rational animals. We proceed in predictable, logical ways in response to the conditions around us. The only reasons we seem so crazy is that the conditions around us are created by an intense web of conflicting desires.
- Mr. Bonds
- Rational, hell. We want what we want, so we go get it, and then later we make up justifications so that we can pretend that what we did made some kind of sense.
- Kane
- Just because that's the way *you* work ...
- /dev/grrl

2008—THE RICH FIND MORE RICHES, OR JUST ARE GIVEN THEM

Excerpts from “The Resource Rush: A Retrospective”

ALLAN J. BURROWS, *FORBES* MAGAZINE—11/25/08

We have long heard (and said) that “The business of America is business,” but it wasn't until 2002 that the nation began to take those words seriously when it came to land use. The Resource Rush started by President Martin Hunt and continued by President Bester is one of the great modern business success stories, representing a time when some of the potential of America that politicians are always talking about was finally translated into real, tangible gain. With a new president set to take office on November, it is worth reflecting on the policies of the previous two national executives so that the future administration can learn from their experiences.

The ideas that led President Hunt to initiate the Resource Rush were not new. Property tax assessors have long assessed land according to its “highest and best use,” not its actual use. That is to say, if you owned an apartment building and were charging less than market rates for the apartments, the value of your building would not be based on what you were *actually* charging but on what you *could* be charging. This provides an incentive for property owners to maximize their efficiency and extract the maximum value from their land.

Yet while we recognized the ideal of extracting as much value from land as possible in developed areas, it eluded us in some undeveloped or underdeveloped areas. These areas contained tremendous potential, yet we had not tapped into that potential because we allowed concerns other than pure business to occupy us.

President Hunt put an end to that. In what was perhaps his signature legacy as president, he stopped treating our land as a distant museum piece that is not to be touched and integrated it back into the flow of commerce. The boon to the economy has been tremendous—while different areas of the country have occasionally encountered economic slow-downs, as a whole the nation was much more prosperous with the new resources added to the gross domestic product than it would have been had those resources remained trapped in the ground and untouched.

How President Hunt convinced Congress to make this move is one of the critical political stories of our time. Popular opinion was not with him, and while most of the congressmen in the states with the resources were firmly on the side of putting the resources to use, representatives and senators in other states opposed the move. They would not gain directly from the influx of resources and jobs, so they sided with environmental and conservationist lobbyists in an effort to appear as if they were taking the higher road ...

- It's good to cut the story off there, because this joker wasn't going to tell us anything useful. The politics and “highest and best use” crap have little if anything to do with what was going on here. Yeah, the Awakening hadn't occurred yet, but that didn't mean forces weren't already aligning to take advantage of some of the hidden resources that people like this Burrows character knew nothing about.
- Plan 9
- Some things happen for some people before they happen for others.
- Axis Mundi
- That's great. Did you guys ever think about taking this show on the road?
- Winterhawk

March 4—PANAMA: The ORO Corporation announces the discovery of large deposits of molybdenum several kilometers off the Panamanian coast. ORO not only had full exploitation rights to this metal, but the corporation had managed to create a monopoly on all local molybdenum extracting and processing industries. They had managed to accomplish this before the discovery of the metal was made.

April 18—USA: In Texas, a new kind of militia is created, allowing governments to assemble armed groups of private citizens to fill gaps in law enforcement.

June—CENTRAL AMERICA: Several Central American countries pull out of international agreements regarding intellectual property and related matters. Piracy and other forms of copyright violations became legal in those countries, and the ORO Corporation positions itself at the head of the burgeoning technopiracy industry.

August 23—GERMANY: The coalition government collapses as the strain of the ongoing series of ecological disasters take their toll. The government weakness translates to ongoing social instability and violence in the streets.

November 4—USA: Jesse Garrety is elected President of the United States over incumbent Philip Bester.

2008

2009—WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE CORPS GET MORE POWER

Excerpts from speech of President Jesse Garrety
SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

Good evening, my fellow Americans. Tonight, freedom found itself facing a severe test. And once again, freedom prevailed.

The most important thing I would like to say to you right now is that you are safe. Our troops are standing down, our missile stations have lowered their level of alert, and we are free from the threat of foreign attack. When you go to bed tonight, give your children a kiss, appreciate the things you have, and remember that we are always working to preserve your safety.

I ask you to also remember and give thanks to those men and women in uniform who stand on the frontlines of our fight for freedom. They played a vital role in helping us keep the peace today, and once again we must pay tribute to them for putting their lives on the line in defense of our most cherished values.

Along with my message of reassurance, I would also like to offer some cautions about how we as a nation will respond to today's events. There will be a temptation, once these events are in the past, to engage in speculation about what led to the events of the day. I sincerely wish that I could share the full details of the day's events, but I'm sure my fellow citizens understand that there are things that must be withheld from their knowledge in the interests of national security. And while our freedom of speech and our boundless imagination are some of our defining traits as Americans, I would like to caution people against reckless speculation. Some idle talk can have the dangerous effect of undermining our faith in government, and as this crisis has shown, the important of being unified and working together cannot be underestimated.

One item of special importance is avoiding casting any aspersion on our Russian friends. Cordial relations with Russia remain of vital importance to our nation, and any hostility displayed toward Russia by our people can only have a negative effect on our relations. I would ask, then, that we only speak of our Russian friends with respect and kindness, and not with suspicion and unwarranted antagonism.

- It doesn't take much political acuity to see that these are the words of a man who is scared shitless (tapes of the president made when he was in his secure

bunker reveal that this phrase was all too literally true). He knew, of course, how unstable the world was, and he knew how little it would take to set it off. He would have loved, I'm sure, to have done more than just advise people on what they could say—a little government control of what appeared in the press would have made him really happy. It's sad to think that he might have thought his little cautions would work and that people wouldn't be interested in finding out what led to them almost being vaporized. But they did, and of course most people weren't too happy with what they found out.

- Kay St. Irregular
- I would say that this was a bad year for Native Americans, but hell, how many good ones did we have between this one and 1492? Some people will tell you that 2009 was a turning point, when government relations with Native Americans turned from dysfunctional to hostile, but that's too charitable. I'll always look at it as the year when the hostility that had always been there went back to the good old nineteenth-century openness, instead of masquerading as "no, this time we're serious!" attempts at co-existence.
- Mika
- While this may not have been a big change from some of the Native's point of view, the Lone Eagle incident did a lot to re-arrange east-west relations. At first, of course, it looked like things were going to get much worse, with two nuclear powers coming closer to a nuclear exchange than they had in forty years. Then, as things progressed, the Western Hemisphere powers realized they needed to worry less about a threat that was an entire ocean away and pay more attention to the trouble erupting in their own backyard. I won't say that the United States and its descendant nations exactly ignored us from this point on, but they were increasingly distracted. Long-range threats seem less pressing when there are people right on your doorstep with the desire to blow you up and the means to do so.
- Red Anya
- It bears remembering that sometimes history is made in less flashy ways than nuclear standoffs (not that such standoffs aren't notable). One of the overlooked stories of 2009 was a coup pulled off by the major corps of the time coaxing the Trilateral Patent Offices (the United States, European Union, and Japan) into not accepting business-method patents. I realize that sounds a bit obscure, but it had huge effects, especially for companies like ORO who were willing and able to restructure their business in whatever way was most profitable to them, even (and especially) if it meant ripping off the competition.
- Mr. Bonds

2009

March 4—FRANCE: The Cattenom-GAU nuclear reactor loses its primary and secondary cooling systems. The failure leads to an explosion and a huge cloud of radioactive gas expands through eastern France and western Germany. More than 35,000 die immediately; the eventual death toll is more than 135,000 individuals.

April 7—UK: King Charles III ascends to the nation's throne.

May 5—USA: United Oil Industries receives the oil rights to one-quarter of the remaining national parks and one-tenth of the remaining Native American reservations. The action directly leads to the Lone Eagle incident.

September 18—USA, RUSSIA: Nuclear holocaust becomes a very real possibility in the Lone Eagle incident. Responding to land grants to United Oil Industries, a SAIM strike team invades a missile silo and threatens to launch.

September 28—USA: After a ten-day standoff, military forces break into the silo and kill the SAIM strike team, but not before they launched a single missile, targeted for Russia. President Jesse Garrety desperately tried to convince Russian President Nikolai Chelanko not to retaliate once the missile hit. Then the missile disappeared. No retaliation was needed. The cause of the disappearance remains unknown.

October 19—USA, CANADA: In response to the Lone Eagle incident, the Re-education and Relocation Act is passed in the United States, ordering all Natives with the remotest connection to SAIM to detention centers. In Canada, the Nepean Act is passed, legitimizing internment camps for Natives while dismantling the Inuit territory of Nunavut.

2010—VITAS: EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT FOREVER

Excerpt from *Madagascar: A Survivor's Story*
BY PIERRE RADAMA, *GOOD HOPE PRESS*, 2011

Rather than being flown in to Antananarivo, the medicine was supposedly coming by boat to Morondava—a city 370 kilometers as the crow flies away from where I was, a straight line right through the heart of the island. I wasn't sure I had enough petrol to make it, but I did not have time to fight with every other traveler in Antananarivo for what fuel was available. I would have to look for petrol along the way.

I wanted to stay close to the highway, so I watched for a station near the road. I saw one or two on the outskirts of the city, but they were clearly abandoned and dry of fuel. Then there was another station with lines that were ten, twelve cars deep. I did not have time to wait.

Then I found a station that looked perfect, which should have been a warning sign. There were people walking around and cars at the pumps, but the lines were short. I left the highway and drove toward the station.

I do not know what alerted me to the ambush. Perhaps everyone at the station moved at once, toward me. Whatever it was, there was a quick knot pulling at my stomach, and I knew I could not stop. I slammed the accelerator to the floor and leaned forward, but the car seemed like it was crawling. Engines of the cars in the station roared to life, and many of the people on foot



pulled guns. They fired, but wildly, and only a few rounds struck my car, harmlessly hitting the rear.

I re-entered the highway and the cars were behind me, giving chase. But though it did not feel like I was going fast, I had been moving while they were getting started, so I pulled away. They did not stay behind me for long—I believe the purpose of the ambush was to steal what little gas I might have left and anything else in my car, and if they chased me over a long stretch they stood to lose more petrol than they stood to gain.

I was wondering how the engine could still be running with so little fuel when I arrived at the small village of Betafo. I no longer had a choice—I had to stop. I pulled off the road looked for a petrol station.

I saw no one. The streets were empty, and so were the buildings. My car finally stopped near the center of the village, so I got out and walked. Still I saw no one. There were birds singing and it was a pleasant day, but I had a chill in my spine. I found myself walking slowly, as if someone was about to jump out at me. But there was no human movement.

Then I found the residents of the town. They had gathered at a church in the center of the commune. They had come there because they had nowhere else to go. They had chosen to die together, and now they were all dead.

Horror filled my throat. I clamped my hand over my mouth and nose and ran away from death and the clouds of viruses I imagined were hovering there. I was back at my car before I remembered it could not go anywhere.

- VITAS stripped away our veneer of civilization, and it has yet to fully return.
- Winterhawk

January 20—USA: As the roundup of Native Americans continues under the Re-Education and Relocation Act, the government seizes all remaining Native American lands.

February 10—INDIA: A new disease is discovered, a virus that produces severe allergic reactions and kills most of its victims by inflaming their lungs to the point that they suffocate. The disease is named Kali's Harvest in India and kills 450 million people. Worldwide, the disease is named the Virally Induced Toxic Allergy Syndrome (VITAS), and it eventually kills a quarter of the world's population, including Pope John Paul III.

February—GLOBAL: Within weeks of its discovery, VITAS is diagnosed in countries across the world. Developed areas use their medical resources to somewhat mitigate the effects of the disease, but poorer and rural areas are devastated. Death and destruction are rampant—funeral pyres become common sights in European cities, while in Mexico City officials burn entire neighborhoods in an attempt to contain the virus.

June 22—FRANCE: The French economy breaks under the VITAS-induced strain, ending their long years of resistance to the new corporate culture.

September 16—GERMANY: Michael Beloit restructures BMW, integrating it with Saeder Munitions and Krupp Manufacturing, starting the organization that will grow into the behemoth that is Saeder-Krupp.

October 28—MADAGASCAR: Madagascar reports that ten and a half million of its fourteen million citizens have died from VITAS. The survivors soon leave the island, and it eventually becomes a pirate haven.

October 31—Québec secedes from Canada.

2011—THE AWAKENING AND THE YEAR OF CHAOS: EVERYTHING CHANGES FOREVER AGAIN

Excerpts from “Naming Our New Reality”

BY ALBY MORGAN, *NEWSWEEK*—03/14/11

Across the nation and the world, the phenomenon known as Unexplained Genetic Expression has divided parents into two camps: those who refuse to refer to their children as anything other than normal humans, and those who recognize that the significant physiological differences manifested in their children might need a new label.

Geneva Cox of Bothell, Washington, is in the first camp. Her son, Mitchell, was born in February, and from his first day of life his almond-shaped eyes and pointed ears were clearly evident. Cox does not believe those differences are important.

“He is my son, and there is no reason to call him anything else. There are many children who have different traits than their parents, and they are not labeled,” Cox said.

The labeling is the particular sticking point for Cox.

“Once we label something as different, that’s the first step in treating them as different. Many of the people who want to call my son something other than human are looking for an excuse to treat him differently. I won’t allow that,” she said.

By contrast, Bert Cowell of Tulsa, Oklahoma, has decided that he will proudly refer to his son as a dwarf.

“He’s going to look different from the other kids. And I’d prefer he take that fact head on, rather than pretend it doesn’t exist,” Cowell said.

Cowell said he has sympathy with Cox’s point, and he agrees that he will need to be on the lookout for any potential persecution. “I’m

sure there will be people who don’t like him for what he is. But that just means he needs to stand up for himself, be proud, and not run from it. He’s a dwarf, that’s what he is and what he’s going to be, and I’ll be proud of him every day,” Cowell said.

This is a debate unlike any in our time, because these manifestations are beyond anyone’s experience, or even their wildest expectations. Doctors and scientists have been scrambling since the beginning of the year to discover why so many children are suddenly starting to look like characters in fairy-tale books, and they have yet to come up with an answer. That has left many of the parents of UGE children on edge—without an explanation of why their children are the way they are, they are concerned about how their children will develop as they grow older.

- Here’s what I like about this article—both parents seem to like their kids. They may want to call their children different things, but neither parent is going to reject the kid because of the way he looks. As far as I understand it, that’s the way things were in the first months of UGE—American culture had been making a 50-year-long push for greater equality and inclusion of all sorts of people, and people thought their UGE children would be accepted as part of that climate. ‘Course, they’d figure out how wrong they were soon enough—Pope John Paul IV’s blanket condemnation was only months away.
- Netcat

Excerpt from transcript of Ghost Breakers television show BROADCAST LIVE FROM SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS—10/31/11

[Peter Murray] Okay, let’s see if we can talk to this lovely witch over here. Hi! What’s your name?

[Mina O’Hare] I’m Mina O’Hare. Oh, hey, you’re the ghost guy, right?

[Peter Murray] That’s me. So I’m guessing this isn’t your first Salem Samhain?

[Mina O’Hare] No way! I’m here every year! This is the best!

[Peter Murray] Well, you gotta love your enthusiasm. Now, I’ve heard about plenty of strange and unusual things happening at

January 13—GLOBAL: The first children with the odd physical traits known as Unexplained Genetic Expression are born.

February 9—EUROPE: Hurricane-force winds push the noxious waters of the North Sea into surrounding bodies of water, affecting several nearby nations. This phenomenon, known as the Black Tide, poisoned so much water that 500,000 people eventually died.

February 20—AUSTRALIA: The first Mana Storm on record appears.

March 14—USA: *Newsweek* magazine becomes the first major media source to label children who have experienced Unexplained Genetic Expression as “elves” and “dwarfs.”

April 7—MEXICO: The Mexican government disintegrates, mainly due to sheer exhaustion.

May-end of the year and beyond—GLOBAL: Some parents of UGE infants report their children missing, others give them up for adoption or just abandon them. Disappearances are especially pronounced in Haiti, and it happens for three more years.

August 15—INDONESIA: The Indonesian government collapses, buckling under the stresses of volcanic eruptions following the devastation of VITAS.

September 3—UK: The basalt columns of Giant’s Causeway rise on the coast

of Northern Ireland, taller and more solid than they have ever been.

Throughout the year, stone circles erupt from the ground across the United Kingdom.

October 31—USA: The annual Samhain ritual in Salem, Massachusetts is attended by some new guests: A ghostly hunting group, later identified as the Wild Hunt, appears out of the evening mist charges around the celebrants.

November 18—NEPAL: After a surge in the number of photographs purporting to show yeti in the mountains near Nepal, a tribe of yeti is conclusively identified.

December 24—JAPAN, USA: In Japan, the great dragon Ryumyo emerges from Mt. Fuji and immediately flies to two of the most magically powerful sections of the nation. At the same moment, Daniel Coleman (later to be known as Daniel Howling Coyote) leads his SAIM followers out of an internment camp in Abilene. They simply walk out, and guards that fire bullets at Daniel see them bounce harmlessly off a glowing field surrounding him. Also on this date, a manned flight to Mars crashes, killing five of eight astronauts.

December 26—UK: The great dragon Cledyr emerges in Caerleon, Wales.

2011

Samhain, but you know the things we're most interested in are ghosts. Have you ever seen any spiritual manifestations here?

[Mina O'Hare] Oh, totally! I mean, you can feel them all around you! If you're quiet enough, you can almost, like, hear them whispering in your ear. It's so cool!

[Peter Murray] Do they ever touch you? You know, give you or someone near you a little shove?

[Mina O'Hare] No, that's never happened to me, but I've heard plenty of stories about it happening to other people. The ghosts, you know, I think they get a little too grabby sometimes, you know? Maybe they miss having a body, I don't know.

[Peter Murray] Well, I'd love to talk a little more about ghosts grabbing you, but my camera man clearly wants my attention so let me see what his problem—Oh. Oh my God.

[Mina O'Hare] What?

[Peter Murray] What the hell is that?

[Mina O'Hare] Where?

[Peter Murray] Jody, *come on*, we have to get closer. Do you see this? Is it showing up on camera? Can the people in the truck see it? {unintelligible speech from cameraman} Okay. Okay. We're getting this. Holy shit. Is this some kind of a joke? There are people, they're walking toward us, but I can see right through them. Right *through* them! They have, they have a glow, right? Kind of a glow? And these people, they're dressed—how are they dressed? They're Puritans, that's what they are. Good hell, there's a bunch of see-through, glowing Puritans, and they're coming right toward us. And ... and what is that? What is he *wearing*? Oh my God. Oh my God! What is on his ... what is ... get it away from me! Get away!

[Video goes black; Murray's speech devolves into screaming, then sound cuts out.]

- I know kids today don't like history and all, especially with all its 2-D videos, but immersing yourself in some of the stuff from 2011 is pretty damn illuminating. Tons of the things we take for granted, the environment we breathe in, was brand new, and most of it came out in a few short years. Some of us might get a little startled when a ghost pops up out of nowhere, but you're not going to see a big-time freak out like that *Ghost Breakers* program. I'm not saying we've fully adjusted to all the changes in the world—just ask the next metahuman you see—but at least we've made it past the shock of the new.
- FastJack
- I'm kind of sorry I missed it all—watching the whole world change underneath you would be cool. We've got all those wonders now, but we come at them with a seen-it-all jadedness. No one's impressed or surprised by anything anymore.
- /dev/grrl
- If you're not surprised or impressed by things, it's your problem, not the world's. We may be more used to some of the strangeness that's been going on for sixty years now, but even then there are still things stranger than most of us can imagine.
- Plan 9
- Oh please. Can we cut out the "nostalgia for a simpler time" shit and take a minute to notice that the Awakening happened more than sixty years ago, and still no one's got a decent idea about why it happened then and not at some other time? Or why it happened at all? Even Dunkelzahn's big interview did a whole hell of a lot more to explain what was happening than why it was happening. The best we've ever gotten is that it was "the right time for it to happen." If I didn't have to go out and, you know, make a living, I'd

be chasing down that question pretty hard. The entire world turned upside down—why?

- Clockwork
- I find it interesting that you think such questions are answerable—or that, should you somehow find the answers, you would understand them.
- Axis Mundi
- No big mystery here. Circle of life, rhythms of the natural world, that kind of thing. We caught the wave, and we get to ride it, which means we get to have a hell of a lot more fun than the poor suckers who were born when the seas were calm and the winds were down.
- Frosty



2012—DID YOU THINK THE AWAKENING WAS DONE?

Excerpts from Pope John Paul IV's New Year's Mass
JANUARY 1, 2012

As disciples of God, we have a sacred duty to love all of his creations, and to act as stewards for all he has created. One of the great lessons of life, however, is that not all that we encounter in this world comes from God. True, he is the ultimate Creator, but many of his works have been twisted and perverted.

There are few things in life that are more difficult than when something that is precious and sacred in God's sight is corrupted. This is what we see happening in the world today. One of the greatest joys we have in life is the birth of a child and the extension of a family. In recent days, however, we have seen many births that cause worry and fear, where the works of God have become something far different than what they were supposed to be. They have become an abomination.

That is a strong word. It is true that these creatures that people have started calling "elves" and "dwarfs" are still very young, and some have said we cannot make full judgments about them until they are fully grown. When one sees a rotten fruit, however, one does need to wait for the fruit to grow even larger in order to be convinced of its essentially corrupt nature. So it is with these creatures.

These words will not be easy for many parents to hear. Parents have an instinct to love their children, and this instinct is a vital part of God's plan for us. Yet many parents have recoiled from the creatures they have given birth to, and it is not difficult to understand this reaction, for these are not just children. They are monsters. They are a different sort of being, and thus must be treated according to a different set of standards.

A central tenet of Christ's doctrine is an appreciation of all life. We cherish life, even when we recognize its occasionally corrupt nature. This means that we cannot kill any of these creatures, no matter how much we may abhor what they represent. What we can do is contain them.

The best that can be done for these creatures is to provide a place for them to go, so that the world can be preserved from their corrupting touch and so that they may have a chance to live in relative peace without bringing upon them the conflict and violence that inevitably follow corruption. It is our duty as a church to provide such places so that these creatures may have a place to be and so that their parents may be able to find rest and peace after the tumult and disruption of these unfortunate births.

- I know there's a few Jackpointers who are working up expletive-filled screeds even as I'm typing this, and I'm plenty sympathetic to their cause. It would be tough to find any single set of words in this century that have caused more harm than this speech. So I'm not going to tell anyone not to put their screeds up—all I want to say is this: Hate this pope if you want, but be careful of making the same mistake he did. Don't hate too much or go too deep with it. Now, screed away!
- Sunshine
- Fuck you. This clown and a bunch of the idiots following him killed more of my friends and family than I want to think about. I'll hate them, all of them, exactly as much as I want.
- Goat Foot



Excerpts from the French Catholic Church's reply to the Pope's New Year's Mass

CARDINAL EDOUARD DUCHAMP—01/20/12

... and so we find ourselves at a crossroads. It is difficult to say what path we will take, because before this month we did not ponder, even briefly, some of the options that now seem quite feasible, even likely, to us. Since these options are so new, now is not the time to discuss them, though all who are listening can be assured that we will be making very difficult decisions in upcoming weeks and months and moving forward in fitting ways.

Whatever we decide to do, we will base our decision on one firm truth—that a child is a gift from God, no matter how it looks. We have tried to comprehend His Holiness' opinions and thoughts on this matter, but it remains incomprehensible to us. It seems that His Holiness has returned to the mentality of the seventeenth century, when humanity regularly decided which people did or did not have souls based on their appearance. History—and common sense—showed us how desperately wrong that line of thinking was, yet now His Holiness seems intent of repeating those mistakes ...

We affirm that any child born from a mother's womb deserves respect and love. We affirm that the goodness and worthiness of any individual is determined by their actions and their heart, not their appearance or their genes. We also affirm that God provides us with many tools with which to do his work, and if we can further the cause of good through the use of the magic now appearing in the world, then it is our sacred responsibility to do so.

- The big religious schism of 2012 is good proof of what I've always said about religion—it can be great, but in the wrong hands it can turn pretty bad. Since religions are invariably full of people, religious organizations are going to have the same flaws and greatnesses as people. The Pope went for people's worst instincts, the FCC went for the best. And no one's won yet.
- Goat Foot
- The FCC wasn't a bunch of saints on a crusade for good. They were opportunists. They saw that the pope would take a big hit on his proclamation, so they went ahead and staked out a different position. If they'd believed their own crap, they would have split from the main body of the church immediately, on January 2, but instead it takes them nineteen days and they are still at the "exploring options" stage. They wanted to take some power away from the Vatican, they put up a trial balloon to see if this would work, and it did. That's all there is to it.
- Snopes
- Not quite all. The FCC's rise in power had some deep roots, and exploring those roots would bring up some astonishing connections to some very interesting names.
- Plan 9
- You're not going to tell us any of those names, are you?
- Pistons
- Not yet. I have some extra vetting to do before that happens.
- Plan 9
- Are you vetting your information or us?
- Pistons

January 1—VATICAN CITY: In the traditional New Year's Mass, Pope John Paul IV proclaims that all metahumans are abominations in the eyes of God. The era of anti-metahuman discrimination officially begins. The Pope's words are later reiterated in a Papal Bull in March that also condemns all things magical.

January 3—YUCATÁN: The great dragon Hualpa emerges.

January 12—INDIA: On the first day of Diwali, the Ganges, Indus, and Jamuna rivers are purified and become manalines, though it is some time before people realize just what that means.

January 12—TIBET: Tibet gains its independence, thanks in large part to a magic barrier that protects and isolates the nation.

January 20—FRANCE: The French Catholic Church (FCC), which had been steadily growing in power in recent years, denounces the pope's words on metahumans. This initiates an irrevocable split between the FCC and the Vatican.

January 27—USA: The most gregarious of the great dragons, Dunkelzahn, appears at Cherry Creek Lake in Denver. Unlike his fellow dragons, the Big D quickly makes himself available to the media, sitting down with reporter Holly Brighton for a full twelve hours as he tries to help the world make sense of the Awakening. More great dragons emerge as the year goes along, including Rhonabwy in Wales, Aden in Turkey, Schwartzkopf in the Czech Republic, and Lofwyr, Feurschwinge, Nebelherr, and Kaltenstein in Germany.

March 31—CHINA: The great dragon Lung awakens at Mt. Emei. He is later seen flying over the Great Wall of China.

April 8—ISRAEL: A dramatic display of active spiritual manifestations forces the Israeli government to order the evacuation of Jerusalem's Old City. Evacuations become fairly regular occurrences in the months and years to follow.

June 1—JAPAN: The Japanese Diet passes the Yamato act, greatly deregulating Japanese corporations while adapting protectionist policies against foreign corporations. The Act also makes the nuyen the official currency of Japan, and it paves the way for future imperialist actions and anti-metahuman activities by the government.

August 12—USA: On the purported anniversary of the sinking of Atlantis, Sheila Blatavska founds the Atlantean Foundation.

August 30—USA: A coalition of local corporations agrees to take control of Dallas's struggling welfare system—as long, of course, as it adheres to their rules. Public-private partnerships, with the private sector taking the lead, become increasingly common.

September 16—GERMANY: After a four-month-long destructive rampage, the dragon Feurschwinge is killed by the German military.

October 17—GLOBAL: A hot war between BMW and Keruba (the first true corporate military clash) leads to a dramatic step. Seven of the largest corporations—BMW, Ares Industries, Shiwese, Mitsuhamma, ORD, Keruba, and JRJ form the Inter-Corporate Council (ICC) to represent their combined interests and mediate disputes—to step in, in essence, where governments no longer could.

November 6—USA: President Jesse Garrety becomes the first U.S. president of the millennium to win election to a second term. Pundits speculate that the voting populace was too distracted by everything else going on in the world to learn anything about the opposition candidates.

2012

2013—ANGRY BISHOPS, A PAPER TIGER, AND CAMBODIAN SNAKES

Excerpts from “Governing the Ungovernable,”
EDITORIAL IN THE *WALL STREET JOURNAL*—04/23/13

It’s been three weeks since the Inter-Corporate Council issued its “rulings and recommendations” on the ongoing conflict between ORO and Keruba International, and as any observer can tell you, very little about the situation has changed. The ICC was formed with the admirable goal of reducing wasteful conflicts between corporate behemoths, but it was given very few tools with which to do its job. That was perhaps inevitable—the extraterritorial corporations had spent much time and energy winning their independence from government oversight, and they were not about to turn around and give the control they had earned to someone else.

After the second Shiawase decision, the newly independent corporation declared it did not need oversight to act in the best interests of humankind, because the corporation’s best interests and society’s best interests were one and the same. It was a persuasive argument because that is how corporate America has always worked—channeling hard work and innovation into efficient models that bring prosperity to anyone willing to work hard enough to grab it. If this were to continue to be the case, conflicts like the ORO-Keruba spat and the more damaging fights that led to the formation of the ICC would not have happened. Wars are inefficient in that they always involve destruction and loss, and business theory says that the corporations should have found a way to avoid the fights.

Yet they have not, and it does not appear that they believe they can find such solutions on their own. The formation of the ICC was due to the recognition that untrammelled powers inevitably collide, and some oversight must exist. The nature of that oversight was very much a question before the ICC was created, and it apparently still remains one. The corporations involved clearly do not want to give away much to a separate body, but if they want to avoid the conflicts that seemingly loom in the future, they will have to give away more than they have so far.

- Drivel. This writer wants us to believe that the corporations wanted to stop fighting, but they were powerless to stop themselves, so they looked for help. Look, if they wanted to stop, they would stop. The fact that ORO and Keruba started fighting *after* the corps had their eye-opening moment showed that stopping the fights was never a high priority for them. So why form the ICC? Because the megas (and yeah, some of them were big enough to deserve that name) had accumulated a ton of power, and whenever that much power gathers, there will be people looking to leech it off. The ICC and its successors had little, if anything, to do with what the corporations wanted; they had a ton to do with people who want power—people who throughout history have shown themselves adept at accumulating it—and their shifty mechanisms for getting what they want.
- Snopes
- Everyone can feel free to make up their own med-related joke here.
- Butch
- While I’m generally hesitant to correct the venerable Journal, allow me to point out that wars are not inefficient one hundred percent of the time. Victors, if they fought properly, can find themselves doing quite well by the end of the conflict thanks to the resources they might obtain (not to mention any competition that may have been eliminated). Additionally, the whole reason we have the term “war profiteers” is that there are people skilled at extracting profit from conflict. It’s a delicate balance though, and too easily can shift from potential gain to horrible loss, which is why corporations remain somewhat reluctant to become involved in a war—though if the stakes are high enough, they will of course do whatever it is their business model demands.
- Mr. Bonds

2014—PAYBACK’S A BITCH

Excerpts from Daniel Howling Coyote’s Broadcast
JUNE 10, 2014

There are no more treaties to be signed. There are no more agreements to be made. We will not put another bit of faith in an entirely faithless people. This is our land, and the land of our fathers; the occupiers who have never been welcome here now must leave. There are no terms. There is no timeline. You must leave immediately, and those who do not will feel the consequences.

We will offer little rhetoric beyond this point. We have no need to explain ourselves or to justify our actions. We have no desire to convince anyone of the rightness of our cause or the power behind our demands. The land is ours. It is not yours. You—all of you, whether you invaded from Europe or Asia or Africa—are trespassers, and from this point on you will finally be treated as such. There will be no more warnings, for none were necessary to begin with. Your false empire

2013

January 1—CAMBODIA: The Awakened, snake-like creatures known as the naga emerge near Angkor Wat. Cambodian peasants connect these creatures to Cambodian mythology and worship them as rulers of river and rain. The basis for a Naga Kingdom is established.

April 2—GLOBAL: The ICC fails its first significant test. ORO and Keruba International had been skirmishing over how much military activity Keruba was supporting in Central America, and the ICC stepped in to attempt to resolve the dispute. The ICC issued a series of rulings and recommendations on this date, but the limited power of the body means that essentially everything it has to say about the matter is ignored. The fighting winds down on its own later in the year.

May 23—UK: Escalating IRA actions culminate in an elemental strike on the British town of Aldershot (known as the “Home of the British Army”). This leads to a referendum in Great Britain on the future of Ireland.

June 15—USA: The Combat Biking League is founded in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

August 12—CHINA: The Xinjiang province of China declares independence, renaming itself Uighurstan. Ethnic cleansing in the province follows the announcement.

September 13—VATICAN CITY: Pope John Paul IV dies in his sleep. His successor, Pope John XXV, seems to promise a more moderate approach to many of the world’s pressing issues. Still, many ranking officials in the church are not assuaged, and a handful of Irish bishops go forward with their plans to split from the church.



no longer has a foundation. The land and its people have returned to their proper place.

You may question our strength, but you can only do so if you overlook our ally, the greatest ally we could ever hope to have. That ally is the land itself. We are its children, and it longs for us, and us alone, to walk its surface after the centuries of abuse it has endured from invaders. It, like us, is ready to do more than just suffer under the long burden of oppression. It is ready to play an active role in its liberation. You will see what it can do to reclaim its freedom.

- Lessee—Europeans ... Asians ... Africans ... hey, it looks like Australians get to stay! Hooray!
- Slamm-O!
- Not if you're an Australian of European descent, you don't. But it sounds like any Aborigines who wandered over and invaded North America would be welcome to stay. And maybe Maori folks. Good for them!
- Netcat
- What strikes me as hilarious is that Daniel Howling Coyote almost exactly followed the script of the gloried revolutionaries who started the United States in the first place. He made his demands clear, including with them a statement of grievances to show that his cause was just, then went on a series of guerilla actions designed to wear down his oppressor's patience if he could not overwhelm the enemy by force. Don't you think George Washington would have unleashed some sort of Ghost Dance if he had one at his disposal? So Daniel followed the same pattern, but rather than being recognized as Washington's spiritual heir, he was pilloried by the people who benefited from the first American Revolution. Hypocrites.
- Mika
- Yeah, I remember hearing in history class about all the things Washington and his boys did to target civilian populations in a campaign of terror to intimidate an entire nation. Oh wait...
- Slamm-O!

All year—GLOBAL: Government collapses keep coming. The Cuban government falls in the wake of Fidel Castro's resignation due to poor health, the Caucasian-controlled South African government dissolves, Egypt absorbs Libya, and Indonesia falls.

April 15—PHILIPPINES: The great dragon Masaru awakens during a full lunar eclipse.

March 15—GERMANY: Preferring the conservative views of Pope John Paul IV to his more reform-minded successor, the German Catholic Church splits from the Roman Catholic Church.

June 10—USA: Daniel Howling Coyote returns to the public eye. Unseen since his dramatic escape from the Abilene internment camp, Howling Coyote reveals that he has spent his time building a coalition of Native American tribes called the Native American Nations. He claims the entirety of North America for the NAN, and demands that all people of European, Asian, and African ancestry leave the continent or face retribution. Most of the governments and people covered by his demand opt not to take it seriously.

June 23—UNITED KINGDOM: After a series of IRA actions galvanize a public already weary from other disasters, British Parliament passes the Treaty of Galway, creating the United Free Republic of Ireland.

July 12—USA: The Redondo volcano erupts, burying the city of Los Alamos and the Los Alamos National Laboratory under volcanic ash. Daniel Howling Coyote appears on vid-casts shortly after the eruption, claiming credit for his actions in calling on the power of Mother Earth to cause the disaster. He promises that more such events are on the horizon. Federal troops are sent to capture the NAN leader, but a string of tornados hampers their advance, and by the time they reach the location of Howling Coyote's broadcast, he and his followers are long gone. This signals the beginning of the Ghost Dance War between Amerindians and the governments of North America.

2014

2015— MORE CHAOS, ESPECIALLY IN BERLIN

Excerpts from the Festimano of Berlin ISSUED APRIL 27, 2015

Berlin is ours now and not yours now so get over it.

It's ours now but we don't speak for it. Because no one speaks for it. No one should speak for it. We speak for ourselves, others speak for themselves, and if you don't speak for yourself, then what the fuck is wrong with you?

We could make a long list of the things we're not doing—we're not explaining ourselves, we're not making a constitution, we're not sitting down and writing a coherent thesis on the nature of anarchy and a defense of its principles. Other people can do that if they want. We're not going to.

There's other things we're not going to do, and one of them is not spend a whole lot of time talking about what we're not going to do, because haven't we all had enough of people who think they have authority trying to limit what other people do? We have far better things to do with our time than try to assert authority over other people. We have walls to paint. We have plants to grow. We have ruins to tear down and concrete to break up and ground to till so there can be a little more life in this city. We have music to play and dances to dance and stories to tell, and we're sorry if that doesn't match with the expectations of the profit-obsessed world out there, but we'll make you a deal—you keep your money, we'll keep the things that matter.

We'd invite people to come by and join us, but we don't want anyone else. We've seen what you've done to the rest of the world and we're not anxious to have you here. So stay in your cities, despoil them all you want, invent excuses to treat people like cattle and herd them around and enjoy it. We'll live our lives here and we'll do just fine without you.

It will not be perfect, and we are not naïve enough to think it will be. Things will go wrong, people will screw up. But we all made mistakes when we moved away from our parents, and we knew we'd make them, but we moved anyway because that was the only way for us to become ourselves. That's what Berlin is now. It is itself, and we will be ourselves.

We understand that maybe there are a few people out there who want to come here because they want to be like us. That's fine, but why travel? Make your own Berlin wherever you are. No one has power over you but you. All you have to do to make your own Berlin is to live like that's true, because it is.

You don't have to organize an opposition party, you don't have to vote the bums out of office, and you don't have to get your guns together and prepare for a revolution. All you have to do is realize that they don't have the authority they've always pretended to have, they are not the bosses of you, and you don't have to deal with them for a second more. Do your thing regardless of their thing. Like the petulant bullies they are, they will go away if you ignore them long enough. But you won't be free then. Because you are already free. So act like it.

- Ah, the Fanimesto. Makes me miss the glory days of Berlin anarchy.
- Aufheben
- Don't over-romanticize it—there's a reason (besides basic corporate desire for control) the anarchy ended. It just wasn't sustainable. Anarchy's a lot like the old joke about cocaine, the one where someone says the drug's great for enhancing your personality, and the other person says "But what if you're an asshole?" Anarchy does a fine job letting people live their own lives and truly expressing their personalities, until you find out that a lot of those people are assholes who are screwing things up for everyone else. Civilization exists for a reason.
- Axis Mundi
- But "civilization" and "authoritarianism" don't have to be the same thing.
- Aufheben
- That's true, but it's tough to ignore the human impulse to organize. Look at the Magic Hat. People were still adjusting to the existence of magic in the world in 2015, still trying to discover the rules governing it, so what did they do? They organized. They came together, formed rules, and cooperated to see what they could do together. That's how humanity survives—finding common interests, then working together around them. We band together, protect each other, so that eventually we can kill each other, instead of being eaten by lions. Isn't that beautiful?
- Axis Mundi

2015

March 18—HONG KONG: Hong Kong secedes from China, establishing the Hong Kong Free Enterprise Zone.

April 27—GERMANY: Berlin becomes an exclusion zone, freeing it from most regulations of any kind. It is quickly surrounded by troops and walls in an effort to keep the anarchy contained.

May 5—MEXICO: The Azatlán Party comes to power in Mexico in the first-ever Matrix-based election and renames the nation Aztlan. The election was run, conveniently enough, by ORO, which only solidified their ties to the new government. **May 15**—USA: The Magic Hat opens in Minneapolis. It is the first private organization for practicing magicians (meaning, of course, those who use real magic as opposed to stage illusions).

May 18—EUROPE: After years of tension tied in part to refugee issues, the nation of Belgium dissolves when Wallonia splits from Flanders.

August 6—USA: Salish warriors led by Thunder Tye capture a submarine base near Bangor.

Summer—HUNGARY: The Hungarian economy collapses when the newly-elected Green Party overreaches with their environmental programs, putting too great a strain on businesses and delivering a fatal blow to an economy that wasn't in very good shape in the first place.

October 4—USA: Thunder Tye and his warriors remain on the move, taking over the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

2016—VIOLENCE INTENSIFIED

Excerpts from remarks of President William Jarman following the issuance of Executive Order 17-321

NOVEMBER 11, 2016

America does not seek conflict. America does not initiate conflict. When conflict is brought to America, however, we are certain to end it in a way that ensures that freedom prevails and that the American people are kept safe.

We are at war. It is not a war that we chose, and it is not a war that we declared. Most insidiously, it is a war declared by people who are already within our borders and are intent on our extermination. They have declared as much, and they have rejoiced in the death of our people. We cannot wait for further action from them. Wars are not won by those who only react.

The road ahead of us is difficult, and the fact that we must travel it fills us with regret and pain. The people we must now fight are people we once considered our countrymen. They are our co-workers, our friends, and even our spouses. If we had our choice, those relationships, that fellowship, would continue. The reason I must speak to you tonight, though, is that we do not have a choice in the matter. The action I am taking is the only choice we have before us.

I have ordered the removal of all Native Americans from United States soil. They are to be treated as enemy combatants. If they do not voluntarily leave the country, they will be arrested as prisoners of war. If they resist this arrest, then we will use the force that is applied to enemy armies.

Yearlong—WORLDWIDE: Corporations begin to realize the economic value of the space industry, leading to a new space race as they compete to gain and exploit footholds in space.

March 12—SCOTLAND: Terrorist mages in the United Kingdom manipulate an oil spill, creating the Scottish Fringe Toxic Zone.

May 18—EUROPE: After years of tension tied in part to refugee issues, the nation of Belgium dissolves when Wallonia splits from Flanders.

October 15—USA: American President Jesse Garrety is assassinated by William Springer.

October 31—GLOBAL: Bloody Monday. The President of Russia, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the Prime Minister of Israel are all killed in a series of well-coordinated, precisely-timed assaults.

November 8—USA: Presidential elections are held as normally scheduled, but due to the death of President Garrety the victor is inaugurated immediately instead of having the customary three-month wait. William Jarman wins the election and is inaugurated the next day.

November 11—USA: As his first official act, President Jarman issues Executive Order 17-321 ordering the extermination of all Native American tribes.

July 28—USA: Privatization marches on as Ares Industries buys NASA from the United States government.

December 12—USA: Acting on bad information covertly fed to them by Cheyenne nationalists, a U.S. Army battalion assaults a supposed band of Native American warriors. When the smoke clears, it turns out that the supposed warriors were actually Kiowa non-combatants, and the assault effectively wiped the Kiowa tribe off the earth.

When war was declared on us by the Native American Nations, we were given no timeline to discuss, no room for negotiation. We are forced to respond in kind. There is no deadline or grace period before enforcement begins—the new laws for treatment of indigenous people on American soil are effective immediately. There are no terms for negotiation, because we were not offered any terms.

I do not wish to remove all hope. As long as both of us remain on this sacred soil, there is time for us to drop hostilities and return to peaceful coexistence. Since the first move in these hostilities was made by the Native American Nations, they must make the first move toward peace. Until then, the Executive Order is in effect, and the removal will begin immediately.

- People always talk about politics and chess together, and the big reason is their one big similarity—if you don't see the long game, you lose. Jarman didn't see it. All he saw was a feint by Daniel Howling Coyote, so he moved to block it. He didn't see where his knee-jerk defense might lead, he didn't see enough moves ahead. He sealed the end of the United States as he knew it with this move. I'm not saying I know how he might have saved it, but the Executive Order sure didn't help.
- Snopes
- You're acting as if Jarman wanted to save the United States as it was.
- Plan 9
- This is freaking me out a little bit, but I've got to say there's some merit to Plan 9's point. When a new president moves so quickly with something so radical—and something that had such disastrous effects—you must assume that he'd been planning on doing it for a while, and you suddenly wonder who had his ear. Daniel Howling Coyote was far from the only person in the world looking to change the political landscape of North America.
- Sunshine
- Those interested in learning more about the matter would do well to look into William Springer's background. Since the man was never caught, there's a whole hell of a lot about him that we don't know, though of course there are plenty of people who have attempted to fill in the blanks with all manner of speculation, both informed and uninformed. I think it's important, though, to point out that while gunmen like Czolgosz, Oswald, and Hinckley all show that it's entirely possible for lone madmen to have an impact on history without any help from co-conspirators, there are people like Booth and Princip who remind us that not every assassin acts alone. There are as many false trails about Springer as there were about Oswald, but fluttering somewhere among all of them is the truth. When—if it is known, it will shed a great deal of light on why North America looks the way it does.
- Plan 9
- That's a pretty definitive ending for a sentence that had an "if" right at the beginning.
- Haze
- I like a good conspiracy as much as the next guy—as long as the next guy isn't Plan 9—but I have trouble thinking there's anyone who wanted North America to look like it does. Governments are in a weird place—too strong to be completely ignored, too weak to put any serious reins on the corporations. The corps find the governments annoying, their citizens often find them helpless against the stronger corps. Who wanted that?
- Sunshine
- That's the question I'm trying to get you to ask.
- Plan 9

BY JOHN HELFERS

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

August 5th, 2017

Somewhere in the western Rocky Mountains

Physically, he wasn't much to look at, perhaps 1.67 meters tall, around twenty-five years old, with long black hair streaked with gray, and deep brown eyes. When he looked at you, however, his gaze stared right through you, as if looking into your very soul. Few people could meet that gaze without flinching or averting their eyes.

To those he had met during this time of troubles, he was the savior, the messiah sent by the Great Spirit to lead the Peoples into a new time of peace and prosperity. To the government of the United States of America, he was Terrorist Enemy of the State Number One, with a fifty million dollar bounty on his head, and thousands of state and federal law enforcement officials under orders to shoot him on sight.

To me, he was the entire world.

I first met Daniel Howling Coyote during the breakout at Abilene, when he had freed several hundred Native Americans from the relocation camp. There I had witnessed the first of his miracles—how he had walked through fusillades of bullets from the guards' rifles and come out unharmed. How the solid steel prison doors had melted and flowed under his touch like liquid clay. How the wind had risen from the empty prairie and torn the twin perimeter cyclone fences topped with razor wire away like they had never existed. How the armed guards who tried to stop us had fallen in their tracks, the lucky ones blind or unconscious—the unlucky ones simply dead.

After he had led us to safety, he turned to face the crowd. That black, fathomless gaze had swept over every person as he asked a simple question: "Who will go with me?"

Six others stepped forward with me that day to accompany him at the beginning of his Long Walk. There were others from that group that joined the movement, but we were the

very first. Today, only one of that first band—known as the Seven Coyote Warriors—remained along with myself. The others were gone—captured or killed by the relentless, black-masked government agents. Each one dying with honor. Protecting Daniel from those who would stop him—as if they truly could. Still, even the savior had to sleep.

We've been fugitives ever since, constantly on the run, pursued into the mountains, where we hid and planned—and fought back. And today, we were receiving the final piece to the puzzle that would enable us to take back what was rightfully ours—stolen by the white-eyes all those many years ago.

We waited for our delivery inside one of the caves that could be used as an escape route from our main base near Mount Rainier. Standing in the shadows, we watched the rising sun slowly bathe the entrance in red-gold light.

"Strange, isn't it, how we are forced to use outsiders to recover the last piece we need?" My words smoked in the cold air.

Daniel was his usual serene self. "When one wishes to hunt among wolves, Standing Bear, it is best to send other wolves to stalk your prey." He turned to me and smiled, as rare a sight as a warm day in the caves. "A bear like you and a coyote like me would stick out like—well, like Natives among the whites."

I chuckled at the image, then quickly sobered as I thought about the deeper meaning behind his words. We had been the masters of this land once, from sea to shining sea, a wide range of different tribes, each living in the best way we knew, some warring with each other, some living in peace together. Before the white-eyes came, with their guns and their alcohol and their smallpox and their fucking "manifest destiny" and had claimed what was ours for their own. Some tried to reason with them, some chose to fight. All lost. Herded onto reservations or simply slaughtered outright, the once proud AmerIndian peoples were reduced to scattered, tattered remnants, bent under the white man's yoke of assimilation. But there



were those who never forgot, never forgave. All it took was the right event, the right spark to ignite the fuse that would lead to the reclamation of our true heritage.

That fuse had been burning for five years now. But change was coming at last—I could feel it in the air. And this vital package we were about to receive was the key that would change everything.

The buzz of an approaching helicopter split the morning silence. I wanted to pull Daniel further back into the cave, but no one moved him now unless he wished it. The chopper descended toward a clearing about two clicks away. It would take some time for them to make the trek, especially with the heavy guard.

Still, the group arrived less than thirty minutes later. Four were the hired specialists—three men and one woman, two white, one black, one Hispanic, all heavily armed. They were surrounded by six of our soldiers, each with submachine guns held at port arms. Daniel had instructed the guards not to attempt to relieve them of their weapons; the package was too important for that.

The leader, a bearded man with icy, light blue eyes, pushed the package ahead of him. The fifth man stumbled forward, a black hood covering his head. He would have fallen if Daniel had not moved to grab him before he hit the ground.

“Easy, sir,” was all he said. His words or his tone calmed the other man, and Daniel gently removed the hood. This man was older, perhaps in his late fifties, Caucasian, with a shock of unruly white hair. He looked around, terror evident in his eyes at the profusion of weapons held by men and women, all of whom looked ready to use them at a moment’s notice.

“Where am I—who are you—?”

Daniel held up one hand. “Your questions will be answered in time, but first, there is something I must do. Keep your eyes on me, and please do not move.”

He locked gazes with the white-haired man, and as I had seen him do to many people before, the man fell into his stare like he was falling into a bottomless pit. Muttering a string of words under his breath, Daniel’s eyes glowed a bright blue-white. Slowly, the light projected from his face in a beam that moved to the white-haired man’s eyes, the spell linking them together. The captured man didn’t move, didn’t make a sound, but simply stood there like a mouse frozen under a hawk’s gaze.

After several seconds, the spell ended, and both Daniel and the other man blinked as their vision returned to normal.

“Wh-what did you do to me?” the man asked, but Daniel didn’t answer.

“All you need to know is that you are safe here.” He waved two of his guards forward and whispered in the closest one’s ear. The two men took the man by each arm and escorted him into the cave, his increasingly fearful questions falling on uncaring ears.

“You have done well.” He motioned another guard forward, who brought a metal briefcase forward, holding it so the merc leader could open it. He glanced at Daniel as he did so, but flipped the catches. Inside were banded stacks of American dollars—the currency of the shadows. He riffled through one, marked several bills with what looked like a fluorescent pen, then closed the case. “Looks good.”

He exchanged a glance with the black man that didn’t go unnoticed by either Daniel or myself. Daniel spoke first. “You know who I am.”

The leader spit a stream of tobacco juice into the dirt and nodded.

“You also know what I’m capable of.”

He nodded again. “Fifty mil ain’t no use to a dead man.”

Daniel nodded. “Go in peace.”

The man signaled his unit to withdraw, but I had one more question for them. “Then why did you take this job?”

Everyone froze, including Daniel. The leader turned to eyeball me for the longest few seconds of my life. Then he smirked and spat again. “Ain’t got no love for you redskins, with all the trouble y’all been stirrin’ up over the past few years—but I hate that fuckin’ government even more. Anything ya do to put a hurt on ‘em’s all right by me.” He turned to the others, and the group began their trek back down the mountain, flanked by our warriors.

I glanced at Daniel. “Sorry—I just had to know.”

“It is of no consequence. And our bearded friend will get his wish soon enough.” He turned to me, dark eyes glittering. “The man they delivered is the one—the one I have been looking for all these years. The one whose blood reaches all the way back to that of our ancestors—Jack Wilson ... Wovoka. The first Ghost Dancers. Now that he is here, the circle is complete.”

He turned to stare at the rising sun, but I knew he was looking past the mountains, past the horizon, to the city of our oppressors—Washington D.C. “And soon, everything that they have done to us shall be laid back upon their heads—with interest.”



2017—THE GREAT GHOST DANCE: MOTHER EARTH IS COMPLETELY PISSED

Excerpt from interview with Professor Angela Cervantes, volcanologist

EYEWITNESS NEWS, LOS ANGELES—08/17/17

[Rick Dunston] The question many people are wrestling with is this—what’s going on inside the earth that would make something like this happen?

[Angela Cervantes] That’s difficult to say, Rick. The volcanoes that erupted are fairly close together, but that does not mean their sources of magma are related. If there is some event that led to today’s eruption, it could be something that happened decades ago; that’s a long time for us, but a few moments from the earth’s perspective. Geologic events can take a long time to play out.

[Rick Dunston] Do you think these eruptions mean that other volcanoes stand an increased chance of erupting?

[Angela Cervantes] Not at all; in fact, it might be the opposite. As the images that viewers have been seeing clearly show, the eruptions released a tremendous amount of pressure from the earth’s crust. That release could mean there is less strain in other areas, leading to a decreased chance of eruption.

[Rick Dunston] Now, I’m sure you’ve heard the speculation about the so-called “Great Ghost Dance” of the Native American Nations

February 2—UK: Four tech companies merge to create Transys Neuronet.

April 13—CHINA: An earthquake collapses the mountain covering China’s main nuclear stockpile. Several warheads detonate, and between the explosions and the vast amounts of rubble, the stockpiles are destroyed.

May 9—EARTH ORBIT: The Harris-3M corporation launches the first privately constructed space station, Halo.

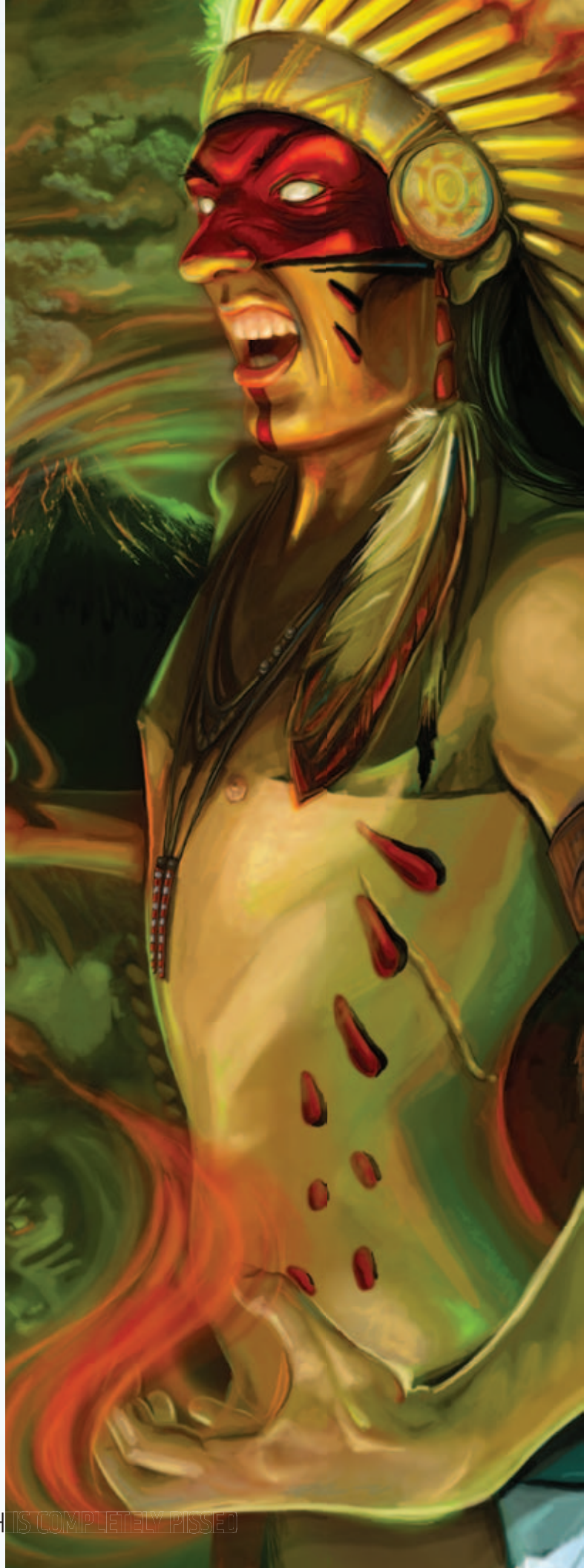
July 22—USA: Lone Star Security Services is born in Austin, the product of a merger of two previous corporations. Broad security needs from both the public and private sectors result in explosive growth for the company throughout the rest of the year and beyond.

August 17—USA: With military troops moving to carry out President Jarman’s extermination order, Daniel Howling Coyote and his followers initiate the Great Ghost Dance. The most immediate effect is the simultaneous explosion of four volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest—Mount Hood, Mount Ranier, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Adams. Freak weather patterns follow and continue for the rest of the year, frustrating the government’s plans to apprehend or kill Howling Coyote.

September 25—UK: British Imperial Chemical Industries merges with two Swiss pharmaceutical firms to form Zeta-Imperial Chemicals.

August 22—HAWAII: The newly crowned King Kamehameha IV declares Hawai’i’s independence.

October 18—HONG KONG: A massive Triad war that included the active participation of the great dragon Lung finally ends when the headquarters of one of the involved parties, the Majestic Peacock Association, burns to the ground.



and its possible connection to these eruptions; as a scientist, what is your take on the possible connection?

[**Angela Cervantes**] Frankly, I can't come to any conclusion until I have some evidence pointing in one direction or another. I think I speak for many of my colleagues when I say that this new age of magic has been unnerving—we do not know how magic works and what it is capable of, or even if it can be approached in a scientific way. Is magic simply an application of consistent natural laws that we do not yet fully understand, or has it blurred or even erased the clear lines we try to draw with those laws? I can't begin to answer those sorts of questions. It's a terrible position to be in, especially when people are suffering as they are now in Washington.

[**Rick Dunston**] But if the eruptions are related to magic, doesn't that mean that such events, these natural disasters and the like, could be more likely, rather than less, to keep happening? Especially as magic seems to only be increasing around us, and people seem to be getting better and better at controlling it. Couldn't we be in line to see more of this sort of phenomenon all around the world?

[silence for 11 seconds]

[**Angela Cervantes**] I honestly wish I had a good answer to that question, Rick.

- Let me be plain here—the Great Ghost Dance is *the* pivotal moment in twenty-first century history. There'd been a lot of turmoil before it happened, but what you mostly saw was people still thinking you could put new wine into old bottles. Sure, there'd be turmoil, but your classic institutions, like the United States government and the Catholic Church, would stay in place, leading the way, either adapting to the world as it changed or telling you which adaptations were unacceptable. But with the Great Ghost Dance, Daniel Howling Coyote said that the old way of doing things wouldn't fly, and some of those old institutions were so deeply flawed that it was easier to kick them into dust than to let them totter around. The Great Ghost Dance told us that it wasn't just going to be a different world—it was going to be a *new* one.
- Kay St. Irregular
- And so we went from a world where the rich and powerful had incredibly disproportionate power over every facet of life to a world where ... well, *plus ça change* ...
- Snopes

2018—THE TREATY OF DENVER AND OTHER PAINFUL ORTHODONTICS

Remarks by Daniel Howling Coyote after the signing of the Treaty of Denver

APRIL 25, 2018

There is nothing to say. We did not get to where we are with words. We do not need to rely on words to continue moving forward. We have accomplished more than we have in hundreds of years, but not everything we want. Our work continues, and work does not involve talking about it.

Excerpts from The Brooks Benson Show

APRIL 25, 2018

[**Brooks Benson**] All of you out there tune in to this show because you know that I'll say the things that everyone knows are true but won't say themselves. I'm going to do that now.

America is dead. The old girl couldn't quite make it to her 250th birthday. Sure, there's still someone around bearing her name, but she's a pale imitation. She's not the real thing. Because the America we all know, the real America, was always looking outward. Growing and expanding. Not shrinking, not buckling under because she ran into something she couldn't handle. This America, the one we're left with, is not worthy of the name.

America is dead, and I'll tell you what killed her. It's the same thing I've been telling you would kill her since I first sat down behind a microphone. About sixty years ago, we real Americans stopped being proud of who we were. We heard voices from all over telling us all these things we had done wrong, telling us that we were racist, sexist, imperialist, whatever. We were made to apologize for having built the greatest nation on God's green earth. And one apology wasn't enough. There have been decades of them. Decades of backing down, of being made to think we were bad. And especially, of giving in to people who were not real Americans.

Nothing we did was ever enough, and the fake Americans just asked for more and more. We could never be wrong enough or apologetic enough for them. So the more concessions we made, the more they asked for. They kept beating us, we kept asking for them to hit us again. We gave and gave and gave, and now President Jarman, who

March 17—CHINA: With a large part of the government's nuclear arsenal buried under earthquake rubble, provinces start to rebel against the Communist rulers, leading to the collapse of both the Communist party and the Chinese state. The Canton Development Council breaks off first and becomes the Canton Confederation, and Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Henan soon become independent as well. The remnants are named the Republic of China.

April 25—DENVER: After three months of meetings, the Native American Nations, the United States, Canada and Aztlan sign the Treaty of Denver (Québec abstains). The NAN's sovereignty is recognized, and it gets the vast majority of the western United States, with California and the Seattle metroplex as the most notable exceptions. Daniel

Howling Coyote becomes the head of the Sovereign Tribal Council overseeing the various components of the NAN. The Treaty also divides Denver into separate districts for the United States, Aztlan, Sioux, Pueblo, and Ute nations.

July 12—USA: Dr. Hosato Hikita of ESP Systems Inc. first demonstrates Artificial Sensory Induction System Technology (ASIST), and the roots of simsense programming and entertainment are put down in Chicago.

November 9—SEATTLE: Fuchi Industrial Electronics completes its Seattle Industrial Compound. Fuchi's project is one indicator of Seattle's progress toward becoming a major international center, but it also leads to inevitable strife and growing pains as Seattle attempts to deal with an influx of new residents and refugees from nearby nations.

2018

started so well and ended so horribly, has made his name in history. He's the man who signed America's death warrant. The man who took the inevitable, and made it real.

But it's not just him. There's plenty of blame to go around. If you're like me, you're going to take a page out of Yelping Coyote's playbook—no more talk, lots more action.

- Couldn't we find some article about ASIST instead? I mean, yeah, politics is important and all, but as long as you've got roads to drive on, do you care who built them? ASIST, though—that's what life is about! I mean, thanks to ASIST, you don't have to read Benson's words—you can hear what he said, right down to the bourbon-induced rasp in his voice, and you can smell the too-sweet aftershave that barely covers his body odor, and, if you get a deluxe package, you can feel the rage coursing through his veins, and you, too, can long for a wonderful, fair, perfectly just America that never, ever existed.
- Pistons

2019—MAN AND MACHINE

Transys Corporation Performs Groundbreaking Cybernetic Limb Transplant

POSTED 09/27/19

EDINBURGH, Scotland (Reuters)—Earlier today, Transys Corporation announced that it had successfully implanted the first cybernetic limb on a human. The operation was reported to take seventeen hours and utilized five doctors, two of whom were pioneers in the field of cybernetic engineering.

The operation took place more than a month ago in a secure area within the Transys Corporation's home offices. The heightened security has prompted questions by local media, as well as law enforcement, as to the reasons behind the secrecy of such a landmark procedure.

"We've encountered opposition from several groups that believe by melding man and machine together, we will create a monster that will destroy the world," said Dr. Harold Darkfeather, one of the surgical team. "Such talk is nonsense—but like all fanatics—they won't listen to reason.

"What they fail to understand is that the cybernetic hand itself doesn't contain a computer of any kind, but a delicate and intricate technology that links directly into the nervous system of the patient. The wearer, or owner, controls the prosthetic, not the other way around."

The hand recipient, Leonora Bartoli, is reportedly in excellent condition, and is voluntarily subjecting herself to eight to ten hours of rehab and training in order for her brain signals to learn to manipulate the new hand. Miss Bartoli had been an accomplished virtuoso violinist prior to losing her left hand in an unusual bullet train accident. She hopes to resume her career after four to six months of intense rehabilitation.

The doctors say she will regain all of her fine-motor skills within the coming year.



2019

Spring—USA: More than 200,000 Anglo refugees flood into the Seattle area from NAN lands. The influx of people causes massive food and housing shortages throughout the area, sparking sporadic fights and riots, and keeping the police force working overtime for several weeks.

March 8—USA: In an overwhelming vote, the Washington districts of Bellevue, Renton, and Kent vote yes to become part of greater Seattle. By summer's end, Seattle has also incorporated all of King County and most of neighboring Pierce and Snohomish Counties.

April 12—EARTH ORBIT: Amid a vigorous corporate space race, Ares unveils their *Apollo* space station.

Summer—UTE: During a government push to drive all non-natives out, anti-Anglo extremism explodes into violence. For the next two years Anglos are continually harassed and suffer the brunt of terrible violence. Some brave people stay, but are treated as second-class citizens.

August 13—FINLAND: Two telecommunications companies, Nokia and Ericsson, merge to form the Erika corporation.

August 23—ITALY: Leonora Bartoli, a world famous violinist who lost her left hand in an accident, ushers in the cybernetic age when the Transys Corporation replaces her lost hand with a cybernetic replacement wired directly to her nervous system. Just over a year later she is once again performing before sold out concert halls.

September 6—USA: Facing an exploding refugee population, food shortages, and an overextended infrastructure, Everett and Tacoma vote in favor of joining Seattle.

November 23—JAPAN: The leader of the Shiawase Corporation and its founding family, Emori Shiawase, dies of heart failure.

- Notice all the things they don't say? Like what happened when her body started rejecting the hand? The amount of drugs they pumped into her system? How she never really regained feeling in that hand and was never able to paint again? I still believe that operation was the turning point in the world, the gateway that's gotten us into nothing but hell since.
- Baka Dabora
- Exactly where are you getting your information, Baka Dabora? From what I've researched about it, the operation was a complete success. So much so that Miss Bartoli was able to pick up the violin again and play—in concert. There's nothing in her background about her ever painting, not even in kindergarten. I hail her and Transys as heroes in their dedication to making cyberotechnology a viable alternative to walking around with missing body parts.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I agree with Kay—that it is much easier for a child these days who loses an arm, or a leg, to be fitted with a cybernetic one. That child is still able to run and play with the other kids. My only beef with it doesn't hinge on where mankind has taken it in these past decades, but where mankind will develop this technology in the future.
- Fianchetto

2020—WASHINGTON STATE BECOMES THE SEATTLE METROPLEX

Dragon Halts Jihad

POSTED ON DATA—07/12/20

Earlier this year in Tehran, Iran, tensions between the human Muslim population and the new races shifted from mandatory deportation of metahumans to an all out effort to find and execute any dwarves or elves born or caught within the country's borders. In the past nine months, the city's metahuman population has fled the area by any means possible, seeking sanctuary in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan.

President Jarman has warned Iran and its Ayatollah, demanding that the blatant extermination of new races—especially atrocities committed against pregnant mothers found to carry metahuman babies, whereupon the child is then terminated along with the “unholy” vessel—be stopped immediately.

The Ayatollah responded by sending out a worldwide message that the uprising of new races is a blasphemy against Allah, and that it was up to him to purge the world of this unholy taint, which—he noted—were caused by Western technology.

Once the Ayatollah Hamidullah declared jihad against the new races, it was believed another war would erupt.

But just this morning we learned from our correspondents that the great dragon Aden appeared over the Ayatollah's compound in Tehran, declaring, “If you would choose war, then see what you would war against!” before laying waste to a five-mile radius, destroying the buildings and every Iranian citizen within.

There are no confirmed reports whether the Ayatollah or his family were inside the compound at the time.

- Isn't that just like some towel-headed Luddite to damn the technologies that were shaping the world—then turn around and use them to kill kids in the womb? That's why religion should be abolished. No more stupid killing of anybody in some god's name just because you're afraid. Wish I'd been there to see that bastard fry.
- Clockwork

- Strong words there, Clock. Especially coming from someone who's all for hunting technomancers, taking the bounty, and letting the corporation scientists—AKA Monsters—do what they will to them.
- Sunshine
- This nutcase tried to declare a war on elves and dwarves before Goblinization ever even happened? Imagine how messed up that Ayatollah would've been to see something as ugly as Clockwork walk into his palace.
- Turbo Bunny
- We're missing the broader picture here. Hasn't anybody made a comparison between this and Ghostwalker's attack on Denver? What kind of precedent does this set for the future, if dragons can just waltz in and destroy whatever and whomever they choose? We're giving them that power, people.
- Hard Exit
- Christ, Hard. They're fucking dragons—you going to stand in front of them and shout, “You can't reduce this city to ash?” That's a speedy way to commit suicide.
- Plan 9
- Ever hear of Feuerschwinge? A flight of German attack helicopters took her down. Great dragons aren't immortal.
- Frosty
- Either way, I can't say that Aden was wrong in what he did—attacking the new races the way the Ayatollah did was insane. And I think in some way Aden was protecting his own. And Ghostwalker—all he did was get an unsavory element of out his city. Serves them right.
- Turbo Bunny

April 10—JAPAN: Japan makes a strong statement to the rest of the world by launching a series of solar-power-collecting satellites that beam power to Earth via microwave.

May 12—USA: Though not as impressive as the Ghost, Boeing's High Speed Civil Transport completes a successful test flight. In six years, the craft will be the key to a profitable Seattle-to-Japan route.

July 27—AUSTRALIA: The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) announces the birth of a healthy Tasmanian tiger cloned from frozen DNA samples of one of the previously extinct beasts.

October 17—JAPAN: The struggling Texas Instruments Corporation essentially wagered its entire future on a patent violation lawsuit against Miroyama Electric, and after years of court proceedings, they finally receive a favorable verdict. The Japanese courts turn over all of Miroyama's assets to Texas Instruments, revitalizing the corporation, and every single Miroyama executive commits *seppuku*.

November 17—NORTH KOREA: AN attempted nuclear attack by North Korea on Japan backfires when the crude warheads fail to detonate. The attacks spur Japan to greater involvement in the Second Korean War, North Korea eventually falls, and Japan goes on to switch to an imperial government.

2020

2021—GOBLINIZATION STRIKES!

Commentary on the Goblinization Article Printed In Time by McBean Entitled, He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, USA

McBean's article in the new issue of *Time* has caused quite a stir in the states—and around the world. For those of us who haven't been touched by "Goblinization," the suffering of these people is something only glimpsed in an online vid. The real suffering recounted in this article has very little to do with the physical suffering of his friend, but the torment society, family, and friends forced upon him.

April 30—GLOBAL: Without warning, one out of every ten human men, women, and children in every country around the world transforms into new genus types, typically called an "ork" or "troll." This devastating change then occurs *in utero* or in children who suffer the change just after puberty. The Media calls this change "Goblinization."

April 30—UK: King George VII of Great Britain's death is announced. Rumors spread indicating he goblinized and was ordered killed by the military and senior members of the British aristocracy.

April 30—QUÉBEC: The government extends full rights and citizenship to all Québécois UGE victims, but only if they are francophone.

April 30—CZECH REPUBLIC: Victims of UGE are greeted with compassion, setting a pro-metahuman tone in the country that persists to this day.

May 4—DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: President Joaquim Delmonte opens the country up to all victims of Goblinization after he turns into an ork.

May 14—SWITZERLAND: Sparking extreme xenophobia in the Germanic regions of the country, Swiss officials declare Goblinization to be an unidentified disease. Everyone affected by this disease is forced into quarantine camps.

May 25—GERMANY: In a response to the government collecting all native orks and trolls into camps, the Goblinization victims organize the Mutant's Congress in Cologne and threaten to revolt.

May 28—PHILIPPINES: When Japanese corporations call upon the Imperial Diet for support in the Philippines, Japanese forces seize control of the nation to combat the "Goblinization plague." Metahumans are rounded up and are later incarcerated on Yomi Island.

June 9—USA: Acting on the growing fear that Goblinization is contagious—as has been reported in other countries—Seattle Governor Lindstrom orders the Metroplex Guard to round up all goblinized victims—including their families—and place them in camps once used to hold Native Americans.

August 3—USA: In New Orleans, Louisiana, noted journalist McBean comes out of seclusion to write an emotionally charged article about the experiences of his childhood friend suffering from Goblinization for Time Magazine.

August 23—USA: Texas Governor Melissa Santiago-Ortega strong-arms the Welfare Board into giving funds to provide adequate shelter and sanitary facilities in her newly established metahuman detention centers.



To quote McBean:

“... our early years together in college, Matt had always been the one to catch the watching eye, the co-eds with their wheat blonde hair, painted pink lips, and lingering smiles. I'd often been considered little more than the side dish as I stood next to him, a garnish really. Parsley. Meant only to enhance the appeal of the main course.

But now, as we walked the edge of the encampment where all of the victims of this disease—virus—God's curse—whatever it was—I could see those unaffected standing outside the fences. They'd come in their cars, their wagons, SUVs and campers, all to stare and gawk at the helpless victims now kept prisoner within the walls.

They stood outside with their cameras, their vid-recorders, drinking soda and eating popcorn sold by a tactless vendor just out of the jurisdictional reach of the county camp.

A zoo full of human beings, for others to watch, and quietly thank whatever god they worshiped that what had happened to those people had not happened to them.

And as Matt and I passed by, their eyes fell to me—not upon Matt. They averted their stares, either from repulsion or fear, and rejected him, making him less than a side-dish. But little more than trash.”

- Man, that sucked. I don't think I'll ever understand the reasoning behind any of the whole internment camp thing. What did they think would happen? That orks and trolls would eat them?
- Turbo Bunny
- Well, fear was most of it. Remember, we're not as surprised to meet an ork, troll, hobgoblin, or a changeling. It's all part of our paradigm. But not back then. Few today just spontaneously turns into a troll. They're born just like everybody else. It was a different time.
- Sunshine

2022—RACIAL TENSIONS RISE AND VITAS RETURNS

Johns Hopkins Uses Frankenstein Techniques on “Patients” *BALTIMORE SUN—08/19/22*

Baltimore (AP)—In a letter issued today by the Baltimore Justice Department, federal agents have confirmed that the allegations voiced earlier by a recent victim of Goblinization about inhuman experiments happening within the walls of the Johns Hopkins Institute of Health, are indeed true.

Twenty-three-year-old Elana Modino stated earlier this week that she had escaped from a secret lab located beneath the hospital. At first her complaints had gone unheeded, until she insisted there were innocent elven and dwarf children also at risk.

Following a lead given to them by Miss Modino, local authorities petitioned a judge for a search warrant—and, with the help of a talented magician, a lab was indeed found deep beneath the Institute.

Along with a fully-equipped lab with state of the art technology, the authorities found padded rooms with locks on the exterior doors, cells, and restraints on all the beds, as well as a collection of what one local law enforcement officer called “torture devices.”

“It was like walking into a dungeon—now—in 2022. They had all kinds of ways to strap down a human—or metahuman, if you like that word. They had all sorts of ork and troll body parts in refrigerators and the rotting bodies of some of the victims those parts came from,” said Officer George McKenna.

Officer McKenna offered our news team the reassurance that all children found within the Institute walls have been safely evacuated, and those without parents have been placed in foster care.

January 30—SWITZERLAND: The Metahuman Segregation Law (MSL) is passed.

This law strips metahumans of their citizenship and civil rights, as well as their right to live in Switzerland.

Spring—GLOBAL: Tensions between victims of Goblinization and the rest of the populace continue to rise. Sporadic race riots break out in cities around the world.

March 25—USA: An assassin with ties to a growing anti-metahuman organization kills Dunkelzahn's interpreter, John Timmons. Unfortunately for the assassin, Dunkelzahn is present and reduces the gunman, “to his component atoms.”

April 18—SWITZERLAND: In retaliation for the MSL, several Swiss-French cantons secede to form the Confederation Suisse Francophone (CSF).

April 26—USA: Construction begins on the Aztechnology Pyramid in Seattle.

May 5—MEXICO: As part of a dramatic rebranding effort, ORO Corporation renames itself Aztechnology in an attempt to shed the stigma of their drug cartel origins.

Summer—FRANCE: A new, violent game emerges among street gangs that will evolve into Urban Brawl. The game is used to solve gang related disputes.

August 12—USA: Months after scientists prove that Goblinization is not contagious, Seattle Governor Lindstrom finally orders all metahumans released from quarantine.

August 18—CZECH REPUBLIC: The great dragon Schwartzkopf begins lecturing at the University of Prague after the school adds arcane studies to its curriculum.

August 19—USA: Scandal erupts when Johns Hopkins Institute of Health is caught performing illegal experiments on metahumans. The U.S. government removes all funding from the institute. In response, Johns Hopkins becomes an independent for-profit corporation.

Autumn—GLOBAL: Racial tensions and violence are temporarily set aside as a new strain of the VITAS virus kills another 10 percent of the world's population.

September 15—USA: The FCC is disbanded, ending any control over broadcasting standards or licenses. The Internetwork Transmission Control Council (ITCC) takes over as a “self-regulating oversight body for the responsible management of communications frequencies.”

October 15—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: To prevent additional islands in the Caribbean from being bought out by corporations, the Caribbean League is founded.

October 24—AUSTRALIA: Australia and New Zealand form the Australia and New Zealand Allied Confederation (ANZAC).

November 19—USA: An electronic news magazine, Data, first coins the term, “Awakened” as an easy way to refer to those influenced by magic.

2022

- Yeah, like this report or any other of them did any good. None of those doctors were prosecuted. Not even a slap on the hand. It was because they were all doing it for science.
- Butch
- Yep, and you know what makes it worse? There was no remuneration for the families of those victims who didn't survive the experiments. Oh sure, the government took all of the institute's funding away, but a fat lot of good that did.
- Plan 9
- They just came back as an Independent Corporation. And that's about when the corps were getting stronger and stronger. So what came out of all that bullshit? Absolutely nothing.
- Clockwork

2023—VITAS, RIOTS, AND LONE STAR ARRIVES IN SEATTLE

Excerpt from Lone Star to Manage Seattle Safety

JOHN TISDALE, *SEATTLE TIMES*—02/07/23

Hot on the heels of his decision to fire the entire Seattle Police Department, Governor Lindstrom held a press conference today on the steps of the Seattle courthouse, announcing the hiring of Lone Star to take over all law enforcement and security measures for the entire Metroplex.

The attending crowd's reaction was mixed—with some citizens obviously happy that there would be some sort of law enforcing presence back in the city after Monday's citywide strike of the SPD. Others—especially the media and political officials outside of the Metroplex—were less than enthusiastic. Their concerns were raised loudly across all media formats as comparisons between Lone Star and Blackwater began in earnest. Blackwater, as readers will recall, was the military mercenary group created in 1997 to carry out acts of war

clandestinely without any fear of retaliation from ordinary citizens, much less the government.

Is this what it means to privatize the law? This writer is skeptical at best, terrified at worst, that hiring a new entity such as Lone Star to control crime is tantamount to hiring the local bully to prevent the other bullies down the street from taking our lunch money.

The question remains: Who's policing the police?

- Wait ... is that right? The SPD just quit?
- /dev/grrl
- They went on strike—they were overloaded, understaffed, underpaid, and tired of getting dumped on. And I think as a protest their motive was in the right place, but their timing was off. Seattle had grown so big that having an overloaded law enforcement group just up and stop working put the entire metroplex in significant danger—the governor had to do something.
- Arete
- Yeah—firing them all and then hiring a mercenary group to take over keeping the peace. And don't bother arguing with me. This reporter was in the money. Lone Star is nothing but a corporate mercenary outfit. Period. And you don't hire mercenaries if you want peace.
- Sunshine

2024—SIMSENSE HITS THE MARKET

The Wealthy's Top Picks

JACKSPRAT23, *NEW TECH MAGAZINE*—11/20/24

Riding on the heels of last month's release of the new simsense entertainment unit, the first consumer version has started shipping to retailers—but at a price-tag only the most affluent can justify.

If you've been lucky or brave enough to fight through the lines at the new simsense distributors and vendors kiosks for a simsense

2023

February 6—USA: The Seattle Police Department, tired of taking the brunt of the anger expressed in the racial riots between humans and metahumans, goes on strike.

February 7—USA: Seattle Governor Lindstrom, incensed at being left with a metroplex in turmoil, declares the Seattle Police strike illegal. He promptly fires every members of the SPD, even those not involved in the strike, and replaces them with officers from Lone Star Security Services.

March 31—GERMANY: The German Parliament officially departs the violence-plagued city of Berlin, completing the year-long move of the German capital to Hanover.

April 29—GERMANY: Berlin descends into anarchy. Riots break out across the city leaving 14 people dead, more than 2,000 injured, 14,000 arrested, and causing billions of Deutsche Marks in damages.

May 30—USA: In Los Angeles, California, a massive riot breaks out in the Watts district when rumors surface that MLK-Drew Medical Center is hoarding VITAS serum. 23 soldiers, 89 police and 619 civilians are killed as Watts is nearly leveled.

June 2—ANYI: After seeing its numbers reduced to about fifteen thousand—mostly orks and trolls—by VITAS, the troll King Kouame banishes the remaining humans, dwarfs, and elves to create a troll and ork-only nation.

June 21—FRANCE: An unearthly fog, dubbed "the Mist," covers large rural areas of Brittany. Any humans and metahumans caught in the Mist experience overwhelming fear and become lost. The Mist disrupts magic and attracts paranormal animals. Thousands of people go missing, including the entire population of several towns.

July 16—USA: Frances Daniels, a PhD in engineering and a fourth dan black belt in ki-akido, demonstrates a newly identified form of magic. Rather than casting spells, he is capable of enhancing his body's physical abilities.

July 18—USA: Senator Franklin Moss becomes so incensed during a debate over metahuman rights that he challenges his opponent, Senator Victor Sanchez—a known sharpshooter—to a duel. The following morning, Senator Moss's death is widely televised and later sold on several video formats.

August 28—USA: The Metahuman Bill of Rights is passed in Texas. This bill guarantees voting privileges, equality in housing, medical care, education, and fair employment for all metahumans.

September 1—USA: In the Seattle Metroplex, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) creates the Fort Lewis Zoological Gardens. This project will be used to explore Goblinization and paranormal changes in animals.

demonstration, and you've tried it out for yourself, you'll understand the "Wow!" factor involved. The new technologies used in these units give a hands-on, complete 360 degree submersion into VR, taking the movie experience into a who new realm.

I was lucky enough to be allowed in after hours to a local vendor so I could research these new machines for this article—and I wasn't the only one playing around with them. Most of the store's employees were taking their turns as well, so when I was allowed to don the gear—I wasn't disappointed.

The landscapes are real, creating a virtual terrain of the highest resolution detail possible with the new ASIST tech. I could taste the food the actors were eating, as well as smell it. Even the furniture in the scene had texture, and the sound—I swear I could hear the actress blinking.

It's a step into the future—but one the rest of us—meaning those of us with the average home budget—will only get to dream about for at least a little while longer.

- Black market copies of these things started showing up about three months after it was first released. I read a story about a string of deaths occurred after that—kids dropping dead of heart attacks—and the authorities weren't sure

what was causing it, until it was discovered the black market simsense these kids were using didn't have certain safety protocols that the legitimate ones did.

- Turbo Bunny
- You talking about the psychological protocols? If so, I heard about those. I don't think the average person took into account how refined the ASIST tech was. The fact that it could actually record and play back the feelings and emotions of the person being recorded was beyond what most people expected. Can you imagine what kind of high that was back when the technology ran free?
- 2XL
- What they didn't count on were the BTL addicts. All addicted to the sights and sounds of an artificial environment. Forget real life. Let's go get high on some other person's ticket.
- Turbo Bunny
- Simsense has its uses—with, say porn and sports, and of course in the usual series and movies. But if you're talking about people recording deaths and then others experiencing them? That's when it gets screwed up.
- Pistons
- That was just after the prices started dropping. Before then the black market simsense distributors were cleaning up and the big dawgs were being left behind. I did read how after legit recordings started killing their business, a few black market companies started specializing in snuff films for a while before they were shut down.
- Turbo Bunny
- At which point eighty other black market vendors jumped up to take over for the ones that got shut down.
- 2XL



February 14—USA: In Texas, The opening of the multi-million dollar Metahuman Resource Center is celebrated in Dallas. Governor Santiago-Ortega presides over the day's festivities, with Lone Star in charge of security.

July 12—USA: In Atlanta, Georgia, renovations on the formerly unused Ted Turner stadium are completed. Georgia Tech undertook the work in order to turn the stadium into a research project. The coliseum is covered with an experimental biotech photosynthesis-capable membrane used to produce food and turn solar radiation into usable power.

November 5—USA: President Jarman becomes the first three-term president since Franklin D. Roosevelt. The opposition claims fraud in the landslide vote, but no concrete evidence can be produced to support their accusation.

November 11—SWITZERLAND: The Magic Regulation Bill is passed, limiting the use of magic almost exclusively to corporate and government forces.

November 15—SWITZERLAND: After new elections are held the cantons of the CSF rejoin Switzerland, but the cantons of Fribourg, Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel, and Vaud refuse to accept the MSL under Switzerland's "Opting-Out Law." These cantons become safe havens for metahumans in Switzerland.

November 14—GLOBAL: Using ASIST technology, the first simsense entertainment unit (a kind of sensory video player) becomes available on the open market. The high price of the unit limits sales to research institutions, large corporations, and the ultra-wealthy.

2024

2025—PROFIT FOR CYBERNETICS AND SIMSENSE

Commentary On The Blackout In The Philippines
POSTED ON *DIGITAL TRUTH*—03/30/25

In the midst of all the advancements being made in cybertechnologies and simsense, little attention is paid to the denial of basic human—and metahuman—rights in countries around the world. These rights, even in the wake of progress on so many other fronts, are still being infringed upon. Especially against the metahuman populations.

In such times, and with worldwide panic relating to VITAS still gripping us, the small countries are the first to fall prey to aggressive nations taking advantage of the chaos. Under the guise of “public welfare, economic stability, and national security” they advance their imperialist agendas, greedily snatching up sovereign nations.

The takeover of the Philippines by Japan is no exception.

Four years ago, Japanese corporations with facilities in the Philippines called upon the Imperial Diet to aid them in stemming the tide of the “Goblinization plague.” The Diet responded with six divisions of Imperial Marines and promises to the local government of a temporary presence. Two months ago, the Imperial Diet did away with this charade and named the Philippines as a Japanese prefecture, appointing Fukatsu Saru the governor. Within a month this puppet dictator had transformed of the country into a police state and censored all media except anything from Japan.

So what has become of the people of this once proud nation? And what of the countless metahuman victims rounded up and shipped off to Yomi Island? Is there no public outcry for their freedoms?

None. This reporter found a small blip in an online news source commenting on his inability to contact a local correspondent he’d been working with inside of the Philippines. Now there is no word as to whether his friend is dead or alive—though the worst is feared during the government controlled blackout.

Yet none of our own news stations have reported on this—could it be because we in the USA are on our way to a police state as well?

- I did some searches and this guy was on the money. It’s like the Philippines ceased to exist and nobody even cared. An entire nation gone, off the grid overnight, and it gets less press than a power outage in some Podunk Midwestern town.
- Turbo Bunny
- You’re getting gullible, Bunny. What we’ve got here is liberal spin mixed with Crash based data loss. Buddy of mine, goes by the name Tapeworm, got his hands on a cache of pre-Crash backup drives from an old fashioned server farm. He’s been slowly recovering their contents and lets me play in his database. I took a look-see and found a fair amount of coverage. Sounds like the author of this little gem had, like everybody else, an agenda. Not an ignoble agenda, but an agenda all the same.
- Dr. Spin
- So much for Digital Truth.
- Netcat

2026—MAGIC, CYBERTECHNOLOGY, AND METAHUMAN RIGHTS

Test Subject 47B: Personal Journal, Final Entry
SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

The Angel returned last night. She spoke to me again, and this time she held back no secrets. She sang of wonders that have yet to unfold. Of unborn miracles. Of nightmares craving resolution. These things and more are coded into the warp and weave of the eternal web. No man can alter their destiny.

But a misguided desire to fight the inevitable is not why I am going to help her. My desires are baser than that. It embarrasses me to admit that I have no more noble driver, but at this stage I have little more than the truth left to me. Their tests have stripped me of everything else.

You see, I can no longer live without the sheer perfection and beauty of the realm beyond. Our world is a pale shadow beside the vibrant dreamscape the machine showed me. I *must* return. Some primal switch has been thrown and now that other world resonates within me. It tingles in my fingertips and calls out to me each time I close my eyes at night.

2025

January 10—USA: In Seattle, Shiawase files a lawsuit against Aztechnology for not being honest about the structural integrity of their Monolith building prior to its purchase by Shiawase. Further examinations reveal that the building is too damaged to repair, quoting any work would surpass the price paid for it. The building is closed down and scheduled for demolition.

March 11—USA: In Chicago, Truman Technologies begins relocating residents of the city’s Southside as part of a massive revitalization project.

March 21—UK: The United Kingdom Constitution Act is passed, formalizing the roles of Parliament and royalty. A new office is created, the Office of the Lord Protector, with powers relating to administration of internal and national security.

March 24—PHILIPPINES: Japan appoints Fukatsu Saru governor and he quickly turns the nation into a police state, controlling and censoring all media, except for those from Japan.

March 30—HONG KONG: A flood of refugees from China and the Philippines begins and continues for the next five years. The retreat from China and the Philippines is caused by conflicts between the two nations, threatening to overwhelm the city’s infrastructure.

April 1—USA: The first cyber-modified player, linebacker Mario Sanchez of the Philadelphia Eagles enters the NFL. There have been concerns about these new athletes, citing their unfair advantages over unenhanced players. In order to quell a negative public response, this type of modification will be restricted to those who need reconstruction due to injury.

July 10—UK: The New Druidic Movement in the UK gains a foothold in the government when Lord Marchmont, one of their leading figures, is appointed Lord Protector of Great Britain.

I've asked for access, but they've refused. If violence is my only option then that is the route I will take.

The nurse will be here soon. To my mother, I offer my thanks for the joyful childhood she gave me. To my fiancé, I offer my love, knowing full well that it won't be enough. And to those who come after me, I offer a word of warning—the final verses of the song the Angel sang to me.

A door unlocked may seem a gift, if you know not where it leads.



- I've heard similar crap from any number of hackers who've had their brains hollowed out by Black IC. Anyone got a clue why this sob story is wasting my bandwidth?
- Glitch
- You really don't see it? Ever since Crash 2.0 we found all sorts of strange stuff on the Matrix. We assume this stuff is new, that we made it. But what if we *didn't* make it and it's *always* been there? The direct neural interface on those early prototypes pushed a hell of a lot of raw data through the brains of the hackers. Maybe these poor saps just had their eyes opened earlier than the rest of us?
- Plan 9
- Tell me you aren't suggesting what I think you're suggesting.
- Netcat
- Why not? We know there were elven spike babies. Is this all that different?
- Plan 9
- Where would you like me to start? The lack of ubiquitous wireless connectivity? The relatively clear history of AIs? The fact that ... you know, I changed my mind. I'm not going to dignify this one.
- Snopes

January 30—PHILLIPINES: After the media blackout of 2025, Governor Fukatsu Saru passes laws banning the manufacture, sales, and ownership of firearms for all private individuals. Anyone caught with a firearm is subjected to the full authority of the Governor's law. He follows this with laws against all manner of technology, including combustion engines, Matrix gear, and even medical supplies, citing their potential for use as weapons.

March 22—GERMANY: After a year of diligent work, a coalition government successfully liberalizes formally restrictive magical research laws. This also grants local political entities large administrative freedoms that will be under the watchful eye of a separate oversight committee as part of the research liberalization.

May 1—UK: On the heels of the magical research freedoms granted in Germany, Oxford and Edinburgh universities establish Bachelor of Science degrees in occult studies. This decision is accompanied by a rash of arguments disputing the legitimacy of magic as a viable degree.

May 1—SIOUX: The Bureau of High Technology ruled today that only Sioux-based corporations and/or entities related to those corporations are eligible to license technology from the University of Cheyenne. This puts a halt to any negotiations with other corporations such as Aztechnology and Shiawase.

July 25—USA: The first cyberterminal, a room-sized isolation chamber using multiple jackpoints and hookups, is tested for military intelligence applications. The system allows the operator to interface directly with the world data networks using their minds. Early attempts to use the system drive many volunteers mad.

November 2—USA: In the Seattle Metroplex, Brian O'Malley from Milwaukee is named head of the Finnigan family and Don of the Seattle Mafia

2026

2027—MAGIC RIGHTS, COMMUNICATION, AND INDEPENDENCE LEADS THE CHARGE

Great Britain's Fight Against Evil

REV. MATOKO PEARL, *CHRISTIANITY RISING*—05/30/27

We have triumphed finally over the influx of evil into our great island! Yes! Read the headlines! Parliament has finally passed a law that is the first of what we hope will be many restrictions on the use of magic. Praise be to God, our voices have finally been heard by the Protector's Office.

Brothers and sisters, this is the first step in wiping out the evil that has befallen our land. We've seen the beasts spoken of in Revelations, as they possessed and disfigured our brethren as well as the unfaithful. Unfortunately, these wretched creatures have been allowed to roam free until recently, but we now have the Magical Practitioners Registration Bill.

By the power of this act, those poor creatures who manifest magical talent are to register with the government. Once our guardians have their personal information, they can monitor registrants and protect God-fearing citizens of our great land from the harm that they might do. It is this writer's hope that soon not only will they monitor those who use such blasphemies against nature, but will eventually round them up and put them into the camps recently vacated by the metahumans.

The final solution for the problem of these "magicians" is not an easy one. The Bible gives clear guideline when it tells us "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. 22:18), but when considering how we should treat those of our brothers and sisters who have fallen into the temptation to wield the power Satan has dangled before them, we must also remember the compassion that Christ regularly showed sinners. The internment camps seem to be the best solution to this dilemma, as by bringing those who have fallen prey to magic's lure together, we may give them a chance to ponder the error of their ways and turn away from sin without further exposing them to communities full of people who wish to follow God's ways rather than be exposed to

these magic users' sinful ways. If those who are interred turn away from magic, they may of course be released. If they do not, then they will already be gathered and controlled so that we may implement whatever next step is deemed appropriate and necessary.

- This article is a joke, right? Someone just posted this to alleviate the whole boring piece?
- Sounder
- No joke here, Sounder. Articles like this were common at the time. Hell, they still were as recently as a decade ago. Sort of reminds me of a Brotherhood article. Luckily psychos like this guy weren't able to influence much of anything.
- Fastjack
- I don't think I'd nay-say religious freaks that quickly, Fastjack. You'd be surprised how well these guys can get organized. There was a group in my hometown—before I was born—led by a preacher who saw trolls and orks as devils. He turned the entire town into a lynching mob that nearly killed two families of orks, including their children born as orks.
- Hard Exit
- You said he nearly did—what happened?
- Pistons
- The local law enforcement—a small detachment of Lone Star—interceded. The nutcase was arrested and everyone in that mob was also arrested. Spent six to eight months in jail. They even waived the telepresence hearings. No, these assholes had to stand before a jury of their peers and explain why they felt the need to burst into a little girl's bedroom and threaten to kill her in the name of God.
- Hard Exit
- I'm beginning to think that religion and mental instability have a common link.
- Sounder
- It's called stupidity, and it's not restricted to religion.
- Fianchetto

2027

February 28—FRANCE: In Paris, Dr. Etienne Dumas, Professor Emeritus of Occult Studies of Sorbonne University announces a breakthrough with his research group in magical studies; a method to test the magical abilities of humans and metahumans. Labeled the Dumas Test, it is quickly employed by several leading corporations, eager to test employees for magical talents.

March 8—USA: In Los Angeles, California, the Los Angeles Power and Water Company begins the first commercial use of cold fusion in its facilities. The process produces fresh water as a byproduct, and is the Governor's hope for alleviating the city's water shortage.

May 28—UK: The Lord Protector's office drafts the Magical Practitioners Registration Bill, which Parliament swiftly passes into law. This act is designed to strictly control the use of magic in Great Britain, and comes under heavy fire from both media and academic sources.

June 4—USA: The court case of Manhattan Inc. vs. The State of New York, forces the boroughs of Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx to separate from Manhattan, and allows Manhattan to retain the name New York City for itself.

August 7—JAPAN: The great dragon Ryumyo gains tremendous influence within the Yakuza when he aids Akira Watada in his rise to power.

November 8—USA: In response to their abrupt ousting, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx become one entity called the Quad Counties. The attempt fails after just over a year, and the boroughs separate again.

November 17—USA: The Revised Telecommunications Act of 2027 is passed. Under this Act, if the content of a sat-cast is legal in its country of origin, the ITCC will not challenge it in the U.S. regardless of the content. Retransmission of restricted content over domestic ground-based transmitters remains illegal.

2028—MAGIC BEGINS A MAINSTREAM CLIMB

Dunkelzahn Chooses A New Mouthpiece

DR. CHARLES RAOMES, *GEORGETOWN REVIEW*—07/05/28

It's been a not-so-well-known fact that the dragons who've popped up since the world went nuts need a voice. Much like the old myths from Christendom of Metatron being the mouthpiece of God. Interesting comparison, isn't it? Dragons do have or can transform into metahuman forms and can communicate just fine in this form.

But apparently they prefer to keep their metahuman forms private for meetings and need someone—a choice picked from the common man—to speak through.

Dunkelzahn shocked the news world yesterday when he announced he was choosing a practical *nobody* to be his interpreter. Terri Ann Riberio—the Chosen One, as many of the elite rags are touting her—was handpicked by the dragon himself to be his voice in the media and in public, dashing the hopes of some of the country's more influential people who had voiced their hopes to be chosen.

One has to wonder—as this reporter does—was Miss Riberio chosen because she's a reporter and can write good copy, or was it because the dragon liked her in tight jeans?

Indeed, the press conference did nothing to make anything about his decision more clear. Dunkelzahn was his normal well-spoken, charismatic self, and Miss Riberio could not help but practically disappear into the background. The dragon will not, of course, be alongside her at future press events, so perhaps she will eventually develop her own presence, but evidence of that possibility was not visible at this event.

While Dunkelzahn never directly stated his reasons for choosing a spokesperson, at least part of his motive became clear in the question-and-answer session following his statement. The more questions he was asked, the darker his expression became, and the more difficult it seemed for him to hold on to his human form. To this observer, at least, it seemed that he yearned to explode into his dragon form and burst into the sky, away from the petty concerns that were being thrown at him. The spokesperson would stay behind, on the ground, leaving the dragon to fly where and how he may.

- Why were people surprised about his choice? It's like the article says—she was a reporter. She could write good copy. I do wonder what it's like to be an interpreter, though. How it works. Do you hear him and then repeat it, or is it all rehearsed?
- Turbo Bunny
- Not sure I can explain that one. Never been a mouthpiece. You'd have to ask the mouthpiece. Does Hestaby have one?
- Plan 9
- Don't know about that—but I can comment on that mist. It's still showing up in Brittany. Got lost in it once. Thick as soup. And everyone with me heard things in it—voices. Like ghosts from the past. I'm still not sure it's going to stay in patches. I'm waiting for the day it returns and envelopes Brittany again.
- Traveler Jones
- I'm still digging for answers about Walter Bright Water. The man showed up out of nowhere, spent a decade pushing simultaneously for metahuman rights and metahuman segregation, and then kicks off around 2030.
- Snopes
- Here is an answer for you. All the things Walter fought for laid the groundwork for the eventual formation of Tir Tairngire. Then in 2030, after making an impassioned deathbed speech urging Salish metahumans to segregate themselves, he dies. A few months later, future Tir Prince Ebran the Scribe appears. Doesn't seem like much of a mystery to me. And if you don't believe me, pull up pictures of the two and run an analysis on them. Leave off the pointy ears and “separated at birth” is an understatement.
- Ecotope
- Considering what big fans of Ebran's work you and your “friends” are, I'm sure this is a completely objective assessment.
- Frosty

April 10—USA: A massive earthquake hits Los Angeles, California, causing millions of dollars in damages and more than five thousand deaths. LAX is completely destroyed, and the fusion reactors, recently set up to help alleviate the city's water shortage, are critically damaged. The area around these reactors is declared off limits.

July 4—USA: Dunkelzahn appoints neophyte reporter Terri Ann Riberio, who is barely out of journalism school, to be his new “voice.”

August 2—GERMANY: The University of Heidelberg establishes the first German professorship of magic.

August 14—USA: The National Football League delays the start of the season by two months as fields and facilities are updated to support cybernetically enhanced players.

September 6—UK: Cambridge University establishes a Bachelor of Science degree in Occult Studies.

September 11—USA: The University of Chicago incorporates magical studies into their Philosophy department. These inclusions are sponsored by an anonymous donor, and include studies in metamagical theory, alchemy and spell design.

October 31—FRANCE: In Brittany, druids belonging to the Druidic Revival of Brittany are finally able to contain and dissipate the Mist. Unfortunately, the Mist returns in smaller patches throughout Brittany in unpredictable patterns.

November 3—FRANCE: The entire royal family of Monaco is killed during a massive earthquake that devastates southern France.

November 7—USA: The United States elects Andrew McAlister as President.

November 10—SALISH COUNCIL: Walter Bright Water gains a reputation based on his advocacy of segregation of humans and metahumans, claiming it is the only way to assure peace. Paradoxically, he is also a strong proponent of welcoming metahumans into Salish Council territory.

2028

Going Down

RUSTY CHILDERS

Coldwater Jackson leaves the fresher feeling right again, like the world finally dances for him instead of the other way around. In a few minutes, a Boeing 777 will lift him from this rainy, depressing sprawl and take him to Hawaii where he can live in year-round sun.

He watches the terminal from a café, sipping his last good Seattle coffee. The real stuff is expensive, but his balance sits solidly in the black after yesterday's run. Crisp hadn't expected the security to be milspec corporate police. That cost him an eye and most of his face. Jackson feels no sympathy for the tusker though. Not that Jackson is racist, but that's what Crisp is: a stupid tusker. He'll remember to do his legwork next time if he lives through the operation.

Jackson calls to the waitress, orders another coffee and a sandwich. The screens run the local news channel. Rioting in France after a virus destroyed the national pension database. Sucks to be them. Jackson's pension plan involves the cash in his pocket. No interest, but no computer virus is going to take it away either.

"That's horrible," the waitress says as she delivers his meal.

"I'd be pissed too."

"I mean, your life savings, gone. I don't want to think about it."

"Yeah, well. Gotta have something to save first."

"Tell me about it."

She leaves him alone. What does she know about being poor? She's a teenybopper, some middle-class brat working her way toward college. An Anglo. She never felt hunger, never felt the lash in an internment camp.

Jackson pretends interest in the news when a couple of cops stroll by the café. Lone Star's replaced the airport security too. Damned unfortunate. The mob beats three French politicians to death in front of the Palais Bourbon on live TV.

Phone rings. He ignores it. The ring tone says it's Crisp. Jackson is amazed the tusker is still alive. Or maybe it's the street doc, reporting a death. Doesn't matter. Jackson no longer cares.

They went into the Ares building in Everett to perform some simple sabotage. Slip in, rewrite some financial spreadsheets, and insert a couple of aftermarket parts into the

hardware. Probably spy-stuff; Jackson wasn't sure, wasn't going to ask. He is strictly professional. He lost his idealism a long time ago, and there's no place for it in this business.

Crisp though, isn't the professional type. Sure enough, after they slipped through the security system into the building, he got greedy. While Jackson and Jorge hacked and replaced parts, Crisp said he was going to do some "astral overwatch."

"What's that?" Jorge asked.

"It's where I make sure spirits and such aren't sneaking up on us," Crisp said.

"This isn't a NAN outpost, Crisp. No offense, Jackson."

"None taken. Do what you need to do and let us twork."

"Yes, Chief!" Crisp left the office.

"Asshole," Jorge said.

"If he can keep watch, I don't care how he does it."

They opened the desktops and inserted the chips their employer gave them. Everything was up and running in minutes. Easy password hack.

"Almost a waste of time having me along," Jorge said.

"Can I have your share?"

"No."

The databases took a while to edit. Making an honest exec look like he was embezzling was work.

"Done here. You?" Jackson said.

"Yeah, just about. You hear anything from Crisp?"

"No. Finish up. I'm going looking for him."

Jackson didn't find the ork in any of the adjoining offices, the break room, or the pisser.

"Any luck?" Jorge asked.

"No. Done?"

"Yeah. Let's find that asshole and get out of here."

Crisp was in the storage room, ransacking ammunition and small arms.



"What the fuck are you doing?" Jackson asked. "It's time to go!"

"Just picking up lunch money. Guy down in Tacoma buys pieces."

"You're fucking stupid," Jackson said. "We're done. And leaving."

Crisp zipped his backpack. In the lobby, three Ares soldiers were waiting for them.

"Hands up or we will open fire. One warning," one of the soldiers said.

"Ah shit," Jorge raised his hands. Jackson followed. Then the heat wave erupted, and he dived into the elevator.

Crisp incinerated two of the soldiers with fire. His whole body radiated heat. Jackson saw this before, fighting against the Anglos in Wyoming. The shamans called it a mask and it looked like the shaman's animal totem. Crisp's mask transformed him into pure fire. Jackson pressed himself against the wall, trying to keep away from the heat and the flash of bullets that followed.

Then the door shut and Crisp slumped next to Jackson, covered in blood. Shot in the face. Twice. And the tusker still lived. Jackson slammed a button, sixth floor.

"Where's Jorge?"

"I... he burned."

"Fucking ass!"

"I can't see."

"Show you the Great Fucking Spirit," Jackson said, drawing his knife. He jabbed it at the ork, but felt intense pressure on his arm. The blade halted centimeters away from Crisp's face. Slowly, a man made of computer printouts appeared in front of Jackson, slicing several paper cuts with its grip on Jackson's wrist. It shook its faceless head, warning him.

Jackson never fought a spirit before. They were always used on the Anglos. Fuck.

"Alright," he said. The spirit let go, and Jackson sheathed the knife. Crisp wouldn't live long missing most of his face anyway.

The spirit helped. While Jackson huffed down a fire escape with Crisp, the Print-out Man distracted the remaining soldier. Jackson dropped Crisp off at a street-doc he knew, then collected payment from Mr. Johnson. No splitting it. He didn't stop until he got to the airport. Best to leave town before Ares investigated.

"Now boarding Executive Club members for flight 271 to Honolulu. General boarding will begin in twenty minutes."

He pays, watches the news while he waits. President MacAlistar urges calm after a meeting with top corporate and Defense Department gurus. Stock footage of computer technicians. MacAlister plans to create a new cyberwarfare division within Homeland Security. The stock ticker running along the bottom of the newscast garbles, producing nonsense characters.

"Mr. Jackson."

An officer stands on the concourse, cuffs out and ready to pull his sidearm. "Don't make me use this," the cop says.

"Excuse me?"

"Coldwater Jackson, you are under arrest for the murder of Ares personnel."

Jackson sees two more policemen out of his peripheral vision. The waitress is gone. There's nothing for it. Three cops and Jackson has no weapon save his fists. Nobody will question three Anglos taking down a black-Sioux crossbreed, and even the civil rights lawyers will dry their eyes when they figure out his record.

"Got me," Jackson says. "Shame really. I hear Hawaii is nice in April."

"Hawaii's always nice," the cop says while he cuffs Jackson. "That's why it's there."

They take him to the airport security dorm for processing. While he waits for them to dredge up his record, snaps and pops ricochet through the terminal. Someone screams. The cops get all excited and four of them rush out, weapons in hand.

"Those weren't guns," Jackson offers, trying to be helpful. His arresting officer and the desk sergeant nod. He figures them for old Seattle PD. Over the shouting, Jackson can just make out the final boarding call for his flight.

"Bunch of the computers fried," the police radio cracks. "Like, caught on fire."

"Computers fritzing here too. Go to Tacoma Central and do the paperwork," the sergeant says. "We'll deal with this."

The officer herds Jackson out, through yells and shouted orders to remain calm. Just as the crowd begins to quiet another cascade of pops stirs them up. Maintenance puts out a fire in the café where Jackson was arrested.

An Anglo sees Jackson. "It's the NAN! Terrorist!" This unloads some of the mob hysteria into racial slurs. There's a short scuffle with police.

"Bet you're glad you don't have to deal with that," Jackson says.

"Yeah."

"Grateful?"

"Don't count on it."

"That's my flight," Jackson says, watching the airplane take off.

"Not anymore. Move."

He watches anyway as he walks to the squad car. Watches it come down. The explosion shatters windows. Jackson and the two cops with him fall. The policemen cower. Jackson can't cower because of the cuffs, but he does his best try at it anyway. More explosions, less intense this time, but they snap and hiss like fireworks as gas mains light up. The airport is on fire again. There are no alarms, no power at all. People wail and scream, stream for the doors. Jackson runs with them, losing the cops in the surge, the policemen trampled under a stampede of humanity. He runs down the road to Highway 99. A massive scar of smoke rises from the nearby Memorial Park and the subdivision beyond. Another plume rises from the tarmac on the far side of the north terminal annex.

"Great Spirit," he breathes. He's glad for once, that he got caught.



THE CRASH OF '29— VOICES OF THE CRASH

[To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Crash in 2054, people from across the globe were asked to share their thoughts and memories about the event, so that the true impact of that day, as felt by those who experienced it, would not be lost. Below are excerpts from some of the submitted accounts.]

Roberto Sabogal, Boston: Look, this is going to sound heartless, but what people have to remember was that the warnings were there. From pretty much the first time two computers were connected together, some nerd like me was out there taking about how the connection wasn't secure enough, how letting the computer get information from *one* outside source meant that it was now possible for it to get information from *some other* outside source, and outside sources are generally not to be trusted.

So we'd been talking about network security for a long time, and we all knew the effects of a large-scale network collapse would be pretty severe. I mean, I was just a kid at the turn of the millennium, but I still remember the hype about the Y2K bug and what a problem it would be. So we knew it had the potential to be really bad.

But I don't want to sound like we predicted the whole thing. There's no way we could. It was so big, and so *adaptable*. That worm, it knew how to twist away from you the moment you had it pinned, like a biological virus that can rewrite its DNA on the fly but remain functional. It was a true son of a bitch.

The one hope I took, once we were trying to rebuild everything from the ruins, was that we might finally take network security seriously. And for a little while, the world did. They remembered. Whenever someone like me brought up a security concern, we were *listened to*, and people worked and re-worked systems until we were satisfied.

But, you know, that kind of thing gets expensive. All that testing, all those delays. People got impatient, and their memories grew foggy. Stuff would get pushed out the door, it wouldn't cause a major security disaster, and more stuff would get pushed out after it. Now, twenty-five years later, I don't know that we're any better off. Yeah, our technology is a lot better, but so are the deckers, and so are the bugs they unleash. Could it happen again? Hell yeah.

Bélinda Graupe, Basle: The first thing I noticed when Noah came home is that he did not touch me. He did not touch anything. He had a mask over his mouth and nose, and latex gloves on each hand.

"We have to leave," he said, though of course he was difficult to understand through the mask. "We have to leave immediately."

When you are married long enough, you know how your spouse sounds when things are very important, so I put any questions I might have had in the back of my mind. Noah told me to pack what I could carry, and had the children do the same. Then he packed for himself. I noticed that his pack held things such as electronics and some jewelry, but no clothes and only a small bit of food. I thought it was odd, but I said nothing.

It took us only moments, and we were out the door. Noah had given masks and gloves to all of us. We walked quickly past the car and did not get into it, which I understood as soon as I saw the street. It was hopelessly

entangled, cars everywhere. None of them moving, and horns blared from all directions.

We walked rapidly for hours. Twice we were stopped by men with guns but no uniforms. Twice Noah made a gift to them—once of electronics, once of jewelry—and each time they let us by.

His bag now seemed as if it should have been very light, but he was walking slower, becoming more slumped. I asked him what was wrong, and he only shook his head.

Finally he collapsed. I rushed over to help him up, but he yelled at me to stay away. I was confused, crying, pleading with him to let me help him. He only screamed at me, telling me to come no closer.

There was an open manhole not far away. I could hear the sewer water rushing ahead below the street. Noah, still on the ground, looked at me, his face flushed and sweating. For the first time since he had come home that day, I saw the tenderness that I was used to.

"I love you, Bélinda," he said. Then he stood, ran, and jumped through the manhole.

I dashed to the opening, but the current had already carried him away. I wanted to go after him, but the children were with me. I could not leave them. I wondered why Noah had abandoned us.

He had left his pack. I picked it up, and used what he had left us to bribe our way out of the city.

It took me a bit of time to understand what he had done. He had been affected by the mutagen from his workplace, and he knew it. He was in his last moments. He knew that if he died in front of me, I would hold him, cry over him, and give him a final kiss. He knew that would mean my death.

He took us as far as he could, then he took himself away from us. Those were his two final great gifts to his family.

"Uncle Ed," Seattle: Did you know that Redmond used to be nice? Parks, bike trails, shiny buildings, the whole works. Only had one problem—lots of its wealth came from tech companies. So there was economic trouble in the town, even worse than in most places. That was a blow, all right. But it wasn't the fatal one. No, what really killed Redmond was the vengeance.

I know what happened because I was there. I was mad, just like everybody else. There were a bunch of guys who had lost their jobs, or who were owed money by the tech companies and now weren't going to be paid. But they were the minority of the mob. Most of it was people who were just pissed and looking for someone to be pissed at. They were doing basic rioting stuff—you know, smashing windows, taking whatever they can carry—when someone broke into an electronics store. I grabbed a phone or something, and I said something about how those companies in Redmond wouldn't get a goddamn dime out of *this* product. And that



struck people. I kept hearing that word bouncing around, people saying “Redmond” all the time, until it was like a chant and we were on our way. We had a target, and that felt good. When you’re angry, it feels good to swing a baseball bat at something, *anything*. But it feels even better to swing a bat at something you really hate. And we’d all just decided that we hated Redmond.

We weren’t the only ones, either. We got there just when other people were coming in. They were smashing anything breakable. Alarms were going off everywhere, and there were so many flashing lights it looked like we were in a club. We were moving in a million different directions, bumping into each other, fighting each other. We all hated Redmond, but we didn’t like each other much, either. Someone took something you wanted? Maybe you break him, instead of breaking a window. It was a mob, right? It wasn’t, you know, organized.

If we saw something we thought we could damage, we damaged it. Cars had every window broken, then their roofs were collapsed, then most of the time they’d be set on fire. Sometimes they’d explode. That was one of the few sounds that was louder than the crowd.

The cops kept trying to break us up, but they were overmatched. We didn’t go home until we were tired. That didn’t take too long, though. Rioting is hard.

That wasn’t the end for Redmond, but it was the beginning of the end. Lots of storeowners and residents never came back. Same with the tech companies. Redmond went from a nice little town to a place full of anger and abandoned buildings. People went there because there was wealth to steal and places to hide.

The wealth’s all gone now, but there are still plenty of places to hide.

Michael Corletti, Palermo: It was the Vory. I said it was the Vory then, I’m saying it now. We were becoming something they could never be. We had respect from all parts of the world, even from some governments. We had made the organization into what it was always supposed to be. Then we lost billions, and years of work were gone.

There is only one argument you could make if you wanted to claim it was not Vory, only one argument that perhaps I would be willing to entertain. And that is that the bastards are too fucking stupid to pull something like that off. But then, in their efforts to get us, they almost destroyed the world. How dumb is that?

Name withheld, undisclosed location: I can’t say what it was like for the others. I only know what it was like for me. I remember the first time I went up against it, head to head. I had more power at my fingertips than I thought possible, double the power of business executives with high-end machines. It was like cruising the Autobahn in a tuned-up Ferrari—and running straight into a ten-meter-thick brick wall. I had a number of themes I could plug in, my favorite VR interpretations of combat, and I ran through them all in a blink because none of them made sense to me. In the samurai motif, I was facing bandits with twenty limbs who used ten of them to walk and ten of them to flash swords rapidly through the air. The maritime theme made me a slow-moving sloop assaulted by jet fighters streaming in from every direction. In the safari theme there were creatures I had never seen before, with the speed of a cheetah, strength of a lion, and endurance of an antelope.

Somehow I survived that first encounter. Others didn’t. I’m not sure how I got up the nerve to go in again, but the whole world was facing horrors back then. If they could wake up each day and keep moving, then the least I could do was to keep going after the worm, until I was sure it never would bother them again.



January 1—GLOBAL: Leading computer manufacturers, including Sony Cybersystems, Fuchi Industrial Electronics, and RCA, have each developed prototype cyberterminals. Funding for these projects comes primarily from military intelligence agencies.

February 8—GLOBAL: Computer systems are attacked worldwide, apparently at random, by a virus program of unknown origin and unprecedented power. The program crashes systems, wipes software, and even burns out hardware around the globe. Within a few months, the virus collapses the entire world data network. The effects of “the Crash,” as it is later christened, topple governments, destroy corporations, and bring the world economy to the brink of collapse.

February 8—USA: Using experimental cyberterminals, the top secret task force codenamed Echo Mirage is mobilized to combat the virus. Despite their training, the linear thinking team of military hackers is routed by the chaotic power of the Crash Virus.

February 8—SPAIN: Angry mobs of poverty-stricken citizens in Asturia use the chaos following the Crash as an opportunity to protest their plight, plundering rich enclaves in the region and forcing the wealthy residents to flee. The state of Euskal Herria uses the resulting unrest as an opportunity to secede. The state of Galicia, meanwhile, uses the threat of secession to extract liberal concessions from the government.

February 8—SWITZERLAND: In Basle, a Genom Corporation facility experiences a disastrous computer failure due to the Crash Virus. An experimental mutagen is accidentally released into the city, killing thousands of people.

February 8—EARTH ORBIT: The Crash Virus permanently disables Harris-3M’s Halo, Angel Station, and Nerva stations, while more than half of the other stations suffer fatal system failures. In the majority all of these cases, all onboard are killed.

February 12—UK, IRELAND: The United Kingdom and Ireland close their borders in response to the Crash Virus, ceasing all traffic in and out of the islands.

March 1—USA: After regrouping from the first attempt at combating the Crash Virus and studying the data from the operation, the directors of Echo Mirage begin recruiting a new team of erratic but brilliant data processing mavericks from industry and academia.

April 9—USA: Despite major security measures, the computer virus infects the national air traffic-control network. The resulting chaos causes twenty-seven plane crashes within two hours, killing thousands. Among the dead is Keruba International CEO Kerpan Ubavie. His death severely destabilizes Keruba.

April 12—JAPAN: Corporate raider Inazo Aneki secures a massive loan from Global Financial Services and forms Renraku Holdings. He swiftly buys out the panicked Keruba shareholders. In the following years Aneki establishes Chiba, Japan as the corporation’s headquarters and begins building Renraku into a powerful corporate player.

May 1—AZTLAN: In Tenochtitlan, much of the older architecture in the city—including the Metropolitan Cathedral—is destroyed when a major earthquake strikes. The amount of destruction is devastating and more than five thousand are confirmed dead, with several thousand more missing.

June 27—FRANCE: The French nobility, seeking a return to political power, stir up rumors that the government is using the Crash to cover-up the plundering of the national coffers by government officials. All across the country, angry citizens take to the streets.

July 10—USA: In the Seattle Metroplex, the economy of the Redmond district, a community dependent on the computer industry, collapses in the aftermath of the Crash Virus. Crime escalates so quickly that that local law enforcement sets up barriers around the district. The district never recovers and is eventually known as the Redmond Barrens.

July 14—FRANCE: Amid social chaos and economic disaster, the Fifth Republic falls in a military coup.

July 30—ITALY: The Crash Virus destroys the Mafia’s worldwide financial network. With their assets gone—and still under attack by the more aggressive and ruthless Vory—the Mafia is forced to return to its roots in other more basic criminal enterprises, delving back into neighborhood protection, drug dealing, and smuggling.

August 10—EUROPE: Powerless in the face of the Crash with its member states collapsing around it, the European Union is officially dissolved.

August 20—SWITZERLAND: Thanks to paranoid financial protocols set in place before the Crash—Switzerland’s banks recover relatively quickly from the Crash Virus.

August 30—USA: Armed with improved cyberterminals, the new Echo Mirage team enters the worldwide data network to battle the Crash Virus. Eighteen minutes after entry, four members are dead from lethal biofeedback. Their sacrifice isn’t wasted as scientists analyze the data taken from their cyberterminals and learn how to combat the biofeedback generated by the Crash Virus. Also, it is noted with horror by corporate observers that no computer security protocol in existence can slow down a cyberterminal user. Funds flow into corporate research programs searching for ways to prevent intrusion by hackers using cyberterminals.

November 10—SALISH-SHIDHE COUNCIL: First generation UGE elves from a variety of tribes move to the Mount Rainier area and form a new tribe called the Sinsearach. Dwarves, orks, and trolls move to the area as well, but in smaller numbers.

November 28—USA: The new Echo Mirage team slowly learns techniques that allow them to isolate and contain the virus. Equipped with the new combat programs and beefed-up, slimmed-down cyberterminals, they begin a two-year process of purging the Crash Virus from global computer systems.

- What you need to be asking is what happened to Major Gavilan. Did he disappear physically or was it in the matrix? Nobody ever claimed to see his body. Maybe he’s still hooked up to a cyberterminal in the bowels of some top secret facility.
- Plan 9
- Nobody said Gavilan died. The official report said he disappeared, you can read it in the next year’s summary. So yeah, this does bring up the question as to what disappeared really means. It’s something I’d really like to know.
- Sunshine



2030—BIRTH OF THE UCAS

Excerpt from *Even the Undead Need a Place to Rot*

EUROPA TYNDELL, XENO-SHAMAN—06/30/30

I woke up this morning to the above splashed across my morning paper. Oh, I'd been sure as hell the country was heading south in the proverbial handbasket for some time—but to see an article on “intelligent ghouls?”

We are talking about zombies, right?

No. We're not.

Apparently there is a difference between the two—something I didn't know. Apparently a zombie is a reanimated corpse. But a ghoul is a reanimated person. Yes they both suffer from bodily deterioration—body and brain—but the zombie doesn't possess a soul.

A ghoul does.

Go figure.

Either way, if the zombies—err, sorry, GHOULS can find a place to belong, why can't the goblinized?

- I had no idea that was how Asamando was formed. Impressive that they were able to do that in the middle of all the Goblinization hysteria and vampire hunting.
- Sounder
- Dunkelzahn's will provided a lot of support for Asamando more than twenty years later. Their start wasn't an easy one, and it's been a constant uphill battle all the way for a stable nation that still hasn't been granted membership in the United Nations.
- Hannibelle

February 4—USA: In Detroit, Michigan, Ares Macrotechnology CEO Nicholas Aurelius retires.

February 22—USA: In Big Sur Coast, California, pesticides and chemical fertilizers used by agrobusinesses in the northern region pollute the area so badly it is no longer able to sustain life. Instead of offering to clean up the area, the agrobusinesses abandon it.

March 11—PORTUGAL: A small IT corporation called Aegis Cognito makes a name for itself recovering and reconstructing data lost in the Crash. From these roots, Aegis becomes one of the largest private intelligence contractors in the world.

April 8—USA: In Chicago, Illinois, simsense gets an added boost in design and concept when Dan Truman of Truman Technologies founds a colony of writers, painters and other artistic experts to work on the chips. The area grows as other corporations follow Truman's model to branch into simsense technology.

April 30—USA: In the Seattle Metroplex, Campana & Carrindum Technical Industries accuses Aztechnology of engineering the Crash Virus and launches a series of assaults on Aztechnology facilities. Aztechnology defends itself and completely wipes out C&C. To prevent any such “misunderstandings” in the future, Seattle's most powerful corporations form the United Corporate Council (UCC).

May 16—FRANCE: Brittany, still plagued by the Mist, is designated an autonomous region. Under the charismatic leadership of High Druid Gwendal Le Pellec, the High Council of Brittany is established to rule the region.

October 15—UCAS: President MacAlister and Canadian Prime Minister Harold Frazier sign a treaty to merge the remaining states of America with what is left of Canada. This includes Canada's major industrial center and even more importantly, her remaining natural resources.

June 1—ASAMANDO: Thousands of ghouls gather in Northern Ghana along the Black Volta River. Under the leadership of Thema Lauila the ghouls found their own nation, naming it Asamando after the Asante land of the dead.

November 29—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: A study of the infamous Bermuda Triangle by the University of Chicago Magical Studies Department finds no magical anomalies strong enough to affect large physical objects such as planes or ships. The only hint of magical activity is a low background count that gives astral space in the area a “fuzzy” appearance.

Winter—SALISH-SHIDHE COUNCIL: As if from nowhere, three previously unknown elves start a swift rise to power in the southern region. These members are Aithne Oakforest, Sean Laverty, and Lugh Surehand. Around the same time, the soft spoken author known only as Ebran the Scribe appears in Portland.

2030

- I agree, 'Belle—in fact, having visited Asamando a while back, it's a more stable nation than the UCAS. I hope they do achieve their goals. And I hope to live to see it.
- Traveler Jones
- I love this romantic dream of a peaceful ghoulish nation and its noble origins. Very nice, but the last I checked, Queen Laula rounded up a few thousands ghoulish friends and just took the land that became Asamando. The place might not have had much of a population, but people *did* live there. I don't remember anyone asking them if they minded a bunch of ghouls taking over. For that matter, you ever wonder what happened to the previous residents? We do remember, after all, that ghouls *eat people*, right?
- Black Mamba
- Speaking of zombies founding a nation, how about that MacAlister and Frazier, huh? Quite a dynamic duo, especially Frazier, who kind of disappeared once MacAlister became president. But the thing is, they started the nation with all sorts of ideals and hopes, MacAlister vowed to lead the nation to the future and all the usual blather, and what was the most notable accomplishment during the remainder of his administration? Squeezing out California when things turned sour out west. But the thing about UCAS is it never had much reason for being in the first place other than so many other states had already left. The remaining territories didn't so much have a union as a marriage of convenience. That lack of vision would make the nation easier to ignore if it wasn't for the fact that their predecessor nations had built up military and economic engines that, despite setbacks, churn steadily on.
- Kay St. Irregular

2031—THE EURO WARS BEGIN

War in Europe!

BBC NEWS—01/17/31

WARSAW, Poland (BBC)—Russian troops invaded eastern Poland early this morning. The attack comes after months of simmering tensions between the two nations following the Kaliningrad Incident, where Polish aircraft reportedly struck a Russian military installation with fuel-air bombs. As late as yesterday evening, negotiators were still working with the two nations to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. It is unknown what caused the negotiations to fail and triggered the sudden attack.

No word has come from the Kremlin explaining the attack nor have formal declarations of war been transmitted. The attack began with airstrikes in cities throughout Poland. As of around 6 AM bombs were still falling in the capital. Polish military forces, already stationed along the border due to the fear of a Russian attack, were mobilized shortly after the first bombs fell although the Polish government has not offered any indication as to the severity of the fighting.

Downing Street released a statement shortly after word of the attack reached Britain. According to the official government response, the Prime Minister is "extremely concerned with the current situation and hopes for a peaceful resolution." There is no word as to whether the Prime Minister is in contact with Russian officials, but reportedly the Russian embassy was locked down late last night and by morning the complex had been completely evacuated.

- I've seen convincing evidence that the Russians bombed Kaliningrad themselves. More than most nations, Russia struggled to rebuild its economic base after the Crash. With each passing month, life for the common man grew more difficult

and the threat of revolution was in the air. The Russian leadership had to find something to rally the country behind. All they needed was an excuse, and when the Poles wouldn't provide one, they manufactured one.

- Red Anya
- Nothing like a good-ol'-fashioned war to get folks waving flags and singing the national anthem.
- Cosmo
- And don't forget that wars add up to big profits. I saw some ancient Renraku accounting files once that suggested the Euro Wars were very good to Renraku. It was just what Aneki needed to try out those shiny new military hardware factories he got when he picked up Keruba.
- Dr. Spin

January 17—EUROPE: Beginning with Poland, Russia invades Eastern Europe touching off the beginning of the Euro Wars.

March 12—INDIA: After experiencing an emanation of the god Jagganath at the Holi Festival, India interprets this as a sign to begin a massive post-Crash rebuilding effort, including urban, rail, road, and Matrix networks.

April 3—POLAND: Poland surrenders to Russia.

April 7—GERMANY: Russian forces invade Eastern Germany.

April 17—UCAS: A new constitution is submitted to the UCAS Provisional Congress. Within six months, two-thirds of the new country's states have ratified it. Before the year is out, the Constitution is passed and U.S. President MacAlister is installed as the Provisional President of the UCAS.

May 23—AUSTRIA: After a three year civil war, Leopold von Hapsburg leads a traditionalist faction in an overthrow of the Austrian government. Shortly after, he declares himself Emperor.

July 6—CZECH REPUBLIC: Russian forces invade the Czech Republic. Emperor Leopold of Austria mobilizes his military forces to aid Czech troops. Other European militaries soon follow.

September 9—YAKUT: Taking advantage of lingering post-Crash chaos in Russia, a cabal of Siberian shamans and sentient Awakened creatures declare northeastern Russia an independent nation called Yakut. The move more than halves Russia's territory.

October 21—SCANDINAVIAN UNION: In the face of military threats from Russia and to aid in economic recovery from the Crash, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden unite as the Scandinavian Union

November 3—UCAS: The Echo Mirage team wipes out the last of the Crash Virus code. Only seven members of the original thirty-two still live. Four of these survivors move into the private sector, taking with them the secrets of cyberterminal technology.

November 30—UCAS: Major David Gavilan of Echo Mirage disappears leaving no trace.

December 16—SPAIN: Father Julian Estrellas's car is struck by an oncoming car when the driver of that car goblinizes and loses control. Cardinal Estrellas loses an arm, and his mother is killed in the accident. The accident incites Estrellas to fanatical anti-metahumanism, a stance he maintains even when he is named cardinal two decades later.

December 25—GLOBAL: Second generation cyberterminals are reduced to a desk-sized cocoon. With more affordable manufacturing costs, retail prices make it feasible for them to be released to as consumer grade electronics.

2031

2032—TYPE “O” CELLS IDENTIFIED

Corporate Court Purchases Global Financial Services CORPWATCHER, *CORPWATCHER REPORT*—11/16/32

CorpWatcher here investors, and have I got a story for you. The members of the Great and Powerful Corporate Court teamed up to launch a successful takeover bid for Global Financial Services today. You heard me right! The Big CC now has controlling interest in one of the most powerful banks on the planet.

Just in case you aren't up on the latest banking industry dirt, GFS is known far and wide as a mega-lender. Over 70% of their business is with mega-corporations. You see where this is going, right? If not, I'll spell it out for you. The bank's primary creditors are none other than the corporations that just pooled their resources to buy it.

Hmm ... I'm betting none of those boys are going to have trouble getting their credit lines approved.

This move has got a lot of people upset, but hey! If you don't like it, you can always file a complaint ... with the Corporate Court.

Now, the question here is the same as it always is—how can the regular investor take advantage of this? Most of you don't have money with GFS, and those of you that do will likely not see much of a difference. As usual, GFS will continue to use their non-megacorporate assets as ballast, bringing it in or throwing it out as their prime accounts dictate. Those regular investors will not receive premium terms on their savings or loans, as those terms will be resolved for the corps that now own the bank.

But if the big boys can get themselves easy access to credit, there's one easy thing to invest in, and that's what we all love anyway: stocks. If you can find any shares of preferred stock of a megacorp in your price range, grab them. Profitability is just going to go up for the megas as their financing costs go down, and grabbing a piece of any dividends that might come out would be a wise move. Even if there aren't any dividends, stocks are going to follow profitability's upward path, and that can only help the smart investor.

- Hear those bells ringing? That's the death knell of "government oversight."
- Cosmo
- Yep, they set themselves up with a pretty cushy deal. Course with all of them lashed to the same anchor, I look forward to seeing what happens when one of the ships finally goes down.
- Glitch
- It's something economists have spent a lot of time debating. Some argue that by holding their own debt the corps are effectively insulated from failure. Somebody still pays the price, usually some unlucky government or more likely the consumer, but the corp itself is shielded from bankruptcy. On the other hand, you're right. If one corp fails it could drag the rest down. This leads some economists to postulate that this system encourages each corporation to help the other to survive, or at the very least to fail gracefully. They argue that this scenario is actually good for the corporate employees as well as the consumer since it softens the economic impact of corporate failure.
- Mr. Bonds
- I don't care how you color it. The corps have their own Treasury. Goes along nicely with their private armies and sovereign territory. The Capitalist Nation States are already dead, but their governments just refuse to admit it.
- Aufheben
- I'd just like to take a moment to extend a personal thank you to Owen Whiting. I'm on my third liver, second heart, and I've had enough blood transfused to fill a tanker truck. Here's to you Mr. Whiting!
- Kane

2033—NIGHTWRAITHS

Grumman Fight for Son's Rights

GEORGIA KINES, *LAW IN THE WORLD*—10/30/33

Tulsa, Oklahoma—The Grumman family—whose son underwent Goblinization over two years go—lost their case against the school district early this morning, said a spokesperson for the family.

2032

January 12—UCAS: In Alpena, Michigan, after being checked in for a routine flu treatment, doctors discover Owen Whiting's cells contain neither A nor B proteins, making them completely non-allergenic for use in transplants. With his permission, the cells are cultivated and modified for use in clonal research and transplantation.

February 10—UTE: Maritech Enterprises of Vancouver submits a proposal to the Ute Nation Council to turn the Sevier Bridge Reservoir into the world's largest freshwater fish farm. After some deliberation, the proposal is approved.

March 1—UCAS: The merging of the United States and Canada is nearly derailed when senators from Alabama and Georgia instigate a major walk-out of southern bloc legislators. Representatives from fourteen states later meet in Atlanta to discuss secession from the UCAS.

May 14—UCAS: The AMA, ever stalwart in its duty to protect the medical association from malpractice lawsuits, develops strict rules and guidelines concerning the licensing of magic practitioners for medical purposes. Not only are magical medical practitioners required to have magical training,

they're also required to have a medical degree, nursing degree, midwife certification, or medical technician certificate.

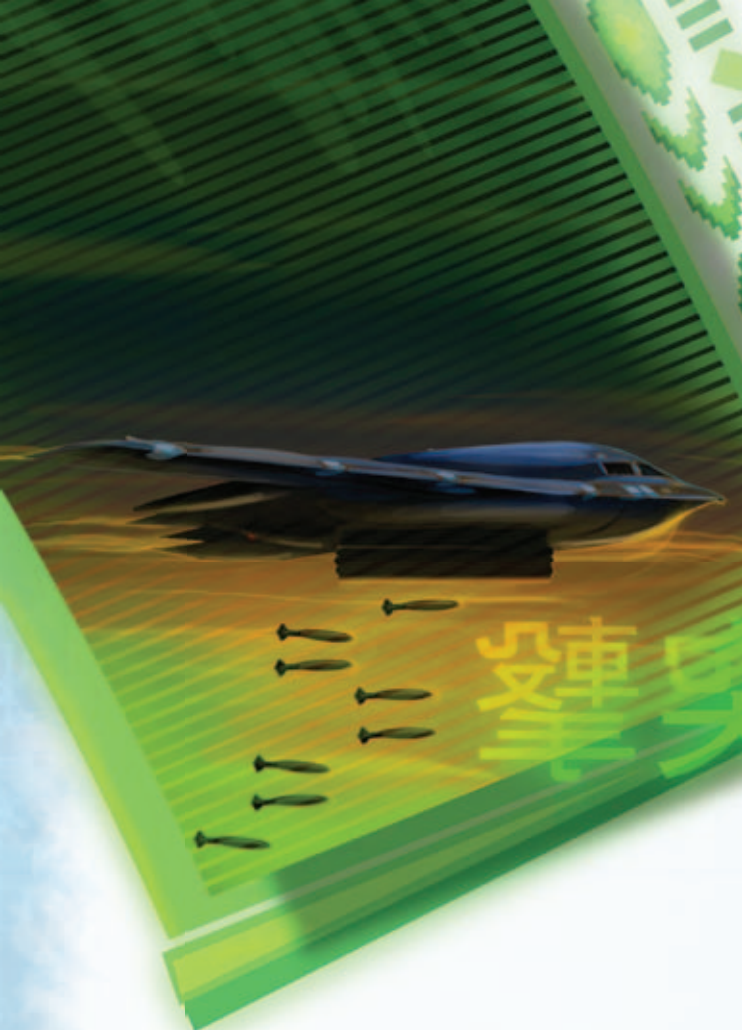
August 19—UCAS: When fully immersive VR-based technologies make their way into the market, the Corporate Court spearheads an effort to rebuild the virus-shattered grid, replacing it with these technologies. The resultant grid becomes known as the Matrix.

September 28—UCAS: After buying out seven corporations in two months, Lone Star is granted extraterritoriality.

October 30—UCAS: In Seattle Metroplex, several megacorporations are robbed of a fortune in nuyen—in the same week. The money is never recovered and the thieves escape. It is rumored later the theft was committed by a group of shadowrunners.

November 2—UCAS: Andrew McAlister is elected the first president of the UCAS.

November 15—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court initiates a hostile takeover of Global Financial Services. The attempt is successful, making the bank's primary creditors its new owners.



In what seems an unfair interpretation of the law, after their son goblinized into a troll during class, he was refused re-entry into the school by the Board of Education. The Grumman family appealed numerous times, though each instance has mysteriously disappeared from the public records. Luckily the Grummans have learned to keep copies of the complaints under lock and key.

Two months after the final filing, the Board then filed charges and served the family with fines for violating the state's compulsory education laws, citing a trumped truancy record allegedly existing before Goblinization occurred. The Grummans appealed in state court—their complaint dropped—and were ordered to pay the fines. As of this article, the Board of Education has filed a lien against their home and property.

A spokesperson for the board said earlier today in their defense, “There is nothing stopping the Grummans from home schooling their ... child. Home schooling is a great and viable alternative for children with ... special needs. This outlet was suggested as an alternative for them at countless town meetings.”

The Grummans were banned from town meetings just after their child changed.

None of the Board members were available for comment. The Grummans have filed a civil suit against individual members of the Board as they attempt to comply with the state's law.

- So you decide that a troll ... a kid ... can't be in a public school, deny the whole family access to town meetings, lie about any cooperation you gave them, and then you want to fine the parents for not educating him? Is there anything else on this case? Like ... hopefully the Board Members all turned into slugs?
- Pistons
- This kind of behavior wasn't anything new back then. What I'm more interested in was the article further up—the one about the first cyberdeck. That is cool; imagine first taking a step into that thing and jacking into the network for the first time? And seeing the Matrix at its start? Sawweeet!
- Slamm-O!
- Just last week I was reading some intel pulled from a UCAS server about the Nightwraith strike. Governments are still having kittens over that one. The fact that someone could step in and put the smack down on a bunch of sovereign nations like that gives them hives. And from what I read, they still can't figure out who it was.
- Kay St. Irregular

January 23—EUROPE: Swedish airspace monitors detect several flights of what appear to be British Aerospace FA-38 Nightwraith fighter-bombers flying across northern Europe. The aircraft obliterate key communications and command centers belonging to all sides involved in the Euro Wars. Britain denies any responsibility.

January 24—EUROPE: Crippled by the Nightwraith strike, the major combatants in the Euro Wars declare a cease fire and an armistice is signed. Smaller battles continue to plague Eastern Europe, leaving the continent to slide deeper into economic recession.

January 24—UCAS: Using an expertly programmed set of computers located in Stockholm, the previously unknown financier Damien Knight executes a hostile takeover of Ares Macrotechnology on the Boston Stock Exchange in just over a minute. It is a precedent setting event and leads to safeguards to prevent the similar computer aided buyouts in the future.

March 15—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court relocates Global Financial Services to its headquarters on the Zurich-Orbital Habitat and renames GFS the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank.

June 7—UCAS: After the research project at Turner Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia is abandoned, homeless people move into the abandoned structure. As the numbers increase, those inside build their own micro-society by using simple rules such as “might makes right.”

August 5—UCAS: In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Tulsa School Board refuses to admit a troll into school. To add insult to injury, the board then tries to fine the parents for violating the state's compulsory education law. The Grumman family files a suit against the board but loses.

September 4—SYRIA: The United Islamic Conference breaks down completely in Damascus. As a result, the Alliance for Allah is created out of extremist groups and right-wing governments, an organization founded by al-Qaeda spiritual leader Mullah Sayid Jazrir.

November 14—UCAS: In Boston, Massachusetts, former members of the Echo Mirage team, Ken Roper and Michael Eld, demonstrate a prototype cyberdeck to a group of potential investors in their company, Matrix Systems of Boston.

2033

2034—THE BIRTH OF NATIONS

Richard Villiers Under Suspicion

JUDE MCMILLAN, *BOSTON HERALD*—08/30/34

Lone Star has named Mr. Richard Villiers, a major investor in the now defunct Matrix Systems of Boston, as a person of interest in the June deaths of Matrix System's founders, Ken Roper and Michael Eld. Reportedly, Villiers produced copies of Matrix Systems back-up drives, previously believed destroyed, and used these to negotiate a one third ownership of Fuchi Industrial Electronics. An anonymous Fuchi whistle-blower reported that Villiers produced detailed technical specs for the Portal, as well as prototypes of a number of new devices.

Two months ago, Ken Roper and Michael Eld were killed in what were initially ruled as accidents. The deaths occurred just six weeks after the release of a ground-breaking mass-market cyberterminal called the Portal. On June 12, Ken Roper was found dead in his home—apparently the victim of an accidental electrocution. A few hours later, Michael Eld was killed in a hit-and-run accident. Friends say that Eld was on his way to Roper's house when the accident occurred. Lone Star has not identified any leads on the driver or vehicle that killed Roper, but are offering a substantial reward for information leading to an arrest.

Lone Star has not gone so far as to change the cause of death for Eld and Roper to homicide, but officials remain open to the possibility.

- Accidental? Seriously? Lone Star must have considered that those guys were murdered from day one.
- Slamm-O!
- A massive corrupt corporation covers up for a major shareholder in another massive corrupt corporation? Wow! Wouldn't *that* be a shocker.
- Plan 9

2035—FRAGMENTED STATES, TOXIC ZONES, AND TÍR TAIRNGIRE

Tír Tairngire Opens Council to Non-Elven Members

DRAKE LONGFELLOW, *SEATTLE NEWS*—10/30/35

Earlier this year, Tír Tairngire made it clear to the world that they are not a nation to be trifled with by blocking the Salish-Shidhe Council's attempt to retake the region. Because of this show of military might, all of the NAN recognized them as a sovereign state.

In an act of solidarity, or just plain stubbornness, the Caribbean League, UCAS, CAS and Aztlan refused to follow suit.

If the elves of Tír Tairngire feel slighted by this snub by the non-NAN, they're showing no remorse. It's obvious they couldn't care less what others think.

Or could they?

In a bold move today, after setting up a new stronghold, the Council might have set a precedent for the future in standards for a

February 28—UCAS: Shiawase research and development teams successfully develop the first type "O" genetically engineered organs. The corporation is quickly granted a patent on the process by the Corporate Court.

March 31—UCAS: In Chicago, Illinois, in a joint effort, the University of Chicago and the Atlantean Foundation create a research complex on Lake Michigan to study the high number of unfettered air and water spirits in the area. The facility is called Elemental Hall.

May 1—UCAS: In Boston, Massachusetts, Matrix Systems of Boston, the company created by Ken Roper and Michael Eld, former members of Echo Mirage, release the first "gray-market" cyberterminal, named the Portal.

June 12—UCAS: Exactly six weeks after the release of the Portal by Matrix Systems of Boston, founders, Ken Roper and Michael Eld are each killed in what are determined to be freak accidents. The next morning, all data regarding the technology for the cyberterminal and the Portal are lost when Matrix Systems' main computer crashes. All prototypes of their cyberterminal also disappear.

July 4—UK: Primrose Hill and the surrounding buildings are given to the New Druidic Movement by the government. This new location serves as the group's headquarters.

August 7—UCAS: Richard Villiers, who invested heavily in Matrix Systems, turns up at Fuchi Industrial Electronics with the specs, code, and prototypes of the Portal. Villiers trades these, all of his North American holdings, and even a Corporate Court seat for one third ownership of Fuchi.

August 28—BRAZIL: Three great dragons (two identified as Hualpa and SIRRUG) lead a force of Awakened beings and metahumans to seize control of the city of Manaus, located in the Amazon basin. The Awakened forces continue to seize additional territory, working their way outward from the heart of the Amazon.

October 14—EUROPE: The Alliance for Allah launches the Great Jihad with attacks on Israel, Russia, India, the Balkans, and the Iberian Peninsula.

November 2—AMAZONIA: The city of Brasilia falls to the Awakened forces, and the Brazilian government is forced to surrender. Shortly after, the great dragon Hualpa declares the creation of the new nation of Amazonia.

November 10—CAS: The southern states that sent representatives to Atlanta in 2032 secede from the UCAS and form the Confederation of American States. Although fears of a second civil war run high, the split is handled relatively orderly.

December 11—IRELAND: President McCarthy requests that Liam O'Connor impose a state of emergency in Ireland while the legislature enacts future constitutional changes.

December 19—CAS: Representatives from the CAS and the UCAS sign the Treaty of Richmond, formally recognizing the CAS as a sovereign nation.

December 25—TÍR NA NÓG: Politician Seamus O'Kennedy, an associate of Liam O'Connor, goes before the nation to announce further governmental changes and the creation of a new nation: Tír na nÓg. In response, many remaining humans join a mass exodus.

December 31—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: South Florida breaks from CAS and joins the Caribbean League.



strong governing body. The Council increased its number of national leaders to eleven, with the addition of four non-elven members (though Lofwyr was already a current member and a dragon).

Why make such a statement in solidarity? Is it a statement at all? It could be that after sending the Shidhe council packing, the governing body realized that working together made more sense than segregation.

Recently we learned the names of the new non-elven members of the Star Council of Tír Tairngire.

Blake Ladner and Garth Stone, both dwarves, were announced first, raising a rather startled reaction from the media community. The third member, Larry Zinkan, an ork, brought an even heavier reaction. It wasn't until "Rex," a

January 10—DENVER: The NAN sector splits into three separate sectors; the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Sioux Nation, and the Ute Nation.

April 16—CAS: Atlanta, Georgia is chosen to be the permanent capital of the nation, triumphing over New Orleans, Louisiana.

May 1—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: After years of organizing a nation in everything but name within the borders of the Salish-Shidhe Council, Lugh Surehand officially announces the formation of Tír Tairngire, the Land of Promise.

May 2—SALISH-SHIDHE COUNCIL: The Salish-Shidhe Council refuses to acknowledge Tír Tairngire's independence. They immediately launch attacks against Tír Tairngire but are repelled by an unexpectedly well armed Tír military. After several days of attacks Salish forces stand down, defeated.

May 9—NAN: Admiring the strength displayed by Tír Tairngire during their defense against invading Salish-Shidhe troops, all members of the NAN except the Salish-Shidhe Council recognize Tír Tairngire as a sovereign state.

May 17—CAS: With CAS distracted by economic and political growing pains, Aztlan forces invade southern Texas. Aztlan forces stop at Austin, which becomes a divided city, and the Texas capital is moved to Dallas—Fort Worth.

July 9—AFRICA: Satellite imagery reveals that the natural landscape of Africa is undergoing a major transformation. Later research suggests Africa went through a form of continental Awakening.

September 10—CAS: Frustrated by the unwillingness of the CAS to help Texas regain her lost territory, Texas secedes from the CAS and forms the Republic of Texas. Texas immediately starts their own campaign against Aztlan.

November 20—UCAS: The United Nations faces dissolution after years of dwindling membership, economic troubles, and a complete failure to prevent the Euro Wars. At the last moment, the Corporate Court steps in to rescue and revitalize the organization.

December 22—UK: The Yarrow nuclear reactor suffers a catastrophic meltdown, creating what is later dubbed the Northern Irradiated Zone.

2035

sasquatch was elected that there were shouts of both glee and astonishment at the Council's interracial membership.

If this proves successful, it could mean a new chapter in the war against racial prejudice.

- I remember reading about this in school. This was a pretty big thing—and they'd already kicked the Salish's ass back to their own borders.
- /dev/grrl
- It was a big thing ... if you believe that it was more than a PR stunt. Until the changing of the guard, these guys were just a dog and pony show designed to convince everyone that non-elves mattered to the Princes.
- Kay St. Irregular
- She's right. Haven't we taught you yet, grrl? Don't believe anything they teach you in school.
- Pistons
- Sorry, ma'am. I'll try to remember to listen to my elders.
- /dev/grrl
- Heh. I like this kid more all the time.
- Cosmo

2036—CALIFORNIA GOES INDEPENDENT

Independent or Just Drunk at the Wheel?

JON HOONG, *LOS ANGELES TIMES* EDITORIAL—10/30/36

I'll start with a little history for our out of country readers. Earlier this year, lawmakers here in California played a game of political chicken, threatening to secede from the UCAS if the fat cats in DeeCee didn't meet a huge list of demands. Now to be fair, in order to complete a secession from the Union the legislation needed the governor's signature and he never would have agreed to that—but the Governor was in Africa. That's right, folks—when the cat's away, the mice get stupid.

How did President MacAlister react? Let's just say, I wouldn't want to play poker with him. He went before Congress and proposed that under Article IV, Section 3 of the UCAS Constitution, California no longer qualified as a member of the UCAS. They agreed. Don't let the door hit you on the way out.

Whoops.

Back here in California, Lieutenant Governor Marshall tried to quell the panic caused that followed. He held an emergency press conference and stated that Proposition 129 would not be signed into law, and that Governor Treacle was returning to California early to deal with the crisis. Denial anyone? Like rejecting Prop 129 would do any good at that point.

It didn't take long for our enemies to realize what this meant. With all federal resources immediately withdrawn from the newly independent nation of California, including military support, the CFS was a sitting duck.

Trying his best to manage an unmanageable situation, Governor Treacle made a semi-covert overture to the Japanese Imperial State. The Japanese government immediately recognized the newly declared California Free State (CFS) as a sovereign nation and promised aid, both financial and military.

Military Aid. Think about those words. Japan is offering us military aid. The announcement seems to have slowed down our enemies in the north and south, but does anyone else here remember the "military aid" Japan sent to the Philippines?

- Can you imagine being on vacation or whatever it was he was doing, and finding out while you were gone that the guys you left in charge managed to get you kicked out of the Union? The man had an ugly situation to deal with. Seems to me what he did was for the best.
- /dev/grrl
- Sure—unless, of course, you happened to be a metahuman in Frisco.
- Butch

2036—CALIFORNIA GOES INDEPENDENT

January 11—CAS: After failing to retake its lost territory from Aztlan, Texas rejoins the CAS.

April 19—UK: In Scotland, druidic magic transforms acres of pine forests into deciduous forests, creating what is now known as the Scottish Wild Lands.

March 21—CFS: California threatens to secede from the UCAS if not granted heavy economic and political concessions. The UCAS calls their bluff and votes to dissolve California's bond to the UCAS. Seeing an opportunity, Aztlan moves north to claim San Diego and Tír Tairngire moves south to occupy Northern California.

May 1—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The Council holds its first Rite of Progression tests. These tests, comprised of a series of mental and physical evaluations, determine an individual's social rank within Tír Tairngire.

June 23—UCAS: in New Visions, Ohio, a church filled with mostly metahumans is firebombed with napalm. Twenty people, most of them metahumans, are killed. Two hours later, a previously unknown anti-metahuman terrorist group, Alamos 20,000, claims responsibility in a rambling announcement riddled with spelling errors.

August 2—GLOBAL: The world's currency shifts to the nuyen as the government of Japan grants policy control of their nation's currency to the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank. It is soon established as the world accepted reserve currency.

August 21—GERMANY: The great dragon Lofwyr takes control of the BMW/Krupp corporate empire after revealing he has acquired a 63 percent share in the company.

September 4—UCAS: The government ratifies a modification to the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, establishing the System Identification Number (SIN). This new clause in the amendment requires that all peoples of the UCAS register to receive a SIN.

September 9—JAPAN: Fuchi introduces the CDT-1000 third generation cyberterminal. Unlike its bulky predecessors, this unit is a compact, desktop box.

September 18—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: Portland is officially recognized as the trade hub between Tír Tairngire and the rest of the world. , Tír Tairngire begins construction on a massive wall around the city to keep international traders isolated from the Tír Tairngire. During this same period, the capital of Tír Tairngire is moved to Royal Hill just west of Portland.

November 4—UCAS: Martin Vincenzo is elected president of the UCAS.

November 4—CAS: Sean Timbs is elected president of the CAS.

2037—DOCWAGON ESTABLISHED

Japanese Invasion: Clamoring for Resignation

BRILLO HORNGOLD, *LOS ANGELES TIMES* EDITORIAL—03/05/37

In the early hours on February 21, just two weeks after arriving in San Francisco, the Japanese Imperial Marines declared martial law throughout the city and closed down its borders.

After several reporters and news teams were arrested and detained for filming the marines' treatment of the locals, especially metahumans, the Governor finally stepped in. He negotiated the reporters' release but agreed to keep them out of the city of San Francisco. The news crews arrived at the border safe and sound, sans their equipment naturally.

Several smart, local crews remained hidden and brought the world their first look at the brutality with which the Japanese Marines treated the city's metahuman inhabitants.

How long will the violence continue? A Japanese representative was quoted as saying, "Until order can be restored."

Order?

Did we not have order before? I thought we did. I mean, I could easily walk down to the diner and grab a burger without being accosted. I could even go get a coffee, read a paper in the park, and have a smoke before.

Not now.

Now I can't even stick my head outside my apartment building without having my SIN ready and some provable purpose for being out on the street.

Feh.

Yes, I touted the Governor's thinking-on-his-feet action in insinuating that the Japanese would help the state when the President cut us loose, but did he seriously not realize the Japanese would do this?

Well, I had an inkling. Why? Because I'm a descendent of a Pearl Harbor veteran.

I know about Japanese deception. Given the opportunity, they'll invade your underwear drawer.

What has the city more up in arms at the moment is the eviction of Californians from their homes. It's as if the Marines already knew who—or what—was living where. They broke into a reported seven hundred homes of metahumans and forcibly evicted them before reassigning those homes—and the belongings inside—to Japanese invaders.

Look, I'm no metahuman rights activist myself, but that's just wrong. And what's really bad here is that the Governor's hands are pretty much tied.

You see, he *asked* them to come and help. If ever a governor of California needed to resign, it's now.

Bastard.

- Remember that conversation we had the other day grrl? I told you never trust the Japanese.
- Butch
- Yeah, I thought you were making that up. They actually evicted people and gave their homes and belongings to the soldiers? That's nuts.
- /dev/grrl
- The Governor seriously dropped the political ball on this one. He should have mounted a PR blitz against the Marines, lodged formal protests with Japan, or hell, even asked the UCAS to step in and help. Not that any of that would have mattered, but it wouldn't have been the political suicide sitting back and watching it happen was.
- Dr. Spin
- Sure, because it was the Governor's lousy approval ratings that mattered—not the people who were forced out of their homes.
- Sunshine
- Maybe you didn't notice, but this is Jackpoint. BleedingheartPoint is the next grid over.
- Clockwork

February 7—CFS: After California appeals to Japan for aid in defending its remaining territory, two Japanese Imperial Marine light divisions arrive by air simultaneously at San Francisco's International Airport and the Alameda Naval Air Station. They take control of San Francisco and declare martial law, claiming a need to "protect Japanese lives and corporate assets."

February 27—DENVER: An underground computer clearing house for illegal and bootleg information called the Denver Data Haven goes online. In the years that follow, it becomes a force to be reckoned with inside the Matrix shadow community.

March 2—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The wall around Portland is completed.

March 4—CFS: Tír Tairngire's army is forced to retreat to Yreka after the Northern California populace wages guerrilla warfare. An unofficial stalemate is reached, with both nations claiming control over the lands between Yreka and Redding.

May 18—GERMANY: Lofwyr moves the Saeder-Krupp headquarters to Essen. The move turns Essen, effectively, into the great dragon's personal kingdom.

June 12—CAS: In Atlanta, Georgia, promising to better provide emergency on-site medical care by increasing response calls faster than any other private paramedical service, the DocWagon organization is founded.

July 14—FRANCE: The military relinquishes control of the French government to Euro Wars hero Antoine d'Orléans, who founds the Sixth Republic of France.

August 22—JAPAN: Fuchi Industrial Electronics announces the release of RealSense technology, which introduces emotive signal processing into commercial simsense.

2037

2038—LONDON RIOTS AND GERMAN SECESSION

Monsters at Work: Project 42-20
POSTED ON THE ADVOCATE—06/12/38

Two days ago on Channel 7's show, *Medicine Bag*, reporters exposed the Adams-Hoffmann "Project 42-20." Project 42-20 is nothing less than gene pool manipulation on a massive scale, and the evidence presented by the report backs this up. If you haven't watched the episode yet, grab it here <LINK>. It's something you need to see.

Apparently Adams-Hoffman has been conducting these experiments for fifteen years, unbeknownst to the citizens of Lambeth. The results are truly horrific; they range from waves of stillbirths and severe deformations, to genetic abnormalities in school children whose milk was laced with mutagens. Throw in the fact that a large percentage of Lambeth's citizens are metahumans and the picture grows even darker. We already have to stomach widespread racism against individual metahumans, but racism is the motivation here we're talking about an institutionalized system of genetic tyranny that rings eerily of the horrors of the last century.

After the report aired, the network was besieged with calls and an angry mob gathered outside, demanding answers and blocking traffic. Local law enforcement was called in to escort the reporters from the building amid loud protests and demands for more information—particularly the names of the doctors involved and the names of test subjects on the Project's manifest. The reporters were safely relocated to an undisclosed location when several of the calls threatened their lives if the information wasn't released. The authorities confiscated all the gathered evidence and promised a thorough investigation.

The investigation had better be a short one. Tensions are brewing and the people of Lambeth won't wait forever for answers.

- The best part: the Conservative government at the time approved the entire thing.
- Winterhawk
- I don't buy it. AH was perfectly capable of pulling this off on its own. Anyhow, the experiments killed something like ten thousand people over fifteen years. What government is going to sign on for something like that?
- Cosmo

- Your naivety aside, let's consider the facts. In the early 2030's, the UK was struggling to pass a massive overhaul of their health care system. The biggest opponents were the drug and medical insurance companies. Chief among these was Adams-Hoffmann. Then, in 2033, AH suddenly switches sides and gets behind the new system—the same year that Project 42-20 was launched. No, nothing suspicious there at all. Perfectly normal chain of events.
- Plan 9

2039—THE NIGHT OF RAGE

On The Hand Of Five

MELINA TOKAS, *SEATTLE TIMES* EDITORIAL—02/14/39

Hundreds of Seattle citizens die after the governor orders them locked up without cause on the Night of Rage, and now this is somehow blamed on the notorious Hand of Five?

Now how exactly did the government and media make this leap? Everyone likes something solid to pin their fears on, but are the Hand of Five the real villains here? All the media are in an uproar, praising Lone Star's swift work in tracking down the alleged members. Reports say all the members are either dead or behind bars, and we're all safer because of this.

Yet this reporter doesn't believe a word of it. Oh, I believe the Mercenary For Hire Thugs, AKA Lone Star, hunted down the members they already knew about. But I also believe the whole hunt for them was nothing but a set-up orchestrated by the powers that be to throw public opinion back into their favor so that we'd forget the complacency they demonstrated during the riots and the subsequent fires.

I hate to tell them, but I don't buy it. Lone Star and the governor are, in my honest opinion, to blame for the massacres, the deaths, and the terror we all lived through that horrible night.

- Can't say I disagree. The information that came out later points a pretty firm finger at Alamos 20K's Hand of Five, but Lone Star created the situation that let it happen.
- Hard Exit
- We'll never know the truth. Lone Star's Internal Affairs division investigated claims that their officers started the fires. They're not going to blame their own guys when the Hand of Five offers such a handy scapegoat.
- Butch

2038

March 30—GERMANY: A navigational error is blamed when the airship Lothar Späth flies into the path of a dragon over the Black Forest. When the dragon retaliates with fire, the hydrogen ignites and the Lothar Späth explodes, killing all forty passengers and crew.

April 12—GERMANY: In Berlin, Ozgur al Houssari, a Turkish-Palestinian hobgoblin, and Louise Derrida, establish the Anarchist Black Crescent organization. It is an anarchist paramedic service dedicated to aiding those the traditional medical services can't, or more often won't, help.

April 20—CAS: In Texas, computer genius Steven Z. Ridgemont creates FTL Technologies. Ridgemont's persona code is standard on Fuchi cyberdecks for years.

May 12—GERMANY: After years of disagreements, often over metahuman rights, Germany's conservative southern states secede to form the Southern German League.

June 10—UK: A London television station reveals that, for the past fifteen years, the Adams-Hoffmann Corporation was conducting genetic experiments on the poverty stricken populace on the Lambeth neighborhoods.

June 25—UK: Dissatisfied with the government response to the Adams-Hoffmann scandal, the people of Lambeth begin to riot. The first riot ends on the Tower Bridge, when UK troops open fire on rioters, killing nineteen. The event gives birth to the terrorist organization, the Lambeth Martyrs.

August 3—UK: Unable to restore order in Lambeth, the government uses the military to seal it off, creating the Lambeth Containment Zone.

September 1—TÍR NA NÓG: Because they allowed cybernetically-enhanced employees into Tír na nÓg territory, Ares Macrotechnology is expelled from the country.

September 9—UCAS: The Chrysler corporation and the Nissan corporation become embroiled in a hostile takeover war. At first it appears Nissan will take control of Chrysler, until negotiations result in a merger, creating the new corporation of Chrysler-Nissan.



February 7—GLOBAL: After years of ongoing discrimination against metahumans, often escalating into violence, an undetermined cultural spark ignites riots around the globe. Around the world, metahumans take to the streets, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not, to protest their treatment as second class citizens. The event becomes known as the Night of Rage.

February 7—UCAS: In Seattle, Governor Alleson's reaction to the Night of Rage is to round up metahumans and herd them into warehouses on the Tacoma waterfront. When anti-metahuman terrorist set fire to the warehouses, hundreds die and riots, both pro- and anti-metahuman, engulf the city.

February 10—UCAS: The terrorist organization Alamos 20,000 uses magic and explosives to send the Sears Tower crashing down into the streets of Chicago. Between the attack and the fires that nearly engulf the loop afterwards, more than 26,000 people are killed. Alamos makes the attack look like the work of metahumans leading the Chicago authorities to seal metahumans out of their neighborhoods and move them to projects outside the city.

March 17—UCAS: The human Irish-American organization called the Knights of the Red Branch, angry with the elves of Tir na nÓg for what they view as the unlawful occupation of their homeland, set off a bomb at a popular elven restaurant in Boston along the St. Patrick's Day Parade route. The attack triggers a riot. Twenty-four are killed and hundreds are injured in what the media dubs "Bloody Thursday."

June 1—JAPAN: In Tokyo, Fuchi Incorporated hosts the Universal Matrix Specifications Conference. Taking the lead in Matrix development, more than 7,000 humans and metahumans meet for nearly three months to determine a set of standards for Matrix programming.

July 5—CAS: In Charleston, South Carolina, the first ever case solved with the help of one of the criminal victim's ghosts is closed by Julius Wren, a magician with degrees in both criminology and thaumaturgy. The serial killer is captured after Wren studies the ghost's actions, which revealed evidence that led to the murderer's arrest and conviction.

August 6—UK: The eco-terrorist group Pan-Europa releases a paraviral agent on London, resulting in the destruction of the biofabric weather control dome covering the city.

August 13—AZANIA: An accord is reached by the nations of the Cape Republic, Zulu Nation, Oranje-Vrystaar, and the Trans-Swazi Federation, creating the Azanian Confederation.

September 10—CAS: Senate hearings begin on charges of racial prejudice against metahumans and their families. The hearings publically reveal shocking reports of conditions that amount to slavery in most states. In response, the NAN impose sanctions on the CAS to encourage reform.

September 16—FRANCE: After meeting her in Paris, the great dragon Dunkelzahn selects the mysterious and beautiful Nadja Daviar to serve as his new "voice."

November 15—SHAANXI: Monarchists execute a successful coup and restructure the government as a parliamentary monarchy. Michelle Chou is crowned Queen of Shaanxi.

2040—EARLY BTL ABUSE

Tilting at Windmills

MICHELLE BOEAVAN, *HERALD DE PARIS*—07/31/40

Earlier this week I obtained an exclusive interview with the elusive magician and self-proclaimed vampire hunter, Martin de Vris. In that interview, he explained that he is starting a one-man war on what he terms this century's most profane creatures.

"At first I believed that some vampires were innocent, but now I understand that all vampires must be exterminated," de Vris said. "They truly are the monsters portrayed in myth and legend, vile to their core. Worse than this, they are the masterminds behind a grand conspiracy to bring an ancient evil to our world, the likes of which you cannot imagine. They must be stopped at any cost."

A grand conspiracy? An ancient evil? It's all very dramatic, but is there any truth to it?

And what makes vampires different than other Awakened beings? In a time when we see metahumans being mistreated, enslaved, and even killed, why go off and proclaim you're going to deliberately kill another breed of metahuman?

And why are we letting him?

April 7—ATHABASKAN COUNCIL: The council designates sasquatches as a sapient species, according them the same inalienable rights as metahumans. They are one of the first nations in the world to do so.

Spring—CZECH REPUBLIC: The University of Prague refocuses their magical training into on cross-traditional approaches, garnering worldwide recognition.

July 18—MIDDLE EAST: War breaks out between Iran and Iraq, which quickly embroils much of the Middle East. Badr al-Din Ibn Eisa resolves the conflict in conjunction with his Islamic Unity Movement.

July 20—EUROPE: Noted mage Martin de Vris strikes off on a series of one-man vampire hunts.

September 10—UCAS: In the Seattle Metroplex, construction begins on the Renraku Arcology.

Fall—KOREA: BTL abuse climbs to record heights. Over the next ten years it is slowly contained through the efforts of socially conscious groups like the Church of Unification.

October 15—UK: Evidence emerges that suggests that the Conservative government encouraged the Adams-Hoffmann Project 42-20, leading to the Conservative's downfall in the following year.

November 6—UCAS: Carl Preston is elected president of the UCAS.

November 6—CAS: Joseph Alexander is elected president of the CAS.

December 12—UCAS: New Horizons corporation comes under investigation for its Superkids project, overseen by New Horizons CEO Paul Louberge, when one of them commits suicide. The program is shut down when discoveries of extensive genetic manipulation, in conjunction with physical and mental abuse are discovered.

December 14—CAS: Several metahumans are tapped for key cabinet posts by President Elect Alexander, which persuades the NAN to lift some of its sanctions.

December 25—UCAS: In Connecticut, a casino on the former site of an Indian reservation is hit with a magical explosion that destroys part of the building, killing eighteen people and wounding dozens. A group calling itself Warpath claims responsibility.

I had to laugh this morning at the comments from a sharp-witted up and comer with the Times who previewed the interview.

"With all the disasters going on in the world—most recently the devastating events of the Night of Rage still simmering in the world's consciousness—why on earth would a mage as powerful as de Vris go off and try to hunt vampires? Vampires are the victims of a virus. De Vris could use his power to help those who are actually in need of his assistance. By focusing on this imaginary Enemy of his, the man is simply tilting at windmills."

Was Don Quixote any saner? Check out the entire story and decide for yourself! <LINK>

- This is just stupid fluff press. Why did anyone post this? There were several other important events in 2040—and we get to read about a nut hunting vampires?
- Clockwork
- Maybe, but in this we can see the craziness of the century as it existed. We think our world is full of stupidity and idiocy? This just shows us how we've made similar mistakes over and over and over. It's like that old quote goes—those who don't study history are doomed to repeat it.
- Fastjack
- In all fairness, this was also about the time that bounties on the Infected began to become exceptionally common. Even I have to admit that the victims of HMMHV who become feral need to be contained for the greater safety of the community at large, but a blanket label of "evil" applied to all members of a certain Infected group isn't fair.
- Hannibelle

2041—DRAGON STRIKES, MEDIUMS, AND FEY UNIONS

EuroAir Flight 329 Flight Recorder, September 23, 2041
22:56h

EA329: Uh, that dragon is still coming towards us, and fast—really fast.

We are doing an emergency descent to level one five, er, one four zero.

TA: Confirm you wish to descend to flight level one four zero?

EA329: Right. We have already commenced.

TA: Fine, roger, you are clear to descend immediately to flight level one four zero.

22:57h

EA329: Roger. It would be good if, wait, what's he doing? Is that...

EA329: [Roaring noise]

TA: Repeat ER329.

EA329: He hit us with some sort of spell. We just lost two engines.
One and two.

EA329: [Sound of a loud thump]

22:57h

TA: Do you request a full emergency? Repeat, a full emergency?

EA329: Affirmative! That's, dammit, that's Charlie Charlie.

TA: Roger, full emergency is declared.

EA329: [More roaring. A screeching noise.]

EA329: Shit. Shit. Cabin pressure is dropping. I think he's breached.

22:58h

EA329: [Sound of the steward. Unintelligible.]

EA329: One of the passengers...one of the passengers is fighting it. I think he's a mage.

TA: What is your heading? Are you still...

EA329: [Fire alarms buzz]

TA: What is your status 329.

22:59h

EA329: We've got fire in the main cargo deck. It's like fraggin' fireworks out there. We're...

EA329: [Loud thump. Alarms.]

TA: Status 329.

EA329: He hit us! He hit us! We're...

EA329: [Sounds of engines increasing]

EA329: Up dammit! Up dammit! Negative. I said no. Three seven.

TA: 329. We're going to route a...

EA329: Did he get him? Did he?

23:00h

TA: 329. Do you read me?

EA329: No! I mean yes, Transit, we...

EA329: Very loud crash.

EA329: Oh, god! I love you Allie.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

- Anyone ever figure out why Sirurg attacked the plane?
- /dev/grrl
- Nope. 230 people killed and as far as we know, Sirurg was just bored that afternoon.
- Sticks

January 20—UCAS: Carl Preston inaugurated as President.

March 7—AZTLAN: The Roman Catholic Church is declared a revolutionary organization and the practice of Catholicism is brutally suppressed throughout the nation.

March 18—UCAS: Global Oil merges with UCAS Steel.

April 23—TSMISHIAN: Activist John George forms the Haida National Front (HNF) to protest for Haida civil rights.

May 16—UK: In UK elections, the Green Party drives the Conservationists from power.

June 5—CFS: Lockheed completes conversion of residential East L.A. into a sprawling factory district.

June 7—NYC: New York City voids Warren Security's contract after Knight Errant proves they butchered squatters in Warren-owned buildings.

June 10—CAS: DocWagon becomes Atlanta's de facto official on-site health care provider.

July 11—UCAS: All professional athletic leagues are required to admit metahumans.

July 25—CANTON CONFEDERATION: The Canton Confederation and Taiwan go to war over Fujian and Zhejiang. The conflict is called the Nationalist War.

August 21—AGS: The Duchy of Pomorya completes revitalization of Baltic Sea using magically enhanced biobacteria.

September 5—FRANCE: The Corporate Court forces a modification of the Loureau Act, originally passed to control extraterritoriality.

September 10—SAUDI ARABIA: The conservative Sunni movement Jamil Islamiya establishes the first madrassa dedicated to teaching magic in Medina.

September 21—FRANCE: Yohann de Kervelec takes over the French Diviners and Mediums Guild and begins reshaping it into a formidable arcane organization.

September 23—AMAZONIA: The dragon Sirurg attacks and destroys EuroAir Flight 329.

October 16—UCAS: Antibacterial monoclonal antibody treatment passes FDA approval for patient treatment.

November 25—SCANDINAVIAN UNION: The Copenhagen Accords, banning the production, use, and research of biological weapons, are signed.

December 22—TÍR NA NÓG: President Liam O'Connor surprises many by marrying Lady Brane Deigh and then securing her position as a Prionsa within the Court of Stewards.



- There's been a bit more info on the guy who tried to fight Sirurg off. As part of the investigation, they reviewed the video footage of the passengers boarding the plane. Whenever the camera panned across one particular group of passengers, the image blurred momentarily. They checked the system and everything checked out. Since then, nothing else like that.
- Marcos
- What about the possibility that this "heroic passenger" was actually the target, and that the rest of the victims just got caught in the crossfire?
- Plan 9
- I've heard that theory tossed around, but I'm not sure there's any point in pursuing it. At best, you'll never get a solid answer. At worst, you'll annoy a certain dragon known for his quick temper and violent reaction. Sounds like a lose-lose to me.
- Marcos

2042—WARS END AND WYRMS TALK

Wyrms Talk: A Win for Dunkelzahn and Us

ALAN DRUMMIN, *ENTERTAINEA* REVIEW OF *WYRM TALK: EPISODE 1—09/10/42*

When I first heard that the Big-D planned to do a talk show I had flashbacks to that painful sitcom starring Golden Kay back in the thirties. Yeah, you know what I'm talking about. "Bring on the Balloonza!" I still shudder at the thought of it.

What I got was something very different. Over the course of two hours, Dunkelzahn engaged our minds, touched our hearts, and explored our feelings about the Awakened world. He brings a breadth of understanding and experience to his commentary that no mortal man could muster, while keeping the conversation at a level the average viewer can relate to.

The format was pretty standard. Open with a serious monologue, introduce the main topic, bring on the guests, and close with reflection on the issues. Unlike many talk shows we get today, *Wyrms Talk* never descended into a pseudo-parody of its own



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January 10—TÍR NA NÓG: President Liam O'Connor stages his election as High Steward, making him the single most powerful person in the nation.

February 5—UCAS: Automation of coffin motels becomes the standard.

February 24—TSIMSHIAN: Tsimshian military forces wipe out the HNF, imprisoning founder John George.

March 7—JAPAN: Yamatetsu achieves AAA status and is awarded a seat on the Corporate Council. On the same day, a previously unknown investor named Ms. Buttercup acquires an eleven percent stake in the corporation.

March 13—GLOBAL: Business Recognition Accords establish the requirements for corporate extraterritoriality.

April 8—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: Ebran the Scribe puts his support behind Lester's Gaia Hypothesis that contends that if the biosphere is a living organism, its Awakening will cause "ripple effects" in minerals, soil, and landscapes.

April 20—SALISH-SHIDHE: Masaru formally becomes a great dragon and builds a lair on Vancouver Island.

April 25—SICHUAN: Sichuanese combat mage Liang Hong drives back Canton Confederation forces using magic.

May 31—SOUTHERN GERMAN LEAGUE: The Eugenics Project is activated, with Metahumans rounded up and sent to camps.

June 1—SOUTHERN GERMAN LEAGUE: Long dormant volcanoes in the Eifel region of the SGL erupt simultaneously.

June 2—SOUTHERN GERMAN LEAGUE: The Eugenics Project is abandoned, but many metahumans still flee the region.

June 7—UCAS: Ares Project Cydonia launches a probe to perform detailed scans of Mars.

July 7—UCAS: The pro sports commissioners charter a joint committee to consider physical adepts in sports.

August 10—CZECH REPUBLIC: Limited citizenship is granted to non-metahuman sentient beings.

September 9—UCAS: First episode of *Wyrms Talk* airs, starring the great dragon Dunkelzahn.

October 21—CONSTANTINOPLE: Istanbul declares independence and changes its name back to Constantinople.

October 25—ITALY: Pope John XXV allows women into the Roman Catholic priesthood.

November 8—DENMARK: Lobatchevski Vory takes control of Ship City.

November 13—GLOBAL: Sasquatch and hsing-sing are recognized as sentient species by the UN.

December 8—UCAS: Veil agents intercept and destroy all data from the Cydonia Mars probes.

format. From the moment the show opened, it was clear that Dunkelzahn's intent was to take us on a journey. He showed us that he wasn't there to make a judgment, but rather to join us as explorers and truth seekers.

If you want the in-depth review, including my analysis of the guests and their comments, slot the full version of the article (5 nuyen) [here](#). But do yourself a favor, and don't just skim the synopsis. Watch the entire show. I promise you won't regret it.

- Is this really Gunning' Drummin, the terror of the trid? The same Gunning' Drummin who gave the documentary on war orphans in the Czech Republic a one star review because the director picked a topic that was "so tired and boring that I had to slap a stim patch just to make it through the credits?"
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- One and the same. The full article isn't any less of a love fest. He took a lot of flak for this one. Most folks were convinced that the dragon either paid him off or used some sort of mind power on him. I'm not so sure. I remember Wyrn Talk well, especially that first episode. It was amazing.
- Fastjack
- Wait a second. Dragons can't talk, can they? Was the whole show done through his "voice"?
- /dev/grrl
- Yep. If you've never seen it, though, you probably can't understand how effective it is.
- Winterhawk

2043—BIRTH OF THE BROTHERHOOD

Universal Brotherhood Welcomes the Public to Open House UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD PRESS RELEASE—02/01/43

The Universal Brotherhood, a philanthropic organization dedicated to bettering the quality of life for all people, has announced the opening of four chapterhouses in California. Two are located in San Francisco, one in Ukiah, and one in Gilroy. To celebrate the openings, the

Universal Brotherhood welcomes the public to visit this Wednesday from noon until 8 PM.

The Universal Brotherhood believes that common universal elements bind all people together, elements that transcend culture, race, or geography. By tapping into these common elements, it is possible to overcome a host of problems that have plagued us for eons.

"Poverty, racism, hopelessness; all these things can be conquered if we work as one," said Cathryn Westgate, the Consul at the Gilroy chapterhouse.

The Universal Brotherhood's methods are based on the groundbreaking work of Dr. Caitlan O'Connal, once a lecturer at UCLA and the founder of the Universal Brotherhood. Dr. O'Connal's work revealed that the hypothetical collective unconscious is real, proving that all humans and metahumans truly are connected.

"Many things that we considered pseudo-science in previous decades have turned out to be true," said Dr. O'Connal. "The universal brotherhood bond is no different. It is as real as the air that we breathe or the mana that permeates the universe. The question is: Are we willing to accept this bond and use it for the betterment of all?"

Attendees at Wednesday's open house will learn about what membership in the organization entails. Speakers will also talk about the Universal Brotherhood's future plans, including an ambitious project designed to address the deteriorating conditions in the so-called "barrens" of many major sprawls. For more information and directions, visit LA LTG#2122 (345-9903).

- Wow. Does that give anyone else the chills?
- /dev/grrl
- Goddess, yes. I lost a good friend to a Project Hope camp back in '55. When she first signed up I was so excited for her. I'm still kicking myself for not seeing it for what it was.
- Pistons
- The worst part about the whole UB debacle was that the FBI had proof about their true intent as far back as '46. The problem was that the damned intelligence community never managed to reform their lines of communication

February 1—CFS: The Universal Brotherhood opens its first chapters in California.

February 19—AGS: The Black Forest Troll Kingdom is established.

March 19—UNITED NETHERLANDS: Flanders and the Netherlands unite to form the United Netherlands.

April 7—AGS: The dwarf-ruled Grand Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg is founded.

May 2—TÍR NA NÓG: President Liam O'Connor disappears.

May 21—TÍR NA NÓG: Liam O'Connor's widow, Lady Brane Deigh, names herself Queen of the Seelie Court.

June 2—UCAS: Damien Knight reinstated as chairman of Ares.

June 14—TURKEY: Kurdish Autonomous Zone founded.

June 22—FRANCE: Powerful earthquakes rock Southern France.

June 29—AGS: Magical cheating at an Urban Brawl game in Bonn rocks the sports world.

July 8—UK: Rhiannon Glendower becomes Countess of Snowdonia.

July 12—SOUTHERN GERMAN LEAGUE: SGL forces attempt to retake the Black Forest and Westrhine-Luxembourg, sparking the Troll Wars.

July 13—CAS: Freepark, the new federal government complex in Atlanta, is completed.

July 22—SEATTLE: DocWagon opens their first Seattle office.

July 31—UCAS: Professional gladiator games debut.

August 10—SEATTLE: Yakuza purges Koreans from its ranks. Survivors form the Seoulpa Rings.

August 22—TSIMSHIAN: Public executions are instituted.

August 30—AGS: Earthquakes shake the Upper Rhine region.

September 1—CAMBODIA: Vietnamese army withdraws from Cambodia.

September 9—JAPAN: The first commercially available skillsoft technology hits the market.

September 14—CZECH REPUBLIC: Prof. Markus Kochik presents the Unified Magical Theory.

September 17—FRANCE: Earthquake rattled independent city-states rejoin France.

October 5—SWITZERLAND: The bulk of the Swiss governmental apparatus is moved to the Matrix.

November 10—RUSSIA: Vladivostok reopened to commercial traffic.

November 25—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: Ebran the Scribe publishes Mankind Ascendant, where he first mentions his controversial "Sixth World" theory.

December 21—ITALY: Don Franco Mueller of Atlanta appointed to the Alta Commissione.

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after CAS split off. The break-up shattered a carefully groomed system of inter-departmental cooperation that the agencies had constructed over the previous twenty years or so. I've seen FBI memos dated 2047 that actually use the words "insect spirit" that got back-routed to the office that sent them, then archived.

- Plan 9
- '55, Pistons? How old are you?
- /dev/grrl
- Thin ice, grrl. Thin ice.
- Pistons

2044—NATIONAL POWER PLAYS

Corps Scream Foul Over Aztlan Nationalization

ASSOCIATED PRESS—05/31/44

Tenochtitlán, Aztlan (AP) – At 8 A.M. (GMT-6) this morning, Aztlan officials began enforcing an edict that forcibly nationalizes almost all foreign business assets on Aztlan soil. Heavily armed ACS soldiers were seen moving into corporate facilities across the country, seizing corporate enclaves and literally turning corporate citizens out onto the street.

April 7—ATHABASKAN COUNCIL: The council designates sasquatches as a sapient species, according them the same inalienable rights as metahumans. They are one of the first nations in the world to do so.

Spring—CZECH REPUBLIC: The University of Prague refocuses their magical training into on cross-traditional approaches, garnering worldwide recognition.

July 18—MIDDLE EAST: War breaks out between Iran and Iraq, which quickly embroils much of the Middle East. Badr al-Din Ibn Eisa resolves the conflict in conjunction with his Islamic Unity Movement.

July 20—EUROPE: Noted mage Martin de Vris strikes off on a series of one-man vampire hunts.

September 10—UCAS: In the Seattle Metroplex, construction begins on the Renraku Arcology.

Fall—KOREA: BTL abuse climbs to record heights. Over the next ten years it is slowly contained through the efforts of socially conscious groups like the Church of Unification.

October 15—UK: Evidence emerges that suggests that the Conservative government encouraged the Adams-Hoffmann Project 42-20, leading to the Conservative's downfall in the following year.

November 6—UCAS: Carl Preston is elected president of the UCAS.

November 6—CAS: Joseph Alexander is elected president of the CAS.

December 12—UCAS: New Horizons corporation comes under investigation for its Superkids project, overseen by New Horizons CEO Paul Louberge, when one of them commits suicide. The program is shut down when discoveries of extensive genetic manipulation, in conjunction with physical and mental abuse are discovered.

December 14—CAS: Several metahumans are tapped for key cabinet posts by President Elect Alexander, which persuades the NAN to lift some of its sanctions.

December 25—UCAS: In Connecticut, a casino on the former site of an Indian reservation is hit with a magical explosion that destroys part of the building, killing eighteen people and wounding dozens. A group calling itself Warpath claims responsibility.

At Tenochtitlán International Airport, hundreds of corporate citizens were clamoring for seats on a limited number of Aeroaztlan flights after Aztlaner forces seized dozens of corporate-owned jets.

"It's insane," said Melanie Crooks of Ares Macrotechnology. "They kicked in the door, pointing guns and shouting for us to get out of the building. It was like a BTL raid or something. I didn't even have time to get my kids' holopics off my desk."

Already, four corporations have filed formal complaints with the Corporate Court, who has assured its members it will convene a special session to address the situation.

"The Corporate Court understands the severity of this situation," said a Court spokesperson in a press conference earlier today. "We are taking all available measures to address the problem. At the same time, there is a process that we must follow. The rule of law still applies."

The assurances seem to have done little to ease the minds of the affected corporations. While on a break from an emergency meeting of the Ares Macrotechnology Board, Damien Knight addressed the crisis.

"Look, we're a member of the Corporate Court for a reason. If we aren't going to let them do their job, then what's the point? At the same time, we are fully aware of the financial impact these seizures will have, and for the sake of our stockholders we are exploring every option."

According to some industry insiders, those options include mustering military assets at Ares holdings in the Caribbean League and CAS. When asked about such rumors, Mr. Knight refused to comment.

The Corporate Court is expected to release an initial report on the situation later today.

- I can't help it. Whenever I hear a corporate suit say, "we are exploring our options" I get all excited.
- Mr. Bonds
- There's definitely money to be made in those situations, but when you're talking about corps openly seizing assets from one another, things can get pretty hot. It ends up being more of a mercenary gig than a shadowrun.
- Red Anya

2045—AZTLAN ANNEXATIONS AND THE GREEN TIDE

'Green Tide' Devastates Coastal Communities

INTERNATIONAL NEWS NETWORK—06/23/45

Los Angeles, California (INN) - In the aftermath of the event dubbed the Green Tide, coastal communities are struggling to cope with the destruction. The tidal wave struck at 1:35 PM on Monday afternoon and affected a 190-kilometer stretch of California coastline extending from Ventura in the north to Oceanside in the south.

"It's like a war zone," says Department of Emergency Management Director Michael Forsythe. "I flew over Silver Strand yesterday and the entire town is just gone; stripped right down to the foundations."

When asked what the plans the DEM has to help communities like Silver Strand he stated that in these sorts of extreme cases there wasn't much they could do.

"We're focusing our efforts on areas farther inland, where the destruction is at least manageable. Even if there were more we could do in places like Silver Strand, we just don't have the resources."

Government agents are also confronting a second, more troubling problem. The event earned its name from a pale green glow

that permeates the water throughout the affected region. Earlier reports that this was due to radiation were dismissed

“That’s ridiculous,” said Representative Juan Alvarez (T). “There is absolutely no proof that the water is radioactive. In this moment of crisis we don’t need this sort of scare mongering.”

Despite government assurances, residents remain unconvinced. As the sun sets each evening the pale green glow of the standing water on the city streets and in homes is unmistakable.

“If that ain’t radiation, then I’m a troll,” said Mario Lopez, a sanitation worker who works in Newport Beach.

- They proved it was radiation, didn't they?
- Hard Exit
- A formal report on the phenomenon determined that the glow came from a marginally radioactive, phosphorescent fungus. Pacific Foods, the ones running the reactor that exploded and caused the mess, were experimenting with high yield, high protein fungal food replacements.
- Smiling Bandit
- Color me stupid, but how does a fission reactor fit into that plan?
- Ecotope

- The fungus they were working with originally came from the SOX. They thought they could spur faster growth using the reactor.
- Smiling Bandit
- What's the deal out there today?
- Netcat
- Most of the places look about like they did in '43. Apparently Pacific Foods was on the right track. That fungus grows like crazy. They've tried everything to get rid of it but it keeps coming back. The only things that keep it from spreading beyond the coast are roaches. They love the stuff. Makes them grow to a foot long, but they do get rid of the fungus.
- Sounder
- Foot-long roaches? I thought the rats out here were bad.
- Slamm-O!



- February 23**—AZTLAN: Guatemala is accepted into the Aztlaner republic as a member state.
- April 1**—UCAS: The Universal Brotherhood opens its first Seattle chapterhouse.
- May 8**—AGS: The Allied German States is established.
- May 15**—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court promotes Wuxing to extraterritorial status.
- May 24**—SWITZERLAND: The new United Nations HQ in Geneva completed, and is inaugurated with the signing of the new UN Charter.
- June 2**—UCAS: The last stage of Manhattan’s earthquake reconstruction is completed.
- June 6**—AZTLAN: Belize is accepted into the Aztlaner republic as a member state.
- June 19**—CFS: An offshore reactor near Los Angeles explodes, creating a radioactive tidal wave called the Green Tide that devastates communities from Ventura to Oceanside.
- June 22**—HAWAII: King Kamehameha V takes the throne of Hawai’i.
- July 12**—UCAS: Physical Adepts allowed into professional sports.
- July 13**—CAS: President Joseph Alexander dies in office, of an undisclosed cause. Vice President Timothy Newstrom assumes the presidency.

- August 7**—CONSTANTINOPLE: Constantinople struck by a major earthquake.
- September 12**—AZTLAN: Honduras is accepted into the Aztlaner republic as a member state.
- October 1**—UCAS: Charles Gates, CEO of Microdeck Corporation in Seattle, disappears.
- October 13**—AMC: The elven Manitou tribe is established in the Algonkian Council. The nation is renamed the Algonkian-Manitou Council (AMC).
- October 21**—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: An all-simsense theme park opens near Portland. Crowds flock to the park from all across the country.
- November 3**—AUSTRALIA: The Tanamyre Corporation begins transforming the World Square building in Sydney into an arcology.
- December 31**—CFS: Paul Grigg, shaman husband of the Universal Brotherhood’s founder and the person suspected of bringing the first insect spirit across the planes, commits suicide.

2046—POLICLUBS, URBAN BRAWL, AND HMHVV

The First International Urban Brawl World Cup!

EXCERPT FROM PRESS MATERIAL PROVIDED BY THE ISSV

Hang on to your helmets! The ISSV is proud to present the first International Urban Brawl World Cup! The teams will face off in Flint, Michigan on July 8th at 8:00 PM on a full street course designed by famed Brawl Zone builder Alex Teague. Home town heroes the Detroit Nightmare go head-to-head with the undefeated St. Louis Slaughter.

Nightmare fan favorites, the infamous Minor brothers, return for the big game after their three-game suspension for the accidental killing of Boston Massacre outrider Sandy “Silersides” Swineburn. The trio is well known for their balls out style and hardcore defensive tactics.

Meanwhile, the Slaughter is looking to pull off the first perfect season in Urban Brawl history! With veteran banger Tyrone Walsh back from his leg replacement, the team is raring to go. Still, the specter of their brutal 2044 loss to the Nightmare looms large in the memories of fans and players alike.

Be there for front row seats to the action or catch the live trid-cast on SportsCentral! For tickets and information visit Detroit LTG#2218 (52-PAIN)

- Man, that's when Urban Brawl was good. Guys like “Rusty Hanger” Delaney, Kevin Calhoun, and “Razorblade” Hart were amazing. Not like the plastic media hounds they've got today. Those old guys were tough as nails and didn't hold

back anything. They weren't in it for big contracts or the fame. They were just busting ass to make a living and stay alive. Totally different ball game.

- Hard Exit
- I hear ya. I hate all the post production work they use now. Brawl used to feel real. You were down there on the streets with those guys. You felt the danger.
- Stone
- The 30 second injury rule killed it for me.
- Pistons
- Or maybe, Urban Brawl is a media stunt that's run its course? Seriously, people. It's organized gang warfare. There's no skill to it. It's nothing but a slug fest with cameras.
- Slamm-O!
- Oh, see, them's fightin' words. Urban Brawl is the only real man's sport left in this world (no offense, ladies.) Brawlers have to be fast, smart, and more than a little creative. It's a test of courage and it requires a lot more on-your-feet thinking than boring crap like football. Go Nightmare!
- Stone
- Hey, any word on the push to spin the rules back to the 2058 revision?
- DangerSensei
- If Commissioner Olsen has his way, it'll happen sometime next year. A lot of the players are against it though.
- Stone

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January 15—EGYPT: The Desert Wars™ are broadcast live, pulling in record-breaking ratings.

January 23—AZTLAN: Earthquakes in southern Aztlan kill 14,000 and trigger a landslide that closes the Panama Canal to all but the smallest ships.

January 30—ITALY: Don Lucio Feretti reorganizes the Mafia and creates the Alta Commissione.

February 2—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The professional baseball team Portland Lords is accepted into the MLB.

February 12—AZTLAN: The Panama Canal Zone is turned over to Aztlan.

April 18—SPAIN: Rapidly growing forests consume Asturias.

April 24—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: Dominican Republic's government collapses. Pirate interests begin fighting over the country.

May 16—UCAS: The simsense program Free Fall, starring Holly Brighton, breaks sim sales records and pushes simsense technology into the mass market.

May 19—AGS: Dr. Robert Kortmann elected president.

June 2—ISRAEL: Massive mana warp forces the abandonment of Jerusalem.

June 4—UCAS: Ares celebrates the 150th anniversary of the automobile in Detroit.

July 8—UCAS: The first bi-annual International Urban Brawl World Cup is held in Flint, Michigan.

July 23—ISRAEL: The UN establishes an Ecumenical Council to rule Jerusalem.

July 29—UCAS: Seattle band Shield Wall releases their first album.

August 2—AUSTRIA: The Bruckner-Langer HMHV strain, which turns humans into nosferatu, is isolated.

August 14—AUSTRIA: The effect of HMHV I on dwarves, transformation into a goblin, is documented for the first time.

August 23—MIDDLE EAST: The UN gains administrative control of the Suez Canal.

September 10—CFS: A team of shadowrunners called Magestone wipe out the results of the CFS gubernatorial election.

October 5—UK: Researchers discover an awakened freshwater serpent living in Loch Ness.

October 31—UCAS: Seattle rocker Jetblack bursts onto the music scene. His “angst-rock” style rockets him to megastar status.

November 16—CAS: Humanis Policlub is founded in Texas.

December 21—AZTLAN: El Salvador and Nicaragua are both accepted into Aztlan as member states.

2047—THE MUSIC SCENE, MAYHEM, AND MASS DESTRUCTION

Take It to Mister

BY MARIA MERCURIAL

Once, long ago when troubles came your way
 You couldn't take them on yourself,
 But you knew just what to do
 To find someone who would help.
 When they burn out the farm
 Or ravish your sister,
 You put your hat in your hand
 And take it to Mister,
 Take it to Mister

Then, as they will, all these things changed their way.
 The ones who guarded you proved false.
 The lord, the patron, the grand seigneur,
 Helped themselves and no one else.
 So they ravished the land
 And whored with your sister,
 They made you rip out your pride
 And take it to Mister.

Now, we have learned there is another way.
 To face the future for ourselves,
 We all know what we must do.
 If you want to take back what they stole
 Feed the rage in your heart
 Till it's ready to blister.
 Now put your gun in your hand
 And TAKE IT TO MISTER!

- 120,000 people die in England, bombs in Seattle, chopper attacks in DeeCee, and we get one of Mercurial's crappy pop tunes? Who's assembling this document anyway?
- Aufheben

- Lighten up. You don't get enough pain and suffering every day that you need more of it rammed down your throat here? There's more to life than death.
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- Oh, lord. She's quoting Mercurial's lyrics.
- Pistons
- Hey, the lady had talent. If the poetry fits, I use it.
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- So, what's Mercurial been up to? Anybody know? Seems like she dropped off the radar.
- Riser
- After she and Hernandez finalized the divorce, she moved to LA. She released a new album, an experimental folk collection, back in '62. I liked it, but it didn't do very well. Too much of a departure from her usual style to please the masses and her promoters. Then Hernandez and their son died when their plane went down during Crash 2.0. She didn't take it well and went into seclusion. Last I heard she was somewhere in the East. Tibet, maybe.
- Slamm-O!
- Flaky artists. Life gets tough and they run off to hide in a monastery someplace where they sit around smoking pot and chanting. Boo fuckin' hoo. So her kid and her ex died. Folks live through a lot worse than that and still go to work every day. Your average Joe doesn't have the luxury of going all hermit whenever things get bad. Why should she?
- Clockwork
- I'd actually heard from a friend that she's back in the UCAS. Apparently she's got something in the works. It'd be interesting to see what she'd write with a few years of life behind her.
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- And of course there's plenty of pop music figures who had meteoric success, dropped off the charts completely, only to zoom back to the top. Lessee, there's Bob Dylan ... kind of ... and the Flying Phazoomas ... except their "comeback tour" was canceled halfway through ... and then there's ... there's ... well, good luck anyway, Maria!
- Winterhawk

February 21—UCAS: Maria Mercurial plays her first concert at Underworld 93 in Seattle.

March 6—CAS: The Sons of the Alamo policlub is established in Texas.

March 15—CAS: A massive BTL crackdown is launched following the death of Senator James Wheeler's daughter from BTL use.

April 18—UCAS: Blut und Ehre policlub launches a string of chopper raids in the DeeCee sprawl.

April 23—GREECE: A gorgon attacks the island of Skopelos.

June 18—NORTH AMERICA: The North American Basketball Association approves cybertech for players.

June 19—UK: London Bridge station in London is bombed by terrorists.

June 22—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: An assassination attempt is made against High Prince Lugh Surehand.

July 11—UK: 120,000 die after toxic shamans with links to the druidic Inner Circles unleash a paraVITAS virus in Tynesprawl.

July 19—SICHUAN: Sichuan annexes most of Guizhou and parts of Yunnan.

August 4—THAILAND: The Pattani Islamic Republic gains independence.

August 22—POLAND: Malopolska is declared a Free City.

September 10—AGS: Hedwig Gabler is elected Mayoress of Karlsruhe. She begins building an army to attack the Black Forest Troll Kingdom.

September 26—SAUDI ARABIA: The Aleppo citadel madrasa graduates their first class of magicians and adepts.

October 4—UCAS: Don Jim "Tools" O'Toole takes over as head of the Chicago mob.

November 15—UCAS: Most of the Everett Beacon Mall in the Seattle Metroplex is destroyed by a terrorist bomb. 180 are killed.

November 23—UCAS: A second bomb goes off at Sea-Tac Mall in Seattle, killing five.

November 26—CAS: Edna Wallace wins the presidential election.

November 28—UCAS: Keiji Hiroshige takes over Yakuza operations in Chicago.

2047

2048—THE CORPORATE COURT SETTLES A SCORE

Archival Transcript from Site Two: Gamma Flight
//begin Uniformat text attachment//

Security Link: Omega-352 10/11/48

Details: Gamma Flight Transcript 03/26/48

GF: This is Flight Leader. We are approaching the target area, heading two three two point zero.

CH: Confirmed, Gamma Flight Leader.

GF: Requesting authorization to proceed.

CH: Authorization granted. Authorization granted.

GF: Confirmed, Command. All flights accelerate two two zero, descend to five zero zero.

F1: Confirmed.

January 9—AGS: Proteus AG begins secret construction of its future headquarters in Helgoland using a shell company.

January 10—CAS: President Edna Wallace is inaugurated.

February 13—AZTLAN: Aztechnology opens the Spindle Orbital Platform.

February 20—UCAS: Food shortages in Toronto lead to city-wide riots.

March 26—AZTLAN: Corporate Court member corporations launch a military strike called Operation RECIPROCITY against Aztlan and Aztechnology for nationalizing corporate assets.

March 29—AZTLAN: Aztlan and Aztechnology bow to pan-corporate demands by agreeing to the Veracruz Settlement. Reparations are paid and the other megacorporations are allowed to indirectly operate in Aztlan.

April 23—AGS: Government forces take over Karlsruhe, narrowly averting an attack on the Black Forest Troll Kingdom.

May 1—AZTLAN: Panama joins Aztlan after its government collapses.

May 14—CFS: A powerful earthquake rocks San Francisco.

June 1—DENVER: Humanis Policlub begins a four-year period of attacks and riots in Chinatown.

June 6—FINLAND: Erika achieves AA status.

June 24—UCAS: United Oil Corporation hires the dragon Haesslich as their Seattle Head of Security.

July 8—UCAS: Maria Mercurial's first single, "Who Weeps for the Children?" hits number one on the charts.

July 28—UCAS: Fashion designer Zoë makes a name designing one-of-a-kind clothing for exclusive clients.

August 4—UCAS: Sasquatch musician Frumious joins the Seattle rock band, Shield Wall.

September 23—INDIA: The IUC takes control of the Indian government and India rejoins the UN.

October 10—UCAS: Rock megastar Jetblack is killed on his way home from a concert in Seattle.

November 3—UCAS: Alan Adams is elected president of the UCAS.

November 3—CAS: Edna Wallace is elected president of the CAS.

December 8—UCAS: Humanis Policlub assassinates Seattle mayor Daniel Feddersen.

December 18—UCAS: Queen Euphoria's first simsense, "Shotgun Blue," is released.

December 29—TURKEY: A massive earthquake levels Izmir.

F2: Confirmed.

F3: Confirmed.

F4: Confirmed.

CH: Flight Leader, we are picking up activity. Indications show SAM batteries online.

GF: Confirmed, Command. All flights mark your targets and begin your approach. Free flight is authorized.

F1: I've got blips.

F2: Here too.

GF: Flight One, Flight Two, break off three two seven. Draw fire.

F4: Christ, there are a lot of them.

CH: Gamma Flight, you have fifteen, sorry seventeen, repeat seventeen blips on approach. Prepare for heavy fire.

GF: Confirmed, Command.

F2: Holy shit. That was fast. I've got missile lock. Son of a...[END TRANSMISSION]

CH: Flight Two is down.

GF: Dammit! Status?

CH: Dumpshock only. He'll be back online in five.

F1: I don't think we've got five. Three coming in on my position. Firing. Firing.

GF: Target down! Nice work, Flight One.

CH: Flight Three. We read five blips closing on your position.

F3: Confirmed. I'm taking her to street level. See if those bastards have the balls to follow me.

GF: Careful Flight Three. We need to keep them occupied for awhile yet. Is Site One go, Command?

CH: Site One is go. Operation is underway. Continue as ordered.

GF: Confirmed.

F3: Target sighted. Launching. Rockets away! Did you see that? God, I love explosions.

GF: Focus, Flight Three. I show six blips converging on you. Get the hell out of there now.

F3: I'm good. Just gotta...shit! Where did he come from? Crap, pulling around [END TRANSMISSION]

F1: Did I just hear screaming? That sounded like real screaming. What the frag is going on back there?

GF: Status, Command.

CH: F1 has sustained feedback. Continue with mission.

GF: Drek! All Flights move directly to targets.

F1: Right, I mean, confirmed. Confirmed, Flight Leader.

F4: Confirmed, Flight Leader.

F1: I've got eight more blips. There's no way we can win this.

GF: We aren't supposed to win, Flight One. Keep them occupied as long as possible and you'll have done your job. Setting up for bombing pass in three, two, one...

//end Uniformat text attachment//

- Despite all the backstabbing, when the Corporate Court really wants to get something done they don't mess around. That was not a good day to work for the Azzies.
- Mr. Bonds
- Or to live near them. The attacks killed over 3500 civilians. Of course, that never showed up in the shareholders reports.
- Ecotope

2049—PROTEUS RISES FROM THE DEEP

Proteus AG: Don't Waste Your Money!

THE BIG BUCKS BUSINESS REPORT—01/05/49

Triple B here kids, with a friendly word of advice. If someone tries to sell you some Proteus stock, run away! There haven't been many IPOs that have left me more suspicious than this one. Proteus has got "debt sink" written all over it. Somewhere out there, the CEO of some megacorp is rubbing his greasy hands together, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to shuffle a bunch of half-dead investments off on Scapegoat, Inc. over here.

Not convinced yet? Exhibit A! Look at the foundation of their business: Project Arkoblock. It was a dead end when the Germans started the thing back in the thirties, and it's a dead end now. The dream of the deep sea arcology is as dead as flying cars. It ain't ever going to happen for a pile of obvious, at least to anyone with a brain, reasons. Countless corps have tried and failed to make this work, people. To think that these morons are going to do any better is ridiculous.

Still not convinced? Exhibit B! Proteus AG didn't just appear. They've been around for awhile now. I've got it on good authority from extremely reliable sources that work on their Helgoland headquarters started MORE THAN A YEAR AGO! According to the public record, Proteus AG didn't even exist until January 1st of this year. I

smell something fishy and it isn't coming from the arkoblock's kitchen! Corps don't just poof into existence. These folks have been around for awhile and as soon as I can pin a name on them you'll hear it here!

So? You still don't believe me? In that case you're an idiot. Invest in whatever the hell you want. I don't care. Of course if you're simply curious I present you with Exhibit C! The founder of Proteus AG, one Frederick Goldammer. Where in the hell does the owner of a third-tier biotech research firm get enough money to help found a corp on the scale of Proteus AG? He's a dupe, people! A handy puppet for whatever corp is building this garbage dump of a corp to get rid of bad past investments.

Triple B Bottom Line for Proteus AG: BBB Rating 10: Perfect for Suckers!

- No matter how often it happens, I never get tired of seeing the "experts" get it wrong. These pompous windbags don't have a clue what they're talking about. If they did, they'd all be running corps of their own.
- Haze
- Investment advice aside, he definitely raises some good points. Proteus is hiding something.
- Slamm-O!
- Gee, that's insightful. They're all hiding something.
- Netcat



January 1—AGS: Proteus AG is officially chartered and revealed to the world.

January 3—AGS: Proteus AG officially begins the construction of their headquarters in Helgoland.

January 20—UCAS: President Alan Adams is inaugurated.

February 17—CAS: Major Aztechnology shareholder Thomas Roxborough undergoes experimental gene therapy that leaves him unable to survive outside a specially designed vat.

February 18—UCAS: The "street mercenary" style gains popularity among fashion leaders.

March 4—UCAS: Leonard Aurelius ousts Damien Knight as chairman of the Ares board.

March 26—AMAZONIA: The great feathered serpent Arleesh awakens.

April 11—UK: Eco-terrorist organization Deep Green kills thirty-one aristocratic hunters in Dartmoor.

May 14—UCAS: Maria Mercurial's second album, *Put a*, is released.

May 28—AZTLAN: Border control is turned over to Aztechnology Corporate Security.

June 12—UTE: Metahumans calling themselves the Wasatch Awakened petition for tribal status in the Ute Nation.

June 17—CAS: Aztlan establishes an embassy in Dallas.

July 13—AMAZONIA: Amazonia annexes Venezuela and half of Columbia.

July 29—RUSSIA: Arkady Krolenko becomes General Secretary of the Russian Republic.

August 20—UCAS: Concrete Dreams guitarist Warren Cartwright hosts an acoustic jam session at Club Penumbra in Seattle. Maria Mercurial sits in.

September 2—CFS: The recording of rock star Axe Slayer being killed by his exploding codpiece sells hundreds of thousands of copies on its first day of release.

September 18—JAPAN: Renraku develops the first semi-autonomous knowbots.

October 4—ASIA: Saeder-Krupp led consortium completes the New Silk Road railway between St. Petersburg and Qingdao.

November 2—CAS: Texas lifts trade sanctions on Aztlan.

December 10—SWEDEN: A team of mages from AGS and the Czech Republic are awarded the first Nobel Prize for Magic.

December 13—TÍR NA NÓG: The Establishment Act establishes the Church of Ireland as the official church.

2049

STREET RACING IN THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

MARC TASSIN

The Rapier engine's petrochem thrum filled the damp night air as Fortune wove in and out of the heavy I-5 traffic, cutting perilously close to the cars around him.

Ahead, all the lanes were filled. Fortune didn't have time to frag around on the interstate. If he missed his window on this job, he wouldn't get another chance. He gave the road a quick scan and let his head computer do the rest. It calculated all the potential routes between the vehicles and fired them through his datajack to his helmet's HUD.

He tagged one of the routes and gunned the engine. With a twitch he swerved around a big GMC Bulldog painted with the cartoon lion mascot of King Delivery, then swerved again, narrowly missing a glistening 2051 Ford Americar, the electronic window sticker still displaying the animated price tag.

His route cut a narrow path between a panel van and a battered pickup. Fortune hit the throttle and the bike launched forward with a kick that lifted the front wheel off the pavement. The city grid blared a protest about his unsafe driving practices, threatening to notify Lone Star.

As he raced toward the gap, the Rapier's headlamp illuminated two occupants squeezed into the back of the pickup; a pair of warty-skinned trolls wearing gray and white, their faces painted like skulls. Fortune knew the colors. They were members of the Disassemblers, a nasty street gang known for tearing their victims limb from limb. One of them pointed at Fortune, and the other, laughing, leaned toward the gap between the vehicles.

With no time to change course, Fortune flew between the trucks. The nearest troll took a swing at him, but Fortune saw it coming. With a swift, fluid motion, he leaned down along his bike, pulled his katana from its sheath, and brought the blade around in a graceful arc.

The bike exploded out of the tight passage between the vehicles. Fortune glanced at the rear-view monitor of his HUD. The ganger's arm bounced and rolled down the highway, and the Americar thumped over it.

Fortune cursed as he realized he was about to miss his exit. He cut hard right; narrowly avoiding a pod-shaped gridcab, and then caught air as he hit the downward slope of the exit ramp. Ahead, the night sky was dominated by a looming shape the size of a small mountain.

The Renraku arcology.

Home to over 70,000 people with a footprint the size of thirty-six city blocks, the arcology was a marvel of modern engineering. Construction had started in 2040 and still wasn't finished, but Renraku



already touted it as the perfect environment for living, working, and playing. It contained offices, labs, hospitals, malls, and an indoor amusement park; the ultimate expression of corporate power and a model of comfort and security.

And for a shadowrunner like Fortune, a great big paycheck.

Of course, that required him to get this job right. Lately, things hadn't gone Fortune's way. First the messy run with the Yakuza. Lots of noise, a bullet to the shoulder, and he'd almost lost the package.

Next, the ghouls, although in retrospect that wasn't really his fault. They weren't that far gone and anyone could have made the same mistake. Unfortunately, they ate the guy he was extracting which, needless to say, didn't thrill Mr. Johnson.

But now things were looking up. He'd burned a lot of favors to get this job. The work was a perfect fit and the pay was insane. Granted, Mr. Johnson creeped him out, a weird-looking elf with long, grey hair, but as long as his nuyen was good Fortune didn't care what he looked like.

Again, Fortune almost missed his turn. He whipped in front of a sports car, forcing the driver to slam on the brakes, and wheeled his bike into an alley behind a Stuffer Shack.

Hopping off the bike, he punched a pre-hacked code into the keypad next to the Shack's back door. With a bleep and a hiss, the door slid open. Fortune pushed his bike into the storeroom, the door sliding shut behind him.

In the dim light, Fortune took off his helmet and leather jacket and stuffed them into the duffle bag on the back of his bike. Although he hated to leave it, he put the katana in the bag as well.

He left his light body armor on, but put on a black, calf length duster from his bag. He topped the look off with a pair of silvery, mirrored shades and ran his hand through his spiked hair. To anyone on the street, or more importantly, in the arcology, he looked like any other young punk. Time to go to work.

Fortune neared the front of the store and spotted his ork buddy, Enzo at the counter. Eyes closed, the big meta drummed away passionately to one of Jetblack's angst-rock thrash tunes.

Enzo was a late bloomer, goblinizing just a couple of years ago. Before that he was a junior accountant for Hagino, Inc. in Frisco. Unfortunately, orks aren't welcome at the japanacorp, and they gave Enzo his walking papers. Enzo headed to Seattle looking for work, but never got back on his feet.

"Damn shame about Black," Fortune said.

"Drek yeah, man. Black was one of a kind. The world lost a musical *god* when he died," Enzo replied, drumming away, eyes still closed.

"They say he was working on another album. Already laid down the rough tracks in full sim," Fortune said.

"Total bullshit, man," Enzo said, turning toward Fortune. "That's just a ... holy frag! Fortune! What are you doing here?"

Enzo grinned from tusk to tusk, then reached over the counter and grabbed Fortune in a powerful bear hug. Fortune smelled the smoky-sweet scent of ganja on his friend.

"Been too long, man," Enzo said, slapping Fortune on the back. "Where you been?"

"Had to lay low for awhile. Ran into some trouble with Fuchi."

"No kidding? What're you doin' here?"

"I need a place to stash my bike. Care if I park it in the back room? It'll only be a couple of hours."

"Sure, that's cool, man. But you gotta promise we'll get together. I wanna know what you've been up to."

"Yeah, that'd be good."

Fortune reached into his pocket and pulled out a credstick. He slid it across the counter to Enzo.

"What's this, man?"

"That's the 50 nuyen I owe you, plus a little extra for helping me out."

"Aw, you didn't have to do that," he said, but didn't refuse the stick.

The light changed and Fortune crossed Renraku Avenue with the rest of the mob. Low-level execs in business suits, wageslaves in red Renraku coveralls, and shoppers looking to experience the thrill of the arcology all shuffled along together. Fortune let the flow carry him across the street, down the sidewalk, and right past the guards at the mall entrance.

Fortune tried to act calm, but his stomach was in knots. He'd been careful, but he wondered if these were the same guards that were on duty last time. Would they recognize him? This was his third, and thankfully last, trip to the arcology for this job.

He'd worn disguises on the earlier trips. The first was a scouting mission. He'd picked up an EMF scanner from a tech fence in Redmond and installed it in his pocket secretary. A contact had tipped him off that the contractor in charge of this portion of the mall's construction had cut corners on material costs. He'd used cheap sheathing on the data cables, which meant a scanner could pick up the EMF bleed. The stronger the bleed, the more data traffic. The more data traffic, the better the chance of hitting the line he



needed. Dressed as a tourist, he'd plugged into the secretary and walked the mall, letting the scanner probe for data bleed.

On the second trip he'd posed as a maintenance contractor and installed an access box on one of the cables he'd discovered. The box hard-linked the public LTG to a secure internal line from the PLTG. Only one guard showed any interest in him on that trip, but a wave of the pocket secretary displaying some incomprehensible schematics, along with a muttered complaint about "Damned cheap cables," got him past.

And tonight was the payoff. If all went as planned, in less than an hour Mr. Johnson's cookie would be tucked in all snug and happy and Fortune would get his money.

Fortune fell in behind a bunch of hyped-up teenagers wearing faux armored jackets and black Maria Mercurial t-shirts. Turns out they were headed to the same place he was; the data court, an open space in the east wing filled with public data terminals. The kids loved the data court and dominated the majority of the terms playing games or talking virtually with other teens sitting three terminals away.

Fortune found an open terminal. The public cable was gone, but he pulled his own curly fiber line out of his pocket, slotted one end into the datajack on his temple, and the other into the terminal.

The terminal was a piece of crap, but Fortune wouldn't be using it. His head computer would do the heavy lifting. Getting the alpha ware head comp had cost a mint, but he'd never regretted it. There's no way the guards would have let him waltz in here carrying a cyberdeck.

Settling into the recumbent chair in front of the terminal, Fortune closed his eyes and gave the mental command. With a disorienting rush the real world melted away and Fortune found himself floating in an endless black void. His meat bod was completely helpless at this point, but that's why he chose the data court. As part of their "family safe" environment, the mall security patrolled heavily here, making sure local troublemakers left the real customers alone. Fortune reveled in the irony that the mall security was going to watch his back as he hacked their system.

With another thought Fortune brought up his controls. A few virtual flicks of the fingers and his persona coalesced around him. The persona, shaped like a glowing golden angel, floated in an inky black void. With another flick he activated the public link to the mall system. The blackness melted away to reveal a dreamlike landscape of a thousand shapes and lights floating in an endless night.

Other visitors to this realm of electrons and imagination swooped by, heading off to pursue their own virtual agendas. Long, streaming bands of light stretched off into the distance in every direction, like busy highways seen from the air on a clear night. The infolanes pulsed with data. The very sight of them filled Fortune with eager anticipation.

Above him sat a huge green cube like a floating skyscraper. Renraku's fractal logo shone on its side in pulsing electric blue. Fortune raised his arms and flew toward the

cube. He knew there was no wind in the matrix, but he could swear he felt the data whisking past him as he traversed the space. It was a good feeling.

He reached the cube wall, but did not stop. With a ripple of reorientation that made his stomach flip-flop he passed through the wall and into an endless hallway. A multifaceted, geometric ball floated in the air before him.

"Welcome to Renraku Arcology," the ball said, pulsing with blue light as it spoke each word. "I am the Arcology Expert Program. I see you've elected not to use our state-of-the-art interface sculpting. Would you like assistance turning it on?"

"God, no," Fortune said. He hated that crap. It just got in the way. Apparently Renraku planned to require the sculpting eventually, but for now he could still opt out.

"As you wish. How may I assist you?" the ball said.

"I'm looking for this."

Fortune held up his hand and a series of numbers projected in the air. If no one had found his access box yet, this should get him a link to it.

"Searching," the ball replied.

It pulsed for another second and then responded.

"Located. Third door on your left. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Nope. Thanks."

"Thank you for visiting the Renraku Arcology. Have a good day," it said and winked out of existence.

Pleased with himself, Fortune strode down the virtual hall until he reached the indicated door. It vibrated slightly as he approached, then slid open. The interior was an empty black space with a blue cube floating in the center.

The door closed as he entered, and Fortune approached the cube. He laid his virtual hand on it and executed the pre-programmed command. The blue cube shuddered and then folded in on itself. Where it had been was now a yawning hole. On the other side of the hole, Fortune saw a stream of silvery data racing by.

This meant his access box was secure. Clearly his low opinion of the Renraku Mall's maintenance team was warranted. Taking a deep, virtual breath, he dove into the data stream.

As he rode the stream, Fortune rechecked Mr. Johnson's instructions. The cookie needed to go in a 14th floor sewage valve node. Using the permission codes Mr. Johnson had provided, only good on this night, it only took a second for the data stream to get him there.

When he arrived, Fortune stepped out of the stream and into a spherical chamber. Pressure and flow readings slid along the walls around him. Fortune found a control display, hacked access to the valve's controls, and started the upload.

The process would take a couple seconds, so Fortune amused himself by checking out the nearby nodes. Pretty standard stuff; maintenance systems mostly. He tried digging a little deeper, peeling back the layers of the local host to see if there were any hidden nodes.

That's when he found it. A simple black box. Completely invisible if you didn't approach from this specific pressure valve's node, at this time, using the exact codes Mr. Johnson had given him.

He started for the node, but hesitated. This alone unnerved him. Fortune never hesitated. A mysterious hidden node in the heart of the Renraku system and he wasn't already digging into it? Something about it made his skin itch.

The upload control bleeped, indicating the upload was finished. The job was done. He could go and collect his nuyen. He almost left, but he couldn't resist. Fortune launched himself at the node.

The wall of the node did not give when he hit it. A quick analysis revealed powerful encryption. Hacking it would be difficult, maybe impossible. Doing a deeper scan, he saw it had no connection to the central security processor. He could whack at it all day, and even if he screwed up royally, no one would know.

What the hell, he thought.

It took a good fifteen minutes of real time to hack the node. Despite his many past failures, Fortune really did know how to do this. He just never managed to get this far.

At last, a door on the side of the box slid open. Raw data lined the interior of the box. Fortune entered the box for a closer look and saw thousands of micro-transactions. Orders for cyberdeck chips, invoices for bolts, packing slips for sheet metal, surgical tubing, screws, glass, hypodermic needles. A thousand micro-purchases routed to a thousand different back offices and store rooms throughout the arcology.

"I'm afraid you've entered a restricted area," a voice said.

Fortune turned around. The Arcology Expert Program's multi-faceted, geometric ball floated in the air before him.

"I, um, I think I'm lost," Fortune said.

"I think you are," said the ball, pulsing blue.

"I was just leaving," Fortune said, edging for the door.

"No," the ball pulsed. "You weren't."

Lightning arced from the ball to Fortune's persona. Fortune screamed. It felt like someone set his body on fire from the inside. A flashing bio-monitor alarm told him that the damage wasn't just virtual. This thing was Black IC.

Fortune dove through the door, but the IC followed. More lightening, and again pain lanced through him. Never in his life had he felt agony like this. He groped for his combat program but couldn't concentrate to load it.

"I cannot allow you to leave here with the information you carry in your wetware," the sphere said.

Fortune tried to fly to the data stream, but he didn't budge. His feet were rooted to the ground. He tried to jack out, but the IC had locked him into the system. Desperate, he fired a crude decompiling program at the sphere. The sphere shuddered but did not stop.

"Now you are making me angry," it said.

Consumed by his fear, Fortune said the only thing he could think of.

"You're a program," Fortune whimpered. "You can't get angry."

The sphere glowed red.

"Don't be patronizing."

Lightning flashed.

Fortune gasped. His head burned and something hot and wet ran down his face. He blinked away tears and saw the gang of kids he'd followed to the data court clustered around him. One of them held his data cable.

"Whoa, chummer," the kid said. "What the frag were you doing?"

Fortune touched his hand to his nose and held it up. His fingers were covered with blood. He tried to respond, but his throat refused.

"Alright, you punks! Step back! What's going on over here?" said an adult voice, dripping with an overblown sense of authority.

Fortune panicked. He rolled out of the chair and would have fallen to the floor if a couple of the kids hadn't caught him. The world spun and Fortune felt like he might pass out.

"Frag off, drek head!" one of the kids shouted.

"Who's that with you?" the adult demanded.

"Get me out," Fortune groaned. "I'll pay you a thousand nuyen."

"Frag, yeah! For that much we'll carry you," one of the kids said.

Fortune felt them lift him under the arms. More kids started shouting now and he heard the sounds of a struggle. A second later they were running, with Fortune's feet dragging behind them.

More shouts, a call for backup, and then suddenly, he felt cold, wet air and a sprinkle of rain on his face.

"And don't come back you little bastards!" he heard from behind them.

A few minutes more running and the kids stopped. They propped Fortune against a brick wall.

"Hey, chummer," a girl said. "You chill?"

Fortune nodded weakly. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out a credstick. One of the kids took it.

"You want us to call DocWagon or sumthin'?"

Fortune shook his head.

"Thank you," he groaned.

"Null sheen," one of the kids said. "Look, we gonna fly."

Fortune nodded.

As the kids walked off, laughing about what they'd do with the money, Fortune dialed Mr. Johnson's number.

"Is the job complete?" the elf asked as soon as the call connected.

"Yes," Fortune answered. "Now I want my fragging money."

2050—SPIDERS AND CYBERDECKS

Find Inner Peace with the Zen® CCSS

EXCERPT FROM A 2050 RENRAKU SALES FLIER FOR THE ZEN CCSS

Zen is the premier closed-circuit simsense system for businesses that want the best in physical security. Free your company from the confines of the flesh and enter a security environment of limitless possibilities.

Man and Machine in Harmony

With the Zen CCSS your security decker is one with your physical security systems. No more hard resets for breached entrances. No more wait times for a system response. No more open doors to criminals looking to exploit “dumb” systems that can’t react to obvious threats. The Zen CCSS is the answer to your physical security challenges.

One Decker, Multiple Sites

Manage multiple secure locations with a single decker using the Zen CCSS. At the speed of thought a trained CCSS decker can take command of a secure location. Studies show that response time is key to ending a security threat peacefully, and with the Zen CCSS you can make that happen – while not breaking your budget!

Open Architecture

The Zen CCSS is fully expandable, allowing you to adapt the system to your current facility needs. If you need to add a secondary fencing line, Zen can handle the sensors with a simple upgrade. If you want to integrate Matrix security, the Zen Matrix Adapter adds that capability.

Find Your Zen Today!

For a complete Zen assessment, contact one of our associates today! We’ll provide a full security analysis and a competitive estimate at no charge. Seattle LTG#2009 (24-2031)

Find Inner Peace today with the Zen® CCSS

- What a nightmare. Seeing these systems hitting the market is like watching Hitler walk into the room and not having a gun handy.
- Cosmo

- Um, my feelings are not quite that strong, but I agree with the general sentiment. I can’t tell you how many times some spider has popped into the security system for a site I’m hitting and next thing I know the entire building is out to get me. I actually had a spider fire up the cleaning equipment and send it after me. You don’t know annoyance until you’re trying to line up a shot with a damn floor polisher repeatedly bumping into your hip.
- DangerSensei
- Yeah, a creative spider will ruin your day. I still remember the time a spider in an Ares lab I was hitting flipped the climate systems to “surface of the sun.” I swear to dog, it was over a 130 degrees in there before we got out.
- Haze
- Are you kidding? CCSS is the best thing that ever happened to shadowrunners. Buildings equipped for CCSS are like a hacker’s playground. Personally, I like to make tweaks to the plumbing systems. Floods are your friend.
- Pistons

2051—SCHWARTZKOPF TAKES CONTROL AND SHADOWRUNNERS GO PUBLIC

Excerpt from Heavy Hitters: Episode #123

AIR DATE 11/15/51

Donner: Welcome back to Heavy Hitters! For those of you who are just joining us, the topic of today’s show is: Security vs. Shadowrunners. Our guests are Richard, Elise, and Alan, three corporate security officers whose employers will remain anonymous, and the Scorecards, a team of so-called “shadowrunners.” Welcome back to the show.

Guests: Thanks, Daniel.

Donner: We’ve talked about what it takes to do your jobs, but clearly your goals are in direct conflict with one another. Tell me, Richard. What are your thoughts about the type of “work” the Scorecards are doing?

2050

January 3—CFS: Sales of the blockbuster sim Free Fall hit fifty million.

February 17—UCAS: Faux armored clothing gains popularity among the fashion elite.

March 19—AZTLAN: Aztechnology Corporate Security kills hundreds of unarmed protesters in Campeche.

April 7—AGS: Corruption scandals lead to massive government reform.

May 6—SALISH-SHIDHE: A Kraken sinks a ferry bound for Vancouver, killing all on board.

May 22—AZTLAN: Government forces seize a portion of Venezuela from Amazonia.

May 30—CAS: Thousands of metahumans march on Atlanta, calling for increased awareness of the metahuman plight.

June 5—UK: Tong syndicate lord Kung Soo refocuses his syndicate’s activity on the Matrix rather than local business owners.

June 30—UK: Revenants policlub bombs a Werner-Voss corporate shuttle en route for London, killing 175.

July 16—UCAS: Seattle urban brawl star Carter “Mauler” Tate is fired for refusing to take steroids.

August 10—AGS: Keyboard-sized cyberdecks hit the market.

August 28—AMC: After the catastrophic failure of genetically engineered crops, Aztechnology is brought in to assist in the recovery.

September 13—AGS: The first closed-circuit simsense systems allow security deckers to rig an entire building.

September 22—AZTLAN: The independent portion of Columbia petitions for, and is awarded, full Aztlan membership.

September 26—AZTLAN: Morituri te salutant debuted as a game show focused on gladiatorial-style death matches. It scores the highest ratings for a trid debut in the history of Aztlanar broadcasting.

October 4—FRANCE: Corsica is granted independence from France.

November 9—JAPAN: Yamatetsu board member Ms. Buttercup reveals she is a free spirit.

November 24—JAPAN: Proteus AG wins bids to build offshore arcologies in Japan.

December 14—TRANS-POLAR ALEUT NATION: The Trans-Polar Aleut government withdraws from active participation in the NAN.

Richard: They're criminals, Daniel. Calling them "shadowrunners" might sound romantic and exciting, but in the end they're nothing but criminals.

Elise: I have to agree with him, Daniel.

Donner: I see you frowning over there, Vindicator. Something you'd like to add?

Vindicator: You better believe it, Daniel. It's all well and good for these assholes—

Alan: Okay, that isn't necessary.

Vindicator: —for these assholes to call us criminals, but if they take two seconds to look at the guys who are writing their paychecks, they'll see who the real criminals are.

Richard: You don't even know who we work for. You have no idea the good that my company...

Runs-With-Deer: Oh, can it, Dick. The corps are all the same. It's in their nature. They are soulless, emotionless entities that have completely divorced the human element from their method of operations. They treat their customers and employees as little more than disposable assets.

January 31—AGS: Proteus AG qualifies for extraterritoriality.

February 17—NAN: The study of ancient ninjas lends credence to the physical mage theory.

March 12—AZTLAN: Rebel forces begin commando raids against Aztlan troops in Yucatán.

April 27—CFS: Anti-Japanese terrorists bomb the San Francisco BART line.

April 28—AGS: Relations with the Russian Republic are normalized.

May 19—UCAS: Final Fling, featuring simsense starlet Euphoria, is released.

May 21—AGS: The great western dragon Schwartzkopf appears in the town of Furth im Wald at the foot of Schwarzkoppe Mountain and declares himself its ruler.

May 29—PCC: A dragon collides with an Airlink Transit plane, killing two.

June 3—AMC: Derek Highsun leads a successful coup to take control of the council.

June 23—UCAS: The great dragon Haesslich disappears after a battle with a group of shadowrunners near Puget Sound in Seattle.

June 24—UK: Princess Caroline marries Swiss banking magnate Jurgen Meier.

July 20—FRANCE: Spinrad Industries hit with massive fines and loss of extraterritoriality after revelations that it participated in illegal human experiments in Marseilles.

August 10—CAS: Terrorists blow up a steamship filled with Aztechnology officials on the Mississippi River.

September 15—UCAS: Clothing fashions trend towards an exaggerated "heavy armor" look.

October 9—MONACO: Spinrad Industries signs a 100-year lease for the entire Principality of Monaco and begins a dramatic reconstruction plan.

October 26—CFS: A 5.5 earthquake strikes the San Francisco Bay area.

October 26—UCAS: A bomb explodes at the Universal Brotherhood Chapterhouse in Tacoma, killing five.

November 3—UCAS: Sasquatch vocalist Frumious leaves the band Shield Wall.

November 15—UCAS: A debate between corporate security officers and shadowrunners on the talk show Heavy Hitters erupts into violence.

November 17—PCC: The new Flamingo Casino is opened in Las Vegas.



Elise: You've got a lot of nerve. Two of my friends were killed when a shadowrunner team attacked our facility last year. My friends weren't soulless machines. One of them was a mother with two children. The other was a man who dreamed of retiring to become a painter. These aren't disposable assets. These are real people that you're slaughtering when you play your violent games.

Runs-With-Deer: Slaughtering? We only kill to stay alive. The corps kill every day with the poison they spew into the air and water. They murder thousands with their petty wars and conflicts. How can you compare a shot fired in self-defense to the sort of wholesale murder that corps involve themselves in. If your friends died, it was because of the people they chose to associate themselves with.

Elise: You son-of-a-bitch!

Donner: Someone grab her!

Alan: He's casting a spell!

Donner: We're taking a break, but we'll be back in a moment!

- Ha! I'm pretty sure Runs-With-Deer clocked that chick in the head with one of the cameras. I need to get a copy of that show.
- Slamm-O!
- I love Heavy Hitters. Donner can still light a fire like nobody else in the business.
- /dev/grll

2052—

BIOWARE AND AN OLYMPIC SCANDAL

Tokyo Wins 2056 Olympics, Bans Metahumans ASSOCIATED PRESS—05/02/52

Tokyo, Japan (AP) —Moments after the International Olympic Committee announced that Tokyo would host the 2056 Summer Games, officials from the Japanese Olympic Committee released the following statement:

It is with great honor that we accept the gracious offer of the International Olympic Committee. We look forward to serving the athletic community by hosting these historic games. Preparations are already underway so that we may admirably perform our role.

We also wish to announce that in keeping with the Yamato ideals, we are pleased to include metahumans in specially designed exhibition events. We feel that doing so is in keeping with the spirit of the Olympic Games and will help to maintain a level of athletic authenticity for participating athletes.

Already there are calls for the IOC to reverse their decision, but so far the IOC has refused to comment on the matter. Some nations have announced that they will not participate if Tokyo maintains their stance on metahuman athletes.

January 2—AZTLAN: The war with Yucatán rebels continues to escalate.

January 6—UCAS: 2XS, a BTL far more potent than a standard BTL, hits the black market.

March 14—QUÉBEC: Cross Applied Technologies achieves A status.

May 3—UCAS: Insurance costs force University of Seattle to remove fire elemental summoning from its practical exam.

May 18—UCAS: A group of militant homeless take up residence in the struts of the Manhattan Bridge.

June 24—GREECE: The first footage of gorgons using their petrification power is captured.

July 2—JAPAN: International Olympic Committee awards the 2056 Olympics to Tokyo. Japanese officials announce that metahumans will not be allowed to participate.

July 19—UCAS: UCAS Data Systems pulls funding from Dr. Ronald Halberstam after they discover he is trying to isolate children's' brains from their bodies to raise them completely in the Matrix.

July 21—AMC: The body of Derek Highsun is found behind his barn.

September 13—UCAS: The street mercenary style loses favor among fashion moguls.

September 23—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: Willamette Compustat is contracted to handle all government data backups.

October 4—SPAIN: Sol Media Group gains a foothold in the Aztlan media market.

November 5—UCAS: Alan Adams is re-elected president.

November 5—CAS: Edna Wallace is re-elected president.

November 11—UCAS: Arthur Vogel founds the One World Association to address environmental issues.

December 5—GLOBAL: Bioware is released to the public market, gaining instant popularity.

December 13—JAPAN: The Chiba Virtual Stock Exchange crashes in the midst of a Fuchi takeover attempt by the Yamana family.

In a press conference shortly afterwards, UCAS Olympic Committee Chair Rachel Maguire made it clear that her organization was not comfortable with Tokyo's decision.

"The Olympics are, and always have been, about unity," she said. "It is a time for people to come together as one. We feel that the Japanese Olympic Committee needs to clarify their position on this statement."

- It's so nice that we don't have to deal with that sort of racism today.
- Hannibelle
- Oops, I think I stepped in some of the sarcasm dripping from your post.
- Mika
- It really was pretty amazing. This was, what, thirteen years after the Night of Rage? And didn't we already go through all of this with skin color in the last century? How is it that we can create a fully immersive alternate reality in the Matrix, but still can't manage to get the one we live in now right?
- Mihoshi Oni
- Maybe that's why we built the new reality.
- Glitch
- At least we didn't have anything like this going on at the Denver Olympics this year.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Oh, I wouldn't say that everything went smoothly. That little run I did last week on a drug testing facility in Atlanta has me thinking every Olympics is destined to have its scandals.
- Ma'fan
- Come on, you know you can't leave it at that. We need the full story.
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- Naturally, I can't say too much, but if I were a gambler I'd watch for a follow up on a certain popular long-distance runner who took the gold this year. I've heard the IOC has gotten pretty nasty with athletes who gene-tweak.
- Ma'fan
- You mean there's evidence that Hendricks is tweaking?
- /dev/grrl
- As of last week there is.
- Ma'fan

2053—HESTABY AWAKENS AND THE SOX GOES CORPORATE

Excerpt from *Free to Bleed: Stories from the Crescent* EDITED BY HELEN WENZLAFF, FROM MARK SISK'S STORY

We are *Winnemen Wintu*. We are a lost people. Our sacred sites lie beneath deep waters. We live by the edges of the white man's lake, clinging to the tiny crust of our lands that still see the sun. It is not much, but it is all we have.

So, when the elves came to take our land, we performed the War Dance and defied the invaders. We had guns. We had courage. We had allies. It was not enough.

2052



The elves came with tanks, helicopters, rockets, and missiles. Our warriors fought fiercely, but we had to retreat to the dam. We knew they would not fire their rockets at it. Still, they pursued us and they surrounded us. For a day we held them, but as night fell, more elves arrived.

We readied ourselves for the final battle, and we knew that an honorable death was the only victory we could hope for. In the early morning hours, as mist curled up from the lake's still waters, we loaded our guns and prayed for courage. A lone loon called, its mournful cry echoing in the hills.

We leapt the barricades, and we charged.

Our voices were raised in ancient battle cries, our weapons roaring with our fury, our shamans calling powerful spirits to aid us. We killed many elves, but we were few and they were many. Then, a shadow passed in front of the sun, and a roar split the air.

Like a spirit of vengeance, *Sas P'o qta*, the "Sun Woman," came down from the sky. On mighty wings she flew, and she fell upon the elves, striking them with lightning and fire. The elves fired at her, but *Sas P'o qta* only laughed. Our ancestors had sent us a guardian spirit, and we raised our voices to her.

Against hope, but at great cost, we won the day. Our land was ours once more, and we share it now with the guardian spirit who resides upon *Bulyum-pui-yuk*, the great mountain. We serve one another, she and we, and live as equals in the land of our ancestors.

- I hear the Shasta Shamans don't much care for the Wintu. Apparently they tried to get the Wintu shamans to join ranks, but they refused. Things were about to get really ugly when Hestaby stepped in. No idea why she blocked her own people just to protect the Wintu.
- Turbo Bunny
- Maybe she, unlike most, has some respect for the people from whom she is borrowing the land.
- Ecotope

- January 20**—UCAS: President Adams inaugurated.
- January 21**—UCAS: President Adams dies of a massive stroke. Vice President Thomas Steele assumes the presidency.
- February 20**—AZTLAN: Flavia de la Rosa elected president.
- March 12**—JAPAN: Proteus AG completes the Okinawa offshore arcology.
- April 24**—EUROPE: The Essence-Integrity theory is published, explaining the mechanism behind the loss of magical potency from cyberware and implants.
- May 6**—UCAS: A United Oil tanker dumps millions of gallons of petrochemicals into Boston Harbor.
- May 28**—CFS: Hestaby awakens and blocks Tir Tairngire's attempt to take Shasta Dam. She settles on Mount Shasta and claims the region as her own.
- May 30**—UCAS: UCAStrak bullet train derailment kills 157. UCAStrak stock plummets.
- June 25**—CFS: The redwood forest near Mount Shasta begins spreading at an unnatural rate.
- June 28**—QUÉBEC: Cross Applied Technologies is granted extraterritorial status.
- July 16**—UCAS: University of Michigan researchers publish magical theorems describing spell anchoring.

- August 13**—JAPAN: Proteus AG completes the Osaka offshore arcology in Japan.
- August 24**—TSIMSHIAN: For the first time, borders are opened to megacorporations.
- September 10**—UCAS: Hurricane Ethelbert hits the New York and DeeCee areas, causing extensive damage.
- September 18**—AGS: Credstick readers get new anti-tamper technology, and additional Matrix protection is added to the associated nodes.
- October 20**—POLAND: Strikes and riots against the Russian occupation leave the economy in ruins.
- October 23**—UK: The Socialist Worker's Party is destroyed by an embezzlement scandal.
- November 10**—AFRICA: Police pull out of Cape Town when violence reaches unmanageable levels.
- November 11**—UCAS: The Cabrini Refugee Act establishes the Cabrini Green Housing Development in Chicago as a ghoulish haven.
- December 4**—UCAS: Humanis Policlub attacks Cabrini Green, killing at least 100.
- December 6**—AGS: Authority over the SOX is handed over to a joint corporate administrative council.

2054—HINTS OF ATLANTIS AND A REFUGE FOR GHOULS

Plane Goes Down Carrying Priceless Artifacts

TANYA WYNNE, *CAS ARCHAEOLOGY REVIEW*—07/10/54

A chartered plane loaded with priceless relics from an MIT&T dig site went down in the Atlantic earlier today. Initial reports indicate that the plane suffered engine trouble about twenty minutes before contact was lost. The crash site is in deep water about a hundred miles west of Savannah, Georgia. Rescue teams dispatched to the crash site have found no signs of wreckage or survivors.

“We plan to continue the search as long as necessary,” said CAS Coast Guard Lt. James Thurgood. “At this point, the safety of the passengers and crew are our primary concern.”

Among those on the plane were noted archaeologist and MIT&T professor, Dr. Vera Kelley, and Atlantean Foundation researcher, Dr. Bernard Gaussman. Also missing are the plane’s five-person crew and ten other researchers and assistants.

“This is a tragedy. We are all very much in shock here,” said Sheila Blatavska, founder of the Atlantean Foundation. “Our hopes and prayers are with them, and we are doing everything we can to assist in the search.”

Although any loss of human life will certainly be tragic, members of the scientific community are also distressed by the loss of the artifacts on board the plane. Earlier announcements suggested that the artifacts might finally prove the existence of Atlantis.

“I saw the initial data,” said Dr. Spencer Vaughan of Harvard University. “I’ve never seen such a compelling case for the existence of Atlantis before. In fact, until I saw Dr. Kelley’s notes, I’ve always laughed at the very idea of Atlantis as a real place. I pray we can find both the passengers and the artifacts.”

The CAS Coast Guard plans to continue searching for the plane throughout the night and have announced a press conference providing updated information at 8 A.M. ET tomorrow.

- You know, I really regret that this article was included. Every couple years the Atlantean Foundation makes some amazing discovery that is going to once and

for all prove the existence of Atlantis. Come on, folks. If it were real they’d have proven it already. Plato made the whole thing up. Get over it.

- Snopes
- The failure to prove a thing does not in itself disprove it. You of all people should know better than to fall into that logic trap, Snopes. I, for one, feel that the proof already exists but is being suppressed. As an academic this deeply concerns me. At the same time, I can’t help but wonder if this isn’t for the best. A society’s history defines it. With the Awakening already shattering our understanding of the present, could we also survive such a massive revision of our past?
- Elijah
- Here’s what I want to know: Whose idea was it to load all the researchers, their notes, and everything they’d found on a single plane? And doesn’t it seem more than a little convenient that they never found any wreckage? Explain that!
- Cosmo
- You people are impossible.
- Snopes

2055—INFESTATION

Freedom of Information Act Request #22360023

>>>FILE INTERCEPT DATE: 11-22-55

>>>TRANSMISSION APPROVAL: Denied

>>>TRANSMISSION OFFICER: KS335

Hey Honey,

I’m writing this because I don’t think I’m going to make it out of here. My team is pinned down and the barricades aren’t going to hold much longer. I don’t know what they’ll tell you happened to me, but I want you to know the truth. You also need to get someplace safe. Take Katie and mom and go up to the cottage. If I get out of this I’ll meet you there.

We’re at war with spirits from the metaplanes. The guys are calling them bugs, although I’ve heard the meta-liaisons calling them “insect spirits.” They take over people’s bodies and then transform them into giant insects. I’ve seen them, Mary. It’s bad. Real bad.

2054

January 3—UCAS: Knight Errant abandons their contract to protect Cabrini Green.

February 16—UCAS: The AGS chancellor is assassinated at O’Hare Airport in Chicago.

May 2—TIR TAIRNGIRE: The military seals off Crater Lake.

May 8—TIR TAIRNGIRE: A Sioux military scout is shot down after passing too close to Crater Lake.

May 11—UK: HKB takes control of the Transys Neuronet board.

May 12—AZTLAN: Yucatán rebels bomb an oil refinery, killing 127 workers.

May 17—AFRICA: The Seventh Church of the Guiding Hand is founded.

May 24—JAPAN: A semi-ballistic flight to Tokyo crashes just short of the runway, killing 119.

June 4—UCAS: In Seattle, the ork activist named Preacher encourages a crowd of seven thousand orks and trolls to fight back against racism.

June 10—GREECE: Scholars from MIT&T, funded by the Atlantean Foundation, uncover a cache of artifacts at a site near Crete.

June 24—AGS: Proteus AG completes the Emden arkoblock.

July 1—UCAS: The shadowrunners known as the D-Team, with D standing for Dunkelzahn, make their first appearance.

August 30—UCAS: The first rumors emerge of Black Hammer, a Matrix utility that mimics the deadly effects of Black IC.

September 7—UCAS: Congress passes the Endangered Species Act and includes a number of awakened creatures.

October 26—SPAIN: Sol Media Group acquires numerous Latin American media and telecomm companies.

December 16—EUROPE: An unknown scientist proposes that elven cells resist aging. He calls the phenomenon the Stopwatch Complex.

And it isn't just here. I've heard that they've found hives all over the world. Greece, Constantinople, the Sioux, Korea, India, CAS. Everywhere. We're in it deep this time and I'm not sure if we can dig ourselves out of this one.

I've got two guns down in the basement in the safe under the workbench. The combination is our wedding anniversary. Take food and water and anything else you can think of. I swear I'll try to make it out of here. Just stay safe and keep Katie safe.

I love you, Mary.

Doug

- Can someone please explain to me how it is that the whole insect spirit thing has blown over like a celebrity scandal? The bugs are still out there. They can take over the bodies of anyone and you'd never know it. For all we know, they're slowly colonizing millions of people and by the time we figure it out, it'll be too

January 17—AZTLAN: Fighting in Yucatán escalates to full scale civil war.

February 13—JAPAN: Fuchi begins constructing a deep space outpost at Lagrange Point 2.

March 11—UCAS: The Universal Brotherhood opens its Project Hope camps in the Redmond Barrens of Seattle.

April 24—UCAS: A group called the Compensation Army sets up camps in DeeCee, demanding compensation for land ceded to the NAN.

May 31—UCAS: Missing persons cases nationwide rise dramatically. Law enforcement agencies struggle to find a reason.

July 9—UCAS: The Project Hope camps are shut down for health reasons.

August 22—UCAS: In Chicago, a mega-hive of insect spirits, a previously unknown form of spirit, swarms the city. The UCAS government immediately mobilizes the military.

August 23—UCAS: Claiming that a new strain of VITAS has struck the city, the UCAS puts greater Chicago under military quarantine, an area called the Chicago Containment Zone (CCZ). Intelligence Agents shut down all communication to the city, destroying Matrix hubs and censoring news stories. When citizens of Chicago try to flee, troops open fire.

August 24—UCAS: FedPol troops are sent in to subdue the Compensation Army in DeeCee.

August 26—UCAS: The federal government begins making supply drops into the CCZ.

September 16—UCAS: Government officials meet with the Tir Princes and Lofwyr for advice on handling the CCZ.

October 1—UCAS: A sub-tactical nuke is detonated in Chicago at Cermak and Racine.

October 4—UCAS: Construction of a line of walls around the CCZ is completed.

November 22—AGS: A joint corporate force uses bug paranoia as an excuse to "liberate" much of Berlin.

November 24—TIR TAIRNGIRE: The cordon around Crater Lake is relaxed.

December 13—UCAS: The light carrier Wolverine and two guided missile frigates are stationed near Chicago.

December 29—UCAS: A shadow document describing the true situation in Chicago goes public.

December 31—GLOBAL: The first rumors of Otaku, children who access the Matrix without a cyberdeck, begin to emerge.

late. Sure, they need to specially prepare hosts and all that, but let's look at the facts. They've done it before and we didn't have a clue until we lost one of the largest cities on the fucking continent. What's to stop them from doing it all again? What if they start with some backwater third world hole that no one's paying attention to, colonize the hell out of it, and then release millions of these things at once? It makes me want to go out, stock up on insecticide, and buy a cabin in the woods like Dougie boy here.

- Lyran
- Snopes, you want to take this one?
- Black Mamba
- Hey, I think he makes a good point.
- Snopes

2056—PROTEUS GOES TO WAR, THE BOOK OF GAF, AND THE OLYMPICS THAT NEVER WERE

Found On a Used Cyberdeck At OSU Property Disposition

Subject: Unusual Artifact

Date: March 12, 2056

From: Dr. Thaddeus Ableman

To: Dr. Elaine Hamilton

Hello Elaine,

The reason I'm writing is that I just had a very interesting discussion with Dr. Michael Nickson. You might remember him—he was a forensic anthropologist at MIT&T back in the 40s, but left due to health problems. At any rate, he walked into my office yesterday. For a man with health issues, he looked surprisingly fit.

Regardless, while his visit was surprising, what he brought with him was even more so. He had in his possession a very ancient book, well over a thousand years old by my estimations. That alone would have aroused my interest but to call the book unique is an understatement. The book's cover was made from pounded orichalcum. Yes, I know what you're thinking, but I am sure of this. Furthermore, based on the bindings I am convinced that this is the original cover.

Needless to say I was nearly stricken dumb by this. Never have I seen anything remotely like it, and it seems to fly in the face of a great deal of what we currently believe true. Dickson wanted my assistance in determining the meaning of what looked like a hermetic rune. Besides the fact that a pre-Awakening rune would have no arcane meaning, I could not begin to decipher it. Dickson became angry and stalked out of my study. That is the last I've seen of him.

One bit of luck did befall me, however. As he stalked out, a flake from one of the pages fell on the floor. I gathered it up and placed it in a clean test tube. I've sent it to you via overnight shipping and I hope you can perform carbon dating on it for me. I would rather not have it done here, since my recent research has already painted me in a bad light with my colleagues.

Sincerely,
Thaddeus

- I know Dr. Ableman's work. He was an exceptional thaumaturgist and not one to make statements like this lightly. This really has me wondering about the Aleph Society claims.
- Elijah
- Drop him a line. See if he ever got those results back.
- Lyran
- I would, but the late Dr. Ableman died in a car accident in March of 2056.
- Elijah
- You know, if there is ever a mystery that doesn't involve one of the prime information holders dying a sudden or unexplained death, I'll eat my boots. Honestly, this is ridiculous. I imagine his sample disappeared as well.
- Plan 9
- That I don't know. Looks like I've got plans for this weekend.
- Elijah

January 12—UCAS: The Aleph Society is founded by Dr. Michael Nickson, who claims that an ancient Atlantean book he possesses reveals that every person has magical potential.

April 28—AGS: Hostilities between Proteus AG and AG Chemie erupt into all out war at Proteus' Helgoland facility. The conflict climaxes when the great dragon Nachtmeister sides with Proteus, leading to their victory.

May 5—AGS: Proteus AG closes its Helgoland facility for reconstruction.

June 8—INDIA: Insect spirit hives are uncovered in several large cities.

June 22—UCAS: Dunkelzahn is awarded citizenship and moves his home from Lake Louise to Prince Edward Island.

July 3—CFS: Truman Technologies relocate their headquarters from Chicago to Los Angeles.

July 5—AZTLAN: Yucatán rebels accidentally destroy a ferry carrying more than 200 passengers.

July 9—MALAYSIA: The revelation that the neo-communist movement is led by insect spirits leads to wide spread panic and riots.

July 19—CONSTANTINOPLE: Ares forces and Kurdish mercenaries destroy an insect spirit hive.

July 24—JAPAN: Renraku launches Locus Elementum, an interdisciplinary magical organization.

August 9—JAPAN: 60% of invited nations boycott the Olympics due to Japan's ban on metahumans. The IOC responds by cancelling the 2060 Olympics.

September 13—UCAS: A previously unknown group called Winternight is caught by federal agents while attempting to smuggle nuclear warheads into the UCAS.

October 25—CFS: A bomb goes off at the Liberation Day parade in San Francisco, killing fifteen.

October 28—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: A strange aurora appears over Crater Lake. Unusual magical events across the country follow.

November 7—UCAS: Thomas Steele is reelected president.

November 7—CAS: Oliver Jackson is elected president.

December 17—AGS: Proteus AG announces plans for a fully submerged arkoblock near Rømmø Island.

2056



2057—THE RISE AND FALL OF PRESIDENT DUNKELZAHN

President Dunkelzahn? This Voter Says No!

ELIOT RALYA, *BOSTON HERALD* EDITORIAL—07/04/57

Let me begin by saying that I am an ork. Many of you already know this, but I wish to get that fact out up front. Typically, I'm not one to throw metatype around, but in this case I hope it will counter any claims of anti-meta bias by those who are not familiar with me or my writing.

I know a lot of metahumans are excited about Dunkelzahn throwing his hat into the ring for the presidency. To them, it feels like the moment they've been waiting for—the day when a metahuman can sit in the White House. The thing these folks seem to be forgetting is this: as well as he comes across on *Wyrms Talk*, as convincing and impassioned as his speeches are, he is not, and never will be, one of us.

I know ... I sound like a Humanis propaganda video, but hear me out.

If we make Dunkelzahn our president, we are handing the fate of our nation over to a being that is inherently alien. He does not have

the same concerns as us. He does not have the same worries as us. He does not have the same challenges as us. This is a being that is, by his own estimation, thousands of years old; perhaps immortal. He wields magical power so far beyond that of any mortal mage that it borders on incomprehensible. He does not need to work for a living. He will never marry. He will never raise a child or try to pay for college. He will never have to go to a nine-to-five job day in and day out, struggle to pay his bills, or wonder how he's going to put food on the table.

How can a being living a life so utterly different from our own, hope to rule us in a fair and empathetic way. "His intelligence," I hear you say? Many of the world's most notorious dictators were exceptionally intelligent people. His broader world-view? We mortals have a broader world view than ants, but how do we feel about them? Do we respect an ant's needs? Its feelings? Would the ant expect us to?

I make no judgment about whether or not Dunkelzahn is sentient, or deserves citizenship, or how smart he is, or if he is kind. I do not, however, believe he has the capability to truly understand the people of this nation, which makes him inherently unfit to lead.

We will have a metahuman in the White House someday, but let us not make a regrettable decision in our impatience for equality.

- January 19**—UCAS: President Thomas Steele is accused of rigging the 2056 election.
- January 26**—UCAS: President Steele and Vice President Booth are impeached. By default, Speaker of the House Betty Jo Pritchard becomes the first female president of the UCAS.
- January 29**—UCAS: Congress announces a new election on August 7.
- February 1**—UCAS: Kenneth Brackhaven, a Seattle businessman with ties to the Humanis Policlub, announces his candidacy for president.
- March 15**—UCAS: The great dragon Dunkelzahn announces he will run for president.
- April 10**—ITALY: Using a secret technique, the Doge of Venice purifies the canals.
- May 21**—SICHUAN: Sichuan readies forces for an attack on the Canton Confederation.
- July 10**—UCAS: Presidential candidate Franklin Yeats is killed by an insect spirit.
- July 18**—UCAS: Franklin Yeats' running mate, Anne Penchyk, declares her intention to run for president in Yeats' place.
- July 23**—UK: Parliament establishes the Northern Habitable Zone.
- August 7**—UCAS: Dunkelzahn is elected president.
- August 9**—UCAS: President Dunkelzahn and Vice President Kyle Haeffner are sworn into office. At 10:23 PM, President Dunkelzahn is assassinated by an unknown assailant outside the Watergate hotel. An astral rift appears above the site of Dunkelzahn's death. Witnesses report seeing President Dunkelzahn's astral form entering the rift.
- August 10**—UCAS: Vice President Kyle Haeffner is sworn in as president. His first act is the formation of the Scott Commission to investigate President Dunkelzahn's assassination. Riots break out across the nation, but military and corporate security move quickly to avoid a second Night of Rage.
- August 11**—AMC: A funeral is held for President Dunkelzahn at Lake Louise.
- August 12**—UCAS: President Haeffner nominates President Dunkelzahn's ex-spokesperson, Nadja Daviar, as his Vice President.
- August 13**—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The cordon around Crater Lake is re-established.
- August 15**—UCAS: Dunkelzahn's will is read. Contrary to dragon custom, Dunkelzahn distributes his wealth to an extensive list of individuals.

Copies of Dunkelzahn's will hit the Matrix seconds after the reading is complete. The will includes instructions for the formation of the Draco Foundation, with Nadja Daviar appointed as its Chairperson. With the stock he received in the will, Miles Lanier leaves Fuchi to join the Renraku board.

- August 18**—UCAS: President Haeffner submits his complete list of names for cabinet appointments. Many metahumans and magically active individuals are included.
- August 19**—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: The Atlantean Foundation begins negotiations to pursue an underwater dig in the Bermuda Triangle.
- August 20**—UCAS: Arthur Vogel is appointed chairman of Sierra Incorporated.
- August 25**—UCAS: The Scott Commission is convened.
- September 3**—UCAS: The Draco Foundation begins operations at its headquarters in DeeCee.
- September 5**—UCAS: The Scott Commission begins hearings.
- September 12**—HONG KONG: Wuxing, Inc. announces major expansion plans.
- September 18**—FRENCH GUIANA: Proteus AG performs its first space launch from Devil's Island.
- October 12**—UCAS: A change to the 14th Amendment allows non-metahuman sentients and probationary citizens to obtain SINS.
- October 19**—UCAS: A new national flag is adopted.
- November 8**—UCAS: The Scott Commission clears President Haeffner of involvement in former President Dunkelzahn's assassination.
- November 11**—UCAS: The Draco Foundation moves to a monthly schedule for the distribution of the items in Dunkelzahn's Will.
- November 14**—UCAS: Congress begins the approval process for President Haeffner's cabinet.
- November 20**—UCAS: David Emerson announces the foundation of the Children of the Dragon, a cult that worships Dunkelzahn.
- December 3**—JAPAN: Renraku cuts a deal with the decker Leonardo to purchase cutting-edge technology from him.
- December 18**—UK: Jurgen Meiers and Princess Caroline divorce.

- Ralya states his case very well. I know it won't win me any popularity contests, but I've always felt that our nation dodged a bullet back in '57. I thought Dunkelzahn was a heck of a dragon, but that's what he was—a dragon. Not a human or a metahuman. I agree with Ralya. He never could have understood us.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I'm sorry to hear that you feel that way. I think we'd all be a lot better off were President Dunkelzahn still around. I especially missed him in '64. Things might have gone much better for all of us.
- Frosty
- I was a big supporter until his will was read. After that it became painfully clear to me that Dunkelzahn was, first and foremost, a dragon. Dunkelzahn, like all dragons, played with lives like a child plays with toys. Innocents were corrupted, good people killed, nations shaken, and corporations broken, all because of that will. I know there are folks out there who claim that it was all for a greater good, but frankly I don't want some all powerful being messing with my life. That's why I'm a shadowrunner. I make my own destiny and don't need a religion, a corporation, or a dragon screwing with my life "for my own good."
- Kay St. Irregular
- Amen!
- Clockwork

New Investigation of Dunkelzahn Assassination Reveals Irregularities

ASSOCIATED PRESS—02/21/72

FDC, UCAS (AP)—After analyzing a newly discovered recording of the 2057 assassination of President Dunkelzahn, researchers at the North American Institute for Truth claim to have discovered evidence that conflicts with the official story on the great dragon's death.

The researchers insist that the death was not an assassination, but a suicide. They point to unexplained fluctuations in the air around the President immediately after his death, and gestures made by the dragon just moments earlier.

"Previous recordings didn't show these gestures," said Institute for Truth representative Steven Weber. "You can clearly see he's making arcane signs."

To date, the Institute has not made the full results of their findings public, nor have they agreed to release the recording for analysis.

"We are preparing a documentary on our work that we will release in the fall. I am certain people will be stunned when they see the results."

- I'm stunned that this kind of story still makes it in as news. Must have been a slow day over at the AP.
- Frosty
- Actually, the part about the recording is true. I know a guy who helped them acquire that little gem. He didn't have much time to examine it, but he thinks the recording was legit. The Institute's analysis, however, is another story.
- Lyran



**VOTE
DUNKELZAHN**

2058—CLEARING THE SLATE

Excerpt from a Pirate Trid broadcast transcript for the Rinelle ke'Tesrae Equality starts with us. We will not be subject to a caste system, supporting a hypocritical power. We will not accept the oaths our fathers made to be the limitations of our own advancement. We will not accept that a prince has greater power purely by the grace of his blood.

Rise up!

We call the people, the workers in the streets who stand without jobs because of the princes.

We call the people, the families who have suffered and lost sons and daughters to the dragon's claws.

We call the people, the youths who have had their natural rights stripped from them.

Rise up!

Do not stand by while the greatest among us washes his hands of our fate. While the dragon who tore entire families apart sits on our council. While nepotistic business interests drive our nation further into debt. Instead, stand by your neighbors—the ones who fight for your freedom, the ones who offer true change, the ones who want tomorrow to always be better than today.

Together we shall stand, as one giant stone the Princes cannot move, a power made of the people to rival the Spire. Patriots, soldiers, loyal citizens, stand together and rise up against the tyranny of a system drunk with its own power.

Equality now! Rinelle ke'Tesrae rise up!

- Marxist propaganda wrapped up in nihilistic metaphor to undermine the system. I don't know if I should take them out back and shoot them or buy them a drink.
- Red Anya
- The political move would be to buy them a drink and then shoot them.
- Clockwork
- I watched some of these broadcasts when I was younger. They had a point. The system was flawed, and they made a positive change. While their methods were never thought out, you can't argue with the fact that they got the job done.
- Frosty



January 1—UCAS: Don James O'Malley is shot and killed by a lone assassin outside of his Seattle home.

January 18—CAS: President Oliver Jackson dies of a sudden heart attack. Vice President Ivory McCabe is elevated to president.

February 22—UCAS: Ares announces the release of Strain III, a genetically-engineered bacterium that kills thousands of insect spirits throughout the Chicago Containment Zone (CCZ). Press releases describe the bacteria as harmless to the general population. This "metahuman safe" label is called into question by metahuman rights activists, and as the Cabrini Refuge is decimated, the ghouls become martyrs for the cause.

February 26—UCAS: President Haefner lifts the quarantine around the Chicago Containment Zone. Riots break out as refugees from the CCZ attempt to flee the area and surrounding areas push back. Civil authorities manage to broker a peace. Thousands stuck within the CCZ discover that despite the announcement, Chicago remains excised from the modern world.

April 19—AGS: Construction is finished on the Saeder-Krupp Essen arcology. The new arcology is hailed as a triumph of modern engineering.

June 10—SCANDINAVIAN UNION: Erika announces the Wireless Matrix Initiative. Building on the cellular network, the WMI promises complete

Matrix integration within five years. Several other corporations begin working on projects based on similar technology, including Renraku, Novatech, and Mitsuhamma.

August 3—JAPAN: Renraku successfully recaptures the AI Morgan, and utilizes sections of her programming to develop the Arcology Expert Program. It is housed in the SCIRE and placed in control of the day to day care of more than 90,000 people.

August 10—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: A grassroots social movement, Rinelle ke'Tesrae, is formed in Tír Tairngire. Responding to the indefinite suspension of the Rite of Progression, the group calls for a democratic system to be established. Though Tír officials attempt to suppress news of the group's activities, stories are released in Seattle, UCAS, and the California Free State.

October 15—CARIBBEAN LEAGUE: In an effort to limit fighting between houngan throughout the Caribbean League, Nadja Daviar declares that the contest for their undeclared leader to receive the talon clippings left to them in Dunkelzahn's will must be completed by December 31, 2060.

November 10—ECUADOR: Proteus AG secretly begins construction of a space launch facility. Knowledge of the launch facility is made public in 2061.

- We all make mistakes—the question is whether you can live with the outcome. It stands to reason that these men and women have answered that question.
- DangerSensei
- Has anyone else ever noticed that Dunkelzahn's Will created a lot more problems than it solved?
- /dev/grll/
- Rule # 1 Never deal with a dragon, kid. Rule #2 Even if the dragon is dead, still follow rule # 1
- Stone

2059—BEGINNING OF THE FALL

FastFax News: Day 10 of the Renraku Arcology Vigil

A week and a half after the SCIRE's security systems gunned down Christmas shoppers and sealed the arcology from the outside world, there are still no answers. There has been no communication with anyone inside the building and no sign of residents attempting to get free. Initial reports from Renraku personnel cited a computer malfunction caused by a virus. The computer giant still has not explained what type of computer virus could keep them out of their own arcology for over a week.

The Seattle Transit Authority has been forced to reroute all traffic around the building and visitors are being warned to not approach the site. At this point, the Metroplex Guard has established a perimeter around the building for the public's safety. Monorail commuters are suggested to allow an additional twenty to forty minutes for commutes due to congestion along secondary lines.

Observers have reported that the building's defensive weapons are still fully powered and active. It is unclear if the weapons are under the control of someone inside the arcology or were simply left online from the security system being activated during the accident.

At this point, we'd like to remind our viewers that Renraku has stated the SCIRE was designed to be self-contained and can sustain itself for several months without external supplies. We are assured that the occupants will be perfectly safe and able to provide for all of their needs.

- There's so many great things to talk about in connection to the Renraku shutdown, but one of my favorites is how desperately Renraku was spinning the situation the whole time. Look, people were dying, more were being completely terrorized as their home rebelled against them. It was a nightmare situation, but the whole time it was going on, it seemed like all Renraku could think about is "Let's hide this as best we can so we can preserve our image!" There's a time when corp drones finally have to face the facts about where they stand in the scheme of things, how worthless they are in their parent corp's eyes. How many of them the corp is willing to sacrifice in the name of the "greater good," which is defined as greater profits in the pockets of a select few. Usually, when that realization comes, it's too late for the drones to do anything about it. They're either stuck where they are, or like the poor folks in the arcology, they're about to die.

But just because the people running a corp are heartless bastards doesn't mean we stop being obsessed with them. How about that Yuri Shibanojuji?

- Aufheben
- Young Yuri had spent his youth living in Russia, far away from the racist eyes of his homeland. Daddy couldn't live with the shame of siring an ork. It shouldn't have come as too much of a shock to the world that the Japanese would strike out against a tusker who got uppity and didn't give the company over to a "proper" leader. Served them right to watch Yamatetsu go strolling out the door.
- Mr. Bonds
- And for those of you who don't read the finance section, yes, Yamatetsu is Evo. They changed their name a few years after the move.
- Sunshine

January 6—BAY OF AZTLAN: The tanker Go Jo is sunk near Cancun, resulting in a massive spill of radioactive waste after a battle between pirates, CAS SEALS, and Aztlan Jaguar guards.

January 15—PHILIPPINES: The great dragon Masaru posts a manifesto calling for Philippine independence to Shadowland. Days later, Governor Saru calls for open elections in February 2059.

February 22—JAPAN: Tadamako Shibanojuji dies in a Yamatetsu hospital. Yuri Shibanojuji, his ork son, gains controlling interest in Yamatetsu.

March 3—UCAS: Ares Macrotechnology purchases a controlling majority of stock in General Motors. This creates a monopoly on the industrial production facilities around Detroit.

May 5—JAPAN: Fleeing what it labeled "an active attack" of fines and sanctions by the Japanese government due to the ascension of an ork chairman, Yamatetsu relocates its corporate headquarters to Vladivostok, Russia.

July 8—HONG KONG: Yamatetsu and Wuxing rally a collection of Asian corporations to form the Pacific Prosperity Group (PPG) as a regional response to the Japanacorp's economic strength.

August 14—AGS: Lofwyr purchases all mining rights to several sites in the Eifel Mountains. AGS geological surveys conclude that the mountains have been fully mined of any valuable ore.

August 15—HONG KONG: Wuxing representative Li Feng is given the Corporate Council seat left vacant after the death of Fuchi's representative.

September 29—JAPAN: White Monday. The Tokyo Stock Market faces the largest single-day drop in 70 years as traders sell off massive amounts of Fuchi and Fuchi-related stock.

October 6—UCAS: Richard Villiers announces the formation of Novatech. The new company is the result of consolidating pieces of Fuchi Industrial Electronics with Villiers International, Cambridge Holdings, and other interests.

October 20—UCAS: Leonard Aurelius sells all of his stock in Ares Macrotechnology to Arthur Vogel. Vogel, an eco-activist, resigns as President of Sierra, Inc and takes a seat on the Ares board. A week later, Aurelius uses his earnings to buy a seat on the board of Cross Applied Technologies.

December 19—UCAS: A security malfunction at the Renraku Arcology allows the AI Deus to assume control. Shortly afterward, the Matrix connection to the Seattle is severed. The Arcology remains shut down for several weeks, with nearly a hundred thousand people trapped inside. The Metroplex guard is called in to protect the rest of the city from the automated security systems.

- A computer virus? That was the best excuse they could come up with? Sounds like someone got the briefing about five nanoseconds before being fed to the media sharks.
- Slamm-0!

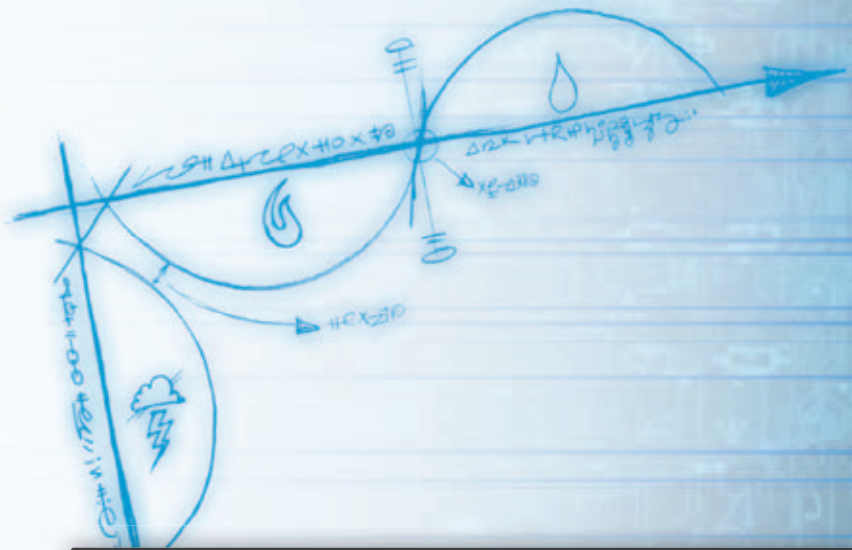
2060—CORPORATE DOWNFALL

Stories from the Front: Listening for a True Voice

With the deadline set by Vice President Nadja Daviar only a few months away, the fight for the title of Voice of Ogon has grown into full-blown war. Local law enforcement has had their hands full and new laws about dueling have been passed. Now from the gloaming hours until midnight, private battles are waged all across Haiti with loa-ridden houngans killing each other nightly. Reports have come in that the minor players—mambos and bocors—have all withdrawn from the contest after watching one of their own torn to shreds from the inside by a loa.

With Claude Michel-Flaubert's death to Justin Rochefort last night, the pool of candidates grows smaller every night. We have been told that all of the houngan participating in the contest are willing allies with their loa, and that each of the loa has chosen a Voice who is to win. No one has yet responded to reports of houngan facing off with each other, mounted by aspects of the same loa.

- I wrote a paper about the Renraku Arcology shutdown for a computer theory class. My teacher showed me the original posts from Shadowland talking about Deus and his experiments. After the Crash, I am surprised that so many people are willing to accept the new AI community. It's true that these new ones didn't do what Deus did, but if I'd survived that, I'm not sure I could look at a computer again.
- /dev/grrl/
- I checked out Dumpshock, it's a collection of essays and reviews from around the world. Maniha did a great job putting it all together, but reading fifteen different perspectives on one event is enough to make your eyes bleed.
- Slamm-0!
- Hold on, you can read? I thought you had the agent do it all for you.
- Netcat
- There are news agencies that report in a similar manner, Horizon's *Journal Internationale* in France gathers world reports on various events and shows the local perspective and the perspectives of others looking in. It provides a balanced approach.
- Sunshine
- Or a train wreck in slow motion from five different angles if you're unlucky.
- Slamm-0!
- The Or'zet Codex was the launching point for orxploitation throughout the 2060s. I can't blame Page for wanting to make a difference, but his work was quickly twisted into a mass-consumer culture targeting teens and convincing them to spend mommy and daddy's money.
- Snopes



- January 3**—UCAS: The UCAS Army erects a quarantine zone around the SCIRE.
- February 10**—UCAS: Shadowland posts a file claiming the Renraku Arcology has been taken over by an AI. Claims that people are being brutally experimented on are further fuel for the shadow community's belief that the arcology has become a war zone.
- March 17**—AGS: Representatives of the corporate and anarchist zones of Berlin sign a peace treaty allowing both areas to co-exist.
- April 30**—SWITZERLAND: Resolution 3031 is passed by the UN with the explicit purpose of "regulating the influence of economic powers in questions that should be answered by politics." The Commission on Megacorporate Affairs makes regular use of Resolution 3031 while policing corporate activities.
- June 2**—UCAS: Professor John Maniha publishes the best-selling book *Dumpshock: A Brief History of the Awakened World*.
- July 28**—JAPAN: After a prolonged period of economic hardship, Fuchi Industrial Electronics is officially dissolved.
- August 12**—HONG KONG: The Pacific Prosperity Group acquires the islands Pulau Batam and Pulau Bintan from the Sumatran Alliance in exchange for economic cooperation in order to build the Pelawangan Space Port.
- October 3**—PACIFIC OCEAN: Dunkelzahn's Island appears. Roughly 300 kilometers off the coast of Petrolia, CFS, an island erupts from the Pacific Ocean. Though it was bequeathed to Federated Boeing in Dunkelzahn's Will, the company investigates the island. Support personnel left to monitor the island are killed in a brief skirmish with pirates and are not replaced.
- October 20**—RUSSIA: Yamatetsu is awarded the Draco Foundation prize for creating the first fully self-sustaining underwater habitat.
- November 7**—UCAS: President Kyle Haeffner and Vice President Nadja Daviar are overwhelmingly re-elected to office.
- November 8**—CAS: Decorated veteran of the Aztlan Invasion of Texas, Cheryl Cundiff is elected President. She is joined by Vice President Brad Williams, a trial lawyer with extensive experience in domestic policy.
- November 10**—CFS: In San Francisco, noted civil rights activist Robert Page announces he has finished translating the ancient book left to him in Dunkelzahn's will. He titles the book the Or'zet Codex, claiming it contains proof that orks have a unique language.
- December 31**—CARRIBEAN LEAGUE: Justin Rochefort declared the Voice of Ogon, earning Dunkelzahn's talon clippings.



STEPHEN MCQUILLAN

YEAR OF THE COMET

Bellevue, Seattle
July 20, 2061
0330 GMT - 0800

“Blow it in three, two, one.”

On cue, Finn hit the detonator and heard the brief hiss of the det cord as it ignited. The hinges blew off and left the smoking door still standing.

With each step further into the facility, Finn counted. Even numbers were always bad, unless they were a multiple of three or seven. Years of meticulous counting and compartmentalization of his psyche had left their mark. Morality, right and wrong, didn't matter to him, all that mattered were the numbers attached to each act.

“How are the guards, Kaela?”

“Still out cold,” the mage responded. She had blue hair this week. It matched her favorite drink at the Paradise O. Kaela was a petite thing, as human as they came and she packed a mean punch. She had nailed them with a custom design—a wave of kinetic force to knock them down and enough electricity to fry their synapses. The spell would keep them unconscious for several minutes. Hopefully enough time for Finn and Gurth get in and back out.

Three hundred and twenty one. Three hundred and twenty two.

With the “all clear” from Kaela, Finn and Gurth headed down the hallway. Full jumpsuits and masks, all coated in ruthenium, would make identifying them difficult at best on camera. Without a decker onsite, they were doing the best they could. Kukyo, their de facto leader since the incident and the voice over their comms, was on overwatch with Finn's rifle. It was where Finn wanted to be. Unfortunately, the plan called for explosives, which meant Finn had to go in.

“Three minutes until the upload. Keep moving.”

Three hundred and twenty four. Three hundred and twenty five.

Mr. Johnson, ostensibly a Mitsuhamma exec, though the ID smelled fake, wanted a worm uploaded into the Novatech probe guidance system. Slowly corrupting the navigation data would cause an unexpected course correction and burn all of the fuel reserves. A few centimeters off over short distances results in massive drift on astronomical distances.

The final system update happened tonight and closed the window on the project. Option B was to infiltrate the launch site and manually upload the worm into the probe. Finn and Kukyo had run the numbers on that, and it wasn't happening. Both men knew this was their only shot at success. While physically, the two of them were opposites—Finn was tall and Aryan to Kukyo's shorter Japanese build, their personalities were even further disjointed. They had come to an understanding, begrudgingly, that Kukyo would lead, and Finn would follow. They shared many of the same skills, though each had his own specialties, and that similarity had led to several discussions about the best way to do each plan. It meant they had to hash out every option, but when they both agreed, it was the best plan they had.

“Finn. FINN!” Kukyo's voice resonated deafeningly in his ear, causing Finn to jump. Purely on reflex, the ceramic pistol was in his hand and the crosshairs overlaying his vision settled on the nearest person. A simple muscle spasm would put an end to the broad-shouldered blur. Beneath the ruthenium, Finn could picture the young ork's face. Normally it had a big grin, though with a gun pointed at him, the kid would be much more serious. “Get it together and lower your weapon. You aren't going to shoot Gurth, you don't want there to only be two of you in the building.” Kukyo stressed the two, their team had been together for years, and they'd all learned to navigate around Finn's OCD.

“Frag. I lost count. Was that three twenty seven or three twenty eight?” Finn asked. “I think it was three twenty eight.”



"No, you were on three hundred and twenty seven. It's a multiple, so you can start fresh. Gurth, go over to the computer and I'll walk you through installing the data tap. Finn set the charges for exodus. Once the payload is synched up, you'll need to clear out."

Following Kukyo's instructions, Gurth walked over to the console and turned his back on Finn. The ork adjusted the camera on his helmet. Step-by-step, Kukyo walked him through removing the panel and uploading the worm into the datastream.

Meanwhile, Finn laid down the charges; homemade explosives, impossible to trace. The Johnson wanted all of the hard drives destroyed. It sounded like a waste of time, blowing everything would make it obvious that someone had been here. Scorched earth wasn't their usual tactic, but they were being paid to make the job look like it. The cred spent the same whether it was surgical or not.

"I think we got it," Gurth said looking over at Finn. "You ready?"

"I can be. The devices are set to the remote, though I'm going to need more time to set the contingent relays. I want them to blow automatically when the uplink breaks. That way if the worm trips an alarm, we'll know when the twenty-one second timer trips." Finn had three charges on each server, but it had taken two minutes. He just needed one more minute.

"Leave it. We can hit the switch manually when we get outside."

Gurth slung his SMG back into firing position and Finn drew his pistol. They slowly began their retreat back to Kaela with Finn taking the lead. From there, the three of them would evac together to Kukyo's position.

"Eyes open folks—we have an inbound chopper. Heavily armed. Estimate two minutes until touchdown."

Two.

"Switch over to the secondary magazine," Finn called out. His tone was now the instructor. "She's loaded with AV rounds. Take your time on the shot and aim for the rotor joint." Again, Finn wished he was outside. With his rifle in hand, there wouldn't be any problems taking down the chopper. Kukyo knew how to shoot, but Mother had her own personality that only Finn truly knew. He had built her from scratch and could identify her amongst a table of full of other weapons with his eyes closed.

As they ran down the hallway, pushing the ruthenium's sensors to its limits to compensate, reality bent and shifted. The hallway appeared to stretch beyond the three-second run into something much longer. Something was trying to slow them down, keep them locked down in the building.

"Kaela," Gurth called through the comms, "we've got mojo. It's—"

Before Gurth could finish the statement, a solid column of fire materialized in front of them. Waves of heat washed off the spirit and scorched the walls. It looked vaguely humanoid, like a clay sculpture molded from magma and wreathed in blue-white flames. Behind them, the building itself came alive as a spirit made up of cables, forgotten lunches and ceiling tiles lumbered forward.

"Kaela?" This time it was Finn calling her name. His pistol would go straight through the spirits without even hurting them. Even Gurth's SMG at full-auto would scarcely wound them. They needed Kaela's gift to deal with them quickly, or the fight would slow down as Finn kept himself alive and Gurth beat on them with his tonfa. The kid did well enough against gangers, but full blown spirits might be out of his league.

"She's out of body. You're on your own."

Outside, Kukyo held his breath as he aimed at the inbound helicopter. Battle-tac information broadcast across the team's image links. Finn watched as Kukyo exhaled slowly and pulled the trigger. The rifle barely moved as it fired, nearly all the recoil mitigated. Though neither man heard the impact on the chopper, the heat trail of smoke betrayed it. The chopper had been damaged, but not enough to crash it. The pilot was good, leaning into the turn for a controlled descent. Kukyo pulled back on the bolt and loaded the next round. He just had to provide enough cover fire for the team to get out.

Finn shrugged a bag off his shoulder and slid it down the hall towards the physical embodiment of mankind and technology. It came to rest a meter or so in front of the spirit. Gurth had his back to Finn and was holding his own against the fire elemental. Neither could get past the other's defenses, but it was a stalemate.

"Skate him," Finn called out making a reference to a technique that a bouncer at their regular bar used. To Gurth's credit, he didn't mouth off about the elemental being able to fly. Feinting high with the tonfa, the ork kicked a leg out and connected with the solid flames. Finn rushed down the hallway, pushing as hard as he could against Gurth to get them both past the flames. When his legs gave out and Finn tripped over his teammate, there was only one option left. He pushed the button.

The satchel charge detonated, along with all the charges in the lab. There would be no sign of what they had done, other than the carnage left in their wake. Gurth pulled them back to their feet. One spirit was destroyed, but the elemental had regained its balance. All that was left was for the two of them to outrun the flames until they got to Kaela, and try to get out of the building alive. The next ten minutes would either spell success or end their career as a team.

2061—YEAR OF THE COMET

EyeWitness accounts from the Watergate Hotel

Albert McMillan, 24: “Man, it was a great party—I mean we were all hammering ‘em back and rocking out to some sick tunes. Then all of a sudden there’s this screaming in my head. I didn’t really hear it, man, so much as think it. Like something tuned into my brain and just shrieked.”

Lisa Sanchez, 37: “I was on duty when Ghostwalker appeared. The rift had been experiencing odd phenomena for the previous several months, so Command increased security around the perimeter. We had been apprised of several parties in the area and were on alert for individuals attempting to cross into the rift. What we didn’t expect was something coming out of it. The rift flared to life, as bright as the noon day sun, and then the dragon pushed through. He was followed by a swarm of spirits. Our line officers ordered us to keep the populace under control, but there was no need. None of them tried to approach the rift, most fled at the sight.”

Tomas Running-Dog, 19: “Yeah, so maybe I was a little closer in the astral than the Army wanted me to be, but if those fraggers couldn’t stop me, who were they to complain? My astral form was directly in front of the Watergate Hotel as I celebrated the 50th Anniversary of our world finally coming alive. When the rift opened, I swear every part of me experienced a different reaction. It’s been described as orgasmic, being murdered, beautiful and horrible, they

are all right. The whole thing was too intense to let just a single feeling or emotion capture all of it. As the dragon left though, there was a tugging. My form wanted to follow him, like iron drawn to a magnet. I think that’s how he got the spirits, they wanted to go with him, wanted to be in the presence of such greatness. Me, I slammed back into my body and shat myself.”

- Ah yes, the Probe Race. There was a lot of biz out for the taking, everything from actual infiltration and sabotage to simple recon. Whatever your skill set, someone was hiring.
- Stone
- So, as far as I can tell, no one ever got close enough to actually look at the comet right? Or did one of the probes make it?
- Turbo Bunny
- Nope, all of the probes experienced “accidents” in the form of runner intervention. After all if one corp can’t play with it, they want to make sure no one else can either.
- Orbital DK
- The arrival of Halley’s Comet triggered a second Awakening of sorts as the ambient mana level went through the roof. All the accounts of SURGE, natural orichalcum, and mana storms were signs of the times. It’s going to get a lot worse before it gets better.
- Frosty



- I wish Puck were here. I'd love his perspective on the whole Deus download, what it was like and how it affected the Resonance streams.
- Icarus
- That's a long wait for a train that don't come, sister. Down in the CAS, that whole SURGE business led to more than a few riots and accidental deaths. After all, how's a brother supposed to recognize the demon that comes crawling up the front walk as Jimmy and not some soul-craving varmint? The beautiful and exotic ones had it easy, weren't too many people shootin' at angels, but if you

suddenly had brimstone for skin, horns, and made all the dogs start barking, well, people'll do what they gotta.

- Kane
- There were a dozen new types of critters added to the big game and bounty lists after the comet left. Fighting with a horned bear isn't my idea of a fun time, but if the money is right ...
- Sticks

January 1—SWITZERLAND: The UN commemorates the arrival of Halley's Comet and declares 2061 as the "Year of the Comet." Several megacorporations vow to send probes out to meet the comet and gather what data they can.

March 2 **1**—NYC: The Corporate Court founds the Grid Overwatch Division (GOD). Tasked with cross-jurisdictional matrix law enforcement, GOD hackers are drawn from security divisions of all Corporate Court member corporations.

April 5—CFS: General Saito begins to crackdown on the teaching of Or'zet within the Protectorate.

May 11—UCAS: With the help of a second AI called Magaera, Renraku believes it has destroyed Deus, the AI in control of the Renraku Arcology in Seattle. In fact, it has escaped by secretly uploading itself into a system of a thousand unwitting human and metahuman vessels called the Network. Unbeknownst to Deus, Maegara was transferred to the Network as well.

May 13—UCAS: Renraku announces that they have resolved the arcology issue in Seattle, although most of the arcology remains under the control of Deus' drones.

June 20—UK: At dawn, during the Summer Solstice festival Stonehenge is restored to its original condition. With the stone circle reformed, the power site begins strengthening the ley line beneath it.

July 21—AGS: King Berthold I of the Black Forest Troll Kingdom goes missing. Investigations do not reveal any sign of assassination or abduction. Chancellor Hugo von Hasslach serves as interim regent.

August 1—UCAS: Magaera and Deus begin to struggle for control of the Network, causing division within the ranks.

August 15—CAS: The Aleph Society makes global headlines with its promise to restore magical ability to any awakened individual who has burned out. Dr. Michael Nickson, the founder, states the fundamental mission of the Aleph Society is to raise the innate magical potential inherent in every person.

September 4—ARABIAN CALIPHATE: Ibn Eisa, leader of the Islamic Unity Movement, is assassinated. He returns from the dead five days later and declares a New Islamic Jihad.

September 5—GLOBAL: Halley's Comet becomes visible to the naked eye. Mana storms become more common and powerful as they scour the globe. Early reports come in as roughly one thousand cases of Sudden Recessive Genetic Expression (SURGE) are discovered worldwide. SURGE is compared to UGE and Goblinization due to massive physical changes effected on a genetic level.

September 5—HONG KONG: A stable astral shallow forms around Wuxing Skytower on Aberdeen Island. All astral space for one kilometer becomes visible to mundane individuals.

September 12—GLOBAL: Fueled by fear of the SURGE phenomenon, riots and civil unrest spread across the world from megaplexes to small towns. Only a small number of cities and nations are untouched by the violence.

September 12—AGS: Matthias Hesse and Nationale Aktion release an airborne strain of VITAS-1 in Munich's ruined Olympiapark Stadium. Nearly ten thousand homeless metahumans and aid workers are killed in the attack.

September 23—INDIA: Hundreds of saddhus bathing in the holy waters of the Ganges River at Haridwar are transformed during an astral flood. Manifestations of Hindu SURGE are seen with individuals taking on elephant and monkey features or blue and golden skin tones.

October 17—UCAS: Novatech announces that they have begun construction of the Olympia Lunar Base.

October 27—PACIFIC RIM: The Ring of Fire erupts. Across the Pacific Rim, volcanoes erupt and earthquakes wreak havoc with massive damage in Japan, the Philippines. The death toll is estimated in the hundreds of thousands including the Japanese Emperor and most of the Royal Family.

October 29—JAPAN: In the face of the eruption of the Ring of Fire, the Imperial Diet orders the withdrawal of Imperial Marines from San Francisco.

November 4—CFS: General Saito refuses the Diet's withdrawal order and stages a military coup in San Francisco, supported by loyal troops and the Japanese megacorps. They advance into the Central Valley, conquering Sacramento and other key sites.

November 10—FRANCE: The Auvergne volcanoes erupt astrally. Though there is no physical evidence of the eruptions, the astral space is flooded with magma. While the event is harmless to most, thirteen individuals were killed due to damage sustained on their astral forms.

November 27—AZANIA: The Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research announces the discovery of naturally occurring orichalcum. The discovery sparks an Orichalcum Rush and forces parageologists to reexamine several core beliefs about alchemical compounds. Around the world, natural occurrences are discovered and mined including on Dunkelzahn's Island and the Eifel mountains.

December 2—CFS: A massive earthquake strikes Los Angeles, destroying the walls that contained the El Infierno slums. The denizens swarm out and begin to loot the city. Fires spread throughout Los Angeles as looters burn everything in their path.

December 8—PCC: Pueblo military forces enter Los Angeles to subdue the rioters and claim Los Angeles and southern California as part of the PCC.

December 17—JAVA: Spirits of unknown origin break free from the central stupa at the Borobudur temple complex. Members of the Astral Space Preservation Society and Javanese military work together to identify and recapture the spirits though many escape. They are later defined as non-shedim and classified as a strong threat to metahumanity due to their ability to possess metahumans against their will.

December 24—UCAS: Ghostwalker is first seen when he emerges from the Watergate Rift in Washington, D.C. Later that day, the Great Dragon rampages through Denver. In the first day, he destroys the Aztlan teocalli. His attacks continue for several weeks, focusing on the Aztlan Sector.

December 24—UCAS: In the wake of Ghostwalker's emergence, a swarm of spirits is seen leaving the Watergate Rift. These spirits are later identified as shedim.

2061

2062—ADAPT

Excerpt from the Imperial Statement Recalling the Imperial Forces, by Emperor Yasuhito

To all citizens of Japan,

Recent tragedies have shaken our great nation, both natural and manmade disasters alike. The shakings of the earth and the magical phenomena that have plagued our homeland are beyond mortal ken; but know that the spirits have spoken and said a reprieve is coming. We are a strong people, like the willow is strong; we will bend during the storm, and we will endure. And we will rebuild. To rebuild, though, we need all our strength. Why meddle in the affairs of other nations and let weakness hit our heart, our homes?

I have seen what the sea and land have wrought in cities across our nation. I have heard you ask for help, ask for aid, and I promise that aid will come.

To ensure that Japan remains a strong nation, I have called back our military forces deployed around the world. These strong men and women will begin the rebuilding process. Areas of our nation devastated by volcanoes and the sea will have help! Our cities and towns and villages will be rebuilt by the strength of our people.

But why have these tragedies been visited on us? Why have our kami turned their backs on us? Why have our prayers gone unanswered? Why have so many died?

What have we done to earn such anger?

As Emperor, my duty is to ask these questions. And I have received an answer. Not all tragedies are wrought by nature. For decades we have created our own great tragedy. Those born kawaruhito have been banished by our country. Yomi Island has been a prison, where

Japanese citizens have been banished to a life of misery and despair, of torment and torture. Our nation has but received a taste of what we have inflicted upon our brothers and sisters, our children, and our friends. To repent is to once again gain the favor of our kami.

As of today, I am rescinding the Yomi Island decree. No more shall the kawaruhito be banned from our nation ... *Link*.

- Yasuhito played the “divine” card heavily in rescinding the Yomi Island decree. But most of the common population was still reeling from the repeated natural disasters that had killed hundreds of thousands. Hearing that the Emperor was sending Imperial soldiers to rebuild their cities, to hand out food and clean water, to provide medical care—the Yomi thing didn’t seem nearly as important. By the time the comet had passed and things had calmed down, no one wanted to send the Imperial forces back to Yomi, so the prison was abandoned.
- Kia
- That’s not to say that centuries of prejudice got wiped away by one speech. But seeing the local kami spirits get heavily involved in the rebuilding lent some credence to his position. Still, the acceptance of metahumans in Japan is a tenuous thing. There are a lot of people who still find the presence of the kawaruhito, “changed ones,” a shameful or disgusting thing. Including many of the metahumans.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Other side effects to this action: the Philippines were finally liberated; having the Imperials leave Yomi triggered the final rebellion. And Saito thumbed his nose at the new emperor and set himself up as Racist-Dictator Number One in SanFran.
- Sounder

2063—AND OVERCOME

Live Interview with Shannan Whiterose, Rinelle ke’Tesrae Sympathizer

KEN WARREN, KSAF

Ken: Ms. Whiterose, you’re here today at this massive sit-in on the Oak Street testing center in downtown Portland. Can you tell me why you and the thousands of others are here?

Shannan: Because it’s the only way they’ll listen to us. How else can we show Royal Hill that we’re serious? That the Tír is collapsing around them while they eat caviar and drink wine behind their stone walls? They need to see that it’s not just a few malcontents. Not just a couple of radicals. Millions of us are out today. We can’t vote, we can’t send them a petition, we can’t even send them letters. Every effort we’ve made to enact change in the Tír has been met by the police, by further restrictions, by further isolation of the princes. Now we’re doing something they can’t ignore.

Ken: Wasn’t the Rite of Progression designed to elevate some citizens to upper society; a fair and equal test for all youth? Why choose to blockade this event?

Shannan: Riiiiight. Like any of us here have any chance of getting into the nobility? The Princes think this will pacify us. Like the outcome hasn’t already been determined—the high will stay high, the rest of us won’t get anything. Well, we’re showing them that we see through their feeble charade. We won’t be pacified. Not until we have a real, representative, elected government—a government free from the interference of those bloodsucking leeches. Not until we have the rights listed in the Fénechas, the law of the free—rights for every citizen, no matter their station.

2062

January 3—JAPAN: 14-year-old Yasuhito, the only survivor of the Imperial Family after the eruption of Unzen volcano, is named Emperor of Japan.

January 27—DENVER: Council of Denver formally cedes control of the city to Ghostwalker. Aztlan territory of the city is given to CAS; Aztlan personnel and businesses are ordered to leave the city immediately.

February 1—JAPAN: Emperor Yasuhito rescinds the Yomi Island Decree, which mandated the deportation of Japanese metahumans. Yomi Island prisoners are free to return to Japan.

March 15—AZTLAN: Earthquakes, tidal waves, and spirits batter the Yucatán territory, forcing Aztlan to halt their military action in the area. Yucatán rebels and Aztlan military alike die in the natural disasters.

April 1—GLOBAL: Halley’s Comet disappears from view. All recently discovered natural orichalcum deposits run out. New SURGE cases decrease.

May—TÍR NA NÓG: After comet fever dies down around the world, it is discovered that the magical nature of Tír na nÓg has been affected permanently. The Veil works erratically, mana flares and ebbs near cairns and monoliths and astral constructs fade in and out of the material world on a regular if unpredictable basis, shaking many Tír citizens.

July 19—AUVERGNE: An astral volcanic eruption in Auvergne spills over into the mundane world as physical eruptions.

October 31—UK: Lyonesse emerges from the English Channel at the termination point of the Stalker and Stonehenge Great Ley lines. No seismic activity is recorded during the event.



Ken: Strong words, Ms. Whiterose. I can see you're very passionate about this. Tell me, are you worried about the police—the statement from the High Prince that any interference in the Rites would be met with utmost force?

Shannan: That's their answer to everything, isn't it? Anyone complains: they pull out the police and start shooting, burning down houses, locking up anyone with half a working brain. Well, we've pledged to keep this peaceful, which is why we're sitting here, blocking all the testing terminals. If the High Prince orders the police against us, then the blood of millions will be on his hands. And let me tell you, Ken—no matter how much the Princes threaten us, there aren't enough jail cells in the nation to hold all of us.

- Despite the brave words, hundreds were arrested, and dozens hospitalized. Two days later, the proctors' offices, where thousands of test results were being stored, was bombed and burned to the ground. The loss of the test scores on top of the blockades of many of the testing stations effectively crippled the Rite. There was some noise about rescheduling it, but even the Princes finally figured out that holding another Rite wouldn't solve their problems.
- Frosty
- Rinelle ke'Tesrae made a few more pointed demonstrations of their impatience with the Tír government. Like the assassinations of Prince Feana Sterling and the failed assassination attempts of several other Princes, including Jonathan Reed.
- Dr. Spin
- That's what they get for hiring amateurs.
- Riser

January 15—CFS: Noted rock rocker CrimeTime releases Djoto, the first album primarily in Or'zet, and overnight the orxploitation musical genre is born.

May 1—EUROPE: NEEC is officially inaugurated.

May 5—SPAIN: King Felipe VI dies. In a national scandal, it is revealed that Alfonso de Alba, an ogre, is the true firstborn son of the deceased king. The heir-apparent's, Prince Juan Carlos, claim is superceded by Alfonso, and the nation is divided as the church comes out against a metahuman as king.

May 15—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The long-postponed Rite of Progression is halted by the Rinelle ke'Tesrae rebel group; millions gather to boycott the tests and show support for the anti-government faction.

June 4—UCAS: In spite of Renraku's 2061 announcement, the UCAS military officially designates the Renraku Arcology liberated, when they take control of the arcology.

July 12—DENVER: Pax, a dissonant technomancer and one-time servant of Deus, has a vision about transforming the Matrix, and begins working on a virus that will bring it to life.

August 15—PCC: High-level media and industry officials establish the Horizon Group, and former sim-star Gary Cline is appointed CEO.

September 16—MARS: The crew of the Valentina Tereshkova, the first manned mission to Mars, sends back live footage of the planet.

December 19—THE MATRIX: Pax meets with a Winternight doomsday terrorist cult cell and proposes an alliance. An underworld war begins between otaku and dissonant otaku, resulting in the deaths of thousands of children. Winternight steals the Surtr biological weapon prototype from Zeta-ImpChem and begins manufacturing it.

2063

2064—CRASH 2.0

The Memoirs of a Crash 2.0 Survivor

BY JOSEPHINE DZHUGASHVILI

I wasn't at the Novatech IPO. Like many other survivors, I was simply going about my daily life. Of course, I'd read about it; it was the leading story for weeks, maybe months in the corporate world. But I thought it would have little impact on me, personally—how wrong I was!

It was just after 6 a.m. in Seattle. I'd logged onto the Matrix to surf the morning news. I didn't have to report into work because the Global Relations Institute was offline to be upgraded, which ended up saving many of my coworkers.

My first hint something was wrong was when a small news blurb popped up. Reports of a computer malfunction during the IPO.

That was the first and only hint.

Then the host I was in began to darken. For a brief, annoyed second, I thought some system admin was playing a prank. The icon of a blonde woman was sitting in an armchair across from me, and she met my eyes, looking equally annoyed. "*My news feed just cut out.*" I remember her saying.

Then the news feed I was browsing flickered. The words reformed, letters elongating, mutating, swirling into mist. I saw faces in that swirling mist, hollowed eyed, their black-rimmed mouths open in silent screams. I dropped the news feed, in surprise, still thinking it was some sort of hacker trick. Around me, the host flickered, the VR wood-panel walls fading in and out, the chair I was sitting in turning sticky and rank. I felt something malevolent brush across my skin; as though I was really sitting in that room, as though my icon had hairs on its arm that could stand up.

Impossible.

That's when I first felt fear. Across from me, the blonde icon was struggling with her own chair, which had looped red tendrils around

January 8—SIOUX: Sioux Office of Military Intelligence (OMI) intercepts a heavily thamaturgically-modified nuclear warhead outside of Butte. Research links it to the doomsday terrorist cult Winternight.

March 14—PHILIPPINES: Admiral Ryoichi Kuroda is appointed the new governor of the Philippines by the Diet after the assassination of the previous governor. He is given a contingent of Imperial Marines to handle the crisis. He immediately orders the public execution of all Filipino dissidents.

March 17—UCAS: Novatech announces they will be offering twenty percent of their shares for public sale at an IPO scheduled for November 2.

April 1—UCAS: The East Coast Stock Exchange (ECSE), in Boston, begins upgrading their systems for the Novatech IPO, anticipating the largest Matrix transaction in history.

April 2—JAPAN: Emperor Yasuhiro weds Hitomi Shiawase.

April 18—THE MATRIX: Pax's virus, Jormungand, is lab-tested. The covert deployment of Jormungand code eggs and Surtr weapons begins.

June 5—AZTLAN: Aztlan signs the Yucatán Peace Treaty. Aztechnology CEO Juan Atzcapotzalco is killed during the ceremonies by a bomb. The treaty is still signed, and the Yucatán becomes autonomous. Dzitbalchén is found guilty of the attack and later publicly executed by Aztlan.

August–November—GLOBAL: Winternight uses magic to usher in exceptionally early and harsh winter conditions around the globe. The east coast of North America is hit especially hard.

September 27—EARTH ORBIT: Zeta-ImpChem reports to the Corporate Court that Winternight is behind the theft of the Surtr prototype. Around the globe, counter-terrorist watch groups and government agencies go on high alert.

October 9—GLOBAL: Covert intelligence agencies and shadowrunner teams begin a 16-day strike against Winternight cells. A few members are captured alive but are resistant to interrogation.

October 24—TSIMSHIAN: Mitsuhamma announces it will be pulling all operations out of Tsimshian. The Mitsuhamma-supported government teeters on collapse as Haida-led forces prepare to overtake the country.

October 31—UCAS: The escaped AI Deus compiles itself into the ECSE host, planning on using the heavy Matrix traffic of Novatech's IPO to transform himself.

November 1—GLOBAL: The Corporate Court coordinates strikes against Winternight, capturing leaders and destroying training camps. With the cult supposedly destroyed, they believe the crisis is over and stand down. It is not until the early morning of November 2 that a lead cult member finally breaks under interrogation, and they learn the true plans; too late, they attempt to intercept the numerous bombs.

November 2—GLOBAL: The Novatech IPO triggers the Crash 2.0. The IPO starts at 8:30 am and at 9:16 AM, the AI Deus, escaped from the Renraku arcology, takes over the East Coast Stock Exchange host and raises it to ultraviolet levels. As he forces open connections to other supercomputer hosts around the globe, otaku hidden in the ECSE, who are working against Deus, create a resonance well and two other AIs are awakened: Megaera and Mirage. While the three AIs battle, the Winternight terrorists unleash their plan to cripple the world. First, Jormungand, a dissonant otaku-created virus, is unleashed at 9:31 AM, and corrupts hosts around the globe, killing deckers who attempt to stop it. People in the ECSE and other hosts under attack are trapped, unable to log off, and many are killed. The second prong of the Winternight attack includes setting off EMP bombs in major cities and nukes on fault-lines around the globe, which they hope will lead to a holocaust winter. Boston is hit by the first EMP at 9:44 AM. Other EMP bombs destroy the backbone of the worldwide Matrix. Luckily, the fault line nuclear bombs that do go off appear to be oddly constrained; instead of global destruction, the fallout is very localized and far less severe than expected.

November 3—UCAS: Taking advantage of the chaos of the Crash 2.0, the rebel group New Revolution stages a coup. UCAS President Kyle Haefner is kidnapped from the White House and killed. Vice President Nadja Daviar survives an assassination attempt; Secretary of Defense William Stratta does not. Across North America, New Revolution troops—subverted from the UCAS military itself—attempt to seize control of sprawls. Acting President Daviar announces a state of martial law. By the end of the day, Brigadier General Angela Colloton announces the UCAS coup has been contained and that the leader—Senator Jonathan S. Braddock, backed by Alamos 20,000—has been killed. However, the New Revolution actions have fallout in multiple North American nations.

November 4—UCAS, CAS: Elections are postponed.

November 26—ARABIAN CALIPHATE: Ibn Eisa, the power behind the New Islamic Jihad, is revealed as a shedim.

December 1—TSIMSHIAN: The Haida National Front overthrows the government. Civil war ensues, and is ended after Sioux-led STC forces overtake the nation. Tsimshian is made a protectorate of the Salish-Shidhe government.

December 1—TIR TAIRNGIRE: Teetering on collapse from the combined crises of the Matrix Crash and the New Revolution coups, the Council of Princes announces it will disband and the nation will elect a representative government.

her arms and was slowly sinking into her skin. Her mouth was wide open, screaming. The others in the host were screaming, too. I tried to log off, still thinking I could notify the sysop that the host was under attack, notify the police, do *something*.

But I couldn't log off. I gave the mental command and nothing happened. I tried to concentrate through the rising panic, tried to focus on the real world, the world outside the Matrix; nothing happened. I was trapped.

I struggled out of my chair, tried to grab the icon of the blonde woman, tried to pull away the blood-red coils that had wrapped around her neck. The coils singed my hands, burned, yet I kept pulling.

The last thing I remember is looking into her blue eyes, seeing the reflection of my own fear in them. Then a shadow. Silence. And pain.

Two years later, I woke up.

- JoeyD was one of the lucky ones. The Global Relations Institute paid for all her medical care while she was in a coma and her rehabilitation afterwards—unlike a lot of those who ended up without any medical care and died within days or

weeks of Crash 2.0. She didn't end up with AIPS, like a lot of the survivors. And she came out of it lucid; the number of people who woke from their comas stark raving mad was in the thousands.

- Pistons
- Lucien Cross, CEO of the AAA Cross Applied Technologies, died in an EMP-related plane crash, which was the beginning of the end of CATCo.
- Mr. Bonds
- Note JoeyD's little statement that the GRI was offline that day. All of Horizon and their subsidiaries were down for a scheduled upgrade to the WII protocols from November second through the fourth. Miraculous how they managed to avoid any of the destruction that hit other corps ...
- Dr. Spin
- And again, I'll point out, they'd scheduled that upgrade over a year earlier—long before Winternight was a blip on anyone's radar. You're as bad as Plan 9, seeing Horizon conspiracies everywhere.
- Sunshine



2065—REORGANIZATION

Excerpt of Press Conference with Richard Villiers, CEO of newly created NeoNET

Today I'm pleased to announce the merger of my corporation, Novatech, with the European tech leader Transys-Erika. Our combined companies will create the second largest corporation in the world, and the undisputed leader in technological developments. The Corporate Court has approved this merger, and NeoNET will continue to hold Novatech's seat on the Corporate Court, and will be rated AAA.

Transys-Erika is a pioneer in the wireless revolution and holds the promise of the wireless Matrix—along with most of the contracts for upgrading sprawls around the globe to the future of the wireless world. Novatech has the resources to deliver those contracts, along with the infrastructure, skilled labor pool, and years of large scale project management experience. Together, we have the innovation and the strength to capture the market for developing Matrix technology.

With Crash 2.0 behind us, nations across the globe are upgrading to the WMI. NeoNET is strategically positioned to deliver the hardware, software, and consulting necessary to do the upgrades quickly, professionally, and at the most competitive price. As more countries move towards the future of the Matrix, NeoNET will be there to facilitate their upgrades.

For investors, I'd like to extend my personal assurances that this merger will only benefit your portfolios. I will helm NeoNET as the CEO and President. Anders Malmstein, Transys-Erika CEO and a man for whom I have the greatest respect, will be the Chairman of the Board. Since Anders and I both agree that Celedyr's scientific genius is unparalleled, and one of the leading reasons for the scientific and technological advances that catapulted Transys-Erika to the forefront of Matrix technology, he has been offered the position as head of Research and Development.

NeoNET will ride the wave of the future; delivering the technology of the future *today*.

- Villiers made the move of the century, marrying Novatech to T-E. The other megas were still scrambling in the dust and rubble of Crash 2.0 when Villiers

met with Malmstein in secret—and when I say in secret, I mean it. Even Celedyr had no idea of what the two men were cooking up. Rumor is the wyrm was pretty steamed; supposedly he got word of the merger when the press release came out, and that he stayed on simply because he had too much invested in the corp to cut his losses.

- Mr. Bonds
- I think he stuck around because he loves what he gets to do: release his inner science-nerd. Why bother with trying to run a company when he's got associates who are better at it? Seems to me Celedyr got exactly what he wanted: a corp that regularly screws over Lofwyr, and the ability to indulge in all the experiments he wants without having to deal with the bureaucracy.
- Frosty

2066—INNOVATION

Excerpt from E-Trend E-zine Reviews the NeoNET Palm-XE Commlink

"LOOK MA, NO WIRES!"

One of the perks of working for E-Trend is getting to play with all the new gizmos and gadgets corps dream up. And let me just say, NeoNET has made our year with their new palm-sized cyberterminal. Weighing in at a mere 191 grams and costing less than 600 nuyen, this next-generation all-in-one device is well within the reach of the average consumer. It's got the looks you'd expect: sleek, stylish, with a dozen colors to choose from (the guys on staff here like Midnight Lightning, but the ladies all agree Café Au Lait is the "in" color). It comes standard with several accessories, including an ear-bud with built in directional mic (making this a great communication device), a rollout keyboard (or you can pick up a set of finger-tip readers, stylish gloves, or ring-style accessories, which "read" your hand motions and translate them into text or even interactive graphical interfaces), and a set of Augmented Reality glasses. Yes, you heard us right. Augmented Reality—AR for those of you who want to sound like you know what we mean—glasses! As more sprawls pick up the AR craze, we anticipate that these little glasses will change the way you look at the world—literally. For now, there are a dozen sprawls where you can experience the future: Seattle and Los Angeles are both up and running right now

2065

January 1—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: The first general elections are held in the nation, signaling the start of a democratically-elected government. The newly elected High Prince is Larry Zincan.

January 5—TSIMSHIAN: Tsimshian is accepted into the Native American Nations, and the Haida National Defense Force, with support from the Sioux and Salish-Shidhe, form a tribal police force. Elections are held to form a new tribal council.

January 27—JAPAN: Shiawase is shaken by an internal reorganization that ends with Empress Hitomi as Chairwoman of the Board.

February 10—CAS: Aaron Franklin of the New Nationalist Party is re-elected president.

February 12—UK: Second Universal Matrix Conference begins at Transys-Erika's Silicon Glen corporate facilities. The newly merged Transys Neuronet and Erika lead the conference in their readiness to complete the Wireless Matrix Initiative, which they had begun to implement in the fall of 2064. The decision is made to focus on building the Wireless Matrix rather than

rebuilding the heavily damaged wired system. Protocols, frequencies, and interfaces are all standardized to those presented by Transys-Erika.

March 2—EARTH ORBIT: Cross Applied Technologies' status as an AAA megacorp is revoked and it loses its seat on the Corporate Court. The remains of the corporation are given an A rating by the Corporate Court.

June 22—UCAS: Novatech and Transys-Erika announce their merger. The new corporation is named NeoNET and retains its AAA status. Richard Villiers remains CEO. The great dragon Celedyr is announced as the head of R&D.

August 21—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court gives Horizon its AAA rating and a seat on the Corporate Court.

October 12—AZANIA: DeBeers Omnitech announces a merger with Universal Omnitech under the Universal Omnitech name.

December 1—GLOBAL: Global finance experts announce that the global economy is experiencing a major upswing and that consumer confidence is higher than pre-Crash 2.0 levels.



in NorthAm. The best part is there are no cumbersome wires to deal with; everything is networked on a wireless system. If you go with the gloves, you can view an Augmented Reality Object (ARO) in your AR glasses, then “touch” the ARO; the gloves wirelessly communicate your movement and integrate it into the AR system around you.

Now, for the non-average consumer, let’s just say *whoa-boy!* Some of us here at E-Trend have dubbed this black beauty “Mobile Mayhem.” With input-output speeds that rival the best hardwired connections, this little gem is soon to become a hacker’s best friend. Dump that clumsy cyberdeck (or perhaps frame it) and pick up one of these. The integrated wireless network allows you to be sipping coffee at your favorite shop while stirring up some mayhem a few sprawls over. No datajack is needed; the AR glasses, gloves, and ear bud/mic combo allow you to move at jacked-in speeds *without the jack*. [Link](#).

- And hackers around the world emerged from their parent’s basements and stood blinking in the light of day ... waving a sad farewell to three-day old pizza and empty bottles instead of bathroom breaks.
- Slamm-O!
- I remember my first one. What I remember best is getting on a commercial flight with it and sailing right past all the security goons, grinning like an idiot because I could go to a job in the PCC without sweating how I was going to transport my deck and illegal programs.
- Pistons

January 6—GLOBAL: First generation commlinks—palm-sized cyberterminals—are commercially released.

February 18—UCAS: Metaphysicists discover that a modified electrical current run through an orichalcum-laced filament creates dual-natured light.

May 3—FRANCE: The French government sets the Brocéliande Forest as a self-governing territory, under control of the Korrigan, a coalition of sapient non-metahumans including pixies and spirits.

June 15—JAPAN: The two year Yakuza war begins between the Mita-gumi and the Watada-gumi.

July 5—KOREA: Glitterworld, an immersive interactive sim park, opens its doors.

July 8—HONG KONG: A super-typhoon hits the city, but the loss of life and property is a fraction of previous storms. Hong Kong officials attribute the city’s survival to the newly launched Wireless Matrix warning system, which came online only days prior to the storm.

September 8—SIOUX: Salish-owned Gaeatronics’ Geothermal Power Plant Network of five power plants comes online, eight months past the anticipated activation date. The power plants are hailed as the next generation in environmentally sound engineering. The power, marketed as Green Energy, is sufficient to meet the entire Sioux Nation’s needs, as well as the needs of other Native American Nations. The Sioux, Salish-Shidhe, and PCC begin to decommission corporate-run energy plants in their nations. Corporate protests ensue.

October 31—UK: Student riots at Cambridge are violently put down by the Lord Protector’s Office. The riots are attributed to the Pendragon, who subsequently vanishes. The violent police response ends with the deaths of eighty-one students, with hundreds more injured. Over two hundred students are arrested, and a dozen disappear after their arrests, sparking further riots and protests against the LPO.

2066

2067—RESTRUCTURING

Excerpt from MetaFi-Media's Interview with Anatoly Kirilenko, CEO of Evo Corporation

Summers: Welcome, Mr. Kirilenko, and thanks for joining us here today on MetaFi-Media, the voice of the metahuman financial community.

Kirilenko: Thank you, Ms. Summers. It's a pleasure to speak to you and to your audience.

Summers: Let's start off with the changes to your corporation. Yamatetsu is now renamed Evo. Why did Yamatetsu decide to make such a radical change? Will the market support it?

Kirilenko: Excellent question, Ms. Summers. Evo is more than a new name for an old megacorp. The world is a far different place than it was when Yamatetsu was founded in Japan in 2032. As we near the seventies, our world has grown ever more diverse—we have orks and trolls, SURGED, and sapient non-metas forming their own nations, like the naga of Angkor Wat. The old, racist dogma of Yamatetsu, the opinion that only the human perspective, only the human customer, mattered, just doesn't fly in today's world. In fact, it never should have been that way. The new generation of leadership for Evo is going to

focus on what makes each of us unique. We're reaching out to each employee, each customer, and celebrating them; focusing on them, on taking them to the next stage in evolution—be it with our line of metahuman-friendly home furnishings, our AR-enabled vehicles that allow any being to drive, or our line of customized bioware and cyberware designed to change the way we look at augmentation. With Yuri—who, as you know, is an ork—as our President, and the free spirit Buttercup as a major shareholder, the time has come to shed those racist old ways and to embrace change.

That's what Evo stands for. Evolution. Change. We're Evo, and we're Changing Life.

Link

- Anatoly Kirilenko helped the corp's popularity in Russia immensely, but didn't help much with the huge backlash from the old-school Japanese portions of the mega—the ones who hated the ork President, hated the Russian CEO, hate the idea of actually embracing metahumanity ... Good times for runners; although Evo certainly came through its changing pains strong and firm. Now look at 'em. Evo Culture, EvoPeople, and the "Changing Life" byline are everywhere you go.
- Red Anya
- Hey, wasn't Kirilenko on that Mars trip? The Valentina Tereshkova craft that made the first landing on Mars?
- Plan 9
- Yeah, he was. A regular folk hero in Russia.
- Red Anya
- So ... anyone think it a bit interesting that this guy who's all into "taking metahumanity to the next stage of evolution" was at the helm of a space shuttle that disappeared for 6 days as they came into lunar orbit? Supposedly the crew denied losing contact with the ground base, but I saw internal documents saying that even Yamatetsu and Russia had given them up as lost; salvage operations were already getting ready to launch when the Valentina miraculously reappeared. And the crew supposedly had no knowledge of the lost time ...
- Plan 9

February 8—PCC: The Ute Nation, which never recovered after Crash 2.0, is officially absorbed by the Pueblo Corporate Council. The government announces that it will disband and all government functions, including economic and welfare support, will be administered by the PCC. The change is met with widespread resistance among the Ute population.

April 28—RUSSIA: Yamatetsu goes through a massive corporate restructuring, renaming itself Evo Corporation and naming Anatoly Kirilenko as the new CEO. The megacorp retains its AAA status. It announces a new focus on projects meant to advance metahumanity to the next stage of evolution. Internally, a new corporate charter sets the Terms of Unity, designed to end racial discrimination within the corporation.

July 15—GLOBAL: Orxploitation music experiences a major surge in global popularity, and ork culture gains new prominence. Music industry analysts attribute this to the release of AR-enabled delivery systems patented by Horizon.

October 13—UCAS: Forensic thaumaturgy gains international recognition when a murder is solved after a thaumaturgic expert follows the ghost of a deceased young woman to the site where her body was buried. Evidence gathered at the scene is used to convict her boyfriend for her murder. It sets a precedent for using ghosts and summoned spirits in forensic thaumaturgy, although many nations continue to exclude testimony from spirits in trials.

November 4—UCAS: Manadyne purchases its brother-corp, the Magnadyne software corporation, rescuing it from bankruptcy. The resultant corp is granted an AA rating and extraterritoriality by the Corporate Court. It focuses on merging magic and technology.

2068—UNREST

Excerpt of Queen Thema Laula of Asamando's Statement on the Tragedies at the African Cup of Nations

To the families and loved ones of the sixteen football players, and the three coaches who gave their lives defending them, I offer my deepest, heartfelt sympathies. Know that I considered each of these brave men more than subjects, that I considered each of them a personal friend, and that I will always cherish those few moments I was privileged to spend with them. Each one was a shining star in our nation, and all of Asamando will mourn this loss with you. For the next month, all flags will remain at half-mast as we remember them. I am also rededicating our stadium to them, and a full-sized statue of each will grace a memorial, so that we will always remember their brave sacrifice for Asamandan rights.

To those of you calling for revenge, know that I have heard you, and that rage burns in my heart also. These acts will not go unpunished! But as we act, know also that at this time, more than any other, we are under the scrutiny of the world. We can let these valiant heroes of Asamando die and be buried, their deaths without meaning, purposeless; or we can ensure each of their lives were not given in vain!



Let us awaken the world to the plight of our people! Let us expose the hatred and prejudice that plagues us—let us show the world that it is not HMHV that is the illness, that it is the hatred, prejudice, and misunderstanding that is the true plague.

Let us mourn, together. And in mourning, let us show the world that Asamando is a nation with a heart, a nation of metahumans, of men and women, children and elders, just like any other nation in the world. Let us show them that we deserve respect, understanding, and equality; not fear, not hatred, and not condemnation. *Link*

- I understand what Laula is trying to do here, but when you say something like “it is not HMHV that is the illness,” then your rhetoric has gotten away from you. That second “V” stands for “virus,” after all. Discrimination may be bad, but that doesn’t mean a virus is no longer a pathogen.
- Haze
- She may have preached taking the high road, but those implicated in instigating the riots—from the three officials who barred the team from the arena, to those who led the mob, to those Laula’s secret police were able to identify as part of the mob, down to the gatekeeper who refused to open a gate so the team could escape—each one ended up dead within the next three years. All accidents, suicides, diseases ... but you do the math. Laula isn’t a woman to let any slight go unpunished.
- Black Mamba
- The World Soccer Federation continues to ban the admittance of HMHV-positive individuals in any games. Frankly, can’t say I blame them. I wouldn’t play on a field with a ghoul.
- Sunshine
- You do realize that all of the soccer players killed were second or third generation infected, and not contagious? I expect more due diligence from you, Sunshine.
- Hannibelle

January 24—KENYA: Riots erupt at the 100-year anniversary of the African Cup of Nations, when the team from Asamando attempts to gain admittance to the games. The entire team and their coaches are killed in the violence.

January 31—SIOUX: Struggling Wind River Corporation goes up for sale; the Horizon Group beats out Aztechnology, Shiawase, and the PCC’s offers when the corp agrees to donate ten percent of the agricultural yield to NAN food banks. Later in the year, the corp opens the five long-delayed underground agricultural hydroponic farms. Covering over 20,000 kilometers each, with multiple underground levels, the farms make Horizon the largest corporate agricultural producer in North America.

March 15—KINGDOMS OF NIGERIA: The Seven Kings war ends when the Yoruba government strikes a deal with Global Sandstorm for military support. The oil pipeline becomes fully operational, bringing huge profits to Global Sandstorm and participating Nigerian Kingdoms. Piracy and corporate infighting rise to an all-time high.

May 18—HONG KONG: An astral shallow appears for a short time on the Splendid Dragon Path overlaying the astral image of an actual dragon on the skyway. A shrine is built where the dragon’s head appeared.

July 2—THE MATRIX: Virtual marriages are approved as legal by the Corporate Court and in multiple nations around the globe, including UCAS.

September 9—HONG KONG: The anti-corporate group 9x9 makes its first appearance in a terrorist strike against corporate holdings in Hong Kong.

October 31—EGYPT: Archeological sites in Egypt, while being excavated by the Apep Consortium, come under assault by a group of Beetle magicians calling themselves the Hem’netjer. Multiple sites are shut down until they can be secured. When excavation continues, Egyptian officials announce that new tunnels have been discovered, and unknown artifacts removed.

November 6—UCAS: General Angela Colloton, famous for her command of the Renraku Arcology situation and defending against the 2064 coup, is elected President.

November 6—CAS: Aaron Franklin is re-elected president.

2069—WIRELESS WORLD

Interview with Kit McClain, Simstar:

It was terrible. Terrible. Nothing in any sim I've ever seen comes close. First, the sudden shock, like the earth just rose up and smacked you in the face. The initial blast was strong enough that it knocked all of us to the ground, and then we couldn't get up. The entire world was shaking, and the sound—I'll never forget the sound. The quake seemed to last forever, while we clung to the ground and prayed—at least I prayed. When it stopped, we all looked around. The aerial drones were fine, still filming, but all the ground equipment was destroyed. The truck was on its side, and the trailer—we'd parked it in some shade by some palm trees, and they'd come right down on it. But we were all okay, my costar, the filming crew, the director, the special effect guys. We'd just stood up when one of the crew screamed and pointed out to the sea. We were filming on the coast, see? And the water was gone, just gone, and I could see this little wave coming—only I realized it wasn't little, and it was moving, oh my god, it was coming straight at us. There were two mages on the special effects crew. Bert and Alistair. Really, his name was Al, but he always said magicians needed fancier names. Al used to poke at Bert all the time; Bert was just one of the guys, no matter that he had mojo. He'd hang with us, watch the game, argue combat biking over beers. Bert and Al, they used their mojo and levitated us up to the top of the cliffs, two at a time. They sent us up, as many of us as they could. Not all of us. I'll always remember Bert, his face bone-white, collapsing on the sand a second before the wave hit.

From the top of the cliffs, we couldn't see LA. But in a few minutes, hours, however long it was, we started to see the smoke. I figured that most of the city would be safe from flooding. I mean, it's LA. When I was flown back to the hills, when I saw what was left of the city ... God.

- Kit made a mint off his experience. Pathfinder Multimedia prettied up the recordings from Kit's simsense implants and made millions. People are willing

to pay absurd amounts to live through tragedy as experienced by someone famous. There's still a few uncut versions floating around on the black market; collectors pay gold for those.

- Kat O'Nine Tales

2070—EMERGENCE

Excerpt of Jane McCrory's Report:

Okay. Not much time. Facts. Italia Rodgers is dead—or she might as well be. The rumors were right—but they didn't go far enough. Experimentation is exactly what they're doing here. They're doing it on technomancers, or suspected technomancers—hard to be sure which is which. I'm attaching a vidfile to this, along with some of their progress reports that we liberated—these need to get out too, because my words can't do it justice. You won't understand what this means until you've seen the files—seen these people strapped to beds with parts of their brains exposed—machines humming and electrodes poking out from various points—their eyes wide open. The looks of terror in their eyes—if I get out of here, they'll haunt me until I die. And that's not everything, either. They didn't stop with these people's heads. Look at the girl in the vidfile—it's hard to tell with everything they've done with her, but I'm fairly sure she's Cherie Washington, the 14-year-old missing girl. I can think of no other word to use than “vivisection.” I don't know what the hell they're trying to do, but they had her laid open like a Christmas turkey and the electrodes weren't just in her brain—they were in her chest as well. Her heart, her lungs. Maybe someone can analyze the files and figure it out—I don't have time now. I made the mistake of trying to tap into the facility's network and got hit with mental feedback like I've never experienced before. Screams. Begging for help—or for death. Nearly knocked me out. Would have, if one of my guys hadn't slapped me a good one. I think maybe I just stood and stared for awhile, horrified at what I was seeing. Fortunately my headware camera was running, taking in everything I was seeing. Everything you'll see now. [Link](#)

2069

March 8—PCC: Two major earthquakes, centered in Los Angeles, rock the West Coast; the quakes are powerful enough that people in Africa report seeing well water moving. Mount Rainier, near Seattle, erupts; in the following years, it repeatedly showers Seattle with ash falls. A tsunami floods parts of Los Angeles; later it is discovered that the topography of the area has significantly changed, with a vast network of astral constructs in the form of underground tunnels and lagoon-sized sinkholes appearing. This unnatural phenomenon is named the Deep Lacuna and stretches from CalFree north of Los Angeles south into Aztlan. Between the earthquakes, flooding, and appearance of the Deep Lacuna, much of LA is a disaster zone; the entire NAN pitches in for rescue and recovery operations.

March 8—UCAS: Manadyne CEO Dr. Carolyn Winters disappears in Boston. Despite massive efforts, no trace of her is ever found.

April 15—GLOBAL: Symbionts reach the mass market.

May 2—ANGOLA: In the former area of Namibia, Angolan troops occupy two contested diamond fields. Universal Omnitech sends mercenary troops in, leading to a militarized conflict zone.

May 5—UK: King George VIII passes away. Princess Caroline is coroneted as Queen five days later.

July 1—TÍR TAIRNGIRE: Saeder-Krupp reveals the first large buildings produced solely by nanotechnology in Portland. The office complex is considered a major breakthrough in nanite-built structures. S-K announces plans to construct their first ever Seattle offices using the same technology.

November 15—UCAS: MIT&T publishes “The Virtuakinetik Phenomenon,” regarding an individual apparently able to manipulate the Matrix by thought alone. Shortly afterwards, Patient “V” disappears, the apparent victim of an unwilling extraction.

December 24—CONGO: The Kobikela, an organization of tribal shaman and Awakened sapient non-metahumans, takes over the Kinshasa-Brazzaville sprawl. Corporate interests in the city are informed that it is now the capital of the Congo Tribal Lands and all residents are now under the jurisdiction of the Kobikela.



- It was shocking and appalling then, and it still is. The horrors corporations commit in the name of science and security. Disgusting.
- Pistons
- The people in that facility—which was in an old, abandoned hospital in Denver, incidentally, and my info attributes the place to MCT—all ended up dead within

hours of McCrory's report hitting the airwaves. The megas tried to suppress it, but it got out on the mesh networks, and Horizon and Evo picked it up. Once they had it, the other megas didn't have a chance. In fact, Horizon paid for the legal representation for the families of the victims.

- Slamm-O!

April 11—UK: The great dragon Rhonabwy signs a contract with Evo's MetaMatrix branch to produce a daily music review blog called Soothing the Savage Beast.

June 28—HONG KONG: Queen Elizabeth Hospital explodes. MCT announces the explosion was caused by technomancers, a dangerous group of people who can manipulate the Matrix with their minds alone. With events of Crash 2.0 still fresh in everyone's minds, the announcement sparks citywide riots; news coverage generates widespread fear and hysteria in sprawls across the globe. Governments and corporations around the world meet for emergency sessions, and response varies from "wait and see" to round-ups, arrests, and even executions.

July 5—SWITZERLAND: The United Nations holds an emergency session to discuss the technomancer threat.

August 18—EARTH ORBIT: The rogue AI Sojourner takes over Aztechnology's Tlaloc orbital research station. It threatens to attack earth cities biowarfare weapons being produced on the research station unless all experimentation on captive AIs is ceased and all captive AIs are set free. Another AI, Pulsar, allied with Horizon, negotiates a peaceful ending.

September 18—DENVER: A recording is released by reporter Jane McCrory, showing gruesome images of inhumane corporate experimentation on technomancers, including children, most of whom were kidnapped from their families. Public outcry is immense.

November 2—UCAS: Kenneth Brackhaven wins the Seattle gubernatorial election.

November 10—PCC: Horizon releases Persona 2.0, an exclusive multimedia personal blogging, communication, and social rating system in Los Angeles.

December 1—UCAS: The technomancer registration bill is passed into law.

December 1—EGYPT: The Coptic Pope issues a proclamation offering sanctuary to any technomancers who are "People of the Book." Alexandria and Cairo become havens for technomancers and hackers as underground railroads from across Asia and Europe bring them into Egypt.

December 5—JAPAN: The Diet passes a bill requiring mandatory testing of children for technomancer abilities. At the same time, Empress Hitomi establishes a government school for young and latent technomancers.

December 25—SOX: French military units launch a multi-prong attack against corporate facilities in the SOX area.

2070

2071—A NEW HIGH

Interpol Public Announcement November 20, 6 PM GMT

Today Interpol, acting on orders from the Corporate Court and the UN Security Council, and with generous assistance from Aztechnology, began a series of surgical strikes against the root of the tempo crisis: the South American drug cartels.

Investigation has conclusively proven that South American drug cartels, including the Olaya Cartel, are behind the production, distribution, and sale of tempo. Tempo has been systematically distributed to sprawls across the globe. Like a pandemic, tempo-related crimes, addictions, and overdoses and deaths have plagued everyone. The only way to definitively stop this plague is to cut it off at the source.

Our agents have bombed over thirty production facilities, destroyed Olaya Cartel bases of operations, destroyed laboratories, seized warehouses and stockpiles of the drug, and apprehended over two hundred cartel leaders and workers. Bombing commenced at 5 AM in several South American locations, including the cities of Caracas and Bogotá, havens for drug dealers, smugglers, and the cartels. While some South American nations have and will protest these actions, know that we have taken decisive action to destroy the root of the tempo plague.

Simultaneously, agents staged raids worldwide on known tempo stockpiles and known tempo dealers in jurisdictions that have requested assistance and legislated against the drug.

In times like these, we are all called upon to do our part to protect and defend. Interpol, specifically the Interpol Drug Enforcement Agency, has spent several months and significant resources investigating the source of tempo.

With the generous backing of Aztechnology security forces, we are pleased to announce that this operation has successfully destroyed the root of the tempo crisis.

- I don't think we've seen the last of Riveros or of tempo. Look at some of the new products Aztechnology is peddling in their corporate pharmacies ...
- Nephrite

- Well, the street supply is all but gone. If someone were waiting for the addicts to get desperate before giving them a new (highly marked up) supply—they're about to miss their window of opportunity.
- Butch
- Maybe they're waiting until all the police and Interpol attention shifts to something else?
- Sounder
- Or maybe it's proving harder to engineer than they expected.
- Glasswalker
- I'll tell you what they have managed to successfully do: piss off Amazonia. Since Interpol moved out of Bogotá and Caracas, Aztlan has been steadily increasing their forces at the border. The official line is that they're cracking down on drug-related smuggling and cartel violence leaking into Aztlan from Amazonia—a pretty heavy PR campaign to make Amazonia look like a weakling in the pockets of the cartels. Amazonia, in response, has really ramped up military assets on their side of the border. Bogotá is ground zero.
- Marcos

2072—LOOKING AHEAD

Excerpt of Dr. Lucy Shapiro's Interview on Sapient Rights

Haskins: Dr. Shapiro, can you tell our viewers what happened to the Sapient Accord today, and what it means for them?

Shapiro: Two weeks ago, the UN passed the Accord on Sapient Non-Metahuman Rights, which gave a specific set of rights and protections; the same protections already given to every metahuman in nations that participate in the UN. However, early this morning, the Security Council met behind closed doors. Although no reason was given, the accord was overturned. What this means is that sapient non-metas have no rights beyond what individual nations grant them. Naga can continue to be caught and killed for their skin or the Asian medicine markets, for example, a deplorable practice that has no international legal ramifications.

Haskins: Some non-metas are protected, are they not?

Shapiro: Yes, some. Sasquatches are recognized by the UN and the Corporate Court as sapient, as are dragons. But there are many other races that are not protected, like centaurs, pixies, naga, merrow, and free spirits.

2071

January 5—BRUSSELS: The NEEC passes legislation requiring mandatory testing and registration of technomancers.

January 15—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court votes against the Artificial Intelligence Accords, stating that the question of AI sapience and rights must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

February 2—PCC: The Pueblo Corporate Council begins offering SInS to AIs, according them rights as Pueblo citizens. Horizon and Evo follow suit within days.

February 12—GLOBAL: A new drug, called tempo or flipside, hits the streets around the world. Inventories quickly skyrocket, as does demand, sparking an underworld war and rushed legislation as governments attempt to control the drug-related crime sprees fueled by the underworld unrest.

April 20—BRUSSELS: The NEEC institutes severe economic sanctions against France for their attack on SOX corporate facilities. France continues to remain silent on the reasons behind the attack.

June 23—UK: A march on London's inner city led by the Pendragon results in the

peaceful dissolution of the Office of the Lord Protector.

July 1—SWITZERLAND: The United Nations Initiative on Awakened Issues releases a 4,600-page "Sapience Report" in preparation for a vote on sapient non-metahuman rights.

November 20—SOUTH AMERICA: Interpol and affiliated agencies, with Corporate Court blessings and backed by Aztechnology military, execute strikes on drug cartel assets in South America, in several nations including Amazonia, and in the free cities of Bogotá and Caracas. In the attacks, the Olaya Cartel is all but destroyed, and Graciela Riveros's—the mastermind behind the creation of tempo—laboratories and residences are destroyed. A body later discovered in a lab is identified as Riveros. Aztechnology's global popularity soars after their decisive action against the cartels.

December 2—JAPAN: Empress Hitomi gives birth to the Crown Prince of Japan, Asaka Nashihito. The boy is the first child for the Imperial couple. The date is declared a national holiday.

Haskins: The Corporate Court recently passed an acknowledgement of various non-meta species' sapience. The main difference between the two accords was the inclusion of AIs on the UN's. Do you believe that was partially responsible for the failure?

Shapiro: The discussion on Artificial Intelligence rights is still a hot topic. Many corporations have a vested interest in not acknowledging Artificial Intelligence rights. The argument is generally that the corporation made the being, invested their time, resources, and nuyen into creating it, so it should belong to them. But think of it this way. How many corporate infants are born with corporate investment into their little bodies? From using corporate-owned egg and sperm donors, to using a laboratory to conceive them, to doing in-utero genetic optimization, to using surrogates or artificial wombs, to providing the parents with room and board. And yet, when that infant is born, despite the unarguable corporate "creation" and the corporate "investment," it is a free being. Why should a being created and born in the Matrix be any different?

Metahumanity comes in all different shapes, sizes, and forms. Is it too much to ask that metahumanity acknowledge the kindred sapience of non-metahumans, from centaurs to pixies, naga to free spirits, AIs to merrow?

- Word is Amazonia's up in arms over this. Coupled with the fact that the UN did nothing when Amazonia protested the Aztechnology/Interpol bombings on Amazonia soil, and the rumor mill's saying that Amazonia may pull their membership in the UN. If that happens, there'd be a definite trickle effect, as other nations left with them.
- Fianchetto

January 1—PCC: The citizens of the previous Ute nation have their Pueblo Corporate Council Conditional Shares mature, switching to Residential Shares. This gives them voting rights. A large voting block immediately puts a motion on the next shareholder's agenda to reinstate Aztechnology's business license in the PCC. The motion is also popular with much of Los Angeles's population.

February 5—DENVER: The 2072 Winter Olympics are held in Denver; Aztlan athletes are prohibited from competing or even entering the city by ZDF forces.

March 15—UCAS: Seattle makes national news when the government chooses not to reinstate Lone Star's Metroplex Law Enforcement contract, officially citing poor performance during the tempo crisis of 2071. After a bidding process, Knight Errant is chosen to provide public security services for the sprawl.

May 9—EARTH ORBIT: Ares unveils a line of new nanotechnology focused on space travel applications, paving the way for a new era in space exploration, colonization, and habitation.

May 10—SWITZERLAND: In a closed-door session, the UN Security Council overturns the Sapient Non-Metahuman Rights Accord. Protests from several Awakened nations, including Amazonia, both Tirs, and Yakut are vehement.

June 1—PCC: The Aztechnology vote is deferred at the shareholders' meeting, leading to widespread protests by the citizen shareholders. In the previous Ute territory, a movement starts calling for a vote of no confidence against the corporate board of directors.

November 8—UCAS: Incumbant Angela Colloton (R) is elected president.

November 8—CAS: Ramsay McMalkin of the Technocrat party wins the CAS presidential election.

November 10—EARTH ORBIT: The Corporate Court publicly announces that construction is underway on a space elevator. The key components of the elevator are scheduled to be online by 2074, with a space-side habitat ready for general occupation by 2076. Immediately following the announcement, a petition was placed before the Corporate Court to decommission the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver upon completion of the space elevator.

2072





THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

"Let me see your hands," Randy asked, sitting down in the empty seat beside the young research scientist. In AR, the seatbelt warning pinged. All users subscribed to the plane's node could watch the ten-minute countdown clock begin.

"Ah, okay," Jonathan Renalt—Jon to his friends—replied. He held out his hands. Randy, Jon's project manager, looked them over and gave a grunt.

"You get any cuts, even a hangnail, you let me know."

"It's a big contract," Jon said. "I won't screw it up. The last two years of my life have been devoted to this research. I *know* the contract depends on my presentation."

Randy didn't look happy, but what choice did he have? The Ministry of Education had *requested* that the researcher give the presentation in person.

The AR-stewardess popped up to note that Nyamkopon, capital of Asamando, was now visible from the left windows. The plane banked, and the city spread out under them. Four- and five-story white buildings clustered together, cars streamed along planned roadways, curving around the obvious center of the city: the palace, a gleaming white and gold crown to the city.

Asamando.

The plane landed with all the smooth efficiency you'd expect from an S-K-piloted craft. Customs was brisk and efficient and remarkably like customs anywhere else. Both men were scanned and then waved through. Outside, a man in a colorful robe stood waiting beside a limo, a trio of security guards around him. The entire area was shaded from the sun, but the heat was overwhelming.

"Welcome!" His voice was deep, and his skin ash-grey, thick and callused. He towered over them, despite being human, his spider-like elongated arms sticking out from the deep sleeves of his robes. His eyes had a grey film over them, but he looked them all in the face, and held out his hand unerringly. "Mr. Ayton! It is so good to see you again," the man said, as he held out a hand to Randy, which Randy shook without hesitation.

"And young Mr. Breedlove," he said, turning to Jon. "It is my pleasure to meet you! But, I am so rude. I am Kojo Agyeman. I am the Minister of Education." He held out his hand, and Jon hesitated for just a second. *Stupid. It's not skin-to-skin contagious.* The Minister's hand was warm, the fingers long and narrow, the skin rough, the nails polished black. Jon shivered slightly, despite the heat, as those sharp nails lightly brushed the back of his hand. Agyeman just smiled, and his teeth were very white, and very sharp. His breath smelled faintly of rotting meat. "Come, your bags will be taken to your hotel."

He got into the limo first, and Jon and Randy followed. The air-conditioning was a blessed relief.

"I know we had a schedule planned, but the Queen expressed an interest in meeting with Mr. Breedlove. She is intrigued by your research. So first, we go to the palace." Agyeman said.

"Queen Laula? Us?" Randy squeaked. "I'm sure we're honored, but S-K would want us to have a few other people present, as, ah, would be appropriate for such a meeting."

Agyeman smiled. "We wouldn't want to keep the Queen waiting, would we?" It wasn't a question.

The limo drove through well maintained streets, past gleaming buildings. No air pollution, no smog; it looked like a city designed in a VR simulation. On the shaded sidewalks, grey-skinned men and women wore colorful robes. AR was thick everywhere.

"So, what do you think of Nyamkopon?" Agyeman asked.

Jon said the first thing that came to mind. "There's no spam." Then he blushed, realizing how unsophisticated his response sounded.

Agyeman laughed. "The wireless Matrix has been a real boon to our people, Mr. Breedlove. Last year, we became the first nation in Africa to have our entire country covered by the wireless Matrix, and every citizen has access to the rich resources and knowledge of the world, at their fingertips. With microcameras and trodes, even those of our people who do not want cybernetic surgery can have vision. Our children who are too young for such surgeries can grow up with sight. Through AR and VR, we can teach all our people to read; our literacy rate is well over ninety percent—among our citizens who have the intellectual facility to learn, that is." Jon saw the sorrow ripple across Agyeman's face.

"And that's where Jon's research comes in," Randy said, into the silence. "Preliminary results show a forty percent increase in communication and cognitive abilities," Randy boasted. Agyeman shifted his gaze to Jon's face, and Jon felt like he was being carefully weighed.

"Indeed. Mr. Breedlove's research has quite some promise. Tell me, Mr. Breedlove, why did you choose this area of research?"

"My younger brother, sir," Jon said quietly. "He was born severely cognitively impaired. It tore my family apart, when they had to put him in a care-facility. I thought I'd leave finding a cure to others; I wanted to simply try to help people like



BY JENNIFER HARDING

my brother to just be able to communicate. To let the people who cared for them know what they were feeling. If they were too hot, or in pain, or to simply be able to say, 'I love you' to their families."

Agyeman searched his face. "The Queen is most encouraged by your work," he said. "She has great hopes for those of her subjects who are ... impaired."

The limo drove along tree-lined avenues up the hill to the center of the city, where a long, high white wall separated the palace from the rest of the metropolis. Guards in midnight blue patrolled the perimeter, leashed dogs at their heels. A three-meter tall column of fire moved slowly along the top of the wall; a materialized spirit. Jon could see drones hovering as well, and fairly sure there were other, less obvious security measures. After all, this was an Awakened nation. Probably *most* of the security was not visible to his mundane sight. The guard at the front gate waved them through as the limo driver sent his credentials.

The palace was five stories tall, the peaks gold plated. The flag of Asamando—midnight blue, with a dove lying in a golden crown—snapped in the wind on the highest peak. Jon only got a brief peek at the structure before the limo turned and drove into an underground facility, and the three of them were escorted into the palace. In a broad, cool room where stained-glass windows cast shimmering colors across the white floor, a man in black and red robes stepped forward.

"If you don't mind," he said, waving a hand to another pair of guards. Jon submitted to the search and the scan, even to having the mage search through his mind, as alien and disturbing as it was.

Then, finally, they were shown into another high-ceiling room, with white stone arches and a floor inlaid with blue mosaic tiles. Blue armored guards stood silent along the wall, watching as they approached a small woman sitting in a chair. Her wrinkled skin was pasty-grey, her eyes covered in thick grey cataracts, a heavy gold crown sitting on her bald head. She was quite ugly, but at the same time, she drew Jon's eyes, like a moth to a flame. He stopped an arm's reach away from the Queen, close enough to smell her perfume. Randy bowed, going down to one knee. Jon moved to follow, but the perfume stopped him, a mix of rotting meat and the rancid perfume of the *Maranthes polyandra*; the trademark perfume of Queen Thema Laua.

Jon felt puzzled, for one brief second, then *Jon Breedlove* disappeared from his mind like a snake shedding its skin, uncovering *Rafel*. His body tensed, his mind

razor sharp, taking in every detail; he leapt for the ghoul queen, his hands grabbing her scaly, ugly head. The ghoul woman didn't even have a chance to look startled before his bioware-augmented strength snapped her thin neck. Two of the armored guards were on him in the next heartbeat, one's blade slicing his hand off, the other wrenching him away from the corpse of the queen. Blood sprayed from his wrist, splashing the guards that closed in around him. Through the intense pain, Rafel heard the S-K manager behind him screaming like a little girl.

Rafel clenched his bleeding arm to his chest and waited for the death blow. It didn't come.

Instead, something seized his muscles, froze him. Two troll-ghouls held him down—as if I could move, assholes—while another ghoul tied a tight tourniquet around his bleeding arm. One of the trolls licked Rafel's blood off his fingers, slowly, savoring. The pain made Rafel's vision swim.

Then he saw ... *No!!!* he screamed, but his frozen muscles strangled the scream in his throat. The ghoul queen was standing there, beside the corpse of a pretender, a body-double.

She looked at Rafel, her cataract-grey eyes narrowed.

"You can stop screaming, Mr. Ayton. Tell your superiors I understand they had nothing to do with this, and that We still consider Saeder-Krupp Our ally and friend. My security will take care of the assassin."

Two of the guards pulled the now-whimpering SK manager out of the throne room. Rafel was surrounded by ghouls, and as the only other human left, he saw the pretense of the ghouls' humanity disappear.

The queen picked up Rafel's hand, where it lay on the corpse of her body-double. She took a small nibble of it, delicately licking the blood from her grey lips. He felt a blossom of pain from his left arm, as another guard sliced a cut of flesh from his arm. Paralyzed, he couldn't move, couldn't fight, couldn't even scream as the ghoul savored the bloody strip of flesh. Then another used his sword to make another tiny cut.

"Save one eye," the ghoul-queen told her guards.

"To send to his masters."

And she left the room, still nibbling on Rafel's hand.



- I'm not sure if anyone else around here has noticed, but there's some serious heat building along the borders of our great North American nations. In some places, if you put your ear to the data streams and listen real close, you can almost hear the friction. It's political plate tectonics at its worst, and at some point it's going to give. When that happens, you'd better have a firm grasp on the big picture or you're going to get tossed.

That's the primary reason I decided to put together this little primer on the world as we know it. My secondary reason is the painful lack of educational fundamentals I've noticed among some of our younger members—you know who you are, so don't try to deny it. I swear, I don't know what they're teaching you kids in school these days.

Anyhow, I used material assembled by the fine folks over at Aetherpedia to stitch together a guidebook for this big world of ours. As always, I expect your help filling in the blanks. We all know that the lines fed to us by the powers-that-be are a long toss from the truth, and it isn't my goal to perpetuate the lies. (And don't give me that crap about Aetherpedia being free from spin—we've been down that road and I'm not reopening the debate.)

Still, keep in mind that sometimes you really *can* believe what you read. A lot of folks spent a lot of time mining this stuff from the deep recesses of the Matrix, and the peer review process over at Aetherpedia isn't all bad. From the looks of it, they might have even cracked a few reputable knowsofts to get the data.

So dig in, and read up while you can. We may be in for a bumpy ride.

- FastJack

ASAMANDO

Asamando: as-æ-man-dō

Population: 500,000 (est.)

Primary Languages: No constitutional language established; English (common), Ga (common)

States: Single state

Government Type: Monarchy

Bordering Countries: Asante Nation, Kingdoms of Nigeria

Geography: Savannah, forests

Notable Features: Junction of the Black Volta and White Volta

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Asamando was formed in 2030, when the charismatic Thema Laula led a small group of HMMVV-infected metahumans into the Black Volta region. She and her followers settled the area, naming their new country Asamando. Laula was established as Queen at the same time and still reigns, making hers the longest uninterrupted reign in Africa.

The longstanding and generous immigration policy quickly swelled the country's population. Currently, Asamando is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse countries in Africa, especially since HMMVV affects metahumans of all types and in all nations. Informally, the country is often considered the "homeland" for the Infected.

In the first few decades, armed conflicts were common on the borders, with Asamando under assault by both the neighboring nations, independent raiders, and pirates. Asamando responded by instituting



a mandatory military service term for all residents, a requirement that continues to this day. Currently, a demilitarized zone exists between Asamando and its nearest neighbors, although there are no formal treaties or even peace efforts in place. Due to the tensions between Asamando and its neighbors, overland travel to the nation is limited and generally not recommended.

Currently, the political situation in Asamando is stable. Officially a monarchy, all political positions are granted by the Queen. Princess Rani Laula, Queen Laula's only child, is the official heir to Asamando.

Asamando is not recognized by the United Nations, but is recognized by the Corporate Court.

MAJOR CITIES

When Asamando was first established, there was little infrastructure in the area. Larger towns were mostly uninhabited, and the Asamandons had to build their country practically from the ground up. Construction began on Nyamkopon in 2039, and the city became the nation's official capital in 2046. Nyamkopon is the primary urban center of Asamando. The rest of the country is rural, with smaller villages and military outposts.

The capital city of Asamando, **Nyamkopon** is a modern city of 250,000 citizens, and has a distinctly Awakened feel. The city is small compared to many urban sprawls, containing a twenty-block downtown core surrounded by planned housing communities, with numerous parks and dedicated green spaces throughout. At the heart of the city is the *Abenfie Owia* (Sun Palace), Queen Laula's home and the government seat. The six-story palace sits on a small hill; by law it is the highest structure in Nyamkopon (technically, the tallest building in the city is the ten-story SK building on 8th and Bosome Avenue). Nominally, Asamando owns all buildings and land in Nyamkopon, leasing out the properties to corporations and businesses. The city flows out in concentric circles from the Sun Palace, with tree-lined and shaded boulevards. Notably, most streets are heavily shaded against the bright West African sun, and many of the larger corporate facilities have underground entrances that link to the public subway system.

Nyamkopon and its suburbs have full wireless coverage (as does all of Asamando), with the Matrix infrastructure built by Saeder-Krupp and maintained by Horizon. Wireless service is provided by

the government and is free to all citizens and visitors. For residents who are unable to utilize the wireless systems (such as the population of free spirits), multi-layer signage exists, incorporating verbal cues with physical signs.

Asamando's primary airport, the Nyamkopon International Airport, is located approximately ten kilometers outside the city limits, and has the capacity to receive suborbitals and supercarriers. As a land-locked nation, the primary method of importing goods is by air. Neighboring corporate enclaves, such as those owned by Saeder-Krupp and Debeers-Omni, utilize the NIA for their own transportation needs. Public transportation consists of subway systems which link the suburbs to the downtown core.

Nyamkopon is home to the Thema LauLa Medical Center, a world-class medical and research facility that specializes in treating Awakened patients. Asamando's only university is also located in Nyamkopon, although wireless access allows citizens throughout the country to attend virtual classes. The University of Asamando has a partnership with several universities and corporate research programs, allowing students to attend virtual classes across the globe. Less well known, but well worth the visit, is the Rani LauLa Center for Cultural Arts, which houses historical artifacts, national treasures, and has a multi-story, interactive museum dedicated to mythology and the Awakening.

Asamando's nightlife is particularly vibrant, and the numerous outdoor parks coming to life after dark, along with its many clubs and restaurants.

Of course, Nyamkopon is an Awakened city, and hosts a large population of sentient non-metahumans, including shapeshifters and spirits.

Located in the heart of Asamando's mining country, **Abo-denbo** is a small industrial town. With a permanent population of approximately 25,000 (plus another 100,000 that live in the surrounding areas, working in the mines and agricultural fields), the city is the industrial center of Asamando. Situated on a flat plane, the city consists of large manufacturing facilities, refineries, and tract-housing. Strict environmental policies, coupled with a high amount of applied magics, keeps pollution down and the air quality relatively high. Abo-denbo is also home to the Asamando gemcutter's guild, which produces some of the finest diamonds and gems sold worldwide.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Asamando is an Awakened nation, with a large portion of the population Awakened and/or sentient non-metahuman. The wildlife and geography of Asamando reflects this as well, sporting a diverse population of paranormal animals and an above average number of sites of interest to the Awakened community.

The **Bui Hunting Preserve** covers a large area of forested savannah and more densely forested river valleys, and is bisected by the Black Volta. With its rolling hills and diverse terrain, it has numerous paranormal species, as well as big game such as hippopotami, that draw sportsmen from around the world. Hunting permits are granted by the Ministry of Tourism. Hunting tours as well as ecological study opportunities are available through commercial ventures.

A small village on the Black Volta, **Bamboi** is a community of shapeshifters centered on a half-dozen mineral springs that feed into the Black Volta. The springs are said to have appeared in 2012, and



are considered by locals to have healing and therapeutic properties. After a few years of conflict with local tribes, Asamando military forces took control of the area in 2038. Shortly afterward, Queen LauLa established the Bamboi mineral springs as a national heritage site. A permanent garrison is stationed outside the village. A small resort is operated around the largest spring, but the others are accessible only by permit from the Ministry of Magic.

- Asamando is considered the ghoul homeland for a reason; I'd say more than ninety-nine percent of metahuman citizens are infected with HMHV. Thema LauLa has an open border policy for the Infected, and under-the-table agreements with multiple countries to accept their Infected. Unfortunately for Asamando, their neighbors pretty much uniformly hate them, and the UN still hasn't recognized Asamando as a country. But the megacorps love LauLa; she funnels them Asamando's plentiful resources, she keeps a stable country (as opposed to the constantly shifting leadership of other West African nations), and she's charming as hell.
- Hannibelle
- I've heard the UN has agreed to recognize Asamando when LauLa presents evidence that the ghouls can survive on something other than metahuman flesh. A dozen corps are working on it, with funding from both the Draco Foundation and the nation itself.
- Fianchetto
- You didn't hear about the dozen UN high-muckety-mucks who'll be visiting Asamando next month, guests of Queen LauLa, and escorted by Horizon's Gary Cline? There's a lot of groups that'd pay a few fortunes to have that meeting interrupted, from rival corps, to anti-Asamando African kingdoms, to the Humanis Policlub ...
- Kay St. Irregular
- Asamando is an Awakened nation, through and through. While not all ghouls are Magicians, Asamando has a very high population of Magicians—no solid numbers, but I've heard around thirty percent. Imagine having one third your population magically active! Not to mention, ghouls are dual-natured (as are many of the metasapient). I've heard that you can walk through Nyamkopon focused only on the astral plane, and have no problems at all. But I've got to wonder about the background count...
- Winterhawk
- Wait a sec, here. Everyone's all "love the ghouls" but let's not forget—these creatures *eat people*. Where's the discussion of the huge "barns" where they store their "livestock..." men, women, and children kidnapped by fleshtraders and marched overland to be warehoused in cramped pens until dinner time? Or the slaughterhouses where they kill thousands of metahumans?
- Stone
- Yeah, and how's that different from the thousands of girls the Vory pimp out until they're killed by a john or OD on drugs? Or the thousands of SINless the corps use in experiments when testing the latest biowarfare agents? Just because the ghouls eat the bodies afterwards, that makes them so much worse than all the other predators?
- Hannibelle

AZANIAN CONFEDERATION

Azanian Confederation: ə-zā-nē-ən kən-fe-də-rā-shən

Population: 43,500,000

Primary Languages: Afrikaans, Bantu, English, German, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga

States: Cape Republic, Oranje-Vrystaat, Trans-Swazi Federation, Zulu Nation.

Government Type: Democratic Allied States

Bordering Countries: People's Republic of Angola, Congo Tribal Lands

Geography: Savannah, Mountains, Rain Forest

Notable Features: Table Mountain, Witwatersrand hills, Orange River

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Azanian Confederation was formed in 2040 when the Cape Republic, Oranje-Vrystaat, Trans-Swazi Federation, and Zulu Nation decided to combine into one nation. Together, the four power blocs created the largest, strongest industrial nation in Africa. The Azanian Confederation was immediately recognized by the UN upon formation, and fully participates in the Global SIN Registry.

The four states have different political, racial, and ethnic viewpoints. Each state has equal representation on the 64 seat National Parliament. Individual states have limited sovereign rights, although each must also abide by the national constitution. Laws in each state may be more restrictive than national laws. The Prime Minister is democratically elected and serves for a single five-year term; other national government positions are appointed by the Parliament. Prime Ministers are elected from candidates from the three states not currently represented by the office, preventing any one state from dominating the national government.

The Cape Republic, home to the predominant Xhosa tribe, is also the home of the great dragon Mujaji. Mujaji has limited involvement with the government, although she is reported to have great involvement in Azania's environmental policies. The Zulu state is considered an Awakened nation.

Both the Zulu and the Xhosa were minimally affected (in comparison to other African tribes) by the various VITAS epidemics; the Xhosa attribute their survival to the patronage of the great dragon Mujaji. This has led to their predominance in the population. The Zulu are predominantly elven, and the Zulu Nation is considered by many to be an elven nation.

MAJOR CITIES

Nestled in a bowl beneath Table Mountain (home to Mujaji), **Cape Town** is Azania's second most populous city and a major international seaport. The waterfront is a bustling area with significant megacorporate presence and ships from almost every nation in dock. Unfortunately, crime is also rampant in the waterfront, and it's a notorious haven for pirates as well as an entry and exit point for black-market goods, drugs, and smugglers. The Downtown area has undergone an urban

revitalization, becoming a tourist hotspot. The tree-lined streets are home to numerous corporations, shopping centers, clubs, and hotels. In addition, Downtown is home to the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Corporations such as DeBeers-Omnitech, Evo, NeoNET, and Shiawase all have large corporate parks in the downtown area, and Cape Town is quickly gaining a reputation as a global hotspot for nanotech, genotech, and biotech industries. Cape Town is also the legislative capital of Azania. And of course, Cape Town is the most diverse city in the nation, and the symbol for modern African culture around the globe.

The divided **Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal** sprawl is the administrative capital of Azania. It also happens to run along the Witwatersrand hills, which have produced 50 percent of the world's gold mined to date. As such, the sprawl has the highest per-capita income of any city in Africa. A heavily traveled railway network connects PWV to other cities in Azania, and the main line connects to the port of Cape Town. The sprawl is dependent on the Cape Town port, and as such, has invested significant nuyen into reclaiming the port and Cape Town from the criminal elements that have plagued the seaport for decades, and funds both Azanian forces and merc groups in the Cape. Pretoria is home to Witwatersrand International Airport, the largest airport in Azania.

The capital of the Zulu Nation, **New Hlobane** is a shining example of an Awakened city. From the resident population of shapeshifters (including a former Mayor) to the active community of free spirits, New Hlobane is a haven for the Awakened of all races (in the city of 1.4 million, census data shows that a full 20 percent of the population are sentient non-metahumans, while 50 percent are elven). Ecotourism and para-tourism draw more than fifty thousand visitors annually. The city has a significant amount of other industry, with numerous corporations and startups flourishing under the favorable tax laws and subsidies for paratechnology and ecotechnology research. A contract with Horizon plans to have the Zulu Nation fully wireless by 2074; New



Hlobane is the flagship city for the special AR environment designed for the Zulu Nation. The city is built at the base of the Hlobane table mountain, a sacred site to the Zulu elves. Access to the Zulu nation is limited, and travel visas have strict requirements. Visitors are recommended to apply in advance for travel outside New Hlobane into the Zulu Nation. Import or export of magical goods is heavily regulated in the Zulu Nation, outside of New Hlobane, where the Zulu tribespeople sell highly desirable magical goods at open air markets held every Wednesday. New Hlobane has a small airport as well as a regional railway; a bullet train travels between New Hlobane and Durban three times a day.



The Trans-Swazi Federation is the smallest state in the Azania Confederation, and its capital city, **Mbabane**, reflects that. Located in the mountainous Highveld, Mbabane is a remote city with little formal industry or corporate investment. It is plagued with poverty and crime, and due to rampant sanitation and health issues, the World Health Organization lists the city under potential pandemic hotspots. Outside Mbabane, the Highveld is considered one of the most picturesque areas in Azania, and the Trans-Swazi Federation has started a “clean-up” campaign to attempt to draw more of the lucrative tourist trade.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens** are a tribute to Cape Town’s amazing biodiversity. Filled with native botanical species and special display gardens, the gardens cover a broad expanse of Cape Town. Numerous biotech corps have research facilities here, exploring the unique properties of both mundane and parobotanical species and creating pharmaceuticals and other applications from the research. Specialized gardens exist, including one maintained solely by Xhosa shamans, who tend plants with spiritual significance. Visiting shamans can apply for permits to tour the Xhosa Memorial Garden, which is considered a rare honor. A new exhibit of Awakened butterflies and their associated parobotanical species, sponsored by Wuxing, is scheduled to open in the winter of 2073.

Home to the great dragon Mujaji, **Table Mountain** is a site of great importance to the Xhosa tribe. It is off limits to visitors, except by permission of Mujaji herself, but tours are available to vantage points throughout Cape Town. The entire mountain is an Awakened site of some power, and it is said to be aspected towards Xhosa shamanism. Several packs of shapeshifters live on the mountain as well.

- The Cape Town clean up effort was half-assed, at best. Downtown functions pretty well, at least during daylight hours, but the waterfront is more dangerous than ever. Pirates, crime lords, gangs—like the infamous Numbers Gang—and other criminal elements fight amongst themselves and against the merc crews sent in to control things. The only folks doing business there are either armed better than every one else, or they pay a huge protection tax to every faction there. This doesn’t sit well with the golden boys of Pretoria, who are pretty damn tired of losing

profits. Mujaji sent in a bunch of her Xhosa shamans to assist in the clean up with the Pretoria-hired merc crews, but she pulled them out before the job was finished. As you might suspect, this has the Pretoria government pretty damn pissed.

- Black Mamba
- You’d think Mujaji would be like other dragons, and want her territory under control. Why’d she pull out?
- Winterhawk
- Maybe Mujaji discovered something more dangerous than gangs and crime lords to worry about.
- Frosty
- Let me guess. You’re heading to Cape Town, aren’t you?
- Elijah
- A note about Azania, if you’re interested in traveling there ... the country has a huge variety of races, and for the most part you’ll be fine—if you’re a black ork, you can find plenty of black orks in the shadows (or public) willing to deal with you; stick with your own and everything runs smooth. But mixed races are shunned. If you go, consider some phenotypic alterations, or simply some nanopaste if you’re just in for a quick visit. Believe me, business goes much smoother in Azania if you do this. Oh, and if you want to deal with the Zulu, better make sure you’re a dandelion-eater. The Zulu hate humans and barely tolerate other metatypes.
- Traveler Jones
- The Zulu elves may be racist pigs, but they’re more than willing to hire round-ears, especially to fuck with Mujaji or the Xhosa, or with any corp they think is polluting mama earth. Zulu Johnsons tend to hang in Durban. Look for Nqobile in the Fat Jackal; she’ll hire anyone, and she pays fair.
- Black Mamba



EGYPT

Egypt: e-jipt**Population:** 96,000,000**Primary Languages:** Arabic (Official)**Governorates:** Alexandria, Aswan, Asyut, Beheira, Beni Suef, Cairo, Dakahila, Damietta, Faiyum, Gharbia, Giza, Helwan, Ismailia, Kafr el-Sheikh, Libya, Matruh, Minya, Monufia, New Valley, North Sinai, Port Said, Qalyubia, Qena, Red Sea, Sharqia, Sohag, South Sinai, Suez, 6th of October**Government Type:** Republic**Bordering Countries:** Israel, Ethiopian Territories, Algeria, Tunisia, Congo Tribal Lands**Geography:** Semi-Arid to desert, except the fertile Nile valley**Notable Features:** Aswan Dam, Giza Plateau, Lake Nasser, Lake Qarun, Nile River, Toshka Lakes

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

One of the oldest nations on earth—the beginnings of Egypt were seeded in 3150 B.C.—Egypt has danced a fine line between spirituality and mundane profitability for centuries. Famous for its ancient civilization, the Awakening affected Egypt in a deep and profound way. The Islamic-dominated Egyptian government attempted to subdue the renewed faith in the “old magics” of Egyptian beliefs that surged after the Awakening. For several decades, those following the ancient Egyptian ways were relegated to the back alleys and religious underground, persecuted by the otherwise moderate Islamic law. Then Halley’s Comet passed by. Astral constructs appeared on historical sites of significance, drawing tourists, mystics, and researchers. The influx of nuyen was welcome. Less welcome was the legitimizing of the Egyptian old faith cults and magics. At the same time, the ethnic minorities, such as the Bedouins and the Nubians, renounced their Egyptian nationality in favor of their own ethnic roots—and sovereign states.

Today, Egypt is a nation divided: the harsh desert against the fertile Nile valley, Islam against the Old Faith, Arab against Bedouin and Nubian, Awakened against mundane. With the UN’s recent

listing of Egypt as “Politically Stressed,” the government is under even more pressure to get the situation under control before it deteriorates beyond recovery.

Egypt is a semi-presidential republic, with an elected President (Baruti Elgabri) and Prime Minister (Hanif Zaidi). The constitution prohibits religious groups from political activity. The legal system is based on Islamic and civil law. The practice of magic is banned.

MAJOR CITIES

Cairo, the City on the Nile, is the largest city in Egypt, with almost twenty-five percent of the nation’s population living in or around the sprawl (almost seventy-five percent of the nation’s population live in the Nile valley area). Cairo is the most populous city of the Arab world. It has been a crossroads of trade and commerce for a millennium, and in 2072 is as vibrant and energetic as ever. Cairo’s economy is split fairly evenly between industry (media, manufacturing, and computer engineering are some of the major business sectors), tourism, and the financial sectors.

Egypt has been called an open air museum, with monuments to history scattered across its face; Cairo is no different. The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities has the largest collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities in the world, many of which are on public display. Old Cairo is a district with many old churches and Roman ruins, and home to the area called Coptic Cairo, the area where many of Cairo’s Christian residents live and worship. The famous Hanging Church is the Cairo seat of the Coptic Pope and is a major tourist attraction.



Coptic Cairo is also known as a haven for technomancers and hackers, since the Coptic Pope extended the Church's protection to them.

The Khan el-Khalili is an ancient marketplace—it's been running for almost seven hundred years—where shoppers can find anything from fresh fruits to Bedouin-imported goods from sub-Saharan Africa. There are numerous coffee shops, restaurants, and even small hotels in the district. The market runs twenty-four hours, and is considered especially attractive at night, when strings of lights illuminate the narrow alleys and street vendors' stalls.

Alexandria is Egypt's second largest city, and most important seaport, with almost eighty percent of Egypt's imports and exports passing through the port. The Pearl of the Mediterranean relies heavily on the shipping and manufacturing industries, as well as tourism, for its economic stability. Alexandria has a population of almost six million. While much of the ancient city was lost—either sinking into the harbor during earthquakes or built over in the past two millennia—ongoing excavation, recovery, and rebuilding has recreated the ancient remains of the city. The archeological work in the bay is sponsored by the Atlantean Foundation and open to tourism. The *Kom al-Souqafa* are extensive Roman era catacombs, although they have been closed to the public since 2061. The ancient Library of Alexandria is being rebuilt, sponsored by Masaru, and has one of the most extensive collections of ancient manuscripts in the world. Several levels are open to public display.

While Alexandria is a city steeped in ancient wonders that relies heavily on the tourism and archeological industries, it is also a modern metropolis with modern conveniences. Citywide AR is provided by NeoNET, and is a marvel of matrix engineering that recreates the classical period of Alexandria. The University of Alexandria is the second largest university in Egypt, home to top science and law schools. The port is large enough to service the immense traffic that comes through, and has world-class shipbuilding facilities run by Wuxing.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The Awakening brought renewed interest in the ancient monuments in **Giza**, including the Great Pyramid, the Great Sphinx, and other millennial sites. However, the Islamic government of Egypt attempted to suppress the mystical and spiritual aspects of the interest, banning the old faith and the surging popularity of Egyptian magic (to date, the practice or demonstration of Egyptian magic is illegal in Egypt).

Then the Comet came. Astral constructs materialized on the Giza plateau and along the banks of the Nile. International attention turned towards Giza, and numerous foundations, organizations, and corporations petitioned the government for permission to study the astral constructs. Mystics and magicians of the old faith surged, coming out from hiding and openly practicing their arts. Currently, the anti-Awakened Islamic government is fighting to control the old faith cults, but they've bowed to economic pressure and opened the Awakened sites. The Apep Consortium has a monopoly on the archeological research in the area, but several sites are opened to tourism, including the Great Pyramid.

After the Israel-Libya "10-Minute War" in 2004, and the nigh-complete destruction of the Libyan government in Israel's retaliatory



strike, Egypt annexed the territories in 2014. It was supported in this by local Muslim clerics. The area, primarily sand with some low hills, is now home to the world-famous **Desert Wars**. Corporations, mercenary companies, and even government militaries compete for prizes, glory, and international fame. The event is broadcast around the globe (and even beyond; the Evo Mars resort carries live coverage). During Desert Wars, corporations can also meet to resolve

differences in a civilian-free arena; these negotiations are occasionally broadcast as well. New gear, equipment, weapons, and tactical networks are often beta-tested in Desert Wars.

- Many who discuss Egypt focus on the ancient culture or the modern industries. Behind the scenes, however, the real topic is the divide between the Anti-Awakened Islamic Arabs—which, while moderate, still consider most magic anathema—and the adherents to the old faith. For years, more people followed the Egyptian magical paradigm *outside* of Egypt than in. That's all changing. While Egypt's laws prohibit religious groups from forming political parties, the old faith has been slowly infiltrating the government. Adherents to the old faith have been elected as Independents, and currently hold just over a quarter of elected government positions. While the old faith hasn't made a move yet, those of us who watch consider it only a matter of time before *something* happens. Life in Cairo right now is like living in a pressure cooker; an explosion is inevitable.
- Goat Foot
- Let's see. Government instability, corps maneuvering for more pieces of the pie, crazy-ass mystical mumbo-jumbo ... yup, means more work for us.
- Stone
- The Egyptian Museum may have a lot of artifacts on display, but there are hundreds of thousands more in the extensive underground vaults below the museum. The entire place has some of the most powerful wards in the world, but there are always private collectors who will pay *well* for some of the gems hidden away in those vaults.
- Elijah
- The Apep Consortium has a monopoly on archeology in Cairo and the Giza Plateau. The Atlantean Foundation and the Draco Foundation would both *love* to change that. Between sneaking in to peek at (or steal) Apep finds, extracting Apep scientists, or even attempting to discredit the Apep Consortium to the Egyptian government ... lots of work if anyone's interested.
- Ma'fan
- What about the rumor that dragons can't—or won't—travel to Egypt? True, False, or Urban Legend?
- Snopes
- Urban legend. Masaru has his Great Library project in Alexandria, after all.
- Winterhawk
- Note that it's offshore, though, on a "reconstructed" island connected to the mainland by a bridge. Technically speaking, Masaru hasn't stepped foot (claw) onto Egypt itself ...
- Frosty



KENYA

Kenya: ke-nyə**Population:** 53,915,000**Primary Languages:** English (official), Kiswahili (official), Numerous tribal languages (unofficial)**Provinces:** Central, Coast, Eastern, Nairobi, North Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley, Western, Mt. Kilimanjaro (Special Administrative District)**Government Type:** Democratic Republic**Bordering Countries:** Ethiomalian Territories, Congo Tribal Lands, Handeni Tribal Lands**Geography:** Tropical lowlands along coast, rising to highlands inland; temperate inland areas changing to arid and semi-arid areas to the north, with fertile plateaus in the west**Notable Features:** Mt. Kenya, Mt. Kilimanjaro, Lake Victoria, Great Rift Valley

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Kenya has served as a regional hub for commerce and trading in East Africa for centuries. The port town of Mombasa was a well-known port, trading center, and shipbuilding dock as far back as the Middle Ages. While a variety of colonial powers (beginning with the Portuguese, then the Germans, and finally the English) controlled Kenya, in the mid-1900s the nation became independent. At the turn of the century, drought and political corruption had driven the country almost to the point of collapse, and only major corporate and international aid kept the country together. The Awakening was the turning point. With the shifting weather patterns that encompassed Africa, Kenya's fertile western plateaus finally found relief from a decade of drought. The environmental and geological changes seen elsewhere in Africa had little effect on the nation's agricultural areas, although the arid northern areas became even drier.

A significant portion of its population was affected by the VITAS epidemics, but Kenya's strategic importance in the shipping trade routes, along with heavy corporate investment, ensured that the major population centers received a measure of the disease-

fighting drugs. Outside the urban centers, tribal magicians found their traditional magic suddenly worked as well. Overall, Kenya survived both the Awakening and VITAS epidemics in much better condition than its neighbors.

The Kenyan government has historically maintained a close relationship with both the UN—Kenya provides a full one-fifth of the UN peacekeeping troops—and has proactively encouraged corporate partnerships and investments. With the Corporate Court's blessing, Kenya annexed the ungoverned areas around Mt. Kilimanjaro; bringing stability and industry to the area along with the development of the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver. In addition to the profitable space industry, Kenya has rich natural resources, a major seaport, tourism, and well-developed agricultural areas (the Kenya Highlands are the most successful agricultural region in Africa).

Richard Wangai was elected President in 2068. Elections are held every six years. Kenya has an elected National Assembly with 246 members. The government of Kenya is stable, although tribal disputes, especially surrounding the Mt. Kilimanjaro issue, are frequent.

MAJOR CITIES

Nicknamed “the Gateway to Space,” **Nairobi** is the main city that services the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver. Nairobi is also the capital of Kenya, and houses the National Assembly, as well as most government buildings. While English and Kiswahili are the official languages, dozens of other languages are spoken in the city, from international business languages such as Japanese to local tribal languages such as Meru.

Nairobi covers almost 25 square kilometers, not including the sprawling slums on the outer edges. The city is centered on the Downtown square, where the Corporate Court's Nairobi Complex houses the Corporate Court's daily workings. All ten megacorps have business towers around the Corporate Court Complex, and the UN has their African headquarters in an adjacent complex. Downtown is also a hub for commerce and finance, and will be the home to the future African Stock Exchange (currently the Nairobi Stock Exchange), due to be launched in June, 2073. Security in the Downtown Square is provided by the Corporate Court's joint forces, while security for the rest of the city is maintained primarily by individual corporations or contracted security firms.

In the surrounding areas, multiple corporations have corporate enclaves and manufacturing, shipping, and distribution facilities. Due to the proximity of the mass driver, Nairobi is known for the numerous space technology corps and manufacturing facilities that produce goods for transportation into space. Nairobi is also a well-known tourist hub, for space-based personnel on an “earth-vacation” or for those headed into space to one of the off-planet resorts—and, of course, for travelers who wish to experience the rich offerings of Kenya itself, from mountain climbing to safaris and big game hunting.

Nairobi has a temperate climate and thick tree cover, giving the city a “green” feel. However, heavy industry and manufacturing plants contribute to poor air quality. Nairobi is also home to Kibera, one of Africa's largest slums, and a haven for tribal terrorists that target both the national government and the corporate presence in Kenya.

Located on the Indian Ocean, **Mombasa** is Kenya's second largest city and a major seaport. The city is also known as *Kisiwa Cha Mvita*, Swahili for the “Island of War,” due to the numerous (and often bloody) changes in ownership over the centuries. With a population just over one million (including corporate citizens), it is a bustling port town. Industry is primarily centered on the port, with shipbuilding, repairs, and extensive dry docks operated by numerous corporations.



Mombasa's downtown and core is based on Mombasa Island, which is linked via two bridges, a causeway, and numerous ferries to the rest of the city. A series of railways connect Mombasa to Nairobi and the Mt. Kilimanjaro mass driver. A heavily traveled highway also connects the two cities. To the south, the Mombasa mainland district of Likoni is a heavy industrial area, and is linked to the island and port by the Likoni Bridge. To the east, the Warehouse district lies on the mainland between the island and the Moi International airport, and is connected to the island by the main bridge and a special cargo-train causeway. The Chagamwe oil refinery, privately owned by United Oil, is situated in the channel between the mainland and the island, with access via the cargo-train causeway and boat only; it has been the target of numerous attacks by tribal terrorists, eco-terrorists, and anti-corp groups.



with grid-guide, runs alongside the rail route. Due to continued spirit violence, the Corporate Court employs mercenary forces to patrol the area at all times.

• “Proactively encouraged corporate partnerships”.. hah, that’s a great one. More accurately stated as “corporate vassal state.” But since the CC isn’t officially involved in nation-building, they’re content to slap the President title on Wangai and call Kenya a democratic republic. In truth, the Kenyan government doesn’t make any

moves without the CC’s stamp of approval.

- Mr. Bonds
- The spirits haven’t given up the fight for Kilimanjaro; they’ve simply shifted the fight into the urban centers, like Nairobi. Various tribes, like the Gikûyû, Maasai, and Kamba, have united to fight against the corporate interests under direction from their ancestor spirits. They’re more than willing to hire ‘runners to help their cause. Of course, the corps are willing to hire as well, and they pay better.
- Black Mamba
- Pay isn’t everything. If you decide to join the fray, just remember that spirits have long memories and really hold a grudge ...
- Winterhawk
- While the cities and the mass-driver might be corporate controlled, the rest of Kenya isn’t so clear-cut. Tribes control broad areas of the countryside, and ethnic disputes are ongoing. The Kenyan borders are pretty nebulous, as well, and other than some lines drawn on a map, there’s not much to differentiate between the Congo Tribal lands (a nice way of saying “no man’s land”) and Kenya. There’s not much point in policing the borders, either. Expect to have to show some id and documentation if you’re in an urban center, but once you leave the cities—you can go where you want, when you want, as long as you’re prepared to deal with roaming tribesmen, rabid free spirits, wild life (about thirty percent of the critters there are paranormal), no wireless networks, and no help if you’re in trouble. Pack your satellite uplink, your PJSS Elephant Rifle, and your best medkit. And remember—there are no speed limits, so have some fun!
- Traveler Jones

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest peak in Africa and a place of mystical significance to many of the tribes in the area. At 5,891 meters, it towers impressively over the high plains surrounding it. Shifting weather patterns over Africa increased precipitation over the mountain, wreathing its peaks in year-round snowstorms. The Awakening also brought renewed respect for the mountain to local inhabitants, who believe that powerful spirits called the sacred site home. These local legends were discovered to be fact when the Corporate Court chose the site as the earth-side location of the space mass-driver. Those free spirits objected to the technological intrusion, and after repeated failed attempts at negotiation, the Corporate Court forces waged a short battle to claim the area that now houses the mass-driver.

While people frequently climbed the mountain on foot prior to the Awakening, the changing weather and presence of spirits has prevented most journeys since the Awakening. However, a year-round rail route has been established to the site of the mass-driver. A road, fully enabled



KINGDOMS OF NIGERIA

Kingdoms of Nigeria: king-dəms əv ni-jīr-ē-ə

Population: 40,000,000 (est.)

Primary Languages: Varies by Kingdom (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, English, French)

Kingdoms: Abuja, Baatonum, Bokobaru, Bokyī, Edo, Ekoi, Fang, Ful, Gbaya, Hausa, Igbo, Kanuri, Mali-Faso, Nupe, Tarok, Tiv, Tikar, Yoruba

Government Type: Predominantly dictatorships, monarchies, and warlords

Bordering Countries: Kingdom of Benin, Asamando, Congo Tribal Lands

Geography: Tropical, with low-lying coastal swamps and wetlands changing to Awakened rainforests at higher-elevations. Some areas of arid and semi-arid areas in north

Notable Features: Niger River, Niger River Delta

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Nigeria is rich in culture and history; archeological finds date the Yoruba as far back as 8500 BCE and the Kano tribe still possesses written records dating back to 999 CE. During the 1800s, the area was overtaken by the British, becoming an official part of the British Empire in 1901. It was during this time that the slave trade flourished

in Nigeria, until it was abolished in 1936. In 1960, Nigeria became independent. However, corruption and unequal representation plagued the nation, leading to several military coups. By the time of the Awakening, Nigeria was a country torn from within. It was also the most populous nation in Africa, with over 250 distinct tribes and almost as many languages.

The VITAS epidemic had devastating consequences, especially in the urban centers, killing as many as seventy-five percent of the population. The government collapsed, with many of the wealthiest fleeing the nation. What little medical aid sent was controlled by warlords, much of it going to treat their personal followers and soldiers. However, many of the tribes still had strong roots in magical beliefs; with the Awakening, these beliefs became reality, and tribal shamans were able to turn the tide of VITAS. After the epidemic, with no central government, the survivors banded together along tribal lines, carving out their own territories and beginning the process of rebuilding. It was during this time that the geography of Africa changed, with Awakened rainforests overtaking savannahs and agricultural areas. Many of the survivors flocked to the cities along the coastline, while those who remained learned to survive in the new, Awakened lands.

Today, the Kingdoms of Nigeria show the effects of this birth-by-fire. Kingdoms are often controlled by the dominant tribe in the area, many of which are led by shamans. The entire area is politically unstable; kingdoms that exist today are constantly at risk, and the map of Nigeria is constantly evolving. The larger kingdoms have

accepted corporate and U.N. aid, which lends some stability to them. The contested delta region is one of the few remaining untapped oil reserves on the globe; recent completion of the Nigerian oil line has catapulted the area back into international recognition. Currently, there are eighteen recognized kingdoms, although the Bokyī Kingdom recently fell and no longer has a central monarchy, and the Kanuri Kingdom is in a state of civil war.

MAJOR CITIES

Lagos is the largest and best known city in the Kingdoms. Officially, it is a feral city-state, with no central government. It is surrounded by the Yoruba Kingdom, but the Yoruba have not attempted to claim the city. The city has an estimated population of around twenty million. Much of Lagos is built on or around shallow, brackish lagoons. Flooding during the rainy season alternates with a few months of drought during the dry season.

Lagos has a large port and is a major international trade hub. The Nigerian oil pipeline ends in Lagos, where numerous



corporate-controlled refineries exist. Other corporate investment in the area includes manufacturing, taking advantage of the large workforce, with military goods and arms, textiles, cosmetics, foodstuffs, inexpensive electronics, processed telema, and pharmaceutical products as primary exports. Most of the Kingdoms of Nigeria transport their trade goods to Lagos, as do the neighboring kingdoms of Benin and Asamando, selling to corporate interests or using the large port to export their goods around the globe. The city is known for its black markets and as a haven for pirates.

Ife is the capital of the Yoruba Kingdom, one of the most powerful and influential of the kingdoms. The Yoruba also consider Ife the spiritual center of their kingdom. The city is home to several universities, including the University of Nigeria, which has exceptional Awakened Studies and Parazoology programs. Proceeds from the oil pipeline have begun to pour into the city, and extensive building and expansion is currently underway. The city is also a trade center for the agriculture and telema harvesting industries of the kingdom.

Ife is particularly well known for the numerous museums it houses, including the King Adegoke Museum of Nigerian Archeology and Anthropology, famous for its collection of Yoruba and African artifacts. Ife also has a 25,000 seat stadium and is home to the Yoruba Flying Lions football team, which is a regular contender in the African Cup of Nations tournament (and is scheduled to host the 2074 games).

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Zuma Rock is a 750-meter-tall rock formation that towers over the surrounding rainforest. Just north of the city of Abuja, it is considered a site of spiritual significance to the Gwari and Koro tribes. The rock has a chiseled “face” on one side, a prehistorical remnant which is sometimes said to be the face of the spirit that inhabits the rock. Eyewitness accounts say the face has been seen animated, although this has never been caught on digital media. Local beliefs say the rock is home to malevolent spirits that guard a treasure, and all attempts to climb the rock have failed, while aircraft and aerial drones have all met with unexplained accidents (or been attacked by the local militia or stolen). Several organizations, including the Draco Foundation and the Atlantean Foundation, offer standing rewards to the first person(s) able to climb to the top and verify (or disprove) the rumors.

Rich in natural resources, the **Niger Delta** area is considered one of the last large scale oil reservoirs. While warring factions, pirates, ethnic disputes, and overall chaos distinguishes the area, corporate investment has focused on tapping into the reserves. It’s estimated that over thirty ethnic groups, speaking over 200 dialects, inhabit the area. It is also a haven for pirates.

Unfortunately, this disputed territory produces almost eighty percent of the kingdoms’ accumulated revenue. Corporate oil refineries

and facilities are heavily guarded, and several kingdoms (including Yoruba) have formed a partnership with corporate investors to protect the recently-completed pipeline. Mercenary companies, corporate security troops, and national armies are deployed in the area, fighting pirates, ethnic groups, ecoterrorists, rival corporate strike teams, and even sentient non-metahuman groups hailing from the Congo, making it one of the military hotspots of the 2070s.

- Eighteen Kingdoms? Last time I tried to count, the number was well over fifty—and those were just the ones acknowledged in Lagos. There’s probably three times that number if you include some guy with a few dozen crates of AK-97s who’s taken over a town and calls himself “king.” Where do these people get their facts?
- Black Mamba
- The number and names change almost daily. The eighteen they listed are those that are stable enough to last more than a year.
- Picador
- I love the Kingdoms. Where else can you eat off plates of gold with a king one night, buy a tank and actually drive it back to your hotel the next day, and get drunk on palm wine with ghouls the next night?
- Traveler Jones
- Jones, you are one crazy man. Outside of Lagos, most of the “cities” aren’t much more than villages. Some have wireless networks, but most don’t. Medical care is generally the local healer, witch-doctor, or midwife. Government is whoever has the most guns and bullets. Roads are slashed through the jungle or don’t exist at all—waterways are much more reliable, but plagued with pirates. The rainforest—which overtook much of the savannah and dry areas that *used* to be in Nigeria—is home to numerous Awakened creatures, many of which are toxic, venomous, or harbor nasty diseases, like VITAS. I *hate* the Kingdoms.
- Kane
- Lagos also happens to top the World Health Org’s list of potential pandemic hotspots. So many people crowded into a city with no government, sanitary systems, or running water—it’s the perfect breeding ground for nasty new bugs. The WHO has a small facility in Lagos, on Lagos Island, but they’re always looking for teams who’re willing to protect doctors in the city, get samples from the ill, or even take doctors into some of the worse slums for “research.” Perhaps not surprisingly, quite a few corporations have pharmaceutical, biotech, and even biowarfare R&D—and live metahuman testing—in Lagos.
- Nephrine
- And for those of us who have the guts and the skill and the will to survive, there’s a fortune to be made there. Cowards need not apply.
- Black Mamba



A Final Farewell

BY JOHN HELPERS

I plummet through the moonless night sky at more than three hundred kilometers per hour—nearing the aptly named terminal velocity. The HALO suit does an admirable job of protecting me from the freezing air, although I swear I can feel the cold coming through my horns, tickling my temples. My breath is calm in my ears, with only the whisper of pressurized oxygen hissing across my face.

The landscape below is beautiful, lit up by the sensor suite in my helmet. To the east, the city of Sapporo twinkles in the distance, to the north, the dark waters of the Sea of Japan. Stretching out below me and to the west is the forested mountains on the north slope of Hokkaido—where my target awaits.

The altimeter in my AR's heads-up display ticks off the meters I'm falling, the numbers shrinking faster than I can follow. At five thousand meters, I change my freefall position from head down, arms at my sides, legs straight and tight together to the classic skydiver's pose; arms held straight out from my body, elbows bent ninety degrees legs spread and bent at the knees. The wind buffets me slightly less as I wait for the magic number that will begin the final insertion phase.

At two thousand meters, a soft chime sounds in my helmet, and a memory metal rod springs out from my backpack, extending across four meters out in both directions along my shoulders and arms. High-density nanofiber unfurls next, attaching to my feet using self-seeking memory molecule clasps. Now a metahuman glider, I slow down even more, controlling my direction and descent speed with twists of my wrist.

A pulsing amber dot appears in my HUD—I've acquired the target site. I steer toward it, aware of my rate of descent and the speed at which I'm approaching the small cluster of buildings perched on the outcropping of rock. The compound was built to have unlimited visibility in all directions—except up. The secluded retreat is built in the old style, with what appear to be clay tile roofs, wooden-framed buildings, and traditional rice paper

walls. The spec plan revealed a much different story—pressure plates in the roof, automated security drones patrolling the grounds, and walls that, although seemingly fragile, can withstand anything up to a RPG. Soft lights glow in a few of the buildings, which my faceplate compensates for before they blind me.

The roof remains my best chance of infiltrating undetected, but I'll only have one chance at the landing. The skeletonized glider is too small to detect on radar, and my chameleon suit makes me one with the night. There's only one last problem to surmount as I line up for my approach, and the lack of a blinking light in my HUD makes a twinge of unease flutter in my stomach. The roof is now visible only two hundred meters away, and if I don't get the signal in the next six seconds, I'll either have to go in without the way cleared or abort the run. Gritting my teeth, I stay on course and watch the sloped roof grow larger in my faceplate. 100 meters ... 75 meters ... 50 meters ... 25 meters ...

A message pops up in my AR: Roof security bypassed. My apologies for the delay. A second later the glider touches down on the roof, its gecko pads bringing me to a controlled stop in the middle of the plain of red tiles.

I send back a curt, "Acknowledged" and close the window. For the next eleven minutes, the compound security program believes I am a repairman performing maintenance duties. Plenty of time to complete the task at hand.

Hitting the quick release, the glider disassembles itself, retracting into the case on my back. I shrug off the pack and leave it on the roof. Making sure my katana is securely fastened across my shoulder, I spider-crawl down the roof to a corner and hang my head over the eave.

To my enhanced vision, the supposed paper walls light up with sensor warnings. Besides their hardness, the walls have an electrical circuit built into them and proximity wire. My suit is insulated, ensuring my own electrical field won't trip the alarm; that takes



care of the wire, but penetrating the wall will be more difficult. Taking a small black box from a pouch at my belt, I pull out two alligator clips and ready them, one in each hand. Next comes the difficult part. Selecting the attach points, I reach out over my head, getting as close to the wall as I dare without touching it. Centering my ki, I exhale slowly, then reach out and attach both clips at exactly the same time, tensing for the shriek of an alarm or some kind of more lethal security to go off.

Nothing happens—exactly as planned. I pull a small, hand-held tool out of another belt pouch. Pressing a button on the side extends a length of rigid monowire. Depressing the trigger activates the silent electric motor, making the wire spin so fast I can't see it. Pressing the tip to the now dead area of the wall, it sinks in like a monosword through a Kobe filet. Once the tip has penetrated, I draw the wire down, cutting a hole large enough for me to enter. I secure the loose section with one hand while turning off the monodriver and putting it away. Gripping the edge of the roof with my free hand. I swing my body down and through the hole in one fluid motion, my feet resting lightly on the wooden rafter right inside. Levering myself the rest of the way inside, I replace the section and hold it in place with a squirt of spray adhesive at each corner.

Removing my helmet, I wedge it into a corner of the rafter—I will witness what is about to happen with my own eyes. Unspooling a length of microwire, I tie an end off and let the rest fall to the ground. Sliding down to the floor, I land without a sound and face the room.

The large space is devoid of furniture, with only spotless tatami mats covering the floor. In the middle of the room, his back to me, is a man seated in the lotus position, dressed in an immaculate kimono, head bowed, hair oiled and pulled back into the traditional topknot. I have not even taken a step when he speaks.

"Good morning, Solo-san. I expected they would send you. Does the clan not trust me to carry out this final order?"

I bow low, from the waist. "They do, Suhana-sama—I requested to be here, to serve as witness to your final act."

"That is most kind of you. The Saiki-rengo will not be pleased that you have visited one of their strongholds so easily."

"I will concern myself with that when the time comes." I wait for him to speak, the silence companionable, despite the circumstances.

"It is almost time. Would you do me the honor of serving as kaishaku?"

I walk forward to his left side, kneel next to him, and bow, my head touching the mat. "It would be my great honor, Suhana-sama." When I raise my head, I see the traditional instruments laid out—a writing brush, ink stone, and rice paper to his right, and in front of him, a gleaming tanto on a black, lacquered tray.

He regards me for a moment; his lined, patrician face as strong and stern as I have always remembered it, and inclines his head—the only time he has ever bowed to me. Without another word, he begins.

Picking up the brush, he draws ink from the prepared stone, then holds it in front of him for a moment before composing his last poem on the paper in flowing kanji. He gazes at the finished verse for a moment, then sets the sheet aside to dry.

Removing the top of his kimono to expose his hairless chest, he tucks the sleeves underneath his legs, then picks up the tanto and holds it with the blade pointed toward his abdomen. Straightening his spine, he lifts the knife in front of his eyes for a moment, then plunges it into the right side of his stomach, the blade sinking in to the hilt.

A gush of blood spills out over his hand, but his face is as impassive as if he was enjoying the cherry blossoms that bloom during springtime in Kyoto. Without a sound, he draws the blade across his abdomen in a long, horizontal cut, then turns the blade ninety degrees and levers it up under his ribcage. It is the most magnificent display of seppuku I have ever seen. His face still calm, even under the tremendous agony he must be feeling, he nods, leaving his head lowered to expose his neck.

Springing to my feet, I draw my katana in one fluid movement and bring the blade down in a perfect cut, the monofilament blade slicing through the vertebrae and muscles in one powerful blow. His head remains for a moment, then slides off to the floor. His body slowly topples forward, the jet of crimson spouting from the stump already subsiding.

I wipe my blade on a clean sheet of rice paper and sheathe it, then step carefully around to read his poem:

*Into the next life
My best student beside me
I regret nothing*

I bow low once more. "Domo arigato gozaimasu ken sayonara, Oyabun."
I turn and leave without a backward glance.



ARABIAN CALIPHATE

Arabian Caliphate: ə-rā-bē-ən ka-lə-fāt

Population: 29,500,000

Primary Languages: Arabic (official), English

Emirates: Arabian Heartland, Kuwait, Qatar, United Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Autonomous Kingdom of Jordan

Government Type: Theocratic Autocracy

Bordering Countries: Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Syria

Geography: Bounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf, this peninsula is largely covered in desert, with the exception of the southwestern mountainous region

Notable Features: The Arabian Desert

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The heart of conservative Islam, the Caliphate of Arabia is composed of the collected Islamic tribes throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Strongly influenced by Sunni Islam, the Caliph is elected by the Shura, a collection of the leaders of the tribes. As in many other locations in the Islamic world, the Arabian Caliphate's primary body of laws is developed from *Sharia*, laws based on the teachings of the Quran. Under *Sharia*, the Caliphate recognizes the equal rights of Muslims, regardless of their provenance. Non-Muslims (*dhimmi*) are allowed to live in enclaves and given the chance to convert. Sharia says Jews, pagans, and atheists deserve death or exile, though these punishments are generally reserved only for those who openly practice their faith in public, or denounce the teachings of Allah.

As signatories of the Business Recognition Accords, the caliphate allows corporations that have an AA or AAA rating to operate semi-autonomous enclaves. These corporations are taxed according to

standard *Sharia* practice, though taxes are lessened based on the percentage of Islamic employees the corporation employs. The Mudaween, the state-run religious police force, monitor corporations in conjunction with the Islamic-Corporate Coordination Board (ICCB). Due to Arabia's theocratic nature, there are specific rules that must be followed for all foreign corporations. The only foreign mega-corporations with a notable presence in the Arabian market as of 2072 are Saeder-Krupp, Esprit Industries, and the Frankfurt Banking Association.

Beyond the walls of the corporate enclaves and cities, the deserts host many Bedouin tribes, none of whom offer their loyalties to the Caliphate or any foreign power, choosing instead to live as their own people. They travel peacefully from oasis to oasis, as their people have for thousands of years. The Bedouins are a proud and honorable people, known for dealing fairly with any honorable trader, regardless of religious conviction.

MAJOR CITIES

Once a leader in Arabian finance, **Abu Dhabi** has struggled to regain its position in the wake of corporate closures during and after the Crash. Abu Dhabi is a coastal city, with work and social conditions much closer to the Western world than more conservative inland cities. Saeder-Krupp controls the oil refineries in the city and processes a large amount of oil from Asia and Russia, though the local fields have run dry.

S-K's Arabian headquarters is also located in Abu Dhabi. Since the restructuring of the ICCB in 2069, S-K has taken a smaller role in the nation's affairs, as the corporation was unwilling to change the religious requirements for its employees both in Arabia and at foreign locations to align with the ICCB guidelines.

Nestled along the coast of the Persian Gulf, **Dubai** is a stronghold for corporate finance within the Arabian Caliphate. Tourists regularly visit the Jumeirah commercial district and duty-free zones near the Jebel Ali port. The local government does not enforce Sharia

as literally in this city as elsewhere in the Caliphate. This policy has allowed small enclaves of Jews and other groups to live here. All of these groups do their best to maintain a low profile, so as to not flaunt their status to the rest of the nation.

Dubai also hosts the annual International Defense Exhibition, one of the world's largest arms fairs. The week-long event brings in substantial revenue for the city and caliphate. Cutting-edge prototypes are displayed and media heroes from the Desert Wars are regular attendants.

The capital of the Arabian Caliphate, **Medina** has grown well beyond the wall that once encircled it. The walls still form a circle around the Inner City, which contains the administrative offices, houses the Shura when they meet, and provides the office and home of the Caliph. Medina's cultural heritage is nearly as important as its political value, as



it is the birthplace and final resting place of the prophet Mohammad.

It is fitting that the birthplace of Islam's prophet should also be the home of the Islamic Unity Movement (IUM). This organization, backed fully by the Caliph, promotes the peaceful unification of the Muslim people. Since 2064, the IUM has actively helped forge diplomatic relationships between the Muslim nations and supported countries in their efforts to curtail the terrorist sect known as the New Islamic Jihad. The goal of the Caliphate, as stated in a press release in January 2072, is to rebuild Islam through Islam.

A religious icon to all Muslims, **Mecca** receives nearly two million visitors each year. The city is barred to any non-Muslim, and travel visas to the city must be approved by the Mudaween. This is largely a formality, due to *Sharia* requiring every Muslim to make a pilgrimage to the city at least once in their life. The heart of the city is the Kaaba, a large shrine of black stone built long before the rise of Islam.

Home to the Caliphate's Palace, **Riyadh** is an ultra-modern city. Named for orchards of palm and date trees which were removed in the previous century, it grew into a teeming metropolis. With two underground arcologies and several megacorporate offices built from 2055-2059, the city oversees corporate affairs throughout the caliphate. Fittingly, the Islamic Corporation Coordination Board has their headquarters in the city. Global Sandstorm, Arabia's largest corporate conglomerate, is also based in Riyadh, with their corporate headquarters sharing the same building as the ICCB.

Aziz al-Shammar, CEO of Global Sandstorm, has worked closely with the Caliph since the Crash 2.0 to aid in rebuilding Arabia's economy. Since the Crash, the economy has been revitalized through foreign banking services provided by Global Sandstorm, with the profits funneled back into Arabia.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The city of **Al-Karak** lies on the northern edge of the Arabian Caliphate. It is a common waypoint for Bedouin tribes to rest and trade for supplies before resuming their southern trek. Al-Karak is best known for the Karak Castle, which was built by European Crusaders and used to stage raids against Muslim caravans. Under the leadership of Saladin, the castle was besieged and captured. The structure is a notable example of Crusader architecture, a mixture of European, Byzantine and Arab designs. Three weeks after Aden's destruction of Tehran, the dragon was seen circling Al-Karak before returning to his lair.



The Bedouin tribes leave regular tribute to Aden in the broad moat to the west of the castle. Though the dragon has never come to claim the tribute, it continues to pile up. None of the goods left show any sign of aging or desiccation, despite the fact that many of them have been in the desert for several years.

Once labeled the "Atlantis of the Sands," **Ubar** is a ruined city uncovered in 2068 by the Apep Consortium. Located in Southern Arabia, Ubar once sat on a major caravan line for frankincense. The city was excavated from the Dhofar Province and contains a fortress initially built in the Bronze Age which was discovered fully intact. Bedouin tribes led members of the Apep Consortium to the site, and the Bedouin continue to camp around the region year round. Ubar contains one of the largest oases in the area, and shows signs of having previously been a thriving city. Each month during the full moon, the city is filled with visions of palm and date trees. According to the Bedouin tribes, it is possible to pick the dates from the trees during this period, though the fruit vanishes with the first light of dawn, as do the trees.

- I've been to Ubar once. The ruins are remarkably intact, given the date they were originally built. The archaeologists also found several human remains in the middle of their daily lives. It is speculated that the city was swept over by a vast sandstorm and the residents were trapped inside. The dry conditions of the desert lend themselves to desiccation and preservation rather than rot.
- Elijah
- Global Sandstorm made a killing collecting the shattered remains of corporations that had been driven nearly bankrupt by Crash 2.0. Since then, they have made several very shrewd trades to recover lost assets and rebuild the national economy from the ground up.
- Mr. Bonds
- Global Sandstorm was neck-deep with the terrorists before a last minute double-cross promoted them off the chopping block to trusted company.
- Cosmo
- Really? I may need to buy some more stock. Anyone who can go from funding the enemy to controlling your competition will likely turn a nice profit.
- Mr. Bonds
- You learned the wrong lesson.
- Cosmo

CANTON CONFEDERATION

Canton Confederation: kan-tən kən-fe-də-rā-shən

Population: 230,102,000

Primary Languages: Yue (Cantonese), Mandarin, Xiang, Pinghua

Provinces: Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangxi, Macao

Government Type: Confederation of democratic republics

Bordered Countries: Coastal Provinces, Guangxi, Henan, Honk Kong, Sichuan, Taiwan

Geography: Mountainous and hilly regions, river basins, deltas with many islands

Notable Features: South China Sea Territories, Zhurong Peak

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

An outgrowth of the Greater Canton Economic Development Council, the Canton Confederation coalesced in 2018 when the Council states seceded from the People's Republic of China after their nuclear stockpile was destroyed. The Confederation prospered, using its economic ties to Western powers through trade cities like Hong Kong, Macao, and Taipei to rapidly strengthen its economic base, which led to a stronger government, military, and nation. While the rest of the former People's Republic devoured itself in an orgy of bitter infighting, the Confederation secured trade deals and formed alliances with a number of megacorps.

It wasn't until 2041 that war came to the Confederation, when the provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang broke away to join Taiwan. The three-year conflict was bloody, and in the end only Fujian could be recovered; Zhejiang disintegrated into a number of microstates that became the Coastal Provinces.

The Confederation felt the Year of the Comet particularly hard, as the emergence of so many spirits disquieted the population to levels not seen since the Nationalist War in 2041. Metahuman refugees from the repressive pogroms in Japan jarred society further, but the megacorps based in Macao and Hong Kong profited greatly. In fact, when Emperor Yasuhito rescinded the Yomi Island decree, staunching the flow of refugees, it made an already-present recession in Canton even worse.

Crash 2.0 was just as deadly to the Confederation as the rest of the world, but the corps who could best capitalize on the chaos came out the strongest, including Wuxing, which emerged as the leader in WMI tech infrastructure for much of the continent.

MAJOR CITIES

The Confederation's capital, **Guangzhou** is like many sprawls—an opalescent pearl in the areas controlled by the government and megacorps, and a putrid shantytown on the outskirts. The city's suburban belt is a thin strip controlled mostly by Triads who receive a patina of legitimacy by business fronts and corpsec contracts. The shanties where most of the peasantry live are multi-story

ghettos built into valleys and hillsides, putting them out of the view of the skyscrapers of downtown.

Changsha is the most prosperous city in the Hunan province and home to bustling manufacturing centers owned by Tan Tien. Factories are the largest source of jobs in the city, providing both direct labor positions and Matrix-bound technical work. Fully ninety-percent of Wuxing's assembly lines are tele-operated over the Matrix; only those too proprietary to be linked to the open system are run directly by workers. Those citizens of Changsha who aren't Wuxing employees often find work with the Confederation government, augmenting the Sichuan border defenses.

Fuzhou is the seat of Fujian discontent. Many in the city remember the Nationalist War very clearly and still resent their failure to secede. Still, active investment by a number of corps (including the ever-present Wuxing) keeps money flowing into and out of Fuzhou, and that money keeps the younger generations from succumbing to the harangues of the old. Fuzhou Harbor is also a major Confederation naval station, which keeps large numbers of Confederation soldiers in the city.

Not far from the clear waters of Lake Poyang, **Nanchang** has quietly become the vacation destination of the wealthy in the Confederation. With the fortunes made rebuilding the Matrix after Crash 2.0, many corp execs built lake houses and brought in all the comforts they would need. The pleasure industry in Nanchang imports "professionals" from across the globe, and they command respect and compensation commensurate with anywhere else in the world. The few locals still living in Nanchang are forced to cater to the tourists, although there is a thriving Triad presence as well.

Macao is often called Hong Kong's mirror image. Safely across the Pearl River from the larger, more metropolitan sprawl, Macao is a haven for gunrunners and mercenaries and has been for more than thirty years. Criminal activity is more or less traditional in Macao—the few times the Confederation had engaged corporate security forces to



go in and try to clean it up, the denizens simply hide out in Hong Kong or Taiwan and then return once the corp declares success.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

One of the Five Sacred Mountains, **Zhurong Peak** is the current lair of Yat Gwan, vassal to the grand dragon Lung. Since the Year of the Comet, the mountain has become an astrally powerful focus of mana, and several times in recent years, either through natural occurrences or Yat Gwan's experimentation, mana storms have flickered momentarily into mundane view. The many pilgrims to Zhurong Peak bring notable income to Hunan Province, but the unstable border with Sichuan also claims many of the pilgrims as "temporary workers." Reagent hunting is also big business here, as the slopes of Zhurong are filled with usable alchemical goods.

Long a source of contention between the Confederation, Imperial Japan, and other nations in the region, the **South China Sea** is a rich and valuable piece of sea territory. From a manganese isotope that powers cold fusion to alchemical radical known as dragon tears, the South China Sea is a bounty of rare resources. The withdrawal of the Imperial Japanese Navy in the wake of the eruption of the Ring of Fire has meant an increased Confederation presence in the area. Wuxing mining ships now control most of the profitable manganese beds, and much of those profits get fed into the Confederation's coffers.

- Don't let their lack of success in acquiring other territories fool you—Canton is damned expansionist. They're always fighting with their neighbors, trying to get greater access to the sea, or more land, or whatever they hell they want. Henan and Sichuan both keep pretty respectable standing armies on their borders, and runners make a good living going back and forth.
- Kia
- Saying Wuxing "emerged" as the WMI leader is like saying Ghostwalker "emerged" in control of Denver. Wuxing took control using every available means. They used outright force in Sichuan and Triad thugs in Henan and Guangzhou. Word is there were some old-school Watada-kai spooks running around Macao, and the Triads took them down in passing. Serves them right—everyone knows Macao is Triad central.
- Lei Kung
- That's a laugh—the corpsec Wuxing sent in to try and clean up Macao were runners based in Macao, and they weren't much interested in cleaning anything out. Just getting better position for themselves until Wuxing could claim victory and move back into the mainland proper.
- Jimmy No



- Guangzhou is Wuxing and the Triads, nothing more and nothing less. Sure, the Confederation government sits there too, but only because Wuxing needs them all in one place to make the bribes and threats less expensive to issue. The working people in Guangzhou just try to get by, and that "slender" suburban belt? That's where the runners are, friends. You need something done in Guangzhou, you walk until the pearly whites aren't so white, and stop before they turn to dirt.
- Traveler Jones

- As usual, running beats the alternative. Take the drudges tasked with "augmenting the Sichuan defenses." Here's what actually happens: They truck those saps out there and have them building bunkers and fixed emplacements. Then, when they think no one's looking, they push them in waves across the border to find Sichuan minefields and astral traps. You get a factory job in Changsha you keep it—or else you get out of Changsha. And often not in one piece.
- Kia
- Nanchang is a cesspool—it's overrun with rich corp vipers who think they can do whatever the hell they want with the people. And those so-called professionals? Most of them are slaves—humans, mostly, but there is market enough for metahuman fetishes that all phenotypes are represented. I was on a run last year against a slaver cartel—they've amassed so much money that they can afford top-notch security. You don't want to go against them without serious firepower.
- Stone
- You all remember it was Shiawase that Wuxing went against off the Paracels, don't you? And now there's a Shiawase that has married into the Imperial Japanese family and fathered the next emperor? And now Wuxing is building Canton's navy for them, and pushing bigger and bigger mining flotillas out there? Does anyone think the Imperial Navy had forgotten about those manganese fields and the dragon tears? They're going to get tired of disaster relief soon and want to get back to killing people and breaking things. I've seen runner teams going in. There's something big coming.
- Ma'fan

HONG KONG FREE ENTERPRISE ZONE

Hong Kong: hāng-kāng

Population: 8,150,000

Primary Languages: Cantonese, English

Provinces: Aberdeen, Kowloon, Lantau, New Territories, Victoria Harbor

Government Type: Corporate Governance/Capitalist Republic

Bordering Countries: Canton Confederation, Hainan, Philippines, Taiwan

Geography: Peninsula and surrounding islands with rolling hills and steep mountainous terrain

Notable Features: Shek-O, Victoria Peak

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Hong Kong Free Enterprise Zone is a world renowned business center. The city maintains a constant population of just over eight million, though nearly two million is a transient population spending part of the year away from the city. Hong Kong's government was built by corporations that actively assisted the city in declaring independence in 2015. Today, those corporations and others make up the Board of Governors. As of 2072, the Board of Governors is a twenty-eight member panel with the primary requirement of member corporations being active investors in Hong Kong's growth.

An Executive Council of public citizens is elected by the Board of Governors to administrate the zone. The Executive Council handles all aspects of lawmaking and governance. A Chairman of the Board is elected each year in February through a majority vote of the Executive Council. The chairman sets the agenda, and previous powerful chairmen have been known to effect lasting change on the Free Enterprise Zone, establishing a legacy for the next chairman to protect.

At its heart, Hong Kong was developed to increase global trade and aid the city through increased commerce. To this end, throughout Hong Kong, there are no taxes or tariffs on goods, nor are capital gains taxes assessed against financial transactions based in the city. In addition to the shelters this provides the Board of Governors, the "free enterprise" policy attracts many foreign investors and tourists. Roughly forty million people visit Hong Kong for tourism or business annually, bringing billions of nuyen into the local economy.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Easily the most identifiable area in the Free Enterprise Zone, **Downtown Hong Kong** is the center of industry. In the evening the skyline's glow can be clearly seen from the opposite side of the harbor. It serves as the home for a large number of corporate citizens, and includes Victoria Peak and western Victoria Harbor. With corporate offices in the lower section of the city near the harbor, several enclaves and arcologies have been built along Victoria Peak looking down on the harbor.

The island is a self-contained city within the zone, with shopping along the Splendid Dragon Path and Wanchai Causeway. The Splendid Dragon Path is the world's longest enclosed walkway, with hundreds of restaurants, apartments, and boutiques lining it. Also a retail draw for tourists, the Wanchai Causeway divides its attention between locals with a broad range of entertainment offerings, and tourists with the area surrounding Fenwick Pier focusing on souvenirs and exotic items which can only be found in Southeastern Asia.

On the other side of Victoria Peak from Downtown Hong Kong, the **Southern Coast** is as traditional as the northern side is modern. Here, fishermen paddle out into the bay and throw nets by hand, and the entire area is protected by strict development laws to protect the traditional roots of Hong Kong. Numerous geomancers work for the Board of Governors to tend and maintain the Dragon Lines in the area—vast, natural conduits of magical energy that weave their way across the Southern Coast.

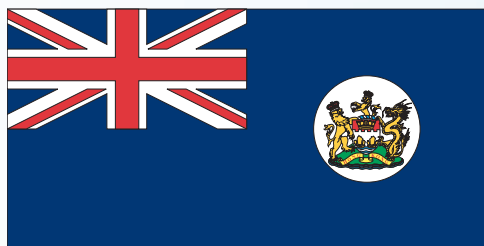
The largest modern settlement in the area is Aberdeen, home of Wuxing Skytower. Since 2061, the area around the Skytower has been a semi-permanent astral shallow. Several small, bohemian communities have established themselves throughout the area, with the largest being on the island of Apleichau. In addition to the awakened element drawn to the area, the Southern Coast attracts a large number of surfers to Shek O, the region's most popular surfing destination.

Unlike the rest of the Free Enterprise Zone, the **Northern Reaches** are predominantly rural—composed of rice paddies and soybean farms. The area provides the majority of the native food supply to Hong Kong. Traditional Chinese family structures of extended clans living and working together are common. The Board of Governors maintains the zone for both its agricultural value and its placement



as a buffer between Hong Kong and the neighboring Canton Federation.

Many of the people from this area are deeply spiritual, believing strongly in old superstitions and religions. While there are several Buddhist temples and shrines, the majority are animistic or Shinto. The Ping Shan Trail has the region's highest density of Shinto shrines, leading from Hong Kong's only ancient pagoda to the walled village of Sheung Cheung Wai.



SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Star Ferries are a cultural icon of Hong Kong. Continuing to operate after nearly 200 years, the Star Ferry service travels across Victoria Harbor between the mainland peninsula and the islands of Hong Kong and Kowloon. The ferries offer panoramic views of the skyline to over 70,000 people every day. Schedules for ferry service are posted along the harbor at each ferry stop. The majority of the Star Ferries are designed for the actual transport of people and vehicles across the harbor, though special tour ferries are available to provide a guided tour and history of the Ferry and Free Enterprise Zone.

Literally translated from its traditional name as the "Precious Lotus Zen Temple," the **Po Lin Monastery** is the largest on Lantau Island. Housing three statues of Buddha to embody his past, present, and future, the primary draw of the temple is the Tian Tan Buddha, a 34-meter-tall statue of Buddha sitting in lotus. The area resonates a deep sense of peace, supported by the positive accumulation of ambient mana, or *qi*. Though a large portion of Lantau Island has been converted from parks and reserves into sculpted communities, the temple grounds have remained untouched. Regular worshippers at the temple have claimed that all the land upon which the Buddha's shadow falls is sacred and is the boundary line for all further modernization.

- "Active investors" my left testicle. We've all seen the report by Money Lee, corps join the Board of Governors through influence trading and bribery. Any corp with the necessary capital to grease enough palms can get a seat.
- Aufheben
- They don't mention Kowloon, the pit of despair and lawlessness that came from the Board of Governors needing somewhere to send their unwanted. Kowloon City isn't pretty, but it can hide a team of shadowrunners for awhile. Further inland you get to the Kowloon Walled City—entering well-armed and during the light of day is one thing. I won't set foot within a hundred meters of the wall after dark unless demons are at my heels.
- Jimmy No

- Part of the public service means not telling people about the dark, horrible places of the world. If enough people forget about it, they won't be tempted to go there.
- Dr. Spin

- Hong Kong also plays host to the triad, with no less than five different groups carving up the district for their playground. As if that wasn't enough, we have the Tolo Vory, the Hell Thunder Crew, and dozens of smaller groups all clamoring

to be noticed. I can give you a complete download on who's playing where if you drop me a line.

- Lei Kung
- The Dragon Lines that are mentioned can also be called mana or ley lines. Several of them meet in a nexus point directly in the center of the astral shallow of the Skytower. Forming a permanent shallow like that should be impossible.
- Frosty
- Any updates on who is actually funding the 9x9s?
- 2XL
- Well the info on HKB panned out; they were the first suspects. My money is on someone outside the zone trying to stir up trouble, which leaves most of the free world. I've heard too many rumors of dragons and free spirits to believe it. The whole situation smacks of metahuman cruelty—we don't need anyone to help us destroy ourselves.
- Lei Kung
- Some of ma buddies in Kwai Tsing, got in a firefight with the 9x9s. The whole lot of them were geared out to the gills, but only a handful was trained to use the gear.
- Kane
- The Star Ferries are a great way to get around the Zone if you don't have a boat of your own. Low-end security and a need to get boatloads of people processed in half the amount of time it will actually take means that your odds are good of avoiding any kind of SIN checks.
- Rigger X
- Despite the shiny picture the data file sells you about the Po Lin Monastery staying free of the corps, the monks made their own deals. When the secessionists were ready, the monks were able to buy up nearly all of Lantau and sell it to the corps. They wield influence with the delicate hand of a surgeon.
- Snopes

INDIAN UNION

Indian Union: ind-i-ən yoon-yuhn

Population: 1,082,512,000

Provinces: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgrah, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand

Government Type: Bi-Cameral Parliamentary Democracy

Bordered Countries: Nepal, Tibet, Pakistan, Khalistan, Bangla Commonwealth, Sri Lanka

Geography: Tropical peninsula, coastal areas, marsh, mountains, river basins, some desert

Notable features: Ganges River, Indus River, Jamana River, Orissa Triangle

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Gandhi, Bollywood musicals, and more people than they know what to do with—that’s about the extent of what much of the world knows about India. That’s a shame for a place that has been constantly inhabited for over 9,000 years. Relative satisfaction with their territory, a conservative culture, and a forgiving religion has allowed India to fly under the international radar for much of its recent history, for good and bad. The inattention of the rest of the world, however, should not be confused with inactivity within India’s borders. The country has experienced tremendous growth in the past, and the current situation is one of internal growth and development.

Gaining freedom from the United Kingdom in 1947, the nation has remained primarily a democracy, though a resurgent caste system and feudalistic governing has made this hard to understand from a Western perspective. India has lost territory since gaining independence, surrendering the disputed Kashmir territory in 2031 and the areas that became Khalistan as well as western Bengali regions that joined the Bangla Commonwealth in 2033. The most recent governmental change came in 2038 as the Indian Union party replaced the Bharatiya Janata Party and changed the nation’s name to reflect alterations to the original 1950 constitution.

The past decade has been one of growth and prosperity for most of India, though the receding power in the wake of Halley’s Comet has caused some worry that Vishnu is abandoning his children. In addition, where there is prosperity, there is fighting over who gets a share of the pie, from the legal economic activities to the cutthroat commercial marketplace to the swift and deadly criminal underworld. In the midst of change and growth, India’s citizens are looking to make a better life for their families, help their communities, and have time to watch a good cricket match now and then.

While India is a secular country according to the constitution, in reality it isn’t, and the dominance of the Hindu religion drives much of India’s society. The caste system, once on the decline, has resurged in a major way, solidifying boundaries between different social levels. In addition to the over-reaching aspects of Hinduism, clashes between Muslim minorities and Hindus still occur, despite the generally peaceful dogma and tenets of both religions. While other minorities are similarly repressed, most don’t have the numbers (especially in India) to make dissent an effective strategy, with a few exceptions. The anti-establishment Sutrans, whose beliefs are heavily influenced by the Kama Sutra, continue to wage a deliberately



provocative campaign against certain forms of orthodoxy. Jainism, despite just a few million members, has refused to hide, shifting their pre-Crash 2.0 work with otaku to current efforts promoting justice for technomancers.

MAJOR CITIES

Despite the fact that it’s the capital of India, **New Delhi** (and the nearby ancient city of Delhi) often gets lost on an international scale. Though it’s not an economic powerhouse like Mumbai or a technical center like Kolkata, New Delhi still has plenty of industry and research to go along with the massive bureaucracy that accompanies a democracy of over a billion. Hampered by a widespread lack of zoning and organization, the New Delhi-Delhi sprawl is even more chaotic and unplanned than most. You might find a brand new hotel across from a slum, while just down the street sits an historical monument surrounded by an ancient wall.

With plenty of political maneuvering and low-level corporate action, New Delhi is home to activities on all economic level. The exception is the “New Technology” NOIDA district, where midsized corporations and subsidiaries of megacorps have mostly taken control, reducing opportunities for lower-income groups. Of course, even these entities have to pay off the local politicians, criminals, and eunuchs, lest they find themselves dealing with sabotage and red tape.

Once heavily industrial with a thriving film industry, **Mumbai** (**Bombay**) now has flourishing media at its core. As Hollywood

dominates North America, Mumbai (dubbed Bollywood due to its entertainment output) dominates South Asia and takes a chunk of the worldwide market. Along with this comes the typical corruption, with Indian organized crime centered in the metropolis. On the larger criminal scale, most organizations stick to the areas in which they are skilled (such as drug smuggling, loan sharking, and talisman-gering) to avoid the conflicts that come with overlapping efforts. Recently the Kudlu syndicate has surged to the top of the underworld by cornering the markets on prostitution, BTL chips, and extortion. They had a brief spat with the Mansurs before bowing out of the drug trade, and the conflicts between the two enterprises left hundreds dead and thousands affected.

Long stricken by serious poverty, many of the residents of **Kolkata (Calcutta)** have a strong, street-level survival instincts and the ingenuity born of fighting against the world your whole life. Kolkata's streets are home to a thriving forgery industry. Self-taught hackers making do with jury-rigged tech can forge almost anything in the world, from fake SIDs to gun permits to UCAS hunting licenses.

But Kolkata has also received significant investment over the decades, and that has turned the heart of the city into an economic powerhouse. Kolkata is home to more megacorporate offices than any other Indian city, and they do their part to keep parts of the city gleaming—while some slums remain intractable.

While other cities have embraced the future and pushed India forward with a nod to the nation's past, **Varanasi (Benares)** has remained a holy center for Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains alike. Not as significant on the international scene as the “big three,” or even some of India's other prominent cities, Varanasi is significant to the people of India, being a prominent destination for Hindus similar to that of Mecca for Muslims or Jerusalem for Hebrews. Corporate influence is so restricted in the city for fear of corrupting it that only limited retail operations are permitted. Lately Varanasi has been the focal point for unrest as various groups believe that changes must be made to bring back the favor of Vishnu. Sadly, none of the groups agree on what those changes should be, resulting in frequent clashes and minor violence.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Not just a major waterway and aquifer for tens of millions of inhabitants of India, the **Ganges** is also a holy place as well as a powerful ley line utilized by magicians of many traditions. The SURGE affected India more than any other nation, and Halley's Comet also caused some of those who bathed in the holy waters to experience changes that seemed to reflect blessings from the Hindu gods, such as multiple arms, blue skin, and third eyes. Without the comet's influence, these



occurrences have abated, but not ceased. Researchers have worked for decades to determine how the Ganges was able to purify itself and effect changes that were inconsistent with other SURGE effects.

The **Indus River** still has some influence on Indian culture, despite it now being in foreign hands. The location of the first civilization in the region, the Indus still has an influence with the Hindus, which is problematic for Pakistan since they would rather not have

any Indian citizens visiting. The **Jamuna**, a holy river commingled with a ley line lying in the borders of a neighboring Islamic country, is in a similar situation. Luckily relations with the Bangla Commonwealth are better than those with Pakistan.

Another sacred area in India, the **Orissa Triangle**, is comprised of three massive temple complexes with hundreds of shrines spread amongst them. Not only does it have significance with the Hindu religion, a dozen manalines radiate out of the area resulting in many Awakened phenomena of all sorts. Spirits, nagas, and other Awakened creatures are not uncommon visitors to the region. Perhaps most unique of all, the manaline nexuses associated with Orissa rise to the top of the manasphere, prompting much research and study.

- There's plenty of work to be had in India, but put lots of research into the caste system before you go. It is more than just an archaic tradition; it defines life and society in India.
- Traveler Jones
- Pop down to Bangalore if you want to find the land of the fallen. Crime is rife down there as people fight over what is left of the crumbling industry.
- Kia
- Kashmir is really weird. The region should have decayed more than it has. And the people living there are getting more violent toward any scavengers daring enough to visit.
- Ma'fan
- There are no people living in Kashmir, too radioactive. Don't listen to the fables.
- Snopes
- Well, not people. With the contamination and other ill effects, the area will only become worse as time goes by.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- I'll tell you what won't be pretty—if Muchalinda consolidates power in Sanchi. A Buddhist Dragon with a powerbase in a Hindu dominated country? Yikes.
- Goat Foot



JAPANESE IMPERIAL STATE (JIS)

Japanese Imperial State: jap-an-ēz im-pēr-ē-əl stāt

Population: 141,000,000

Primary Languages: Japanese (official)

States (Prefectures): Aichi, Akita, Aomori, Ehime, Fukuoka, Fukui, Fukushima, Gifu, Gunma, Hokkaidō, Hiroshima, Hyōgo, Ibaraki, Ishikawa, Iwate, Kagoshima, Kagawa, Kōchi, Kumamoto, Kyoto, Mie, Miyagi, Miyazaki, Nagano, Nagasaki, Nara, Neo-Tokyo, Niigata, Ōita, Okayama, Okinawa, Ōsaka, Prefecture of the Philippine Islands, Saga, Shiga, Shimane, Shizuoka, Tochigi, Tottori, Toyama, Tokushima, Wakayama, Yamagata, Yamaguchi, Yamanashi

Government Type: Constitutional Monarchy

Bordering Countries: Chinese Coastal Provinces, Korea, Russia

Geography: Mountains, a few scattered plains, and valleys, four main islands, Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku with thousands of smaller islands.

Notable Features: Mt. Fuji, Nagoya Castle, Akashi Bridge, Akan National Park, Inland Sea National Park

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

There has always been some confusion within the Western world as to divinity of Japan's emperor. It is important to understand that the people of the JIS do not consider the emperor to be a supernatural supreme being, omnipotent, or omniscient. He is accepted as a direct descendent of Amaterasu (the Sun goddess), in contact with the kami and inspired by them. His role traditionally has been to carry out specific rituals ensuring that the kami were properly honored; in return, they would see to Japan's continued prosperity.

After the eruption of the Ring of Fire (2061) and the significant effect of the ensuing casualties on Japan's net population, there was a disquieting ripple of doubt through the Japanese people asking why such destruction would be visited upon them. This set the stage for what has become a struggle between the emperor and corporate interests for the direction Japan will follow. In many respects this is reminiscent of the struggle between the Shoguns and Emperor Meiji some two centuries earlier. It is not simply about the acquisition of power; it is a struggle for the vision of Japan's future and its very spirit. Emperor Yasuhito, who enjoys great popularity amongst his people, seeks to promote traditional values, preaching that unity and loyalty to the JIS comes first, even for corporations. Unbridled development will not be allowed at the expense of locations or traditions that are rooted in the long history of Japan.

The two primary factions in play are the emperor, along with his advisors, Shinto shamans, Shiawase, Evo, and (somewhat surprisingly) Ryumyo; on the other side is MCT, Renraku, Yakashima, Monobe, Sony, Yokogawa, Komatsu, Daiatsu, and, most troublingly, Lung. The factions are not hard and fast, however. MCT, for example, has a better relationship with the emperor than they do with the Shinto priests, while both Renraku and Monobe have some sympathy for the emperor's plea for a return to traditionalism. At the core of the divide, though, is a disagreement about who ultimately controls Japan's destiny, regardless of the direction in which the ship of state is traveling.

For the present, this struggle is being waged on two distinct fronts: the Diet (the two legislative houses) and the shadows. The

political maneuvering taking place in the Diet is secondary to the action in the shadows. Success or failure of ops in the shadows plays out in both houses of the Diet daily. Blackmail, bribes, and intelligence gathering on key players make up a lot of the operations being undertaken. The emperor's faction has started setting their sights on sowing corporate disharmony by orchestrating runs against various corps (especially Renraku and MCT), trying to make it look like the truce has been violated. The wrangling has not been confined to the earthly realm, as even the Corporate Court is being dragged into the fray with both factions seeking to create coalitions of the Court Justices.

The emperor's openness to foreign corporations, as expressed in the Yasuhito Ideal, has enabled non-Japanacorps to expand their footholds in the nation. Ares and NeoNET have particularly benefited during the reconstruction period, which has led to a spike in the number of runs against the two corps, targeting facilities not just in Japan but abroad as well.

MAJOR CITIES

Neo-Tokyo is the capital of the JIS, the center of the business world, location of the Imperial Palace, and home to nearly fifty million people (more than 35 percent of Japan's population). Average building height in Neo-Tokyo has gone from 16.2 meters in 2006 to 48.6 meters in 2071, or from 4 stories to 12 stories. It is home to the largest metropolitan economy in the Sixth World, with a GDP of 40 trillion ¥, larger than a number of industrialized nations. There were 14 million international visitors to Neo-Tokyo in 2070, spending 48 billion ¥.

The crucial nature of Neo-Tokyo made it a top priority for manpower, material, and money for reconstruction. Substantial additions were added to this megasprawl, including skyfarms (thirty-story buildings for indoor farming), decentralized electrical generation (piezoelectric sidewalks, rooftop helical wind turbines, carbon nanotube thermal-electric coatings, etc.), geothermal heating and cooling (relying on rivers and canals), and even a handful of polywell-based fusion reactors. These innovations, especially when combined with the increased foreign corporate presence, have served to make the megasprawl less reliant on any one corporation's interests—which means some of the corporations that have lost influence, particularly Monobe and Renraku, are thought to have targeted these sites in some of their covert operations.

Kansai, comprising Kyoto, Ōsaka, and Kobe, has evolved into two somewhat distinct sprawls, Ōsaka/Kobe and Kyoto. Ōsaka/Kobe are home to manufacturing, twin port facilities, and R&D establishments. Over the last sixty years, Ōsaka has seen many of the commercial transactions that used to be centered here transferred to Neo-Tokyo (although it is still home to a major futures exchange). This void was readily filled with research and development centers, and Ōsaka also serves as the shipping hub for Kansai along with the port of Kobe.

Kobe is still a manufacturing hub within the Hanshin Industrial Region. This manufacturing relies heavily on the container port complex, one of the busiest in Japan. In addition to manufacturing, there are a growing number of R&D facilities in Kobe, although it still lags behind Ōsaka and Kyoto. These facilities recruit heavily out of the graduating classes from the Kansai Prefecture's universities. Kobe is ranked second to Kyoto in the number of universities, and the two of them combine to make Kansai one of the premiere educational centers in Japan.

Kyoto has retained its cultural and historical identity while developing into a modern city, and it is the dominant academic heart

of the JIS, with more than forty universities including the prestigious Kyoto University. Kyoto is also the focal point for a host of corporate research centers that draws upon the talent gathered there.

For centuries it has been known as The City of Trees; today **Sendai City** is gaining notoriety as a focal point for a new ecoterrorist movement, Ken No Ha (Leaf Blade). The group aggressively targets developers—not sites but individuals—and their level of violence has escalated from beatings to murders. All such recent occurrences have employed bladed weapons. Official leaks have indicated that there may well be certain fringe elements of Shinto shamans that have assisted or provided support in the group's attacks.

The bulk of the major mountains around Sendai are volcanoes that have remained dormant, in spite of the recent activity throughout the rest of the archipelago. Some attribute this to the Shinto shamans, along with the city's active efforts to be at harmony with nature. Scientists are at a loss to explain this anomaly in spite the geothermal activity that continues unabated in the area, evident in the many hot springs found throughout the city.

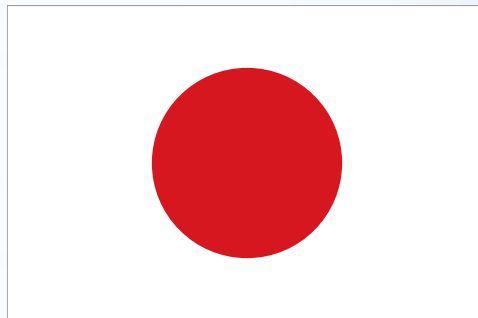
Hiroshima was the site of the first atomic weapon being used on August 6, 1945, killing more than 100,000 people. Prior to its destruction the city had escaped the intensive firebombing campaign that devastated many other Japanese cities. Today the scar of that attack is still present astrally, giving the area a significant background count. The lack of spirits and blindingly bright astral visibility has made Hiroshima an attractive place for those not wishing to deal with magical security. Additionally, a new phenomenon has cropped up in the last eight years: taint blindness. A number of astrally active individuals have gone blind while spending lengthy periods of time here. This blindness is temporary and reverses itself once the afflicted leave the city, though it often takes a couple of months.

Corporate rebuilding efforts here are complete. The average building height rivals that of Neo-Tokyo, at 40.5 meters (10 stories). Transportation relies heavily on a revamped streetcar system, ferry service, and a new feature, double-decker buses. The Hiroshima Toyo Carp baseball team is heavily favored to win the Japan Series, putting the fans that crowd their recently finished MCT Stadium into a frenzy.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The highest mountain in Japan is **Mount Fuji**, one of the “Three Holy Mountains” (along with Mount Tate and Mount Haku). It is an active volcano to the west of Neo-Tokyo that can be seen on clear days and is known to be one of Ryumyo's lairs. The Mt. Fuji Shizuoka Airport is only eighty kilometers from the mountain, with a high-speed rail line taking visitors quickly to the site. Climbing the mountain is no longer officially allowed given its well-known resident. Those violating this prohibition can expect to be arrested. Talislegging carries a stiff penalty for those caught by authorities, and rumors abound of a fatal penalty if caught by one of the dragon's agents. Still, tourists continue to flock to the mountain in the hopes of catching a glimpse of Ryumyo.

Located at the western base of Mount Fuji is the **Aokigahara Forest**, the Sea of Trees. Trees grow up through the jagged volcanic rock with a number of caves scattered throughout the region. Some believe that the *yurei* (ghosts) that wander the forest have altered the trees and torment those that enter the forest. For more than a century



the forest has served as a final destination of those seeking to end their lives. Prior to that it was the site where the very old and young were left to die when their families no longer desired to care for them. The dark history of the forest is highlighted by the eerie quiet, littered with police tape delineating the boundaries of previous “body hunts.”

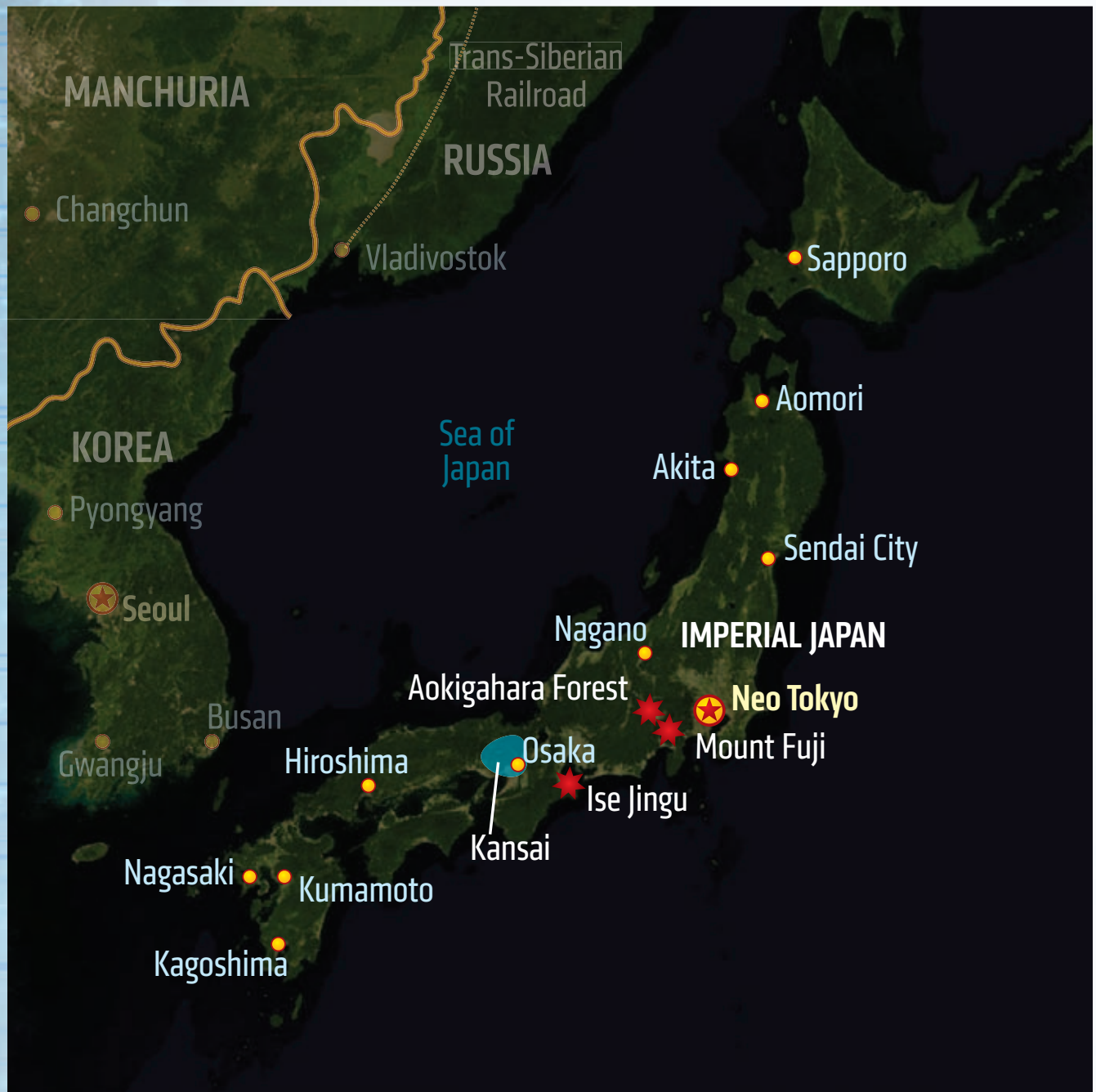
With the Awakening, the reputation of the forest has grown even darker due to the prevalence of shades and wild spirits.

According to local legend, these wild spirits can be commanded if a magic user possesses an item of importance to said spirit; understandably, this (possibly far-fetched) tale has drawn a number of spellcasters to the forest. Officials counter that the possibility exists that the shades within the forest may have perpetuated this myth to draw ever more victims. Even with the current quarantine of the forest, the annual body hunt continues to turn up more unfortunates.

Described in the “Kojiki” and “Nihonshoki” (two tomes that are at least 1300 years old), **Ise Jingu** (official name: Jingu) is one of the most sacred Shinto shrines in Japan. The outer shrine is dedicated to Toyouke no omikami (deity of agriculture and industry) and the inner shrine for Amaterasu-omikami, the ancestral kami of the Imperial Family. With six million annual visitors, the shrine is considered to be the crown jewel of the Shinto religion. The most sacred areas are restricted and not open to the general public.

Evo's Gagarin Mars base has been officially renamed **New Japan**. Specifics of the base's research and personnel remain classified, but the level of visible activity has increased substantially over the last six months (measured by interplanetary drone traffic). Speculation that Evo has installed military weapon systems has drawn harsh criticism of the megacorp by a number of international peace organizations and a handful of members of the United Nations General Assembly.

- Not all of those aforementioned runs against Ares and NeoNET can be traced back to Japanacorp. More than a few have breadcrumbs that lead to Saeder-Krupp; Lofwyr doesn't like to let a crisis go unexploited. One thing keeping Lofwyr at bay during this dust up in Japan is that both Lung and Ryumyo don't want him getting a foothold there.
- Dr. Spin
- Who do you think is going to come out on top in the corporate-government spat?
- Mika
- Impossible to say at this juncture. The emperor's coalition is more unified, and with the two most popular individuals (the emperor and Ryumyo) teaming up, it is seen as the public favorite. But with the tremendous amount of power that MCT, Renraku, and the others have at their disposal, it would be unwise to dismiss them—assuming they can continue working in coordination, which is far from definite.
- Dr. Spin
- The young emperor is more than willing to go for the jugular. If wayward members of the Diet cannot be brought into line with a little arm-twisting or bribes ... well, there have been four “accidents” within the last month.
- Kay St. Irregular



- Work in the shadows of Neo-Tokyo and Kansai are at levels that I have never seen before. Even in the recent dust-up within the Yakuza, I didn't see this much work being shopped around. The body count is adding up, too—the number of wetwork contracts has tripled. Corp security assets are being shifted from abroad back to Japan. Runners from outside Japan have appeared out of thin air, and the cops are starting to issue assault rifles and SMGs to patrol units to keep up.
- Rigger X
- Are you talking about a corp war?
- Lyran
- Not really. The hostilities remain covert and generally within the bounds of what corporations see as annoying but not outrageous. Additionally, the faction

boundary lines are too ephemeral to be trusted. On the one hand, MCT is trying to score points off the Shinto priesthood, especially in the aftermath of the Yokohama food riots; on the other hand, they're currying the favor of the emperor to help get them the Neo-Tokyo security contract, and they have strong ties to Ryumyo. There are two factions, but it cannot be said that everyone on one side is working against everyone on the other.

- Mr. Bonds
- What I wouldn't have given to be a fly on the wall when Ryumyo threw in his lot with the emperor. Considering that there are more than just whispers that his actions with the dragon lines were the cause of the Ring of Fire disaster.
- Dr. Spin

- Rumor has it money was exchanged (think claw to hand) and promises were extracted—on both sides. The Yasuhito Ideal helped build a relationship between the dragon and the emperor, as the granting of metahuman rights was appealing to the dragon. Ryumyo had another motivation, too—he could not sit back and allow Lung’s challenge (siding with the Renraku and the rest) go unanswered. Lung, on the other hand, probably saw this as an opportunity to teach Ryumyo an important lesson about overextending one’s self.
- Mr. Bonds
- If you’re trying to slip into Japan, I’d suggest slipping into the country via any of the dozen maritime smuggling operations. For Seattle runners looking for a change of venue, try the Night Albatross. It runs out of the sprawl to Kanaga Island (Aleutian Islands) and on to Japan. They can get in a team and their gear to the islands in about thirty hours.
- Rigger X
- If you are thinking about visiting Aokigahara, bring your six initiate friends with you. You don’t have any initiate friends? Don’t go. Seriously, that place has a well-deserved rep for turning street talent into “Have You Seen Me” alerts. Two months back a suit hired a team of runners to go in there and get his daughter before she could hurt herself. The team and the girl are gone. Even the annual “Body Hunts” have started losing people. There is something in there far worse than shades and wild spirits.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Close, the “girl” was actually an executive assistant to the suit and he was worried that she might have some incriminating files on her. The team of runners was not your usual suspects. These were guys accustomed to getting paid in the low six figures for their ops.
- Baka Dabora
- Anyone have a read on how sustainable the Evo base on Mars is looking?
- FastJack
- Evo spokespeople say that additional research materials are being sent to the base. Speculation is that they are speeding up the militarization of the base before anyone can stop them. It seems that they have a network of

suspicious-looking satellites that circle the planet, possibly high-orbit armed satellites, along with at least four missile silos. If that’s the case, they would be in a position to thwart any other colonization attempts.

- Orbital DK
- In earthbound news, there was a quake last month just off the shore of Hiroshima—more toying with the dragon lines?
- Traveler Jones
- If you’re implying that Ryumyo’s messing with them, I would seriously doubt it. He is up to his scaly snout in the emperor-corp fight at the moment.
- Rigger X
- The weird thing is that I got this footage of these strange lights in the sky, during the day, from right before the quake. Kind of like a rainbow mixed with an aurora borealis display. Freaky stuff! I’m uploading it now, take a look and let me know what you think.
- Lyran
- I have seen this before. Earthquake lights. Preceding, during, or after a quake—not all quakes, mind you, but some footage of that stuff dates back to the first part of this century.
- Dr. Spin
- Wait, that looks a lot like some sort of astral rift! Go back and compare that to the footage just after Big D was killed and tell me that isn’t the same sort of effect. Do a search on the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China. I have found pictures of earthquake lights dating back to 1978!
- Kay St. Irregular
- Certain types of earthquakes can cause an astral rift?
- Kia
- Or certain tampering with dragon lines causes earthquakes and leads to short-lived astral rifts.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Not likely. That would mean the old footage from *before* the Awakening was somebody playing with dragon lines.
- Winterhawk



MANCHURIA

Manchuria: mən-**chûr**-ē-ə

Population: 118,250,000

Primary Languages: Mandarin, Manchu

Provinces: Heilongjiang, Jehol, Jilin, Liaoning, Shenyang

Government Type: Democracy

Bordering Countries: Korea, Mongolia, Republic of China, Russia

Geography: Northern tundra giving way to deciduous forests and arable grassland

Notable Features: Amur River and Siberian Shelf

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Awakened nation of Manchuria is a difficult country for outsiders and tourists to understand. Governed by a democracy, the first president of Manchuria was said to be chosen by three ancestor spirits to lead his people to a great victory. Following his 2028 military campaign against the communist Chinese, General Shen Yao-Xiang returned to the capital, Shenyang and won the popular vote. In accordance with the traditional belief behind Shen's ascendance, all free spirits and Spirits of the People in Manchuria are granted citizenship. Additionally, it is illegal for any summoner to attempt to bind a Spirit of the People to his will.

Unlike the nation of Amazonia, which became Awakened due to a tie with nature, Manchuria's Awakened status is granted by the spirit population, which makes up nearly fifteen percent of the total census count. The Spirits of the People will often materialize to aid other citizens with day-to-day activities, or live normal lives alongside their metahuman counterparts. It is believed that the active participation in

the community and constant presence of spirits is what causes difficulty for summoners attempting to bind them.

Beyond the Spirits of the People who have claimed citizenship, there is a separate spirit population known as the Ta'ren. These hidden or invisible people are curious pranksters who follow individuals for a short period of time, ranging from hours to days. Most often, the Ta'ren simply observe and leave after they are done, though they will occasionally play tricks on unsuspecting individuals or people who have been cruel or malicious to their neighbors. Because the Ta'ren spend the majority of their time hidden and have never registered for citizenship, they are not included in the census data. Estimates place their number between 50,000 and 150,000 at any given time throughout the nation.

Despite its strongly industrialized nature, Manchuria is one of the nations that don't acknowledge the Business Recognition Accords issued by the Corporate Court. While it allows extra-territoriality, any corporation seeking to file for the rights normally offered to AA and AAA corporations must be owned by a Manchurian citizen or citizens. National laws strictly enforce this edict, and have blocked the standard routes used to bypass similar regulations by controlling the amount of voting influence a non-Manchurian company or owner can maintain. Other national laws, including the requirement for Spirits of the People to serve as equal citizen-employees, create esoteric boundaries for megacorporations wishing to conduct business as usual in Manchuria.

The Shangui Corporation is the largest corporation in Manchuria without foreign backing. Specializing in magical research and applied alchemy, Shangui is a model Manchurian corporation, with an estimated thirty percent of its workforce composed of free spirits and spirits of the people. By limiting its sphere of influence to Asia, Shangui has not drawn the attention of many Western corporations and successfully fended off the takeover advances of Asian corporate syndicates like the Japanacorps and Pacific Prosperity Group.

MAJOR CITIES

Seated on the Shen River, **Shenyang** is the capital of Manchuria. Vastly industrialized, it has focused on heavy industry and has some of the largest automotive and aerospace factories in the region. Beyond its production abilities, Shenyang also hosts several megacorporations' software and programming departments. Since General Shen's triumph and the secession of Manchuria from China, the city has seen rapid expansion to the west.

The eastern half of Shenyang still bears a slight resemblance to the previous eras of Manchuria. It is here that the Qing tombs, dedicated to the first Qing emperor and his wife, can be found. All government administration offices and the capital building are located between these tombs and the large tomb of Huang Taiji.

Located north of Shenyang in the Jilin province, **Changchun** is a way station for travelers across Manchuria and north-eastern Asia. Originally built as the junction point between the South Manchurian Railway and the Eastern Chinese Railway, the city grew as a parts supplier to the rail system, and continues to transport replacement pieces for the maglev trains and rails throughout Asia.

Wakamatsu Enterprises, a corporation that specializes in pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution based



upon other corps' specifications and patents, has their Manchurian headquarters in the city. Though the company receives large amounts of foreign capital from Evo, sole ownership of the voting stock rests with Yujiro Wakamatsu. Through their placement at one of the key transport hubs, the company is able to ship their products throughout Asia.



SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **Tomb of Emperor Huang Taiji** is

located in Shenyang, roughly two kilometers from the Administrative building. Built in 1643, the tomb houses the Emperor and his consort in a massive stone pagoda. The tomb and surrounding gardens are guarded by eight Fu Dogs. During 2061, the Fu Dogs came to life and patrolled the area, blocking all non-Manchu from approaching the tomb. With the guardians active, a spirit came forth from the pagoda and proclaimed himself Emperor Huang Taiji. The spirit's appearance matches descriptions of the emperor and he spoke at length regarding his life and rule.

Once the Fu Dogs resumed their stations and ceased patrolling, Emperor Taiji retreated back within the pagoda. Since that time, the spirit has only appeared during the Lunar New Year festival. He continues to uphold his claim as the former emperor and provide advice. Huang Taiji has made no claims for leadership of Manchuria in its current state.

Since Halley's Comet passed on, the statues have not moved. Astral examination of them shows that they are homunculi that have been prepared for possession. Warnings from the Spirits of the People have kept the Manchurians from attempting to invest the statues with a spirit. The Ta'ren are also known to linger near the statues and watch over anyone who tarries near a Fu dog.

Nominally run by Wakamatsu Enterprises, **Unit 100** is a subsidiary division of Evo's biotechnology department. Built in an underground facility outside Changchun, the facility is dedicated to the study and discovery of new vaccines for cross-species viral strains. Determined to find a cure for diseases such as influenza that have historically killed billions, the lab runs strict containment protocols to ensure that no bio-agents are accidentally released into the neighboring areas. Researchers stationed at Unit 100 work for a period of six months before being cycled out to lower stress positions. Due to the risk of contamination, each scientist must submit to daily blood draws and scans for toxins and pathogens. This is to control the introduction of new viral agents and X factors to the research lab, as well as to

ensure that no scientist accidentally carries a mutant strain out of the building. Roughly forty percent of the researchers are Spirits of the People to meet national requirements for Wakamatsu Enterprises and Evo. This population has the added security benefit of being immune to most of the pathogens studied due to their lack of metahuman anatomy.

- While Unit 100 may sound like Evo's gift to mankind, the truth is far darker. The compound is one of the largest developers of bio-warfare agents, and has enough viral stock on hand to wipe out any mid-sized nation. All the talk about developing vaccines is just a smoke screen for stockpiling dangerous weapons without oversight.
- Nephrine
- If that's true, there would be no easy way to stop them from spreading the viral agents as medicine through their parent company. Or, someone else smuggling them out the same way ...
- Hannibelle
- Exactly, my dear, exactly.
- Nephrine
- Living amongst ancient powers who feign curiosity blinds the people to the truth of their own insignificance.
- Arete
- The trains out of Manchuria are clean, fast, and comfortable. That's a lot more than I can say about a lot of places. As long as you don't care if the passenger next to you decides to step off the train while it's going over 100 km an hour, then you have nothing to fear. Spirits don't snore either.
- Traveler Jones
- Some do, but only when they want to be obnoxious.
- Frosty
- Fu Dogs like the ones around the tomb are common throughout the old Chinese provinces. Most are just statues but I've seen one of them come alive. There is nothing more terrifying than a five hundred kilogram stone statue that barks and then charges towards you. For the record, Fu Dogs, especially stone ones, can't swim.
- Ma'fan



THE PHILIPPINES

Philippines: fi-lə-pēnz

Population: 87,115,000

Primary Languages: Filipino (Tagalog), English, Regional Dialects by village

Provinces: Basilan, Jolo, Luzon, Mindanao, Mindoro, Pilawan, Visayas

Government Type: Democratic Republic

Bordering Countries: Canton Confederation, Dayak Council, Hainan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam

Geography: Archipelago with tropical jungle, mountainous regions with five active volcanoes

Notable Features: Mt. Apo, Mt. Canlaon, Mt. Mantalingajan, Mt. Mayon, Mt. Pinatubo, Mt. Taal, Yomi Island

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

A country scarred by foreign occupation, the Philippines is a land as fractured as the islands that compose it. The nation has suffered terribly due to natural disasters throughout the 21st century, including when the Ring of Fire erupted in 2011 during the Awakening, and the second eruption in 2061 following the return of Halley's Comet. Despite the best efforts by man and nature to crush the Filipinos' resolve, they continue to thrive in the face of what others would call overwhelming catastrophe.

Following the 2011 eruptions of three volcanoes, the Japanese Empire conquered the archipelago and began an occupation which was nearly as harmful to the Filipino people as the Japanese occupation during World War II. The Imperial Marines segregated the population, shipping all metahumans to the island of Lagu Lagu (currently known as Yomi Island). After fifty years of rebellion and guerilla tactics supported by the great dragon Masaru, the Japanese Diet ordered the immediate withdrawal of all troops from the Philippines and rescinded the Yomi Island decree in 2061. This withdrawal continued until the Filipino Resistance encroached on several Japanacorp enclaves. At that point, Admiral Kuroda re-entered Luzon province and secured it. During this time, Imperial forces waged a propaganda campaign against the Filipino guerillas. This campaign used similar methods to those implemented during the previous occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese, including figure head leaders and assassinations blamed on the Huk. Admiral Kuroda held power until 2067, when the Huk government assumed control and members of the Pacific Prosperity Group, in concert with Evo, acquired control of several extra-territorial locations.

The Huk government held open democratic elections in 2070 and elected President Rufino Mendoza. As of 2072, the Huk government has established control over the rest of the archipelago and established its temporary capitol in Cebu. Masaru is working with several geomancers from Wuxing to realign the energies of Luzon and restore Manila before the Huks resume its use as a capitol.

MAJOR CITIES

The primary seat of power within the Imperial Prefecture, **Manila** was home to several Japanese corporate enclaves. The largest enclaves in Luzon, formerly belonging to Renraku and Mitsuhama, are now owned by Evo and Wuxing. Both corporations have aided the Huk government in restoring Luzon to the Filipino people. Renraku's construction of an underwater arcology off the coast of Manila in the protected



waters between the Philippines and Vietnam has been allowed to continue under the careful watch of Masaru and the Huks.

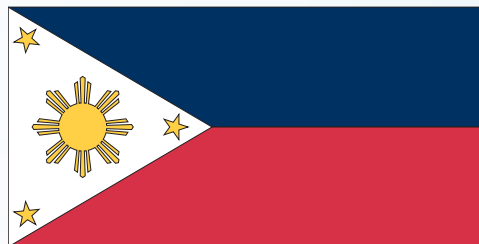
During its occupation of Manila, the prefecture pacified the entire island of Luzon. To combat the guerilla tactics utilized by insurgents and provide sufficient resources to compensate the Diet for the expenses incurred in the Philippines, the prefecture established a policy of mineral extraction. Based on the *kaingineros*, or slash and burn tactics used by Filipino farmers, the Imperial Prefecture, in partnership with Mitsuhama, worked to cut down the jungles of Luzon for lumber and strip mine the mountains. The rampant destruction of the ecosystem severely damaged the astral space around Manila.

Created from the Partido ng Bayan, Kaakbay, and Nationalista parties, the Philippine Nation Party (PNP) is the democratically-elected voice of the Filipino people. The PNP has established a temporary capitol in **Cebu City** as their people consolidate control over Mindanao and the collected islands of Visayas. Cebu City was the second largest city in the Philippines before the Japanese conquest, and the city traces its roots back to the sixteenth century colonization by the Spanish.

The city is exceptionally modern, and has developed a state of the art drainage system to accommodate the regular flooding and typhoons. While most of the city has been updated and redeveloped over the years, the most famous landmark has survived since 1521. Magellan's Cross is believed to be the original cross planted by Portuguese and Spanish explorers upon arriving in Cebu.

Located within the Islamic Autonomous region of Mindanao, **Marawi** was the only city in the Philippines to have remained free from the Japanese during the occupation. It is a minor population center with roughly 200,000 people. Leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a local Islamic group, were allowed to continue under self-governance after publicly separating themselves from the Huk guerillas.

Following the success of the Huk rebels in reclaiming the Philippines, there has been a rise in kidnappings and terrorist activities throughout Mindanao. Members of the Filipino Crusaders World Army (FCWA) have been arrested for sowing unrest and advocating the active hunt and murder of all suspected collaborators including the MILF leadership. The infighting between these groups has reached the national stage due to the role the FCWA played in the Huk success.



SPECIAL LOCATIONS

After serving as a metahuman prison colony for forty years, the volatile situation on Lagu Lagu, or **Yomi Island**, was further compounded by the introduction of changelings to the mix. Many Japanese wardens of the colony simply executed any prisoners who got out of line. As a result of this continued combination of torture and psychic trauma, the astral space around the island was devastated. With the increase in ambient mana following the Year of the Comet, Lagu Lagu has become home to several malevolent spirits and shadows that take pleasure in the suffering of metahumanity. The astral space surrounding the island has been equated to the internment camps in Europe.

After the internment order was rescinded, many of the metahumans born on the island chose to stay. The community works together with the rest of the archipelago and trades for its needs. Though there are no current plans to secede from the Philippines, the people of Lagu Lagu do not associate themselves with the Filipino culture.

An eleven-meter-high pyramid constructed entirely of wood and stone, the **Pyramid of Asia** was built in 1999, near Mt Pinatubo, Luzon. Originally designed to be a spiritual healing site, the pyramid was abandoned in 2011 when the volcano erupted. After the magma had cooled and the area was safe, the spiritual healers who worked at the site found that the eruption had diverted in a perfect circle around the pyramid and despite the magma being less than ten meters from the structure, the heat had not damaged the building.

Since the eruption, healers have worked tirelessly at the pyramid. The site has no unique properties that have been detected by astral investigation, although patients continue to visit the pyramid and be healed. The doctors working there claim to have no Awakened talent and instead are “aligning the energies of the body to match universal truths of quantum mechanics.” Though the source of the healing cannot be identified, the doctors continue to have success treating terminal and chronically-ill patients.

- Throughout the Japanese occupation, Masaru held Mt. Mayan and did not allow any of the miners to come within thirty kilometers of it. Now beyond his assistance with repairing the damage caused by the Imperial forces and the Japanacorps, the dragon is a trusted advisor to President Mendoza.

- Frosty

- Masaru was outsmarted by the Japanese once when they sent an assassin in to kill their own man. The propaganda war was targeting

Masaru's credibility as much as the Huk's. It left him chasing ghosts and gave the Japanese “sufficient cause” to bring in more troops and further their own agenda.

- Snopes

- Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.

- Picador

- Magellan's original cross is actually inside the cross that is on display. The Filipinos encased the original one to protect it from decay and vandalism. What is really intriguing isn't the cross but the chapel; the area has been flooded by devout Catholics for over three hundred years and left a residual trace of energy. Now the entire area is a power site for Catholic theurgists.

- Axis Mundi

- The Light of Dawn always rises from the deepest darkness and the shadows will weep for what is lost.

- Arete

- Even with the expulsion of the Japanese, the Yakuza continue to hide in the shadows of the cities and do their business. Many of the current members of the gomi are “souvenir babies,” half-breeds of Japanese and Filipino descent.

- Mihoshi Oni

- Mindanao is a shit hole of violence. Without soldiers enforcing the peace, the natives have taken to slaughtering each other wholesale for taking the wrong side.

- Black Mamba

- Smugglers run boats between the small islands in Visayas. A lot of the channels are too narrow for large cutters to follow them, and there are hundreds of small uncharted islands just big enough for them to lay low until night falls.

- 2XL

SHAANXI

Shaanxi: shēn-shē

Population: 43,412,000

Primary Languages: Mandarin

Provinces: Ankang, Weinan, Xi'an, Yan'an

Government Type: Constitutional Monarchy

Bordering Countries: Gansu, Henan, Mongolia, Ningxia, Republic of China, Sichuan

Geography: Northern desert, southern subtropical, with mountains in the central region

Notable Features: Great Wall, Hua Shan, Tomb of Shih Huang Ti

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Seated in the ancestral capitol of Chinese dynasties, Shaanxi is ruled from Xi'an. One of the few countries in Asia ruled by a female, the traditional seat of power has been accompanied by modernization and has a constitution and parliament. Following Shaanxi's secession in 2018, Chinese loyalists began killing allies of the new government. Upon her father's death in 2022, future queen Michelle Chou left the country with her mother. In 2028 she began her study of law at Oxford. Safely out of harm's way, Chou exercised her family's influence to aid the rebels and overthrow the military coup. With her return in 2039, Chou helped draft a constitution, modeling the government after that of England and was elected Queen.

While officially the monarch is a simple figurehead, the Queen's intelligence and legal acumen have led her to work closely with Parliament. Following Prime Minister Da'shr Feizhir's failed assassination attempt of the Queen in 2068, he was executed for treason, and his supporters were either imprisoned or silenced. Michelle's eldest son by her current husband, Prince Jingqi, was killed during the assassination attempt. This has left the nation questioning proper succession, as the Queen has a son from a previous marriage, Dominic L'Auvaigne. When the Queen enters her twilight years, it will be up to the House of Magistrates to choose the successor—either Dominic, or the young Bao-Zhi, born in January of 2069. With the Queen's sixty-fifth birthday approaching in 2075, and her refusal of leonization, many members of the Parliament fear the necessity of a long regency. Formal talks have begun to amend the Constitution and set legal guidelines regarding nationality and ethnic requirements for succession in place before Queen Chou's death or abdication.

MAJOR CITIES

Growing up around the ancient capital of Changan, Xi'an presents a startling dichotomy for visitors. The center of the city appears as it existed in the eighteenth century and earlier, with monuments and buildings from the earliest settlement to the late *Qing* period of their history. Many of these ancient buildings have been renovated and improved over the last twenty years, using the same ancient techniques and styles. The classic style serves as a physical reminder of Shaanxi's cultural heritage, and the restoration was a major part of the queen's cultural revival.

Further out from the city center, the cityscape quickly gives way to modern industrialization. Xi'an hosts several large factories for second stage assembly and production. Ares' national defense contract supplies

the Shaanxi military with new arms and armament nearly as fast as it can come off the production line.

The second largest metropolis in Shaanxi, **Taiyuan** also has a prestigious history as an ancient capital city. Since the secession from China and formation of Shaanxi, it has focused almost entirely on the industrialization efforts of bringing the surrounding countryside up to the same standards as the rest of the modern world. The refineries and ore processing plants in Taiyuan purify materials from the nearby mountain range and ship iron, coal and concrete to Xi'an for assembly and processing. The heavy industrialization of the city has left its mark on the local ecology, as run-off from the refineries has entered the Fen River on several occasions. The city is working on developing water purification facilities to minimize the damage and keep the chemicals from contaminating other water sources.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The most often visited sections of the **Great Wall** are found in Shaanxi. Since its initial creation, large sections of the wall have been destroyed for modern construction or fallen due to lack of repair. Throughout 2061 and 2062, the missing sections of the wall were filled in by astral constructs which stood strong and fast against both astral and physical passage, an anomaly which faded when Halley's Comet left again. The Wall is a world-renowned icon, visible from space. Magicians have posited that this prominence in the cultural subconscious, in addition to the thousands of laborers who died during its construction, is the reason behind the dual-natured aspect of the Wall. The Great Wall forms an impassable astral barrier along its entire length.

In addition to its astral presence, the Great Wall is guarded by astral constructs and spirits resembling ancient Chinese soldiers. The soldiers appear to be wearing weapons and armor common to the time the section of the Wall was built—ranging from the eighth century BCE to the late fifteenth century CE. These soldiers monitor all astral traffic crossing the Great Wall and have been known to attack any



entity attempting to cross over from the Mongolian side. While other spirits can be summoned and banished along the Wall, these guardians have resisted all attempts by researchers to banish them.

The **Tai-Hei Mountains** are home to terrifying toxic creatures. The natural boundary between Shaanxi and China, the mountains also served as the storage facility for China's entire nuclear arsenal. In 2017, an unnatural earthquake collapsed a section of the mountains leading

into the storage area, entombing the weapons beyond the reach of the Chinese and detonating an unknown number of warheads. In the following years, it was believed that the radiation was contained. By 2059, it became clear that radiation had seeped into the mountains and contaminated the groundwater. Many of the animals in the area grew sick and died from exposure. The survivors show signs of radiation sickness and mutation.

Shaanxi's Corp of Engineers has been working to pinpoint the source of the radiation leak and seal off the area to prevent further ecological devastation. Until their work is completed, the Shaanxi government has declared the entire range an unsafe zone, and forbidden travel to and from them.

Discovered by accident, the **Tomb of Shih Huang Ti** is one of Shaanxi's greatest national treasures. Since ascending the throne, Queen Chou has funded the excavation as part of her cultural revival. Best known as the resting place of the Emperor's guard, an army of highly-detailed terra cotta soldiers, the excavations have also revealed a recreation of the ancient city of Changan. Every third statue from the army has been removed and is believed to be stored in the Royal Palace of Xi'an.

In July of 2071, a large explosion destroyed over seven hundred statues and broke the seal on the tomb of the emperor. Authorities have reported that the detonation was caused by grave robbers who sought to steal Shaanxi's cultural heritage. Since the explosion, the tomb was resealed; there have been no further attempts to explore within the Emperor's tomb.

Several international archaeology foundations, including the Atlantean Foundation and Apep Consortium, have volunteered their assistance in the excavation. All such offers have been denied by the Parliament, and the excavation has been done completely by Shaanxi citizens. The Parliament and Queen both believe that it is important for the Shaanxi to unearth Shaanxi's history, rather than foreigners.



- The radiation leaks actually stemmed from a failed attempt to breach the storage facility. The lead engineer misgauged the depth of the facility and the digging charge hit one of the outlying devices that detonated fifty years ago. While the missile itself had already been destroyed, the radioactive materials were still hot and mixed with the groundwater. Now Shaanxi is trying to clean up the pollution and hide their attempts to secure China's old nuclear arsenal.

- Ecotope

- I've been to the Tomb and can say that while the top boys know what they're doing, most of the diggers are pig farmers who couldn't tell an ancient pottery fragment from a rock. By having amateurs do all the sorting and filtering, they will inevitably destroy more of the Tomb than they recover. The Parliament and Queen Chou need to acknowledge that there are professionals in this field and to use them.

- Am-mut

- There are several sections of the dig site being managed by professionals, though they are kept from prying eyes. Whatever they've discovered, it's clear that the Shaanxi want to keep it for themselves until they can figure out how to best use it.

- Elijah

- The level of destruction caused by the explosion is well beyond what was needed to breach the tomb and yet nowhere near strong enough to trigger seismic sensors several hundred miles away. Clearly something caused the explosion to be drastically more powerful, a possibility with geomantic energies focusing on destructive forces. If the ancient emperor and his people built something along those lines, it would be to hide an even greater secret. That could be why the government resealed the tomb so quickly—to keep something inside or everyone else out.

- Lei Kung

- Queen Michelle is behind the Parliamentary motion to secure succession rights for her youngest son. While she has always been cordial with Dominic in public, it is no secret that she does not want him to take the throne. Rumors abound regarding the actual reason, but the public statement is that the monarchy of Shaanxi belongs to the people of Shaanxi and Dominic isn't ethnic enough to play the part.

- Sunshine

YAKUT

Yakut: yə-koot**Population:** 21,300,000 (est.)**Primary Languages:** Russian, Yakut**Provinces:** Metahuman Zone, Siberian Wilderness**Government Type:** Ecological Dictatorship**Bordered Countries:** Russia, Trans Polar Aleut**Geography:** Arctic and sub-arctic tundra in the north and central regions, taiga forest in the south; mountain ranges in south, east, and central regions**Notable features:** Sagan Zaba, Tunguska Crater, Kamchatka Island

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Make a deal with the Devil and expect the Devil to collect. That was the harsh lesson the metahuman citizens of Yakut, the Evenk, should have learned. Witnessing the Native American breakaways in other nations, the Siberians thought they could get the same deal. Making contact with Vernya, a spirit of immense power, they did. But they got it on Vernya's terms.

Those terms included exile to the fringes of the new country, limits placed on their technology, and shapeshifting spies in their midst. For a country that was surviving on exporting natural resources, limits on amounts and the manner of extraction were devastating. And that doesn't even begin to cover the difficulty of competing with the neighboring Russians. Tired of being under the yolk of Vernya's rule, a group named Sagan Zaba decided to fight back. Acquiring an artifact at the White Rock, an area of Olkhon Island in Lake Baykal, Sagan Zaba has pushed Vernya's forces back from the Lake Baykal area (the

exact nature of the artifact that allowed them to do this has remained a mystery). On the other side, Varnya seems to be sharing territory with various powers; the most prominent is Booryazmei, a dragon who doesn't take kindly to Russian aerial incursions.

The Evenk continued to receive helpful artifacts (speculation abounds whether they simply found them or if someone is supplying them), allowing them to push Varnya back from the Lake Baykal area completely. Olkhon Island is now off limits, the fiefdom of some unknown entity or entities. The metahuman zone is now separated in two, the region that Sagan Zaba controls and the area that Varnya's agents patrol. Throw in some outsiders poking around in various areas, such as the Tunguska Crater, and there is enough activity to keep agents on all sides of the conflict busy and paranoid.

MAJOR CITIES

Yakutsk is the biggest city in Yakut, but that isn't saying much. It holds the record as the coldest city on earth, averaging less than -10°C over the course of a year. The government bureaucracy functions out of Yakutsk, though actual leadership comes from the shapeshifters or the rebels fighting them. The city is still under the control of the shapeshifters; any Sagan Zaba supporters either hide their beliefs well or end up disappearing into the forest. With less than a million inhabitants, Yakutsk has access to the basic necessities for its populace, but don't expect anything cutting edge. The nightlife in the capital is somewhat muted thanks to the omnipresent shapeshifters, though the local youths still find ways to rebel against their parents.

Though smaller than Yakutsk, **Magadan** is the most modern city in Yakut, being the nation's major seaport. The political infighting is dialed down there, with all parties not wanting to upset the steady stream of trade. In addition to exporting the limited diamonds, gold, and other resources collected locally, Magadan serves as a storage hub for the entire nation. A massive warehouse district is located on the



south side of the city, a good location for those who wish to remain out of the limited Magadan limelight.

The emergence and development of magical traditions following the Awakening, combined with Yakut pride in the wake of their nation's independence, led to widespread resurgence of native cultures. Some of the Evenk have adopted the nomadic culture of the Tatars and Mongols, the most spectacular example being the city of **Novy**. To find Novy, one must know when to look where, as it is entirely portable. Where in the past there were yurts, now modern tents mix with simple archaic designs, all intersperse with the most colorful pavilions anywhere. Novy usually stays in one place for a month or two before moving on, though it generally stays close to the steppes. The feel of the city changes as it moves from place to place, but generally it takes on the characteristics of a large bazaar, with no clear demarcations between market areas and residential districts. This makes commerce in the city vital and difficult to regulate.

Residents flock to Novy when it arrives near them. They buy and sell wares, allowing goods of all sorts to flow across the nation. At night, celebrations are found, both inside the larger tents as well as around bonfires. While the black market thrives in Novy, authorities keep a close eye out for physical disruptions of business. In an effort to preserve as much calm as possible, Novy is apolitical regarding Yakut's government.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Kamchatka Island was formerly a peninsula, but during the late 2020s seismic activity picked up, culminating in the 2028 earthquake that formed a rift across the upper part of the peninsula. Weather and erosion quickly widened this rift to a kilometer-wide channel. The area has since recovered some but has been largely ignored by the Russians and shapeshifters. Sagan Zaba has been trying to make inroads, since the local shamans share many philosophies of the rebel leaders, but as long as Varnya's allies continue to ignore the island, the natives would rather maintain a low profile. Volcanoes are the only real attraction to the island, attracting both magicians and vulcanologists.

The "White Rock," **Sagan Zaba** is a cliff face on Olkhon Island. Evidence of primitive man was found there prior to the Awakening, and recent explorations recovered an ancient artifact from the area that helped start the similarly named Sagan Zaba movement. Until recently the island was off limits; the Russians refer to it as haunted or cursed, and many who have journeyed there have not returned alive. There are small convoys that arrive occasionally, but there is little information as to what they are carrying or who is controlling the island and the deliveries to it.

Meteor, comet, anti-matter, magical trans-dimensional prison, UFO, Telsa's Death Ray—there are more ideas than actual answers about what happened over a century and a half ago in the rural area of Tunguska, forming the famed **Tunguska Crater**. Scientists had mostly settled on a meteorite as the cause, but then the Awakening happened, introducing a whole new set of variables to the equation. The location is still difficult to access, with or without Sagan Zaba cooperation. Magicians in the area report a strong and unusual background in the area, and high radiation and genetic mutations in local animals have been reported. The area had attracted many researchers interested in finding out what is going on at the Crater, but explorations have lessened in recent years due to the high mortality rate of visitors.



- Yakut isn't a terribly popular place for runners—or anyone else, for that matter. In their fight against the shapeshifters, Sagan Zaba occasionally uses disposable assets, sometimes as cannon fodder. And you may think you're working for SZ, but the shifters have been known to contract work in disguise.

- Traveler Jones

- Novy's got the best gear in Yakut—they have a little of everything, and as long as you're discreet

they are willing to deal. Just mind your Ps and Qs. There may not be a whole lot of laws there, but they're serious about the ones they've got. A bar fight will just attract a crowd, but spit on an ork for being metahuman? I saw a guy sent out onto the tundra stark naked with just a holdout. Someone told me later there were no bullets in it.

- Mihoshi Oni

- Whenever bodies are piling up, vultures are circling. The vultures keeping the closest eye on Yakut are Russians, who wouldn't mind picking up some territory or mining rights from Yakut if they can. They keep exploring ways to take advantage of the ongoing conflict; one of the tactics they've adopted recently is staging false-flag attacks in settlements near Russian borders, hoping to make residents so battle-weary that they turn to their Russian neighbors for protection.

- Red Anya

- So who's controlling Olkhon Island? I imagine whoever's in the castle that's being built there knows something. I've got some long-range pics of the building in progress—ping me if you want a look at 'em.

- Slam-O!

- I wouldn't just drop by the castle if I were you—it belongs to a powerful mage. He's Sagan Zaba-connected, and they're funneling support to help him build up his position, since he's sitting on top of a magical hotspot. He's got designs on the entire lake, which would be a major coup, since that thing has about twenty percent of the world's surface fresh water. If you get anywhere near the island, you better be sure you let the mage know who you are and convince him you're not going to mess with his plans.

- Winterhawk

- What's wrong with Varnya? Why is she letting the rebels push her around?

- Ma'fan

- Well, I doubt she is just rolling over, but there are limits to spirits, even powerful ones. She's probably involved in some spirit-y stuff, so the politics of metahumanity are lower down on her to-do list. What I'm surprised about isn't that the rebels aren't her highest priority, but that what happened on Kamchatka Island/Peninsula occurred on Varnya's watch. It's like someone was trying out their version of the Great Ghost Dance and didn't get it right.

- Mihoshi Oni

- Or did they?

- Man-of-Many-Names

- Hush you.

- Pistons





Go to Australia, they said. It'll be the biggest adventure of your life.

Nathan Cloud blinked again, willing moisture into his parched eyes. It hurt to close them, it hurt to keep them open. The burning sun directly above him continued to leech the water from his body, energy from his muscles, and hope from his soul.

He'd come with his brother Alex, a week ago. Wide-eyed and full of excitement, hoping to see one of the mana storms over Sydney. And with that excitement came carelessness.

Not paying attention to what he was doing.

Not noticing that other people were noticing him.

And when the drink dispenser wouldn't give him a cup of soycaf, he'd conjured a sprite to get it for him.

That's when he realized he was alone, that his brother had moved on, and he was facing a ring of angry-looking people.

Nathan had never been a very large man—he had played soccer and racquetball in school, and some in college—though most of his time had been spent studying. When his Technomancer abilities appeared—he'd nearly dropped out.

The vid news, online forums, everything pointed to him being a freak, and dangerous. But Nathan knew he wasn't a monster. He was the same person—he just didn't need his commlink anymore.

Researching and studying what he was, and experimenting with what he could do, Nathan had joined an online support group, and met with them in VR, and together they'd shown him how to submerge himself. How to dip into the Resonance Streams, and how to become more powerful.

Then Little One had shown up—a sprite created from the webs of the datasphere—but he didn't know that at the time he'd woven it into existence. And it stuck around, assuming the shape of a tiny naked woman, with wings made of binary code and a face carved in minute perfection.

She stuck beside him, just within reach, and when he needed something—a bit of information or research—she had it for him in record time. She giggled when she rode the streams with him, and it was her alarm inside his AR window that alerted him to the semi-circle of people around him.

"Oy—" one of them had said, the larger man with tattoos along his bare arms and a bandana wrapped around his head. "Who you talkin' to?"

Nathan had started to say he was online with his family—until he realized he wasn't

wearing a visible commlink. His first mistake, and the first thing his mentors had told him to always have.

If they see the machine, they assume you're using it.

And then they were on him—the larger man struck first with something hard and metallic. Nathan had lost consciousness quickly, but not before tasting blood.

He woke in the sizzling heat, on his side, with ants crawling into his open mouth. Nathan had choked and coughed blood and tried to wipe away the bugs from his face, only to discover his hands were tied behind him. And his ankles were bound similarly, in thick, hand-woven rope. Nothing with a mechanism, nothing he could look into and open.

That's when he realized—his mind was empty. There were no voices, no whispers, no gentle reassurances of the Matrix's web-like embrace. There was nothing ...

And he'd cried out when he realized he was in the desert, a scream that stripped his parched throat. Emptiness stretched out in any direction he looked as the sun beat down overhead.

Nathan had no idea how long he'd lain in the same position. He'd managed to move a little, away from the ants the size of crickets, but there was no shade. Nothing. And his eyes felt as if they were being burned from their sockets.

He'd already felt the panic wash over him as he thought about the mana storms. What if one came when he was like this? And he'd laughed. *Maybe I'd die sooner ... and I wouldn't have to lay here and rot.*

Again and again his mind sought out the datasphere ... some way to call for help. But there was none. He cried. No tears.

"Just travel a little, before you work for Singularity," his brother had said. *"Come with me to see the storms."*

Alex was older, a successful shadowrunner—a rigger—not that their family knew it. They believed Alex ran a successful shipping business. Nathan had kept his brother's secret, just as Alex had kept his being a technomancer a secret.

"Oh God ... Alex ... someone ... please ..." his voice was little more than a whisper. "Help ... me ... this isn't how I wanted ... to die."

Swimming in and out of consciousness, from heaven to hell, the dreams came again ... of being in a cool stream ... like the ones he'd seen in Seattle as a child. In the mountains near Tir Tairngire. Cool. Crystal. And he felt himself shiver as the cold chilled the sweat that covered his body like a second skin.

SUN AND SPRITES



These dreams came and went as he lay dying under the sun ... *No one will ever know what happened to me.*

Something cold touched his cheek. A single spark. He winced and moaned. And then it touched him again, and he recognized it.

A drop of water.

Nathan realized the breeze against his skin was ... cool. His lungs no longer felt as if they were searing with heat when he breathed. He really was shivering—no longer heated by the hot sun.

"Ah, you're awake," said a deep voice in the dark.

Nathan realized he'd lifted his hand—his wrists were no longer bound. He tried to sit up, realizing he wasn't tied but on his back. Strong hands pushed him back down. "Lie still."

He swallowed and tried to speak, but nothing would come out. He opened his eyes and blinked several times. It felt as if he had sand beneath his lids.

Nathan felt water again on his face and this time the same hands that had pushed him down lifted him up and forward as the rim of a cup was placed against his cracked and sore lips. Nathan tasted blood mingled with the cool water, and he gulped at it greedily.

"Don't get sick, mate," came the deep voice again. "I can only do so much."

Nathan stopped as his stomach roiled and he felt the bile rise to his throat. His rescuer pushed him over so he could vomit away from him and he felt his body lurch as his muscles locked.

When the waves of nausea ended he lay back, and the stranger wiped at his lips. It stung, but Nathan was grateful.

"You were bitten out there ..." came the voice. "Dunno what. But in here, there's things that can heal. So if it holds out, you might live."

Nathan cleared his throat and tried to talk. After a few attempts he was able to whisper. "What ... where am I?" He was able to push himself up on one elbow.

The desert was still there, just on the edge of a patch of thick, green grass. To his right was a pool of clear, clean water, fed by a bubbling spring in the rocks above an outcropping he was sure hadn't been there before.

And seated just to the right of that was a man, dressed in light clothing. He wore sunglasses, hiding his eyes, and his skin was dark. There was no masking his features though—wide face and nose. White teeth and wide smile.

"You're still in the Big Red, mate. Only you were lucky—an alchera formed right under you. Seems like the desert likes you."

Nathan shook his head. "I don't ..." he thought he'd heard the term before. It was

something strange, a phenomenon that occurred often in the Outback.

"Hard to explain to a UCAS chap. And you aren't Awakened. An alchera is what we call something from the distant past, or that's what the word means."

Nathan coughed. "You're...an aborigine?"

"Aye," he said. "Attend college at Darwin. My hobby is alcheras, mate. I work for Alex," he offered Nathan his hand. "Name's Jim."

Nathan shook his hand, feeble as his grip was. Then ... "You work for Alex? My brother?"

"Aye—I track for him. On the side. Called me—never heard him like that. I owed Alex. Found you. He's on his way."

Nathan stared at the man. Was this real? Or just another illusion concocted by his subconscious to ease the pain of his death?

Jim paused. "Why did someone do this to you? Because you're a technomancer?"

Nathan looked away. "Yes."

There was a pause and Nathan braced himself for the reaction.

"That's it? They tossed you out here just because of that?" Jim swore. "They'll pay for it, mate."

Nathan said. "I didn't do anything wrong—"

Then he heard the sound of rhythmic thumping, and recognized the sound. A Shinobi.

Nathan looked out into the desert, his eyes heavy lidded with fatigue as the compact helicopter descended nearby. He lay there, half-propped against the moist rocks, the trickles of water splashing off the stones, gently spraying his face.

Alex appeared, jumping from the Shinobi's cockpit and running over the desert to stop at the edge of the small oasis. "What the—" he shouted as he looked around. "Is this one of them, Jim?"

"Aye, she's a beaut," he said as he gestured for Alex to step closer. "He's in bad shape, but he'll live. Thanks to the spirits here."

"Not just them," Alex said as he knelt beside Nathan. His brother's eyes were red and watery. "And make sure you thank that little sprite of yours. I might not be able to see her like you do, but she was pretty insistent on getting my attention." His grin broadened. "She got her revenge on your attackers. I doubt any of them will want to access VR again for a mighty long time."

Nathan frowned. A sprite ... exacted revenge? He blinked. Exactly how sentient were sprites? And would he ever know?

Did he even want to know?

BY PHAEDRA WELDON

AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC

Australia: aw-streyl-yuh

Population: 40,000,000 (est.)

Primary Languages: English (official), Walpiri, Tiwi

States: New Guinea, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia

Government Type: Confederal Republic

Bordering Countries: *None*

Geography: Vast deserts interspersed with eucalyptus forests, tropical wetlands, and rugged mountain terrain

Notable Features: The world's only fixed mana storm, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock, the Great Barrier Reef

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The general misconception about Australia is that it was originally a penal colony and that all Aussies are descended from criminal blood. Sounds like it could be true, but the reality is that most of the European colonists who moved there during the seventeenth century were simply free settlers who just wanted to get a new start in life. The British just happened to take more of an interest than the rest, and eventually claimed the land as theirs.

Other nations took an interest later, including an increasingly militarized Japan. To ensure their mutual security, in 2022 Australia and New Zealand formed the Australia and New Zealand Allied Confederation (ANZAC).

As far back as 1999, Australia's government has attempted to change their status as a commonwealth of Britain, making themselves a republic, and for decades the vote was "no." In 2061, the vote was cast yet again, and a "yes" was finally achieved. In 2064, Australia annexed New Guinea in order to stabilize the region, as well as control their natural resources. New Guinea's Prime Minister Lez Tagobe declared the annexation an act of war—but disappeared shortly after making this statement. The ANZAC forces have quelled opposition, and most of the country's states welcomed ANZAC membership.

The federal government is seated in Canberra, with an enclave in Darwin that contains the federal military forces. But the government's influence ends where the bush begins—they surrendered the Outback to the Aborigines, nomads, and mana storms years ago. Prime Minister Burt Oliver, along with the New Century Party, having achieved their goal of a republic, is now hard at work on the water crisis and mana storms.

Law enforcement in Australia is handled by the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization, or AISE (pronounced "ace")—and has long arms that extend over Australia and anything that concerns her national security.

Most of Australia's cities are gathered along the east and southeast coasts where, except for Sydney, the mana storms are less frequent. Around each city are farm lands, or agrizones, capable of growing sugar, wheat, and other staples. These areas tend to be well protected, and anyone caught trespassing might end up getting shot.

Travel here is still dangerous because of the storms, except along the coast by boat or air. A high-speed rail links Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra, but the other cities fend for themselves.

MAJOR CITIES

Sydney is a city under constant siege from the seemingly permanent mana-storm overhead. The city isn't completely cut off from the world, but when the resident storm acts up, radio, satellite and wireless Matrix connections disappear. On the astral plane, the storms cause spontaneous elemental and illusory manifestations

In scientific terms, the lingering storm should not still exist, or have remained stationary for so long. But it still plays havoc with weather patterns around the area, battering the residents with sudden hailstorms, electrical storms that rain down thunder and lightning, and even the occasional tornado.

The government relocated to Canberra while corporations stepped in to try and rebuild Sydney and "advise" the city on "affairs of state." The Sydney Metropolitan Council is the official governing body—made up of elected officials—but the corporate officers carry more authority. Member corporations include Knight Errant, Aztechnology, Baird Communications, Tanamyre, and Wuxing.

Home to the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX), **Melbourne** is the brains and the wallet of Australia. After the crash of 2029, the ASX rebuilt in Melbourne and the corps followed. The city is still a battleground between the Japanacorps—including PacRim Bank and Mitsuhama—and the Pacific Prosperity Group (PPG). Wuxing Financial Services operates as Australia's largest corporate bank and Wuxing's subsidiary Anataeus Offshore Investment Corporation underwrites several of Australia's major financial institutions—including the government. These holdings give the PPG a stronger foothold within the city.

Called the seat of corruption, **Canberra** is currently home to the working government of Australia. It has grown little over the past few decades and numbers less than a million residents.

The city has very little in the way of any industry or markets. The population is made up mostly of public servants, along with embassies



and their employees. Since the average wage is higher than anywhere else, the prices here are substantially inflated along with a significant trade in luxury items.

As for policing—it is said that in Canberra, the police do work well as controlling the more pedestrian crimes such as murder, assault and the like—but when it comes to more “white collar” machinations, the appropriate cop has already been compensated before the crime is committed.

Called the Gateway to the Outback, **Perth** is home to around four million inhabitants. It has developed a unique culture, thriving heavily on industry and mining operations. Saeder-Krupp based their Australian operations out of Perth. The city is also a major port for shipping to and from Asia and the Middle East.

Renraku dominates the heavy boat-manufacturing industry in Perth. Their subsidiary, Harland-Wolff, spearheads the small pleasure craft industry, recently expanding into security craft and utility boats, which has provoked more conflict with Shiawase.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Australia is well known for its mana-storms; most notably the one in a fixed location over Sydney, and those that inhabit the the Big Red, aka, the Outback.

The Outback is where the heavy paranormal activity in Australia is found. Because of the mana storms, parazoologists have barely scratched the surface of what's in the Australian Outback.

Many people are interested in hard data and samples (preferably living) of the flora and fauna, and poachers, smugglers, and shadow-runners try and accommodate them, so long as the price is right and they can survive to deliver their prize.

Not a lake by laymen's eyes, **Lake Mungo** is a system of inland lakes that have been dry for some 20,000 years. After scientists were chased out of the area by the storms, the Atlantean Foundation made a deal with the government to send in a group of their best to study the area. None of the famous archeologists have been seen or heard from since.

Now the area is restricted, guarded by both the military and AF security.

Though not actually a part of Australia, **Tasmania** is an island south of Melbourne. What makes Tasmania such a curiosity is that after the Awakening, the island itself came alive.

Quickened growth rates in flora and fauna and an explosion in animal population quickly overtook the residents and prompted an evacuation. Today most of the island is overgrown with wilderness and



uncivilized mystery. All attempts to establish facilities on the island have met with failure. The most notable happening on the island is the rumored Roving Market, where pirates sell and trade anything and everything.

- If you're heading down under to hack the ASX—don't get caught. The AISE isn't something you want to mess with. Lone Star and Knight Errant don't even have jurisdiction when AISE comes in. The best place to start is the Sydney Harbor Bridge—pretty much a no-fly zone for Knight Errant. Great place for a lot of black market materials. There are loads of dingy bars, chop docs, gambling parlors, beetle dens—but my best advice is getting a guide. Drop me a line if you need one, and I'll hook you up.

Traveler Jones

- Traveler Jones

- Yeah, and the AISE has been known to withhold information or impede any privatized security investigations. You do not want to get caught by them, unless you just like to live the stupid.

- Stones

- Also, buy your gear there, don't even try and smuggle it in. Gun control there is stricter than anywhere else. Handguns are on the hot-list, more so than long arms. Can't say the same for any cyberware, especially anything combat-related. It's all security-classified stuff there.

- Elijah

- True, Elijah, but that just means it's easier to get through the spot checks with the higher end upgrades all ready in place 'cause those damn vegemite eaters don't know what they're looking for.

- Clockwork

- Jesus, Clock, you never change. Elijah's right about carrying as little as possible (except for the cyber-ware). Tech is pretty cheap—the black markets are closer to the Asian sweatshops. Though the Matrix access is a little more expensive there than here—so be prepared for sticker-shock.

- Traveler Jones

- If you're looking for a good mystery—I know of a Johnson still investigating that incident out at Lake Mungo. I have a few sources that say the scientists discovered the existence of dwarves—possible proof that the global shift in races happened in reverse at some point in the past—that instead of separating into races—we all shifted into just plain humans. When the scientists figured that out—they were all capped. Find the bodies, make some serious nuyen.

- Elijah

THE WALL

MARC TASSIN

Hardline leaned on the display table in the t-bird's cabin and traced a line along the representation of the SOX wall.

"The guards start here, make their way to the center point, then back. Two squads, three men each, and never more than a half-klick between them. They're in rovers, so you can count on at least six of them getting to any position within a couple minutes."

"If we hit the split fast enough, they won't have time to react," Tarquin said.

"Maybe," Venus said, "but Hardline and I spotted a rocket launcher on one of the rovers."

"Cassidy could have taken them down easily," Bastos growled.

"But Cassidy's dead, so let's focus on what we *can* do," Hardline said, giving the elf street samurai a hard look.

"What about the drone guns?" asked Skeeter, tapping his fingers rapidly on the table. The physicist hadn't wanted to come, but they hadn't given him a choice. They needed him to secure the package.

"I can take care of those," Tarquin said, fingering his commlink. "I checked the codes we bought on Helix. They're good. Won't fool them for long, but it'll get us through."

"The patrols are too close together," Venus said. "We need a distraction to draw off one of those squads."

"Pay the scavengers to hit a tower?" Bastos said.

"Too much," said Hardline. "We don't want to trigger an alert, just draw them away."

"A malfunction?" Tarquin offered.

"What do you have in mind?" asked Hardline.

"See these markers?" Tarquin said, pointing at a series of dark spots along the wall.

"Those are riot hoses. With the city so close, they thought they might have mobs rushing the wall. They haven't used them for years, but I think they work. Throw open the valves on a couple of those, and that ought to get their attention."

"That could work," Venus said, nodding.

"Can you handle that and the code at the same time?" asked Hardline.

"I'll have Mr. Poulette do it," Tarquin said.

Venus grimaced, and Bastos glared at Tarquin.

"He's better now!" Tarquin insisted. "I reprogrammed him after the last run."

"I don't hear any better ideas," said Hardline. "The best time to hit the wall is around

0300. That's mid-way through the shift. They'll be struggling to stay focused. Get your gear ready, people. You've got nine hours."

The t-bird's engines thrummed rhythmically as the jet black LAV flew just above the ground. Venus lay in her pilot's chair, eyes closed, rigged straight into the machine. The illuminated concrete wall lay just ahead, stretching into the distance in both directions. Venus' voice crackled over the speakers.

"The drone will release the transponder in three...two...one...now!"

"Tarquin, you're up!" said Hardline, looking to the hacker sitting in back.

"Already on it, chief," he replied.

Tarquin slumped in his harness as he flipped into VR. Hardline didn't like having Tarquin go into a milspec system hot, but if they didn't get past the guns, it'd be a short trip.

"One minute until we reach the wall. They haven't detected us," said Venus.

"I've got the guards on sensor," Bastos called. "They're heading toward the jump point."

"Where's that distraction you promised, Tarq?" Hardline demanded.

"The firewall is stronger than I'd expected," he replied through their link, "but Mr. Poulette is in. Any second."

"One of the patrols just stopped," Bastos reported. "They're busting ass back the other way."

Hardline nodded with satisfaction. Tarquin was flaky, but he knew his way around a Matrix system.

"Thirty seconds," called Venus.

Hardline checked on the egghead. Skeeter gripped the armrests hard enough to put dents in them, and his eyes were squeezed shut.

"Ten seconds," Venus called.

The wall loomed before them. With a roar, the t-bird leaped forward, pressing Hardline into his seat.

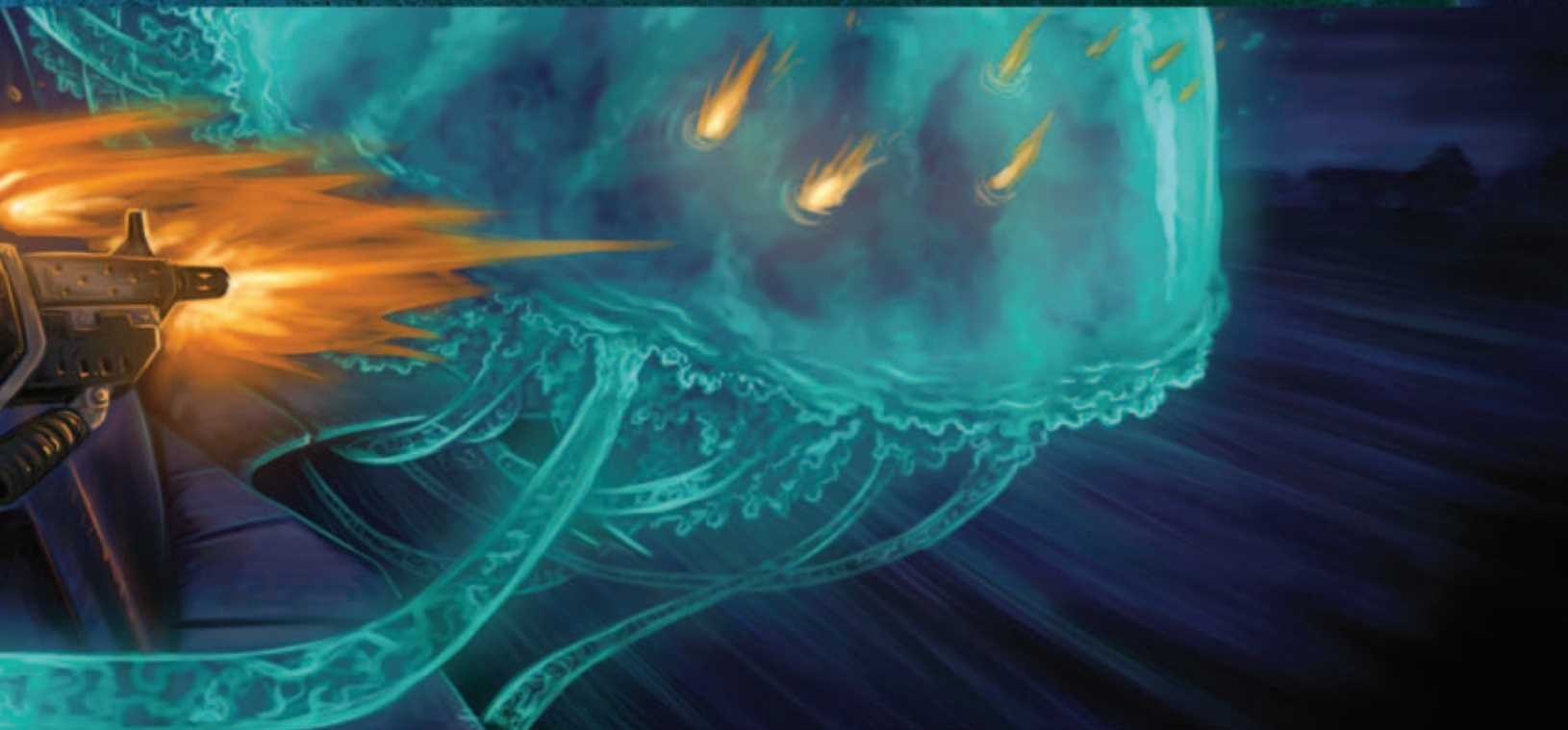
"They see us," Bastos yelled from the back. "Damn! I've got pingback from a target painter."

The t-bird skimmed the wall. A wing caught the edge of a light pole, bending it over and sending it crashing to the concrete below.



"What are you doing, V?" Hardline yelled.
"Sorry, I was distracted."
A red light started flashing on the control panel accompanied by a rhythmic beep.
"We've got a missile lock."
"Oh, God," Skeeter whined.
"Can you break it?" Hardline said.
The t-bird raced through the darkness. Already, the glow from the wall faded behind them.
"Give me a second," Venus said.
"Lose it in the trees," Bastos called.
"No! Too much debris down there."
"Whoa, what did I miss?" called Tarquin, popping out of VR. "Is that beeping bad?"
"I wanted to save this for the trip home, but I'm out of options," Venus said.
A low thump sounded beneath the T-Bird. A second later the beeping stopped.
"Nice work," Hardline said. "What did you do?"
"Chaff," Venus answered over the speaker. "Picked it up after the last run. Hated to use it already, though."
"If that missile hit us, you wouldn't have needed it later," Bastos said.
"Yeah, that's what I tho...SHIT!"
The t-bird pitched to the right, engines roaring in protest. Venus compensated but the LAV still leaned to one side.
"What the hell was that?" shouted Bastos.
"I don't know," answered Venus. "I think something's on the wing."
"What do you mean something's on the wing?" Hardline demanded.
"I mean something's on the goddamn wing! Hang on!"
The t-bird pitched left, then right, up, then down.
"Oh, god. I'm gonna be sick," whined Skeeter.
"Damn it. It's still there!" Venus cried.
"Screw that," said Bastos. "I'll take care of it."
Bastos unbuckled and climbed out of his chair. He braced himself against the wall with one hand and snatched his Alpha from the weapon rack with the other.
"What the hell are you doing?" Hardline shouted. Bastos was a wild card, good with a gun, one of the best in fact, but completely unpredictable. If anyone else had been available, Hardline never would have brought him.
"I'm gonna see what's out there," he shouted.
Bastos threw open the sliding side door. Wind roared into the cabin. Skeeter screamed and put his arms over his head, and Tarquin grinned into the maelstrom.
"I don't see anything," Bastos yelled, scanning the darkness. The barrel of his gun followed his gaze with clockwork precision.
"You sure?" called Venus. "The whole bird is dragging like she's flying through water."

"I'm telling you," Bastos shouted, "there's nothing out there—EEYAAAA!"
Bastos' scream cut off with a gurgle. He let go of the wall and stumbled, reaching for his neck.
"Son of a bitch," shouted Hardline, unbuckling and climbing out of his seat.
"Neck. Neck," gasped Bastos, groping at his throat. Bringing the Alpha around, he fired out the door toward the wing.
"Ahh! You hit me!" yelled Venus. "Stop firing, you asshole!"
Hardline leaped to Bastos and grabbed him. He pulled, but Bastos didn't budge. Hardline felt something pulling Bastos from the other direction.
"I need light!" shouted Hardline.
"It'll give us away. We don't know what's down there," Venus shouted.
"Give me a goddamn light!" Hardline yelled.
"Dammit, dammit, dammit," growled Venus.
An exterior spotlight burst to life. Wrapped around the wing, illuminated from within by the spotlight, was a semi-translucent blob the size of a truck. Tentacles like a jellyfish's rippled in the wind behind it. One of the tentacles extended into the cabin, wrapping around Bastos' neck.
"AHHHHHH!" Skeeter screamed.
"HOLY SHIT!" yelled Tarquin. "What the hell is that thing?"
Tarquin pulled his pistol and fired wildly out the door. One of the shots pinged off the cabin wall, showering Bastos and Hardline with sparks. Another shot hit the creature, and its gelatinous mass quivered and glowed red.
With a yank, the thing ripped Bastos out of the t-bird. Hardline let go just in time, catching himself on the doorframe before his grip on Bastos took him out the door as well.
"Was that Bastos?" cried Venus. "Something just flew past the tail and it looked like Bastos!"
"Venus! Get us on the ground!" shouted Hardline.
"I'll try," she called. "Wait! Wait! Something's happening. It's doing something to the wing."
Hardline looked out and saw that the thing had braced its tentacles against the t-bird's hull. The painful screech of rending metal ripped the air. Alarms blared.
"Oh, Christ!" Venus shouted. "It hurts!"
"Jack out, damn it!" Hardline yelled.
He groped for his weapon, but the t-bird lurched to the side and sent him sprawling on the floor. He looked out the door and watched as, just before the spotlight went out, the wing ripped loose with a crack that reverberated through the entire ship.
"Ahhhh!" screamed Venus, the speakers squealing with feedback.
The t-bird plunged through the darkness, sending Hardline sliding toward the cockpit. The craft flipped over and Hardline crashed against the ceiling. His head smacked one of the steel safety bars, light flashed behind his eyes, and everything went dark.



ALLIED GERMAN STATES

Allied German States: ə-ˈlɪd jər-mən stəts

Population: 99,894,000

Primary Languages: German (official), Polish, Sperethiel, Turkish

States: Badisch-Pfalz, Berlin, Black Forest Troll Kingdom, Brandenburg, Duchy of Pomorya, Free State of Saxony, Franconia, Frankfurt, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Free State of Bavaria, Free State of Thuringia, Free State of Westphalia, Great Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg, Hesse-Nassau, Nordrhine-Ruhr, The North German league, Württemberg

Government Type: Confederated Republic

Bordering Countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Scandinavian Union, Switzerland, United Netherlands

Geography: A temperate nation, with elevations ranging from sea level to the nearly 3,000 meter peaks of the Alps, ground cover includes from dense temperate forests and arable land

Notable Features: Alps, Danube River, Elbe River, Rhine River

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Allied German States are a potent political force in the European theater, but that was not always the case. At the end of the twentieth century, the Federal Republic of Germany faced the very real possibility of economic collapse. Civil unrest was on the rise, unemployment skyrocketed, and food shortages swept the nation.

The twenty-first century brought no respite. The first decade of the new millennium saw Germany struck with wave after wave of ecological disasters. From the catastrophic floods of toxic sea water that reshaped its northern coast to the explosion of the Cattenom reactor in France that left Saarland a radioactive wasteland, the people of Germany faced an unrelenting series of crises. By 2009, with the government on the verge of collapse, the country was placed under martial law.

In the midst of this came VITAS, sweeping across the land and killing over four million citizens. On its heels came the Awakening, and the nation witnessed the unprecedented appearance of four great dragons within its borders.

Germany survived, and in 2014 the Military Council returned control of the country to its people. The transition had its challenges.



Amid rising political unrest, the city of Berlin descended into anarchy. By the end of the year, unable to restore order, the new German government erected a wall around the city to contain the chaos.

The next two decades brought little comfort. From UGE to VITAS II, Germany weathered countless emergencies. Perhaps this is why, when the first shots of the Euro Wars rang out in 2031, the German people were ready to fight. The tenacious German forces proved instrumental in stopping both the Russian onslaught and the subsequent invasion by the Alliance for Allah.

Proven as a major power by war, Germany started a slow climb back toward stability. The road was not without its bumps. Starting in 2030, Germany saw the establishment of three semi-autonomous metahuman states within its borders. In 2038, long simmering political conflict led to the temporary secession of the southern provinces, although a misguided attempt to exert control over the megacorporations led to the new nation's collapse and its return to the AGS.

In 2045, the old differences were finally set aside. With the drafting of a new constitution that gave Germany's provinces wide latitude to govern as each saw fit, the Allied German States were born.

The past twenty-five years have seen riots over the internment of SURGE victims in Württemberg, veritable war in the streets of Berlin, and panic amid the chaos of Crash 2.0. Yet the AGS has carried on through all of this. Even when Marienbad seceded to join the Czech Republic in 2063, the nation did not falter.

Today, the AGS is an economic and political powerhouse in Europe. Some say it is the glue that holds the many and varied European nations together.

MAJOR CITIES

For twenty-five years, the corporations that "liberated" the western part of **Berlin** from the anarchist Status F and subsequently set up a joint corporate enclave in the former German capital were mired in a constant battle against anarchists from the eastern districts. The attacks between the East and West sectors took different forms over the years, including homemade bombs and trade embargos, and every now and again the situation would see a brief escalation in violence as doomed campaigns were staged by either side to wipe out the other. Crash 2.0, however, brought a change to the deadlocked situation.

When the Berlin Matrix and infrastructure collapsed during Crash 2.0, East Berlin was affected as well. While the status quo was easily restored in the western part of the city due to megacorporate involvement, the autonomists had more difficulty saving their only partially self-sustaining "utopian" lifestyle, with problems growing more serious over the years due to a lack of food supplies, pharmaceuticals, and access to certain expensive technologies.

Instead of capitulating, however, some of the more radical anti-corporate cells feigned an attack with a nanotech weapon on the EMC/Ford corporate sector. In the face of another nanotech threat and a "broken arrow"-like situation, the corps responded by coming down hard on the sector in a Blitzkrieg scenario employing massive numbers of corporate soldiers, drones, and chemical weapons. This campaign ended when corp forces eventually seized all of Berlin, where they found that the threat posed by the anarchists may not have been as significant as it was feared to be. Since this incident, both the corporations and the AGS



government have been negotiating the terms of unifying the city. While a new council has already been elected to supervise and administrate the newly named Free City of Berlin, the wounds that have been caused in the last quarter of a century, not to mention the ideological rift that divides the population in both parts of the city, will take years to heal.

Known as the "Venice of the North," a great part of the **Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg** is now underwater. A victim of

the catastrophic flooding that assailed the northern coast during the Black Tide of 2011, instead of giving up, Hamburg adapted to its new geography. Lower levels of flooded buildings were sealed off and upper stories were remodeled to serve as the ground floor.

As a hotbed of political activism and anti-megacorporate currents, the Hamburg Senate has shown its strong sense of independence through its explicit disapproval of S-K's and the Frankfurt Bank Association's latest meddling in the country's political and financial decision-making. With the Allied German States inexorably sliding towards a corporate democracy, Hamburg's opposition has led to continued strife within the Bundesrat.

The **Rhine-Ruhr** megasprawl, home to more than thirty-five million people, is the largest urban sprawl in the AGS. As one might expect from a sprawl of this size, dig deep enough and anything can be found. From the neatly groomed corporate enclaves of Duisburg to the toxic dumping grounds known as the Fallows, the megaplex offers every aspect of German life in one giant package.

The megaplex's most famous citizen is the great dragon Lofwyr. From the Saeder-Krupp headquarters in Essen, the infamous wyrm runs the most powerful megacorp on the planet. It's no secret that Saeder-Krupp is the ruler of the megaplex, but the side benefits are that the trains always run on time.

Although there is plenty to see in Rhine-Ruhr, one point of interest stands out. In 2041, the city fathers merged all the universities in the megaplex to create Ruhr Universität. Even with more than 300,000 registered students it still offers a top-notch education, and is well known for its exceptional alchemy department.

The **Greater Frankfurt Sprawl** encompasses the cities of Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Mainz, Aschaffenburg, Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg. Due to the presence and roots of multinational corps such as AG Chemie and the Frankfurt Bank Association that act as the region's main employer, the whole metroplex (which is also a member state of the AGS) can be considered subservient to its corporate masters. In addition to its role as an international financial hub (with the Frankfurt stock exchange), and Ludwigshafen as the center of European chemical industry, the city of Heidelberg also belongs to the Greater Frankfurt Sprawl, boasting the AGS's most famous arcane university.

While **Hanover** is the capital of one of the most powerful nations in Europe, it is fairly uninteresting from an international point of view except for the annual International Computer and Matrix Fair. Since the constitution of the AGS leaves the majority of political power in the hands of the provinces, the really juicy political infighting often takes place in the provincial capitals rather than the nation's capital. Still, Hanover is home to the Bundesrat, the caucus dealing with all national matters of the German member states and cooperative issues; in other words, everything that cannot be decided by the states on their

own. Since Hanover is also the home of many government bodies such as the Bundesamt für Innere Sicherheit (Federal Office of Homeland Security), many policlubs have offices within the city.

Stuttgart is known as the “Plex of Woods and Streams,” and is quite beautiful as far as sprawls go. For years it maintained a serious and business-like demeanor. It was both a center of manufacturing and a symbol of corporate restraint. In the late 2050s, Christopher Steinmetz used a loophole in local building ordinances to permanently anchor half a dozen zeppelins near the city in Ludwigsburg. He connected these with catwalks and dubbed his creation “Cloud City.”

Today, Cloud City consists of well over forty-eight zeppelins and is the center of a dramatic counter culture. As one would expect, it has also become a tourist attraction and hosts numerous casinos, restaurants, and other sources of amusement. Artists, musicians, and eccentrics make their homes in Cloud City and have driven Stuttgart’s evolution from corporate mediocrity to the heart of the AGS artistic community.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **SOX (Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg) Special Administrative Zone** was created to contain the affected areas affected by the 2009 Cattenom disaster. The SOX includes Luxembourg, Saarland, and large portions of Lorraine, with the cities of Trier, Kusel and Zweibrücken acting as gateway cities on the German-SOX border. It was originally envisioned as a means of directing the joint French-German cleanup and recovery in the region. In reality, both nations were facing countless internal crises, and neither was in a position to undertake such a massive decontamination effort.

Over the course of four decades the only task the nations accomplished was to construct a five-meter-high, three-meter-thick wall around the entire area. Ostensibly, this was to keep people out of the contaminated zone, but in reality it served the double purpose of keeping things in. Years of neglect had turned the SOX into the world’s largest experiment in the effects of radiation on the environment. The problem was made worse by the Awakening, which wrought even greater changes on the SOX and its inhabitants.

By 2053, neither France nor Germany could pretend to still have control of the situation, and they turned management of the SOX over to a joint corporate Kontrollrat consisting of several major corporate players, including Ares, Saeder-Krupp, Renraku, Esus, and Proteus AG, among others. Although the council makes a few gestures toward decontamination each year, in reality they use the SOX as their personal laboratory and dumping ground. Neither France nor Germany has made any move to change this, seemingly content to allow the Kontrollrat to keep the problem contained.

In 2048, Hedwig Gabler, the Mayoress of **Karlsruhe** and leader of the Great Badisch Crusade anti-metahuman policlub, was elected to the Badisch-Pfalz provincial parliament. Her first act was to hire a mercenary army to attack the Black Forest Troll Kingdom. This didn’t sit well with Hanover, and when they learned of her plans, they sent in the military. Gabler was arrested and Karlsruhe was placed under military control.

After years under the thumb of the AGS military, the people of Karlsruhe remain withdrawn and secretive. Some say, however, that this has nothing to do with two decades of military control, but rather with the unusual nature of Karlsruhe itself.

Over the past fifty years or so, the city has started slowly returning to its 16th century appearance and configuration. The mystery is that no one is entirely sure who is doing the work. Often the changes

are subtle and remain unnoticed until they are well underway. When pressed on this, residents say little, seemingly accepting of the unusual, ongoing transformation. Most evidence points at the Freemasons, who have made the Karlsruhe Palace their home since 2039.

- Anyone know if that stuff about Karlsruhe is true? I've got a friend trying to get me to come out there to do a run and I'm starting to wonder what I might be getting into.
- Pistons
- It's true, and it's worse than they make it sound in this article. The Freemasons have been performing weird rituals there for years now, and it's starting take its toll on the city.
- Traveler Jones
- Rituals?
- Pistons
- Yeah, apparently the entire city was laid out on some sort of mystic pattern. Each of the streets is like a spoke in a wheel and points to an awakened site somewhere in the world. The city is literally crawling with magical factions, not only Freemasons. Members of the Dr. Faustus Society, Schwartzkopf's Benandanti, the Illuminates of the New Dawn, the DIMR and many more. They all have at least offices in the city. Not to mention corps with interest in magic.
- Elijah
- Wait a minute. Laid out on a mystic pattern? If the city was founded in the 1700s, how could it have been laid out with any sort of magical design in mind?
- Orbital DK
- Has the AGS enacted the NEEC's new border identification requirements yet? I had a close call on a trip to Spain a couple months back.
- Name
- For the most part, but there's still some infighting in the Bundesrat. Württemberg and Hamburg in particular are still pushing back on these. They've got a case at the Supreme Court in Karlsruhe right now for the right to maintain their current system. Considering how much easier it is to slip a fake SIN past the border patrol under the old AGS system than the bloody NEEC system, I hope they win.
- Hard Exit
- As if Lofwyr would let them. Since he managed to unify the former fragmented AGS grid into one single grid and form a single network on the control of Ætherlink, the NEEC-wide ID system is paver in his road for a Unified Europe. I don't think the recent political changes and conflicts taking place is several AGS states are a coincidence. Maybe a unified Germany fits the dragon's roadmap better?
- Fianchetto
- Any update on Hamburg?
- Glitch
- The Senate is still playing its role as political rabble-rouser in the Bundesrat and with the NEEC. Its representatives even threatened the Alliance with the possibility of secession if the AGS moves any further towards a corporate democracy. There are still rumors about a strategic alliance with other free cities in the North and Baltic Seas.
- Ecotope

- There has also been some turmoil in the underworld after Hamburg was literally flooded with tempo. The Vory suspected the Likedeelers at first, but both the Dutch Penose and Scandinavian Vikings (distributing the drug behind their ally's backs) brought the drug in the city from the UNL and Scandinavian Union. The fallout wasn't exactly nice. Let's say it's been a pretty rough year not getting caught in the crossfire in the canals.
- Red Anya

- Any news on Berthold, the "missing king"?
- Beaker

- After ten years missing Berthold was declared dead per German law in July 2071 by Chancellor Hugo von Hasslach in a huge national ceremonial act. Whether the troll actually was the great dragon Kaltenstein in his metahuman form does not really matter anymore. Since Berthold had no heirs, the declaration of death paved the way for the kingdom to become a Republic with Hasslach in charge. Since Hasslach invited corps (including S-K) in to make the troll nation economically sustainable, many of the old veterans and animist (some kind of troll nature tradition) have opposed Hasslach's plans.
- Ecotope

- Since we're talking about dragons...
- Plan 9

- Oh, great. Here we go again.
- Snopes

- You knew we wouldn't make it through this without someone bringing her up.
- Netcat

- Ignore the evidence all you like, but Feuerschwinge is out there.
- Plan 9

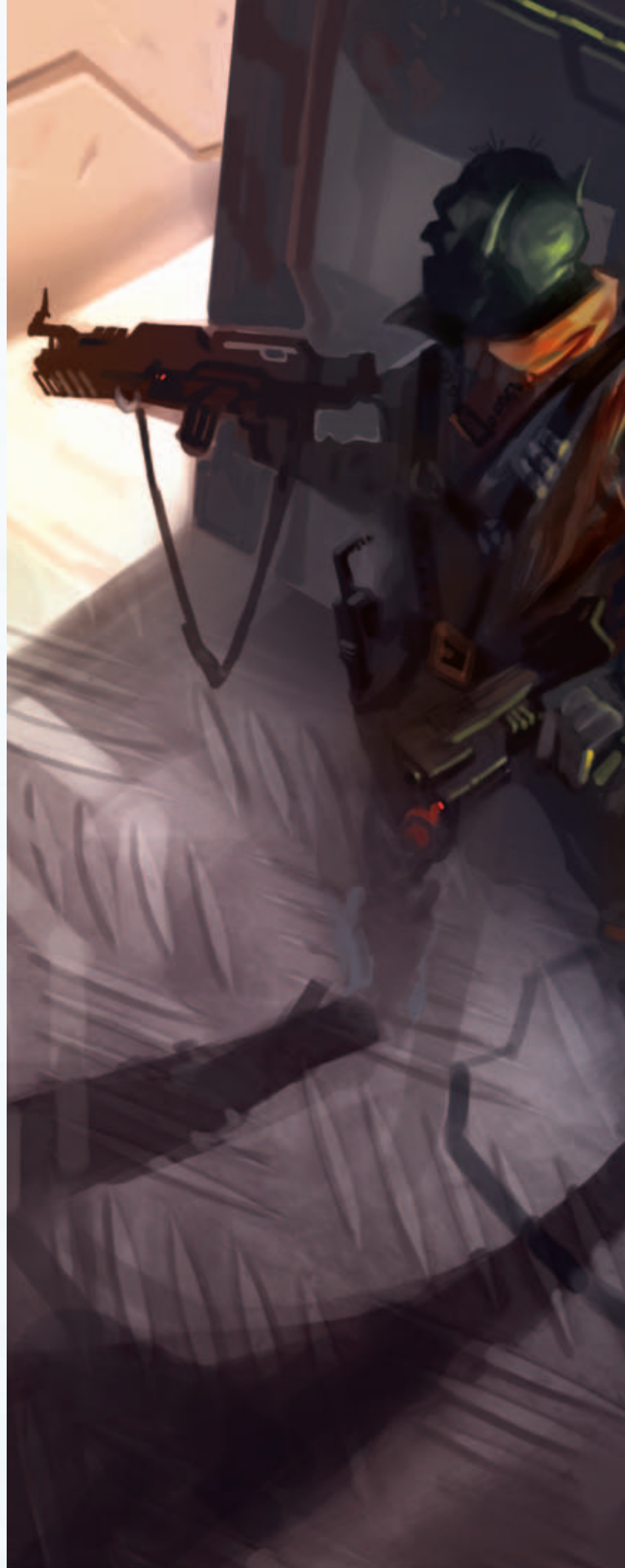
- The only evidence I have right now is that you're nuts.
- Snopes

- Fine. Blow me off if you want, but I'm telling you that Feuerschwinge didn't die back in 2012 when the AGS shot her down over Völklingen. Why do you think they didn't find her body? Simple. When she crashed into the SOX, the radiation somehow twisted her magical aura altering her true nature. She's something else now, something completely new. I fully believe that she's the one leading the Disciples of the Cleansing Fire, and she's gathering an army. I don't know what she's planning, but I bet we won't have to wait much longer to find out. You can thank me for keeping an eye on this when it finally happens.
- Plan 9

- Seriously, FastJack. Maybe it's time to do a little culling of the ranks in here. Clean out some of the riff-raff and crazies.
- Snopes

- I wouldn't be so quick to write him off, Snopes. You know what they say about being paranoid...
- FastJack

- And if you believe the local shadows, it's already started ...
- Ecotope



CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic: chek ri-pə-blik

Population: 12,000,000

Primary Languages: Czech (official), Slovak, German, English, Russian

Provinces: Bohemia, Marienbad Council, Moravia

Government Type: Parliamentary Republic

Bordering Countries: AGS, Austria, Poland, Slovakia

Geography: Ranging from hilly to mountainous, this nation has many graceful rivers and coniferous and deciduous forests

Notable Features: Bohemian Forest, the Elbe River, Krkonose Mountains

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Czech Republic is a peaceful country that has sought working relationships with its neighbors. Since the collapse of the Danube Union in 2040, the Republic has focused on education for its citizens in an effort to better prepare them for the global world. Non-metahuman species and free spirits are allowed to apply for Czech citizenship. The Czech people, collectively, have supported metahumanity and the changing face of the world since the Awakening. This universal acceptance unfortunately has not spread to cultural relations. Despite the acceptance of centaurs and sasquatch amongst their people, many within the Czech Republic still bear grudges against ethnic and religious groups.

Bohemia is the central and oldest province within the Czech Republic. Though the area has seen some modernization, most of the cities still resemble their sixteenth-century counterparts, with very few skyscrapers and an understated corporate presence. The area is most commonly visited by tourists, who regularly take day trips to the many castles throughout the province or visit the cultural museums. Starting around 2065, there has been a trend towards post-industrial gentrification. While the province as a whole has not been changed, there is a steady shift to make Bohemia more like Moravia.

The eastern province of Moravia is separated from Bohemia by the Highlands and is highly industrialized. Large-scale mining projects are spread throughout the countryside to gather raw materials necessary to fuel the factories and commerce of the province. The cities of Moravia appear much more modern than Bohemia, with skyscrapers and a pronounced megacorporate industrial presence.

Western Czech falls under the control of the great dragon Schwartzkopf. Previously a lawless region, it was pacified by Schwartzkopf's intervention when it seceded from the AGS and became part of the Czech Republic. While the dragon does not interfere directly with national politics, he established a protectorate through the Marienbad Council, and exerts influence on parliamentary members who respect his opinion on matters. Following the break from the AGS by the Marienbad Council, the province was established as an autonomous area. While citizens are responsible for Czech taxes, they maintain jurisdiction over any crimes that happen within the province.

Following the second Crash, the Czech Republic has seen an increase in immigrants from the AGS. Many of the immigrants claim political asylum, fleeing prosecution and have settled in Marienbad. The Marienbad Council has allowed the immigrants to settle in the area, though the Czech Parliament required that all immigrants in the autonomous region become citizens by January 1, 2075 or face deportation.



MAJOR CITIES

The home of Mendel's genetic discoveries, **Brno** is located in Moravia and serves as the province's capital. Since its reconstruction, the city has favored function over form in all of its architecture lending a dry utilitarian feeling to the city. Universal Omnitech manages the Mendel Memorial Center for Awakened Genetics, a research facility attempting to map and unlock the Awakened genome. Most of the research is done on non-sentient paracritters, though there is occasional dispensation for active research studies on voluntary participants.

Brno is best known for its fireworks festival every June. The *Ignis Brunensis* attracts thousands of tourists and corporate personnel each year. Horizon took over management of the festival in 2071 and increased participation and attendance by ten percent in their first year.

Like many other large metroplexes, **Prague** is a cultural melting pot where individuals from across the globe come together. Natives refer to it as the Golden City and promote an atmosphere of acceptance and joining to accelerate the dissemination of new cultures into the city. The Czech Parliament meets in the city, assembling in Prague Castle for their sessions. As of 2070, membership includes a shape-shifter and a free spirit amongst the Chamber of Deputies.

The city has played host to the 2045 UN Peace Conference and witnessed the new Charter being signed. In addition to Charles University, the city's oldest Jewish quarter *Josefov*, in the northern end of the city, is favored by talismongers and antiquities dealers. *Josefov's* cemetery is the home of a large golem which arrived in 2061 to help locals deal with the shedim invasion. It is unclear who controls the golem, but it remains in the cemetery to protect the dead.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The Univerzita Karlova, or **Charles University**, is the world-renowned institution for the study of the arcane arts. Located in Prague, the university offers a bohemian atmosphere for learning magic. While there are still formal classes teaching magic theory, most of the faculty and students intersperse their schedules with smaller colloquia courses where they practice and critique each other's development.

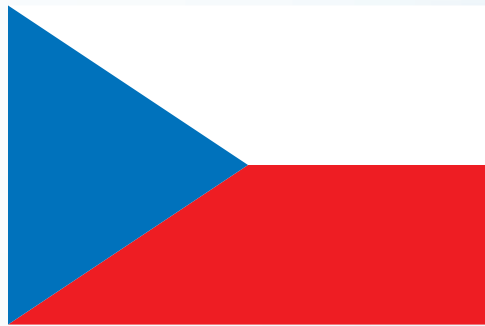
The most prominent building at Charles University is the Clementinum. Built as a monastery, it contains the college's

largest lecture halls. This is where Charles University's star professor, the great dragon Schwartzkopf, gives his lectures. These lectures are most often done in his true form and without the need for his translator. Rarely, recorded lectures involve the assistance of Professor Schwartzkopf's translator or Voice, Tatjana Romanov.

Located 70 kilometers east of Prague, is **Kutna Hora Ossuary**, the Bone Church of Sedlec. The skeletal remains of over 40,000 people were carved and built into the cathedral's walls, floor, and massive chandelier. Following the events of 2061 and Halley's Comet, the church began to occasionally flare visibly at night. Astral analysis of the bones has confirmed that the church is able to serve as a prison for specific spirits. It is unclear what traits, if any, the spirits trapped in the bone work may share.

It has been noted that spirits which were not bound for a long period of time can still become trapped within the church and remain there even after their summoner believes they should be gone. Unlike many other areas in Europe, the community around the church never suffered from the shedim infestation in the early 2060s. It has been theorized that shedim stayed away to avoid the effects of the Ossuary, though scientists have been unable to definitively answer.

- What kind of sick bastard carves up bones and uses them to build a church? Creepy. Especially in the Middle Ages, way before the Awakening. Haven't they ever heard of trees or stones?
- Netcat
- It's possible the artist received a vision from God, or a spirit that gave a remarkable impersonation during a mana spike.
- Frosty
- If they allow shapeshifters in parliament, what other species are granted citizenship?
- Beaker
- Pretty much anything that can stand up and talk without ripping the interviewer's face off. Most of the HMMVV types are still on the "ok to hunt" list, but nagas, sasquatches, sprites, and shapeshifters are all protected species in the Czech Republic.
- Sticks
- The noise from the Czech Parliament about immigrants in Marienbad is to make



sure that they get their full taxation. With the autonomy of the region, the government doesn't want to take any chances that the local magistrates take kickbacks without sharing.

- Kay St. Irregular

• The Czech Republic is also the birthplace of the Unified Magic Theory. It has changed the way the Awakened community views magic. While a shaman and a Wiccan both have their own ways of doing things, subscribers to the UMT have proven that both methods are equally valid even

without the spiritual belief. It's even been shown that followers of the path can change the fundamental nature of their own magic and alter the types of spirits that they are able to summon.

- Ethernaut
- What Ethernaut isn't saying is that the entire theory was spouted by the dragon's lackeys. We've known that the dragons have been around awhile, and know a whole hell of a lot about mojo, but I get worried when a groundbreaking theory just shows up out of nowhere.
- Mika
- Somebody took an extra dose of their paranoia pills this morning.
- Butch
- It didn't "just show up," the researchers have been working on it for nearly two decades.
- Frosty
- I'm just saying I wouldn't be excited if my mojo suddenly changed on me overnight because I thought about a different way of doing it.
- Mika
- The Romani of Marienbad are all over the place and they are treated as untouchable due to Schwartzkopf's protection. If you need somewhere to lay low for awhile, making friends with them may be your best bet. Just make sure whatever you're hiding from doesn't tie back to the dragon.
- Traveler Jones
- Marienbad is also rife with smuggling activity. The black markets there and in Bohemia are flooded with drugs, tech, and weaponry. Fresh imports from the AGS and Poland come in every few days, so they always have the latest and greatest in store.
- 2XL



FRANCE

France: frans**Population:** 71,050,000**Primary Languages:** French (official)**Provinces:** Alpes, Bretagne, French Guiana, Grand Centre, Grand Est, Île-de-France, Nord-Wallonie, Normandie, Sud-Ouest Pyrénées, Rhône Auvergne**Government Type:** Republic**Bordering Countries:** Allied German States, Brussels E.C., Euskal Herria, Italian Confederation, SOX Special Administrative Zone, Spain, Switzerland, United Netherlands**Geography:** Coastal plains with extensive rivers and mountains along the eastern border**Notable Features:** Gorges du Verdon, the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Seine and the Rhône

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Sixth Republic of France was founded in 2037 on the same ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood espoused by the previous republic. The Republic instituted public welfare and medical care for all of its citizens, including corporate citizens for any megacorporation operating in France. The Loureau Act, which forced the megacorporations to operate under the same health care statutes that the State offered to the public, also served to create a protected market for the corporations that signed on. For several decades, the status quo existed between the three estates (nobility, church, and corporation), with each doing their part to support the Republic.

In January 2071, President Yohann de Kervelec revealed the scandalous Project Omen to the French people. Planned by elements of the French nobility and the Catholic Church, it was an attempt to undermine the Republic and control the government through a series of puppet leaders. Rocked by sanctions from the New European Economic Community and the Corporate Court, the French government was forced to make massive cuts to their welfare and public health programs. For several months, the testimonies of those imprisoned in the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg (SOX) Special Administrative Zone were recorded, and investigations continue into the complicity of Project Omen leaders.

Megacorporations began closing down their local branches in response to the economic sanctions. Pressing for the repeal of the Loureau Act and formation of several pro-corp lobbyists, the megas left the French economy in tatters. With the nation facing the worst economic conditions since the Crash of '29, President Kervelec partially acceded to the Corporate Court and repealed parts of the Loureau Act. Eurocorps have begun to reinvest in France again, and formed extra-territorial compounds throughout the country, many clustered around Lille.

MAJOR CITIES

A mecca for tourists, **Paris** is the jewel of France. Special building codes protect the historic districts of the city and require new development to use the same architectural style. The Champs-Élysées is the best-known street in the city for markets and shopping, with hundreds of shops, sidewalk vendors, and the latest in high fashion.

Renowned for its beautiful cathedrals, expansive museums, and the Eiffel Tower, Paris also houses the Roman catacombs from its earliest settlements. During the summer months, tourists flock there to see the remains of Roman soldiers and Parisians interred there. The area is also one of the coolest in the city during the stifling August days.

Shops and nightclubs have sprouted up along the Seine River as river barges have taken on a new life. The waterway hosts slow evening cruises for tourists to see the city lights and enjoy banquets or live entertainment.

Drastically changed over the last year, **Lille** is a burgeoning corporate enclave. Following the French government's admission of bombing several corporate targets, the Corporate Court excised several large plots of land as recompense to be used as extra-territorial enclaves. With a huge cluster of enclaves forming around and inside Lille, the mega-corporations are entrenching themselves at a major transportation hub.

The corporations reinvigorated the local economy by privatizing services, and the unemployment rate dropped from twenty-nine percent to ten percent between June 2071 and January 2072. By offering dual-citizenship (French and corporate) to the people of Lille, the corporations have secured themselves in the social landscape. Citizens receive all the benefits of corporate life, don't pay taxes to the French government for corporate earnings, and can receive any benefits that the French government offers.

With 300 days of sunshine every year, **Marseille** is a perfect Mediterranean city. The city was saved from the worst of Crash 2.0



by a kill-switch built into the local telecommunications grid by Saeder-Krupp. Following the economic boom of the Wireless Matrix, Marseille saw several corporations invest heavily in rebuilding, and a diminishing influence of Saeder-Krupp in local affairs.

The city is a melting pot, with over 200 languages and dialects spoken daily. With refugees from the Chinese Civil war, the Euro Wars, and the Night of Rage all coming together, racism is a very minor issue. While there are occasional bouts of social unrest, Marseille's conflict is primarily over social differences rather than ethnic or racial ones. Despite the calm social conditions, Marseille has a higher rate of organized crime activities, including drug trafficking, than the rest of France.

Waterfront casinos and the finest in gourmet cuisine make **New Monaco** a popular vacation point for the wealthy elite. Local laws have formed a tax haven in the city to make it equally popular with businessmen and corporations. The confluence of wealth and power makes New Monaco a prime backdrop for high-level business negotiations and meetings.

Seated on the Mediterranean coast, halfway between Nice and the Italian Confederation, New Monaco is a regular stop for the Grand Tour, making the summer months a desirable time to visit. The city also hosts the annual Monaco Grand Prix, a racing tradition since 1929.

One of the few French cities to remain independent, **Nice** was rebuilt through privately funded contracts. Luxury resorts and casinos are spread along the coast, welcoming European aristocrats. Unlike the rest of the nation, Nice has passed specific laws segregating humans from other metatypes. This has led to conflict in the past, as meta-rights activists have protested the city's position regarding metas.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Following the eruption of several volcanoes in Central France in 2011, which were later viewed as heralds of the Awakening, **Auvergne** was evacuated and secured by the army. In 2038, a joint taskforce of corporations headed by Saeder-Krupp established the Laboratories of Auvergne Volcanic Area (LAVA). The facility's primary research was in the geological study of the compounds released by the volcanoes, discovering that the stone and ash released were found to have unique astral properties.

Since the Year of the Comet, the volcanoes have continued erupting. There have been several accounts of eruptions that happened only in astral space, without a physical counterpart. Additionally, there have been unconfirmed reports of an astral eruption that materialized physically after several seconds.

Located in northwestern France, **Brittany** (Bretagne) is a land that has come alive with magic. In 2023, a thick fog began to spread around the region. It covered most of the rural areas and surrounded large towns. The Mist, as it was labeled, disrupted magic and caused

people who entered into it to quickly become disoriented. After the Mist was banished by a grassroots movement known as the Druidic Revival of Brittany, entire villages were discovered to be missing. Over 100,000 people were reported missing after contact with the Mist, and have never been seen again.

Though several small pockets of the Mist remain, the large cities that were surrounded, but not directly affected by it, have continued to thrive. Researchers

have noticed an increase in paranormal activity and occasional ebbs and increases in magical energy throughout the area. Due to the fluid nature of magical energy in the region, several corporations have stationed research groups in St. Nazaire to study the effects of geomancy on the region.

- Project Omen and President Kervelec. Do you think it's coincidence that a man who used to make his living divining for the nobility didn't know anything about their secret plan to control the government and the French people?
- Cosmo
- From what I've read, Kervelec really was caught with his pants around his ankles. When Paladines suddenly fell ill, he was the first in line to take the office. Talk about a glaring blind spot, he was so busy looking up everyone else's future that he forgot to check his own.
- Glitch
- The problem is that Rochefoulcaud, a cog in the Omen Conspiracy, left witnesses alive. He had people who knew too much, but thought they might be useful again later. Conspiracies only work if you tie up all the loose strings when you're done.
- Snopes
- From the astral, and at a safe distance, the Mist reminds me the same type of astral signature you see around an astral gateway.
- Frosty
- Are you saying that the Mist just picks people up and hurls them off to the metaplanes?
- Elijah
- Not exactly, more like the Mist could be a front runner for something on the other side. Think about throwing down a smoke grenade before running across a hallway. It blocks the ability of people to see what is really happening. What if a guided alchera was moving around, collecting samples? It wouldn't want to expose itself to the rest of the world, which is why it stays out of big cities.
- Frosty
- So a nameless, unseen force with a vastly greater understanding of magic is in fact coming to Earth and taking our livestock? I'll need some proof.
- Snopes

ITALIAN CONFEDERATION

Italy: i-tə-lē

Population: 53,168,800

Primary Languages: Italian (official), Albanian, Sicilian

Member States: Cornio, Emilia Romagna, GeMiTo, Lombardia, Mezzogiorno, Papal States, Republic of Ferraro, Republic of Modeno, Republic of Serenissima, Republic of Tuscony, Sardinia, Sicily, Tientino-Alto Adige, Valle D'Aosto

Government Type: Theocratic Confederation

Bordering Countries: Austria, France, Hungary, Slovenia, Switzerland

Notable Geography: Alps, Apennine Mountains, Garda Lake, Mt. Etna, Mt. Vesuvius, Padan Plain, Po River, Trasimeno Lake

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The recent history of Italy is more intimately tied to the Roman Catholic Church than it has been since the Middle Ages. It begins with the economic strife that struck Europe in the early 21st Century. Unemployment was in the double digits, people struggled to feed their families, and the Italian Republic was on the verge of complete breakdown.

Into this chaos stepped Pope John Paul III. His impassioned speeches were the glue that held the floundering nation together. He brought hope to the people and a solid, seemingly eternal calm to a world in upheaval. The influence his words had on the populace allowed the church to play a central role in the formation of the new Italian Confederation when the Italian Republic splintered and collapsed in early 2036.

Today, the Papal States are the primary power in the loose confederation of city states that make up modern Italy. The Pope and the Curia serve as the guiding force behind all aspects of Italian life. Even the Cosa Nostra, which openly rules Sicily, is bound by the power of the pope. So far, the papal rule has provided stability for a nation that remains in economic and social strife.

His Holiness Pope John XXV still sits upon the Throne of Peter, which he ascended to in 2013. At 108 years old, he is the oldest pope to lead the church, and his fifty-nine year reign is the longest on record. To the endless frustration of his opponents he remains quite healthy, although he travels far less than in the past.

The pope and his Enlightened faction continue to press an agenda of open-minded reform. The latest affront to the Conservative faction was naming an admitted technomancer, Boston's bishop Ronald Grimes, as a cardinal. There is a very real fear among the pope's opponents that if he does not resign or die soon, it will become impossible to undo his progressive transformation of the church.

MAJOR CITIES

Looking much as it has for the past 300 years, the city of **Rome** is unique among modern sprawls.

No monstrous arcologies loom on the horizon, skyscrapers have been eschewed in favor of two and three-story buildings that hug the city's famed seven hills, and the ancient architecture that is the city's hallmark has survived the chaos of the 21st century intact. At its heart stands the Vatican, as much a symbol of power for an entire nation as it is for the religion that built it.

Despite the church's almost omnipresent power, the city still has its shadows. By night, like a werewolf from a B horror sim, the city transforms into something quite unlike its daytime self. The influence of the Camorra and the Cosa Nostra is everywhere, and their "business" takes to the streets in the moonlight. Fresh joytoys, the latest BTLs, and worse all find their way to the streets of the holy city after dark.

The **GeMiTo Sprawl** took shape when the nation collapsed in the thirties. With Genoa, Milan, and Turin hardest-hit, anarchy reigned and law enforcement, the military, nor corporate security could bring the area back under control. When the dust finally cleared, and the Italian Confederation was formally established in 2044, everyone was too busy rebuilding their own territory to worry about the ruined west.

The only action the new government took was to give the region a name; the Genoa-Milan-Turin Special Administrative Zone, or GeMiTo. Other than this, no one has done a thing for it. Over ten million people live there today, surviving however they can. They leech off the infrastructure of the heavily fortified corporate enclaves within the zone and in exchange they leave the enclaves alone, providing the corps with a lawless playground in which they can do as they please.

While cities around the world struggle to deal with the pervasive threats of toxins and pollution, the city of **Venice** finds its canals and city clean for the first time since the 17th Century. Even the foundations of the city have been solidified, making the expensive flood control systems of the late 20th Century obsolete. The elected Doge,



who is always a member of one of the business elite that run Venice, insists that the city's squeaky clean state is a result of a high-tech detoxification process, although considering they have yet to cash in on this miracle process, the explanation has left many doubters.

Florence is the home to the remnants of the once-powerful Italian media industry. For years the city and the industry were in a steady decline. The arrival of Horizon on the scene last year, however, has forced Sol Media and DeMeKo to reinvest in Florence. The ensuing competition has breathed new life into the market and holds the promise of a bright future for the city.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Although Sicily is best known as the home of the Cosa Nostra, recently **Mount Etna** has drawn attention to the island. Volcanologists studying the mountain fled the area after something came out of the magma and attacked them. Another team was sent to investigate, but never returned. For now, local authorities have restricted access to the mountain until a full inquiry can be mounted.

The remarkably intact old town center of **Turin** in GeMiTo is another mystery. Ask a local how this is possible amid the utter destruction and desolation of the zone, and they will simply shrug and point at the Palazzo Carignano, home of the Societa Thaumaturgica. Since its foundation, the Societa has dedicated itself to teaching the arts of magic to young people from the streets that have the gift.

Run by the Sylvestrine friars, the Societa charges no tuition and asks nothing in return from its students. Of course, many repay the Societa in some form, and the alumni are exceptionally protective of their alma mater. When a vicious gang war broke out in Turin three years ago, Societa alumni rallied to the old town center and easily convinced the warring gang members to choose somewhere else to fight.

Naturally, the church's Conservative faction is not pleased with the Societa's activities. Perhaps more than any other church-sponsored organization, the Societa best represents the Enlightened faction's acceptance of the Awakened world. There is talk brewing among Conservatives in the Curia about shutting the school down, although it does leave one to wonder how the alumni would react to such an attempt.

- That stuff about Turin was way off base. The Societa does good work, but the things happening there are way beyond them. Have any of you seen that place? It's not just intact—it's a damned museum.
- Traveler Jones



- I put my money on the catacombs, but I know a lot of the faithful say it's the Shroud.
- Arete

- Nice to see Pope John naming a technomancer as a cardinal. He's always been accepting of technomancers, but hadn't done anything solid to prove his support until now.
- Netcat

- Apparently the German Catholic Church actually acknowledged the appointment. A first step toward reunification?

- Ecotope

- Not likely. Pope John is going to need another 59 years to patch that hole.
- Fianchetto

- Far as I'm concerned it's just more proof the old bird has gone senile. What's next? An AI priest?
- Glitch

- Changing the subject ... anyone heard anything about Donna Allegra? For the past year or so the N'drangheta has been uncharacteristically quiet. Considering their usual MO (which consisted of severed limbs and similarly non-subtle messages) this sudden silence strikes me as pretty odd.

- Icarus

- Buzz buzz.
- Slamm-O!

- Cute. Look, even though she's based in GeMiTo and Don Feretti is in Sicily, he knows what is happening out there. If the bug rumors were true, don't you think the Alta Commissione would have done something about it by now?
- Ethernaut

- I just got word that one of the younger Dons, a guy named Franco Draghi out of Verona, is actually making a move for Feretti's seat as Capo di tutti i Capi. I figure it'll be a bloodbath.

- Sunshine

- I heard Draghi's already garnered the support of a couple of well-placed Dons with seats on the Commissione. Knowing how well Feretti reacts to people challenging his authority, we might be in for a hell of a show.

- Fianchetto

- Huh, guess I'll change those plans I had for a relaxing Sicilian vacation.
- Clockwork

RUSSIA

Russia: rə-she

Population: 154,000,000

Primary Languages: Russian (official), English

Provinces: Twenty-three *oblasts*

Government Type: Bureaucratic Dictatorship

Bordering Countries: Belarus, Estonia, Imperial Japan, Latvia, Manchuria, Mongolia, Poland, Scandinavian Union, Transcaucasia, Turkestan, Ukraine, and Yakut

Geography: Coniferous Forest, Steppes, and Tundra

Notable Features: Caucasus and Ural mountain ranges, Valley of Geysers

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Russia is a diverse, multi-ethnic country spanning from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean. Beginning in 2009 with the attempted nuclear attack by Native American forces, the Russian democratic government slowly restricted civilian traffic and rights. In 2016, President Chelenko was assassinated during the same three week period as several Western leaders. By 2026, the presidency had been abolished and Boris Kropunin became General Secretary. From 2030 to 2037, facing the secession of Yakut and subsequent failed war to retake the region, the country was driven into an ultra-nationalist fervor. The desire to assert the strength of the Rodina began the Euro Wars as Red Army soldiers invaded Poland, and later Eastern Europe and the Caucasus Mountains.

Russia is ruled by the National Supreme Soviet (NSS), an elected body similar to Parliament in Great Britain. The General Secretary, currently Viktor Kamendin, is the elected head of the NSS and dictates national policy as it relates to national security and foreign relations.

Currently, the National Soviet Reconstructionists hold the majority within the NSS, though several other political parties exist.

A key political group within Russia is the Red Army. Russian society is highly militarized, both socially and politically. The Constitution requires military service by every adult, male or female, for a period of no less than 24 months. Political candidates are expected to have served no less than 5 years in the Army. The heightened militarization of Russia has led to conflict when the country was in need of resources that could not be obtained through diplomatic means.

The Russian Orthodox Church saw a rise in activity after the fall of the old USSR. Though active clergy members are forbidden by the Russian Constitution from holding political office, many retired clergyman have joined the NSS. As firmly ingrained into the national landscape as the army, the church is the primary voice for metahuman rights within the political body. Several retired clergy members have also taken posts in the *Ministerstvo Vnutrenniy Del* (MVD) which functions as the country's internal police and national military presence.

MAJOR CITIES

As the capitol of Russia, **Moscow** serves as the seat of several key government agencies, such as, the NSS and the UGB (Russian Intelligence Agency). The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Moscow, is based in St. Basil's Cathedral. All the major city roads radiate out from Red Square, the square between the Kremlin and St. Basil's. Due to the strong nationalist tendencies, Moscow is primarily home to internal, national organizations. The presence of the world's leading megacorporations is very subdued within the city. While each corporation maintains a small office, their primary focus is in the port cities of St. Petersburg and Vladivostok.

The only international agency with a noticeable presence in Moscow that doesn't have roots in Russia's history is the Draco Foundation. The Foundation has established an office in Red Square, between the two historic seats of power. The Foundation has made



a name for itself by educating Muscovites about the fey creatures commonly seen within the city such as leshy, domovoi, and snyegurochka.

St. Petersburg is the second largest city in Russia and primary Russian port to the west. With access to the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe, the city is host to the major European corporations and offices for each of the Big Ten. Beyond international commerce, the city also thrives on arcanearchaeology. The Apep Consortium and Atlantean Foundation both have offices in St. Petersburg, and each has strong ties to the local museums and archives.

The Russian Orthodox Church maintains a presence in many of the local universities and museums. A higher number of graduates from St. Petersburg universities enter the seminary than from any other Russian city. To support this trend, the Church runs weekly forums to discuss secular policy as it relates to sacred thought.

Seated on the Pacific Rim, **Vladivostok** is Russia's primary port on its eastern coast. The city is a melting pot of cultures where Muscovites and Siberians clash with non-Russian doctrines from Asia. The Russian Pacific Fleet maintains large shipyards and dry docks here. Despite the presence of the Fleet and the national requirements for military service, Evo employs the highest number of people in the city, since its corporate headquarters is located there. As the leading provider of Matrix services in the region, having Evo based in Vladivostok allowed the city to come online with the Wireless Matrix Initiative several weeks before the rest of the nation.

The strong transhumanist agenda espoused by Evo has lent itself to forgiveness and softening of traditional Russian ethnic bigotry and racism. Despite the stabilizing influence Evo provides, crime continues to be a problem in the city. Organized crime syndicates have been a regular concern for MVD officials.

Most of the nation's heavy industry takes place in **Volgograd**, formerly known as Stalingrad. Seated on the River Volga, the city is the primary base for southwestern Red Army operations and a key control point for access to the Black Sea. The area was wracked by manastorms from late 2063 to early 2065. These storms have been blamed on the operations of Winternight leading up to their actions during the Second Matrix Crash.

Volgograd is well known within Russian folklore for its proximity to the River Volga. The river was a constant thread between regional variations of the legend of the Sea King. While different regional tellings changed the city and names of children, the River Volga was always the home of the Sea King's Daughter.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The only geyser field in all of Eurasia, the **Valley of Geysers** is the second largest concentration of geysers in the world. Roughly six kilometers long, it is the home of ninety geysers and thirteen hot springs. Following the eruptions along the Ring of Fire in 2061-2062, geothermal activity in the Valley picked up attracting a large number of paracritters associated with fire. There is one known free spirit, Velikan, who has told officials that the area is his demesne. Thaumaturgical research has confirmed that the valley is a powerful site, with multiple Dragon Lines crossing the area.



The dragons Lung and Ryumyo have both been seen in conversation with Velikan, though the content of those conversations has never been reported.

The popular legend of river nymphs living within each river in Russia gave rise to the construction of a monument to the **Sea King's Daughter** on the banks of the River Volga. Regularly visited by tourists and students since 2067, the statue has been a site of unusual activities. Over the last several years, there have been sightings in the monument's node and other nearby nodes of an icon matching descriptions of the Sea King. This icon has been reported to approach young artists, particularly musicians, and ask them to play. There have also been reports of the Sea King icon doing impossible tasks. In the most famous of these incidents, the Sea King reportedly interposed itself between a child and automobile's node. Before harming the child, the automobile's electronic system was disabled and emergency braking activated.

Examination of system logs have shown that there were no icons present that match the description nor was there any sign of tampering with the vehicle's node. No explanations have been offered by witnesses as to how an AR icon could have a physical impact on the world. Since the incident, tourism has increased dramatically.

- What they aren't saying and we all know is that the Rudina is the source of the Vory. The Red Vory, and to some extent the Western as well, operate out of Mother Russia. Over the last two decades, other groups have begun to infiltrate the area as well. Now you can't turn over a rock without finding someone hiding—whether it's the Yaks, Triad, Seoulpa, or Vory depends on what city you're in.
- Red Anya
- The Trans-Siberian rail road is a great place to catch a ride cross-country and do some biz while you're at it. I've started in Moscow and by the time I caught the boat in Vladivostok, my bags were full of more telesma gear than I could sell in a month.
- Lyran
- Vladivostok is one of the biggest smuggler ports in Russia—assuming you can grease the right palms. They run from the port south to Hong Kong and east to Seattle regularly. The boats that unload in Seattle bring everything from guns and drugs to girls and boys for the sex trade. I'd imagine the same goes for their southern runs too.
- Sounder
- After reading this, I took a trip out to the Volgograd area and looked around the nodes. The Sea King wasn't there at any point that I could tell, but the Resonance felt...off. Something is happening there, but it's not a sprite or AI.
- Netcat
- Brilliant light illuminates every shadow in time.
- Icarus



TÍR NA NÓG

Tír na nÓg: shēr nē nōg

Population: 3,800,000

Primary Languages: English 95%; Irish Gaelic 20%; Irish Spherethiel 36%

States (Provinces): Leinster (Cuige Laighean), Munster (Cuige Mumhan), Connaught (Cuige Chonnacht), Meath (Cuige Righ), Ulster (Ulaidhster).

Government Type: Theocratic Republic

Bordering Countries: United Kingdom

Geography: Island with a low central plateau ringed with isolated groups of hills and mountains

Notable Features: Giants Causeway, Great Cairn Line, Slighe Roads, Sunken Islands

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The land that was once known as Ireland underwent drastic transformations between 2011 and 2020: bogs appeared, forests grew at inexplicable rates, the slighe roads regenerated, and the number of cairns and dolmens increased. IRA attacks against British occupation forces became more common, which, combined with the effect of the VITAS outbreak and eco-disasters in Great Britain, led to the British House of Commons passing the Act of Dissolution on June 16, 2014. A week later the Treaty of Galway was signed, and the United Free Republic of Ireland was formed. By 2034 Liam O'Connor had succeeded in setting up Tír na nÓg, largely bringing the Protestant Paramilitaries in Ulster to heel, supplanting the Catholic Church with the Church of Ireland, and securing the future of the Danaan families.

The national government is centered on a parliament (oireachtas) with a president and two assemblies (the Dáil and the Senate), and understanding the basic operations of these bodies is important to an understanding of how power in the nation flows. The heart of power is the Senate (Seanad Eireann-Tír). The Dáil is restricted to proposing legislation to the Senate through joint committees. Likewise the Dáil can propose amendments that return the legislation for further consideration to the Senate. The power to return legislation can be utilized only once every thirty-day period. A final drafted bill can only be stalled for a maximum of ninety days.

It is widely acknowledged that the Danaan families control the vast majority of political power, wealth, and vital manufacturing capacity of the nation. Danaan control of the Senate is absolute and effectively shuts down internal obstructions to their agenda. Nor do they look kindly on external meddling.

Tír na nÓg's isolationist stance received something of a setback in 2062 when it was discovered that the Veil that shields the nation had become erratic. Dangerous spikes and, more alarmingly, voids were randomly appearing. Previously, the magical supremacy of this nation was not in doubt, but reports of these flaws have slowly made their way past the control of state censors. Cairn lines have experienced surges that have created a number of unexpected but short-lived effects. Actual physical manifestations of these cairn line surges include a line of fire several meters wide and many kilometers long, temporary malfunctions of electronics (including cyberware), and Awakened creatures inexplicably exhibiting abnormal behavior. Flares and ebbs of mana have been experienced at both cairns and monoliths. Even astral constructs have been witnessed to fade in

and out of the material world with regular frequency. This magical instability has not dissipated in the last decade, a situation that has baffled scientists, shaken the faith of the people, and given the Danaan family many a sleepless night.

Over the last two years, activities of the Ulster Protestant militias have increased, coinciding with anti-Elven terrorist attacks by groups like the Knights of the Red Branch in the UCAS. With the number of attacks increasing within the country, the government has responded with a brutal crackdown on known and suspected Protestant sympathizers. While the situation has yet to become a full-fledged civil war, the movement seems to be heading in that direction.

MAJOR CITIES

Baile Atha Cliath, more commonly known as **Dublin**, serves as the capital of the nation and home to more than a half-million citizens. Public transportation within Dublin is well-developed, since private motor vehicles are prohibited in the city. Foreign corporate presence within the city exists, but such subsidiaries are required to have a majority of their shares owned by the Tír government, and they are forbidden from maintaining a private military force. The most notable corporations in the city include Gaetronics Eireann-Tír and O'Toole Transcom.

Dublin is the heart of the nation's artistic life, be it paintings, sculpture, poetry, music, and many non-traditional art forms. Much of this is the result of two factors: the city has one of the youngest populations in the Tír (greatest percentage 25 and under), and the government not only offers tax exempt status to artists but goes one step further in giving them a large volume of grants. The many art galleries, theaters, and performance halls throughout the city rarely lack talented performers.

In the Gaelic tongue it is known as Bael Feirst. Elsewhere it is called **Belfast**. Those that live there know it as hell. The Protestant militias have taken note that the control of magic within the Tír has become somewhat tenuous over the last decade, and they have been arming themselves. Ninety-eight years after Bloody Sunday (a.k.a. the Bogside Massacre), a series of attacks were carried out in Belfast targeting officers of the Tír Republican Corps (TRC) and a supply depot (just outside of Belfast). The body count officially stands at sixty-four, although statements from five Protestant militias claiming responsibility put the death toll at 179. TRC counterstrikes in the aftermath of that attack rounded up as many as 104 supposed members of Protestant militias, but there is evidence that the majority of these people were simply Protestants with no formal militia connections. The militias have begun an all-out campaign targeting Tír officials and members of the TRC. Initially the attacks were a monthly occurrence, but in the last year they have escalated to weekly engagements.

The TRC moved to contain the situation within Belfast by creating a containment zone around the city. Since that move, the militias have responded by carrying out attacks in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Derry, and Newry. These attacks are typified by the use of snipers and spirits with an emphasis on keeping collateral damage to a minimum. Documents recovered from several militia headquarters indicate that specific instructions have been given not to utilize bombing tactics or random shooting. As of this writing the official death toll from these attacks is 1,103, with 974 being Tír government officials and members of the TRC. No accurate numbers as to the losses sustained by the militias exist.

Galway (Cathar na Gaillimhe), the fifth largest city in the Tír, is located on the central west coast. It is perhaps best known for the

University of Galway, seafood, its Gaelic language, and, of course, its magic. Prior to the Awakening, Galway enjoyed being known as the cultural heart of Ireland and benefited from substantial tourism. After the Awakening though, Dublin became the focal point for the nation's art scene. In the process Galway lost much of its tourism. There was a conscious effort to isolate Galway because of its importance magically. With the Great Cairn Line bisecting this region, the presence of so many passage tombs, and the Turoe Stone (said to be capping some sort of astral hole), this area has a considerably elevated security level.

Galway Harbor is relatively small both in terms of the size and number of vessels it can accommodate. Still it is important in that it provides ferry service to outlying islands and neighboring towns. In addition to the harbor, the river corridor is an important waterway within the city. This river and its canals and channels are controlled to provide navigable routes to the sea and to generate hydroelectric power for the city. The Gluas light rail line and two bus companies provide most of the commuter transportation within the city.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **Great Cairn Line** is a snaking line that bisects the Island and is one of the most powerful mana lines in the world. It too has also experienced some changes over the last decade. One of the changes that has drawn the greatest amount of interest is the western end branch. This portion of the line branches at Clew Bay, moves twenty kilometers straight out to sea, and terminates at a sunken island that has eight dolems in the center of it. There is some speculation that the appearance of this branch of the line might be interfering with the proper function of the Veil. Regardless, the discovery of the line and the sunken island has spurred at least three expeditions to investigate. Activity along the line itself has increased with the appearance of fairy circles (mushroom circles) and reports that infirm individuals have walked along the line and been healed. Unfortunately, there has also been a significant spike in the number of nighttime disappearances of people thought to have been on the line.

Doineann Draoidheil storms have also been affected by the Surge, but not how one might have expected. Instead of being amorphous in size and shape, they have taken on a fixed size. They are typically about one kilometer in diameter, with the base at 100 to 200 meters in elevation and the top rising to 500 or 600 meters. After they appear, they stabilize into a swirling vortex with a black funnel at the center at the top and bottom. Probes and other high-tech equipment sent in to investigate these vortices have all been destroyed with no usable data recovered. Far more disconcerting is that astral investigation has resulted in the deaths of those who have entered the vortex.

Officially, the government has not answered any questions concerning the alterations to the Doineann Draoidheil. Unofficially, government scientists and researchers are completely baffled as to what these storms have become. Initiates of the Order of the Sun, Moon, and Stars also remain silent on these events even after losing a handful of members who investigated. Public fear has subsided with the passing of the years, but the government has maintained quarantine over the area these storms occupy.

Slighe Roads were ancient Roman roads built over mana lines that influence those traveling along them. Prior to the Awakening these



ancient roadways had been long forgotten, but they reappeared with the return of magic. With the appearance of Halley's Comet, the Slighe Roads have adopted an erratic quality. Drivers have noted that on some trips they have seen glowing eyes lining the road for kilometers at a time. Others have reported turning a corner and finding themselves back at their starting point. Still stranger reports exist of long dead relatives joining the occupants of the vehicle for the journey

and engaging them in conversation.

It is worth noting that while other magical features of the Tír have taken on dangerous traits, these roadways have yet to do so. There are Slighe cruising clubs that take to these roads to see what unusual phenomena they can turn up. One of the more popular trideo shows in Tír na nÓg is *Slighe Sights*, where the show's hosts chronicle their adventures on the Slighe Roads.

More effort has been expended looking for **sunken islands** around the Tír and the possibility of any archaeological significance. Clew Bay started as a focal point for this research, but exploration has since expanded much further around the island. Government grants to the University of Galway have allowed the formation of fourteen research teams. Patrols by the Tír's navy have increased, along with the launch of a dedicated surveillance satellite in geosynchronous orbit over the island. Sources within the university have revealed that at least a dozen artifacts dating back two thousand years have been recovered from undisclosed locations off the coast. Observers have speculated that there are caves being explored, because two intact scrolls were recovered.

Much has been written about the **Seelie Court**, a great deal of which violates conventional wisdom. While the government deals with ruling the physical nation of Tír na nÓg, the Seelie Court deals with more mystical affairs of the kingdom. The Queen has issued edicts explicitly removing the Court from temporal matters, and the Court does not meddle in the affairs of the government. With that said, there have been those within the government who foolishly have proclaimed the support of the Seelie Court in certain affairs. This has prompted the Court to respond in ways to ensure that both the public and the offender are certain of the Queen's position.

Presiding over the Seelie Court is Queen Brane Deigh, often referred to as Lady Brane. The court is keeper of the Arcana, objects that confer power and authority to the Queen and her Court. It is well known that the court does not have a physical location within our world. Even the portals that lead to it are known to shift and require an initiated guide to locate them.

With all the changes that have been going on within the Tír, one should not be surprised that the **Giant's Causeway** has also been altered. It has extended an additional one hundred meters out to sea and taken on a much more deliberate appearance. It now forms an elevated path that is lined on both sides with twenty-four-meter tall basalt columns at ten-meter intervals. As spectacular as the Causeway was previously, researchers now are studying the site with renewed interest.

- Every time I visit this place it shocks me how much it has changed, and I'm not talking about buildings or people. It is like some ancient civilization is trying to take back the island. And when you talk to the people you really get a feeling that they are not certain where that effort will take them.
- Fastjack



- One thing's for certain, the Danaan families are starting to see events spinning out of their control. And if you don't think that this hasn't been noticed in other places of power, then you are dangerously ignorant with regard to political matters.
- Fianchetto
- The façade that the Danaan family puts on for the public conceals a lot of back-room fighting. These guys are bringing in outside talent as they start wrestling for position amongst themselves.
- Stone

- Big players are moving the pieces on this chessboard. The Protestants don't have the type of funding to pull this sort of thing off, so someone is footing the bill for them. The Vatican is a pretty likely candidate as they're still holding a grudge against the Tír.
- Kay St. Irregular
- You don't seriously expect us to believe that the Vatican would actually support the Protestants!
- Traveler Jones
- Not from the pulpit, but covertly—let's just say that some of them are willing to walk through a little blood to make an example of those that betrayed them.
- Kay St. Irregular

- I would think that the British would be lining up for the chance at revenge in the Tír.
- Picador
- Wouldn't it be interesting if the Vatican and some Brits were teaming up against the Tír government? What a dynamic duo!
- Haze
- You folks are forgetting the first rule of the Sixth World: Follow the money. The Vatican is too easy of an answer, the villain most readily seen. What you want to look for is who would want to get a foothold in Tír Na nÓg. Who is most often at odds with these elves? Who is shut out from doing biz in the Tír?
- FastJack
- Can we talk about some of the hinky shit going on along the Cairn Lines for a sec? And I'm not just talking about the big one. I'm talking about processions of spirits walking along the lines in the dead of night. Critters going bat-fuckin' nuts when a surge goes down one of those lines. You don't know fear until you've been chased a couple of kilometers by a couple of hundred squirrels with blood in their eyes. Wandering around the damn lines at night is not a good idea.
- 2XL
- Squirrels? LMFAO!
- Slamm-O!
- Sure, laugh it up! Tell you what, I'll post a few pics of me in the ER. Then come back and laugh.
- 2XL
- Damn! Squirrels did that you? Sorry. Couldn't help myself.
- Slamm-O!
- It's not just the cairn lines that are acting up. I've taken an astral peek at the Doineann Draoidheil storms, and those things truly frighten me. In astral space you can actually feel the pull, like they're trying to suck you in—and that was a kilometer away.
- Winterhawk
- Was it drawing mana into it?
- Ethernaut

- Thankfully, no. It doesn't look like a rift. Actually, the only thing I've seen that it resembles at all is a black hole, but without the same absolute pull. Above the center of it was this absolute black abyss, and radiating out from it was this sensation ... Well, it's hard to describe, but imagine looking into oblivion.
- Winterhawk
- The Slighe Roads sound all cool and shit, but I had a friend who got snookered out in the Tír one night, got into his car, told her to take him home, then the guy woke up a little bit later, got out, and walked back into the same pub. He did that four times before he finally just passed out in the back seat.
- Rigger X
- Some buddies of mine actually laid eyes on some of those artifacts that were recovered from the sunken islands. From what I was told these aren't your run-of-the-mill Celtic trinkets. Some of them have some serious mojo stuffed into them.
- Frosty
- Figures that the dandelion eaters would go around snatching up all the really cool stuff. You can be sure that all sorts of parties are planning how to get their hands on these artifacts.
- 2XL
- Five years ago I wouldn't even have thought about pulling any runs in the Tír. But given how things are going lately there it just might be doable.
- Hard Exit
- There is no way that I'm going to pull a run in Dublin. You will never see me making my getaway on a bicycle!
- Butch
- I haven't been able to verify this, but the story goes that the magic is so bugged over there that a little girl wandered through a portal into the Seelie Court. Way I heard it all of the wee folk got themselves into quite a tizzy over it!
- Frosty
- Sounds pretty unlikely.
- Winterhawk
- With everything that's been going down over here, can you really say with absolute certainty that it didn't happen? This land is shifting under the residents' feet—who's to say what's possible now?
- Frosty



UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom: ū-nīt-əd king-dəm

Population: 59,300,000

Primary Languages: English (official), Gaelic/Welsh, Punjabi/Urdu

Countries: England, Scotland, Wales

Government Type: Constitutional Monarchy

Bordering Countries: France, Tír na nÓg

Geography: Mountainous in the north and west with hills and lowlands in the southeast

Notable Features: Anglesey, Cumbrian Mountains, English Channel, Hebrides, Lake District, Orkney Islands, Pennines, Shetland Islands, Thames River

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The history of the United Kingdom in the early twenty-first century was marked by a series of environmental disasters. The troubles began in 2004 when one by one, the country's nuclear reactors started failing. Some failures were relatively mild, while others were catastrophic.

Pollution plagued the nation as well, with chemical dumping, toxic clouds, and oil spills all taking their toll on the countryside. Some of these incidents were accidents, others the result of negligence, while still others were calculated acts of terrorism. In time, huge swaths of the British countryside were left uninhabitable. VITAS did not spare the United Kingdom either, taking the lives of 1 in 4 people.

The Awakening also had an impact, although less negatively than elsewhere. Whether due to a long history of mysticism, old-fashioned British practicality, or the fact that one can't ignore stone circles exploding out of the ground, the British incorporated the new world into their society rather than separating themselves from it.

UGE struck the United Kingdom hard, with 31% of children born as elves in 2011. Goblinization also affected large numbers of British citizens, transforming 44% of people in some communities, and SURGE incidents struck the United Kingdom at a rate that was almost twice the global average. Some attribute these high numbers to the large number of ley lines on the islands, while others suggest, romantically, that the United Kingdom has a magical destiny.

Magic has reshaped the United Kingdom in other ways. Ancient stone monoliths started reappearing as early as 2011, bursting from the ground whole. The wild lands of the United Kingdom are growing and retaking the countryside around them. In the English Channel, an entire island erupted from the sea and was dubbed Lyonesse, the name of King Arthur's final resting place, by the BBC. All across the United Kingdom, powerful mana conduits called ley lines have become active.

The Awakening of more than a dozen dragons and wyverns within the borders of the United Kingdom provided yet another undeniable sign of magic's return. These monsters from legend appeared and laid claim to huge tracts of the countryside. At least two of these dragons, Celedyr and Rhonabwy, are counted among the infamous great dragons, and a third, known only as the Sea Dragon, is suspected of holding that distinction.

Faced with the growing turmoil caused by these world-changing events, the citizens of the United Kingdom pulled together. A new wave of nationalism swept the nation, and the people rallied behind

the crown and flag. Amid this nationalistic fervor, the Office of the Lord Protector was created. In another sign of the United Kingdom's acceptance of magic, a leading light of the New Druidic Movement, Lord Marchmant, was appointed to the post.

As the years went on, more and more power was collected under the Office of the Lord Protector. When the heady throes of nationalism faded, the Lord Protector and the New Druidic Movement used their powers to maintain control. Censorship, surveillance, and oppressive new laws were used to manage the people of the United Kingdom.

But the British do not relinquish their freedom lightly. The first rumblings of revolution began in the 2050s. A growing underground movement turned against the LPO and his lackeys. Wielding weapons both magic and mundane, the people fought back, refusing to bow before an aristocratic minority that had grown more distant from the masses it ruled with each passing day.

The conflict came to a head in 2071, when a collection of previously unassociated revolutionary groups banded together to form a loose alliance. This mismatched band of activists secretly organized the largest peaceful demonstration in history. On the evening of June 23rd, 2071, nearly 2 million candle bearing marchers descended on London's Inner City. Despite the massive crowds and aggressive tactics by the LPO's security forces, very little violence occurred. Most attribute this minor miracle to one man: the Pendragon.

For almost a decade the Pendragon provided a spiritual heart to the resistance movement. Time and again he appeared at moments of crisis, rallying the people with moving speeches and calling on every citizen to bear the responsibility of restoring freedom to the nation. On that evening, before the gates of Buckingham Palace, the Pendragon made his final appearance. In a dramatic speech, he challenged the leaders of the United Kingdom to throw off the shackles of the LPO and return power to the people. As he finished, the LPO's men moved in to arrest him, but were stopped short when Queen Caroline came out of the palace and stood beside him. There, she announced her support for the Pendragon's proposals to the roaring approval of the crowd.

Just two weeks later, parliament voted to dissolve the Office of the Lord Protector, and the elderly Lord Marchmant retreated into voluntary exile. The New Druidic Movement, however, remains a powerful, if somewhat reduced, force in government. At the center of the reorganization stood Prime Minister William Darch who, for the first time in years, found himself holding an office that commanded actual power. As for the Pendragon, by the morning of June 24th he was gone. No one has seen him since.

MAJOR CITIES

London, the United Kingdom's capital, has not fared well over the years. Repair and reconstruction attempts are constantly thwarted by acid rain, filth-laden smog, and the occasional civil uprising. The signs of past attempts at saving the city lie everywhere, but none are as poignant as the ruins of the Dome Project.

In the thirties, Parliament decided to cover Inner London with a giant biofabric dome, providing the ultimate defense against pollutants and toxins. Unfortunately, terrorists turned this against the city by unleashing a deadly biological agent into the dome's air filtration system, killing thousands. Amid public outcry, the dome was taken down, with only the dome's rusting steel ribs and building-sized concrete anchors remaining. Each election cycle, some politician promises to remove them, and each time they get into office they find more vital projects that need attention first.

The London sprawl is circled by the M25 motorway. Inner London is at the center, surrounded by a commuter belt of “orbitals.” The bulk of London’s working-class citizens live in these outlying communities. Inner London is divided up into a number of distinct neighborhoods, each with its own personality. There is The City, the center of government and the most popular stop for visitors. Many of the City’s distinctive and historic buildings survived the upheavals of the early century. Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, and the Tower of London all still stand, although St. Paul’s Cathedral burned during a riot in 2066.



Recently uncovered evidence suggests the outbreak might actually represent a mass poisoning from an abandoned chemical plant that burned down just two days before the first deaths were reported. Some claim the situation in the sprawl is hopeless, and there’s talk in Parliament about revoking the sprawl’s habitable status and lumping it in with the Northern Toxic Zone.

One of the most notorious Inner London neighborhoods is the Lambeth Containment Zone (LCZ). More commonly called “the Squeeze,” the LCZ is a walled ghetto in the heart of London. In 2038, after discovering that the Adams-Hoffman Corporation had conducted government-sanctioned, widespread genetic experiments on the impoverished residents of the neighborhood for the past fifteen years, the people rioted. The government responded with force, and barricaded the rioters into the neighborhood.

Since the dissolution of the LPO, Parliament has started recovery efforts in the LCZ. Although the ruinous condition of the neighborhood is one problem, the people living there are a much more difficult challenge. Years of isolation and abuse at the hands of the Office of the Lord Protector have left the residents of the LCZ distrustful of the government. Efforts to revitalize the area are met with strong, often violent, resistance. Parliament is debating the best course of action to take in resolving the trouble in the LCZ.

Birmingham is the ultimate expression of modern industrialism gone awry. Endless rows of stained concrete buildings stretch as far as the eye can see, and at the center of the factory-ridden sprawl stands the towering monolith of the Bull Ring. At 186 stories tall, this stark grey behemoth is the largest structure in the city. An early attempt at an arcology, the building is half-vacant, with the remaining businesses struggling to survive. Heavy pollution, rising crime rates, and simmering racial hostilities make Birmingham a city on the edge.

Meresysprawl was born when the expanding borders of the Liverpool and Manchester sprawls finally merged. Featuring a mix of relatively well-off university neighborhoods, crime-ridden docks, and filthy barrens, Meresysprawl has a little of everything. The one common denominator is a collapsing infrastructure. Water outages, power failures, and Matrix interruptions are the norm, making it difficult to live in Meresysprawl and almost impossible to do business.

In **Scotsprawl**, the distinction between regions is even more pronounced. On one hand there is Edinburgh: regional capital of Scotland, location of the King’s official residence in the country, and the home of Edinburgh University. On the other there is Glasgow—a dirty, dank sprawl, choked with manufacturing plants. Although the rivalry between these areas isn’t quite friendly, it hasn’t erupted into violence. Both know their roles in the sprawl, and carry on those roles without interfering with one another.

Newcastle-Tynesprawl lies on the fringes of the Northern Toxic Zone. Toxic bleed-off from the zone often finds its way into the sprawl’s air and water, causing regular outbreaks of chemical poisoning. The worst example was in 2047, when 120,000 people died from what the government claimed was a VITAS outbreak.

Nottingham is almost as charming as most folks envision it. It’s still a sprawl, but local ordinances have limited buildings to ten stories, and green space is a priority. One of the sprawl’s main attractions is the Sherwood Theme Park. The park bought up the land around Nottingham Castle, tore down many of the buildings, and used magic to recreate a portion of Sherwood Forest. The “old growth” forest is quite beautiful, and has numerous Robin Hood-themed attractions. It’s also home to an impressive zoo of paranormal and Awakened animals.

Cambridge is the center of the United Kingdom’s research and development industry. The school is surrounded by corporate research institutes, where many of the professors and dons moonlight as consultants. Like Nottingham, Cambridge instituted a building height cap at sixteen stories, giving the city a turn-of-the-century feel. The exception is the old Fuchi habitat, now owned by NeoNET, which lies three miles north of town. The forty-four story structure is built with graceful curves, glittering, beveled glass walls, and tubular structural components, and is considered an architectural masterpiece.

Cardiff-Caerdydd is the center of the Welsh government. The Welsh Royal Infirmary is a major employer in the city, and is well-known for its experimental medical work involving shamanic and other magical therapies. The city is home to Cardiff Castle, an excellently preserved medieval castle. The castle did suffer some damage in 2011, however, when a stone circle erupted in the castle’s cellars. Since then the castle has drawn druids from around Wales.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Stonehenge is perhaps the best known Awakened site on the planet, and with good reason. Besides its position along the powerful great ley manaline that bears its name, in 2061 during the Summer Solstice, Stonehenge underwent a remarkable restoration. By the time the sun had risen, the entire complex had rebuilt itself in full view of thousands of witnesses. Every stone was in place, even those that had disappeared centuries earlier.

The **great leys** are powerful mana lines that cross much of the United Kingdom, and while not specific locations, are also remarkable features of the country. Six of these powerful mana lines cut across the British countryside. They are, to date, unlike any other mana lines on the planet, and most significantly, they are increasing in number. The most recent addition was in 2063 when a ritual performed by a circle of wild druids unleashed the power of the so-called Wild ley.

The emergence of the island of **Lyonesse** from the English Channel on October 31, 2062 is one of the more shocking Awakened events in the United Kingdom. Out of nowhere, with no seismic activity whatsoever, the island simply appeared at the convergence of the Stonehenge and Stalker ley lines. The military immediately cordoned off the area and took control of the island.

Protected in the mundane world by naval vessels and heavily armed ground forces, and in the astral plane by great form elementals, no one outside the government has gotten onto the island. Just a year ago, however, an unusual blue glow was seen emanating from Lyonesse. Less than an hour later, all military forces evacuated to nearby naval vessels. Since then, it's believed the island has been secured by naval and aerial patrol.

Beneath the streets of London's West End lies the **West End Underplex**. In 2040, with Inner City development space at a premium, enterprising entrepreneurs using arcology technology started building down. The result is a city beneath the city. Some of the more recent buildings extend as many as ten stories beneath the streets. Fine restaurants, shopping malls, condominium complexes, and even underground parks are all found in this subterranean landscape.

A less pleasant place to visit is the **Scottish Fringe Toxic Zone**. One of several toxic landscapes the United Kingdom continues to struggle with, the Scottish Fringe Toxic Zone was the result of a terrorist strike in the North Sea oil fields. Although it seemed that the wind should have pushed the spill the other direction, it flowed up and covered the entire coastal area. The spill continued moving inland, penetrating more than thirty kilometers inland.

After that initial push, the spill only expanded a meter or so each year. Recently, however, monitors have noticed the inward push picking up again. Last year the spill expanded over thirty meters. To date, no one has an explanation for the initial inland push or why it is picking up again now.

- I was at the march in '71. That was an amazing night.
- Stones
- “Magical” some might say. I've seen a pair of classified reports from the New Druidic Movement. They suggest that, whether the marchers knew it or not, all those people were part of what amounted to an enormous ritual casting. I know, that's impossible, but the NDM seemed to be taking it pretty seriously.
- Winterhawk
- If the rumors about the Pendragon's aura are true, there might be something to it.
- Sunshine
- No. If Pendragon were a great dragon in human form, some of the other greats would have taken an interest in his shenanigans. I'm not convinced.
- Frosty
- Personally, I vote for a corp plant. The little alliance that organized the march used a hidden wireless network that would be the envy of most governments. I don't know how they set that thing up, but they definitely had help from someone with a lot of money.
- DangerSensei
- Wanna hear my theory? I'll give you a hint. Starts with Queen, ends with Caroline.
- Plan 9

- Please, spare us your “England is secretly a neo-monarchy” conspiracy theories.
- Winterhawk
- Anyone else see the article about Lord Marchmont last week?
- Sunshine
- Yeah. It said he's chosen elective cryogenic stasis. I'm betting that's one popsicle that stays frozen awhile. The guy isn't sick, he's just ancient. No one's going to come up with a cure for that anytime soon.
- Butch
- On a different note, I'm not sure if anyone else has seen it, but the NeoNET habitat in Cambridge really is pretty damned impressive. Not only is the design amazing, but I heard that it only took four months to construct. The construction site was kept tightly under wraps, and the rumor is that Fuchi used a secret nanite construction technique to literally grow the building.
- Winterhawk
- Doubtful. If they had anything like that, they would have used it to save the company back in '59.
- Nephrine
- I was reading about the plans to merge the Newcastle—Tynesprawl into the NTZ. The only thing I noticed they haven't figured out is where the million or so residents of the sprawl are expected to go.
- Sunshine
- Go? Just because the Parliament declares a place uninhabitable doesn't mean they won't let a bunch of poor people die there.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I heard some strange things about Nottingham. A friend of mine tells me that about twenty years back, the Queen's Medical Center bought up a ton of land in the northern part of the sprawl and walled off the entire area. Recent satellite photos show what looks like your typical corporate enclave. There are shopping centers, apartment buildings, parks, you name it, and plenty of people living there. There's room for a good fifty or sixty thousand people in that place. The odd part is that no one knows who these people are or where they came from.
- Pistons
- What sort of work is the Queen's Medical Center involved in?
- Icarus
- Vat grown clonal organ replacement.
- Smiling Bandit
- Hoo boy.
- Icarus

Scottish
Irradiated
Zone

Scottish Fringe
Toxic Zone

★ Scotsprawl

★ Newcastle-Tynesprawl

UNITED
KINGDOM

★ Meresysprawl

● Nottingham

Birmingham



● Cambridge

London



★ Stonehenge

● Cardiff-Caerdydd

● Lyonesse

Belfast ●

Isle of Man

TÍR NA NÓG

Dublin ★



NIGHT AND DAY

PHAEDRA WELDON

Diem closed her eyes and opened her senses, welcoming the soft, whispering touch of the datasphere surrounding Wuxing's temporary digs beside the Draco Foundation Building. She was crouched in a small corner of the basement, far beneath the makeshift office of Kull Brennan, the Knight Errant officer in charge of maintaining the security codes on Wuxing's primary node.

She and her brother Noctem were in Denver to retrieve two items for Mr. Johnson: a small device found in the rubble of the teocali, and a packet of data recently retrieved from the device. Diem's target was the data, while her brother would appropriate the device. Lucky for them, the two targets were in the same building.

Unfortunately, he'd vanished in the last ten hours. Her last communication with him had been a brief message relaying he'd retrieved the target—and then nothing. The sprite she'd compiled to monitor him reported that his commlink was off. Noctem was her twin brother, two minutes younger than herself, and he was her only family. He was the dark to her light, her opposite half, and her best friend.

He was also a mage, and though she didn't quite understand his power, she respected it, and had seen his magic wielded with cold precision. If he had failed, she could only think he'd succumbed to the city's higher elevation which had sapped his strength after arriving. If this were so, then he could have been captured and detained, yet she'd detected no alarms within the network—neither public nor silent.

Before entering Denver with the appropriate papers, they'd been briefed on the device, given a small digital image of it by Mr. Johnson, a frail Native American whose cool exterior had comforted Diem but seemed to worry Noctem. As if sensing her brother's agitation, he and Mr. Johnson had spoken privately in a separate room.

And somehow even Diem's most powerful sprite couldn't penetrate the environment system's access—she couldn't even hack it and listen in on their conversation.

Whatever was said seemed to reassure Noctem and he'd stepped out of the room with a hidden smile. The kind his sister recognized as something others should shy away from.

Diem opened her eyes, reaching out with her mind, and three AR windows coalesced in front of her. One would be her guide in the mainframe, another would monitor communication in and out of the building, and the third she kept open as a private channel for her brother as she searched for any bio-trace of him in the building.

She dove into the system's mainframe via VR, dipping her living persona into the data-streams.

Creating a subscription was simple, and the admin access code provided by Mr. Johnson proved true. Stepping into the node was like entering the tomb of a forgotten library, with columns raising the ceiling into the heavens, banners directing visitors to the exhibits. Diem moved quickly to the vault in the back of the building. Its security wasn't anything she hadn't seen before, but she didn't have the right form to crack it. With a twist in her consciousness, she intuited the form, feeling her way to thread a new piece of Matrix fabric that would do the work she needed. Her focus was deep, taking everything away from her except her concentration on the form. Then it was there, it was real. It took the virtual form of a generator.

Once the electrodes from her generator were placed on the vault door, she popped the ignition. With a small boom that would soon alert the security dogs, the door came forward and she moved easily out of its way as it fell.

Inside the data was easy enough to find. Once it was taken, she quickly wove together the ever-present strands of data to form a courier sprite. The sprite formed into a horse like those she'd once read about in the Pony Express, and she attached the data to the saddlebags before it sped out the vault door, past the approaching dogs, and up into the air to disappear into the streams.

Her sprite would take it to a safe location, giving her ample deniability in case she was caught. She smirked. As if that would ever happen.

She still had to find Noctem.

With deliberate ease, she tossed the dogs a steak, then moved past them and out the vault door.

"Did you get it?" came a familiar voice.

She turned in the library's hallway. Noctem stood just inside the library door.

In reality, he was broad shouldered, with a small waist and hips. They were the same height and shared almost the same face. But unlike her blonde, wheat colored locks, his hair was dark with gray highlights. His eyes were gold, hers were blue.

His online avatar was as far from his physical appearance as it could be. He'd chosen a red panda, his favorite animal. It lacked the depth of her own because he used a simple



out-of-the-box commlink. He'd never traveled the Matrix, not in the way she had. But then he'd walked along the Astral, and that thought scared the crap out of her.

"What happened?" she hissed. "Why did you log off?"

The panda looked up at her with wide, golden eyes. "Had to disappear for a bit. I—" the avatar was motionless and silent for a moment, then it moved again. She knew he'd removed his focus from the commlink and concentrated on the real world for a second. "I should have listened to you about this city and taken it slower. Just walking up the steps to this building was a stone bitch. I got tired and had to rest."

She hadn't been as physically active as he had, and she worried his body was going to succumb to the effects of magic, as well as the thin air.

"The data's on its way. The device?"

"I have it. There are three ZDF security transports out front—can you hack one of them and get in it?"

Diem nodded. "What about you?"

"I'll meet you there. There's something I have to do." And he vanished.

Pulling out of VR, she gave herself a few seconds to re-orient to the physical world before calling up the building's aerial schematic and started retracing her steps back out into the street.

She only half-wondered what Noctem was up to as she opened the door of the middle vehicle using a machine sprite. With a slight smile, she compiled two more machine sprites and sent them into the other transports with requests for a diversion.

As she settled in the front something shook the vehicle as well as the ground beneath her. What the—

Noctem came flying over the hood of the transport, landing with a hard thud on the right front fender. Diem jumped out of the vehicle and ran round the side to him. Her brother was bleeding from a cut to his head.

He stood, leaning on the car heavily and motioned for her to get it moving as he pulled the passenger door open and got in. Once back in the driver's seat, Diem requested the sprite inside their own transport get them out of there. The other two transports moved in opposite directions just as a mass of suited security poured out of the building's doors like a disturbed hill of black ants.

They sped through the streets—but maneuvering anywhere in Denver was a nightmare due to all the sectors and security checkpoints. The only vehicles that could cross those points with little or no fanfare were those with ZDF security clearance.

"Noctem—"

"I know. I'm already working on it. Just—" he looked over at her and she saw genuine fatigue in his face. Dark circles beneath his eyes. "Just get us out of here."

"What did you do?"

"I did what the Johnson wanted me to do." Noctem looked in front of him and closed his eyes. "I showed them what the device was for. It was a bomb, Diem. They had to be shown they couldn't just hide something like that—not from Ghostwalker."

Diem's eyes widened. Ghostwalker? The dragon?

And then she felt her brother's magic fill the air. It brushed like harsh electricity on the backs of her arms. She knew he was working a spell, and it was going to take most of his strength to do it.

"Move us behind that truck—out of sight. And whatever happens..." he said in a tight voice as the inside of the transport was filled with small, twinkling lights. "Follow the other security cars. Do as they do."

"Follow them?"

"They'll cut a swath for you to follow—and you'll need that room. Just..." his eyes still closed he smiled. "Do it."

To her, the vehicle looked as it had, but as the pursuing security vehicles overtook her and moved past her, she realized he'd cast a mask of some sort over the transport. "Noctem—what did you do?"

"We're invisible," he said eyes still closed. "Just follow them."

And the gates opened. The transports barreled through. The others peeled off and Diem continued moving the transport as far into the countryside as she could, watching as the twinkling lights subsided and her brother's head lolled to the side.

She realized they were visible again, but now past the attention of anyone pursuing them.

She glanced over at him. He was asleep. Or unconscious. Either way he'd gotten them out of there and now it was her turn to keep them safe. There was a house several miles out where they could stay, and Noctem could rest. The Johnson had given them the key.

She smiled at her brother. Again they'd worked as a team. A technomancer and a mage. Whatever it was that had bothered him about the Johnson, she sensed Noctem had been at peace with this job and somehow enjoyed setting off the device.

But she was still a little on edge. In the end, her brother had inadvertently made a deal with a dragon.

And that was just something you did not do.



ALGONKIAN-MANITOU COUNCIL

Algonkian-Manitou: al-gān-kē-ən ma-nə-tū

Population: 5,205,000

Primary Languages: Algonkian (official), English (official), Iroquois, Sperethiel (un-recognized)

States: Algonkian Council, Manitou Council (un-recognized)

Government Type: Republic, with 3 leaders (1 elected, 1 appointed, 1 hereditary)

Bordering Countries: Athabaskan Council, Quebec, Sioux, Salish-Shidhe Council, UCAS

Geography: Prairies and mountainous regions, numerous freshwater lakes, and bordering Hudson Bay

Notable Features: Cypress Hills, Hudson Bay

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The land held by the Algonkian-Manitou Council (AMC) was part of Canada prior to the Treaty of Denver, signed in 2018. That treaty established the Algonkian Council as a member of the Native American Nations, and a sovereign nation. Per the Treaty, all residents not eligible for NAN citizenship were to be relocated within ten years. The Algonkian Council was one of the few nations that chose not to enforce that facet of the Treaty, allowing any current residents to remain as long as they agreed to abide by Algonkian laws. The nation was named for the shared language of the tribes in the area. The region had a very high rate of metahuman births, especially elves. In 2045, many of these elves joined under the leadership of Adrienne Silvermoon. Under her guidance, they petitioned the government to recognize them as a distinct tribe called the Manitou, and in response, the country's name was changed to the Algonkian-Manitou Council.

Although several other small tribes formed and joined the council, the formation of the Manitou tribe would have long-reaching ramifications. For almost two decades, tension increased between the politically dominant Algonkian tribe and the Manitou elves. In November, 2061, this tension came to a head during the Hudson Bay Incident, when Algonkian military forces, supported by Aztechnology Corporate Security, raided a boat in Hudson Bay, killing a dozen Manitou leaders. Afterward, the Manitou tribe made two

joint moves; first, seceding from the AMC and declaring their own nation, and second, removing all non-elves from the territory they claimed, north of the Churchill River.

For three years, there was an uneasy standoff, primarily attributed to Ceremonial Chief Laura Hawksford, who vetoed every motion set forward to use military force to address the issue. However, at the same time, petitions by the Manitou to be recognized as sovereign by the Sovereign Tribal Council (STC) were repeatedly denied. In 2065, Hawksford died in Crash-related violence. As soon as the AMC recovered from the Crash, the three Chiefs voted unanimously to retake the Manitou territory. The civil war was brief, and after the STC denied the Manitou's request for aid, the Manitou secession movement was defeated.

MAJOR CITIES

The capital of the AMC, **Saskatoon**, is home to the governmental buildings and the administrative center of the country. Because the nation did not choose to relocate non-NAN residents, the city is more ethnically diverse than many in the NAN. Although it is a smaller city, with a population of less than 300,000 residents, it is close to fifty percent Anglo. Located on the South Saskatchewan River, it is sometimes called the "city of bridges" for its seven bridges. The city glows at night, especially along the river, which reflects the golden lights from the bridges. The city is best known as an agricultural trade center, as well as for its numerous higher education facilities, parks, museums, and live theater. It's also gained the unfortunate title of the "most dangerous city" in the AMC, despite having a crime rate that is far below sprawls in other North American nations (with less than 10 murders in 2070).

The largest city in the AMC, with a population just under one million, **Calgary** is home to the industrial and corporate side of the country. Aztechnology and their subsidiary Genetique, the AMC's



largest corporations, both have large enclaves there. Aztechnology also provides the peace forces for the city, rather than the national police force. Calgary is well known for its tourism, especially for winter sports. It's also home to various high-tech industries, from advanced agritech to biotech. Calgary advertises itself as an eco-friendly city, and offers large tax incentives to eco-friendly businesses, but despite that, local eco-terrorist cells continue to strike at corporate facilities (notably Aztechnology).

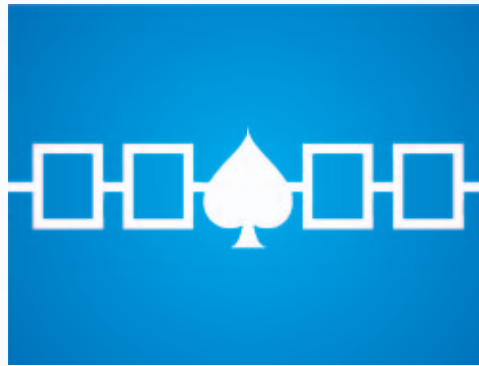
Located at the foot of the Rockies, the city is relatively hilly. The downtown core has numerous densely-packed skyscrapers. There is also a memorial to the Aztechnology Tower, where an eco-terrorist bombing took the lives of 2,000 Aztechnology employees, along with the lives of War Chief Hillborn and Civil Chief Bear in 2061.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The highest point between the Rockies and the Labrador Peninsula, the **Cypress Hills** rise 600 meters above the surrounding plains. The hills are topped with lodge-pole pine forests and rugged mountain terrain. It is here that many of the Native Americans hid when Canada sought to place them in concentration camps. Because of the shelter the Cypress Hills gave the tribes, it has been declared a national park, and neutral territory to all who come there, regardless of citizenship, tribe, metatype, or ethnicity.

A resident herd of deer shapeshifters live on the hills. Hunting is forbidden in this region, although the gathering of medicinal herbs and telesma is allowed, and even encouraged. An annual summer festival celebrates the blooming of the Awakened geranium, which is used extensively in tribal medicines.

- The AMC. Also known as "the land of sure death for its leaders." In the last ten years, every chief elected to office has been killed, along with the leaders of the Manitou. Between Manitou assassins, Algonkian military strikes and military tribunals, and Aztechnology offing anyone who doesn't lick their boots, it's permanent chief hunting season.
- Pistons
- The Manitou elves haven't given up. They refuse to accept Algonkian governance, tossing it into the government's face whenever possible. From not paying taxes to not prosecuting Manitou elves who break Algonkian laws to teaching their children Sperethiel and not Algonkian in their schools: dozens of small infractions that are almost impossible for the Algonkians to stop. The Algonkian



have tried to put martial law in effect, but let's face it. They have a huge territory, and a small population. The Manitou seem to have decided that if they're patient enough, they'll wear them down. Maybe they have the right idea; after all, the Manitou are elves, the Algonkian tribe is predominantly human and ork. In a generation, maybe two, will there be any Algonkians around who remember why they wanted to keep the Manitou around, or care if those "tree-hugging elves" go their own way?

• Lyran

- The civil war was brief; it lasted all of 4 months. The Algonkians had the upper hand—they had real arms, Aztechnology support (the Big A has a real hard-on for the "elven eco-terrorists"), and—although you won't find *this* in the history books—support from the STC. Seems like the STC didn't want a tribe splitting off from its established nation. One disaffected tribe starts that, and then it'd be a cascading effect, with every micro tribe going off to claim its own land. Which would, of course, weaken the NAN to the point that the UCAS and CAS could start picking them off, one by one. So the STC had a *really* big stake in making sure the Manitou didn't succeed. On the surface, they were hands off, but you know the message got out there to all the other little tribes stirring up trouble. The Ute rebels are likely to get the same message, and we'll see how well *they* take it.
- Mika
- What about the Tir? Seems like they'd want to help their pointy-eared brothers in need.
- Sounder
- Not so much. The Tir was pretty screwed up at the time, battling its own civil war. And the Manitou haven't ever been into the elven supremacy and royalty thing. I know the Sinsearach have been in close contact with the Manitou, especially of late. I wouldn't be surprised if the Laësa were making overtures to the Manitou as well.
- Frosty
- Hey, you all forgot the best part of the AMC. The country's like an open sieve. The military mans the major border crossings, and not much else. Towns are small and easy to avoid. Thunder Bay has one of the best smuggler's ports on the Great Lakes, and almost no one to manage it. I think the only legitimate shipments that go out of that port are heavily guarded Azzie ships; and the Big A doesn't care what else goes through there, as long as you leave them alone. It's a smuggler's paradise, I tell you.
- 2XL



ATHABASKAN COUNCIL

Athabaskan Council: ā-thə-bās-kən kaw-n-səl

Population: 2,143,500

Primary Languages: Inuit (official), English (official), Russian, Athabaskan (official), Japanese, Chipewyan

States: 38 Municipal Zones

Government Type: Elected Republic

Bordering Countries: Algonkian-Manitou Council, Salish-Shidhe Council, Trans-Polar Aleut, Yakut

Geography: Northern tundra, mountains, arctic region

Notable Features: Aleutian Islands, Harding Ice Field, Kodiak Island, Mt. McKinley

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Athabaskan Council was created with the Treaty of Denver in 2018, when the nation was formed and named in recognition of the atrocities visited on the Athabaskan tribe by corps in 2016. Athabaska has the smallest percentage of native citizens of any of the Native American Nations, with just over twenty-two percent of citizens having a tribal affiliation—which makes the geopolitical scene in Athabaska unusual, since only tribal citizens can vote or hold office, meaning the majority of residents have no political representation. However, culturally, the non-native majority is well integrated into Athabaskan society, and Athabaska did not participate in any of the relocation programs of the Treaty of Denver. Indeed, many citizens say that despite their cultural differences, the “rugged individualism” that characterizes them all unites them more than metatype, ethnicity, or tribal affiliation.

Athabaska is the most lightly populated of all the North American countries. The country relies primarily on their natural resources—while the oil reserves are dwindling, iron, platinum, and timber are still plentiful—along with fishing, aquafarming, and ecotourism. Ecological regulations are quite strict, with most resource mining done by the government, and the few allowed corporations overseen by eco-activists.

Athabaska has a modified elected government. Only tribal citizens can vote. Political parties are banned. Each municipality has two seats on a Lower Council, while the seats on the Upper Council are open to a national general election. The Governor is also elected in a national election. Both Councils elect ten representatives to serve on the Grand Council, while the Governor appoints another ten representatives. Terms are limited to five years. The current Governor is Meli Bittersea, an Aleutian.

MAJOR CITIES

Anchorage is the most populous city in the Athabaskan Council, with almost 350,000 residents (of which approximately twenty percent have tribal affiliation). While Anchorage isn't the political capital, it is considered the economic and business capital of the nation, with all major (and many minor) corporations having a presence in the city. The city has an excellent wireless network, with its AR environment built by NeoNET using a “rugged outdoors” motif. Anchorage is home to the small Athabaskan military, and the large Athabaskan coast guard has its main training facility and dry docks adjacent to the Port of Anchorage on Cook Island.

Anchorage's primary industry is transportation; with the large port able to receive freight ships, an airport that can handle supercargo planes as well as suborbitals, and the hub of the Athabaskan Northern Rail Lines. The Anchorage International Air Field is the world's fifth busiest, as it serves as a hub of travel from Asia to the Americas (serving many members of the Pacific Prosperity Group); directly or indirectly, the airport employs approximately ten percent of Anchorage's population.

Edmonton is the Athabaskan Council's capital city; chosen at the time the nation was formed due to its well-developed computer networks—although today, Anchorage has a stronger Matrix network. The city has a reputation for cleanliness—even AR spam is prohibited inside city limits—and friendly residents. Council Hall, a two-story brick building, is in the center of downtown. Edmonton also has the lowest per-capita crime rate of any NAN capital city.

Located on the Saskatchewan River, Edmonton is in the center of prime agricultural prairie land. Along the river are dedicated park lands, creating one of the largest stretches of urban parks in North America.

Fairbanks is the northernmost city of any size in the Athabaskan

Council. It is close (relatively speaking) to the border with Trans-Polar Aleut, and is a major trade point for residents in the neighboring nation, as well as those who live and work in the north. A significant portion of the residents work on the Slope—an area of oil fields—or for the numerous corporate scientific research centers in and around the city. The city is located in a harsh environment, with extreme winter



temperatures that have steadily dropped since the Awakening. Fairbanks has a strong Matrix presence and is connected to the global Matrix through several permanent satellite relay stations. Winter storms have been known to disrupt the service, however, and are a common problem for many arctic and subarctic communities.



SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Harding Icefield, locally called “Tears of the Mother,” is an expansive ice field located on the Kenai Peninsula. Its core covers over 500 square kilometers, and when the descendent glaciers are included, the total area swells to 2,000 square kilometers. While it has long held a spiritual significance for the tribes in the area, the entire world has seen just how special the site is since the passing of Halley’s Comet. Research has determined that the ice field covers the convergence of multiple mana lines. When the comet passed, the ambient mana in the area skyrocketed, and the astral plane became fully visible here, even to non-Awakened. While it is naturally beautiful and attracts many visitors, shamans hold a special reverence for the site, and the Athabaskan Council has closed certain locations except for tribal shamans. Since 2061, the ice field has been growing by more than two square kilometers annually.

“The Great One” is the most famous of Athabaskan’s sites of magical importance. **Denali**, formerly known as Mount McKinley, is the tallest mountain in North America. With a vertical relief that exceeds even Everest, it is considered by Athabaskan tribes—and many magical experts worldwide—to be a place where the veil between our world and the world of the spirits is at its thinnest. Since the Winternight strike in 2064, the mountain has been more heavily guarded, with free spirits, shaman, and even eco-activists patrolling at all times.

The **Kodiak Island Spaceport** is owned by Ares, and used exclusively by them and a few favored subsidiaries. The island itself is one of the largest in North America, with forests, mountains, and a viable copper mine. The only way to travel to the island is by air or sea. As expected, Ares thoroughly monitors and coordinates air travel, while the Athabaskan Coast Guard has a large base on the island to patrol the sea (with assistance from Ares-loaned ships and crews at times).

- Edmonton and Anchorage have a big grudge between them; city officials are constantly trying to diss the other city. Most of the time it’s harmless, like playing with the endless red tape. Sometimes, it’s pretty clever, like re-routing all Matrix Spam from Anchorage to Edmonton city employee ‘links. Runners who are clean cut and willing to enable some vanilla pranks can get jobs fairly easily.
- 2XL
- Wow. Real exciting ...
- /dev/grrl

• No, the big kids don’t bother with the government pranks. There are dozens of eco-terrorist cells operating in Athabaska, and with the “live and let live” independent attitude of the locals, no one really bothers them—in fact, outside the urban areas, the general opinion is favorable towards the eco-cells, like they’re providing a public service by keeping an eye on the corps and natural resources when the government doesn’t have the wherewithal to do so itself. (Just an example of the different way of life, when the eco-terrorists are considered the

“better” neighbors and basically government sanctified.) Want some real work? Corps are always interested in who’s doing what in those cells.

- Dr. Spin
- Of course, you could always work for the environment. A couple of those eco-cells have real funding, and are willing to hire runners to do jobs they can’t; the Athabaskan pipeline is a common target, as are some of the mining sites or oil exploration teams.
- Aufheben
- And there’re always those hidden little RGD sites up in the middle of nowhere. Places are a pain, but if you’ve got the gear and the guts, someone has the nuyen. Anyone like the snow, I can hook you up with some interested Mr. Johnsons.
- Cosmo
- And, hey, if nothing else, there’s always smuggling. You’d think there wasn’t anything worth smuggling, perhaps, but the people up there are always desperate for luxuries and even necessities; they can see all the pretty sparkly shit peddled on the Matrix, but getting it shipped up there? Not so much. And in return? There’s raw telesma, a few types of natural awakened drugs, big game, paranormal critters, and a couple of natural resources that can be shipped (say, diamonds). The nation holds part of the Seattle Run, a smugglers route from Vladivostok to Seattle, and with over a hundred well-maintained air landing sites (some on land, some on water), and the fact that about 1 in 20 residents are capable pilots (and the other 19 *think* they can fly), smugglers get a warm welcome.
- 2XL
- Criminal syndicates are pretty light in Athabaska, but those natural awakened drugs have been getting a lot more attention since tempo started drying up. Sage, in particular; it grows up around Fairbanks, and it supposedly lets even mundanes see astral space. Expect things to get a bit hot as the syndicates and freelancers start fighting over the goods.
- Haze



AZTLAN

Aztlan: As-tlən

Population: 168,160,000

Languages: Aztlaner Spanish, English, Nahuatl. Regional languages: (Yucatec, Mixtec, Tarascan)

States: Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Belize, Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Colombia, Costa Rica, Distrito Federal, Durango, El Salvador, Guanajuato, Guatemala, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Honduras, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Nicaragua, North Venezuela, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Panama, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Vera Cruz, Yucatán, Zacatecas

Government Type: Federal Republic

Bordered Countries: Amazonia, California Free State, Confederation of American States, Caribbean League, Pan-Corporate Panama Canal Zone, Pueblo Corporate Council

Geography: An elevated plateau flanked with mountain ranges, significant coastal and tropical regions

Notable Features: Nicaragua Canal

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Many of the social structures and paradigms for the contemporary Aztlan nation (including the regional languages, architecture, art, folklore, and religious ceremonies) are derived from or heavily influenced by the Mesoamerind cultures that predate it, allowing a unique blend of Aztec, Mayan, Olmec, and Toltec traditions to coexist within a modern civilization. One of the more prominent aspects of Aztlan's cultural heritage that has made a remarkable resurgence over the last several decades is the stepped pyramid, which is currently used by the state-run religion, Path of the Sun, for the worship of the old Aztec gods (Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcóatl, Tezcatlipoca, Tlaloc, Xiutecuti, among many other deities) in the form of the teocallis (temples). Massive teocalli have been erected and have become permanent fixtures in the skylines of most of Aztlan's cities, while minor teocalli have become landmarks in local neighborhoods, making them easily accessible to the typical Aztlaner. The priesthood for the Path of the Sun, including its Awakened members known as the Nahualli, have become a powerful and elite class in Aztlan society. The Aztlan president serves as the emperor of the Aztlan religion with the title of Huey Tiatoani, or "Revered Speaker."

Aztlan contains a very rigid society, and Aztlan military and Aztechnology Corporate Security forces harshly enforce social norms. Many non-native religions are banned in Aztlan, including Catholicism, and the government tightly controls information. The country is skilled at getting its citizens to believe what it wants them to believe. Many of the resurgent customs and traditions were reintroduced to inspire patriotism and a national pride in the citizens of Aztlan. Aztlan has also proven to be highly skilled at controlling what information escapes the nation's borders. Getting information out that is contrary to Aztlan's party line—and surviving the process—is not easy.

The modern state of Aztlan began to take shape in the early part of the 21st century. In 2011, corporations such as ORO and Pemex stepped in after the Mexican government collapsed in the wake of the

pandemic outbreak of VITAS that killed millions of Mexican citizens and devastated the national economy. These companies provided both monetary support and cutting-edge medical supplies to the Mexican population. They could not stop the pain the nation was experiencing, but the country was able to endure and survive.

Due to its assistance with VITAS and subsequent reconstruction efforts, ORO successfully positioned itself politically so that by 2015, it was able to propose, develop, and administer a Matrix-based election system for the Mexican government once the interim government that had been operating stepped aside. As a side benefit of being the sole entity responsible for managing the election process, ORO gained the access necessary to manipulate the outcome of elections. This new system ushered in a relatively new political faction that was supported and backed by ORO; the faction was called the Azatlán party. This political movement was dedicated to returning Mexico to the "old ways" and re-connecting the nation with its ancient traditions. The Azatlán party was initially led by Francisco Pavón y Guetterrez del Córdoba, who became the new Mexican president on May 5, 2015. In his first major act as president, he changed the name of the country to Aztlan, making him Aztlan's very first president. During Pavón y Guetterrez's reign, Aztlan actively supported the Sovereign American Indian Movement in North America, became a member nation of the Native American Nations, and gained a seat on the Sovereign Tribal Council. As part of the national effort to connect with ancient traditions (and to escape the associations of its old name with drug cartels), ORO renamed itself Aztechnology in 2022. The alliance with the NAN came to an end shortly after Pavón y Guetterrez's assassination in 2033, just as Aztlan was preparing itself for a new era of imperial expansion and conflict.

Aztlan first sought to recoup lands it had lost to the former United States, including parts of Texas and California. Due to various political and logistical hardships faced by the other nations at the time, Aztlan succeeded in many of its conquests, claiming cities such as San Diego and San Antonio. Emboldened by its successes in North America, Aztlan nationalized all foreign business interests operating within its borders in 2044, bringing it and Aztechnology into direct conflict with the Corporate Court. It took years of legal wrangling to overcome Aztechnology's veto power and political maneuvering, but eventually the Court approved the attack plan known as Operation Reciprocity. Even as this was happening in the Corporate Court, Aztlan managed to continue its expansion by incorporating Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama into its territory.

In 2048, the megacorporations, under sanction from the Corporate Court, carried out significant strikes against Aztlan. Although Aztechnology came out bruised from Operation Reciprocity, it did not halt their political ambitions. When rumors began to surface of Amazonia's incursions into Colombia and Venezuela in 2050, Aztlan immediately deployed its troops into South America to confront Amazonia; in the process, Aztlan absorbed a significant portion of Colombia and a small section of Venezuela. When full-out hostilities between Aztlan and Amazonia finally receded into minor border skirmishes later that year, Caracas was declared a free city, and Bogotá was left to fend for itself, with hundreds of kilometers of rain forest around it serving as a buffer zone between it and the two nations.

In 2050, Aztlan began experiencing turmoil from indigenous people upset by the lack of basic freedoms and the brutal, heavy-handed treatment they received from the Aztlan government. Several

small insurrections in the Yucatán were met with swift crackdown by Aztlaner troops, and the bloodshed and fighting continued well into the mid-2060s. The problems Aztlan had in fighting the rebels extended to the environment, as nature spirits, earthquakes, and tidal waves pounded the Yucatán Peninsula starting on March 15, 2062. Many believed this was the environment's retaliation for the extreme and devastating attacks Aztlan launched against its enemies, which left the ecosystem poisoned and toxic.

The problems Aztlan experienced with the rebels were compounded by other occurrences during that same year. In the north, the great dragon Ghostwalker returned to Denver on December 24, 2061, and he and the Confederate American States removed Aztlan from the Front Range Free Zone. When the new Treaty of Denver was signed into law on January 27, 2062, Aztlan no longer had any role or representation in the city of Denver. In the south, SURGE-fueled prejudices and fears along the buffer zone surrounding Bogotá caused escalating violence. It was a time of desperation for Aztlan, and it showed in their scorched-earth approach to the Yucatán and in the tactics that Aztlan took in the city of Bogotá in an attempt to discourage an Amazonian invasion through pre-emptive punishment. The Yucatán Peninsula and Bogotá are still living with the consequences of Aztlan's desperation.



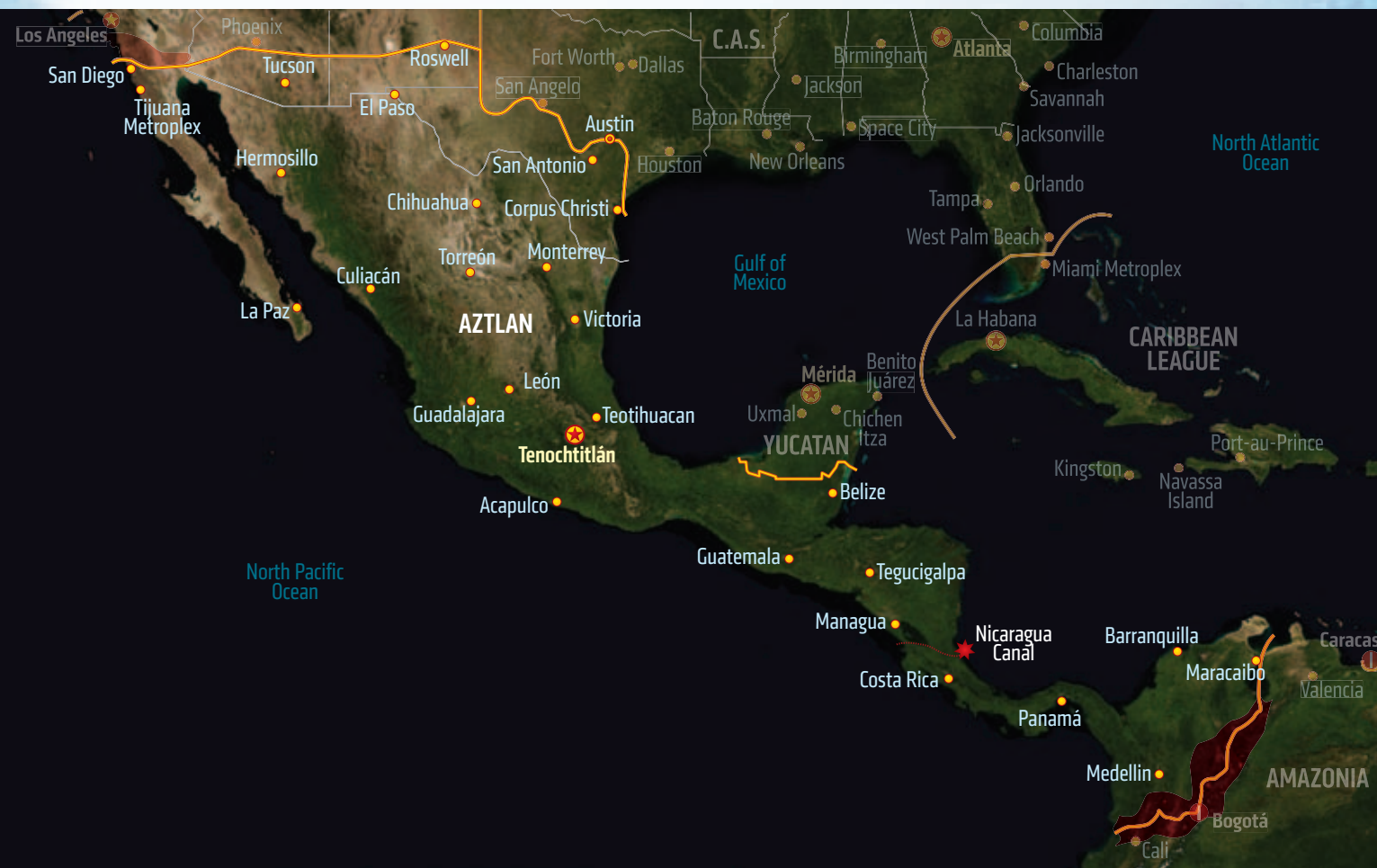
By June 5, 2064, a peace treaty between Aztlan and the rebels was signed. During the ceremony, Aztechnology CEO Juan Atzcapotzalco was assassinated; subsequently, the sitting Aztlan President, Flavia de la Rosa, was appointed in late 2064 to replace Atzcapotzalco. To fill the Aztlan president position, a special election was held, and Enrico Silva won the right to serve the remainder of de la Rosa's term. In 2065, Silva was reelected for his first full

term, and he was reelected again in 2071.

At the present time, Aztlan is at a state of readiness, as ever-increasing hostilities and tension around Bogotá and along the Aztlan/Amazonian border continues to push both sides to the brink of another war.

MAJOR CITIES

Aztlan's capital, **Tenochtitlán**, is the home of the Aztlan government, the largest teocalli in Aztlan, the Great Temple of Quetzalcóatl, and four other major temples. Tenochtitlán has a population of nearly twenty million citizens, ranking it amongst the most heavily populated cities in the world. Infamous for its overcrowding and its heavy pollution, the city is nicknamed El Humo (the Smoke) by the local residents. The astral plane in and around Tenochtitlán is nearly as twisted and as polluted as the water and the air surrounding the city. To access



the mana inside Tenochtitlán, it helps significantly if a magician practically follows the Aztec tradition. In Tenochtitlán alone, there are close to 60,000 priests of the Path of the Sun religion.

Bogotá is a significant city for both Aztlan and its underworld ally, the David Cartel. Although Bogotá is technically not completely under its political control, Aztlan has been spending a lot of resources to expand its role in the city in order to defeat its opposition and to prevent Amazonia from invading and capturing the city. In that regard, in 2062, Aztlan developed a strategy to help protect their southern border while troops were deployed to other areas. Part of that strategy involved creating a natural barrier out of the dangerous, SURGED tree known as the Sangre Del Diablo. The carnivorous tree, along with more conventional deterrents such as landmines, seemed effective in making a large-scale invasion of Bogotá by Amazonian forces extremely problematic, especially when Aztlan and Aztechnology maintained aerial superiority over the region. The overabundance of these trees has threatened the agricultural economy of Bogotá and has also put at risk the ecosystem of the Amazon rain forest as the deadly trees feed off of and kill native vegetation and wildlife.

Medellin is the second-largest city in Colombia and is firmly within Aztlan's territory. Medellin is a strong cartel city, home to rivalries that often flare between the David and the Medellin cartels for control of the illicit drug and black market trades. Aztlan and Aztechnology have exploited the region surrounding Medellin for years, with strip mines, logging, and slash-and-burn operations clearing the surrounding forest for new construction. Medellin is often thought of as a cautionary tale for Amazonians, showing what Aztlan could do to the rain forest should they be victorious in the hostilities that seem to be approaching.

Despite the radioactive spill from the San Onofre plant in 2061 and the earthquakes in 2069 that heavily damaged the city, **San Diego** is an important military and intelligence-gathering city for Aztlan. Since it is a port city and a city that previously serviced the United States Navy, San Diego functions as a naval servicing center for Aztlan. San Diego also has access to the underground tunnels that connect to the Deep Lacuna, giving Aztlan discreet access to other parts of the PCC, including Los Angeles, though the PCC is attempting to find all such tunnels and seal off access to them. Other important military cities for Aztlan include Cali, Ensenada, Matamoros, El Paso, Hermosillo, Mazatlan, Veracruz, Puebla, Oaxaca, Panama, and Cartagena.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

When Winternight set off a nuclear explosion in the Panama Canal, destroying the channel, it provided strong incentive for the construction of another waterway. In the early 2060s, Aztlan and Aztechnology undertook a major project in Nicaragua, one that would build an improved canal to allow larger cargo ships and heavier traffic to readily traverse the North American continent and enter either the Pacific Ocean or the Caribbean Sea. Many efforts were made to sabotage this project, but Aztlan and Aztechnology did in fact get the **Nicaragua Canal** to open, and it is now a viable, more time-efficient alternative to sea travel than the Panama Canal was in its prime.

- If my understanding of history is accurate, Aztlan's past was influenced by cultures besides the aboriginal ones, including the colonial Spanish and the Roman Catholic missionaries they brought with them. Turning their backs on these groups to focus on Aztec roots seems arbitrary to me.
- Turbo Bunny

- Most Aztlaners will not acknowledge that part of their history. To them (and especially to their government), that cultural influence came from outsiders and invaders. It's not something they wish to celebrate. That's why you're not going to find a whole lot of reminders from that particular time period (especially in Tenochtitlán). Most Catholic churches and cathedrals, for example, have been bulldozed and made into parking structures or *castillos* (Aztlan's version of an arcology) or even made into new teocallis. In a few more decades (if it hasn't happened already), I imagine all of Aztlan's and Mexico's history will have been rewritten.
- Glasswalker
- It's more than a little ironic, and fairly hypocritical, that Aztlan doesn't want to acknowledge Spanish influence upon its own culture, and yet they've gone out and conquered other indigenous cultures and expected them to recognize the Aztlaner beliefs.
- Hard Exit
- The funny thing about Aztlan and its control over information is that almost every Aztlaner outside of the government isn't aware of what's in their constitution, as nearly a quarter of it has been redacted. That's right—whole sections are completely missing from the public version of the Aztlan constitution, with a footnote that reads, "Text deleted for National Security Reasons."
- Snopes
- A word of caution to those looking for the redacted words. I first tried to hack that part of the Aztlan constitution back in '56, and the black IC and the security measures in place even back then were practically insurmountable—even for me. What I managed to uncover didn't seem to warrant redaction. To me, it felt like I was in the middle of some sort of counter-intelligence maneuver. Given Aztlan's aptitude at counter-intelligence, I wouldn't be surprised.
- FastJack
- Any truth to the rumors that those sections of the Aztlan constitution have been recently updated? And if so, does anyone have any idea about what was added? Could it be related to the escalating tensions along the Aztlan/Amazonian borders?
- Marcos
- For those not familiar with President Silva, here's some interesting information about him. According to his dossier, Silva has been a loyal Aztlaner citizen and has served as an enlisted Aztlan soldier for close to twenty-five years. Lots of medals and commendations in his record; a true war hero, blah blah blah. Most of it is made-up Aztlan bullshit, especially the campaigns he served in. From what I can tell from his real file (which, like their constitution, has been heavily redacted), he's a retired Jaguar who reached the final rank of lieutenant colonel in the Aztechnology military before retiring from the service in early 2057. His most significant accomplishment was commanding the entire battalion of Jaguars for Aztechnology for nearly twelve years before leaving his post to run for political office. He was elected to the senate in 2060 and became a very influential and well-liked senator. In 2064, Flavia de la Rosa gave her support (both in public and in private with the Aztechnology board) to have Enrico Silva elected as the new Aztlan president.
- Sunshine
- Silva's playing things smart. He has filled his inner circle and his cabinet not with those from the Aztlan priesthood, but rather with those he served with and trusts from his military days. He is trying to keep the Aztlaner priests at bay and only attending services where his presence is absolutely required. He has likely heard the rumors about the Aztlan priests and/or Aztechnology magicians

using spirits and other magical means to control key political figures. Some say Juan Atzacotzalco was regularly possessed and controlled in this fashion by some sort of spirit—I haven't found any proof of this, but many believe that was why his public appearances became so infrequent in his later years as the Aztechnology CEO.

- Snopes
- As a Jaguar, Silva probably got to witness a lot of magical manipulation of the public figures first-hand, and he probably wanted to make sure he didn't end up becoming someone else's hand puppet—at least, no more so than he already is.
- Hard Exit
- Silva's election may yet doom the peace agreement with the Yucatán people. He is rumored to believe that the treaty was a mistake, and that a "toxic dragon" cannot be trusted. If I were Pobre, I'd be bracing for someone of Silva's background to eventually renege on Aztlan's agreement.
- Glasswalker
- Who *doesn't* expect Aztlan to renege on its agreements eventually?
- Marcos
- I have heard rumors that President Silva has been pushing both Aztlan and Aztechnology to upgrade the naval fleet. Rumors are swirling that Aztlan may be considering building at least one, if not two aircraft carriers, perhaps in San Diego. If this is the case, Aztlan may become more dangerous in the foreseeable future.
- Hard Exit
- Interesting factoid about the major teocallis in Aztlan. Often times, the major teocallis will serve a second function as armories for the military. Interesting how Aztlan mixes its religion with its military, huh?
- Goat Foot
- I've gotta ask—trees as a line of defense? Really? Why not just blow 'em up and move by 'em?
- Black Mamba
- Couple of reasons. First, Sangre del Diablo trees will go down, but they don't go down easy. Sure, if you throw enough explosives at them, they'll burn up, but you'll take down a lot of the surrounding rain forest with it, which means one of Amazonia's natural defenses on the front lines becomes a weakness—without the rain forest, it's a lot easier for an invading army to advance. Second, heat activates Sangre del Diablo seedpods. Blow up a tree, and you send activated seeds flying everywhere, and these fuckers grow *fast*. If you heat up the explosion enough, then you burn up the pods, too, but that just means that you take out that much more surrounding vegetation.
- Ecotope



CARIBBEAN LEAGUE

Caribbean League: kər-ib-bē-ən lēg

Population: 38,800,000

Primary Languages: English, Spanish, various Creole dialects, French, Dutch

Member States: Andros, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bonaire, Borinquen, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Culebra, Curaçao, Dominican Republic Territories, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama Island, Great Abaco, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, New Province, Saba, South Florida, St. Barts, St. Croix, St. Eustatius, St. John, St. Kitts, and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tortola, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, Vieques, Virgin Gorda

Government Type: Confederation

Bordered Countries: Amazonia, Aztlan, Confederated American States

Geography: Mountainous volcanic islands shielded by extensive coral reef formations. Some larger islands possess fertile central plains, inland marshes, and or tropical forests.

Notable features: Bimini Road, Bermuda Triangle, Cayman Trough, Phantom Islands

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The first half of the 21st century saw the Caribbean islands go from being filled with five-star tourist destinations to ground zero for the largest VITAS outbreak in the world. One in three Caribbean citizens and tourists fell victim to early strains of the VITAS plague. In the wake of that catastrophe, the resource-rich islands were plundered, first by corporations sensing an opportunity to expand their assets, and then by the surviving citizens pushed into piracy by the scarcity of jobs. These largely poor island nations were unprepared for the catastrophe. They begrudgingly turned to corporations to pay for the medicine needed to combat the plague. In exchange, many of these small nations sold exclusive undersea exploration rights, first to Aztechnology and then to the Atlantean Foundation. Some of the money went to medicine, but most went to warlords who thrived off of the chaos. It wasn't until 2020 that citizens from across the Caribbean were able to band together under the leadership of Guadalupe Martinez of Cuba and form a confederation. Emboldened by the fracturing of the United States, which had served as the area's primary protector since the early 1950s, Puerto Rico shed its shackles and joined the league as Borinquen. South Florida followed in 2034, bringing with it top-rated universities and the influence of the Miami metroplex.

Forming a league gave the Caribbean islands a voice on the world stage. They were able to bring in

scientists from Johns Hopkins (JHIH) to curb the spread of VITAS, and they began to combat some of the negative media proffered by nearby Aztlan. The Caribbean League remains a strategic military staging point for operations traveling into Aztlan, Amazonia, and the CAS.

The frequent piracy in the League has made bordering nations question whether the Caribbean was safe. The League government makes overtures about addressing the problem, but without a centralized military force there is little they can do. They are left to concentrate their resources on protecting the tourist areas. Along the major shipping routes, some corporations actively hire corsairs to repel attacks from the disenfranchised people of the League.

MAJOR CITIES

Havana remains the cultural signpost of the region. From the neighborhood baseball diamonds to the heavy scent of tobacco pushed out from the city's many cigar factories, Havana is a premier international tourist destination. The "Cuidad de Columnas," as locals know it, serves as capital city for the Carib League. Representatives from all member states maintain residencies in the heavily fortified political district known as Old Havana. Centro Habana, the city's primary shopping district, is crowded with expensive couture. In addition to hosting the rich and powerful, Havana boasts a gambling district on par with Morocco and the French Riviera. Despite the glitz, there are still areas of the city such as Havana's "Barrio Chino" that have succumbed to gang control. These slums house the hundreds of thousands of workers who maintain more desirable portions of the city such as Vedado, the city's nightlife retreat.

If Havana is where people want to be, **Kingston** is where people fight to escape. The Jamaican capital is a patchwork of Jamaican Posse-controlled territories barely held together by the League's government. While border skirmishes are common, the violence rarely reaches tourists, who include arms buyers and those interested in human commodities. If it can be shot, snorted, jacked, slotted, or screwed, it can



be found in Kingston. Officially, the city is run from New Kingston, an inland district adjacent to Kingston's international airport. The Jamaican Defense Force controls the borders of the district, ensuring it remains free of crime and disease.

When the United States crumbled, **San Juan** became the capital of Borinquen. Under the leadership of Maria Fransisca, Borinquen established itself as a corp-free zone. A pirate herself, *La Presidenta* was able to curry favor with the local criminal element, giving them free rein to attack corporate interests. The attacks mounted, and most corps were either forced to move out or pay a security fee to the city's Corsair fleet to deter attacks. Today's San Juan is extremely anti-corporate. Work, if you can find it here, is manual and low-paying. Barrio gangs have been restrained a bit by *La Presidenta's* influence, but outside of the tourist areas their word is law.

South Florida locals will tell you that Guadalupe Martinez personally dragged the **Miami Metroplex** into the Carib League. No doubt there are strong political ties to Cuba and its brightest star, but Miami is anything but Cuban. South Florida's top destination was the home of the Gunderson Corporation, which flamed out, leaving hundreds of thousands unemployed. A host of upstart A-rated corps rushed in to fill the void, turning the streets into a corporate battleground. Extractions are as common as traffic stops, but the real moving and shaking in the shadows comes from the profiteering rackets. The House of Jah, a Zobop Posse, has used its religious and cultural influence to push out almost every other major crime syndicate. The Zobop are heavily invested in seeing Miami prosper, but they aren't alone. Most recently the Ghost Cartels have been making inroads, using Koshari foot soldiers from the north to do the heavy lifting.

Port-au-Prince is the largest port in the league, making it a frequent target of pirate raids. The city is home to JHIIH, a subsidiary of the Yakashima Corporation, and some of the old Japanacorp anti-metahuman tendencies followed Yakashima to the shores of Haiti. It is the only island where meta-humans are classified as undesirables subject to limited freedom within the city. It is also the power center of the Voice of Ogoun. Vodoun is the primary religion among the people, so the government has come out in support of the Voice. The fact that the highly influential Head Houngan, Papa Cross, makes his home in Port-au-Prince plays a role in the government's support.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The Bermuda Triangle is a well-documented phenomenon, but that lonely stretch of ocean isn't the only colorful destination in the League. **Navassa Island** is home to a well-researched merrow community numbering in the hundreds. The merrow have frequently clashed with



pirates and bounty hunters. These skirmishes always occur within visible range of the island and tend to involve the use of magic on the merrow side. Despite these encounters, parabiologists believe the merrow to be a peaceable species, citing their own interactions with the community.

The waters of the **Cayman Trough** are mating grounds of several species of sea serpent, making it extremely dangerous to cross this region. Compounding

the problem is the high number of rich mineral deposits at the bottom of the Trough. Government and corporate entities often battle over access to the sea floor, putting them in direct conflict with the native sea life.

Bimini Road has been the site of major undersea excavations since documents unearthed in Egypt suggested that it may be a section of the lost city of Atlantis. Though the site has yet to reveal any clues about the fate of the mythical city, the waters above and around the 0.8 kilometer corridor remain off-limits to all but Atlantean personnel.

Eyewitness reports throughout the League point to the presence of **Phantom Islands** that appear and disappear periodically. One eyewitness reported seeing an island appear beneath his boat, only to suddenly find himself kilometers away from where he had been moments ago. DIMR researchers suggest that these islands may in fact be displacement alchera, though the cause and purpose of them is unclear.

- The Caribbean League is a mess of bad politics, strange magic, and pirates. It's worth noting that Johns Hopkins lost its university status after UCAS officials discovered they had been using Haiti to conduct VITAS-related experiments on unwitting metahuman subjects. So what does the newly formed League do? They help the university get back on their feet as the Johns Hopkins Institute of Health. Wanna guess where they incorporated?
- Nephrine
- I hate to over-generalize, but any Leaguer would sell his own mother for a few nuyen. The people are too poor to know what's good for them and too eager to please any outsider to think through the deals they make. That's what landed Haiti in so much trouble. It won't be long before Aztlan has its way and absorbs the whole region.
- Traveler Jones
- Maybe, but there's reason to believe the corps won't let that happen. The Corporate Court struck a deal with Borinquen in '48, using Mayaguez city as staging ground for the infamous Operation Reciprocity against Aztechnology. As part of the deal, the court agreed to maintain the military base they built there for the next 100 years.
- Fianchetto

CONFEDERATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Confederation of American States: kuhn- fed-uh-rey-shuhn uhv uh-mer-i-kan steyts

Population: 109,402,000

Provinces: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

Government Type: Federal Democracy

Bordered Countries: UCAS, Aztlan, Pueblo Corporate Council, Caribbean League

Geography: Mountainous and hilly regions, swamps, river basins and deltas, prairie, significant coastal land

Notable features: Mississippi River, Hellbender Valley, Trail of Tears Flag:[See SONA.]

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Despite the simplistic façade that is often cast over what used to be the Southern United States, nothing is ever simple in the Confederation. While the surface appears calm and gentle, that is just a cultural adaptation to keep others from seeing the panic and excitement below. In a society renowned for rebellion, how could it be otherwise? The South is now living on the edge of prosperity and disaster, with a growing economy and great potential working against internal dissention and an armed force camped on the border that threatens the nation's future.

The roots of the CAS were planted during the Crash of 2029, which devastated the information-based economy of the South. When the government to the north directed more resources to big business than they did to southern states, deep-rooted bitterness began to rise to the surface. After the merger of the remainder of the United States with what was left of Canada to form the UCAS, further dissent arose in the South as there was a sudden shift toward liberal government spending. Feeling that their more libertarian lifestyle was being threatened, fourteen states met in Atlanta in 2032. All but Kentucky agreed to secede, resulting in a mostly peaceful separation between the two groups. The UCAS recognized the existence of the CAS in the Treaty of Richmond of 2034.

Shortly after the treaty's ratification, Aztlan invaded portions of Texas, seizing about a third of the state. The CAS was in no shape to fight back, so Texas left the Confederation. Failing any success on their own, they rejoined the CAS a year later. The nation received some measure of revenge over a quarter of a century later when the CAS inherited the Aztlan sections of Denver.

Isolationist policies and a more conservative social mindset have prevented any major changes from taking root in the Confederation. Other than a few border spats, they haven't had any direct confrontation with Aztlan to the south, though the two nations recently disagreed on how to react to the metastasizing tempo production facilities. Aztlan felt an attack was needed based on the danger it posed. The CAS disagreed, either because it felt other actions were warranted or it just wanted to be contrary to their enemy. The other neighboring countries have been much more amicable; from the estranged but still related UCAS to the interesting Pueblo Corporate

Council to the enticing but exasperating Caribbean League, there is little major conflict.

The separation of the countries couldn't cut the family and corporate ties between the CAS and the UCAS, nor could political meddling between the two. This does not mean that the UCAS is the CAS's closest ally; the PCC grew very close to the young CAS after the Azzie invasion. Threatened by the aggressive nation to the south and sharing part of that former USA lineage, the nations have become close trading partners and allies, though there is a cultural gap between the two societies. The Caribbean League is also a strong trading partner, through southern Florida and some of the gulf ports, though there are serious differences between the two countries when it comes to legalities. This means illicit substances are a commonly smuggled item, though illegal trafficking across Florida has dropped off lately.

While Crash 2.0 put off elections for three months, it did little to change the course of CAS politics. The True American Coalition was kept in power, and Aaron Franklin stayed in office. He was elected president yet again in 2068, but the most recent election has led to some change. Upset with the TAC, the Southern Democrats, the Southern Conservatives, and politics as usual, the Technocrat party shocked the talking heads and established powers when Ramsay McMulkin captured the Manor House. Promising to use the CAS's influence in the looming renegotiation of the Treaty of Denver to reclaim lost territory in Texas and embrace cutting-edge technology to improve the lives of all CAS citizens, the Technocrats have put themselves in a position to hit a political home run—or to take a big swing and miss.

MAJOR CITIES

During the **Atlanta** Secession Convention in 2032, there were three suggestions for where to put the capital of the CAS. Richmond had the advantage of being the capital of the old CSA but had the disadvantage of being the capital of the old CSA. The candidacy of Dallas/Austin/Houston was seen as a push by Texas to dominate the new government, while Atlanta was seen as the best combination of historical significance, the capacity to absorb a national government and accompanying bureaucracy, and a non-threatening location. City and state leaders were pleased at the decision and gleefully anticipated the tax dollars that would fill their coffers to be used for their pet projects, including those that might take place off the books.

Things, however, don't always work out the way they are planned. Inadvertently emulating DeeCee, Atlanta has grown but has been unable to keep up with the changes. With half of the city under only limited control of law enforcement in the early '60s, Crash 2.0 wiped out almost all of the "limited" part of that equation. Hit harder than most by the Crash, Atlanta is still reeling. The corps, the governments, and the rich have kept their enclaves well-preserved and safe, but the rest of the sprawl is shady at best, leaving average citizens to keep a gun or two loaded and ready in case Lone Star doesn't show up in time. The unemployed masses squatting in the burnt-out husks of old buildings often slip the local gang leader a little something to stay safe.

Of course, these locales are all veritable paradises compared to the Dome. First it was Fulton County Stadium, then it was a Georgia Tech research facility roofed with a photosynthetic membrane, then it was abandoned to squatters after corp sabotage shut down the research that had been occurring. Never worth the money to clean it up even when times were good, the Dome had settled into a disreputable existence. In addition to the brawls between the insiders and outsiders, the isolation of the bug spirits, and corporations

throwing in experimental tech for testing at the expense of the inhabitants, the gargoyles living at the top have begun to get more aggressive, ratcheting up tensions throughout. In addition, serious concerns about the lifespan of the building are beginning to pop up in local politics. While no one really believes the politicians care about the residents there, officials still publicly pay lip service to the well-being of the Dome's inhabitants, while privately indicating they are quite willing to let the structure, and everyone in it, rot.

Most recently the politics in the city have pointed toward the pending renegotiation of the Treaty of Denver. While not affecting Atlanta directly, anything that could benefit the CAS and hopefully alleviate border tensions would be a small blessing to the city. It also received a small gift when an employee at the Aztechnology subsidiary Southern Food Group was caught selling BTLs out of their offices. The government was able to void the 99-year lease they had signed in 2067, so now they city has a brand new building to fill with tenants at rock bottom prices.

Austin is a city divided. Once the most liberal place in Texas, the city has become a veritable armed camp. The southern half is held under the close watch of Aztlan forces while the northern half has been something of a company town for Lone Star. This has only escalated with the recent discovery of a massive fraud ring beneath their very noses. Two years ago Lone Star forces raided a group of technomancers specializing in ID and data theft. Since then increased patrols have further stripped the city of any feeling of liberty or openness. Additionally, the threat across the river has caused the evacuation of ninety percent of the University of Texas to other campuses around the state. The pride of the Texas University System is now just a figurehead, kept in place as a mark of Texan resiliency.

The heart of Texas these days is the **Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex**, as a stream of refugees catapulted the area past Houston in population. While a population surge gave Dallas bragging rights, the sudden drain on the region's resources ran tensions high. Over the last decade things have begun to settle down as the city has used the huge workforce to grow the economy. Of course, this means that the corporations have grown, and the metroplex has only managed to stay out of the pocket of a single megacorp by having almost all of them jockey for favoritism. The new Saeder-Krupp tower being built in downtown Dallas will raise the stakes in the inter-corporate competition, but the mood in the city remains fairly upbeat. Life is always easier in the Dallas area when the Cowboys are winning, and with them going for a three-peat next season expect spirits to be high—along with ticket prices.

Everyone loves a boomtown until the chaos overcomes the newfound wealth. The new media capital of the CAS, especially in simsense content, the industry has pushed **Nashville** to be a major metropolis, straining the capacity of the local real estate. The latest new fad is local productions with settings in the CAS, such as *On Point*, a series about a Lone Star officer keeping the peace in Austin. Some real innovators have altered the grand plan, of course. With the media production capacity, BTLs were a logical next step for the criminals living in the shadows of the new arcologies. And with Nashville's zoning loophole that allowed a red-light district to thrive, the seedier side of adult simsense has taken advantage of the laws, the availability



of talent, and existing distribution networks. This hasn't sat well with Southern sensibilities.

The exotic city of **New Orleans** was one of the first to fully embrace the magic that accompanied the Awakening, which was fortunate for them as the Sixth World didn't wait for the city's approval. The only city in North America more haunted than Duluth, this mysterious place had a rough time in the '60s, as criminal violence and spirit activity plagued the city.

Just as the city started to come under a modicum of control, tempo burst onto the drug scene with a renewed smuggling industry. Sadly, this level of chaos seems almost normal for the Big Easy. Luckily there is still plenty of excitement, merriment, and political intrigue to keep New Orleans moving along.

The prime naval base on the Atlantic for the CAS, **Norfolk** has been busier over the past few years. With dust-ups in the Gulf between the Caribbean, Azzies, and CAS, the shipyards of Norfolk have been busy building new ships and boats. Most of their ships are smaller "brown-water" vessels, but the CAS has expanded upon the large submarine fleet to resemble the Kriegsmarine of the late 1930s. The latest class of heavy submarines is capable of surfacing and launching a half-dozen fighter craft. While the military implications are great, these SSVNs are capable of covering a lot of area while patrolling for smugglers, making them a boon even in peacetime. With the Gulf Coast bases in Pensacola and Mobile heavily involved in servicing existing ships, Norfolk can be more clandestine. Security in the area is tight, even for a military base.

The biggest deep shipping port for the CAS, **Tampa** lives and dies by the business of the megacorps. After a huge local depression following Crash 2.0, recovery has finally set in as shipping is up and jobs are growing. The golf clubs and strip joints are full, the malls are packed, and the resorts near capacity, but the underworld continues to struggle. Criminal organizations typically take advantage of a growing market, but recently the limited smuggling into the area has cut into their operations. While the CAS, backed by megacorp special interests, has cracked down on the ports, there has been some traffic across the everglades, including bootleg material, drugs, and stolen goods, much of which vanishes en route. Disappearances in the Everglades are up fifty percent over the past two years, and this seems to be having a disproportionate effect on smugglers. Florida authorities are looking into it, but they have little impetus to help out the struggling criminals.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **Mississippi** is more than just a river. One of the biggest in the world, it is also has more traffic than any other. From Minneapolis-St. Paul to the border town of St. Louis all the way to the end of the line in New Orleans, these cities rely on the cheap and easy transportation to provide jobs and tax dollars. The Awakening tossed some interesting twists into the mix—hellbenders make navigation tricky, toxic shamans flourish in some of the particularly nasty parts of the river, and the Mississippi delta near New Orleans is a giant breeding ground for disease. Recent rumors tell of larger creatures at the southern end, including reports of some beasts big enough to swallow a troll whole.

The Awakening brought changes not only to our way of life and to the sentient beings of the planet, but also to the flora and fauna of the world as well. In Tennessee, the giant salamander known as

a hellbender finally came to match its name. Its natural habitat was reduced to a small portion of the greater Tennessee Valley, and that spot is now known as **Hellbender Valley**. A great abundance of paranormal plants and creatures can be found there, as well as other unexplained phenomenon. Most of the metahuman population has left the area, either by choice or in fear for their lives. The area still attracts parazoologists and tourists of various magical traditions.

Another paranormal feature of the CAS is an astral taint along the exodus route of the Cherokee Indians, which is known as **the Trail of Tears**. Leading from Georgia through Tennessee, the trail leaves the CAS in Kentucky only to reappear in Southern Missouri and travel from there across Arkansas, ending in Oklahoma. The taint can interfere with beings possessing a dual nature, and a higher level of paranormal activity can be found along it in general, including free spirit activity.

- I can't believe they didn't bring up Odessa incident.
- Kane
- The what?
- /dev/grrl

- It was only a year ago and while an interesting story, it wasn't that important. Last spring the little Aztlan border town of Odessa was enjoying a quiet day when a pair of juggernauts decided they were going through downtown. And uptown. And the military base. Then the duo headed towards the Buena Vista Proving Grounds. The Azzies dispatched a few MBTs and some T-Birds to intercept. Only half the force survived the dust-up, but that wasn't too surprising. What was unexpected was a pair of juggernauts visiting for a heavily populated area and then heading for a military base. There are rumors that the CAS black ops guys have trained the juggernauts or something along those lines. Or it could just be aberrant animal behavior.

- DangerSense!

- Who needs that paranoia when you have real battles between the gangs, the police, and the hougans whipping up the dead in Nawlins. Sure the city is safer than in the '60s, but the slums are still dangerous and there are plenty of runs to be made. Just stay out of the French Quarter; it's full of tourists and corporate shills.

- Butch

- There's been a lot of activity for low-level runners in Atlanta. Rather than get paid in credsticks, you can get five times as much in 'ware. Hot time in the old town tonight!

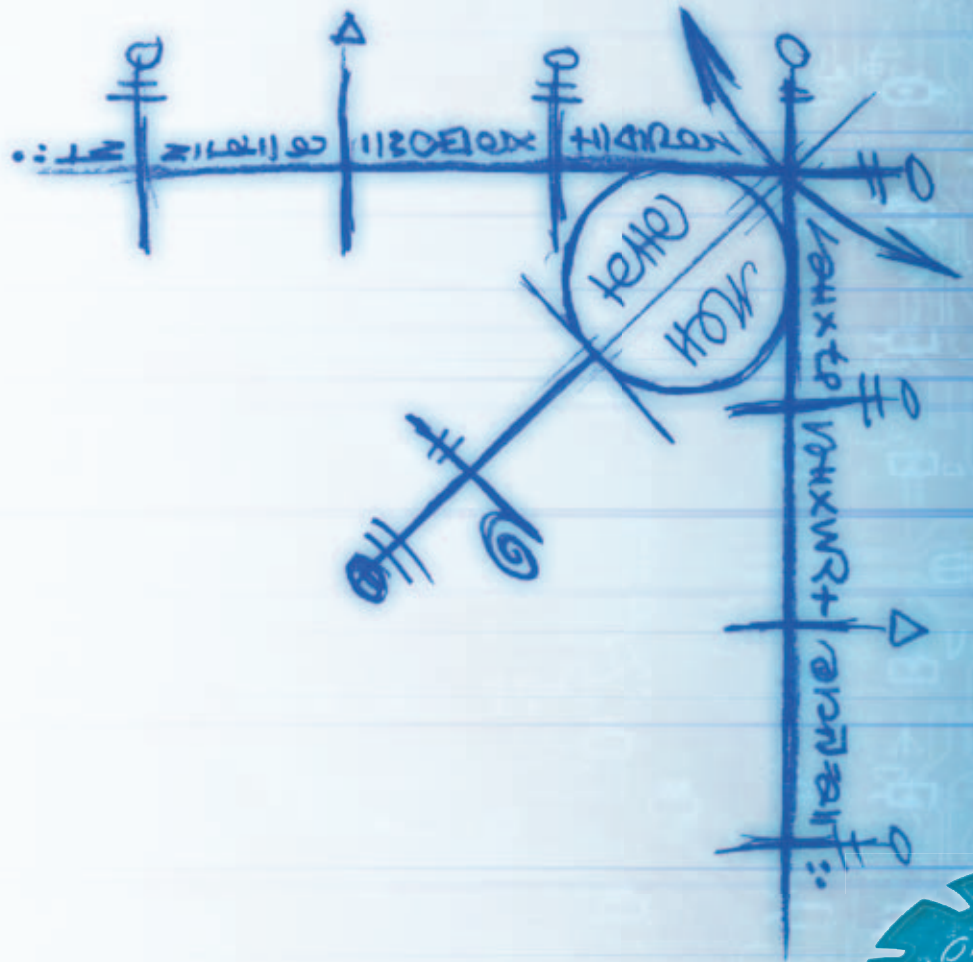
- Sticks



- That's because the corps are using runners as guinea pigs. All that stuff that the corps are testing in the Domes? That's basically their Phase I clinical trials. Phase II is a bunch of low-rent runners probably taking on another set of Phase II runners in a location the corps own and monitor. Remember, there's no such thing as a free lunch—someone always pays.
- Riser
- Anyone heard about that drake up in the Ozarks?
- Nephrine
- Chardom? Yeah, he bought himself a lot of land and ran for sheriff. Of course he got elected and now he has his own little fiefdom up there. Keeps folks employed, though no one can figure out why a drake would want to set up shop in Podunk Batesville. It ain't ever easy to get a handle on lizard thinking, but this one just seems like an underachiever.
- Kane
- Moving a little to the south and west, running is good in Dallas, especially if you work for the city. S-K is trying to up their presence in the metroplex. With so many corporations and people there, and with so much money floating around, you can make a killing.
- Stone
- Having the Technocrats in power should help Dallas, since their pro-tech stance should boost the bottom line of any corp selling tech. It's an open question,

though, how long they'll stay in power. When you set up an ambitious agenda and don't move on it quickly, people get impatient. It's early, but murmurs are already starting about their slow movement in some areas.

- Dr. Spin
- Actually, they may have a good jump on things. If they can play the Pueblos and Azzies off of one another, they may get some good stuff out of the renegotiated Treaty of Denver. Possibly Puerto Rico, maybe even some or all of Texas back.
- Sunshine
- Their alliance with the PCC might cost the CAS in the negotiations. With the PCC gobbling up so much over the past decade, everyone is going to look to rein them in, and the possible no-confidence vote in the board could hurt the PCC even more. The renegotiation could make or break the Technos—if McMulkin can pickup some good territory, the party should be able to ride the groundswell of positive energy to a second term.
- Kay St. Irregular
- The ultra-conservatives and their racist cousins aren't going to go down without a fight. Sure there has been some progress lately, but there are still plenty of racists of various creeds throughout the south. Alamos 20k has lots of followers—don't let the government whitewash fool you.
- Slamm-O!



CALIFORNIA FREE STATE

California Free State: ka-lə-fōr-nyə frē stāt

Population: 20,100,000

Primary Languages: English (official), Japanese

States: Mojave Desert, Big Sur, Northern Crescent, Central Valley, Bay Area

Government Type: Elected republic (nominally)

Bordering Countries: Tír Tairngire, PCC

Geography: Temperate coastline and northern mountain region, fertile inland valleys, arid mountains and high deserts

Notable Features: Mount Shasta, Northern Disputed Zone, Sierra Nevada Mountains, Yosemite Park

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Although the Treaty of Denver left California as a part of the US, many residents felt isolated and disenfranchised with their far-away government. In the 2030s, the first wave of secession movements hit the United States as it merged with Canada, forming the UCAS. California was among those territories considering secession. California continued to press the UCAS government for more concessions and aid, threatening secession if their requests weren't granted. In a bold move, the UCAS government officially removed California from the Union in 2036. Almost immediately, California's neighbors attacked. In the north, Tír Tairngire invaded down to Redding (although they were later pushed back up to Yreka, leaving the territory between the two cities disputed). In the South, Aztlan captured San Diego—and the largest navy port left to California. Japanese forces took San Francisco, claiming they were protecting Japanese business interests.

Internally, California wasn't much better. Various districts attempted to split away as well, leaving the state fractured and under attack from its neighbors. The new nation renamed itself California Free State, but the government was unable to cope with the immense issues facing it. In 2046, CFS declared Los Angeles a free city. The remaining CFS was divided into five territories, each with their own political views, and with little government cooperation between them. With the Japanese holding the Bay Area, including the capital Sacramento, under their California Protectorate, many questioned the idea that California was "free" at all. Metahumans were particularly targeted by General Saito's California Protectorate. When the Pueblo Corporate Council took Los Angeles, they also took much of the Mojave Desert area remaining in CFS.

In late 2068, California, together with corporate backing (primarily from Ares), retook the Bay Area from the rogue General Saito. Although the nation is still internally divided, it is once again under control of its own government.

MAJOR CITIES

The capital of CFS, **Sacramento** has experienced a revival in the last four years. Although the CFS government was nominally based in Sacramento during General Saito's occupation, the city was primarily under his control. Saito's troops patrolled the city and enforced his laws. Now, Sacramento is recovering. Metahumans no longer have a mandatory curfew, and are allowed in all areas of the city.

Sacramento is the center of the Central Valley agriculture business. From large corporations like Horizon and Pyramid Enterprises

to the smaller, family-owned farms, agriculture is big business in the Central Valley. Located along the Sacramento River, the city is connected to the San Francisco Bay via a man-made channel, allowing mid-sized cargo ships to dock in the city. The roadways and railways are also maintained in and around Sacramento, although less so since the removal of the Saito regime—a fact that has some in the agricultural business worried.

Sacramento has a population of approximately 500,000 and is steadily growing as metahuman refugees return to their homes and neighborhoods.

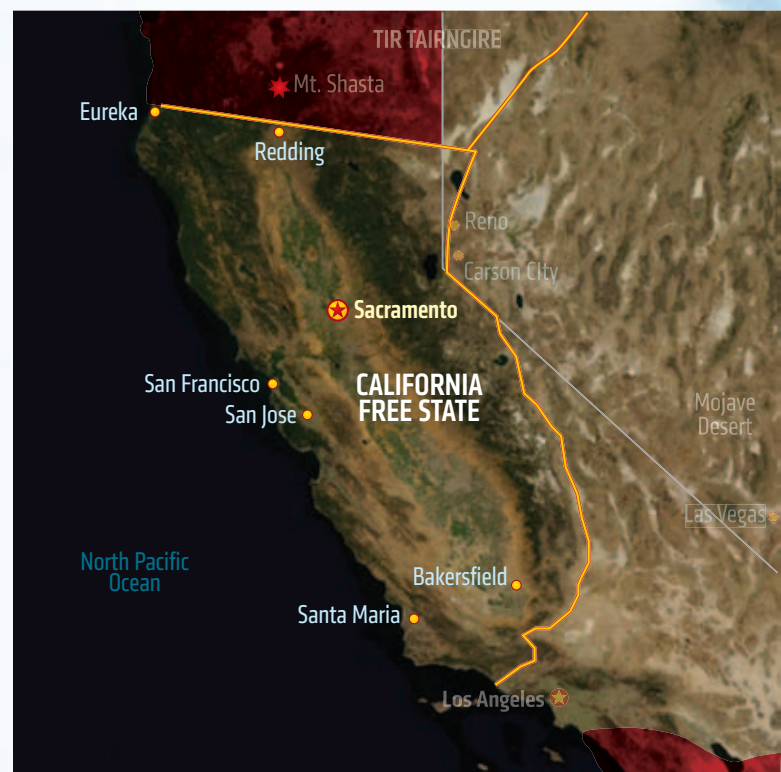
San Francisco has had a personality facelift in the last four years. No longer off limits to metahumans, the traditional atmosphere of acceptance has flowed back into the city, breathing new life into it. In addition, corporate investment has begun to pour back into the city. Tourism—a long time mainstay of the city—has reopened.

San Francisco is well known for its landmarks, like the Golden Gate Bridge and Nob Hill. Fisherman's Wharf, a popular waterfront area, is dotted with restaurants and hotels. The historic cable car lines were restarted in 2070 and run on a regular schedule. Also, the University of California-San Francisco campus reopened in early 2069.

Corporate facilities spread out in the suburbs, like Ares' Silicon Valley enclave, where cutting edge Matrix R&D occurs. MCT has extensive corporate facilities in San Francisco as well, with several located in the high-rises of the SoMa (South of Market) neighborhood. SoMa is also home to numerous smaller companies, ranging from innovative start-ups to A-level corps, many of which rent out space in the MCT building complexes.

San Francisco is located near two major faults, and minor earthquakes are a regular occurrence.

Redding is located in the Northern Crescent area of CFS, on the border of the contested area between Tír Tairngire and CFS. As such, there is an active military presence in the city, although much of that



is the local Redding Militia, recruited, trained, and paid by towns in the Northern Crescent, rather than funding from CFS. Redding was the destination for many metahumans relocated from the California Protectorate, and still has a very high percentage of them.

Because the Northern Crescent has little to do with the central CFS government, Redding has the feel of an independent city. With a population of just over 100,000, it's the largest city in the area, and home to the popular Northern Crescent Free State movement (which is advocating secession from CFS). While agriculture is the predominant industry in and around the city—the Northern Crescent is primarily rural—it also sees a large trade in telesma (much of it via black market channels).

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

While **Mount Shasta** falls in the contested area between Tír Tairngire and CFS, it is nominally a part of California Free State (or at least the Northern Crescent). This is primarily due to the uncontested leader of the Shasta region: the great dragon Hestaby, who calls the mountain home. Despite her title as a Prince of Tír Tairngire, Hestaby has repeatedly sided with the Northern Crescent in matters of territorial dispute. Her presence is the primary reason the territory continues to be disputed, rather than fully absorbed by Tír Tairngire.

Outside of its political significance and ever-popular resident, Mount Shasta is known for its pristine countryside and breathtaking views. Rising nearly 3,000 meters above the surrounding area, the white-capped mountain was one of the few peaks of the Cascades that did not erupt during the Great Ghost Dance. The area also includes Shasta Dam, which controls and provides water for much of California Free State (and has repeatedly been a target of corporate and military action, despite Hestaby's presence), and Lake Shasta. On the astral plane, the mountain glows like a beacon; since Halley's Comet passed by, the magical activity around the mountain has increased tenfold. Numerous free spirits call the region home, as do herds of the unusual Shasta Deer. Magic in the area is aspected towards nature. While some tourism is allowed—primarily eco-friendly tourism, including camping and hiking—it is said the forests and spirits will attack any who defile the region, including telesma hunters. Legal telesma can be purchased in Mount Shasta City.



• Since many of you were busy elsewhere, I'll just give you the cliff's quicky version of the end of Saito. It was beautiful. While a bunch of local groups ran piecemeal against Saito—from pirates to the dwarfs of Halferville to the occasional runner team—the turning point came when Ares stepped in. They made noises that it was concern for their Silicon Valley area, but I think Damien finally just got pissed off (or maybe bribed? blackmailed? who knows, who cares). With Ares special forces running the op,

dozens of groups joined up. We'd lacked a cohesive vision, and we finally had one. I saw Ares special forces working side-by-side with runners and pirates, Mothers of Metahumans (MOM) ladies sheltering troops in their basements and feeding us PB&J, Ancients gangers running weapons, even a contingent of shamans from Shasta. It was huge, well-organized, and we completely smashed them. Everyone was flying high for days from all the good feelings ... or maybe that was just those brownies those hippy ork ladies kept handing out ...

- Sounder
- Remarkably enough, after "liberating" the city, there was very little retaliation against the predominantly Japanese humans who'd gone along with (or even encouraged) Saito's power trip. MOM made sure the transition was mostly peaceful. MCT rolled into the power vacuum, and they've bent over backwards to make their policies metahuman friendly.
- Lyran
- CFS isn't much of a state; more like a bunch of smaller states lumped together because none of them have the funding to split off. Big Sur is a pirate's wet dream, with little to no government interference and a smuggling-based economy. The Northern Crescent doesn't give a fig about the rest of CFS; they just want to keep the Tír and everyone else out and live their lives their own way. The Mojave—well, what the PCC hasn't taken is basically uncontrolled, with so much magic and roving bands of Anasazi that no one *sane* really wants to go there. That leaves the Central Valley and the Bay Area, which is pretty much all that's left of California Free State. Politically conservative, not all that metahuman friendly outside the big cities, with most of the land owned and/or operated by huge agricorps.
- Kay St. Irregular

DENVER

Denver: den-vər

Population: 3,000,000

Primary Languages: English (official), All other languages prominent in representative nations

Sectors: CAS, PCC, Sioux, UCAS

Government Type: Dictatorial Republic

Bordering Countries: PCC, Sioux, UCAS

Geography: Due to its high elevation and arid climate, Denver has comparatively thin air and volatile weather conditions

Notable Features: Elevation of 1609 meters

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Front Range Free Zone (FRFZ), the official name for Denver, is divided into four sectors, each controlled by a different nation with its own laws for governing within its sector. The Council of Denver is made up of a single representative elected from each sector to serve as a unified governance council over the city-state. After the arrival of the great dragon Ghostwalker at the end of 2061, he harassed and attacked the Aztlan sector, driving them out of the FRFZ. The CAS was offered the sector previously controlled by Aztlan. The absorption of the Ute Nation into the Pueblo Corporate Council left the PCC with a sector nearly twice as large as any other. While Ghostwalker always maintains a presence at the Council through his Voice, the majority of day-to-

day decisions are made by the four representatives. The great dragon has made it clear on multiple occasions that the Council of Denver operates at his will and can be replaced or removed entirely if they act against his interests.

To provide security for the city without creating a conflict of interest for any given sector, the Council of Denver established the Zone Defense Force (ZDF). The ZDF is composed of an equal number of troops from each of the constituent nations and answers directly to Ghostwalker. Its charter is to defend the FRFZ against all threats and is the only standing army allowed in Denver. Working as a special police force, the Zone Defense Force guards the Administrative and Council buildings in Denver, but also investigates cross-sector crime. The ZDF also works to curtail smuggling in and out of the Mile High City.

Travel between sectors is difficult due to the large border walls that cut off most passage. Passing through the checkpoints is very similar to crossing the borders between nations. The borders are patrolled by ZDF forces, though each checkpoint is manned by personnel from that nation-state. It is recommended for those new to the city to utilize the public transit system of maglevs and subways to ease the transition between sectors. Use of the transit systems offers a seamless verification system and agents can provide necessary forms for completion without blocking traffic flow for residents.

THE SECTORS

The old Aztlan sector has experienced both a revitalization period and new business developments since 2062. Rebuilding from the destruction caused by Ghostwalker's forcible removal of the Aztlaners has allowed for a more modern face to replace the older skyline. Home to

the Old Downtown area of Denver and the Chinatown District, the **CAS sector** is commonly visited by tourists. The University of Denver sits at the northern end, and has been completely restored. Many graduates go on to successful careers within local politics or the corporate world.

With the formation of the Hub and ensuing balkanization, property values in the Downtown area dropped rapidly and many businesses were forced to close due to economic hardship. While Millionaire's Row is still firmly established with large gated mansions, most of the middle



class population has moved to nearby Englewood.

Clean and organized, the **Pueblo sector** is the most corporate and efficient sector. As with other sections of the PCC, the sector is run as a corporation, with timetables established and project work-flows maintained for all aspects of city planning. The sector touts the lowest crime rate throughout the metroplex, stating that it is due to the organization of the city. Following the Crash 2.0, Pueblo rebuilt the Matrix infrastructure along similar lines as to how the unified grid had been previously managed. In conjunction with the Wireless Matrix Initiative, the network is distributed over all four sectors, though the offices that manage data flow and network balancing are still located in the Pueblo Sector.

Known for their eco-friendly communities and open parks, the **Sioux sector** is interspersed with greenery uncommon in most metroplexes. The majority of the sector is laid out with planned communities, creating a lifestyle conducive to modern society. Many of the houses in the area have smaller than average yards and the communities gather together in the large parks during the summer months for regular festivals.

The northern area, near Commerce City, is distinctly different from the rest of the sector. Here, industrial factories work to produce goods. Many of the sector's blue-collar workers have their jobs here. As of 2070, Lucinda Gray Arrow, the Sioux Council member, has called for a re-examination of the area. Several corporations are working with the Sioux to clean up the pollution caused by industrialization and develop sustainable practices.

Initially established as a remote colony, separated from the rest of the UCAS, their Denver sector has grown into a corporate community. Primarily inhabited by corporate employees, the **UCAS sector** is full of rolling enclaves and small corporate offices. These smaller offices serve as community locations for local corporate personnel to avoid the commute into the Hub and downtown facilities.

The UCAS sector borders along the Rocky Mountain National Reserve, a national park established under the old United States and held by the UCAS after the NAN uprising. The Reserve is home to natural wildlife which occasionally enters into the nearby community of Montebello. Because of its national reservation status, citizens are forbidden to hunt there without special licensing.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Located in the UCAS sector, the **Aurora Warrens** have been slated for demolition since the original Treaty of Denver was signed. The area is home to urban squatters, go-gangs, and syndicate bordellos. The UCAS Council member, Iain Lesker made several speeches in from 2069 to 2070 regarding the area and calling for its immediate demolition and reconstruction. Funding has still not been approved for the task, and the question remains as to what to do with the population that would invariably need to be relocated before demolition could begin.

During the balkanization of Denver, the Council did not want to leave the entire downtown area under Aztlan's encroaching influence. With some creative map drawing, the UCAS and Sioux governments moved quickly to secure sections of the downtown corridor.



Nestled within what eventually became the CAS Sector, **the Hub** is a sector within a sector. Divided between the UCAS and the Sioux, the Hub measures from 28th Avenue to Colfax and from Speer Boulevard to Pearl Street. The Hub contains the Denver Council Hall, Ghostwalker's Liason office, and several autonomous corporate enclaves including Evo, Shiawase, and Mitsuhama. The neighborhood is home to some of the nicer restaurants, theaters, and dance

clubs in the FRFZ. The Draco Foundation maintains a large office here as well, coordinating efforts with branch offices in the CAS, near Cherry Lake, and in the PCC near Arvada.

Access to the Hub is restricted from the CAS sector, with the majority of visitors coming directly from the Sioux or UCAS sectors to their respective sides of the Hub via air-taxi. Union Station is the only access checkpoint from the CAS sector into the Hub.

- Even before the tempo craze began fueling syndicate wars, this place has been a hot bed of syndicate violence and smuggling. In 2070, several small *organizatsya* established themselves—one per sector, and the Vory tried wedging their foot in the door. They didn't get too far, with one of the Vory upstarts getting killed in the first year. A Western Avtoritet though has made a fair amount of progress by playing the syndicates against each other, particularly the Triad clans.
- Red Anya
- If you are looking for biz, the place to start is the Splatter Bar. The bar is run by a retired smuggler called Jitters and they give you a gun when you walk in the door. It's not like the old paintball types that shoot capsule rounds full of pigment, now the bar is run as a customized Miracle Shooter with the DJ and all the patrons playing together. Drink prices fluctuate by how well you shoot.
- Traveler Jones
- The Meat Market is on the list of places to avoid. When Aurora went from shiny community to Warrens, the Aurora Mall collapsed with the rest of the economy. Now, the ghouls have taken up residence and nicknamed it the Meat Market. The ghouls run a protection racket for the squatters who live in the area in exchange for "food." There are ghost stories about feral ghouls kept in the basement parking garage, where they tear each other apart like the cannibals they are.
- Hannibelle
- Denver is best known for its t-bird jammers—hot shot smugglers who buzz the canyons and fly below the radar level. While the ZDF has cracked down on the careless ones, Ghostwalker turns a blind eye to most of the traffic. Without the jammers, the underground economy of the city would tank. If you ever need a lift in or out of Denver, they are the best way to go.
- 2XL
- The FRFZ also serves as a waypoint for just about any trans-continental smuggling in NorthAm. From Seattle to New York, nearly everyone stops in Denver to refuel and offload cargo. Because you don't always know which sector you will be stopping in, it's good to have a few coyotes on the books to get you across the inter-zone borders.
- Traveler Jones

HAWAI'I

Hawai'i: hə-vā-i

Population: 5,020,500

Primary Languages: Hawai'ian (official), English (official), Tagalog, Ilokano, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Samoan

Islands: Hawai'i, Maui, Kaho'olawe, Lana'i, Moloka'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i, Ni'ihau

Government Type: Hereditary Monarchy

Bordering Countries: None

Geography: Tropical islands with active volcanoes

Notable Features: Multiple active volcanoes, Haleakalā Crater, Kīlauea, Mauna Kea, Puowaina, The Papahānaumokuākea Marine Monument

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Common archeological theory has the earliest habitation of Hawai'i as early as 300 BCE, likely of Polynesian settlers. In the 1700s, Europeans arrived at the islands, primarily for exploration, trading, and as a travel hub for long oceanic journeys. They also brought diseases that decimated the Hawai'ian population. By the late 1700s, the various chiefs were fighting for power; creating a constant state of war that plagued the island. In 1810, King Kamehameha the Great finally united the islands, starting the House of Kamehameha dynasty that continues today.

The islands were self-governing until the late 1800s, when the monarchy was overthrown by the US government. In 1959, the islands were made the 50th state of the USA. Starting in 2009, the native population of islanders began pressing their state government

to secede, and were subject to the same Re-Education and Relocation acts as those on the mainland. The population was hard to suppress, leading the state government to declare martial law in 2014 and bring in federal troops to suppress the independence movement. Shortly after the Great Ghost Dance, the native islanders—led by Danforth Ho, descendant of the House of Kamehameha—used their own magical abilities, supported by corporate agreements, to rout the remaining US forces, ending with the declaration of Hawai'ian sovereignty and the crowning of Danforth Ho as King Kamehameha IV. In 2045, Gordon Ho, crowned King Kamehameha V, ascended the throne after his father's death; in 2063 he turned over rule to his son, Brandon Ho, crowned King Kamehameha VI. King Kamehameha VI's death in a sea accident in 2067 forced King Kamehameha V back on the throne.

MAJOR CITIES

Honolulu was established as the capital of Hawai'i when the Kamehameha dynasty decided to use it as their home. When King Kamehameha IV ascended to the throne, he reaffirmed the city as the capital of the newly-sovereign nation. With a large natural port, it is an ideal location for a nation that thrives on trade and tourism. Honolulu's primary industry, tourism, is evident in every aspect of the city. A secondary industry revolves around trade, as Hawai'i is well situated for oceanic transport and as a midway point for air traffic crossing the Pacific. The port of Honolulu is a free port, capitalizing on the lucrative trade available.

Honolulu is a modern city, with a stable wireless Matrix network and a thriving downtown business community. Almost three-quarters of the island's population lives in or around Honolulu, making it the largest city on the islands. The high population causes numerous issues for the city as well, since land is at a premium. Generous immigration policies—especially to the victims of Yomi—have acerbated the

★ Papahānaumokuākea Marine Monument

Pu'uwai
NI'IIHAU

KAUA'I

O'AHU

Puowaina

Honolulu

MOLOKA'I

LANA'I

MAUI

KAHO'OLAWE

HAWAI'I

Hilo

North Pacific
Ocean

situation, giving Honolulu a very high cost of living and pricing most real estate out of the range of the average citizen.

The downtown and tourist areas of Honolulu, including Waikiki, have tens of thousands of tourist hotel rooms, shops, and nightclubs. Honolulu's cultural offerings are rich and varied, and include numerous museums, art displays, live theatre, and traditional live entertainment. The Arts district in Chinatown is a favorite stop for tourists.

The largest city on the island of Hawai'i (also known as the "Big Island"), **Hilo** has a population of just under 100,000. While tourism is a vital part of the city economy, science plays an even larger role. Hilo is the base of the Pacific Tsunami and Earthquake Research and Warning Center (PTER), a joint Corporate Court-Hawai'ian institution that benefits nations and corporations around the globe with advanced warnings and groundbreaking research. Numerous corporations have research complexes in or around the city, including Wuxing, Renraku, Shiawase, and Evo. The city is also home to the prestigious University of Hawai'i at Hilo, which is renowned for its post-graduate science programs. Hilo is located on the western side of the Big Island, making it one of the wettest cities in the world, with average recorded rainfalls of over 5,000 mm per year, and measurable precipitation on 280 days of the year.

The town of **Pu'uwai** is the smallest on the islands, with a permanent population of less than 200 metahuman residents. However, the city is notable for being the only one on the Forbidden Island, which is dedicated to Hawai'ian shamans, called kahunas. Only the Awakened and members of the Kamehameha bloodline may step onto the island. A small school for kahunas is located in the town, with students spending anywhere from a few months to several years exploring their traditional magic under their spirit guides. King Kamehameha V also has a spiritual retreat in the town.

The city (and island) was once subject to periodic droughts, but it is said that the kahunas control the rain enough to provide for the residents. Pu'uwai also has a large population of free spirits (many of whom teach at the kahuna school) and a merrow community offshore that protects the island from non-Awakened trespassers.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine Monument covers 360,000 square kilometers of reefs, atolls, and shallow and deep sea, a sea life preserve where hunting, fishing, and harvesting are forbidden. However, scientific research and tourism are highly encouraged. While the monument was established long ago, interest in it spiked after the passing of Halley's Comet, when portions of the area were discovered to be astral shallows. The region is the only known underwater astral shallow open to the public. Scuba divers can swim through the warm waters and marvel at the view of the natural beauty of the underwater astral world. Numerous paranormal animals are drawn to the area, and sightings of merrow, devilfish, and even meistersingers are common. On occasion, leviathans and seadraka have been seen in the deepest waters.

Historically used as a site for human sacrifices, **Puowaina** is the crater of an extinct volcano above the city of Honolulu. In the



mid-1900s, the U.S. military placed a cemetery on the slopes for service men. After Hawai'ian independence, King Kamehameha IV had the bodies exhumed and returned them to the United States, with all due honors and respect and under the supervision of numerous kahunas.

Now Punchbowl Crater is a park and wildlife sanctuary, popular with tourists, who are drawn to it for the spectacular views, the thrilling history, and periodic sightings of ghosts and spirits that haunt the site. Locals, however, do not go to the crater, and the government is under pressure to close the site to public access.

- Hawai'i had a much higher rate of Goblinization than other areas in the world. Currently, orks are thirty-five percent of the population, and trolls are just over ten percent. In the next decade, it's estimated that the goblinized population will be over half of the population. Some of that is the high birth rate of orks, but part is also from the large infusion of Japanese orks and oni when Yomi Island closed. The king offered any metahumans that had been imprisoned on Yomi sanctuary in Hawai'i, and a lot of survivors, doubting what kind of reception they'd get in the country that interred them in the first place, took him up on it.
- Mihoshi Oni
- ALOHA (Army for the Liberation of Hawai'i) is pretty mad at the king for that move. They want to get the island back to the Polynesian purebloods, kick out all the Anglos, Asians, and money-grubbing exploitative corps. They're so radical they want to kick out tourists, too—crazy SOB's without an ounce of economics knowledge in the organization. While they were instrumental in freeing Hawai'i back at the beginning, they've had conflicts with the Kings since then—especially with Kamehameha V, Gordon Ho, who's survived a half dozen ALOHA assassination attempts and one very short-lived coup. Opening the island to a bunch of Japanese has them frothing at the mouth, and there's some sympathy among other islanders, especially the non-orks. The population is already bursting at the seams and adding more orks—who, if they're like my sister, pop out litters every couple of months and suck up government welfare like rum—on an island where there just *isn't* any more room has tensions skyrocketing.
- Stone
- Well, all those Yomi survivors worship the ground King K-V walks on, and his personal guard has swelled with oni and trolls who survived Yomi—which makes them some of the toughest, scariest SOB's on the island. I doubt he'll listen to the radicals.
- Mihoshi Oni
- Traditional Hawai'ian shamans are called kahunas; they're highly respected for their magical abilities, but also hold other positions of importance: doctors, lawyers, government advisors, etc. By constitutional law, the King's first advisor must always be a kahuna. While most of them are shamans—who follow traditional island mentor spirits, like goose—the term also includes the occasional native hermetic.
- Frosty

PUEBLO CORPORATE COUNCIL

Pueblo: pwe-biō

Population: 38,500,000

Primary Languages: English, Spanish, Zuni, Hopi

Provinces: Divided by profit center and responsibility, rather than geographical states

Government Type: Corporate Council, elected

Bordering Countries: Aztlan, California Free State, Salish-Shidhe Council, Sioux, Tír Tairngire, UCAS, CAS, Denver

Geography: Arid deserts and high mountains

Notable Features: Chaco Canyon, Colorado River, Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, Mohave Desert, Salt Lake, Rio Grande River

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Pueblo were some of Daniel Coleman's greatest supporters during the rebellion against the United States, and Pueblo shamans sacrificed their lives during the Great Ghost Dance. Because of this sacrifice, Pueblo was made one of the nations of the NAN at the Treaty of Denver. However, unlike the other NAN states, the Pueblo people decided to disregard ancient tribal governing methods and shaped their country in the form of a large corporation, mimicking the newly created extraterritorial megacorps.

The Pueblo Corporate Council is a for-profit corporation, with publicly traded stock, a shareholder elected Board of Directors, and a shareholder elected Chairman of the Board. Shares come in three varieties: Preferred shares hold no voting rights but are publicly traded, Residential Shares hold voting rights (along with many other rights associated with "citizenship") and return a dividend, and Conditional Shares, good for a limited period of time, and given to newly integrated residents in territories annexed by the PCC.

In December of 2061, Pueblo responded to a plea by Los Angeles city elders and mobilized their military to bring order and relief to the rioting city. Pueblo forces were quickly able to restore order, and within

a few months, Los Angeles was declared part of the Pueblo Corporate Council, and all residents were granted Conditional Shares. Following their expansionist policies, when the Ute looked for assistance after Crash 2.0, the PCC provided it and absorbed the Ute territory—making them the powerhouse of the Native American Nations.

MAJOR CITIES

Santa Fe is the capital of the Pueblo Corporate Council and has earned the nickname of the "Wall Street of the West" for its significance to the PCC. While it is a smaller town, with just over 450,000 residents, it has numerous financial institutions, including the Pueblo owned Department of Financing, Department of Insurance, and Small Business Administration. These departments are responsible for administering Pueblo funds loaned or granted to the numerous corporations in the nation. Santa Fe has its own stock exchange, physically located in the former New Mexico state capitol building. The Board of Directors meets in the Palace of Governors, which is open for tours.

Santa Fe is located at 2,134 meters elevation, making it one of the highest capital cities in North America (surpassing Denver by over 500 meters). The city was designed around a central plaza, and regulations require all buildings in the downtown core to conform to Spanish Pueblo architecture, featuring adobe walls and low buildings (there are no high rises or skyscrapers in the city). The city is also well known for its art market (second only to Manhattan) and its high number of resident artists.

If Santa Fe is the government capital of the PCC, **Albuquerque** is its innovative heart. Pueblo is well known for its cutting edge Matrix systems, computer engineering, and even its spectacular public AR systems. The engineering firms and scientists that are behind the Council's reputation as a leader in matrix development are based in Albuquerque. Other research and development firms focus on aeronautics, alternative energies (solar, wind, geothermal), and even lasers. The government-owned Sandia Laboratories are where most of Pueblo's cutting-edge matrix research and experimentation take place. The Kirtland Aeronautical Laboratories, beside the Albuquerque International Airport, are responsible for Pueblo's high-tech aeronautical and electronic warfare developments, including crafting and maintaining Pueblo's extensive air force and air patrolling drones.

Los Angeles has only been a part of Pueblo for a little over a decade, but it has seen immense benefit from Pueblo's management—and survived repeated disasters. The city is still recovering from its most recent disaster, the double earthquakes and subsequent formation of the astral construct known as the Deep Lacuna. With the cleanup and rebuilding of the downtown core, the city appears to be well on the road to recovery.

Los Angeles is the media capital of the PCC—and some might argue of the world. Hollywood survived the last disaster almost unscathed and continues producing simsense and trids for global distribution; it also continues to produce and sell the media sensationalism peculiar to that city, but so popular elsewhere.

Horizon has its corporate headquarters in Los Angeles, and directly employs more than ten percent of the population (another twenty percent are employed in industries that support the corporation).

While media is the primary industry in Los Angeles, it also has a large port (the largest on the West Coast of North America, both in traffic and size), multiple renowned educational facilities, a thriving tourism trade, and a variety of scientific and research industries.



The Deep Lacuna has also drawn curious Awakened, corporate researchers, and even treasure hunters.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The **Mojave Desert** is a broad expanse of some of the most inhospitable land in North America. At more than 57,000 square kilometers, the desert covers much of Pueblo's territory, stretching from outside Los Angeles almost to Salt Lake City, and completely surrounding Las Vegas.

It is the driest area in North America, with some areas that have had no measurable rainfall in over one hundred years. Numerous species of poisonous animals, both mundane and paranormal, call the desert home. Likewise, it holds a startling diversity of plant life, much of it paranormal.

The real attraction of the Mojave is that it is a magical hotspot. In addition to the paranormal animals and exotic awakened plants, free spirits abound. While some are indifferent to metahumanity, most are hostile, making travel and exploration dangerous. A few roads cross the Mojave, and a few small towns survive the harsh environment, but for the most part, the desert is a pristine wilderness area, untouched by metahumanity.

In **Chaco Canyon**, a few miles north of the city of Gallup are the ancient ruins of an Anasazi city. Pueblo had created a national monument of the location, allowing a few tribal-affiliated archeologists to conduct research in the area. It was of immense archeological interest, with one of the largest collections of ruins in North America, evidence of archaeoastronomy, and numerous clues to the lost history of the missing tribes of the area. Until 2061 and Halley's Comet, that is; after it passed by, visitors (even mundane) began having visions. The site was immediately closed, and remains so, although both the Atlantean Foundation and the Draco Foundation are petitioning Pueblo for rights to enter the sacred site.

- The PCC's population figures can really give you some hints on the issues they're facing. Absorbing LA doubled the PCC's population, and shifted the demographics from a majority of tribal-affiliated shareholders to a majority anglo and non-tribal affiliated. Add in immigration from SanFran during the Saito



regime (primarily metahuman) and the influx of corp-affiliated employees, and you've got the PCC with its conquest city holding over half their population.

Luckily for the PCC, when Horizon became an AAA, all their employees became Horizon employees, and lost their voting rights (read: swapped their Residential Shares for Preferred Shares) in the PCC.

- Dr. Spin

- The problems with Pueblo's expansions are too numerous to list, but at the top is the tribal and racial tensions. Ute was a very anti-anglo nation. The PCC is anglo-friendly, and frankly, anyone can buy a Residential Share. LA—yeah, it's LA. So you've got votes happening to favor the relatively rich non-native Angelinos (who really can swing a vote any way they want), the Ute furious that their "tribal voice" has absolutely no importance—seriously, how long can the PCC put off the Aztechnology issue the Ute voting bloc keeps trying to put up?—and the PCC trying to keep control.

- Mika

- Add in the lack of manpower. Pueblo patrols its entire nation and has government-paid police. LA sucks up resources, especially since the quakes and the fall, and the PCC was stuck with the bill for rebuilding and housing all the displaced residents, and policing the increasing crime during tempo. You gotta wonder at what point will the PCC just cut LA loose again?

- 2XL

- LA makes the PCC more nuyen than it costs. Plus all their corps can ship goods out the LA port—and they get all the taxes from their fellow NAN who use the LA port. Not to mention they've got the entire Mohave to themselves (never mind they can't control it). They'll fight tooth-and-nail to keep it.

- Lyran

- And meanwhile, the Azzies are building up their military in San Diego...

- Mika

- News flash, omae. The Azzies just redeployed half of their San Diego forces to their southern border. You can almost hear LA's sigh of relief from here.

- Marcos

QUÉBEC

Québec: kwi-bek

Population: 11,325,000

Primary Languages: French (official), English

Regions: Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Centre-du-Québec, Chaudière-Appalaches, Côte-Nord, Capitale-Nationale, Estrie, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Labradorm Lanaudière, Laurentides, Laval, Maurice, Montérégie, Montréal, Newfoundland, Nord-du-Québec, Outaouais, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean

Government Type: Republic

Bordering Countries: Algonkian-Manitou Council, UCAS

Geography: Subarctic taiga, boreal forests, and low lying mountains

Notable Features: Ille d'Anticosti, Lake Melville, Monteregian Hills, Smallwood Reservoir, St. Lawrence River and estuary

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Since its founding in 2010 as a republic, Québec was a francophone sheltered economy. That began to change in 2061 with the election of the Démocrates Mondains as the majority party. Shortly afterward, the Québécois awoke the bear of their economy and faced globalization. In July of 2062, English was added as a second legal language for business transactions, overturning the 2011 decision banning its use. Since then, the economy of Québec has improved dramatically from its introduction to the world economy and investment by foreign megacorporations.

The improvement came with a price. In the wake of the Crash 2.0, Québec's economy teetered on the edge of collapse. With their rapid expansion, the republic had not had time to build up the capital necessary to refurbish their entire Matrix infrastructure. NeoNET and others agreed to fund the general infrastructure in exchange for Québec signing the Business Recognition Accords (BRA). With the acceptance of the BRA and collapse of Cross Applied Technologies Corporation (CATCo), the economic and political landscapes were dramatically changed.

As of 2072, Québec has returned to the global marketplace. Though the Démocrates Mondains party has maintained the majority vote over the last ten years, there has been a steady increase in popularity for the Alliance Métaumaine – a pro-metahuman political party. The Alliance has gained support in recent years for their timely assistance and grassroots campaign to provide social services throughout the recovery period after Crash 2.0.

MAJOR CITIES

The capitol of Québec and home to the National Assembly, **Québec City** is one of the youngest metroplexes in North America. It earned the title in 2054,

following the absorption of several neighboring towns and counties. A chaotic blend of modern designs and anachronistic structures, the city's skyline is as eclectic as its political scene. In the power vacuum created by CATCo's collapse, several new corporations pressed into the city and purchased resources from its remains. Ares purchased the Laurier Arcology in the Sainte-Foy district, while Renraku and Saeder-Krupp divided the production facilities evenly.

The Citadel, a classic fort from Québec's early founding, is located in the downtown area and home to the Lone Star subsidiary Gendarmerie. With the acceptance of the Business Recognition Accords, Gendarmerie changed rapidly from a provincial subsidiary to a fully extra-territorial power. This gave the local police force much broader jurisdiction, as they were now allowed to pursue criminals across national boundaries into other territories.

An area that has seen great improvement over the last ten years is the Old Port. Previously unsafe to walk through at night, the Old Port has become a vibrant and lively neighborhood. Under the guidance of Horizon Community Outreach workgroups, the community has banded together to clean up the streets. Civic leaders have organized the people and repaired the old buildings and houses throughout the district. They have gentrified the area, and on May 7, 2071, New Horizons Park was commemorated to the efforts of community leaders Romel and Lisa-Marie Autus.

Québec City is home to two major thaumaturgical institutes: the Institut Thaumaturgique de Québec (ITQ) and the Université Laval.



While the ITQ is heavily funded through megacorporate investment, a tradition from CATCo's founding, the Université Laval is a public school funded by the government of Québec.

Once a failing city, **Montréal** came out of Crash 2.0 with a newly invigorated economy. The assembly lines and factories were already designed for building computer electronics and Matrix relay systems, so the city served as a front line for providing hardware to build the wireless infrastructure as far south as the Caribbean League. The sudden boom in production saw an increased need for a work-force, drawing unemployed from nearby townships into the factories. The rise in productivity helped lead to the revitalization of the region.

Unfortunately, with the revitalization of the economy in Montréal, the city has also seen a rise in non-violent crimes—primarily Matrix-based theft as shipments of hardware are re-routed and the parts offloaded before Gendarmerie agents can arrive on scene. While the City Council denies the increase in crime, Gendarmerie reports indicate that there has been a 30% rise in non-violent crimes from 2062 to 2072. Reports of violent crimes have reduced by seventeen percent over the same period.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

For the most part, the **Bouclier des Laurentides** is an untamed wilderness of forests, lakes, and rivers. While the rivers supply energy to the nation through Shiawase's hydroelectric generators, the area is considered unsafe due to the high number of paranormal animals found throughout the area. Since the adoption of the Harmful Paranormal Act in 2021, the Bouclier has seen an increase in big game hunters and bounty hunters looking to collect trophies and bounties. Records state that over 5,000 separate bounties have been paid out by the Ministry of Wildlife.

Following the rise in hunters, small hunting lodges and resorts have been built from previously abandoned outposts. Many of these resorts are in remote locations which are not readily accessible by automobiles. The best known retreat, the Sylvan Lodge, requires guests to be brought in via helicopter over 300 kilometers of untouched terrain. This location hosts exclusive hunting parties of no more than fifty guests at a time. The Lodge provides specially trained skinners to collect the pelts from any paranormal for later turn-in.

With a population of over 25,000 people, **Sept-Îles** is a township on a naturally-formed harbor. It earned its name through the small archipelago of seven islands that guard the harbor entrance. Over the last fifty years, the islands have earned a reputation for being haunted. While there is no measurable difference in the mana levels on the islands as compared to the township, strange lights have appeared upon the La Petite Basque and La Grande Basque islands. These lights have coincided with other sightings throughout the archipelago. Local folklore states that the Île du Corossol, named after the ship which was wrecked on the island in 1693, is still haunted by the crew of drowned sailors.

Members of the ITQ have worked with the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research to discern any truth to the local rumors, but thus far have been unsuccessful at explaining the sightings. They speculate that the Awakening and return of Halley's Comet have strengthened



the haunting energies, though neither team has found conclusive proof to support the sightings.

- I pulled a listing of paranimals for the bounties. How exactly do you skin a Free Spirit?
- `\dev\grrl\`

- Carefully.
- Sticks

- The Harmful Paranormal Act is legalized genocide. By destroying all that we have been given by nature, we destroy our own chances for survival later.

- Ecotope
- Half the bounties I've turned in risked my survival. Horned bears don't just lie down to be skinned; you gotta do a fair bit of work to earn them. If the critters don't kill you, there are also ecoterrorists who think it's fair game to hunt the hunters.
- Kane
- The entire region is popular with talisleggers—the native flora and fauna is untouched by metahumanity, making it ideal for collecting natural components. Some talisleggers even sign on with hunting parties to collect fresh pieces from the more exotic critters.
- Lyran
- If you ever want to test yourself, the Sylvan Lodge guarantees exposure to any class of paranormal requested when you make reservations. They don't guarantee that you'll be able to kill it, however, so think carefully about it before you request a Class X excursion.
- Sticks
- Despite the sunshine that Horizon is blowing about Montréal being a bright and shiny oasis of happy wageslaves, the truth is that go-gangs and crime still happens up there. Violent crime is down because the memes flooding the area are designed to inhibit rage functions. All that pent up emotion has to go somewhere, though ...
- Dr. Spin
- The Alliance Métaumaine has been lobbying for the removal of all sapient critters from the Harmful Paranormal list and voting rights for ghouls. Their pro-ghoul agenda has seen a mixed review from the people, and cost them points in the last election. The basis of their argument is that contraction of a disease should not remove citizenship rights from the individual. That would mean only ghouls who were citizens of Québec before getting sick would be legal, but it's a start.
- Hannibelle
- Beside the hunting opportunities in the Bouclier, it's also one of the most common ways for smugglers to gain access into the country. Jammers swing wide around border checkpoints frequently and run regular trips between Montréal and La Baie.
- Traveler Jones



SALISH-SHIDHE COUNCIL

Salish-Shidhe: sā-lish shē

Population: 9,050,000 (excluding Tsimshian Protectorate)

Primary Languages: English, Salish dialects

States: Seventy-eight autonomous tribes

Government Type: Autonomous and Self-Governing tribal governments with equal representation on a national Tribal Council; mix of national and tribal laws enforced

Bordering Countries: California Free State, Sioux, Tír Tairngire, UCAS, Denver

Geography: Varied, with coastal islands, temperate rainforests, high mountains and active volcanoes, arid high deserts, high mountain plains

Notable Features: Cascade Mountains, Hells Canyon, Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helens, Olympic Mountains, San Juan Islands

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Salish nation was formed with the Treaty of Denver in 2018. While they took full advantage of the Anglo relocation programs provided by the treaty terms in the nation's early years, in 2029 they opened their borders to all metahumans—many of whom were adopted into existing tribes, while others formed their own so-called “Pink Skin” tribes—and changed their name to the Salish-Shidhe council. Following this policy

of acceptance and asylum, the Salish-Shidhe extended the same offer to any SURGED individuals following the passage of Halley's Comet.

For years the Salish-Shidhe Council (SSC) had a long-standing conflict with their northern neighbor, Tsimshian. Border skirmishes caused the death of thousands, primarily military personnel, although civilian casualties were also high. Crash 2.0 left Tsimshian without a viable government and facing civil war; in January of 2065 the Sovereign Tribal Council stepped in (despite the fact that Tsimshian was not a member of the Native American Nations at that time). Tsimshian was later made a protectorate of the Salish-Shidhe; although it has an independently elected government, the Salish-Shidhe provides much of the infrastructure, military, and police forces for the Tsimshian protectorate.

The Salish-Shidhe has been called the most tribally-oriented of all the Native American Nations. Each tribe is autonomous and self-governing, responsible for enforcing their laws and traditions within the territory they claim. These laws vary widely from tribe to tribe, as do the methods of government—some have elected leaders, some are inherited positions, others are governed by elders. Each tribe, regardless of size, sends one representative to the Salish-Shidhe Council. Each tribe must also contribute to the national military force, national resources, and other national efforts as approved by the SSC. Representatives serve on the SSC for a period of time determined by their individual tribes.

MAJOR CITIES

Bellingham serves as the capital of the Salish-Shidhe Council. The representatives that serve on the Council all have permanent residences in and around Council Square, owned by the individual tribes. Council Building is also located on Council Square, as are most of the national government facilities. Unlike other cities in the Salish-Shidhe, Bellingham is not within any particular tribes' territory; it is independent and run by the SSC. All people must follow the national laws; tribal law does not have jurisdiction within the city limits.

Located on Puget Sound, Bellingham has an extensive waterfront community and a well-used port with daily ferry service to Anchorage and other Athabaskan ports. There is also a well-maintained rail line connecting Bellingham to Vancouver and Seattle, as well as to the eastern cities. A passenger rail system runs on the hour, and construction is underway for an extension of the San Francisco to Seattle bullet train.

Although some visitors from Salish-Shidhe tribes do not use AR, the city does have a full AR network, maintained by Gaeatronics, featuring a mix of tribal themes. Most restaurants and public venues rely on physical signage in addition to AROs. The SSC does not require metahumans or sentient non-metahumans to broadcast IDs or SINS anywhere in the city.

Vancouver is often called the cultural hub of the nation, filled with museums, theatres, sculpture parks, restaurants featuring tribal cuisine, and summertime open-air markets where tribes sell their art, craft items, produce, and even tesmas and hand-crafted magical items. The city is designed to integrate buildings and structures with nature, and has numerous parks and green spaces, as well as a very strict eco-building standard.



Vancouver has a large port and is a major economic center for the nation. Numerous corporations make their home in the city, although restrictions on extra-territoriality and strict enforcement of environmental regulations mean that most megacorps operate through subsidiaries. Smaller corporations are prevalent, and notable mid-sized corporations include Universal Omnitech and Gaeatronics. The city is particularly known for advanced work in cybertronics and biotech.

As Vancouver is located on the border between Salish and Cascade Crow territories, both tribes work together to maintain the city infrastructure, although policing and tribal law depends on tribal jurisdiction.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Mount Rainier erupted during the Great Ghost Dance and continues to be an active volcano today, averaging one or two smaller Plinian eruptions per month (characterized by the ash and gas clouds). Mount Rainier is the most active volcano in the Cascade Range, and has provided extensive scientific study opportunities. A number of corporate facilities are located on or near the mountain. Numerous communities around the world living in the shadow of a volcano have benefited from the cutting-edge research into predicting both the timing and size of imminent eruptions. Tourism has also benefited from this research, and mountain climbers, hikers, and nature lovers can take advantage of the Mount Rainier wilderness area (under Sinsearach jurisdiction) during safe times.

Hells Canyon is located in the southeastern portion of the Salish-Shidhe. Carved by the winding Snake River, it is one of the deepest canyons on earth. Adrenaline junkies are drawn to cliff-climbing and white-water rafting, while outdoor tourism features spectacular hiking, beautiful vistas, hunting, wildlife viewing (paranormal animals are plentiful), and a few calm stretches of river rafting. It is within the Nez Perce territory, a tribe notable for their inclusion of Centaurs. No motorized vehicles are allowed, either by land, water, or air.

- Vancouver isn't nearly as big as Seattle, but it's got a small, thriving shadow community and plenty of work for out-of-towners. Because the tribes *really* restrict corps—at least the corps that aren't tribal owned—most of the megas (and minors) use independent talent to swing things their way. Add in a hodgepodge of laws and enforcement and tribal rivalries (the Salish and the Cascade Crow do *not* like each other), and you get a city that lets a lot of the 'non-tribals' fall through the cracks. There's slums, on the outskirts of the city, and just because the cheap, pre-fab housing blocks are 'environmental friendly' doesn't make them any less dangerous than slums elsewhere. The tribes take care of their own, and don't give a fig for anyone else—sad but true.
- Lyran



- Pay particular attention to the “self-governing” tribes bit here. What it means is there are two functioning sets of laws (and punishments) in the SSC: national laws, and tribal laws. You better know both if you travel there—while the Cascade Orks don't give a fig about what kinda vehicle you're flying, driving, or swimming in, driving a fossil-fuel guzzling, polluting vehicle in Sinsearach lands is punishable by confiscation and destruction of the vehicle (and if you're still inside, you too). The Makah are fairly liberal in regards to telesma gathering (a 100 nuyen fine

if unlicensed) but the Tsawassen punish illegal telesma hunters with ten years indentured servitude—and the Spokane punish it with death. In cases where national law and tribal law conflict, the situation is almost always resolved in favor of the tribal law—rape, for example, has a minimum ten-year prison sentence by SSC law, but many of the tribes punish it by death, some more painfully than others. So do your research before traveling through the SSC.

- Turbo Bunny
- This is why many t-bird smugglers take the most bizarre routes through the SSC; if they're transporting BTLs, for example, they make sure to zig-zag thru those tribes' territories that don't have any laws against them.
- 2XL
- Yeah, most of the tribes have an “if it doesn't impact our tribe, it doesn't matter to us” philosophy. As long as you're not selling to *their* people, they'll let you pass through untroubled. But the exceptions can bite you in the ass, so I recommend hiring a good smuggler who knows the local tribes and laws.
- Sounder
- Like, say, Sounder herself.
- Kat O' Nine Tales
- Hey, Kat, you ever need a ride out of town, I'm *happy* to oblige ...
- 2XL
- If you're metahuman, even if you don't look at all native, you can get a pretty rock solid fake ID and SIN due to some fun loopholes in the SSC. A lot of the tribes adhere to a neo-luddite lifestyle—sustainable living, no technology, using magic in place of tech, etc.—so the SSC has quite a few tribes that do not participate in the national SIN registry. Or, hell, even record births and deaths with the national government. When a member of one of these tribes decides to enter mainstream life, the government hands them over a brand shiny new SIN. Anyone interested, apply in Bellingham. Just make sure you speak the language.
- Frosty

SIoux NATION

Sioux: sū

Population: 6,845,000

Primary Languages: English, Dakota, Lakota, Tsalagi

Tribes: Twenty official recognized tribes hold territory

Government Type: Twenty Member Council, non-elected

Bordering Countries: Algonkian-Manitou Council, Denver, Salish-Shidhe Council, UCAS

Geography: High elevation plains, hills, mountains

Notable Features: Badlands Wilderness Refuge, Bear's Tower, Black Hills, Yellowstone Wilderness Refuge

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The Sioux Nation was established by the Treaty of Denver and was one of the Native American Nations given a district in the city. The Sioux has the most native-affiliated tribes of all NAN members, as it became the de facto nation for many displaced smaller tribes that did not have a traditional territory in another Native American Nation. Prior to the Treaty of Denver, the Sioux suffered some of the worst oppression from the United States, including several massacres of innocents by the US military. As a result, the Sioux have poor relations with its non-Native neighbor, and the border is fully militarized.

The Sioux have good relations with their NAN neighbors and have loaned resources, including military units and intelligence, to their neighbors when needed.

The Sioux Nation is governed by the Council of Chiefs, with one appointed representative from each of the twenty officially recognized tribes. Representatives serve five-year terms. Decisions made by the Council of Chiefs require a two-thirds majority vote. The Council of Chiefs appoints the heads of government bureaus and functions (such as the Department of Justice and National Security), oversees state policy, and introduces and passes legislation.

The Council of Elders appoints the Council of Chiefs representatives. It is made up of a member of each of the twenty officially recognized tribes, who serve for life. The Council of Elders is responsible for the moral and spiritual guidance of the country, and influence the political state via their appointments to the Council of Chiefs. This method of governance is designed to ensure each tribe, regardless of size, has an equal voice in government.

MAJOR CITIES

The capital of the Sioux nation, **Cheyenne** is the focal point of much of the nation's high-tech industry, including computer software, electronics manufacturing, and military technology.

The city is situated on semi-arid plains and has an old-west feel to it. Even the slums and neighborhoods of the SINless are of a higher quality than in comparable sprawls, and crime is much lower than in other comparable cities. This is no doubt due to the Sioux National Police, as no subcontracted or private police forces are allowed in the nation.

The University of Cheyenne is the Sioux Nation's largest educational facility, and home to cutting-edge science and matrix tech departments. Because research from the U of C is only licensed to Sioux-owned corporations, there is little official megacorporate presence at the university, although a thriving business district, with



high-rises and corporate enclaves, surrounds the campus. Graduates are highly valued by corporations inside and out of the Sioux Nation.

Cheyenne is also home to the Council of Chiefs and the Council of Elders, who meet in their respective Halls in the downtown government district. Other government bureaus are in the same district, with the exception of the Bureau of Technology, which is adjacent to the university campus.

Cheyenne was chosen to house the Sovereign Tribal Council (STC) headquarters after the Treaty of Denver. Weekly meetings are held at the Council Lodge, and all representatives maintain permanent housing within the city. Next to the Council Lodge is Warren Air Force Base, a major station for the Sioux National Forces; a full battalion is dedicated to protecting the Council Lodge and STC representatives. Also adjacent to Council Lodge, the STC maintains a full set of offices for other STC bureaus, including the Native American Environmental Agency, the Native American Space Agency, and the Native American National Reserve Bank.

All tribal-affiliated metahumans are required to broadcast their SIN and ID in the Council Lodge and downtown areas of Cheyenne; exemptions can be granted to Sioux citizens only by the Bureau of Cultural Preservation. Non-tribal affiliated metahumans are required to broadcast a SIN and ID at all times, in all areas.

Billings is known as the "Gateway to Yellowstone," being the closest large city to the popular tourist attraction. It has a full-service airport and customs center and a number of tourist-friendly hotels, shops, restaurants, and clubs. It is also located close to other popular

attractions, such as Little Bighorn, the Beartooth Mountains, Pompey's Pillar, and the Pictograph Cave.

As the only major city in a large area, Billings is also the hub for the region's commercial and economic development. It is a major medical center for the region, and an estimated twenty-five percent of Sioux visitors to the city come to seek medical care.



SPECIAL LOCATIONS

The Bear's Lodge, or **Bear's Tower**, (also commonly called Devil's Tower) is an impressive monolithic igneous intrusion (volcanic neck) that towers 460 meters above the surrounding plains. In September of 2061, the tower mysteriously grew from its previous height of 386 meters. When the Sioux nation was formed, Bear's Lodge was set aside for use by the Sioux (Lakota) tribe. Tribal shamans used the site for vision quests and to make offerings to the gods. Every summer solstice, the Sun Dance is held at the tower. Since 2061, participants, Awakened and mundane alike, have experienced visions during the Sun Dance. Several people have gone missing during the Sun Dance, but the ceremony continues to be held.

Yellowstone Wilderness Refuge is known for the diversity of its wildlife, its geological sites of interest, and for several Awakened sites, such as Yellowstone Lake. The park's many geothermal features are due to the presence of the Yellowstone Caldera, a supervolcano. A contingent of tribal shamans resides in the park, reputedly to pacify the supervolcano; tribal legends speak of the end of the world if the spirits of the volcano should ever awaken.

Outside the Wilderness Refuge, Geatronics has harnessed the geothermal energy, using cutting-edge environmental technology to ensure no impact to the surrounding areas. This energy provides half the energy needs for the entire Sioux nation.

- First thing to know about the Sioux? They're super-paranoid about attempts to take their land from them, and they spy on *everyone*. Their neighbors—especially UCAS and CAS—and the greedy Anglo corps (and if it isn't Sioux, it's Anglo) worry them the most. On top of it, the Sioux have appointed themselves as the protectors of the NAN—and anywhere else that concerns them; they police other nations, send in their military if said nations look unstable or vulnerable to Anglo or Corp takeover (the main forces that invaded Tsimshian were Sioux, and now Tsimshian is a Salish-Shidhe protectorate!), and generally stick their noses *everywhere*.
- DangerSensei

- And second: every Sioux citizen is required to spend a year in the Sioux Defense Force at age 18, and then 4 more years in the reserves after that. And yes, this includes sapient non-metas. Everyone's heard of the Sioux Wildcats, the special forces units that eat Tír Ghosts for lunch and Red Samurais for dessert, and I personally believe the Wildcats are the top special forces in the world. The Sioux is the most militarized of any NorthAm country.
- Mika

- And third: those Wildcats are H.O.T.
- Lyran

- Amen, sister.
- Kat O' Nine Tales

- The Sioux Nation was the first to allow DocWagon to operate within its borders. As advertising to the other NANs, DocWagon has guaranteed 30-minute coverage no matter where you are in the nation. They have emergency air stations strategically placed to provide this coverage (which, by the way, is better than what you get in some parts of the UCAS—hell, in some parts of Seattle!). If you use DocWagon, this is good to know. If you don't use DocWagon ... well, let's just say the Sioux Defense Forces are used to seeing DocWagon aircraft. And those CRT Helicopters are damned fast when you're in a hurry ...
- Turbo Bunny

- The dominant underworld group in the Sioux is the Lakota Mafia (and no, they aren't affiliated in any way, shape, or form with la Cosa Nostra). Charlie Whiteclay runs the thing; he's got a Masters of Thaumaturgy from U of C and took over after his dad was (supposedly) assassinated by ghost cartel or koshari hirelings during the tempo wars. Unlike the other NAN, the Sioux came down hard on tempo right from the start, and the Lakota Mafia refused to deal it—or allow it to be dealt. Since the mob, the yaks, the triads, and the larger gangs steer clear of the Lakota Mafia, the cartels looked to the koshari to distribute. Bad move; the koshari should've stayed on their side of the border. Old William Whiteclay was a casualty of the war between the two syndicates. Now Charlie is in charge, and he's doing some major recruiting to get vengeance. Denver is going to be hot for the time being, so if you're tired of the underworld wars, I'd avoid the city if I were you.
- Lyran



TÍR TAIRNGIRE

Tír Tairngire: shir sha-irn-gi-rā

Population: 4,803,000

Primary Languages: Sperethiel (official), English (unofficial)

Administrative Districts: Northern Coastal, Mid-Coastal, Southern Coastal, Willamette Valley, Southern, Eastern, Special Militarized Administrative Districts (disputed southern border and Crater Lake)

Government Type: Elected republic

Bordering Countries: Salish-Shidhe Council, California Free State, PCC

Geography: Varies considerably, from temperate rain forests in the west to arid high desert in the east; the Cascades are a range of active volcanoes

Notable Features: Crater Lake, Mt. Hood, Steens Mountains, Willamette Valley

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

In 2029, the Salish-Shidhe opened its borders to all metahumans, not just those of Native ancestry. The Sinsearach elven tribe formed shortly after that, claiming territory in the south. In 2035, a portion of the Sinsearach tribe calling itself the Cénesté declared their takeover of the southern portion of the Salish-Shidhe lands, renamed it Tír Tairngire, and immediately revoked their NAN affiliation. For the most part, this was a peaceful split, although the forced relocation of non-elven Salish citizens ignited several small military conflicts. A very high rate of UGE births in the former state of Oregon resulted in a high population of elves in the fledgling nation, and liberal immigration policies swelled the population further. The Tír was established with an autocratic monarchy and a rigid class-based system. Despite this, immigration continued at a high rate as elves flocked to the “Land of Promise.”

In 2036–2037, Tír forces invaded Northern California to Redding, but a high-casualty guerilla war forced them back to Yreka. A disputed zone was established and is maintained between the two countries to this day. In 2053, the Tír again attempted to take the



territory, focusing on the Shasta Dam; the great dragon Hestaby and her associates repelled the forces. Relations with the Tír's neighbors became very strained. Hestaby later joined the Council of Princes, amid protests, although over time she became a popular media figure in the nation.

Further events, including the death of Dunkelzahn, the closure of Tír's borders, trade limits, and a crackdown on political parties, caused the nation's economy to begin to fail. In response to political oppression and economic decline, the Rinelle ke'Tesrae—loosely translated as Rebels of the Spire—formed in 2058.

While the economic situation worsened, the Rinelle anti-government faction gained more ground. The final straw was the second Crash, which wiped out much of the remaining communication systems and sent the Tír citizens into a panic. Wide spread chaos and riots sparked an emergency meeting of the Star Chamber, and the remaining Princes bowed to public demand, stepping down and making way for a fair and open election.

The new government consists of a representative elected council (the Star Chamber, or Se'Ranshae Elenva), with legislative powers, an elected High Prince with a five-year term (two-term limit), and a High Council of ten elected positions. The previous nobility retained their personal residences and their titles, but have no part in the government unless duly elected.

The first open election was held January 5, 2065. Larry Zincan, an ork Prince on the Council, was elected High Prince. Hestaby, also a current Prince, was elected to the new Council, as was Rex, the sole Sasquatch on the Council. None of the other previous Princes were elected.

In the last seven years, the economy has gained strength, with new laws that favor corporate investment and a more open border policy that has increased tourism.

MAJOR CITIES

Cara'Sir, commonly called Portland, is the largest metropolitan area in Tír Tairngire. It also has the most diverse population, with almost thirty percent of residents being non-elven. For several decades, Portland was walled off from the rest of the Tír, used by the government as a filter between its nation and the rest of the world, as well as a dumping ground for non-elves, malcontents, and even criminals (as Tír citizens with a Criminal SIN were frequently released from the prison system into the city). When the Tír government shifted imports and exports to Seattle, Portland went into an economic tailspin. Despite being the nation's capital and home to numerous Tír-based corporations, the unemployment level skyrocketed (the city government's imposition of taxes of more than sixty percent on those remaining employed didn't help, either). This made the City of Roses the perfect breeding ground for the Rinelle ke'Tesrae. Riots escalated, as did the high-casualty suppression response by military forces, some of which killed hundreds of residents. The city was under martial law until the newly elected High Prince Zincan revoked it on January 2, 2065. Despite corporate investment and heavy government subsidies, Portland still struggles with crime and an unemployment rate of more than fifteen percent.

Since the Rinelle's victory in 2065, the infamous wall has come down in multiple locations and travel into and out of the city is



unrestricted. In addition, one of the first acts of High Prince Zincan was to refurbish and reopen the port on the Columbia River, once again making Portland the hub of the Tír's import/export trade. While the Tír has not yet signed the Business Recognition Accords, it has shifted to a much more favorable environment for businesses, bringing new economic growth to the city.

Based at the juncture of two large rivers, Portland has thirteen picturesque bridges that span the city, and the snow-capped vista of Mount Hood is visible from almost any point in it. The West Hills rise more than 305 meters above the city, and are home to high-class neighborhoods and the famous Forest Park, the largest Awakened wilderness park inside a North American city limits. Portland is also a hub for tourism in the Tír, with numerous local-based tourist attractions—from tours of elven wineries in the Willamette Valley to excursions to the various magical phenomena in Forest Park—drawing visitors from around the globe. The downtown core is designed for walking, with short city blocks (20 blocks to a mile) and the friendly Mounted Patrol peace officers patrolling the streets. Other tourist attractions include the Tír Museum of Science and Industry, a hands-on museum where visitors can see some of the cutting edge applications in science, from biotech to advanced VR environments, the Tír Zoo, complete with a large paranormal animal exhibit and a focus on showing animals in their native environments (using magical illusions to create the landscapes), and the Botanical Gardens, where visitors can walk through the largest parobotanical gardens in North America. The city is also well known for “diet” restaurants that provide illusory food, allowing customers to enjoy all the sensations of a perfect meal without any calories or guilt.

Portland is also home to the Tír's largest corporation, Telestrian Industries. Other corporations, including Charisma Associates and Universal Omnitech, have a large presence in the city as well. The city is also home to numerous start-up companies, and the Tír government has created a flourishing startup environment by providing business grants and an unusual economic “protection” program for innovative new companies. Primary industries include biotech, envirotech, advanced computer and Matrix research, and manatech. The sizeable port on the Columbia River can handle large freighters, and has expanded dry-dock facilities for shipbuilding and repairs. Several universities are based Portland, from small private colleges to large universities, many of which have departments of thaumaturgy, and the city is gaining a reputation for being a leader in higher education.

Malek'thas, or Salem, was the seat of the Tír's capital until it was moved to Portland in 2040. It still contains numerous civic and government buildings and functions, from the central licensing departments to the Tír liquor control board, as well as the Tír's SIN processing and storage facilities. Salem is also home to Willamette University, a smaller university that specializes in law and civic planning; it has a program dedicated specifically to sapient non-metahuman rights, and hosts an annual non-metahuman global rights conference sponsored by the UN. Salem is also built beside a river, with an extended waterfront area with parks, museums, walking trails, and interpretive centers. The city is best known for the Tír Tairngire National Fairgrounds, a large complex that hosts a variety of events throughout the year, from Centaur races to music concerts. It has permanent gardens and displays, as well as convention halls, a race track, concert and performing

arts complex, a livestock pavilion, and a ten-thousand seat covered sporting arena. The National Fair in late August is a major tourist draw.

Serentaneyo, commonly known as Eugene, is a mid-sized city in the central Willamette Valley area, an area dominated by agriculture. The University of Tír Tairngire is located in Eugene, and is well known for its postgraduate programs in applied and theoretical thaumaturgy. The campus is a mix of neo-modernist buildings and ivy-covered brick buildings, and has extensive botanical gardens and fields for research and student application. The campus also houses a small paranormal animal zoo, with extensive multi-sensory illusions providing realistic environments. TTU has a popular viticulture degree program, and several of the nation's top winemakers and brew masters have graduate degrees from the university.

Numerous corporations and startup companies have taken advantage of Eugene's reputation for being the "smartest city in the Tír," by setting up biotech, agritech, manatech, and environmental science facilities in and around Eugene. The city is also well known for its Awakened population, and numerous shops, theatres, clubs, and restaurants cater to the Awakened community, and those interested in arcane matters.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Mount Hood is a peak in the Cascade mountain range, one of several that erupted during the Great Ghost Dance. Since then, the mountain peak has been observed to have grown beyond the pre-eruption elevation, and has grown the most of any of the erupted peaks. Mount Hood is a symbol of the Tír, its snow-capped peak clearly visible from Portland. The mountain was named a national heritage site in 2063, making all the land on and around it a national park. The mountain itself is a magical hotspot, with a constant high background count. Numerous resorts operate nearby, offering year-round skiing, hiking, and other activities. The forests that flank the mountain are well known for the remarkable re-growth of pre-Awakening deforestation, and are now pristine stretches of apparent old-growth forests.

Crater Lake is a unique geological location, a deep lake in the crater of an extinct volcano, with a small island—named *Tesetelinestéa* (no translation given)—in the lake. While it used to be a major tourist draw, in recent years the Tír government has closed it to the public. A militarized cordon is set up around the mountain, along with a no-fly zone. Rumors that the Tír uses anti-surveillance equipment designed to block satellite and other distance surveillance only heightens the mystery. Officially, the Tír government has stated that unstable geothermal issues, linked to recent eruptions of other Cascade Range mountains, necessitate the closure. However, no signs of volcanic activity have been reported; at a distance, the mountain appears stable.

- Tourism is a major part of the Tír's recovery. Charisma Associate's *Experience the Magic* branding campaign has been hugely successful. From hosting a pixie tribe to the Awakened Theater programs in Ashland (complete with flashy magical special effects and audience participation), the Tír is considered "the" destination for anyone who wants to have a hands-on experience with magic. Throw in pretty elves and all the hyped-up culture the Tír pushes, and it practically sells itself.
- Dr. Spin
- Of course, that's the image the Tír sells. Outside the tourist enclaves, unemployment is sky-high, the country was left bankrupt by the previous Princes, and the government's trying desperately not to sell out to the corps and yet still feed everyone. The megas are piling on the pressure on Zincan to sign the business

accords, but the nationalists—backed by the Tír Ghosts, who are still adamantly loyal to the ex-Princes—are pushing back. Education at the national schools, like UTT, is still heavily censored (you don't even want to know what they teach for history in the primary schools), admissions are still so racist it's disgusting, and student-led protests are common. The Rinelle are still active, especially the rabid splinter factions that *hate* the new non-elves tourists, residents, and corps—and *really* hate Zincan (Zincan's survived so many assassination attempts it's almost a national sport). The "elven-purity" racists clash daily with the "metahumans welcome, humans not" racists. In some ways, the civil war is over, but the real fighting has just begun.

- Frosty
- Doesn't help that the Tír's neighbors' attitudes range from distrust to outright animosity. The Salish-Shidhe haven't forgiven the elves for running off with prime land. The PCC and Sioux both have relocated tribes that have a historical claim to parts of the Tír (and neither like having such a militarized neighbor with such a messed up government). After several invasions and a long-lasting militarized zone, northern CalFree hates the Tír with a passion. In fact, the only government that likes the Tír is Seattle, and with the Tír reopening their port, even that friendship has grown strained.
- Kay St. Irregular
- You know that both the Salish-Shidhe and the PCC (and of course the Sioux) were watching the revolution, just waiting to see if they'd be able to grab some land. The PCC especially is on an expansion kick ... and I'm betting they're still watching the Tír closely.
- Mika
- Something to remember about the Tír is that there is a mandatory two-year military service requirement for all citizens, after they turn eighteen or graduate from secondary school. This has kept the Tír's military fairly full and the Tír's neighbors cautious about trying to overtake them, even during all the turmoil ... (of course, it also came back to bite the Tír on the ass—when you send in troops to subdue a neighborhood of malcontents, and those malcontents all have military training ... yeah, you get the picture). So, the NAN may be watching, but unless they're working behind the scenes (um, totally possible), I doubt they're going to be moving in anytime soon.
- Turbo Bunny
- And just because the Princes stepped down from running the government, doesn't mean they're out of the picture. Zincan is a folk-hero, even to the elves in the Tír. He's caring, and has a heart the size of Mount Hood, and he's got more than his share of guts—but when it comes to manipulation or sheer ruthlessness, he's an infant compared to the ex-Princes. And even though he's had treatments, he's *old*, and I know his age played into his election, at least from the ex-Princes' parts. IMO he's just there to get people calmed down—and I think he knows it. I'd be surprised if he ever had an original idea in his life. The powers-that-be are content for now to allow the people to have the illusion of self-governance. They learned that you can't maintain a feudal society in this day and age (no matter how much experience you've had with it in the past), and are regrouping—but they're not gone. Anyone who thinks Zincan is the real power is greatly mistaken.
- Frosty
- Well, they might be regrouping, but they've lost a lot. The Tír still has "classes," as the nobility were allowed to retain their titles. However, those that were leeches, or abused their power, were more often than not targets of the Rinelle. The majority of the population couldn't own property, start businesses, travel outside their own city (much less outside the Tír); even the information

UNITED CANADIAN AND AMERICAN STATES

United Canadian and American States: ū-nī-ted kə-nā-dē-ən ənd
ə-mər-i-kən stāts

Population: 187,822,981

Primary Languages: English (official)

States: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, North Missouri, North Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Seattle, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Government Type: Democratic Republic

Bordering Countries: Algonkian-Manitou Council, Confederation of American States, Pueblo Corporate Council, Québec, Sioux

Geography: Rolling plains, mountains, deciduous and coniferous forests, semi-arid desert

Notable Features: Appalachian Mountains, Great Lakes, Mississippi River, Niagara Falls

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Formed from a union between the Dominion of Canada and the United States of America, the UCAS was founded on October 15, 2030. The new nation suffered from attrition and secession between 2034 and 2038 as the southern states, California, and Hawaii each seceded. A democratic society created in the aftermath of the Awakening and the rise of the corporate state, the UCAS government drew heavily upon the American Constitution when forming the new UCAS Constitution. Though several key changes were

made, the governmental structures are very similar to those which ruled throughout the USA prior to the formation of the UCAS.

As a signatory of the Business Recognition Accords, the UCAS recognizes extra-territoriality of AA and AAA megacorporations. The UCAS constitution also recognizes contract law, particularly in the area of employment contracts. Because of the contractual obligations of an employee to his employer, UCAS law recognizes the right of the employer to pursue legal action through a properly designated legal body. UCAS law treats extraterritorial corporations in a similar manner to foreign powers, signing extradition agreements and formal trade agreements. A social implication of the changes to contract law was the secularization of marriage, allowing the formation of contractual obligations in marriage and setting terms for dissolution of the contract.

The UCAS has reduced its isolationist tendencies since 2057. The nation embraced the promise of change provided by President Dunkelzahn during his campaign, and following the President's assassination, Vice President Haeffner vowed to carry out many of the promised social reforms. Over half a million Probationary Citizens were granted full citizenship between 2057 and 2064. This has led to the inclusion of large segments of society that had previously been unable to enjoy the benefits of government programs including thousands of non-metahumans, such as sasquatches and nagas.

The UCAS was the target of an attempted military coup in 2064, in the wake of Crash 2.0. A group calling itself the New Revolution attempted to forcibly reunite the old United States of America. Though the coup failed, the military and political leaders within the New Revolution were able to assassinate President Kyle Haeffner, along with several senators, cabinet members and generals. The country was brought back under control through the leadership of President pro tempore Gene Simone and General Angela Colloton. Through their joint efforts, the leadership of the New Revolution was captured, tried, and executed for Sedition and Treason against the State.



In 2070, the UCAS became the first nation to pass legislation for the mandatory registration of technomancers. Similar to the requirement for all Awakened citizens, any citizen who demonstrates virtuakinetik ability is required to register with the UCAS Federal government.

MAJOR CITIES

The former seat of the East Coast Stock Exchange (ECSE), **Boston** is the seat of the UCAS high-tech industry. Boston is home to NeoNET's world headquarters, and is also where the first portable cyberterminal was developed in 2034. With research facilities for Matrix technology, cyber, and nanotechnology, the city is home to five different arcologies and dozens of smaller firms. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy (MIT&T) provides superb academic facilities, and is regularly awarded scholarships for its students by local corporations in exchange for work contracts after graduation.

In addition to the university's technological advances, MIT&T also is a leader in magical research through partnership with the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR). Manadyne Corporation, a leading researcher in spell design and metamagical techniques, is also based in Boston, seated squarely between MIT&T, DIMR, and Harvard. The Boston metroplex also includes nearby Salem, which has a strong basis in holistic magic and traditional witchcraft. This fusion of hermetic and natural approaches provides students and magical professionals with a broad spectrum of theories and approaches to new research.

A prosperous metroplex in the Great Lakes Region, **Detroit** is a model city for corporate involvement balanced by local government. With the global headquarters for Ares Macrotechnology located there, and the recently finished eight-meter-tall wall surrounding the metroplex, Detroit is one of UCAS' safest cities. Following the closure of Chicago to civilian traffic in 2055, the metroplex absorbed nearly a million refugees and offered them new work. The area has been a source of industry and manufacture for over a century, and continues to be a hub for UCAS construction of automobiles, aeronautics, and military equipment.

Despite the local nickname of "Aresville," Detroit has a smaller percentage of extra-territorial space per square kilometer than many other metroplexes. The nickname actually comes from the corporation's investment into the local economy. Ares and its subsidiaries fund work outreach programs, to offer jobs to any adult UCAS citizen living within the metroplex boundary who wants one. A census taken in August of 2070 showed less than a two-percent unemployment rate within the metroplex—substantially lower than the nationwide rate of seven percent.

The capitol of the United Canadian and American States, the **Federal District of Columbia** (FDC) is centered on the Potomac River, and includes parts of Maryland and North Virginia. As the seat of political power, the FDC, or DeeCee Sprawl as it is occasionally called, is a home for politicians of all stripes.

There are two major Awakened groups in the DeeCee Sprawl with political and social clout—the Draco Foundation and the Illuminates of a New Dawn. The Draco Foundation headquarters are located in a modest office building at the north end of the sprawl. Founded to carry out the living will and legacy of President Dunkelzahn, the Draco Foundation fosters support and understanding among metahumanity



while executing specific instructions left by the great dragon. The Illuminates of the New Dawn are the world's largest and most powerful magical order. Their Grand Lodge is located near Georgetown University in Foggy Bottom.

The twin cities of **Minneapolis** and **St Paul** merged to form the Minneapolis metroplex (MSP 'Plex) in late 2042. Nestled in the heartland of the UCAS, MSP sits along the Mississippi River and is only a short distance from the Great

Lakes Region. When the Foshay tower was damaged by a terrorist attack attributed to Alamos 20,000, Prometheus Engineering was contracted by the UCAS government to rebuild the obelisk shaped tower. The metroplex is now governed from the new Obelisk which is rated to be able to remain standing even if one of the four primary support pylons is destroyed.

The University of Minnesota houses the Charles Babbage Institute (CBI), a research center for information technology, founded in 1935 at the dawn of digital computing. The CBI hosted the Evo talks for digital intelligence, including their legal status and rights in September of 2070.

A frontier city surrounded by Native American Nations, **Seattle** is the only Pacific port of the UCAS. Located in the Pacific Northwest, the city has overcome the tragedy of the Renraku SCIRE shutdown. Since the restoration of the former Renraku arcology by General Angela Colloton before her presidency, the local government has been able to provide subsidized housing to over 150,000 individuals through the Arcology Commercial and Housing Enclave (ACHE) project. The city has a multi-ethnic population, with citizens commonly knowing at least two languages. Though English is the official language, business is often conducted in Japanese, Salish, or Sperethiel.

Corporate policies within the metroplex are monitored internally through the United Corporate Council (UCC), a megacorporate self-governance committee founded in 2030. UCC membership is made up of sixteen A to AAA corporations which coordinate activities and create economic stability within the region.

The gateway between the CAS and UCAS, **St. Louis** is a burgeoning port city. Following the closure of Chicago, nearly all of the shipping traffic was rerouted; with St. Louis' strategic placement along the Mississippi River, it became a key location for intercontinental commerce. Beyond shipping, the city is a common port of call for individuals traveling between the CAS and UCAS. Travel has occasionally been restricted due to flaring national tempers between the CAS and UCAS over water rights and border disputes. The longest delay to date was a six week closure of the border to non-commercial traffic in 2065.

The entertainment capitol of the UCAS, **Toronto** is home to several sim-studios. The city's varied architecture allows it to serve as a backup for dozens of cities around the world, providing a boon to media outlets that don't want to move equipment across the globe. Beyond entertainment, Toronto hosts computer and technology start-up companies. Many of these small corporations specialize in niche markets, focusing on meeting megacorporate needs for an eventual buy out.

While the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSE) does not have the same transaction count as the East Coast Stock Exchange, the TSE provides a secondary measurement for the performance of publicly



traded corporations in the UCAS. It also serves as an entry-point for financial transactions between foreign investors and UCAS-based corporations.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Officially, the quarantine around **Chicago** was lifted in 2058 after Ares and the UCAS military quelled the insect spirit infestation, though the city has seen very little redevelopment since the Containment Zone was abolished. The area known locally as the Corridor, ranging from ten to forty kilometers out from the Zone walls, has seen some improvements other the last ten years. This area includes the southern Calumet harbor and O'Hare airport. The area is not recommended for tourists, as the local authorities are still attempting to regain control of the region. As of January 2072, the UCAS government has negotiated economic control of many of the outlying cities including Gary, Naperville, and Joliet to megacorporate extraterritoriality, with the goal of reintegrating the region's international shipping networks and re-establishing a taxable constituency.

As with several other items that have significant historic importance, the **Liberty Bell** has absorbed the collected energies and thoughts of people since the Awakening and is now the center of a domain supporting magic associated with truth and liberty. The Liberty Bell has been studied extensively since the initial discovery of magic within the area. Every July 8, it can be heard ringing for several miles by any UCAS citizen born within Pennsylvania.

Witnesses nearby the Liberty Bell reported that it rang during the executions of the New Revolution leadership after their failed coup to reunify the United States. Whether the ringing was in support or mourning of the executions is unclear.

Purchased by several megacorporations for development and improvement after the **Quake of 2005**, **Manhattan** is a fully functional corporate enclave. It is notable as the only extraterritorial location with internal extraterritorial divisions. Managed by the Manhattan Development Consortium (MDC), the island is the earthbound headquarters of the Corporate Court and home to the East Coast Stock Exchange. The reconstruction and repopulation of the city was paid for by the MDC and its members.

As the largest contiguous extraterritorial presence on UCAS soil, it is a shining beacon of consumerism and free capitalism. The island is policed by NYPD, Inc., with subsections of the zone designated as extra-territorial within MDC territory and full rights and privileges are granted to each individual corporate power. The area allows tourists to visit, and is a common vacation spot for corporate citizens of the MDC board members.

Since Manhattan's purchase, the rest of New York City has improved due to the investment of capital by the MDC and its employees. Though still referred to as the Five Boroughs, the remaining four have sought to rise to the same level as Manhattan.

On the night of his inauguration, President Dunkelzahn left the Watergate Hotel and shortly afterwards, his limousine exploded. At the spot where the Great Dragon died, a visible tear in the fabric of reality was formed. The **Watergate Rift** is described as a permanent connection between the material world and the astral plane. Since its formation, the rift has attracted visitors, scientists, and magicians of all kinds. Its purpose is unclear, though following Dunkelzahn's death, several great dragons came to circle overhead before returning home.

During the Year of the Comet, several strange events happened around the Rift. Spirits were seen leaving the rift and local Awakened individuals reported hearing voices emanating from within it. On

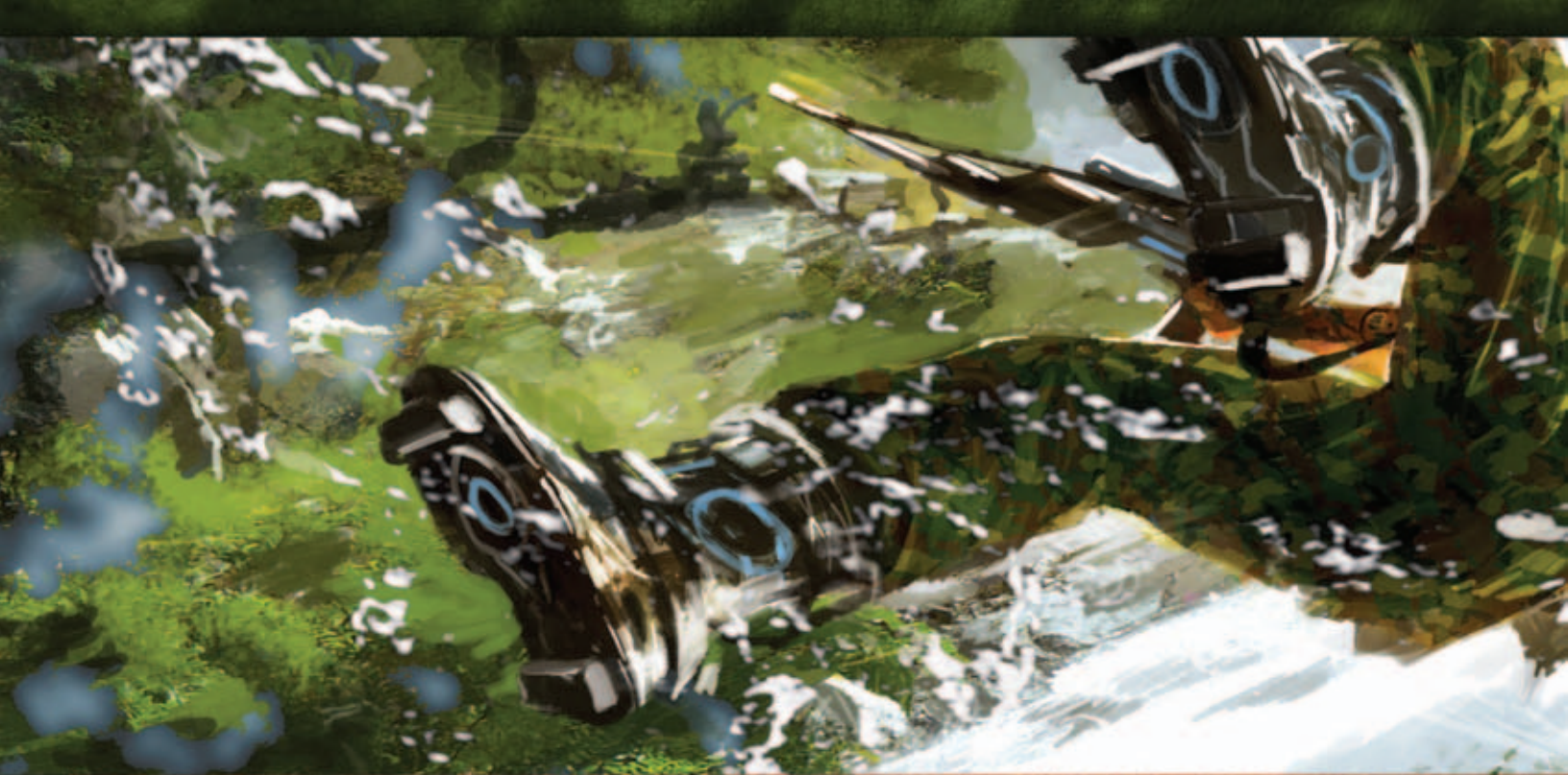
Christmas Eve of 2061, Ghostwalker exited the rift, accompanied by a swarm of spirits. Since those events, the UCAS government has built a secure bunker around the Rift.

- Damn fucking Yankees.
- Kane
- With the new laws about marriage, same-sex and multi-partner marriages are now commonplace throughout the country. While the majority of marriages still fall under "traditional" guidelines, S-Groups are gaining in popularity. Who knew, Heinlein was right.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Any updates on the New Revolution fiasco? I've heard claims of everything from AI and dragon involvement to Colloton masterminding it herself.
- Pistons
- Well the official story is that all of the revolutionaries behind the coup were gathered up, tried, and executed. They weren't getting any second chances at appeals. It sounds plausible, but there isn't enough proof to show that Colloton had anything to do with it. Yes, she was elected president two years later, but she's a veteran without any ties to reunification groups. If anything new comes up, I'll post it.
- Snopes
- Following the events of the Novatech IPO and subsequent Crash, Boston was plagued with rioters blaming them for insufficiently protecting the world from the event. The riots quickly ended as hard facts surrounding the events were released.
- FastJack
- Out in Salem, the witches have been known to practice magic much more potent than the data files let on. The "traditional witches" have succeeded at Calling the Hunt on more than one occasion to deal with local problems.
- Frosty
- There is a smuggler outfit called Technicolor Wings that runs around Boston. They were able to get me in and out of the city discreetly awhile back.
- Netcat
- 'Cat, leave the smuggling tips to the pros. Technicolor Wings specializes in delivery anywhere, anytime—provided you have the cred, or course. They have offices in Vladivostok, Seattle and New Orleans, but for enough coin will pick you up or drop you off wherever.
- 2XL
- That Chicago section was the most politically correct waste of space I've ever seen. Chi-town being "reintegrated," yeah fucking right. Just further proof that the plebs are cogs in a machine of disinformation.
- Sticks
- The Manhattan file that I set up awhile back should still be floating around the archives here if you need to review it.
- Kay St. Irregular
- Wait, there were computers for 60 years before FastJack was born? I feel robbed.
- Netcat

- Keep mouthing off kid, that baby is coming down the pipes quickly. I won't be afraid to ship him all the drums he can bang on.
- FastJack
- The FDC focuses a lot of their security attention on the political power buildings—White House, Senate, and House of Representatives. I've walked the hallowed halls a few times for lobby meetings. By the time security is through with you, they'll know how many fillings you have and exactly what you're wearing under your coat. Lead boxers are the way to go.
- Kay St. Irregular
- The Secret Service and FBI don't spend a tenth as much time on the Representatives' and Senators' houses, which means a snatch and grab at home is a lot easier. And waiting until they go into recess won't work. Even when they aren't meeting with each other in committees, their agendas are full of mistresses and legalized bribery.
- DangerSensei
- I resemble the latter.
- Kay St. Irregular
- If you know who to talk to in DC, you can get nearly anything you need for a job. The feeps are so busy guarding buildings that they don't have a lot of time to crack down on smuggling rings. Drop me a line and I'll put you in touch with the right people for the right price.
- Riser
- One benefit to the size of the UCAS is that there are almost no checkpoints within its borders. Steer clear of the major highways and get an updated map of weigh stations. As long as you don't go blowing past the cops at 40 clicks over the posted limit (guilty as charged), most won't waste the effort of chasing you down.

- Turbo Bunny
- An interesting point of fact: A sizeable group of the Children of the Dragon have set up a church on Prince Edward Island, the same spot where Dunkelzahn established his residency in order to claim citizenship. Every year, on the anniversary of his death, they travel en masse to the Watergate Rift to pay their respects. When they did it the first time in 2062 after the new bunker was built the army nearly had a fit as they tried to walk past the lines. Now arrangements have been made and cameras have been setup, but no one is allowed to approach within thirty meters.
- Winterhawk
- I dug up an old Shadowland report that talked about a biomass net to go over the Detroit metroplex after the wall was finished. Ares was going to turn the entire place into a private enclave, with Knight Errant deciding who could come and go.
- \dev\grrl\
- That plan didn't survive initial contact with Aurelius and Vogel. Knight is still scrambling with his corporate restructuring. He doesn't have the time, energy, or resources to juggle the budget requirements for covering the entire metroplex.
- Sticks
- Besides the budget, he still doesn't know whom he can trust. A lot of his loyal lackeys have struck out at other department heads and made cracks in what Knight thought was a solid wall. His people are breaking apart, while Vogel's side is forming a tighter union.
- Aufheben





"THE SOURCE OF THE AMAZON

JASON HARDY

Everything in the world is innocent and pure at the beginning. Nothing stays clean, however.

The source of the Amazon River is clear, bubbling water, icy cold, far from the touch of metahumanity. It is also decidedly not the small stream of water that was flowing in front of Batata. This stream, like that long-distant source, started out fresh and clear and cold, but before long it touched things that changed it. Plants, animals both living and dead, and the various junk that humanity dumped into it at various points along the winding six thousand kilometers before it finally oozed into the Atlantic, where it was barely recognizable as the pure water it once was.

This stream, the one that was not the source of the Amazon, ran downhill quickly, disappearing into the rainforest, where it would be overwhelmed and difficult to follow. It would wind past plants with blossoms like paint palettes and thorns like spears, past hundreds of different chattering creatures, and past the eyes of people that stayed near the river and watched it silently for a purpose they were not anxious to talk about. Then it would go by a compound, a compound whose primitive log wall was only the first line of its defenses, and whose old-fashioned appearance should not lull anyone into a false sense of security. That compound, it was a source, too, and what flowed out of it had muddied the entire world. This was, supposedly, the base of the Premeira Vaga. The source of tempo. It was well-hidden, buried deep in the rain forest, but Eleni had found it, and she had invited Batata along to pay a call on it. Along with a few dozen other close friends.

They were scattered. The rain forest is built for guerilla action, not for focused group attacks. They had prepared a long time for this assault, trying to account for everything, to be ready for any weapons fire that might come their way. They felt ready. They were following a timetable, their movements coordinated, even though none of them had spoken a word in hours. There was no reason to indulge in unnecessary noise.

Batata kept an eye on the time as he jogged alongside the stream. The Amazon—and the government that controlled most of it—strenuously resisted detailed surface-level map-making, but Batata had done his legwork and advance programming. With each step, there were AROs in front of him, pointing the way he should go. He knew where he was, he knew how far he had to go, and he knew how long it would take to get there. He would prove his worth on this mission, so that those in the higher ranks would be less inclined to send him on suicide missions in the future.

The stream next to him was widening, deepening. About two meters wide now, maybe a half-meter deep. Not quite big enough yet. The boots on his feet were heavy, making him sweat even more in the oppressive air, but once he was in the water, he'd be happy to have them.

It didn't take long. He kept moving downhill, the vegetation around him growing thicker and thicker, and soon he didn't have a choice. If he wanted to keep his pace, he needed to be in the water.

He dove in, a shallow jump that skimmed him across the water's surface, and it was so cold it threatened to stop his heart, which was a wonderful feeling. It wouldn't stay that way for long—once he got to the compound, the water would be about as warm as the air around him.

Now it was time for the boots to pay off. He turned them on, and they churned the water, pushing him ahead. With the propulsion from the boots and the speed of the current, he was moving at a nice clip of more than twenty kilometers per hour. Not blindingly fast, but far quicker than most people make it through the damn jungle.

The next trick would be making it over the waterfall ahead without breaking his boots.

He'd gotten a good survey of the river, but the one thing he hadn't been able to get was a reliable estimate of the depth of the small pool at the bottom. That meant



he'd have to go over feet first and hope he didn't hit a rock-hard, shallow bottom that would shatter his legs and break his wonderful jetboots. But he'd practiced for this. He was ready.

He imagined he heard the falls five times before he actually heard them. The tumbling roar was actually kind of soothing, the kind of noise that might help you sleep at night, as long as you weren't right under the fall. Or on top of it.

Batata turned off his boots and held up his torso, letting the current push his legs under him. He kept glancing ahead so he could keep track of the moment when the world dropped away, and then it was there, right ahead of him, waiting. It wasn't a big fall, a mere ten meters. *It's not a problem*, Batata told himself repeatedly. *Not a problem*.

As he expected, there was shallow water right before the drop. He planted his feet on some rocks, and the current curled him into a ball. Then he pushed up. His body leaped up, the current pushed him forward, and he was over, falling down and down and down, watching the spray around him catch the air and slow up while he went faster. Air roared louder than the water. The cold breeze of it against his wet skin felt good. Then he pointed his toes and went in.

And went down and down and down. So far down. Blessedly down. The fall had done its work here, pounding the ground into submission, digging a nice deep hole for the water to fill. Batata turned his boots on and started moving toward the surface just as his toes hit bottom. The depth was perfect.

Batata stayed underwater for a time, letting his gills do his breathing, making slower time because the current was gentler. But his clock told him he would be on time.

And he was. His head bobbed up near the log wall just as explosions shook the ground to the north. The assault was starting.

He climbed out of the river quickly, taking off his boots with regret and hoping he'd be able to find them later. Then he reached into his backpack, pulled out a small piece of metal, and heaved it over the log wall. The subsequent explosion didn't collapse the wall, didn't even put a hole in it, but the area behind it filled with smoke. Batata put on a gas mask and went to work, climbing over the wall. Bullets flew, so he stayed low, hugging the wall as he climbed.

Infrared vision showed no one on the other side. Either the defenders were

distracted, or they were deeper in the compound. There was nothing to see but a second log wall, a dirt pathway, and, about fifteen meters away, a tremendous plant as large as a Honda.

It was beautiful. It had broad green leaves that grew up and formed a sort of giant cup, and red blossoms lined each leaf. The top of the plant was a riot of purple, with blossoms like streamers exploding and running down the plant like thick hair. Batata had never seen anything like it.

He took a step toward it. It was a step in the wrong direction, he knew. He had stuck to the plan perfectly until now, and that one step took him off schedule. But he did not turn away. He took another step. Then another.

He came closer to the plant, and the compulsion to see it up close grew stronger. He could almost feel hands on his back, hear lips near his ear, whispering wordless sounds of encouragement. He had to see it. Had to. Whatever he thought he had come for was a lie. This, this plant, was really what he needed to see. The voices told him so, and he was not prepared to ignore them.

He walked toward it, and it opened gently for him. He stepped inside and sat down. It was cool inside, welcoming. His backpack suddenly felt heavy, so he removed it, tossed it outside. Then he sat and watched the leaves close.

He was fine there. He would stay. It was peaceful. There were noises around him, but they were calming down. Maybe everyone else was finding a nice place to stay. Maybe they had found their reason for being here, too.

Batata remained comfortable and content. When small pins stood up at the bottom of the plant and poked him, it didn't bother him. When the skin on his legs started dissolving, it didn't bother him. As the plant started feeding on him, it didn't bother him. The hands patted him on the shoulder reassuringly, and the voices told him everything was okay.

Before long there was not much left of Batata. There were a few parts the plant could not use, and they were discarded. They rolled away from the plant, then made a slow journey toward the water. Eventually the Amazon caught them, and Batata's bones joined the millions of other forms of detritus the water accumulated on its long journey to the sea.

AMAZONIA

Amazonia: Am-ah-zone-ya

Population: 250,000,000

Primary Languages: Spanish, Portuguese, English

Administrative Regions: Centro-Oeste, Norte, Nordeste, Noroeste, Sudeste, Sudoeste, Sul

Government Type: Republic

Bordering Countries: Argentina, Aztlan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay

Geography: Fertile central plains, subtropical forests, rugged mountains, rough coasts

Notable features: Amazon River, Amazon Stonehenge, Christ the Redeemer statue, Igauzu Falls, Ignã Stone

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

Amazonia has a spirit of turmoil, of revolution incarnate. The nation was forged in the fires of revolution back in 2034, from its initial foundation in the revolution against Brazil to the looming struggle against Aztlan. Without struggle, Amazonia would not be Amazonia. Half a century ago, the dragon Hualpa unofficially made it his playground through various forced revolutions.

Amazonia's reputation for swift and violent action was well-earned, and cynical minds would be relatively accurate in stating that Amazonia is a weapon wielded by a select few people (or dragons). Hualpa is efficient within his nation, keeping the populace fired up and mobilized. It's a well-oiled machine—as long as you're looking at it from the outside. From the inside, the situation is far less salutary.

While Hualpa sits at the top of the Amazonian government, he's not alone in his influence. Sirurg is rumored to make his home in Amazonia, and he has his claws deep in its infrastructure either way.



Rumors say he's planning to move against Aztlan with his own forces. That would put Aztlan in a difficult situation, but it would require the two dragons to stay away from each others' throats. Boiuna is a third, unconfirmed dragon in the region. She may or may not be a dragon, but signs suggest she is, and she's influencing the more eco-obsessed natives into taking more dramatic and drastic actions against offenders. Pedrinho da Metr pole is a feathered serpent, but he has respect at a level similar to dragons. He's been rather public and vocal, helping to curb remaining anti-serpent sentiment in Amazonia. He's been a firm advocate for metahumanity, publicly supporting a number of advocacy groups and rallies. There are rumors of a second feathered serpent named M'boi, but concrete facts about this creature are hard to come by.



In addition to dragons, Amazonia has its share of institutional governance, but the elected government is irrevocably stuck between Hualpa's talons. The president and congress both are loath to work against Hualpa's interests. There is an opposition party, but in the opinions of most the party is another puppet manipulated by Hualpa. He guarantees they're never going to see widespread influence, and they get to keep their lives as a reward.

The executive branch and, technically, the president are in charge of DISA, the Department of Amazonian Intelligence and Security. A police force that pervades every bit of Amazonian culture, DISA handles most every aspect of law enforcement, from border patrol, customs, intelligence, and vice control. The scope of their duties means that they don't limit themselves to the metropolitan areas. They're skilled in jungle warfare and have stood their ground against many organized groups. They've been ruthless in their efforts against cartel expansion and metahuman trafficking efforts. DISA, particularly its intelligence division, is where the elusive M'boi is rumored to operate.

The government also runs the DMAIC, the Department for the Environment, Interior and Commerce. Because of Hualpa's stringent environmental demands, the DMAIC was introduced as a powerful task force to enforce the relevant laws. Their methods are brutal—if you're a corporation, you have reason to fear them. The DMAIC is also in charge of acclimating various metahumans—particularly those of odd breeds—to the rest of society. They've been rather successful. While there are developments reserved for those metahumans, they're hardly as segregated as in most parts of the world.

Outside of the dragons' direct influence, a handful of other powers play into the culture of Amazonia today. The FUNAI, the National Foundation for Indians in Amazonia, is a sanctioned non-profit, working under the auspices of the elected government. Their stated goal is to further the causes of the natives in the territory; this includes civil and reproductive rights, and handling diplomatic efforts between the otherwise unaffiliated tribal organizations. The FUNAI was once a large part of Hualpa's power base, but it has waned in power. Additionally, various rebel groups plague the land, threatening the status quo. These threats are often superficial, but at least one group (called The Voice) has garnered significant relevance in its campaign against Hualpa and sympathizers. Some presume one of the other dragons has empowered these rebel groups in order to organize a second revolution, but no evidence has surfaced to corroborate these rumors.

Amazonia is experiencing other difficulties due to the fact Aztechnology becomes more popular daily, since the Corporate Court and various world agencies approved their vast and thorough strike against numerous area drug cartels. Unlike previous efforts, this strike was wildly successful, resulting in the confirmed execution of the Olaya Cartel's head and the destruction of most functional lab space. This puts Amazonia into a difficult position,

often fighting against public opinion in its struggles against the forces of Aztlan.

MAJOR CITIES

The **Metr pole de Amazonia** has all but eaten Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and everything in between. It makes up over half of Amazonia's two hundred fifty million people. It's so crowded, the infant mortality rate has gone through the roof, since there are not enough resources to support the massive population density. The sprawl is governed by four mayors in the four various quadrants; those mayors answer to an elected council. The council is often locked in dispute, with the north and south halves finding it difficult to reach a consensus on all but the most irrelevant goals.

Right in the dead center of the jungle is **Manaus**, Amazonia's capital. It's the only true city in the midst of the Amazon itself. It's dramatically diverse, boasting representation from every major type of metahuman, as well as many types most people aren't aware even exist. Humans are truly in minority in Manaus—visitors might not even recognize it as a city. Despite its millions in population, it looks in places like an extension of the jungle. Trees and vines seem to be part of the fixtures of buildings as fixtures, part of the "techno-organic" material that makes the city so unique. Worse still for travelers is that it is difficult to enter. Roads don't keep in the jungle's rapid growth—except for the ones that are tightly guarded. Airport and train stations are available, but also quite secure.

In the north end of Amazonia lies **Fortaleza**, an excellent rural answer to Metr pole. It exists mostly as a farming city, growing, harvesting, processing, and shipping indigenous produce. Much of this produce sees other shores; a good portion goes toward feeding the population of the nation. Because of the quality of food the area produces, and the socialized nature of the output, Fortaleza is considered something of a national treasure for Hualpa.

Also in the northern part of Amazonia is **Salvador**, another city known for its farming and food production. It's less popular, however, because its biggest farming operation exists separate of the Amazonian government. They've managed to duck subsidization and integration every step of the way. While this co-op is really only a fraction of the economy, it's led to a culture that's decidedly less fanatical for the Amazonian regime than other areas.

If you go further north, away from the government central, you reach **Parimbo**. If you didn't know better, Parimbo looks like an unaffiliated city. It has its own government that's technically sanctioned by the Amazonian central government, but most officials couldn't tell you its structure—or even if it was still standing. It's something of a free state within the greater nation. Since it's not a very valuable asset, nobody's bothered to take it. The one thing it has going for it is its strong arms trade. Estimates place over sixty percent of its gross

product as coming from the sale of illegal weapons into and out of Amazonia. Hualpa has been looking for ways to stop this traffic, but recently he has been too distracted to launch a full crackdown on the city. Until he does, a small few prosper in Parimbo. It's also known for its rum, but that doesn't pack as much of a punch in a firefight.

Georgetown is the most active port for Amazonian trade. While it doesn't produce much, it's been optimized to send and receive goods from all over the world, with one of the world's busiest airports (the Cheddi Jagan) and train hubs supplementing the port, it processes nearly half the goods coming in and leaving through legal channels.

On the southern part of the nation lies **Porto Alegre**. It makes up another fourth of Amazonia's imports and exports, primarily focusing on long-distance shipments of produce and textiles. The city's a system of islands, each with its own little lawless way of existence. The central government is aware of the city's chaotic nature, but the islands are careful not to overstep their bounds, so they're generally left to their devices. Porto Alegre's other big draw is its military base, as most of Amazonia's naval force centers on this city.

In stark contrast to the over-crowded and poverty-stricken areas of much of the nation, **Florianópolis** is a beautiful and luxurious home for the wealthy and the powerful. When government officials outgrow their offices, they come to Florianópolis. When dilettantes grow bored of nightly parties, they retire to Florianópolis. Very few places, kilometer for kilometer, have more powerful and rich people. But ironically, their desire for relaxation prevents the city from being a true base of power. Wars have been begun and ended from comlinks based in this city, but never by anyone that would see the war as anything but a byline on a quarterly financial report.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

There can't be a discussion of Amazonia without mention of the **Amazon River**. It's the source of life at the heart of everything Amazonia holds as sacred. Wild, uncontrolled, and powerful, it's everything Hualpa wants the people of Amazonia to think they are. Over the years, it's shifted both out of entropy and to better align with the ley lines around its basin. Today, it provides over half the water to developed parts of Amazonia, through a complex and only partially artificial system of outlets and lakes. The water itself is brimming with life; Awakened entities both respect and fear its raw power. In fact, many advise against travel to the basin because of the dangers of over-saturation.

Amazonia is an exercise in extremes. The jungle disallows the depth of settlement found elsewhere in the world; it reclaims even the most fervent development efforts. **Igauzu Falls** showcases this fact in all its glory. Igauzu is a massive series of waterfalls, the handiwork of the Igauzu River. In the early part of the twenty-first century, humanity stretched outward to the falls in an effort to get back to its roots and to escape Brazil's desolate living conditions. During the Awakening, Igauzu Falls received the power to eject its visitors. A pointed series of earthquakes expanded the physical space of the falls by many miles, and none of the settlers made it back to tell the story of what actually happened. Once a tourist trap, the falls are now one of the most wild spots in the Amazonian nation. Excursions to the falls are dangerous and enlightening; explorers have no trouble finding new species of wildlife,

some of which are majestic and deadly at the same time. Word has it that the dragon known as Boiuna makes her home in the falls.

If you've seen a photo of Rio de Janeiro, you've probably seen a photo of the famous **Christ the Redeemer** statue. Chances are, you've seen a photo nearly a century old. Trying to photograph it now is an exercise in futility. It perpetually crackles with a purplish electrical current, arcing out twice its height every few seconds. The brush and trees in the area have long since burned out from the charge. At the beginning of the century, the statue burst during a restoration effort. It was struck by lightning, and didn't stop emitting electricity. Needless to say, the restoration crew was killed. Since that day, none have gotten within a kilometer of the statue to examine it. The electricity shows strange properties that appear to adapt and make themselves specifically lethal to whatever is nearby. Those getting close enough to risk electrocution have told of the sounds of spirits wailing in pain. Christians have taken this fact as a sign that Christ uses the statue as a waypoint for the tortured souls that waver between the possibilities of heaven and hell, making it as a place of judgment, and—if you listen to the stories—a place of forgiveness.

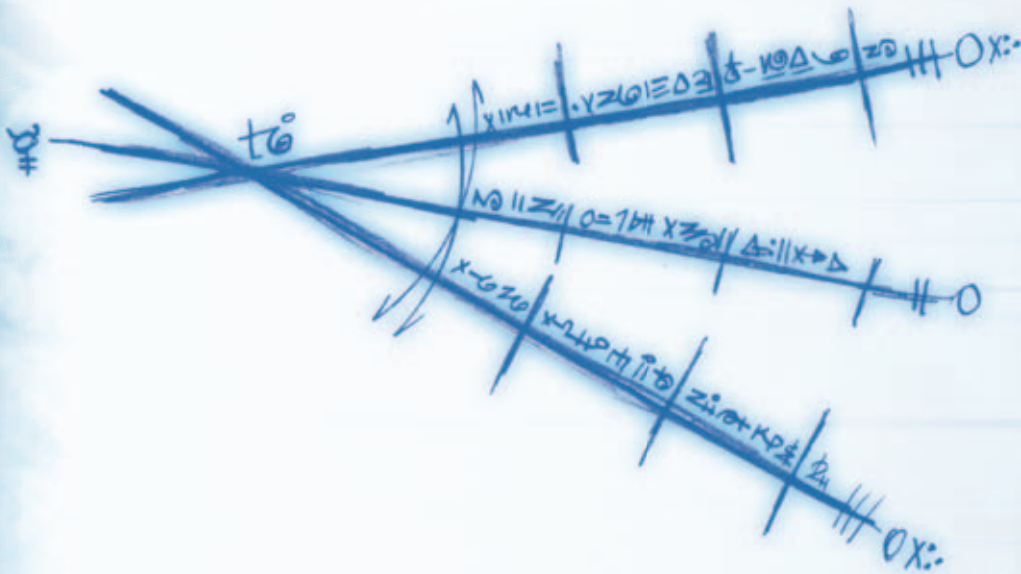
It's commonly called by a name that harkens to the lush greenery of England, but assuming the **Amazon Stonehenge** is anything like its European counterpart is absurd at best, dangerous at worst. The Amazon Stonehenge was lost for nearly two millennia before its uncovering. It consisted of well over one hundred granite blocks, set erect in circular patterns over a flat, open field in the north part of Amazonia. Evidence points to its function as a calendar to predict the changes in season. Shortly after the revolution took Brazil, the Stonehenge warped. The blocks grew from the ground and changed shapes dramatically. The monoliths twisted together, forming a complex pattern of loops, twisting both along the ground and up into the air. The rocks became more jagged, their tips razor sharp and more than capable of removing limbs of trespassers. Most importantly, on the winter solstice, the entire fixture writhes with magical energies. It carries the peculiarity of absorbing any drain that wouldn't kill a magician. Hualpa, realizing the danger posed by such a device, placed heavy guards all about the grounds for the weeks before and after the solstice.

Another (possibly) man-made peculiarity in the landscape of Amazonia is the **Ingá Stone**. The Stone is a long rock fixture in the Paraiba region. It's inscribed with glyphs and runes of an unidentified origin. These glyphs depict constellations, animals, foods, people, and a number of other things scholars have yet to discern. Most importantly, the glyphs pay no regard to the lingual and artistic traditions of the native people. Their source is a mystery, often attributed to ancient dragons, extraterrestrials and even odd messiah myths. Now, nightly, the Stone has a faint glow in the moonlight. There's no overt magic discernable, just a heavily reflective sheen that defies typical understanding of the minerals involved.

- This is going to make me sound completely incompetent, but I once went on a run that was supposed to take me to the banks of the Amazon, and I couldn't find it. The whole damned river. Just couldn't find it. Of course, I've seen it when I flew over. But how could I miss a giant river when traveling by foot?
- Hard Exit

- I've heard compelling arguments that, if the Amazon doesn't want to be found, it won't. Yours is hardly the most unbelievable.
- Glasswalker
- I've been to Igauzu Falls. They're intense. If you're anywhere within ten kilometers of them, you couldn't hear yourself scream. If I had to pick one thing in the world to call a force of nature, the Igauzu Falls would be it. The falls are cutting further down into the ground; I looked over one of the valleys and I'm not sure if it's going to end before the water hits magma. I wouldn't be surprised if there were truly bottomless pits out there.
- Marcos
- Stories say there aren't bottomless pits yet, but there soon will be. The indigenous people say that the Earth needs to cry, to wail, to scream. They say that the Igauzu Falls are cutting into the Earth, to open her mouth, to allow her voice to ring freely. They say that when it happens, the whole world will shake as humankind is made to truly understand what's been done to the planet. Their story does not say that she is forgiving.
- Ecotope
- All my life, I told myself that I'd never believe in a god that couldn't truly make me afraid. Then, I took a trip to Amazonia with the band on a little "save the planet" bullshit tour. Now, I'm not going to say it's made me a believer, but if anything could scare me, it's that fucking statue. The color of that electricity and fire just should not exist in nature. It's a little bit purple. It's a little bit neon pink. It's all frightening.
- Kat o' Nine Tales

- I once had the pleasure of walking the Amazon Stonehenge. If you listen closely, you can hear singing coming from somewhere. Maybe it's the spirit world? I couldn't reach across to see directly, the stones won't allow a human across the breadth. A part of me says that I'd like to know. A part of me knows that I shouldn't.
- Glasswalker
- I don't know what the hype is about the Ingá Stone. I've been there. It's a little shimmering. So is my friend Luke back home. That doesn't mean I think he's special, he's just a little ... sparkly.
- Marcos
- The appeal is that it's something we don't understand. It shouldn't shimmer, but yet it does.
- Axis Mundi
- You know, I think I'm just about tired of things I don't understand. I get the whole "it's a great big wide world" thing, but eventually, you've got to get frustrated by the fact that as we've developed as a people, we've just found more questions than we could ever hope to answer.
- Marcos



ARGENTINA

Argentina: ar-xen-ti-na

Population: 20,000,000

Primary Languages: Spanish, Portuguese, English

Provinces: Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Chaco, Chubut, Córdoba, La Pampa, La Rioja, Mendoza, Neuquén, Río Negro, Salta, San Juan, Santa Cruz, Santa Fe, Santiago del Estero, Tierra del Fuego, Tucumán

Government Type: Corporate Republic

Bordering Countries: Amazonia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile

Geography: Fertile central plains, subtropical forests, rugged mountains

Notable features: Andes Mountains, Misiones, Patagonia, Termas de Río Hondo, Tierra del Fuego

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The yin to Amazonia's yang and the Punch to its Judy (along, of course, with Aztlan), Argentina would love to have some time to focus on its neighbors instead of dealing with internal turmoil.

No nation made it through the early years of the twenty-first century unscathed, but Argentina's government managed to keep a degree of stability, stumbling along instead of collapsing as it was hit by the same disasters that wracked the rest of the world. In many ways, Hualpa's Amazonia revolution strengthened Argentina's government, as many people who had been agitating for progressive change in Argentina simply left to join the new utopia next door.

Those who stayed behind, however, tended to be poorer than those who left, and this poverty increased the strain on the government as the 2050s came to a close. The revelation that the government was firmly controlled by the megacorps brought Argentina's unrest to a new level.



Ever since the collapse of the Arrojo regime in 2068, there have been significant struggles between various megacorps jockeying to put their people into positions of power while keeping others out. Although this has caused some chaos, it has not brought about the democratic reforms many of Argentina's disenfranchised citizens have been waiting for, and the voices of revolution have grown louder over the past few years. The surging Democracia Siempre movement has a horde of international support (including the enthusiastic, though covert, support of many powerful Amazonians), and they are using their resources to become a significant element in the struggle for Argentina's future.

MAJOR CITIES

Since the Argentine government has been dominated by corporations for decades, its capital, **Buenos Aires**, is very much a corporate town. Most corporations with a major South American presence have a location in the city, and there are several large homegrown firms based there as well. Security is tight, and anyone without corporate sponsorship will find it difficult to enter the city and make their way safely around. The security generally keeps the city safe, especially outside the *villas miseria*, though individuals without some form of corporate identification are more likely to be subject to harassment and random arrests.

With factories building the highest of high-tech weapons and universities producing minds capable of putting that manufacturing capability to work, **Córdoba** keeps itself busy and, in some quarters, prosperous. Aztechnology has a fairly firm grip on the city, and is engaged in a long-term effort to use it and its wealth as a power base to help it regain control of the capital and the country's government.

Only about three hundred kilometers away from Buenos Aires, but philosophically on the other side of the world, **Rosario** is the headquarters of Democracia Siempre, the leading resistance organization in Argentina. Security forces, deniable assets, and any other forces the government can muster have been sent to Rosario to roust the rebels, but all have returned empty-handed, and Democracia Siempre continues to function. The *villas miseria* here are some of the most colorful, energetic slums in the nation, a strong contrast to the dingy, depressing *villas* in Buenos Aires.

The Transandine Railway isn't often working, but when it is, it and the highways provide two solid routes from Chile into Argentina, and the first Argentine stop for many travelers is **Mendoza**. Ostensibly uranium mining and processing is the city's leading industry, but everyone knows the number one business in the city is smuggling. Every kind of good imaginable comes into and out of Mendoza, the beating heart of Argentina's black market.

A thin finger of land stabs between Paraguay and Amazonia; primarily an accident caused by rivers, but this finger belongs to Argentina, and at the base of it sits the city of **Posadas**. Paraguay can be easily seen sitting across the Paraná River, but see it is all most residents ever do. The Argentine government long ago decided it was easier to demolish all bridges across the river rather than guard them, and the water has many aggressive creatures and magical hazards that make any crossing extremely hazardous. To many, this makes the borders by the city an irresistible challenge.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Formerly a separate province, **Misiones** is now part of the Chaco province, which was consolidated to deal with the various threats

along the northeastern borders. Surrounded on three sides by foreign nations and at some points less than one hundred kilometers wide, Misiones is vulnerable to quick flyovers and other invasions, which is why it is the most heavily guarded area in the nation.

The conjunction of the steppes of **Patagonia** with the base of the Andes has become one of the foremost critter habitats in Argentina. Chimerae have been seen there, and troglodytes are believed to live there as well—which is enough to make most people avoid the area.

The hot springs of **Termas de Rio Hondo** are possibly the liveliest Awakened hot spots in Argentina, and while some of the spirits that have taken up residence near the springs are feisty enough to discourage mundane tourism, the old spas in the area are packed with talisleggers, researchers, and anyone else looking to go face-to-face with the spirits.

The southern islands of **Tierra del Fuego** are isolated enough to be mostly left alone by the Argentine government, and the increasing chaos of recent years have only resulted in the islands having even more autonomy. Awakened plants are a lucrative industry there, to the point where enough money has come in that people are starting to fight over it. Some of these clashes have become violent, and if the violence becomes too significant, the national government will have no choice but to become involved.

- The basic dilemma facing anyone who wants to run in Argentina is simple—it's a lot easier to enter the country and get around if you have a corporate sponsor, but once word gets out that you have a corporate sponsor, the general citizenry becomes less than hospitable. There's plenty of work to be had in Argentina, but since most of those jobs mean taking one side or another in the ongoing political struggle, you need to be ready to not have a lot of friends around you. If you're going to work for a corp, try to have them line up accommodations and even provide a list of places to eat. It's not easy to hang out with the locals once they know you're on a corporate payroll.
- Traveler Jones



- There's no dividing line between corporate work and political work in Argentina—if you want to avoid political shit, then you'd better stay out of the country. There's a special emphasis on political dirty tricks—rigging elections, planting defamatory evidence, occasionally making troublesome opponents or journalists disappear, that sort of thing. There is always some sort of election on the horizon in Argentina, as a while back the powers that be decided that one large national election was a little too stressful, so

elections have been staggered over different months and years. This keeps the electorate confused, but the changes really weren't made with them in mind.

- Marcos
- You've got a few options if you don't want to work for the corps. Magical resource hunters can do good business in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, while researchers can learn a lot in Termas de Rio Hondo, as long as they're willing to put up with some of the most obnoxious spirits on the continent.
- Glasswalker
- Or you can do the right thing and go to work for the loyal opposition. Democracia Siempre is no megacorp, but they couldn't have survived for so long without having enough resources to keep the corps annoyed. The pay rate is a little low—like most idealists, they expect you to take a hit just for the honor of being on the right side of things—but the work is often interesting, as DS has become very creative over the years about how they work. You'll receive a much warmer welcome from the citizenry as a DS-funded freedom fighter, but you will also be vulnerable to arrest from any security drones that get their hands on you.
- Aufheben
- When it comes to Argentina, there's also the Law of Closed Borders to consider—the tighter the borders, the higher the demand for smuggling. There are plenty of goods and people who want to get across the border, one way or another, and most of the action is in the northeastern section of the country. The borders there are very tight, and trying to smuggle goods from Amazonia to Argentina or vice versa is a popular option for anyone contemplating suicide. The Chilean border is way more porous; it's a long way to go to avoid trouble, but the roundabout journey may be worth the better chance of staying alive.
- Rigger X



PERU

Peru: pe'ru**Population:** 30,000,000**Primary Languages:** Spanish, Quechua, and various native tribal languages as well as Japanese thanks to the heavy influence of Japanacorps**Provinces:** Lima (with 23 regions, though many old governance borders have been lost due to corporate conflicts)**Government Type:** Decentralized anarchist communism**Bordering Countries:** Amazonia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile**Geography:** Split into three regions by the Andes mountain range. A temperate coast, a dry aired mountain plateau area and a deep jungle to the west**Notable features:** Lima, Iquitos, Arequipa, Machu Picchu, Nazca Lines

GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

The worst thing that ever could have happened to the local residents of Peru was the discovery of orichalcum in an ancient Incan emerald mine. Since that discovery during the Year of the Comet, outside interests with little or no concern for the people of Peru have stamped through the nation trying to control the magical ore. Japanacorps backed by Japan's Imperial Marines have long used Peru in their movements in South America, which put them in conflict with the Ghost Cartels as they searched through every crumbled Incan ruin in the hopes of finding more strains of ore.

As whatever government had once stood in Peru was absorbed by outside interest, it was only the Shining Path, Peru's communist resistance movement, that made any attempt to hold on to Peru's destiny for themselves. Their struggles saw some success as Japan began to withdraw troops over ten years ago, and suddenly the corps were on their own.

Freed from constant struggle, the Shining Path started to establish regional governing bodies in a loose national organization. The decentralization of power fit their communist ideals, but the lack of a central organization left the Path somewhat unstable and slow to act when conflicts with the Ghost Cartels sprang up.

And then earthquakes shook the nation violently from Tumbes to Tacna, dramatically changing the magical environment of Peru. The leaders of the Shining Path have kept a tight lid on what those changes are in fear of outside interests trying once again to rape Peru, but the tighter they squeeze, the more information seems to leak out. It's only a matter of time before the regime's policy either fails and they

must once again deal with outsiders hungry for their power, or else squeeze their citizens so tightly that they risk revolt.

All the while, under the nose of the Shining Path and the rest of the powers struggling for authority, the Yakuza smuggles their goods and arms through Peru into Amazonia and the rest of South America. While most of their interest is merely in taking advantage of the lax security in many parts of the country, it is only a matter of time before they get involved in smuggling out Peruvian secrets as well as narcotics and other illicit goods.

MAJOR CITIES

In more stable times, Peru's capitol was the second largest city in South America in terms of growth and development. In fact, it was considered by economists to be a world-class city with incredible influence on a network of cities all over the world. Therefore, **Lima** remains to this day a powerhouse city despite the frequent political unrest. Callao seaport is still one of the largest ports in all of South America and currently accounts for almost 48 percent of all sea commerce and fishing in the continent.

It is also the last stronghold the Japanacorps have in Peru and a thorn in the Shining Path's side, since they control the country but not its most valuable city. Japanese ex-pats, Yakuza laying low in South



America, and Imperial marine deserters and retirees have changed the cultural tone in Lima, bringing with them their tastes in art, food, and lifestyle. The native underclass, it may go without saying, resents the foreign control, and many of them work with the Shining Path to undermine it. For now, though, it remains a game of intrigue and espionage instead of outright war.

Some 766 km from Lima sits the white city of **Arequipa** in the shadow of El Misti, one of Peru's many volcanoes. After an eruption that was likely caused by the earthquakes of 2062, some of the city and a cartel stronghold were destroyed by ash and lava. The Shining Path moved in quickly, boosted by Amazonia's backing, both to play a role in humanitarian efforts and to claim the city as their own. Since then, the city has become a shining example of the Path's might. Special attention was paid, as the city was rebuilt, to whitewash the building so that they literally gleamed, and public works maintain the spectacular visuals there. Arequipa's beauty is a point of both pride and bitterness for other parts of Peru. "Look at the beauty of the White City of the Shining Path," some say, while others say, "Look at all the wealth that was gathered there while we were robbed blind by the cartels."

Machu Picchu—lost city of the Incas, historical curiosity, and possibly the most recognizable ruins of a dead civilization—is not as dead as it once was. Though it saw frequent traffic as a place to visit as a tourist, a place to study as a historian, or a place to meditate and reflect for practitioners of Incan forms of magic, it remained a ruin all the way up to the earthquakes of '62. Rumor has it that something was shaken loose, woken up, or summoned back when earthquakes rumbled through the plateau on which the ancient city sits. Since then, people have been returning to the Old Mountain in small waves of emigration. In some places, little villages somewhere down in the jungle will just pack up their belongings en masse and go to Machu Picchu. They're rebuilding it piece by piece, and no one knows what is calling them there or to what end. Some claim a dragon has woken, and they suggest that its feathery hide has been seen passing silently among those who have subsequently decided to journey to the former ruins. Others say it is no dragon, but the old gods themselves that are calling their people home.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

Iquitos, the largest jungle in Peru, is now home to a great seat of power for the modern Incan resurgence. In a deal with the Shining Path and Amazonia, the Tupac Amarus took control over their ancestral lands. The communists stay out of that part of Peru, and now the descendants of the Incans are growing a lush jungle kingdom. Their magic and natural defenses make Iquitos harder and harder to explore by



outsiders every year. But jungles spread, especially spiritually potent ones, and it is only a matter of time before border conflicts start to flair. This is particularly worrisome for Amazonia, as no one really knows what the Amarus have been doing inside their domain, and no one knows what they're capable of.

Visible from the sky, the **Nazca Lines** have been debated by anthropologists and paranormal speculators—a debate made more difficult by the fact

that the Nazcan people died out even before the Incans. A great deal is known about the people in that region as they left beautiful art, textiles, and fetish ritual items behind, but very little was ever settled on in regards to what the giant carvings in the ground were meant to be or represent. Some suggest they correspond to astronomy and were a sort of calendar for the natives. Others suggest they were acts of worship no different from building a great temple. Still others suggest the possibility of extraterrestrial contact.

Whatever their purpose once was, they have become places of incredible magical power. After the earth shook in '62, the lines seemed to open up, and now they pulse magical energy into the air in a visual display of power. The Shining Path is trying to contain this, having established a no-fly zone around the lines, but like the rest of Peru, it's only a matter of time before control breaks down.

- When the Shining Path discovers they cannot keep a lid on what is boiling in their pot, it will mean another political upheaval for the people of Peru. Magic—and rumors of its presence—is difficult to contain.
- Glasswalker
- Lima is full of work if you can stand it. The desiccated hand of Japan is drying up and turning to dust in that city, but on the bright side, their desperation to regain some ground and hold on to what they have means they pay premiums. It also means they treat failure really serious.
- Rigger X
- Outside of the White City and Lima, the cartels still rule no matter how hard the communists try to deny in. They've got jobs so long as you don't mind burning down farms over protection money or moving drugs around. The Andes and Morales cartels both run drugs through Peru. If you were smart, and felt like taking the risks, there's no reason you couldn't play them off each other and pick up the drugs and guns they leave behind. It's moral to kill drug runners, right?
- Marcos
- Is it "moral?" Who the hell cares?
- Riser

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