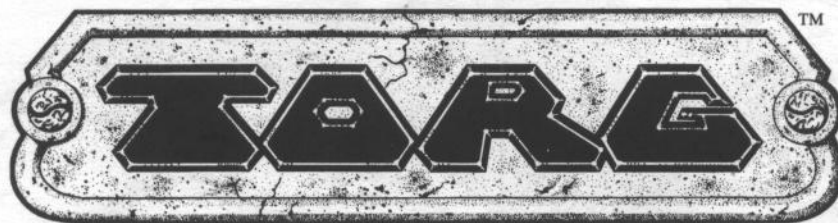




INFINIVERSE™

CAMPAIGN GAME UPDATE
VOLUME I





Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

INFINIVERSE™

CAMPAIGN GAME UPDATE
VOLUME I

By Greg Farshtey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Chapter One: Aysle	7
Chapter Two: The Cyberpapacy	17
Chapter Three: The Living Land and Core Earth	29
Chapter Four: The Nile Empire	41
Chapter Five: Nippon Tech	59
Chapter Six: Orrorsh	69
Chapter Seven: Dispatches & Rumors	78
Chapter Eight: The Best of Your Letters	84
Chapter Nine: Herald Messages	87
Chapter Ten: New Rules	90
Templates	95
 <i>Plus Two Mini-Adventures:</i>	
Dance of the Demons	100
Tablet of Terror	113



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Introduction



Alex holstered his pistol and prodded the corpse of the cyberpriest with his foot. Malraux's agent was dead, and his plan to assassinate Rotan Ulka, leader of the Akashans, had failed. It had been very close — a hair too slow on the trigger, and it would have been disaster. Alex wiped the sweat from his brow and slumped against the cool stone of the temple with a mixture of relief and exhaustion.

"You have done well, Alexander," Ulka said, in a voice so deep and resonant Alex could well believe the Akashans had once been mistaken for gods on Earth. "My people are once again safe, and we shall not be so foolishly trusting again. You have my gratitude."

Alex nodded. He still wasn't sure what to make of these aliens — still wasn't certain he believed that they wished only to help. *Maybe they're planning to grab the planet for themselves when all this is over ...*

Ulka's expression darkened, as if he read Alex's thoughts ... *and perhaps he did*, Alex said to himself. "Still, if the teachings of the Mohani were correct, there is a place where you were not in time. There is a world where it is my body which lies in the dirt, still as death."

Seeing Alex's puzzlement, the Rotan smiled. "Of course, you would not know of such things. You see, Alexander, when Apeiros fled The Place, he created thousands of cosms. Yet they all existed within the same cosmverse, and all was as it should have been.

"But when the Nameless One, the Destroyer, threatened to overwhelm the cosmverse, Apeiros was forced to act. He passed his hand across the face of the heavens, and the cosmverse was duplicated many times over. Some of these duplicates varied greatly from the original, and others not at all — and each time you win a battle, my son, a plane is created where you have lost. There are an untold number of

such planes, and together they form the Infiniverse."

In the distance, Alex could see a squad of Monitors coming over the hill, laser weapons aimed in his direction. He knew they would be trouble — they didn't like being shown up, particularly by Storm Knights from a "less advanced civilization." He spat in the dust and started up the hillside toward the jungle.

"Wait, Alexander," Ulka said. "There is much you do not know about this infiniverse. There are things in the heavens, and things beneath the Earth, and all of them could be blessings or threats to you and your cause. Stay here, and learn of all this."

Alex squinted against the afternoon sun. The Monitors were getting closer, and there were Gudasko with them. Alex hated Gudasko; they were unpredictable and violent. One of them had taken a chunk out of his arm in Lima because he wouldn't buy him a drink.

"Thanks, but no thanks, Rotan," Alex said. "My friends are waiting, and impatient sorcerers tend to start tossing fireballs in inconvenient places. But I'm sure we'll run into each other again. It's going to be a long war."

Alex vanished into the jungle, and the Rotan's mind followed him until the Monitors approached. "Was it wise to let the Storm Knight go, Rotan?" the soldier asked. "Perhaps he goes to inform the cyberpriests of our strength and position."

Ulka gestured for silence. "No, Kel, no. He is a hero, young one ... on many worlds."

Worlds Within Worlds

Welcome to *Infiniverse Update*, Volume I. Within these pages, we'll look back at the first 18 months of the *Infiniverse* newsletter, and ahead to some of the events soon to occur in the world of *Torg*: *Roleplaying the Possibil-*

ity Wars™.

What has happened in the realms since the war's beginning? Which High Lords have enjoyed victory, which defeat, and which are in danger of being betrayed by their own Darkness Devices? All of that is detailed in this book, along with updated realm maps, new locations and templates, optional rules, and two new mini-adventures, "Dance of the Demons" and "Tablet of Terror."

All of the events related in the realm chapters came about through the pages of *Infiniverse* and the responses of the subscribers. Dispatches resulted in Storm Knight triumphs and tragedies, rumors were confirmed as true or false, and herald messages let those of us at West End know what was going on in a myriad number of *Torg* campaigns. All of this information was employed in the creation of this book, along with extrapolations from the data we've received.

Also included in this book are latitude and longitude coordinates for stela in the original six realms, as well as the Akashan and Tharkoldu realms. These figures were taken from the Robinson projection map in West End's "war room," so the maps may look somewhat different when plotted on flat maps.

What is Infiniverse?

Back when the concept of *Torg* first came into being, the game's designers hit upon an innovative idea: an interactive newsletter which would allow gamemasters and players to have a genuine effect upon the course of the game's storyline. The idea was that, given the concept of multiple cosmverses, the Nippon Tech being adventured in by Party A was in a different cosmverse from the one being adventured in by Party B. So each campaign can be independent of each other — but if the same thing happens



in a number of cosmverses, it is assumed to have an effect upon the whole of the *Infiniverse*.

The newsletter was not an undertaking to be begun lightly, as it would require a great deal of record-keeping to maintain, but it was well worth it — the fact that the players are an integral part of the game, and have an impact upon which products are released, has helped make *Torg* a unique and popular game in the international world of roleplaying.

Basically, this is the way it works: an *Infiniverse* subscriber has the opportunity to work dispatches into his campaign, and/or confirm rumors through his party's adventures. The subscriber then fills out the response form included with each issue (and in the back of this book), giving us information on the number of Storm Knights, how well they did, how many Possibilities they began with and ended with, and how many of these were the result of cards. In addition, the subscriber gets to vote on the truth or falsity of rumors, and tell us which realms he feels his campaign most affected this month.

All of this data gets entered into a massive computer program designed by Barbara Schlichting. The immediate result is the mailing of a personalized response form to the subscriber, containing the results of the dispatches his group has played, as well as new dispatches relating to the realms he has adventured in. But this is by no means the end of the uses to which this information is put — every four issues or so, the West End editorial staff feeds the data into the computer and comes out with a rough "progress report" of the

war.

This report gives us the quarterly averages for all the categories listed above, as well as a very important numbers we refer to as "High Lord points." This helps us to determine what actions a particular High Lord has taken over the past few months, ranging from a very simple action (such as defending a stela area) to an extremely difficult one, such as indirect confrontation with another High Lord. Each type of action costs a certain number of points, so they must be spent wisely. Some High Lords, like 3327, put all their points into one plan, hoping it will succeed. Others, like Dr. Mobius, scatter their expenditures throughout a number of different plots in the hopes of wild, against-the-odds successes.

Once we've determined how many points a High Lord has to play with, we can see how this fits into his overall strategy and goals (usually outlined in the relevant sourcebook). For example, when the realm update of Issue 14 was being put together, it was discovered that the Cyberpope had a large number of High Lord points — a sufficient amount to plant new stela and drop another bridge. Having already decided that he might be planning expansion outside of Europe, it was apparent that the time had come for him to seize the opportunity and drop a bridge into Quebec.

What other effects have *Infiniverse* subscribers had on the game? Well, the Tharkoldu realm was originally planned to be no more than a tantalizing reference in the first three *Torg* novels, with no thought of expanding upon it. But Tharkold proved so wildly

popular, and the cry for techno-demons so clear, that a *Tharkold* sourcebook was immediately put into development. And we all know the devastating impact *that* has had upon the Possibility Wars in general, and Nippon in particular ...

How to Subscribe

If you are not a subscriber, but want to get involved in the excitement of *Infiniverse*, here's how to do it. Subscriptions cost \$25 for 12 monthly issues plus the response page with each issue. Send check or money order to:

Infiniverse Subscription
West End Games
RR 3, Box 2345
Honesdale, PA 18431

Currently, *Infiniverse* has close to 400 subscribers worldwide, and is growing larger every day. It's been an exciting time for all of us, and as we look forward to the future of *Torg* and its newsletter, we can confidently say that the best is yet to come.

This Volume

In this book, you'll find chapters updating conditions in the initial six realms, new dispatches and rumors, two one-act *Torg* adventures, letters and herald messages, and new rules and some clarifications of existing ones. This book is a companion volume to *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*, and you will need the boxed set to play the adventures contained herein.



CHAPTER ONE

Aysle[™]



alek stood watch at the bow of his longship, waiting for a signal from the shore. His men were impatient—it had been two sunsets since the scouts were to have returned from their foray north of Djurgarden, with word that the attack could proceed. He had begun to fear that, like so many other campaigns in recent months, this one would end in disaster.

It was a hard truth for a warrior to face, but, in over a year, little glory had been won on this strange world called Earth. Bjanni had promised them riches and women and wondrous towns to sack and burn—but all they had found were small, weak men with powerful weapons that spit fire and metal. His Vikings had tried every tactic known to seize the fortresses of their enemies—to no avail—and their leader... Talek cast a glance about to see that he was not observed letting treasonous thoughts cross his mind.

He could remember when Bjanni had been a great leader and a *true* Viking. When Ardinay (a curse be on her name) chose to side with the miserable people of this world, it was Bjanni who rallied the giants, the dark elves, the dwarves and his own troops and exhorted them to fight on.

But in recent months, Bjanni had forgotten the ways of the Viking. His stratagems grew more and more complex, and he seemed to care more about an eventual conquest of Oxford than about the war before him. Discipline was lacking, bickering between giant and dwarf had intensified, and some began to mumble that Bjanni had to be slain and another put in his place.

Talek smiled a grim smile. He knew his name had been among those advanced as a possible chieftain, and though he was unwilling to soil his dagger with Bjanni's blood, he would not weep if news of murder came. He eyed the city across the waters, envisioning the plumes of black smoke that would rise when his Viking legions—freed from the shackles of Bjanni's madness—would burn it to the ground.

It was then that he noticed the darkness. It had grown colder as well, the winds biting as they did in the Frozen Land. The sun had been extinguished,

it seemed, but what manner of beast could swallow a star?

In his final moments, Talek had his answer. And as the winged fury tore the life from him with its claws, he knew that Bjanni had at last been usurped once and for all.

State of the Realm

The sorcerous realm of Aysle has been in a state of civil war since Pella Ardinay stepped off the maelstrom bridge in Oxford and declared that all battles must cease. Freed of possession by Angar Uthorion, Ardinay was determined to revenge herself upon the Lord of the Dark and save this new world from the predations of the High Lords.

In the months since then, Ardinay and Uthorion have been deadlocked, their forces too evenly matched for either to achieve victory. Brief victories by the armies of Light, aided by Storm Knights, have been followed by bitter defeats on the battlefield. Throughout, Ardinay has refused to heed the sweet, seductive song of the Darkness Device, which has offered her the power to crush all her enemies at the price of her soul.

All of this has resulted in a stagnant realm which has neither expanded nor contracted in the months since the ini-

tial invasion. Aysle continues to overlay England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the northern half of Denmark. While Ayslish agents have been active in other realms, there have been far fewer organized operations emerging from this realm than any other, save the Living Land. Attempts to plant stelae in Northern Germany were frustrated when agents ran into Core Earth troops assembled for use in "Operation: Central Fire."

Denizens of the Dark

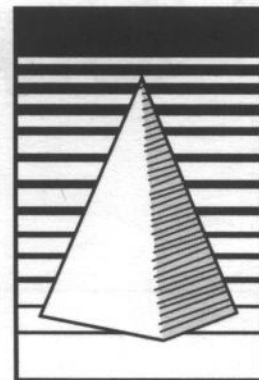
His inability to expand the realm has caused Uthorion, in the body of Viking chieftain Thorfinn Bjanni, to fall out of favor with Drakacanus. Although he has maintained an outward show of alliance with Cyberpoppe Jean Malraux I, privately Uthorion resents the fact that his fellow High Lord has been reluctant to provide him with substantial aid against Ardinay. He has sensed the growing perception among the other Possibility Raiders that his is a lost cause, as well as the Darkness Device's quest to find a more "efficient" servant.

All of which perhaps explains his most recent action, a desperate attempt to retain power at the cost of his very humanity...

S telae Placement

Latitude and longitude coordinates of the Aysle stelae are given below:

50°N, 5°W	56°N, 11°E
55°N, 10°W	61°N, 13°E
58°N, 8°W	68°N, 13°E
63°N, 8°W	65°N, 15°E
61°N, 2°W	57°N, 18°E
58°N, 3°W	69°N, 20°E
56°N, 4°W	72°N, 22°E
51°N, 1°E	75°N, 28°E
57°N, 4°E	62°N, 21°E
60°N, 3°E	66°N, 25°E
64°N, 6°E	69°N, 31°E
59°, 30sN, 5°E	67°N, 31°E
65°N, 8°E	64°N, 30°, 30s E





The Death of Thorfinn Bjanni

Uthorion found the body of Viking leader Thorfinn Bjanni a useful one after his defeat at the hands of Tolwyn Tancred in the Dream Time. A respected chieftain, "Bjanni" was able to rally the forces of the Dark and prevent the total collapse of this section of the Gaunt Man's master plan.

As stated above, Uthorion's inability to make any progress in his war led to a growing disgust with him on the part of both the Obsidian Crown and various agents of corruption in Aysle. Eventually, Uthorion's very life was revealed to be imperiled — someone had discovered his presence in Bjanni's form and Storm Knight teams had been dispatched to end his threat.

The initial mystery connected with this was just who was behind the "kill order." Rumors focused on Ardinay (or some other highly-placed agent of the Light), a vengeful member of House Daleron, or a Nippon execu-

tive. The truth was more startling than any individual tale: all three sources had been informed through minions in the service of the Darkness Device, and all three had contrived to dispatch Storm Knight parties after Uthorion. To Drakacanus, this seemed to be a way of ensuring its ineffective servant's destruction, unless he was able to prove he was more capable and cunning than he had at first appeared.

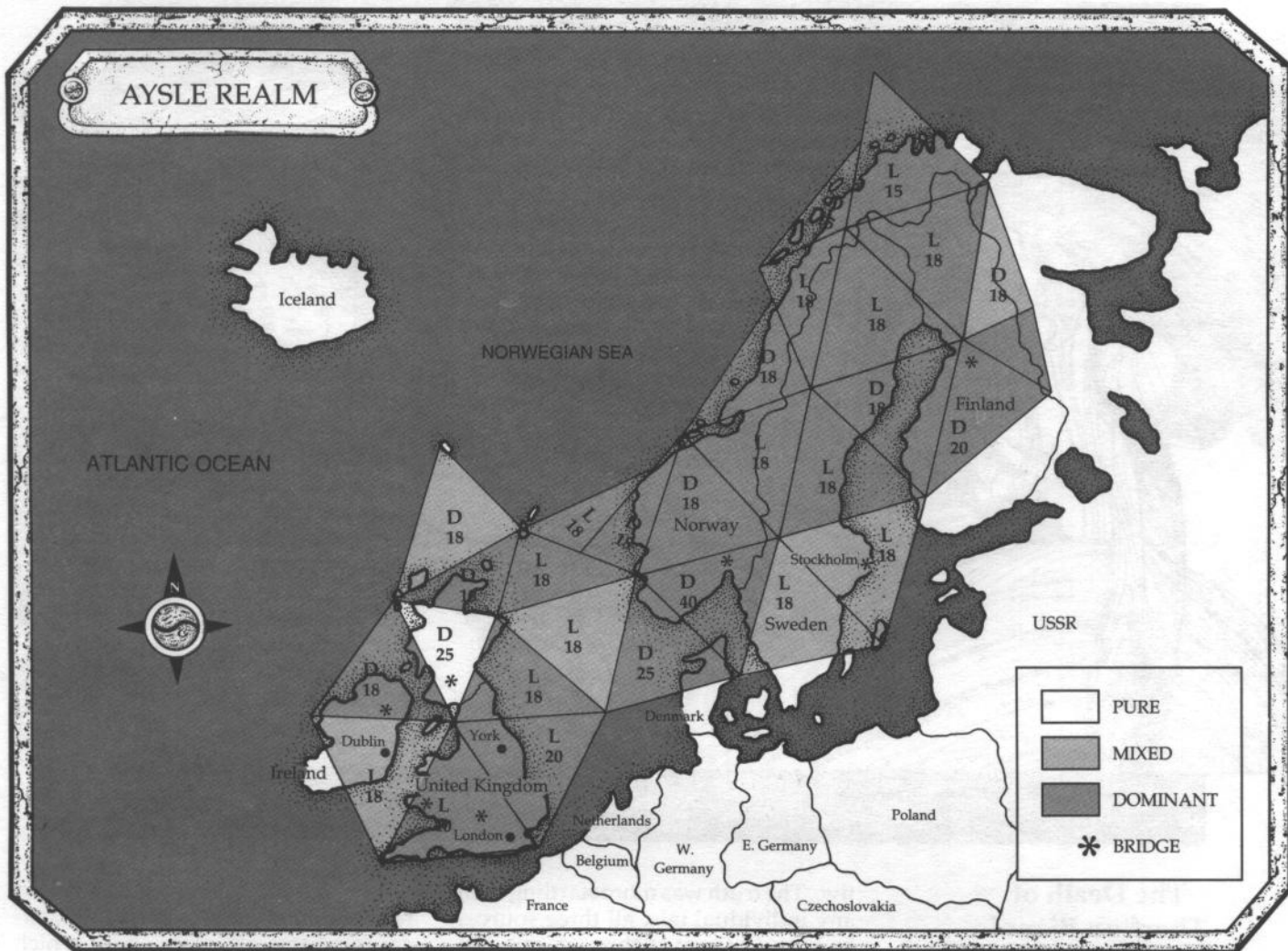
The parties converged on Bjanni in Southern Norway, intent upon his defeat and death. They caught him unprepared, and, though he fought with a fury born of desperation and claimed the lives of a number of Knights, he suffered a mortal wound.

With the life draining from him, Uthorion was granted a respite by the arrival of his elite giant bodyguard, who engaged the Knights and gave the ex-High Lord an opportunity to escape. Still, it seemed as if time had run out for Uthorion, unless he attempted one final bit of dark sorcery ...

For some months, Uthorion had been working on versions of the *sunder spirit* and *possession* spells which would work on enchanted creatures rather than folk (did he, perhaps, foresee the dire circumstance in which he would one day find himself?) With only moments left, Uthorion cast his newly-created rites upon a Draconis Teutonica (a beast at the peak of its power, used as a mount by an elven dragon rider).

The spell was successful: after a few seconds of great pain and disorientation, Uthorion willed his now heavily-lidded eyes to flicker open. Far below him, he could see the bloody body of Thorfinn Bjanni, its face transfixed with hatred as the spirit of the dragon looked up at the one who had usurped its form. Raising a massive claw, Uthorion slaughtered his abandoned form and the creature trapped within it.

Realizing that he was still too unused to the workings of his new body to be able to battle Storm Knights, Uthorion willed his wings to carry



him into the mountains, there to rest and plan.

When he emerged again, it was with the aim of re-instilling fear in the hearts of his troops, and yes, in those of the other Possibility Raiders. He began by systematically eliminating those who he knew had questioned the rule of Thorfinn Bjanni in extremely brutal — and public — manners. Those who sensed the tremendous corruption within the dragon whose bloody claws tore through the ranks of the Dark believed it to be some demonic entity sent from Hades to crush the Light. It took little more than that to rally the leaders of the Vikings, giants, and the Dark Houses behind him and begin a new and more aggressive war against Ardinay's armies.

How Drakacanus has reacted to this is unknown. Uthorion has certainly

increased the physical power at his command as well as his ability to intimidate lesser beings. However, the Darkness Device has not ceased its search for a new High Lord, apparently waiting for further proof that Uthorion is once again worthy of its trust.

Uthorion, never a model of mental stability, has been driven completely mad by his immersion in the form of the dragon. He shifts from the coldly rational, planning effective strikes against vital Light bases and keeping watch on the war in other realms; to rampages of destruction, vows of vengeance against Ardinay and Tolwyn on his horrible lips. Whether his insanity proves to be a boon or a hindrance to the Dark war effort remains to be seen.

Angar Uthorion (Draconis Teutonica form)*

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 21, flight 13, maneuver 20, melee weapons 25, missile weapons 19, running 16, stealth 12, unarmed combat 24

STRENGTH 27

Lifting 28

TOUGHNESS 23/35

PERCEPTION 18

Alteration magic 38, divination magic 35, evidence analysis 25, find 26, language 27, scholar (realm lore) 22, scholar (occult lore) 25, tracking 19, trick 35, water vehicles 20

MIND 16

Apportation magic 32, conjuration magic 39, medicine 24, survival 29, test 33, willpower 34

CHARISMA 8

Charm 21, persuasion 23, taunt 24



SPIRIT 9

Corruption 30, faith (Corba'al) 23, intimidation, 35, reality 32

Possibilities: 90

Arcane Knowledges: death 6, time 2, darkness 7, living forces 2, inanimate forces 3, air 2, earth 2, fire 2, metal 1, plant 2, water 2, aquatic 2, elemental 5, enchanted 4, folk 2, entity 5

Spells: Many from Pixaud's *Practical Grimoire* and from his own creation

Natural Tools: armor, TOU+12/35; wings, speed value 11; claws, damage value STR+3/30; arctic air breath, damage value 36, range 3-50/100-250; 300-600

* The change in Uthorion's stats and skills reflects both the changes in his form and mind since taking the body of the Draconis Teutonica

The Darkness Quest

In recent months, the Aysle Darkness Device has begun an intensive search for someone to serve as High

Lord of the realm. Were a new servant to be chosen, the Device would have to sever its connection with Pella Ardinay and re-attune itself to its selection, possibly even teleporting itself from Oxford.

There are currently four principal candidates for the post other than Angar Uthorion, all vying for the prestige and power that comes with an alliance with Drakacanus. The potential High Lords are detailed below:

The Warrior of the Dark

The creation of an Ayslish sorcerer, this "Warrior of the Dark" is not the same as the one who the Storm Knights encountered and defeated near Reidal, Norway. Although this fearsome woman warrior looks and acts the same, she is in fact more powerful than her predecessor, and slightly more adept at the use of sorcery.

The Warrior of the Dark leads a small army of half-folk, and, as High Lord, would enjoy greater support

from these second-class Ayslish citizens. However, it is doubtful that the notoriously sexist Vikings would be willing to follow a woman (even an enchanted one), although her more aggressive methods would stand her in good stead with the giants.

Drakacanus appreciates the Warrior's potential for sheer destruction and understanding of strategy, and has already considered ways to use its power to make her completely independent of her ally/creator, the wizard Salbane. Indeed, the execution or domination of the wizard would probably be the Warrior's "initiation fee."

Should the Warrior be chosen, look for a series of bloody battles to erupt throughout Scandinavia, and possibly half-folk rebellions against the Light in England and Wales.

The Warrior of the Dark

DEXTERITY 14

Beast riding 16, dodge 17, fire combat 15, maneuver 17, melee weap-

ons 20, unarmed combat 18

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 11 (26)

PERCEPTION 13

Alteration magic 15, evidence analysis 16, find 14, scholar (battle tactics) 16, tracking 15, trick 15

MIND 12

Conjuration magic 14, science (logistics) 15, survival 14, test 16

CHARISMA 12

Charm 14, persuasion 15, taunt 15

SPIRIT 12

Corruption 19, faith (Kalim) 15, intimidation 16, reality 19

Possibilities: 25

Arcane Knowledges: fire 4, metal 4, darkness 2

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

Equipment: wheellock dag, damage value 13, ammo 1, range 3-5/10/25; two-handed sword, damage value STR+7/22; plate mail, armor value TOU+15/26 (enchanted permanently by spell *armor of Draconis Metallica* — see page 80 of *Pixaud's Practical Grimoire*).

Description: Tall and beautiful, with raven hair and a grim, determined manner, the Warrior of the Dark dresses entirely in black. Her armor is encrusted with sapphires, emeralds and black opals. Her helm is in the shape of a dragon's head, and she wears a long, flowing black cloak.

Wotan

The second candidate for Ayslish High Lord is the scourge of the Aysle cosm, the Horn Master of the Wild Hunt. Wotan and his minions had been conspicuous by their absence for many months before suddenly reappearing in the skies above the realm, their powers mysteriously increased. But their lust for blood is apparently as all-consuming as ever.

The Wild Hunt has cut a swath through Core Earth's defenders in Southern Ireland, but more as a diversion for other operations than as part of a serious attack. Perhaps aware of Drakacanus' interest, Wotan has seemed to be everywhere at once in battle, displaying a ferocity unusual even for him.

Wotan's strengths as a High Lord would be his knowledge of strategy

and tactics and the fear he and his Wild Hunt inspire in the Ayslish. His dark retinue would serve to protect him from those who would wish him ill, as well as providing him with eyes and ears throughout the realm.

Wotan's weaknesses are a lack of subtlety in his plans — no disadvantage when fighting in Aysle, but a serious flaw when in competition with High Lords like 3327 — and his close association in the past with Uthorion. Although he has been operating independently for most of the war, Wotan was, at one time, Uthorion's most trusted servant. Drakacanus may feel Wotan was tainted by Uthorion's weakness or may be burdened by some of the same obsessions that dragged down the former High Lord. Also, Wotan would be phenomenal in leading his forces into battle, but he is a berserker; he would not retreat until they were decimated. He also has no head for administration.

If Wotan succeeds to the position, he can be expected to launch an immediate assault on Tolwyn Tancred and the Home Guard in England. Look also for Uthorion to attempt to slay Wotan as vengeance for what he is certain to regard as a betrayal.

Wotan the Horn Master

DEXTERITY 19

Beast riding 20, dodge 21, flight 20 (speed value 18), melee weapons 21, unarmed combat 23

STRENGTH 21

TOUGHNESS 25

PERCEPTION 16

Alteration magic 20, divination 19, find 17, language 17, scholar (tactics) 17, tracking 18, trick 20

MIND 15

Conjuration magic 17, survival 16, test 19, willpower 20

CHARISMA 13

Charm 20, persuasion 25, taunt 21

SPIRIT 14

Corruption 18, intimidation 27, reality 18

Possibilities: 30

Arcane Knowledges: death 3, inanimate forces 5, magic 3

Spells: *skeletal shield*, *polymorphism*, *cast lasher*, *dispel magic*, *mystic shield*

Equipment: horn (enchanted — used to summon the Wild Hunt), *Toughness* 35, range 3-100/400/1k;

two-handed sword (enchanted), damage value STR+10/31; helmet (enchanted) TOU+3/28, with an additional +2 against magical attacks; armor (enchanted), value TOU+6/31, with, with an additional +2 against magical attacks

Description: A massive figure in the form of a man, Wotan wears a distinctive antlered helmet. Flashes of lightning reveal his true form, that of a rotting skeleton riding a blackened and misshapen demon.

Simon Carr

An unusual candidate for Ayslish High Lord, Simon Carr is a Core Earth stormer who traveled to Aysle shortly after the war began with the aim of learning sorcery. Long a dabbler in the occult arts, Carr had been a professor at a large Eastern university in the United States, but was forced to leave under a cloud of scandal when he was suspected of complicity in the disappearances of several students.

Police investigations have been unable to establish a connection between the quiet, brooding educator and the apparent crimes, but the damage has been done to his reputation. It was not undeserved — Carr had, in fact, murdered the students as part of (unsuccessful) demonic rituals. When the war began, he sailed for Aysle and enrolled at a magic academy, but he was expelled by Magister Mathea for what was seen as an unhealthy interest in the magic of corruption.

Since that time, Carr has wandered Aysle, often in the company of dark wizards or foul creatures of the realm. He has studied the mages he has encountered most carefully, learning all he can from them and then killing them when they held no further interest for him.

Carr is a man of great intelligence whose violence is carefully calculated and executed with a frighteningly cold-blooded thoroughness. He is obsessed with necromancy and alchemical texts, and believes that by merging the two — somehow distilling the essence of death — he could achieve immortality.

He is at present unaware of the Darkness Device's interest, but if he could be convinced that massive de-



struction would further his personal goals, he would gladly agree to become High Lord. His strengths would be his intelligence and his ability to analyze situations without letting emotions interfere, something which would make him a worthy rival of 3327. In addition, he would have no compunctions about torturing and murdering thousands if it meant he could live forever. Carr would immediately begin operations to expand the realm and quell the resistance within.

Carr's weakness as a High Lord would be his independent nature, which Drakacanus would feel compelled to alter to better suit its purposes. While Carr would no doubt agree to voluntarily disconnect to enjoy the higher Aysle magic axiom, it is likely that, were he to become High Lord, the Darkness Device would alter the realm and cosm's reality. One could expect the Magic, Social and Spiritual axioms to remain the same, but the Technological axiom to be increased by a few levels to allow for more efficient weapons of destruction.

Carr is, at present, a "dark horse" in the race for High Lord, as Drakacanus would prefer an Ayslish native. However, if none of the others under consideration measure up, the Darkness

Device knows it could do far worse than to choose this dark, twisted soul to be its servant.

Simon Carr

DEXTERITY 11

Beast riding 12, dodge 14, fire combat 15, maneuver 12, melee weapons 13, stealth 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 13

Alteration magic 17, divination magic 15, evidence analysis 19, find 19, land vehicles 15, language 16, scholar (alchemy) 16, scholar (medieval history) 18, scholar (occult lore) 18, trick 17

MIND 12

Conjuration magic 18, test 16, willpower 16

CHARISMA 12

Charm 20, persuasion 19, taunt 15

SPIRIT 10

Corruption 13, intimidation 17, reality 15

Possibilities: 25

Arcane Knowledges: death 9, darkness 6

Spells: *abrasion, conceal evil, mage dark, create fear, detect folk evil, skeletal shield, talking dead, grave assistance, vi-*

sions of death

Equipment: MAC 10 submachine gun, damage value 18, ammo 10, range 3-15/25/50; dagger, damage value STR+3/18; rapier, damage value STR+5/20; cloth cloak; oil lamp; sleeping mat; wristwatch

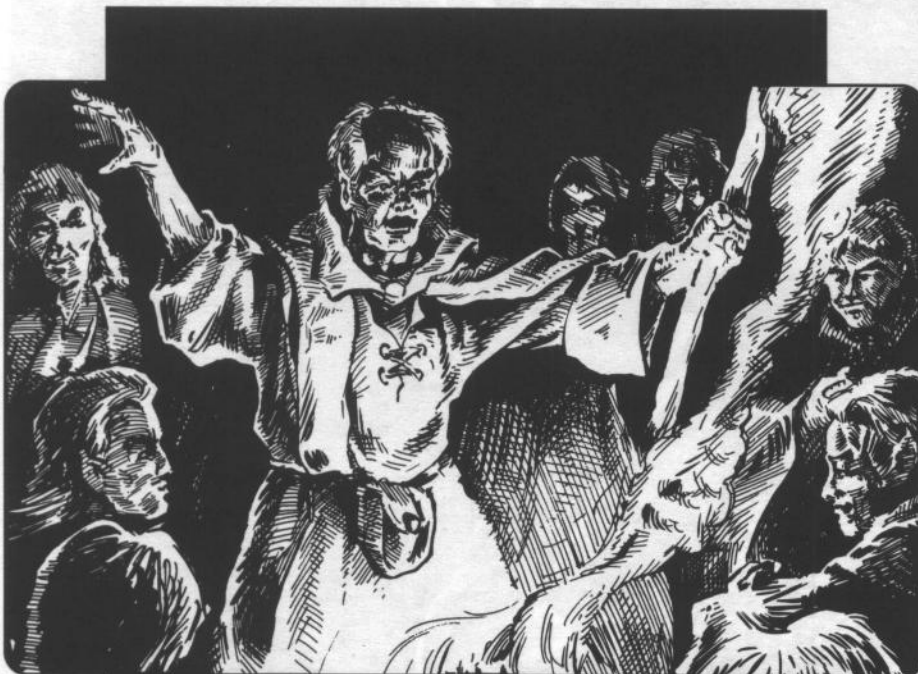
Description: Carr is tall and handsome, capable of being extremely charming when he wishes to obtain someone's trust — but generally very quiet and reserved. He is normally quite cold with those around him, particularly those he considers to be his intellectual inferiors. He has a single-minded devotion to his goals, and classifies people as those who can be of use to him, and those who cannot. The latter are expendable.

Malekere

Another long-shot High Lord prospect, Malekere is an elven follower of Estar who has acted as the spiritual leader of that corrupt god's worshippers and who traveled with Uthorion to the realm. Gaining an alliance with Malekere had been a coup for the High Lord, guaranteeing him dragon-riding shock troops for his campaigns.

Never particularly fond of any humans, Malekere supported Uthorion for his own reasons, chief among them a desire to overthrow the benevolent rulers of the Elveim. When he saw that Ardinay's forces had stolen the initiative from the Dark troops, he abandoned Uthorion and began carving out a small empire for himself in northern Finland. His elven warriors have raided into both Sweden and the USSR, but have been reluctant to join in dwarven or giant excursions against the Finns.

Malekere is wise and canny, and firmly believes that the war against the Light could be won if wedges could be driven between humans and the other folk of Aysle. He feels certain that the giants and elves would abandon Ardinay if they were shown that there would be no place for them in the realm if the Light emerged victorious. He has already crafted insidious plans to spark mutinies among the various races, and has succeeded in winning the loyalty of some of the Light elves in Finland.



Malekere's weakness lies in his strength: being virtually immortal (in comparison to those around him), the elven candidate is incredibly subtle and patient. He will wait years for a plan to be enacted but, when it is, it will almost certainly succeed. While not a warrior, his cool, methodic and devious manner make him an enemy to be reckoned with.

Were Malekere to find favor in the eyes of Drakacanus, elves and other folk will assume greater status in the realm, something which may not sit well with the humans. His rule could even result in the resumption of the human-giant war in the cosm. In addition, Malekere has expressed veiled hints that he may know more about the Akashan realm than others in Aysle, and he may attempt to use whatever secrets he possesses about the Space Gods to his advantage.

Malekere

DEXTERITY 17 (14)

Beast riding 19, dodge 20, lock picking 18, maneuver 19, melee weapons 21, missile weapons 21, stealth 22, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 11

Evidence analysis 17, find 16, language 15, scholar (elven lore) 18, trick 19

MIND 12

Conjuration magic 15, test 20. will-power 20

CHARISMA 13

Charm 19, persuasion 23, taunt 17

SPIRIT 16 (13)

Corruption 18, faith (Estar) 24, focus 26, intimidation 19, reality 20

Possibilities: 30

Arcane Knowledges: fire 4

Spells: conjured fireball

Miracles: *illusory dragon, inferno, language, passing shadows, plague, read aura, reanimate dead, storm, trap*

Equipment: elfmail, armor value TOU+6/21; elf longsword, damage value STR+8/23; short bow, damage value STR+5/20, range 3-10/40/100; staff, damage value STR+2/17

Description: Malekere is unusually adept at the warrior arts for a monk, his explanation for this being that a worshipper must always be prepared

to defend his beliefs or kill on his god's behalf. He is an elf who always seems to know more than he reveals, and he views every conflict as a game of strategy between himself and his opponent. Uthorion is aware that Malekere is being considered for the High Lord position by Drakacanus, and may be planning an attempt to slay the elven cleric. Uthorion only hesitates because such an attempt may be playing into Malekere's hands.

The Army of the Light

The devastating defeat of Ardinay's army in a recent battle in northern Scotland has led to wholesale changes in the organization of the Army of the Light. Tolwyn Tancred, who was already the leader of the Ayslish Home Guard, has been appointed Supreme Commander of the army, and is working toward creating leaner and more efficient units. Tolwyn, her memories fully returned, has used her knowledge of the tactics used in Uthorion's original invasion of the Aysle cosm to counter his maneuvers in the realm.

One major change has been a reduction in the number of Core Earth units fighting within Aysle. Tolwyn feels the Scotland debacle proved that the risk of disconnection (followed by panic and rout) on the part of non-Ayslish troops is too great to risk using them in battle. The paladin had made no secret of the fact that she opposed fielding the army so soon after its creation, something for which she was reprimanded by Ardinay.

The Army of the Light scored some impressive victories in England following the death of Thorfinn Bjanni, and succeeded in flipping the area in the north of that country to L18. This leaves Scotland and Northern Ireland as the only Dark zones in the United Kingdom.

A major boon to Ardinay's cause was the death of the wizard Amethyst early in the war. Amethyst was slain by Storm Knights at his newly-constructed fortress at Mount Redenstok in Sweden while attempting a ritual which would have restored him to full life. Amethyst had been one of Uthorion's most effective lieutenants,

and his death was a blow to the morale of the Viking forces in Sweden.

Most recently, units of Tolwyn's army have been occupied repelling Viking incursions into Denmark as well as acting to protect shipping in the North Sea.

The Home Guard has been most frequently occupied in ending the threats of various Ayslish creatures, including reanimated Storm Knights in Scotland, gorgons in Ireland, Orrorshan doppelgangers in Oxford itself, and even faerie crime syndicates near London. Most recently, they have been attempting to restore order to the Irish city of Dungarvan, which has played unwilling host to a renewal of the age-old hostilities between the Chamkatt and Polja giants.

A Realm Besieged

The difficulty of maintaining secure borders in the realm of Aysle has allowed agents of various High Lords to move in and out at will, working untold mischief while doing so.

Kanawa representatives have enjoyed guarantees of safe passage from both Ardinay and Uthorion, as they sell arms to both sides in the civil war. They have used this privilege to their advantage, exploring the realm and attempting to put their hands on artifacts of real or imagined value (among them the Tablet of Power left by the Akashans at Cerne Abbas). Recently, Ardinay issued an order banning the doing of business with Kanawa Corp. and its affiliated companies, but it is not being strictly enforced as yet. In addition, Orrorshan and Cyberpapal agents have been known to infiltrate Aysle, often in attempts to recapture refugees from their own realms.

The sole bright spot for Ardinay has been the arrival of the Akashans, upon whom she has been willing to bestow the benefit of the doubt. She is fascinated by the idea of living machines, and has asked Akashan representatives what arcane knowledge was used in the creation of these devices. The Akashans, in turn, are perplexed by magic, and a few of the more adventurous Coar have applied for acceptance at magic academies in the



realm. Only the elves seem unwilling to have any dealings with the Akashans, for reasons they refuse to divulge.

The Mobius Gambit

The Nile Empire has been the most persistent and potentially dangerous thorn in Aysle's side. Dr. Mobius is known to have an active dislike of Uthorion, and was more than willing

to exploit the weakness and confusion in the fantasy realm. Among Mobius' schemes directed at Aysle have been the use of Scorpions of Set, cursed bugs which spread a particularly violent form of warrior madness; dispatching Nile mathematicians and engineers to disrupt Ayslish commerce and transportation networks; and his most ambitious (and least successful) plot, the creation of a simulated aquatic star which would kill every Ayslish

born under that sign. In addition, Mobius has been implicated in the kidnaping of a number of dwarves in Wales, hoping to put their talents to use in his "weird science" laboratories.

The Ayslish have responded by working to widen the gulf between Mobius and 3327 through economic sabotage, and have also disrupted Kanawa operations by bringing karashishi (stone lions) to life in Japan.

Things to Come

The future of the Aysle realm is a question with no apparent answers. Much of it will be determined by who Drakacanus selects as the new High Lord, and how well the Army of the Light will stand up to concerted attacks by their foes.

In addition, it is known that Tolwyn is becoming increasingly distracted by reports coming from the cosm, and has made noises about returning to the disk-world and reclaiming her ancestral lands from her foul brother, Gareth. Ardinay has warned her that she would be walking into a carefully-laid trap, a fact Tolwyn concedes — but the warrior has been spending more and more time brooding about her past. With the apparent death of Uthorion, she feels that her major goal in the realm has been achieved, and wonders if she could not do Ardinay more good by winning the cosm back for her.

In truth, Tolwyn's departure at this time would be a disaster for the Army of the Light, but it is a decision she will have to make for herself. Meanwhile, she is working to groom a successor from the ranks of the Home Guard in the event she does travel up the maelstrom bridge to settle matters with Gareth once and for all.

Look for a sudden expansion of the Aysle realm in the months to come, possibly putting it in direct competition with the Cyberpapacy for territory (it is doubtful, after all, that a new High Lord would feel the same "kinship" with Malraux that Uthorion enjoyed).



CHAPTER TWO

*The Cyberpapacy*TM



laude shook his head and removed the cable from the J-jack in his temple. The cyberpriests had come too close this time

— he was unsure how long he had been tagged before he noticed and removed it, and he wondered if a net track might have been instituted. The Inquisition could be on their way right now, and he had seen more than enough evidence of how they felt about netrunners.

At any rate, he had what he'd gone in to get. Stored in his cyberdeck was data on Malraux's plans for Quebec and the rest of Canada. With the Living Land all but defeated in the North, Malraux had it all to himself, and meant to take advantage.

The Resistance would find this information very useful — providing, of course, he lived long enough to get it to them. He glanced out his window and saw the GWI David Mk. II gliding to a stop and the Church Police disembarking. One of them gestured toward his building, and they both unholstered their GodMeeters. Claude gathered up his Delicious and bolted out the door of his apartment, heading for the fire escape.

He swung out onto the cold black iron structure just as the Church Police entered the building. But luck wasn't with him — his foot struck a piece of masonry and it flew to the ground, landing with a resounding clatter on the cobblestones below. One of the CPs turned and spotted him.

"Halt, heretic, in the name of the Cyberpop!" he shouted, already taking aim. Claude doubled his pace. Once on the roof, he could make a leap for one of the adjoining buildings. He knew the rooftops well, for they were the safest route to take to Resistance meetings.

A GodMeeter slug ricocheted off the side of the building, close to his head. He turned and saw one of the CPs charging up the fire escape, already halfway to him. He dug into his pouch belt and pulled out one of the grenades he had purchased in Lyon, then rolled it down the ladder.

The Church Policeman saw it a little too late. He was halfway over the railing as it went off, sending deadly iron



missiles flying into his back. Claude didn't wait to see him hit the ground, instead vaulting to the top of the rain-slicked roof. The other cop would be calling in reinforcements, if he hadn't already.

Claude clutched his deck tightly to him, trying to protect it from the stinging droplets of water that were coming harder now. He somehow made the jump to the next roof, and then the next, then scurried down the fire escape and did his best to vanish into the crowd.

He would not relax until the information was safely in the hands of the Resistance, and could not be at peace until the war was won. But a small battle had been his today, and if that brought the hint of a smile to his lips, he felt he could be forgiven for his indulgence.

State of the Realm

The Cyberpapacy was, in many ways, a "late starter" in the Possibility

Wars. Having delayed his arrival on Earth to allow his agents to prepare France for its "savior," and then hindered further by his encounter with Storm Knights in the Dream Time, Malraux's invasion did not advance as swiftly as did Kaah's and Mobius' initial attacks. In addition, his realm was very different from what his cosm had been due to the influence of the Kadandran images upon the Darkness Device, and Malraux was forced to expend precious time simply adjusting to the Cyberpapacy and the GodNet (which he still does not fully understand).

Thus it has only been recently that the Cyberpapacy has been able to successfully expand, with the dropping of a maelstrom bridge into Quebec. Buoyed by that success, Malraux now plans major expansions in Europe, the Americas, and possibly Africa as well.

Malraux is many things — charismatic, deluded, intolerant, and coldly brutal — but his greatest virtue as a High Lord is persistence. Despite heavy Storm Knight opposition, he has moved ahead with his plans, seemingly willing to pour unlimited resources into projects like his budding space program. Even setbacks such as Operation Central Fire have been turned into effective propaganda tools for the Cyberpapacy.

The Kingdom, the Power, and the GodNet

Although Cyberpope Malraux can point with pride to some successes since his arrival on Earth, he has also suffered a number of serious reverses. Military losses, difficulties in creating an efficient space program, and bizarre occurrences in the GodNet have combined to stymie some of Malraux's short-term plans. He can be expected to devote more energy toward removing the "bugs" from his system in the coming year, in the hope of preventing such unexpected complications from arising in the future.

Malraux has, however, become only the second High Lord (after 3327) to expand his realm onto another conti-

nent, leaving North America playing host to the domains of four different Possibility Raiders.

Spreading the Faith

The Cyberpapacy has enjoyed only two expansions since its establishment on Earth — the dropping of a maelstrom bridge into Quebec City, Canada and the placing of a stelae triangle in Spain. An attempt has also been made to place a stelae in Germany (which was foiled by Storm Knights), and there are reports that stelae may have been dropped into the Mediterranean, but it is unclear whether they have been planted or were intercepted by Nile agents.

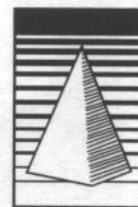
Efforts to dominate Spain have been helped by pre-existing fractures in the fragile democratic government there. Hardliners are calling for a return to the rigid system that existed under Franco, claiming that civil liberties are a dangerous luxury in a time of war. Although the Spanish government has thus far resisted these entreaties, it is no secret that it ignores them at great risk to its own continued survival.

The expansion into Canada, however, was a textbook example of an experienced Possibility Raider at work, one who had learned the advantages of stealth and secrecy. Having seen his more open efforts at expansion stopped by Storm Knight intervention, and bereft of a firm ally with Uthorion cut off from his Darkness Device, Malraux realized he would have to take Quebec quietly. For that reason, there was no great fanfare associated with the dropping of the bridge, as there was when Malraux arrived in Avignon. As he turned up the power of the reality storms in France, the High Lord lessened greatly the ferocity of those around Quebec. In fact, the stelae triangle in which the bridge sits has been adjusted so as to be a Cyberpapal dominant zone rather than a pure zone, simply so that the presence of an invading realm would be less evident. In this, Malraux took a leaf from his enemy 3327's book, who has managed to keep his invasion of California largely a secret. The most telling sign of the Cyberpapacy's presence has been a subtle propaganda

S telae Placement

Current positions of Cyberpapal stelae are as follows:

46°N, 67°W
45°N, 72°W
49°N, 72°W
39°N, 3°W
43°N, 3°E
44°N, 7°E
45°N, 4°E
48°N, 4°E
46°N, 4°E
48°N, 8°E
51°N, 3°E
46°N, 8°W
51°N, 8°W

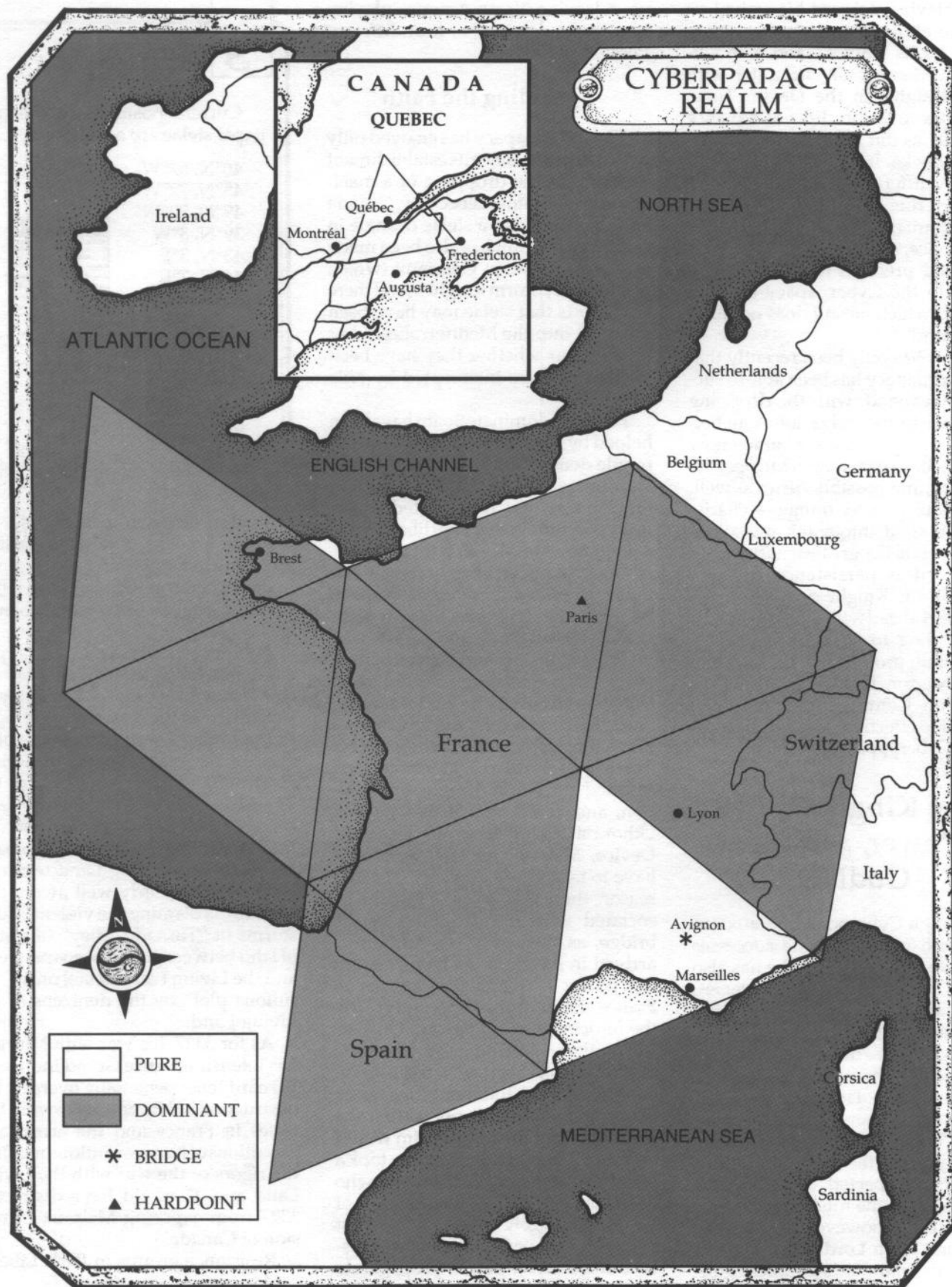


campaign to drive a further wedge between French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Canadians. Malraux believes that anything which divides potential opponents is beneficial to him.

Naturally, there have been repercussions to this maneuver. Malraux could not keep his power play in Canada from the attention of Nippon or the Living Land, nor has the presence of his realm on the American continent endeared him to the Tharkoldu. Baruk Kaah has made no secret of the fact that he does not trust Malraux or his pledges to not expand his realm into Living Land territory. Kaah is particularly well aware that Malraux is blaming the violent reality storms in "Tornado Alley" (the strip of land between the Cyberpapal stelae and the Living Land stelae) on an "insidious plot" by the denizens of the Living Land.

As for 3327, his war with Malraux has intensified since Grand Inquisitor Bernard Jenet personally oversaw the destruction of Nippon cyberware factories in France and the arrest and executions of Kanawa infiltrators. Only the rigors of the war with the Living Land and Tharkold have distracted 3327 from exposing Malraux's invasion of Canada.

Resistance groups in Paris Liberte



are also aware of Malraux's actions in Quebec, thanks to the actions of GodNet runners, but all efforts to disseminate the information have been stopped by the Church Police. They have also discovered that Quebec was Malraux's second choice for an invasion site — he had been planning to drop a bridge into Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, but was informed by his agents in the "Peace Through God" party that the area was not quite primed for such a move. Forced to postpone his plans, Malraux watched in frustration as the Akashan realm established itself on the West Coast of South America. Although he is still very much interested in acquiring territory in South America, he has lately been turning his sights toward a European expansion, encroachment on Mobius' realm, or possibly moving into traditional bastions of French influence such as New Orleans or Port-au-Prince. It is also possible that, should the Living Land suffer further reversals, Malraux may attempt to sweep further into Canada or even into the Eastern United States.

Operation Central Fire

German intelligence could not believe its eyes when the data was first scanned — a GodNet raider had discovered the location of the stelae planted in the center of the CyberFrance's "wheel," as well as the four backups hidden in the same area. Tearing up that stela would result in the entire wheel collapsing for the brief time it would take for Malraux's agents to replace, and possibly even collapse the Avignon maelstrom bridge. At the least, it would distract the Cyberpapal armed forces for Core Earth units to do some severe damage to God's Word Industries, the major arms supplier for Malraux.

Plans were immediately laid for a strike against CyberFrance. The first disappointment for the German military was the reluctance on the part of some Storm Knights to participate in the operation, feeling that too many lives would be lost when the stela areas collapsed. Eventually, the government contacted the Guildmaster in Hawaii, who was willing to supply the needed personnel for twice her

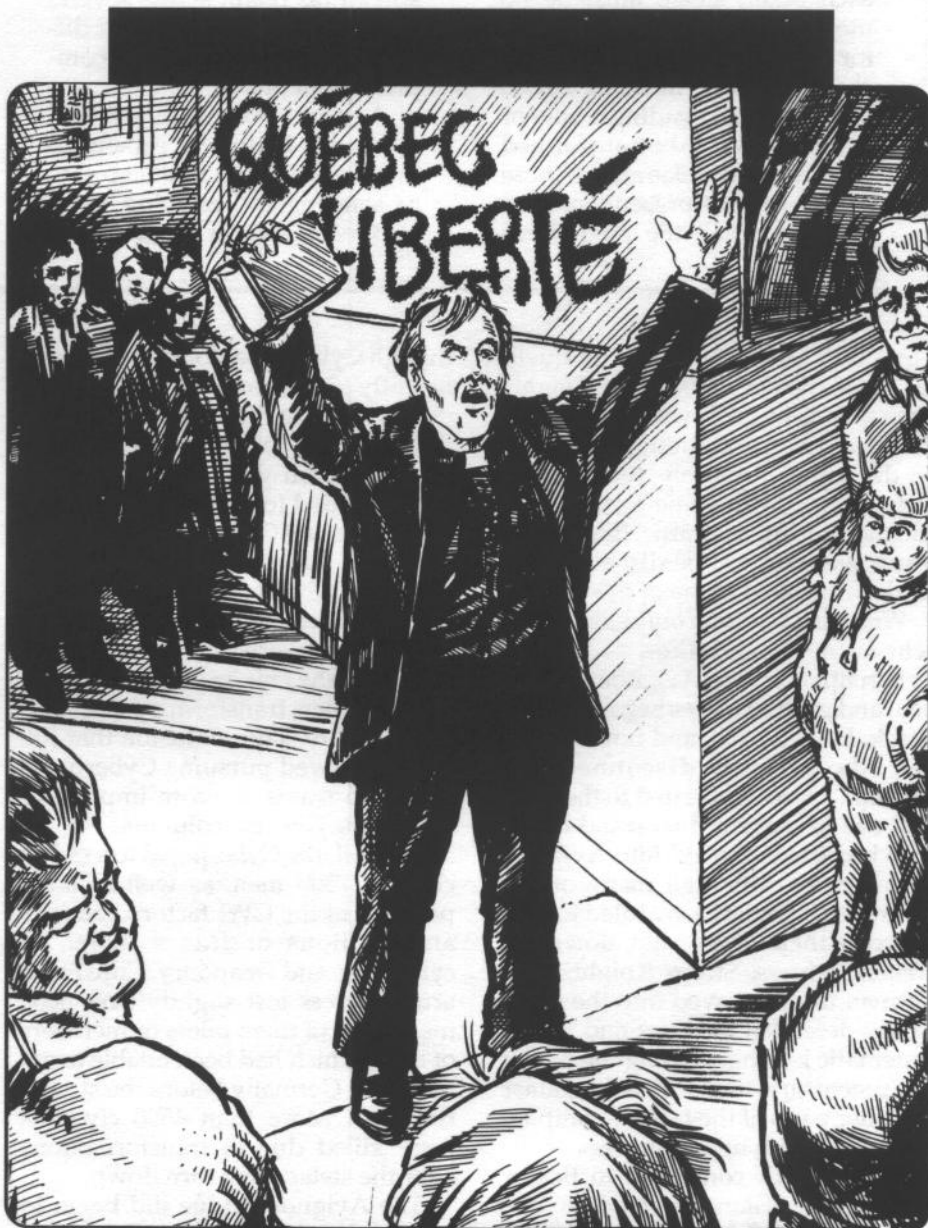
normal fee.

On a cold autumn morning, German intelligence agents successfully penetrated the reality storms surrounding France and linked up with Storm Knight teams already in place. Together, they moved along a previously cleared route into central France and uprooted the key stela in the wheel.

Meanwhile, GodNet raiders did their best to lure those cyberpriests monitoring rail traffic in the northeast into the Net, where they could be dis-

patched. This phase was only partially successful, which lessened the amount of looting Core Earth forces were able to do later in the operation.

Immediately after the signal was given that the stela had been uprooted, German air units began bombing the area around the main GWI plant near Avignon. Cyberpapal jets were immediately scrambled in response, and a bloody air battle began high over France. With the GodNet datapaths being used to send commands to military forces and the



How Do Realms Expand?

There are three possible ways for a realm to expand once it is established in a cosm. The first, and most obvious, is simply to add stelaes to the realm, the means used by Dr. Mobius to expand his territory. These stelaes must be in a triangular pattern, and no single stelaes can connect to more than six others. To connect with each other, stelaes must be no more than 300 miles apart. Also, for the reality of an area to be changed, there must be 25,000 natives of the invading reality or people willing to be transformed present in the stelaes area. If these people are not present (such as in a sea area), the High Lord

must spend an inordinate amount of "High Lord Points" (see the "Introduction") to compensate.

The second means of expansion is the dropping of a maelstrom bridge. This is far more expensive in terms of possibility energy and High Lord Points, but it does allow a High Lord to spread his realm across several continents and make it more difficult for foes to drive him completely out of a cosm.

A good example of this method is Malraux's expansion into Canada. The first step was to send agents carrying three charged stelaes to Canada and

have the artifacts planted. Once that is done, the Darkness Device can drop a maelstrom bridge into the center of the stelaes area. Normally, such areas become pure zones, but as the Quebec situations shows, this need not always be the case.

The third method is that used by 3327 to expand his realm into California, detailed in the "Nippon" Chapter. This is an extremely risky maneuver — it sets one High Lord irrevocably against another, and increases the possibility that the invading realm's stelaes will be uprooted before a bridge can be dropped.

Church Police consumed with quelling Resistance-led riots, Storm Knights were able to hijack several trains near Reims and Nancy, although casualties on the trip to Avignon were moderately heavy. With some cyberpriests still monitoring rail traffic, Inquisition teams were able to be dispatched to retake or destroy some of the trains.

With the operation only slightly off schedule, airstrikes against Cyberpapal units in Avignon intensified, and ground forces began a major attack. Driven back, and now in serious danger of disconnection, Malraux's forces retreated to the GWI facilities to make a final stand there. Hijacked trains moved into Avignon at this point, although many of the German helicopters scheduled to rendezvous there were shot down by French fighters. Storm Knights and German troops moved into the more lightly-defended facilities and began systematic looting, loading the heavy equipment on to trains. Attacks against the other parts of the factory complex continued, with mixed success.

As the clock continued to tick, a command decision was made to destroy those GWI factories which had not been taken. Artillery and air attacks accomplished much of this, al-

though Cyberpapal forces rallied sufficiently to prevent total destruction.

It was in the fifth and final stage of the operation that the major Core Earth miscalculation was exposed. As the trains headed for Les Vosges and the Resistance and German units began to pull out, the central stelaes was replaced, a full twenty minutes ahead of intelligence estimates. Retreating units ran straight into the fierce reality storms on the Franco-German border, many soldiers transforming to Cyberpapal reality. The confusion that followed allowed pursuing Cyberpapal air strike teams to score impressive hits on the German columns.

Overall, the Cyberpapal forces lost close to 7500 men, as well as large portions of the GWI factory complex and millions of francs worth of cyberware and weaponry. Core Earth armed forces lost slightly over 6000 men, most of them pilots or members of units which had been unable to get back into Germany before the storms returned. More than 4500 civilians were killed due to transformations after the stelaes were torn down.

The Avignon bridge did begin to crumble, but did not completely collapse due to the fact that the transformation wave did not strike Avignon

immediately after the stelaes was uprooted. Still, Malraux will be forced to expend possibility energy to repair the bridge before it will be safe to move large amounts of men and material across it to or from Magna Verita.

Strangely, much of the equipment stolen from GWI did not reach Germany — or, if it did, it did not stay there long. Nippon agents had caught wind of the operation in its early planning stages, and were concerned that massive amounts of equipment from GWI might give German scientists the data they needed to duplicate it in some areas. This would conceivably damage Nippon's cyberware markets, already reeling from the loss of seven factories in France. So 3327 ordered the theft of much of the equipment, with some of it being transported back to Nippon, and some destroyed. Still, enough did make it back to Berlin for researchers to begin trying to pierce the veil of mystery around its functioning.

Overall, this operation was a loss for both sides: the Core Earth troops were not able to gain in proportion to their losses and the Cyberpapal industrial organization, which is hampered by the realm's low *Social* axiom, will take a long time to rebuild.



Cast Into the Net

Although Malraux's understanding of the GodNet remains imperfect, others have plumbed its depths, seeking information to use against the Cyberpapacy and often encountering the unexpected.

One of the few pleasant surprises has been the "Virtually intoXicated" (a play on "VX") bar, located in the Net just outside of Tours. Its patrons tend to be those who are less than faithful to the Cyberpapacy and more interested in surviving to deck another day. Information is passed almost as frequently as watered-down VX drinks, and Inquisition efforts to shut it down have been unsuccessful so far. The VX has become a "floating bar," its owner and patrons doing their best to stay one datapath ahead of the enemy.

Other aspects of the 'Net are less benevolent. The Sees exchange has become the home of a Draconis Metallica, transported into the region by a modified *extradimensional gate* spell. The dragon is reportedly extremely unhappy in its new domain, and has been known to waylay travelers and demand that they find the Ayslish sorcerer who sent it there and get him to undo the spell. While speaking to them, the dragon casts spells which force the travelers to return to Sees once a month, so it can torture them regularly for their failure to do its bidding.

Another mysterious peril in the GodNet is the "spirit surge," sudden bursts of energy which erupt through neural jacks, causing explosions that kill deckers and wreck entire buildings. These surges have struck both servants of Malraux and netrunners, and are believed to take place within seconds of a decker's arrival in Babel Central. While it was originally believed these surges might be the product of some sort of external sabotage, cyberpriests now say that the point of origin of the surges is the region of the GodNet known as Hell. An expedition into Hell to determine the source of the surges is currently being prepared.

Another strange entity is said to exist in The Deep, resembling a huge,

glowing cylinder, with a myriad of cybernetic attachments of an unknown nature. The entity, calling itself Necrar, apparently has the power to link Spirit chips with the souls of those consigned to Purgatory. This has the effect of driving the Spirit chips insane, and making them useless to the Cyberpop.

The final, and perhaps most ominous, event in the GodNet of late has been the sightings of VX Tharkoldu techno-demons moving toward the region of the Net based upon Dr. Hachi Mara-Two's data plate containing her memories of Kadandra. It is possible that, once they have established a firm hold on Earth, the Tharkoldu may plan to revenge themselves upon the Kadandrans through the GodNet in some as yet unknown fashion.

The Knights Templar

One of the most powerful and efficient groups resisting the rule of Cyberpop Jean Malraux is a modern-day incarnation of the Knights Templar, the Crusaders of legends who fought for the Church in the Holy Land.

The history of the original Templars is as mysterious as anything that has emerged since the Possibility Wars began. Founded in Jerusalem in the aftermath of the First Crusade, the Templars fought throughout the Holy Land, and the great red cross on their banners signalled the defeat of many Moslem armies. Fierce warriors and pious men of the Church, tales nevertheless spread that the Templars had learned forbidden secrets while in the Middle East which they brought back with them to Europe.

Once back in France, the Templars became the bankers for many of the crowned heads of Europe. Rich beyond comprehension, the Templars came to wield incredible political influence as well, often on behalf of the Church.

By the late 13th century, however, everything changed. The French government, deeply in debt to the Templars, decided to destroy them and steal their wealth. The Church agreed to comply with this scheme, as it was believed the Templars possessed

knowledge that could one day rock Christianity to its foundations. Charges of heresy were levelled against the Templars, and many members of the order were arrested, including their leader, Jaques de Molay, and several were burned at the stake. A smaller group escaped with the "treasure of the Templars" and fled to Scotland, where they aided in the establishment of Scottish independence.

But no one ever learned what secrets, if any, the Templars did possess, nor had anyone ever been able to disprove persistent rumors that the Templar order survived in some form to the present day. But when the Cyberpapacy arrived, the Templars emerged from hiding—first in Carnac, then in Provins. Some of these men were apparently the descendants of the original order, and others were Magna Veritans who had belonged to similar organizations in their cosm.

Templars can now be found throughout the world, but though they bear the same name, they are not necessarily all members of the same organization. The French Templars eschew cyberware, while those who have been spotted battling in South America carry power swords and other sophisticated armaments. Wherever they appear, they rapidly become a major thorn in the side of Malraux, and he has tried several times to crush them to no avail.

Little is definitely known about the Templars, but a few facts have emerged: the French group is headed by a man who calls himself "Jaques de Molay," but whether he is a descendant or simply a romantic is unknown. The Templars at Carnac are reportedly hiding a highly-placed Magna Veritan cleric who was driven from the cosm by Inquisitors. It is believed the cleric has information which could be used to further weaken Malraux's standing in the cosm, and the Templars are simply waiting for the correct moment to use it. The Delphi Council has established to its own satisfaction that the Templars are not being funded by the Church, but who is supplying their worldwide network of agents and how it is being done remain mysteries.

Jaques de Molay

DEXTERITY 12

Beast riding 14, dodge 17, fire combat 16, maneuver 14, melee weapons 17, missile weapons 16, stealth 13, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Air vehicles 12, disguise 14, evidence analysis 15, find 15, first aid 14, language (English) 13, language (Arabic) 14, language (French) 14, scholar (military tactics) 18, scholar (Templar lore) 16, tracking 12, trick 15

MIND 10

Medicine 12, test 16

CHARISMA 11

Charm 13, persuasion 17, taunt 18

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Catholic) 18, focus 16, intimidation 16, reality 17

Possibilities: 25

Equipment: Kevlar armor (fashioned to look like armor plate), TOU+7/17; dagger, damage value STR+5/15; two-handed sword, damage value STR+7/17; lt. crossbow, damage value 21, range 3-10/100/200; 9mm Beretta, damage value 15, ammo 9, range 3-10/25/40; crucifix

Description: Though evidently a product of Core Earth upbringing (and still connected to Core Earth), de Molay acts like a relic from another age, still believing very strongly in chivalry and the ideals of the Templars. Although he wears modern armor, he disguises it, and he prefers to use medieval-style weapons whenever possible, relying on the Beretta only in emergencies. He is a master of strategy, and his men are fanatically loyal to him.

Standard Templar (French)

DEXTERITY 9

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

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 8

Language (Arabic) 9, language (French) 9, scholar (Templar lore) 9

MIND 7

Willpower 8

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Catholic) 10

Additional Skills: three at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (25)

Equipment: Kevlar armor (fashioned to look like armor plate), TOU+7/16; dagger, damage value STR+5/13; broadsword, damage value STR+6/14; lt. crossbow, damage value 21, range 3-10/100/200; 9mm Beretta, damage value 15, ammo 9, range 3-10/25/40; Uzi, damage value 17, ammo 11, range 3-15/40/100

Note: A few of the French Templars

are connected to the Cyberpapacy rather than Core Earth, but they have rejected the Cyberpopes and have removed their cyberware.

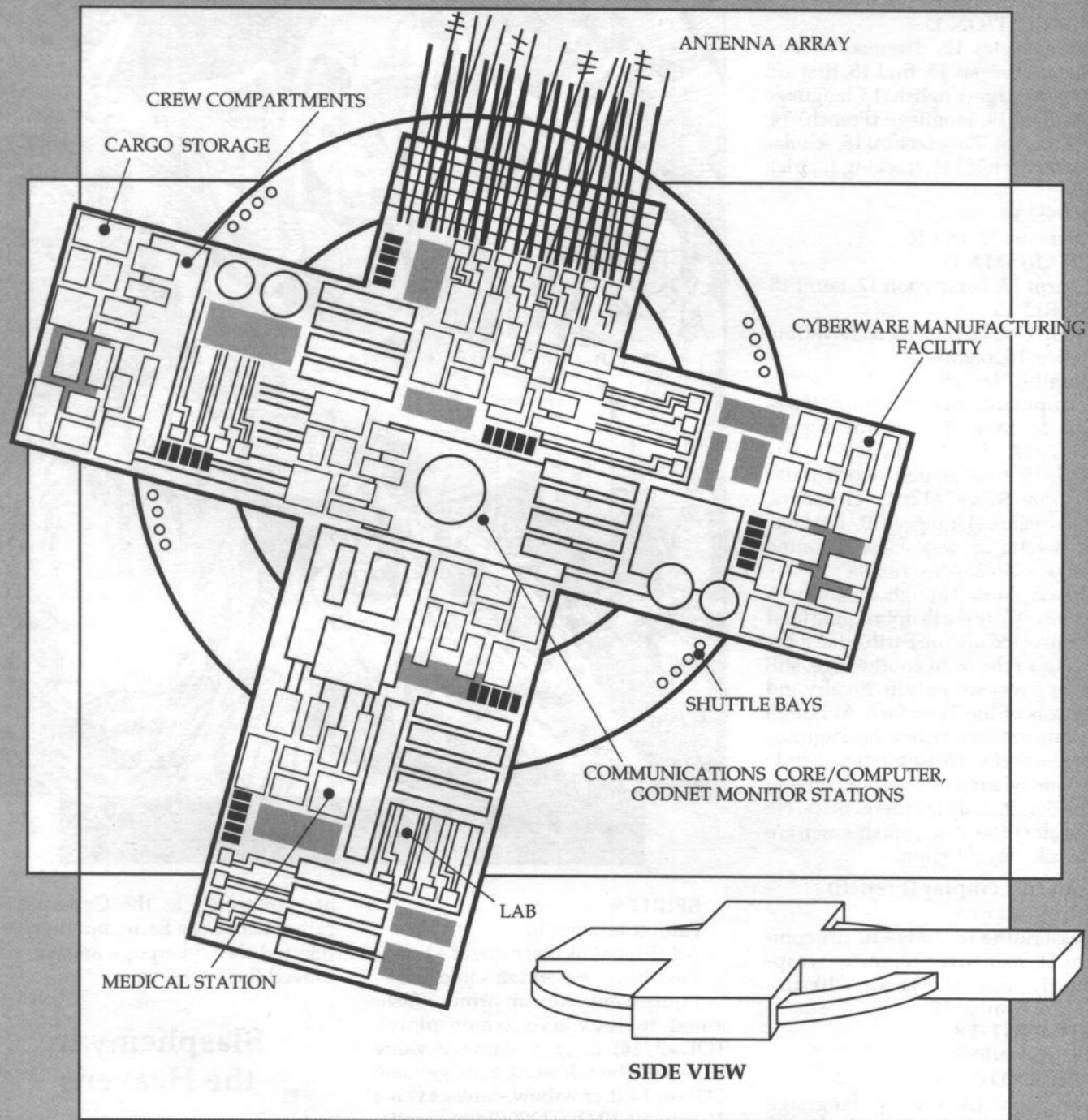
Blasphemy in the Heavens

One of Malraux's earliest ambitions was the implementation of a space program to rival that of Earth's superpowers, with the goal of both monitoring the actions of his enemies and





Infiniverse Update: Map 1 Firmament



spreading the power of the GodNet.

Early efforts to accomplish this met with failure. After the first few communications satellites were launched into space, Storm Knight and Resistance sabotage came extremely close to wrecking the shuttle program and did result in the destruction of a number of valuable payloads. Malraux's plan to immediately spread the GodNet through every computer on Earth (an overly ambitious scheme, to say the least) had to be put on indefinite hold.

But the Cyberpope and his scientists persisted in their efforts to claim a share of space, and the result of their labors was the space station which now shares the name of Malraux's satellite network, Firmament. Built around a huge telecommunications satellite, the space station currently boasts a crew of 25, and contains lab facilities, GodNet and standard computer monitoring stations, a small cyberware manufacturing facility, a shuttle bay, a medical section, and space for cargo storage. Once the United Nations made it clear it would not intervene in France despite German protestations, Malraux was able to move ahead with confidence and the station was completed in an astonishingly small amount of time (albeit with the help of subverted NASA engineers).

With the exception of 3327 and Jezrael, none of the other High Lords care a great deal about Firmament, the concept of a space station being a bit beyond their understanding. Not surprisingly, the people most concerned about the station are the Akashans, who are concerned that the Cyberpapacy might one day develop interstellar technology and discover the stargates.

They plan to put a stop to that, when the time is right.

Although Malraux has postponed plans to expand the Net through the space station, he does have his scientists looking for ways Firmament can be used to sabotage Nippon's computer technology, as well as its nascent space program. How long 3327 delays before taking some action to prevent the use of the station against him is unknown.



Firmament Adventure Hook

The Resistance has received word that a cyberware breakthrough has occurred in the research labs on Firmament. However, all data on it is restricted and stored in heavily guarded vaults in the Firmament construct in the GodNet.

The Storm Knights are contacted and asked to jack into the 'Net and follow the datapaths from Venasque through the multitude of satellites in

the network and finally into Firmament itself to retrieve the information. They are also warned that the Inquisition knows the Resistance is after this data, and 'Net monitors have been instructed to be especially vigilant.

The Knights successfully enter the 'Net, and fight their way past a multitude of Cyberpapal Guardians to reach the Firmament construct. But just as they have reached their goal, they are assaulted by the Beast of the Apocalypse. Locked in fierce combat, the

Knights are stunned when the Beast taunts them with the news every decker fears: the Inquisition has successfully traced their VX images back to the locations of their physical forms, and will be breaking in any second to slay the catatonic bodies of the heroes. The Storm Knights have to flee back to their bodies or be trapped in the GodNet until they die.

The Coming Days

The Cyberpapacy can be expected to go from a potential threat to Core Earth to an extremely serious one, with Malraux eager for revenge on the rest of Europe and aflame with the urge to expand. The Tharkoldu demons are exactly the propaganda tool he had

been hoping for, and Cyberpapal incursions and conquests can now be cast in the light of "saving innocent lives from those techno-demons of the Pit."

Expect Malraux to take advantage of 3327's problems in California and step up his program of sabotage against Kanawa facilities. The Cyberpoppe feels that it is imperative that Nippon Tech be eliminated as a threat prior to the return of the Gaunt Man, as it is unlikely the Orrorshan High Lord will look favorably upon a stalemate between 3327 and Malraux.

In addition, exploration and mapping of the GodNet is set to increase sharply as soon as the Angel-Demon war has drawn to a close, as Malraux tries to learn just how to make use of one of his most unique and powerful assets.

As for the Akashan realm, Pope Jean Malraux I is worried about his "new competition." While all the invading High Lords are worried about the new reality trees and the deadly Comaghaz virus, the Cyberpoppe has more to fear. The heretical "Space Gods" have not only stymied immediate expansion into the resource-rich continent of South America, but they threaten the basis of his faith. Their hedonistic, sinfully fluid acceptance of *all* religions — and not just that of CyberCatholicism — and their scorn of holy technology have convinced Jean Malraux that the "Space Gods" are nothing more than a blasphemous race of evil devils who must be expunged from the Earth.



CHAPTER THREE

The Living Land™ & Core Earth™



Sekk Raal looked from side to side, making sure his brothers and sisters still accompanied him. They had experienced many different sensations on behalf of the goddess this day, and Raal could smell on the wind the scent of dead things. He did not need to see them to know it was the fleshy dead ones and their firesticks, yearning for release from their barren existence.

Not having an understanding of time as humans know it, Raal was uncertain how long he and his tribe had been walking. They had been in the Northern Land when things suddenly began to change — without warning, the optants' miracles ceased to work, and the dead ones were burning the village and slaughtering the warriors. No longer hidden by the Deep Mist, the lovers of Lanala were tempting targets, while all about them carnols and borr akas began transforming into strange creatures and then falling before the invaders.

Raal knew that Lanala still held sway in the Western Land, and he gathered his people for the long trip through the dead lands to sanctuary. Many were gifting Lanala with panic and rage, and, while he understood the joy they found in these strong emotions, they hindered the march by their behavior. He instructed his gotaks to slay them as a warning to the others that Lanala wished them to rejoin their brothers in her domain, and all energies must be directed toward that goal.

They had been assaulted by the humans many times on the journey, and lost several of the tribe. Others had changed for no apparent reason, and began toying with the dead things left behind by the attackers. Raal ordered them cast out of the tribe and left to die.

Now the enemy was just ahead, filled with fear and hatred and, in Raal's eyes, as close to living as they would ever come. He instructed his optant to bless the tribe with increased strength, but the miracle inexplicably

failed. If it was Lanala's will that they fight in her name, but without benefit of her blessing, so be it. Raal motioned his warriors forward, relishing the thought of the pain that would be inflicted and received for the goddess this day.

State of the Realm

Although Baruk Kaah is in that select group of High Lords who have seen some major expansion of their realms, he has also suffered more telling defeats than any other Possibility Raider. In the first 18 months of the war, Kaah has seen two of his three maelstrom bridges come down, a hot war with Nippon Tech, and the birth of several rebellions against his rule. He has been (unknowingly) betrayed twice by his Darkness Device, Rec Pakken, and he has been forced into an uneasy alliance with the Tharkoldu.

The positives for Kaah have been a moderately successful campaign to



eliminate storytellers in his realms and a tremendous expansion into Nevada, Arizona, Montana and Wyoming. This, combined with the actions of Storm Knights in blocking Nippon plans in the west, has allowed Kaah to retain his position as Saar of the edeinos (at least it seems to be Kaah — see “The Vengeance of Thrakmoss,” below).

Baruk Kaah

DEXTERITY 16

Beast riding 19, dodge 18, long jumping 18, maneuver 20, melee weapons 21, missile weapons 20, running 17, stealth 20, swimming 17, unarmed combat 21

STRENGTH 19

Climbing 21, lifting 22

TOUGHNESS 18

PERCEPTION 13

Evidence analysis 14, find 19, survival 18, test of will 19, willpower 18

CHARISMA 14

Persuasion 17, taunt 16

SPIRIT 20

Faith (Keta Kalles) 28, focus 25, intimidation 23, reality 35

Possibilities: 60 (or more, if he has recently tapped his Darkness Device; see page 88 of the *Torg Rulebook*).

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+3/22; teeth, damage value STR+2/21; tail, damage value STR+1/20

Equipment: hrockt spear, damage value STR+3/22

The Eastern Land

The defeat of Baruk Kaah's forces in Silicon Valley apparently inspired Storm Knights in the Eastern Land to strike at the Saar. Within four months of the invasion, Knight parties had ripped up a stelae in Canada (near the shores of Hudson Bay) and a stelae near the southern border of Virginia. This prompted Kaah to order increased security around the interior stelae, made up of flame warriors, gospog, and ravagons on loan from Thratchen.

The Eastern Land has also been the site of Kaah's storyteller elimination program. With the help of Orrorshan “advisors,” edeinos have been stalking the jungles seeking out authors,

Stelae Placement

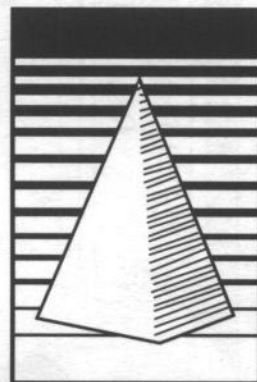
Current positions of Living Land stelae are as follows:

The Western Land

34°N, 114°W
37°N, 112°W
35°30sN, 106°W
38°N, 102°W
44°N, 105°W
45°N, 112°W
51°N, 118°W
40°N, 109°W
42°N, 114°W
46°N, 117°W
53°N, 127°W
48°N, 128°W
44°N, 122°W
44°N, 125°W

The Eastern Land

34°N, 76°W
36°N, 72°W
38°N, 77°W
41°N, 74°W
47°N, 76°W
44°N, 80°W
42°N, 83°W
38°N, 88°W
41°N, 94°W
44°N, 90°W
47°N, 87°W
49°N, 82°W
52°N, 79°W
55°N, 87°W
52°N, 90°W
48°N, 93°W
46°N, 96°W



cartoonists, and bards of all sorts. After brutally murdering these men and women, the storytellers are hung from trees as warnings to others. While there are no accurate figures, it can be assumed that this slaughter-spree has significantly slowed the tearing up of stelae in the Eastern Land. With storytellers not there to spread tales of glory, the people cannot be refilled with possibilities, and thus their lives are at risk from a second transformation. It is for that reason that Storm Knights in the Eastern Land have been making pilgrimages to South America in the hope of obtaining reality trees.

“It’s a dangerous profession, that’s for sure,” storyteller Evan Gore has been quoted as saying. “I’ll be riding through the jungle on my chopper, trying to steer in that damn mist, and the next thing I know, hrockt spears are flying. I duck my head and let out the throttle, and I can hear the lizards behind me, screaming loud enough to drown out the engine noise.

“Then I’ve got a choice: head for safety and risk leading the edeinos to a resistance community, or try to lose them in the mist. I choose the latter — the people in those villages rely on me, and I can’t put them in danger. So I pop a

wheelie and fly over some gnarled roots, skid up a slope, and duck into a cave. I hear the party march on down the path, and know I’m safe ...

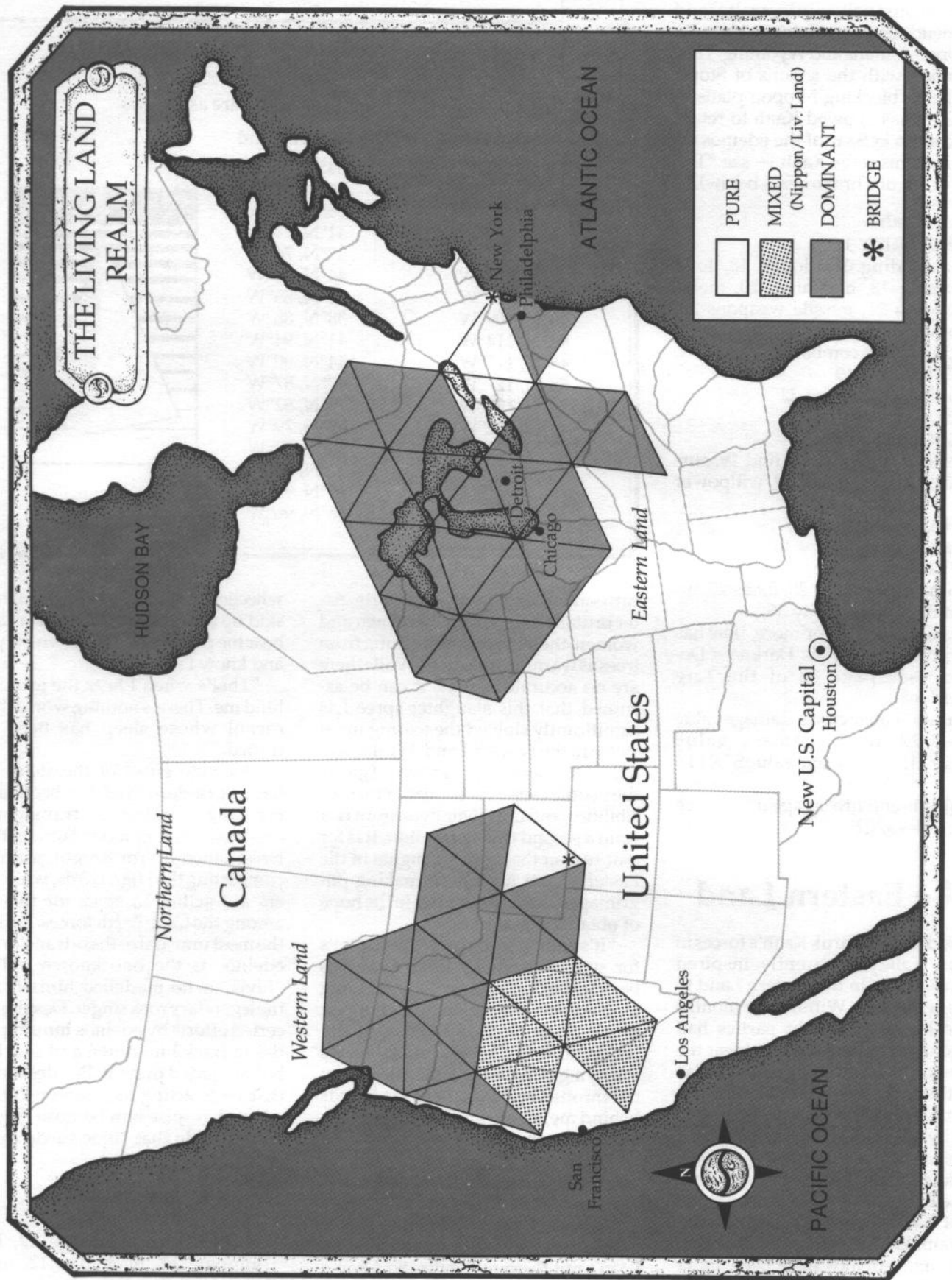
“That’s when I hear the growl behind me. There’s nothing worse than a carnol whose sleep has been disturbed.”

One side effect of the stelae that have been destroyed has been an increasing number of transformed edeinos traveling about. Some of these have joined Storm Knight parties in combatting the High Lords, while others are acting as spies for the Saar among the Core Earth forces. Perhaps the most unusual of these transformed edeinos is the one known only as “Elvis,” who modelled himself after the legendary rock singer. Despite concerted efforts by edeinos hunting parties to track him down and slay him, he has eluded pursuit. Besides the fact that he is acting as a storyteller, the edeinos despise him because they are fairly certain that “blue suede shoes” are dead things.

Elvis the Edeinos

DEXTERITY 10

Beast riding 11, dodge 12, long jumping 11, maneuver 12, melee



weapons 14, running 11, stealth 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 10

Climbing 12, lifting 12

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 8

Find 11, land vehicles (motorcycles) 12, language 11, tracking 10

MIND 8

Artist (musician) 13, survival 11, test 10

CHARISMA 10

Charm 13, persuasion 13, taunt 12

SPIRIT 10

Faith ("The Big Man Upstairs") 13, reality 17

Possibilities: 10

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+3/13

Equipment: Harley (Tech 22, speed value 160/100/13, pass. 2, TOU 14); guitar; knapsack; battery pack for guitar

Quote: "Baruk Kaah ain't nothing but a hound dog, crying all the time."

Kaah's plans for the Eastern Lands include a raid on Detroit launched

from the Land Below, and increased vigilance in the northern reaches, as the High Lord does not for a moment believe Cyberpope Malraux's assurances that he will not spread his realm south from Quebec. The proximity of a Cyberpapal maelstrom bridge has Kaah extremely nervous, and his most trusted lieutenants in the Eastern Land have been instructed to monitor the area known as "Tornado Alley" (the reality storm area between the Living Land zones and the Cyberpapal zones) and report any change to him as soon as possible.

Kaah has also been having difficulties in New York City, and these can be expected to increase in the coming months. Mobius has ignored the Saar's warnings to withdraw his shard hunting teams from the city, and they continue to plunder the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other sites, occasionally coming into conflict with edeinos. In addition, the street gangs have become restive of late, with a splinter group of the Links burning

gospog fields in Central Park and destroying a number of third-planting gospog. This has sparked concerns within the New York Metropolitan Protectorate that edeinos attacks on the area might increase, but so far this has not taken place. It is possible that Kaah's problems in the Midwest and the Western Land have distracted him from dealing with this increasingly explosive situation.

One threat that has been dealt with has been the use of the Delaware River by the Spartans to ferry supplies. The edeinos are now firmly in control of New York riverfront tows, stretching from Narrowsburg to Port Jervis, making it impossible for the Spartan canoes to make any landings. In addition, aquatic Living Land creatures now populate the deeper portions of the river, making traveling the waters dangerous. The National Park Service headquarters in Milanville, PA has been burnt to the ground, and those resisting the edeinos in this area are now scattered and disorganized.



The Northern Land

The original conquest of the Northern Land, accomplished with the dropping of a maelstrom bridge in Fort Providence, was the result of a masterful bit of deception by Angar Uthorion and has led to Baruk Kaah's most ignominious defeat. Uthorion, seeking to spur Kaah to squander his resources, convinced him that taking an area of Canada with virtually no population would force Core Earth troops to spread their efforts and fight a multi-front war.

This was, in part, a success — Canada did have difficulty dealing with the invasion, and their confusion may have helped Malraux drop his realm into Quebec. And Kaah was able to take advantage of the isolated nature of the Northern Land to perform experiments with osthangs and flame warriors. However, the edeinos themselves were now spread too thin, and Kaah was unwilling to divert sufficient resources to protect the stela areas. This strategic decision would lead to the collapse of two pure zones and a tremendous blow to the Saar's prestige among his people.

Organized resistance to the edeinos in Canada was led by a transformed Nile hero known only as "Major Mapleleaf." A former Mountie, Mapleleaf rallied the other members of his organization and those Canadians who had taken to the wilderness in the wake of the invasion and began a successful series of hit-and-run attacks against the edeinos.

Major Mapleleaf

DEXTERITY 15 (12)

Beast riding 16, dodge 16, fire combat 18, melee weapons 16, missile weapons 17, stealth 16

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 10

Evidence analysis 12, find 11, tracking 13, trick 13

MIND 8

Survival 11, test 9

CHARISMA 12 (9)

Charm 15, persuasion 14, taunt 13

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 12, reality 14

Possibilities: 24

Inclination: Good

Powers: two super-attributes, added to *Dexterity* and *Charisma*, for an adventure cost of 6; chameleon power in jacket, adventure cost 5 (*style* flaw worth three possibilities — the death or serious injury of a follower; stays until end of scene or until it is revenged)

Equipment: padded jacket (Nile gadget), armor value TOU+4/14, and chameleon power (value CHA+5/17, range self, duration six rounds); .455 Webley revolver, damage value 15, ammo 6, range 3-10/15/40; modern compound bow, damage value STR+7/17, range 3-10/100/250; spear, damage value STR+4/14, range 3-5/25/40

Mapleleaf's activities attracted the attention of both Kaah and Storm Knights. A party of edeinos and stalengers were dispatched to ambush Mapleleaf and his band, but were stopped by Knights. With the aid of information provided by the Mountie, the Knights proceeded to tear up the southern-most stela in the Northern Land, causing the collapse of the Fort Providence bridge.

Rec Pakken, sensing what was occurring, was able to sever the connection between the bridge and Takta Ker, and an immediate exodus of edeinos and other Living Land creatures from Canada to the Western Land began. Core Earth troops took advantage of this to harry the edeinos' columns, delaying their progress and killing large numbers of Jakatts. Very few survived to make it south.

Major Mapleleaf is now focusing his attentions on the Cyberpapal zones around Quebec, and Malraux's representatives there have already branded him a heretic (a title he bears proudly).

The Vengeance of Thrakmoss

Baruk Kaah's setbacks have led a number of edeinos to turn against him (for more information on this, see "The Western Land," below). But no opponent proved to be more dangerous or lethal than Thrakmoss, and at this point, it is still unclear whether or not he was successful in the Infiniverse. It

is quite possible that the Saar currently ruling the edeinos is in fact Thrakmoss clothed in Baruk Kaah's form.

Using the power of Death roused by him on Takta Ker, Thrakmoss was able to travel down a dimthread into Chicago. There, he and his cult of Rec Stalek kidnapped members of the Great Neck resistance community, intending to sacrifice them to Death as part of a ritual that would place his spirit in Kaah's body. It is known that edeinos loyal to Baruk Kaah and parties of Storm Knights opposed Thrakmoss, and there was a major battle in the Temple of Rec Stalek on Takta Ker. As yet, reports have only begun to flow in from these parties, and it is unknown whether Thrakmoss succeeded in his vile plot. If so, the Living Land can be expected to change radically over the next few months, with the edeinos adopting the use of dead weapons and the probable lessening of the severity of the Deep Mist.

Rec Pakken

It would have been impossible for Thrakmoss to have moved his plan forward were it not for a decision by the Living Land Darkness Device, Rec Pakken, to look the other way. The Device has grown disgusted with what it perceives as Baruk Kaah's inability to visit sufficient amounts of destruction upon this new world, and has begun casting about for a new High Lord to replace him.

Along with the Kefertiri Idol, Rec Pakken has been exploring the Land Below, hoping to find a sufficiently brutal candidate (see Chapter Four, "The Nile Empire"). But given the proximity of Nippon, Cyberpapal and Tharkoldu zones, Rec Pakken is impatient to find someone to take Kaah's place, and was willing to give Thrakmoss the opportunity to prove his worth.

If Baruk Kaah survived Thrakmoss' assault, he must suspect that Rec Pakken was aware of what was going on. This may result in a wedge being driven between the Saar and his Darkness Device, something the Storm Knights could possibly use to their advantage.



Rec Pakken

DEXTERITY 0

STRENGTH 0

TOUGHNESS 200

PERCEPTION 20

Evidence analysis 30, find 28, trick 38

MIND 35

Test 45, willpower 50

CHARISMA 40

Charm 47, persuasion 43, taunt 50

SPIRIT 55

Faith (The Nameless One) 65, focus 70, intimidation 60, reality 70

Possibilities: Untold thousands

Powers: All powers listed on page 88 of the *Torg Rulebook*.

The Western Land

Most of Baruk Kaah's plans and schemes have revolved around the Western Land, and he is striving to accumulate sufficient possibility energy to allow him to have another

bridge dropped in this area to replace the one that was destroyed. His desire to completely conquer this area has led him into an unholy alliance with Jezrael and the Tharkoldu, as well as to alienate a number of his followers, who are repelled by his apparent willingness to work with those who love dead things. (In truth, Kaah has every intention of betraying the Tharkoldu as soon as Nippon is crushed, something which is unfortunately not a secret to Jezrael.)

In terms of stelae area, Kaah has enjoyed significant expansion in this area. Following the loss of the Sacramento zone and the Western Land bridge to the forces of Nippon Tech (see Chapter Five, "Nippon Tech"), the High Lord began looking elsewhere for territory to conquer. With the benefit of advice from Thratchen's agents, Kaah ordered the planting seven stelae in the Western Land. These served to extend his domain as far east as the Kansas/Colorado border, in-

cluding chunks of Arizona and New Mexico. A new maelstrom bridge has been dropped into the vicinity of Denver, CO, and Jakatts have poured down from Takta Ker and transformed the new stelae areas to dominant zones.

One of Kaah's earliest plots was the use of benthe to control the emotions of Living Land creatures. Stoked into a rage by the small organisms, the beasts would then rampage against edeinos tribes that were disloyal to the High Lord. This plan was defeated by Storm Knights in the area, answering Delphi Council requests to adhere to the Storm Knight Registration Act.

The edeinos have also been unsuccessful in planting two new stelae, one in Tennessee (see "Breaking New Ground" in *Full Moon Draw*) and one in Central City, NE, which would have resulted in the United States being cut in half.

The ongoing war with Nippon occupies much of Kaah's time, as the edeinos work to dislodge 3327's agents

from Sacramento, while Kanawa executives devise new and more devious ways to wipe out the Living Land denizens. Storm Knight intervention prevented a Nippon plot to poison the water supply in Oregon, thus killing a score of edeinos and hundreds of resistance community members. With the techno-demons from Tharkold pressuring Nippon from the south, Kaah has ordered efforts to undo the "Miracle of Sacramento" redoubled.

A number of edeinos groups have joined with the Fresno tribe in opposing Baruk Kaah and his plans. Some have joined with Storm Knights and Core Earth forces, feeling that the invasion of Earth was not the will of Lanala, but rather the action of the dead thing to which the Saar has enslaved himself. Others believe the invasion could be carried out with much more efficiency, and have splintered off from the main body of Jakatts to follow other leaders. Kaah has reacted swiftly and violently to this development, and a number of ambitious edeinos have met untimely ends at the hands of the Saar's elite guard. The common method of disposal is to tear the offender to pieces and leave his various parts in a pile in the center of the rebellious village. So far, this does not seem to have discouraged grumbling against the Saar, but, with the exception of Thrakmoss, there have been few active insurrections.

Future plans for the Western Land include further expansion into Arizona and New Mexico, and possibly a push toward Texas to threaten the seat of the US government. Kaah is not overly concerned about Tharkold at this point — he feels that, with their realm being so strong, his forces would be able to crush both the techno-demons and the Race with little difficulty. He has no intention of doing so, however, until Jezrael has fulfilled her bargain with him — the complete destruction of Nippon Tech's holdings in California.

As noted above, Kaah is worried about Malraux's efforts in Canada. He has rejected offers of aid against Nippon by the Cyberpope, and has been informed by stormers that Malraux points to the Living Land as a place conquered by the Evil One.

Kaah believes that a few successful raids in the Quebec area would put Malraux in a difficult position, forced to explain how his forces were unable to stop tribes of savage "demons" from menacing the faithful.

Core Earth

Most of the events taking place in Core Earth during the first 18 months of the war will be covered in detail in the upcoming *Delphi Council World Book, Volume I*. However, four aspects of the current world situation have had their roots in Infiniverse, and so are collected here.

The High Lord of Earth

A year after the initial invasion, Malcolm Kane, former minion of the Gaunt Man, made his bid for power. Feeling that he had been spurned by his master, Kane allied himself with an Orrorshan sorcerer named Kibos and launched a search for Core Earth's Darkness Device. His plan: to make himself a High Lord, carve out a realm, and eventually frustrate the Gaunt Man by becoming Torg himself.

He found something quite different than what he had bargained for: a battered, amnesiac Darkness Device from a conquered cosm which was convinced it was the Aztec god of war, Huitzilopochtli. Willing to play along for the sake of sharing in its incredible power, Kane became the Device's High Priest and began to return part of Mexico to the days of the Aztec Empire.

Unfortunately for Kane, he was pursued by Storm Knights who had followed his trail from Orrorsh. In a pitched battle atop Huitzilopochtli's temple in the ancient city of Teotihuacan, the proto-High Lord was defeated by the combined might of the Knights and slain. The Darkness Device, in turn, was tricked into returning to its own devastated cosm, where it is believed it will pose no threat to Earth in the future.

(The results of *High Lord of Earth* recorded here were compiled by tabulating those submitted on the response forms included with the adventure.

High Lord resulted in the single highest total for a true/false question in the history of *Torg*, with the creation of the Aztec Empire coming in at False (96).)

The Storm Knights' Registration Act

One of the first actions of the Delphi Council was the creation of a measure which would require all Storm Knights operating within the United States to register with the government. The stated reason for this was that, in a time of war, the government had a right to know what resources it might have at its disposal at any given time. Those who signed were promised financial and other aid from the Delphi Council, and those who refused were threatened with censure and outlaw status.

Despite the resistance of most Storm Knights to this measure, Congress (in the aftermath of a benthe assault on that august body) did give its approval to a slightly watered down version of the bill. Although it strictly limits punitive actions which can be taken against non-registering Knights, there are documented cases of "Sweeping Crews" attacking Knight parties who were suspected of aiding resistance communities or "friendly" edeinos tribes. No action has been taken by Congress to investigate these reports, and it is believed that the Delphi Council may be blocking any efforts to do so.

The Storm Guild

In the wake of early defeats in the war, the need for some sort of organization and financial support for Storm Knights became increasingly evident. One step was taken in this direction by a mysterious woman known only as "The Guildmaster," who has masterminded the creation of an organization known as The Storm Guild, based in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Little is known about the Guildmaster or her group. There have been reports that she recruits both Storm Knights and stormers — and even talented ords — to accomplish her missions, offering the inducement of large sums of money (the size of her personal fortune is said to be virtually



incalculable). She is said to tolerate no rebellion among her staff, which is said to number in the hundreds. It is also believed that she keeps dossiers on Storm Knights, both those in her service and those yet to be offered her "sponsorship." As yet, no Storm Knight has reported attempts at coercion on the Guildmaster's part, but she is an aggressive recruiter.

The Five Realms

In the early days of the war, a new roleplaying game appeared from a small company called S&W. Entitled *The Five Realms*, the game offered the players the chance to be Storm Knights battling the forces of the Cyberpapacy, Orrorsh, the Living Land, the Nile Empire, and Aysle (Nippon Tech was not included, perhaps because the US government has never officially acknowledged that it is a realm).

The game was not only timely, but eerily accurate, as published adven-

tures began to reveal details of High Lord plots that only confidantes of the invaders (or the Storm Knights involved) could have been aware of. Just as the game's popularity had seemingly reached its peak, the creator, Jeff Mills was kidnapped by Nippon agents. Knights speculated that perhaps the Kanawa Corporation was interested in discovering just where Mills was getting his information.

Later, Mills just as mysteriously reappeared, now the focus of Delphi Council attention. Rather than submit to "debriefing," Mills and his staff vanished into Oregon, and are continuing to publish the game through black market channels. In recent weeks, new versions of the boxed set entitled "The Seven Realms," and featuring the Space Gods and Tharkold, have appeared.

There is even a rumor that an expansion set (including a new Japanese realm) is floating around, but no game distributors admit to seeing it.

Biosphere II

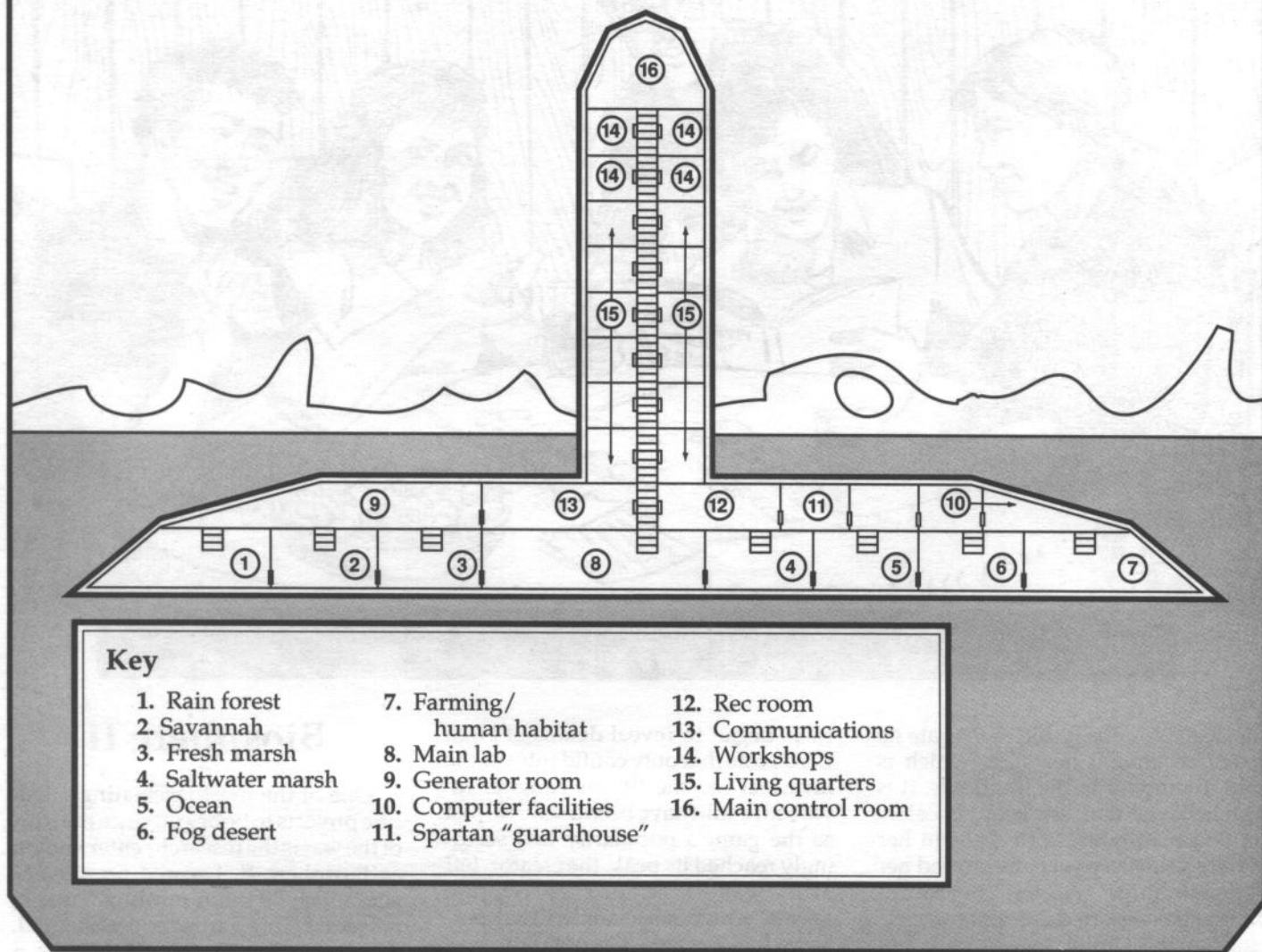
One of the most fascinating scientific projects to be begun since the start of the war is the research center known as Biosphere II. Located on a 2-1/4 acre ranch 30 miles north of Tucson, AZ (still a Core Earth dominant zone), the structure was intended to be a blend of biology and technology, a miniature world in which experiments could be done on the "greenhouse effect" and other environmental threats to the world.

Within the center are seven climate zones, each with its own flora and fauna: a tropical rain forest, savanna, fresh and saltwater marshes, an ocean, fog desert, farming area and human habitat. Thirty-eight hundred species of animals and 250 types of insects are contained within the 5 million cubic feet of the complex. Monitored by 5000 sensors, it was believed that the staff would be able to better understand Earth (Biosphere I) through the work



Infiniverse Update: Map 2

Biosphere II



done here.

In the early months of the war, this private institution was taken over by the Delphi Council, which has since replaced the staff with government scientists. Among the experiments currently being conducted here are tests on edeinos being held in the rain forest area, to determine how they "create" the Deep Mist; tests on captured Nile residents with pulp powers, to get at the exact nature and limitations of those powers; and studies of Ayslish sorcerers and the nature of magical energy. It is believed that all of the subjects of these experiments

are being held against their will.

The center is now guarded by 100 Spartans, with a number of the workshop areas having been converted for their use and exterior barracks built to accommodate them. In addition, the town of Oracle, where the complex is located, has been declared off-limits to non-Delphi Council employees. A contingent of US Marines is currently in place in Oracle to enforce this directive.

Biosphere II is powered by 3.2 megawatts of electricity, with computers keeping temperatures and humidity levels constant. Ocean tides and waves

are mechanically generated, and artificial rain stored in tanks for distribution as required.

Biosphere II Adventure Hook

Investigators into the nature of magic at Biosphere II have inadvertently drawn the wrath of mage-killers, that peculiar breed of monster whose sole purpose is the slaying of sorcerers (see *Creatures of Aysle*). It seems that Ayslish investors in the conjuring futures market fear that the Biosphere experiments might lead to the creation of new wizards, which

would drive the prices of their shares down and create an Aysle-wide depression. Thus they have taken the unusual (and dangerous) step of hiring mage-killers to kill the sorcerers being used as test subjects, and any staff member who might get in their way as well.

Learning of this while in Aysle, the Knights must make their way to Arizona and stop the mage-killers before they lay waste to the center and its occupants in their bloodlust.

Looking Ahead

How long Baruk Kaah stays in power and is able to keep his realm a viable one depends on how well he deals with Jezrael and Malraux, both

of whom have now staked claims in North America and have offered their aid against Nippon. Kaah must form an alliance with at least one of the two of them, and risk being caught in the middle of a four-way conflict which would surely lead to his destruction.

In addition, Kaah is said to be growing increasingly concerned about the Land Below, a place said to be filled with primitives who would have little trouble functioning even under the harsh laws of Lanala. Already, there have been attacks on the Living Land from that quarter, and it is only a matter of time before Kaah will be forced to respond in kind.

To keep the glassed-in areas from bursting due to hot air expansion, igloo-shaped buildings on either side of the main structure are equipped with steel

plates riding rubber doughnuts, which go up and down as the air expands and contracts. In this way, they act very much like lungs for the building.

Space Gods and Tharkold

The two newest realms to enter the *Infiniverse of Torg* are the "Space God" (Akashan) realm in South America and the Tharkoldu realm in Los Angeles, CA. Neither of these is receiving extensive attention in this volume, only because neither existed during the first 18 months of the war covered here.

However, *Infiniverse* subscribers were the first to discover that strange apparitions (actually mental projections) of Those Who Wait had been seen around Machu Picchu. They were also the first to learn that a dimthread had been dropped from the Tharkoldu cosm, and a techno-demon dispatched to meet with Thratchen, the first warning that Tharkold planned a return to Earth.

For more information on Tharkold stelae and Akashan reality trees, see the *Tharkold* and *Space Gods* sourcebooks.

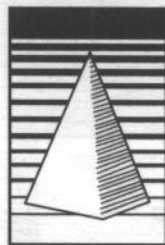
Stelae Placement: Tharkoldu and Akashan Realities

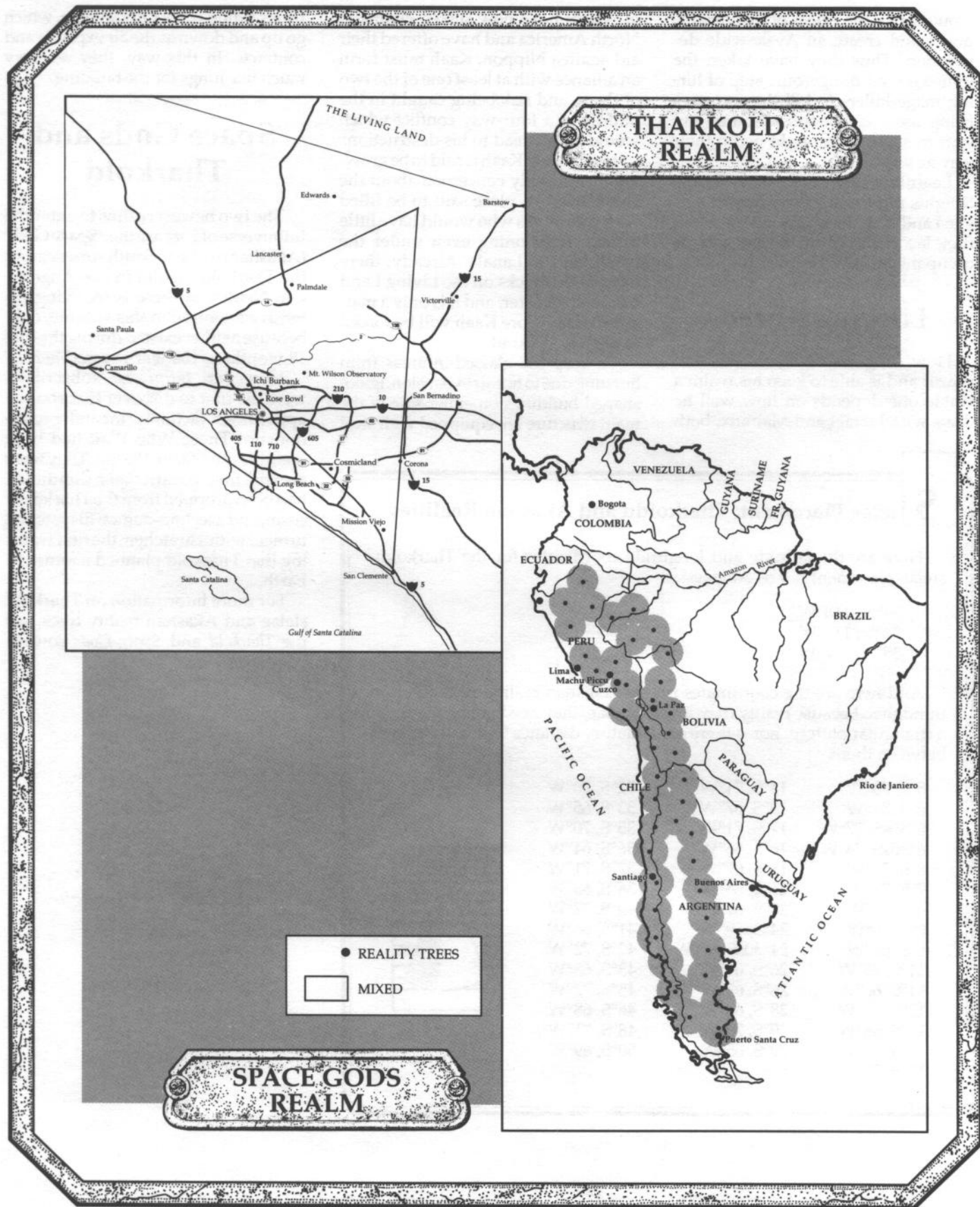
Here are the latitude and longitude coordinates for the Tharkoldu stelae placement in Los Angeles:

34°N, 118°W
34°N, 116°W
35°N, 117°W

And here are the coordinates for the Akashan reality trees. Keep in mind that, because reality trees are not stelae, they need not be placed in a triangular pattern, nor is there a mandatory distance that must be kept between them.

5°S, 75°W	14°S, 71°W	32°S, 70°W
6°S, 81°W	13°S, 67°W	33°S, 65°W
6°30'S, 77°W	17°S, 71°W	35°S, 70°W
6°30'S, 74°W	16°S, 66°W	36°S, 64°W
8°S, 76°W	18°S, 67°W	37°S, 71°W
7°S, 72°W	21°S, 68°W	38°S, 63°W
6°S, 70°W	22°S, 66°W	40°S, 72°W
9°S, 70°W	24°S, 69°W	41°S, 66°W
8°S, 68°W	24°30'S, 67°W	42°S, 72°W
11°S, 75°W	26°S, 69°W	43°S, 68°W
11°S, 66°W	26°S, 67°W	45°S, 72°W
12°S, 72°W	28°S, 68°W	46°S, 68°W
12°S, 69°W	29°S, 70°W	48°S, 71°W
13°S, 74°W	29°S, 65°W	50°S, 69°W
15°S, 73°W		







CHAPTER FOUR

The Nile Empire™

In the parlance of the underworld, Jake Faith is an enforcer. It is his job to instill fear, through violence or threats of violence. He works for whomever offers him the most royals, and he thoroughly enjoys his chosen occupation.

But today, Jake runs down a Cairo alleyway, heart pounding in his chest, lungs fighting for air, sweat pouring off his brow. Today, for the first time, Jake Faith knows the true meaning of fear.

He wheels around the corner, his eyes darting back and forth as he looks for an open doorway, a bar, someplace he could duck into and get away from his pursuer. There are none — even in this city, the nightspots close eventually.

He struggles to remember the layout of the neighborhood. The next alley ends in the brick wall of a tenement, and there's a fire escape that he could climb. Once on the rooftops, he could find a way to escape. For a moment, he felt wildly grateful that he wasn't tangling with one of the guys who could fly.

He skids into the alley. He can hear the measured steps of the hunter on the street — how did he find him so quickly? He embraces the blank brick wall, reaching for the rusted metal of the ladder.

Reaching, but not finding. The fire escape is jammed, the bottom rung of the ladder just beyond his grasp. And now there's nowhere left to run.

Fear turns the corner.

He wears a broad-brimmed black hat, and dark garb that seems to melt into the shadows. The eyes are piercing and the voice is cold like a winter wind. He is not fatigued by the chase; he is amused.

"Your race is run, Jake," he says, moving his hand slightly so that the glow of the street lamp reflects off the automatic he holds. "Now we will talk."

"I don't know nothin'!" Jake protests, all bravado gone. He has a gun in his pocket, but does not dare reach for it. He has seen what the Whisper does to fools.

"A statement not ordinarily open to debate," the Whisper replies with a mirthless chuckle. "But you were in

the Blue Hawk with an officer on leave from Super Battlegroup Mobius. He had been drinking heavily, and you were asking all the right questions. I want his answers."

Jake ran a bluff. "He didn't say nothin', Whisper, I swear! Just some stuff about the Mecca massacre, stuff that was in the Clarion!"

The Whisper drew closer. Jake felt like the Mystery Man's eyes were driving him back into the wall. "You are a liar, Jake. I do not like liars. Where I come from, we shoot men like you in

ways that allow them to suffer for a long time before they die. We call that justice in Terra."

Terror somehow lent Faith courage. "You can't do that, Whisper! I got rights!"

The Whisper's rasping voice grew even quieter. "Yes, you do, Jake. You have the right to tell me what I want to know, before I grow impatient. You have the right to walk out of here on your own two legs if you do, and no one need know that you talked to me. I will use your knowledge to right a wrong.



"If you wish to remain silent, Jake, you have only the right to bleed."

Jake Faith had been many things in his life: thief, henchmen, small-time hood with big plans. He had never stepped in front of a speeding bus, or put himself between a slug and a squealer. He thought for all of two seconds before singing a song in the right key.

And the Whisper laughed ...

State of the Realm

Dangerous. Unpredictable. Gloriously insane and invariably lethal.

Phrases that have been used to describe both the Nile Empire and its masked High Lord, Dr. Mobius. The Terran expatriate has carved his Tenth Empire in the sands of North Africa, mixing the magic of ancient Egypt with the bizarre weird science and pulp figures of his native cosm. The result has been a realm where Storm Knights have numerous opportunities to foil the plans of a Possibility Raider, as well as the introduction of a wild card into the already strained relations between the High Lords.

Mobius has relied on a number of elements for his success: weird science gizmos that tilt the balance of power in his favor in most conflicts; huge battlegroups armed with 1930s technology; strange Egyptian magic; and an almost pathological unwillingness to devote all his energies toward a single plan. Mobius thrives on instigating twelve schemes at once, then watching to see which one bears fruit. In this manner, although some of his plots may be frustrated, more subtle ones are allowed to proceed unnoticed.

A Realm Triumphant

In recent months, Mobius' combination of military might, complicated strategy, and utter madness have resulted in major gains for the realm in three areas. This has more than made up for minor setbacks, and even the loss of an important stela.

The Nuclear Card

In the wake of the initial invasion, Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi believed he had discovered a kindred

spirit in Pharaoh Mobius. Here would be an "Arab" leader capable of uniting the various nations of the Middle East and leading them in a jihad against Israel.

One can imagine his surprise when Mobius' legions poured into southern Libya, mowing down all resistance and marching inexorably toward Tripoli. In a desperate gambit, Qaddafi ordered a nuclear bomb be planted in the oil fields, and used the threat of its detonation to blackmail Mobius into halting the attack.

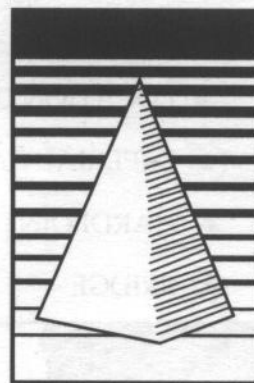
The High Lord agreed, with every intention of someday overcoming this thermonuclear obstacle and continuing his conquest. But Qaddafi underestimated his opponent's resolve, and believed he had achieved a stalemate which would last — beyond appealing to some of his former allies (like the Soviet Union) for economic and military aid, he did nothing.

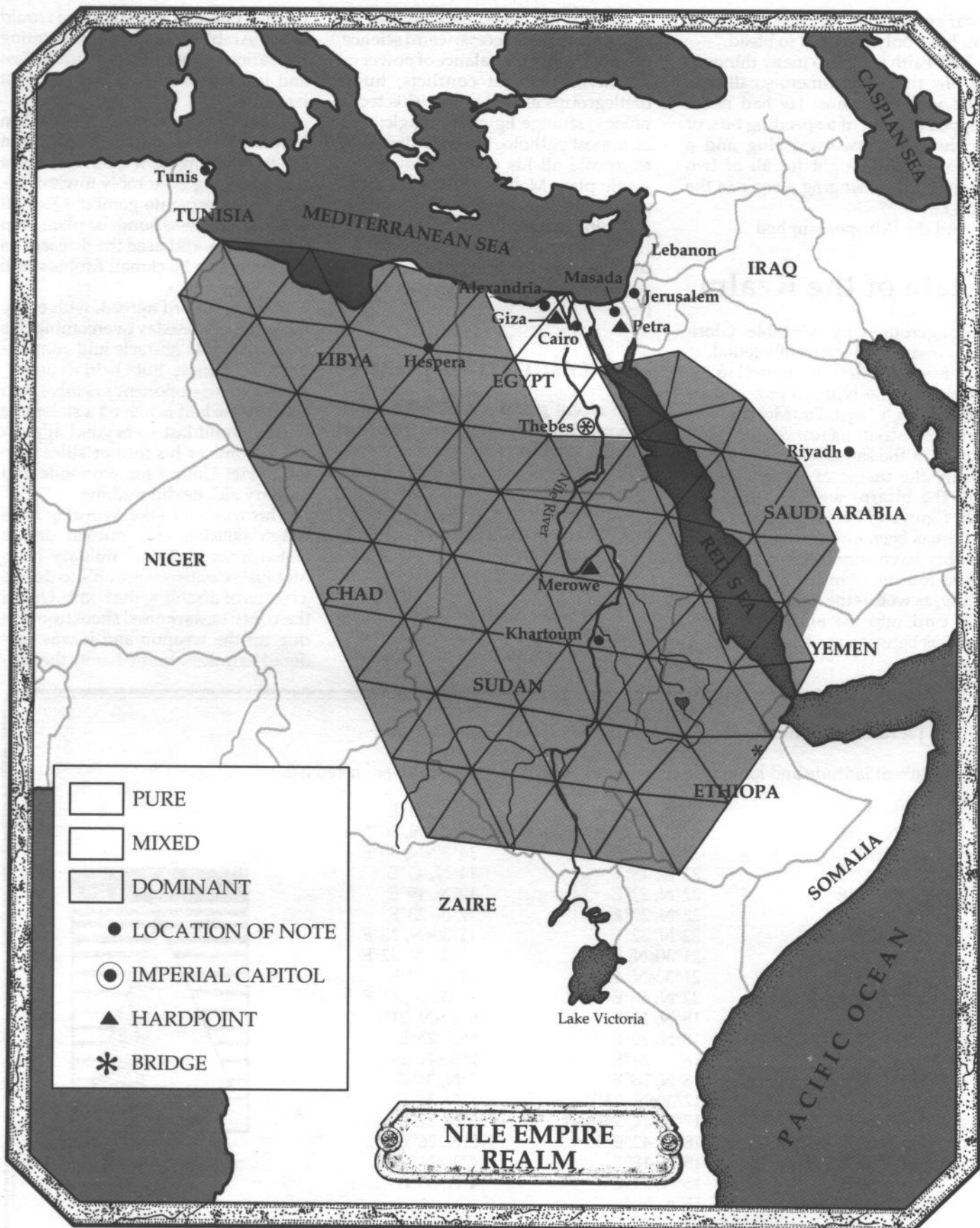
This was a mistake. Working from rough sketches of a nuclear device stolen from an Israeli military base, Mobius' scientists were able to devise a means of disabling the bomb. Under the cover of darkness, shocktroopers dug up the weapon and it was rendered harmless. Immediately thereafter

Stelae Placement

Current latitude and longitude coordinates for Nile Empire stelae are listed below:

33°N, 11°E	23°N, 38°30s	15°N, 31°E
32°N, 17°E	E 23°N, 43°E	14°30sN, 36°E
32°N, 21°E	22°N, 14°E	14°30sN, 40°E
32°N, 27°E	22°N, 18°E	14°N, 45°E
32°N, 31°E	22°N, 22°E	12°N, 19°E
28°30sN, 9°E	22°N, 27°E	12°N, 23°E
28°30sN, 14°E	22°N, 32°E	11°30sN, 28°E
28°N, 18°E	21°30sN, 37°E	11°30sN, 32°E
28°N, 24°E	21°30sN, 41°E	11°N, 37°E
28°N, 28°E	22°N, 46°E	10°30sN, 41°E
28°N, 33°E	18°N, 15°E	8°30sN, 21°E
29°N, 37°E	18°N, 20°E	8°N, 25°E
26°N, 41°E	18°N, 24°E	7°30sN, 29°E
25°N, 36°E	18°N, 28°E	7°N, 34°E
24°N, 11°E	17°30sN, 33°E	7°N, 38°E
24°N, 16°E	17°30sN, 38°E	5°N, 22°E
24°N, 21°E	18°N, 42°E	5°N, 26°E
24°N, 25°E	15°N, 18°E	4°30sN, 31°E
24°N, 30°E	15°N, 21°E	4°N, 35°E
23°30sN, 34°E	15°N, 26°E	







ter, Battlegroup Sesetek poured into northern Libya, facing only token resistance.

In a panic, Qaddafi fled into Algeria, seeking asylum (which was granted). Mobius' agents were able to plant additional stelae throughout Libya, and the realm now extends into the southern tip of Tunisia. Large numbers of transformations have taken place in Libya, and the ranks of Battlegroup Sesetek have been swelled by defections from Qaddafi's military.

Bridge to the Dead

Mobius' second major maneuver was the dropping of a second maelstrom bridge into the "Land of the Dead," near the city of Aseb in Ethiopia. Troops under the command of Colonel Hassed Al-Sidda were assigned to guard the bridge, and rapidly acquired a reputation for their brutal treatment of the native Ethiopians.

Although the new bridge provided Mobius with some obvious gains

(easier access to the diamond-rich regions of South America, for one), its true purpose was to facilitate exploration of the mysterious Land Below. The High Lord's agents constructed a weird science levitation device near one of the tunnel entrances to enable the transport of men and material into the caverns.

Mobius is a man who dislikes defeat, and the unexplained disappearance of Major Hopten-Ra and his expedition to the Land Below has plagued the High Lord since the war began. The unwillingness of the Kefertiri Idol to provide him with any information on what lurked below the jungles of Ethiopia puzzled him (see below), and increased his determination to discover the secrets of this new land.

Hassed Al-Sidda was ordered to send a detachment of 100 men into the Land Below. After an absence of three months, the lone survivor of the expedition somehow found his way back, driven mad by the sights he had seen.

Though Al-Sidda dismissed his tales of leopard men, strange monsters, and tunnels that seemed to go on forever, Mobius believed there was at least some grain of truth in what the crazed shocktrooper said. Al-Sidda was promoted to the office of regional marshall of Battlegroup Red Hand.

Mobius is intrigued by the Land Below, a place he believes must be filled with untold riches and secrets that could lead him to ultimate power. Although the members of Al-Sidda's old regiment are markedly reluctant to travel into the tunnels, they have been doing so with increasing frequency, feeling that risking death in that terrible place is preferable to the assured execution that would await them if they disobeyed the orders of the Pharaoh himself.

The Mecca Massacre

Saudi Arabian General Abdel Assad reacted with disbelief when he was handed the satellite reports, but their

message was all too clear: Battlegroup Neteru was on the move, heading toward Mecca and a confrontation the Arab nations had feared since the coming of Mobius.

Despite the fact that it lay within the stela boundaries of the Nile Empire, Mecca, the Islamic holy city, had been largely untouched by the High Lord and his minions. Within its ancient walls, life went on much as it had before the invasion, due largely to the fact that it was a Core Earth hardpoint. But as Saudi, Syrian and Iraqi troops began scoring small successes against Nile troops, those in power knew it was becoming more likely that Mobius would strike at Mecca in an effort to gain a psychological victory over his foes.

Despite the objections of High Priests Ahkemeses and Royal Builder Muab, Mobius ordered that the whole of Battlegroup Neteru be thrown into the fight. The results were not surprising to the High Lord's military men—battling in a region where their *Tech 21* weapons were facing *Tech 23* hardware, the shocktroopers were hammered by their foes, taking nightmarish casualties and forced into retreat.

It was here that the Core Earth forces made their first mistake, attempting to pursue Neteru's troops back toward the Red Sea. Once in the Nile zones (which had flipped to dominant as a result of the recent military operation), the Saudi, Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian troops found their guns ceasing to fire, their tanks stalling in the unforgiving desert. Rallying, Neteru's men drove them back into the city and prepared to lay siege.

Mobius was not satisfied with a stalemate. He dispatched Battlegroups Natatiri, Red Hand and Ramses to the site, with orders to conquer Mecca or level it. Having learned from their experience, Core Earth troops remained within range of the hardpoint as much as possible, lobbing artillery from the heart of the city into the Nile lines.

Casualty figures continued to rise among Mobius' forces, something the High Lord responded to this by ordering three regional marshalls executed for incompetence (one of whom would be replaced by Hased Al-Sidda).

Growing increasingly obsessed with crushing the holy city, Mobius ordered the construction of a huge statue of himself in a martial pose as a monument to his eventual victory over the Moslem troops.

Within Mecca, the situation began to grow more desperate. Strafing runs by Gu-88 Herusents against supply convoys had led to shortages of food and water in the city, and, despite the pounding his armies were taking, it was beginning to look as if time was on Mobius' side. This was despite efforts by both Cyberpope Malraux and 3327 (in a rare instance of cooperation between the two) to provide arms and equipment in an effort to crush Mobius and eliminate him as a player on the board.

Desperate, Syrian and Saudi troops attempted to break the siege at the Battle of Jeddah, only to see their hopes dashed when a lone MB11-Nekata managed to evade Iraqi fighters and drop a reality bomb upon the battlefield. Entire armored columns suddenly ground to a halt, becoming no more than easy targets for Battlegroup Ramses' MK-1 Aperehens and Mk-13 Kheperas.

Now convinced that victory was truly in his grasp, Mobius played his two trump cards: he ordered Super Battlegroup Mobius to begin a very conspicuous march toward the Red Sea, as well as the activation of the artificial sun for possible use against Mecca. When reports of this reached Mecca, Arab military commanders were forced for the first time to confront the possibility that their sacred city might be destroyed.

Valiant Storm Knight efforts led to delays in the embarkation of Super Battlegroup Mobius. By convincing the High Lord that massive uprisings were planned for Egypt and the Sudan in the coming weeks, they forced him to leave his troops in Thebes to deal with any trouble that arose.

But his ploy had done its work. With both supplies and morale low, Mecca's defenders fell before a concerted attack by the four Battlegroups. Nor was Mobius' effort hurt by the intimidating effect of a single burst of the artificial sun, which incinerated a

small area on the outskirts of the city.

A triumph it was for the Nile High Lord, but an extremely costly one. Battlegroup Neteru has been decimated, and the other three military units have also suffered severe casualties. The nations of Islam have put aside their personal differences and united in opposition to Mobius. OPEC has agreed to slash oil prices as a means of undercutting the Nile economy, and terrorism directed against Tenth Empire targets has increased sharply.

Most dangerous for Mobius is the growing perception among the other High Lords that his martial escapades have left him dangerously vulnerable and madder than ever before. Sources in the Imperial Palace report that he is planning horrible revenge on those nations whose troops battled his at Mecca, and a number of Battlegroup officers are reportedly looking over their shoulders for fear that they did not conquer the city fast enough to suit the High Lord.

In addition, the Mecca expedition may have diverted Mobius' attention just long enough for Malraux to cement his plans for an invasion of northern Africa.

The Jerusalem Factor

No one can enjoy success all the time, not even Dr. Mobius. His most telling defeat thus far has been the loss of a stela located adjacent to Jerusalem, which has placed the strategically important Suez Canal back in Core Earth hands.

This particular stela has always been unstable due to its proximity to Jerusalem, a major Core Earth hardpoint (due to the fact it is a sacred site for three major religions). While the High Lord's troops were occupied in Saudi Arabia, an Israeli strike team uprooted the stela, causing two triangles to collapse. Israeli troops are said to be massing along the Suez for a possible attack against the Nile Empire. It is doubtful Mobius will make any concerted effort to recapture the area in the near future, due to the decimation of his troops in the Mecca effort.



The Hand of Dr. Mobius

As stated above, the Nile High Lord is renowned for his ability to keep a number of plots running concurrently, thus ensuring that no single defeat will result in a serious setback.

Among the schemes hatched by Mobius since the invasion have been:

- Adopting the disguise of "Deathhawk," Mobius led a popular revolt against Wu-Han's troops in Cairo. His success in this endeavor earned him the trust of a number of Storm Knights and pulp heroes, who he planned to lure to the Pyramid of Giza and incinerate with his artificial sun. Only swift action by a party of Knights saved hundreds of people from certain destruction;

- The creation of an apparent "time machine," one so placed as to prove a tempting target for Storm Knights. In truth, the device was a disintegration box which caused those who entered it to be utterly destroyed. Over 15 Knights met their ends in that hellish chamber before the truth was discovered;

- The use of a specially-designed billboard to hypnotize foreign diplomats into revealing classified information;

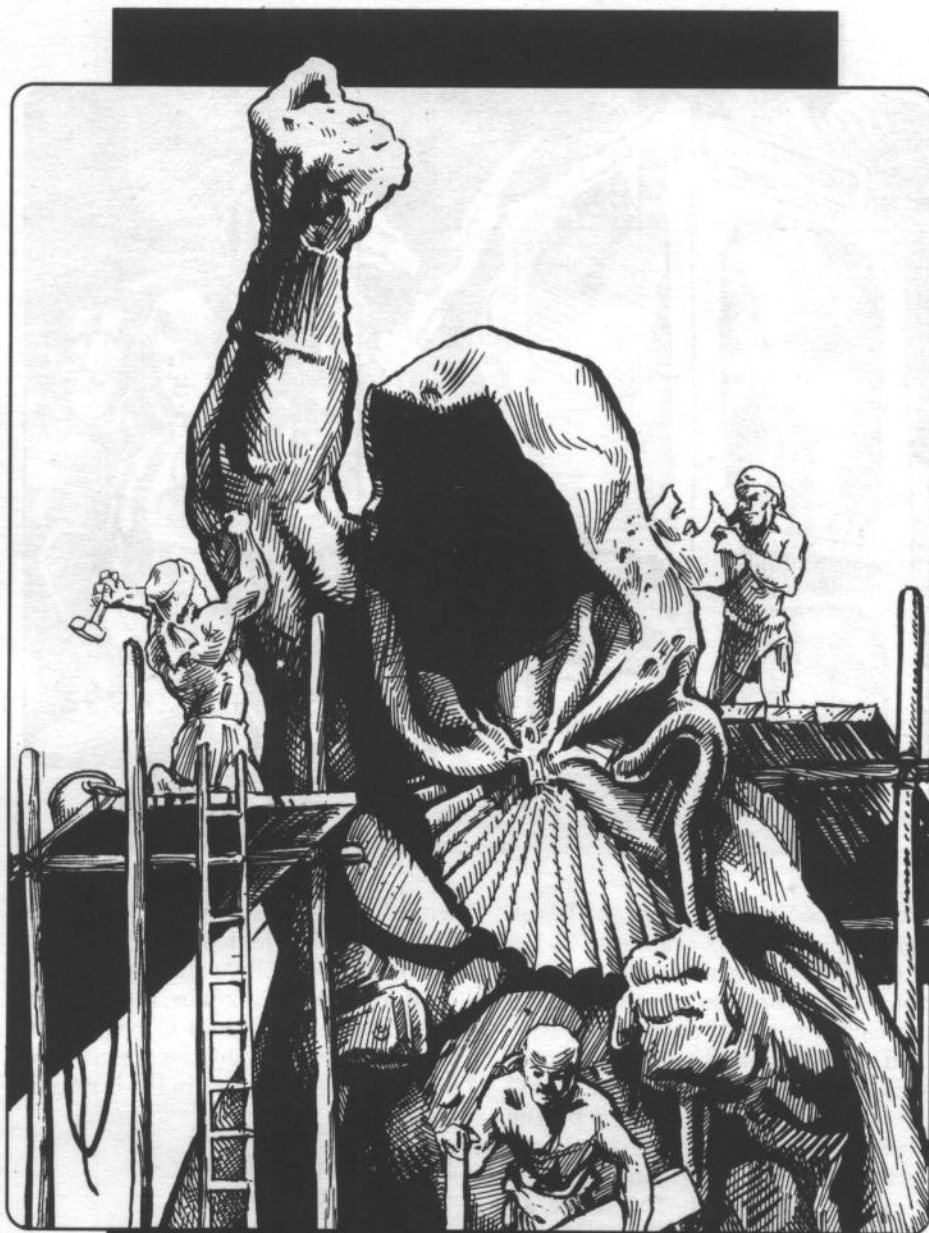
- The kidnapping of the Soviet ambassador to Japan, in an effort to learn the secrets of the Russian psychic program, codenamed "Project Omen";

- Increasing research into the possibility of constructing reality bombs which would create zones of non-Nile realities;

- The sponsorship of a number of new villain groups, including the Tarot Gang, pulp villains disguised as figures from the Egyptian Tarot deck; the Crescent Blade, a revival of the ancient sect of Assassins; the Ra Warriors, evil counterparts of the Terran Rocket Rangers; and the Pharaoh Force, pulp-powered secret police;

- The dispatching of "weird science" submarines to battle Cyberpapal ships in the Mediterranean.

Among Mobius' future plans are efforts to capture African uranium mines and the construction of ura-



nium-eternium reality bombs which would have much greater power and a larger radius of effect; tentative plans to block Malraux's designs on Africa by conquering Greece and Cyprus, thus threatening Italy; and, in his most audacious scheme, gifting his fellow High Lords with statues of himself — statues that conceal weird science gizmos with the *fear* power. These will be used to drive the other High Lords and their advisers into states of irrational paranoia and lead to crippling internal purges.

The Kefertiri Idol

Dr. Mobius' Darkness Device has shown a willingness to do the unorthodox in its zeal to carry out the edicts of the Nameless One. Despite the rapid success of Mobius (having conquered nine cosms in a mere 30 years), the Idol was taking no chances that its High Lord would prove disappointing in the future. It began casting about for a possible replacement, unwittingly aided by Mobius himself.



When the Nile High Lord and Baruk Kaah decided a link was needed between their two realms, the Kefertiri Idol and Rec Pakken were instructed to create a tunnel between the two. Their efforts resulted in an unexpected event — the creation of a vast tunnel network in the Earth created by the possibility energy of the Darkness Devices and the imaginations of the people of this world. The caves allowed access to a slew of fringe realities, and the Darkness Devices watched, fascinated, as an entirely new land revealed itself to them.

The Kefertiri Idol and Rec Pakken have chosen to keep the existence of the Land Below to themselves, which is why the Idol has been of so little help to Mobius in his efforts to explore it. Both Devices have dropped dimthreads into the area, and are attempting to develop a native of one of these new worlds into a candidate for the position of High Lord and possibly that of Torg as well.

How long the Idol will be able to hide this duplicity from Mobius is unknown, nor is it clear how Mobius

would react to this news. It is clear that, while the Device is pleased with the conquest of Libya and the creation of more dominant zones, it considers the conquest of Mecca to have been wasted effort, barring the appearance of any related benefits in the immediate future.

The Kefertiri Idol

DEXTERITY 0
STRENGTH 0
TOUGHNESS 225
PERCEPTION 30

Alteration magic 35, divination magic 40, Egyptian religion 39, evidence analysis 45, find 33, hieroglyphics 41, mathematics 50, scholar (master criminal) 45, trick 50

MIND 35

Apportation magic 44, conjuration magic 46, engineering 50, hypnotism 55, test 50, weird science 45, willpower 55

CHARISMA 45

Charm 49, persuasion 50, taunt 55

SPIRIT 40

Faith 51, focus 51, intimidation 60, reality 55

Possibilities: Untold thousands
Powers: All powers listed on page 88 of the *Torg Rulebook*.

Pulp Powers

Here are a few new Nile pulp powers which can be used, with one exception, for characters of both Good and Evil inclinations. They differ in format slightly from those presented in *The Nile Empire Sourcebook*. We have included a "System Limit" stat, which is the power's system limit value when incorporated into a gizmo.

Absolute Vision

Adventure Cost: 3
Value: Perception +6
Range: self
Tech Rating: 25
System Limit: 12

Absolute vision endows the character with two sensory enhancements: exponentially increased eyesight and 360-degree vision. When attempting to see an object normally within a character's field of vision, the power value is used rather than the character's Perception. If using the power to see a full 360 degrees in a circular arc, the character must use the power as one of his actions, suffering the One-On-Many multi-action penalty. This action does not usually require a die roll, and the player may choose to place the 360 vision action last among his choices.

Example: While investigating a dark alleyway in Luxor, "Hawkeye" McManus hears a gruff voice behind him, saying, "Move only the parts you want shot, buddy." He calls on his absolute vision to get an image of who is behind him. He also wishes to throw a knife over his shoulder toward the man menacing him. Since that is a multi-action, Hawkeye's player declares that the throw is his primary action, making it DN+2 to accomplish successfully. The use of absolute vision, his secondary action, is at DN+4, but no roll is required (just seeing the man is a simple action).

Hawkeye's player rolls well, spoiling the thug's aim by pinning his coat

sleeve to a crate. Hawkeye then says, "I always look a man in the eyes before I kill him. If you don't tell me who you are working for, I'll turn around and look in into yours. One ... two ..." The thug caves in before Hawkeye reaches three.

Brainbuster

Adventure Cost: 3

Value: *Mind* +5

Range: 15 meters

Tech Rating: 28

System Limit: 10

Brainbuster inflicts mental damage upon a target. To use, the character must make eye contact with the target for a full round (a *Dexterity* or *maneuver* against the target's *maneuver*). If the contact remains unbroken, the character generates a power total against the target's *willpower* or *Mind*. Targets can actively resist using *willpower* of *Mind*. The result points are read as damage on the Combat Results Table (treat mental damage the same as physical damage, except mental wounds can only be healed by time, *psychology*, or certain special powers).

Brainbuster cuts both ways, however; if the target's *Mind* proves too powerful and the attacker achieves negative result points, the attacker takes damage rather than the target.

Example: Dr. Dynamo confronts Dr. Mobius. Staring intently into the hood, Dynamo is surprised to find he can make eye contact with the High Lord. He has a power value of 17, and rolls a 9 to generate a total of 16. Mobius has a *Mind* of 23; $16 - 23 = -7$, so Dynamo takes seven result points of damage. This equals a knockdown, K and two shock points. The hero drops like a stone as Mobius cackles.

Fire Blast/Fire Wall

Adventure Cost: 5

Value: *Strength* +10

Range: 3-10/25/40

Tech Rating: 30

System Limit: 10

This power allows the user to shoot a jet of flame from his hands or project a wall of fire in a circle, with a two and a half meter radius centered upon the user.

The damage value of both the *fire blast* and the *fire wall* is equal to the power value. The *fire wall* can be maintained only as long as the user concentrates — if he performs anything other a simple action while projecting the wall, it will cease to exist.

The *fire wall* can be maintained for a maximum number of rounds equal to the user's *Toughness*, after which it takes six rounds for the power to recharge.

Successful use of the *fire blast* power (when used as a weapon) causes the user to suffer two shock points of damage.

Ice Blast/Ice Wall

Adventure Cost: 5

Value: *Strength* +10

Range: 3-10/25/40

Tech Rating: 30

System Limit: 10

Allowing the user to draw upon the moisture in the air around him and transform it into a devastating *ice blast*, this power is useful everywhere but in the driest desert. This can be used either as a weapon against a foe or to create a protective wall.

Use of the *ice blast* against a foe requires a successful *Dexterity* roll against the *dodge* or *Dexterity* of the target, and can be used against more than one target using the relevant multi-action chart. If used as a weapon, the *blast* has a damage value equal to the power value.

An *ice wall* formed by the user can not be more than three times his height. Its *Toughness* is equal to the power value. The duration of the *wall's* existence is dependent upon the concentration of the user. Should he perform anything other a simple action, the ice in the wall will revert to moisture and evaporate within one round (his pulp power was keeping it stable).

The *ice wall* can be maintained for a maximum number of rounds equal to the user's *Toughness*. After such use, it takes six rounds for the power to recharge.

Successful use of the *ice blast* (when employed as a weapon) causes the user to suffer two shock points of damage.

Magnetism

Adventure Cost: 2

Value: *Strength* +10

Range: 30 meters

Tech Rating: 28

System Limit: 13

Magnetism grants power over those substances affected by magnetic forces, particularly ferric metals. The power gives its bearer the ability to temporarily "polarize" himself and act as a living magnet. When "polarized," the character either attracts or repels most ferric material within the power range.

To polarize, the character must generate a bonus number. Generating a positive bonus means the power has been successfully activated, and the user is "polarized" as he wishes. A zero bonus (roll of 11 or 12) means the polarizing forces cancel out, and the character neither attracts nor repels metals, so the power fails. If the character generates a negative bonus, the bonus is treated as a positive number and is added to the power value, but the character is "polarized" contrary to his wishes — a potentially disastrous event.

The magnetism wielder may attract or repel a total weight of matter equal to their *magnetism* total. Matter pushed or pulled moves at a speed value equal to one-half the *magnetism* total. The weight value of the caster does not come into play, and he will not find himself being pulled toward a heavier object.

Polarization lasts for five rounds. If an already polarized character wishes to reverse the polarization, a new total must be generated. If the character generates a positive bonus number, the polarization is indeed reversed and adjusted to the new power total. Turning off the power before the polarization naturally expires also requires a new total; in this case, positive and zero bonuses cancel the power.

Sonic Scream

Adventure Cost: 6

Value: *Strength* +5

Range: 10 meters

Tech Rating: 27

System Limit: 9

This power allows the user to emit

a sound in the ultrasonic range, which can cause tremendous pain to unprotected targets within range. The power is hurled using the *Charisma* skill, and the damage value of the scream is equal to the power value.

Sonic scream can be used to attack more than one target at a time by taking into account the relevant multi-action penalties.

The user is *fatigued* (two shock points) each time he generates a positive bonus number when attempting to invoke the power. As with the *electro-ray* power, he has the option of not applying the positive bonus number in exchange for avoiding the fatigue penalty.

Withering Touch

Adventure Cost: 10
Value: *Toughness* +10
Range: touch
Tech Rating: 30
System Limit: 16

This power allows its wielder to literally kill with a touch. A person possessing this power touches his victim her bare flesh and generates a power total versus the victim's *Toughness*. If the power total is greater, then the result points are read as damage on the Combat Results Table. In addition, for every *wound* the target suffers, she apparently ages 10 years and loses one point off her *Dexterity*, *Strength* and *Toughness* attributes and all related skills. Immortal characters are immune to this power.

Fortunately, the effects of withering touch are not permanent. Providing the character survives the initial attack, 12 hours rest per *wound* received will cause the "aging" and attribute loss to reverse itself. *Medicine* and *first aid* have no effect on reducing the aging, but certain miracles, spells, and powers may.

Only characters of Evil Inclination may use this power.

New Skill

This has been included here instead of in the new rules section because this new skill *pulp power* (*power*) is a skill only usable by characters with pulp powers that require a roll.

Pulp power (*power*) reflects the experience a character has with his power. For example, if the Fire Master, a pulp villain with the *fire blast* power uses his power a lot, he should get better with it. He can develop adds in *pulp power* (*fire blast*).

The skill *pulp power* (*power*) is dependent on which skill is being used by the power. Obviously, *super-attributes* and *super-skills* do not use this new skill, nor do other powers that do not require their own skill roll to use (a *super-skill* doesn't require a skill roll to access; it's always there).

Pulp power (*fire blast*) would be a *Dexterity*-based skill, because the character needs to generate a *Dexterity* total to hit. *Mind control* is a *Mind*-based skill.



Nile/Land Below Pulp Powers Table

Power	Adv. Cost	Value	Range	Tech Level	System Limit
Absolute Vision*	3	PER+6	self	25	12
Adrenaline	3	TOU+2	self	26	9
Animal Companion	3	CHA+5	unl.	26	5
Animal Friend	3	CHA+2	voice	26	7
Brainbuster*	3	MIN+5	15m	28	10
Chameleon	5	CHA+5	self	27	9
Claws	2/3	STR+3	self	25	10
Darkness	3	STR+5	5m	27	12
Dazzle	3	STR+2	25m	20	12
Dispersal	5	TOU+10	self	31	5
Electro-ray	4	STR+10	10/25/60	27	7
Far Vision	2	MIN+10	value	25	10
Fear	4	CHA+2	15m	27	7
Fire Blast*	5	STR+10	10/25/40	30	10
Flight	3	DEX	self	24	12
Fog Screen	3	TOU+5	10m	21	13
Force Field	5	TOU+10	5	30	10
Grow	5	STR+7	self	30	5
Ice Blast*	5	STR+10	10/25/40	30	10
Illusion	6	MIN+2	value	28	9
Invisibility	4	MIN+10	self	31	13
Jump	2	DEX+3	self	23	6
Magnetism*	2	STR+10	30m	28	13
Mega-Hearing	3	PER+5	self	25	10
Mega-Scent	3	PER+5	self	27	6
Mega-Sight	3	PER+5	self	25	10
Mind Control	5	MIN+5	5m	28	8
Mind Reading	5	MIN+5	25m	28	7
Regeneration	5	TOU	self	27	6
Running	3	DEX	self	22	10
Sense Magic	1	PER+7	value	28	9
Shrinking	12	DEX+5	self	31	5
Sonic Scream*	6	STR+5	10m	27	9
Super Attribute	3	none	self	27	PRO
Super Skill	3	none	self	26	PRO
Swimming	3	DEX	self	20	9
Teleportation	5	TOU	self	30	8
Wall Walking	3	DEX	self	27	6
Water Breathing	2	none	self	26	6
Withering Touch*†	10	TOU+10	touch	30	16
X-Ray Eyes	3	STR+5	vision	25	20

* Denotes new pulp power.

†This power can only be used by those of Evil Inclination.

"PRO" indicates that no gizmo can be built which uses this power.

The gamemaster has the final say as to whether the *pulp power (power)* skill can be used by a character or not. If so, it is a skill that costs ten possibilities to learn the first time (a character cannot be "taught" the use of this skill), but the cost is then normal afterwards.

Pulp power (power) is used unskilled by Nile heroes and villains possessing pulp powers.

The Villains of Terra

When the Mystery Men discovered that their old foe, Dr. Mobius, had escaped to another cosm to pursue his mad dreams of conquest, the heroes wasted no time in pursuing him. Now, they battle the Nile Empire High Lord throughout the Middle East and Africa, alongside Storm Knights from Core Earth and other realms.

But what of the world they left behind? Abandoned by its most powerful protectors, Terra has become a playground for costumed villains and their violent gangs, and the heroes who remain on that beleaguered planet are hard-pressed to contain their evil.

Thus, the Mystery Men have asked that any Storm Knights who have the courage should travel to Terra, there to challenge some of the most insidious foemen ever to darken a rogue's gallery. Among the villains currently stalking Terra are:

Conundrum

As a child, the man who would one day become Conundrum was consistently blamed for acts he had not committed, and he was brutally punished by his parents. This had the combined effect of embittering him toward all authority, and leaving him with a pathological fear of apprehension and punishment.

Conundrum's first criminal act was the murder of his parents, accomplished by tampering with the brakes of their car in such a way that it resembled normal wear and tear. In one evening, he set fires at his home, the school he had attended, and the hospital in which he was born, effectively destroying all records of his existence.

Then for all practical purposes a man with no identity, he became Conundrum, a master criminal whose signature, strangely, became crimes without any clues left behind.

Even with the relatively primitive police science of Terra, Conundrum's career might have ended quickly had he not encountered the Silent Partner, a mysterious man of apparently unlimited means who outfits and advises pulp villains in exchange for a small percentage of their take. He provided Conundrum with a black bodysuit woven from a special "weird science" material that leaves no fibres behind at a crime scene. In addition, the Silent Partner gave Conundrum the formula for a chemical solution that bestows the *dispersal* power upon him. Finally, he gave him instructions on how to create *dispersal* grenades using the formula.

Combined with his own natural abilities, the potion and costume allowed Conundrum to slip in and out of crime scenes unnoticed. His fear of capture leads him to carefully eliminate all possible clues after committing a crime, making him extremely difficult to track down. Though the Mystery Men have frustrated a number of his schemes, they have never caught him, nor even learned who he is behind his ebony mask.

Conundrum True Identity:

Unknown

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 16, lock picking 14, maneuver 15, missile weapons 16, stealth 17, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 10

Evidence analysis 15, find 14, scholar (master criminal) 11, trick 13

MIND 9

Science (chemistry) 11, test 12 **CHARISMA 11**

Charm 13, persuasion 15, taunt 12 **SPIRIT 11**

Intimidation 13, reality 17

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: 21

Powers: *dispersal*, adventure cost 5, value TOU+10, DEX-4 penalty when in use (see page 70 of *The Nile Empire* sourcebook). Conundrum's *dispersal*

power has a *stymie* flaw — if he is unmasked, he is *stymied* anytime he uses his power until he gets his mask back on or the scene ends. The flaw is worth three Possibilities when invoked.

Equipment: black bodysuit and mask; *dispersal* grenades, blast radius 0-5/10/15. These have the *dispersal* power at a value of the target's TOU+10. Duration of the attack is a number of rounds equal to the target's raw *Toughness*. The grenades are effective against both organic and inorganic matter, and Conundrum normally carries four on a job. Conundrum must be solid to throw a grenade.

Description: Mystery Men files list Conundrum as probably being in his late 20s, cunning and intelligent. He tends toward theft rather than murder, but has been known to kill without compunction when in danger of being captured.

Mind-Master

Dr. Matthew Kent was a highly successful police psychologist when he decided there was more profit to be had on the other side of the law and assumed the mantle of Mind-Master. No one realized that his triumphs with hardened criminal patients stemmed from a head injury he had suffered as a child which left him the power to cast *illusions* into the minds of others. Kent was able to transmit comforting images to patients when they behaved correctly, and frightening ones when they did not.

For a while, Kent experimented with manipulating his patients into committing crimes for him, but found second-hand evil lacked the thrill he desired. Eschewing violence, he embarked on a criminal career in which he pitted the power of his mind and *illusions* against the minions of the law.

Of all the Mystery Men, only Dr. Alexis Frest has been able to consistently resist the power of Mind-Master's *illusions*. The villain has made numerous attempts to kill Frest, but failed each time. Now that the scientist has left Terra, Mind-Master is bent on destroying all of Frest's inventions that remain behind.

Mind-Master True Identity:

Dr. Matthew Kent

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 12, fire combat 12, maneuver 11, stealth 11, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 13

Evidence analysis 15, find 14, trick 17

MIND 17 (14)

Science (psychology) 19, test 18, willpower 19

CHARISMA 12

Charm 14, persuasion 14, taunt 13

SPIRIT 11

Intimidation 13, reality 14

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: 25

Powers: Mind-Master has the *illusion* power, adventure cost 6, value MIN+2, (see page 71 of *The Nile Empire* sourcebook). He also has one *super-attribute*, applied to *Mind*, for an adventure cost of 3. Mind-Master has a *stymie* flaw — if one of his targets shakes off an *illusion* in the round it is cast, Mind-Master is *stymied* until the scene ends, or he successfully uses an *illusion* on that target.

Equipment: .38 revolver, damage value 14, ammo 6, range 3-10/25/50

Description: Mind-Master hides behind a facade of respectability, and uses his position in the police department to gain hot tips about payroll shipments, valuable museum exhibits and the like. He is not above using his *illusions* to attempt to frighten foes to death.

The Raptor

Klaus Schmidt was an aerial ace during the last of Terra's World Wars. Decorated by his government and lauded by his people as a hero, Schmidt thoroughly enjoyed his newfound fame.

Unfortunately, as people learned more about Schmidt, they grew less enamored of him. He was a gambler, a wastrel, and, it soon turned out, a murderer: during a crucial bombing mission, Schmidt had shot down one of his own squadron so that he could be the first to hit the target (and reap the attendant glory).

Reviled by the press and cast aside

by the public, an angry Schmidt decided to use his talents to make war on society and reclaim the notoriety he so cherished. Schmidt fashioned a costume for himself, consisting of his old aviator's uniform with a mask attached to the helmet, then assembled a gang of crooked barnstormers. Together they broke into a military base and made off with six Gu88-Herusents ("terror hawks.")

The citizens of Terra's large cities soon came to fear the frightening scream of the Gu88s. As "The Raptor," Schmidt demanded ransom payments from various Terran metropolises and, when the municipal governments failed to pay, he and his Flock made strafing runs down midtown streets, bombed train stations and radio towers, and reduced defiant citizens to cowering sheep.

The Raptor's reign of terror was temporarily halted when "Diamond" Jack Murphy took to the air in a plane of his own devising and shot down half of the Raptor's flock. Schmidt returned to his secret base and, over the coming months, recruited and trained a new group of pilots. With the aid of the Silent Partner, Schmidt rebuilt his private air force and has recently renewed his attacks on the citizens of Terra.

The Raptor True Identity: Klaus Schmidt

DEXTERITY 11

Acrobatics 12, dodge 13, fire combat 14, heavy weapons 15, melee weapons 13, missile weapons 15, prestidigitation 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 16 (13)

Air vehicles 19, find 17, scholar (air combat techniques) 18, tracking 17, trick 18

MIND 10

Test 11

CHARISMA 10

Charm 12, persuasion 12

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 10, reality 14

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: 16

Powers: *super-attribute* applied to *Perception*, adventure cost 3

Equipment: 9mm Luger, damage

value 15, ammo 8, range 3-10/25/40; dagger, damage value STR+3/17; Gu88-Herusement, speed value 400/250/15, TOU 18, pass. 2 — armament, four .55 Onslaught machineguns, damage value 26, ammo 8, range 3-250/1k/2k; .30 Khaifu machinegun, damage value 25, ammo 11, range 3-250/1k/2k; bombs (4), damage value 25, burst radius 0-3/8/15

Description: The Raptor is an arrogant, egotistical man who desires attention, positive or negative, above all else. The sky is his element, and he specializes in daring aerial maneuvers designed to catch an opponent off-guard.

Typical Flock Pilot (11 total)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, fire combat 9, heavy weapons 12, melee weapons 9, missile weapons 9, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 10

Air vehicles 13, trick 11

MIND 8

Test 9

CHARISMA 7

Charm 8, persuasion 8

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 9

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: some (40)

Equipment: KO8 pistol, damage value 15, ammo 8, range 3-10/25/60; dagger, damage value STR+3/17; Gu88-Herusement (see above).

Heroes of Terra

The Mystery Men of the Nile Empire are an organization of heroes from Terra. The organization was conceived, organized and led by Doctor Alexis Frest. Mobius had held Frest's family, threatening to kill them if Frest did not cooperate with the Pharaoh's twisted schemes. Working under the threat of this terrorism, Frest designed or built literally dozens of gizmo prototypes for Mobius.

Frest's family was rescued by one of Terra's famous costumed heroes, the sensational Guardian. Upon hearing of the Guardian's feat, Frest himself escaped Mobius' laboratories.

From that moment on, Frest dedicated his life, and his considerable talents, to fighting Mobius. Using the Guardian as a spokesman, Frest secretly organized a meeting of Terra's most renowned heroes. He told them of Mobius' secret invasions of other cosms, and of his planned invasion of Earth. Frest asked them to join him to fight Mobius' evil, wherever that evil might be. He asked them to take a solemn pledge:

"We, the Mystery Men of Terra, do pledge ourselves to each other and our quest. We shall fight to end Mobius' reign of terror, even at the cost of our own lives!"

Dr. Frest built an extremely complicated gizmo which gated the heroes to the cosm of Core Earth, a gate which could be used only once before the gizmo would be destroyed by the flow of intercosm energies. The Mystery Men volunteered to leave their own world to save another.

Organization

The Mystery Men are strictly an underground organization. There are very few ords who know any of the membership or whereabouts of the Mystery Men. Only sworn members are given the secret hand signal which identifies them as a Mystery Man. (The signal is two fists flat against each other, knuckle to knuckle.)

The public is aware of the existence of the Mystery Men, as well as some of their more notable accomplishments. Mobius' propaganda machine has done its best to belittle these daring deeds, but they have only fueled the fire. Empire officials have branded the Mystery Men "outlaws" and "terrorists," and they have posted rewards for information leading to the apprehension of these brave beings.

The symbol of the Mystery Men is a stylized rendition of the same two-fist motif represented by their hand signal. Most members incorporate the symbol into some part of their attire.

The original founders of the Mystery Men are their leaders on earth. Dr. Frest coordinates the actions of the organization as best he can, while the Guardian sees to it that they are carried out.



Dr. Alexis Frest

DEXTERITY 6

Dodge 7, lock picking 8

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 14 (13)

First aid 17, land vehicles 15, language 18, scholar (cosm theory) 19, scholar (engineering) 19, trick 16

MIND 15 (13)

Medicine 18, science 21, survival 16, test 19, weird science 22, will-power 16

CHARISMA 10

Charm 11, Persuasion 15

SPIRIT 9

Reality 11

Inclination: Good

Possibilities: 11

Equipment: slide rule, beaker of chemicals (fog screen value of 12), hyperlenses (x-ray eyes value of 14, mega-sight value of 16, ultra-sight value of 12), boom belt (teleportation value of 10).

Skill Notes: Dr. Frest has *super attribute* added to his *Perception* and

Mind, for an adventure cost of three. He has a *power setback* and a *stymie flaw*. Whenever a villain mocks or challenges Frest's scientific acumen, and makes a successful *test*, *trick*, or *taunt* against Frest, Frest loses his confidence, and his *super attribute* for the duration of the scene. The *stymie* applies to all of his mental skills for the duration of the scene. The flaws are worth nine Possibilities each scene they are invoked.

Dr. Frest rarely ventures into the field anymore, although he is constantly on the move to avoid the zealous attention of the Nile Empire's Overgovernors, particularly Janya Paterski. He has a keepsake, a pair of safety goggles with a 9mm Walther P38 slug embedded in its left lens, as a reminder of just how close Paterski has come to accomplishing her mission.

Dr. Frest has two projects to which he devotes time when a gizmo is not urgently needed. The first is the design of a Mountain Fortress, one which could act as a secure base for the Mys-

tery Men. He is extremely interested in contacting any character's with Egyptian engineering who might be sympathetic to his cause.

The second project is AE-7, a self-aware weird-science robot—at least that is what Dr. Frest hopes it will be. AE's one through six were less than successful, although AE-2 still putters around the lab trying to be helpful, but it acquires the correct tool, component, material or notebook less than half of the time.

The Guardian

DEXTERITY 15 (12)

Acrobatics 19, dodge 17, long jumping 16, maneuver 22, melee 19, running 18, stealth 16, swimming 16, unarmed combat 27.

STRENGTH 15 (14)

Climbing 18, lifting 17

TOUGHNESS 13 (11)

PERCEPTION 12

Disguise 15, find 14, first aid 13, land vehicles 15, language 13, trick 13

MIND 9

Test 11, willpower 12

CHARISMA 9

Charm 11, persuasion 11

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 11, reality 11

Inclination: Good**Possibilities:** 44

Equipment: diamond-tipped cane; damage value STR+5 (22 max), has five charges of electric shocks, inflicts stun damage value 18 on target upon contact (this damage is in addition to the damage done by the blow), shoots 50 feet of coiled rope with spring-released grappling hook); fabri-steel coat adds +6 to *Toughness*; steel-heeled shoes, damage value STR+3; ultra-sight mask (*ultra-sight* value 14).

Skill Notes: The Guardian has two **super attribute** powers for an adventure cost of six. The Guardian is under a special curse inflicted by a High Priest of Anubis. Whenever a character with faith in the Egyptian religion generates a focus total equal or greater than the Guardian's *Spirit*, he loses his super attributes for the rest of the scene. This power flaw is worth 12 Possibilities each time it is invoked.

The Guardian wears a long dark blue coat and a dark blue mask with a gold letter "G" embroidered on it. He carries a long black cane with a striking diamond tip. The Guardian is in superb physical condition, and has unparalleled hand-to-hand fighting skills.

The Guardian is a natural leader of this intrepid group, because he battled Mobius for years on Terra and is intimately familiar with the evil genius' tactics; no Mystery Man has fought evil for more years than the Guardian. The Guardian's presence and experience demand respect. The other Mystery Men give him that respect.

Leader of the Mystery Men is not a position the Guardian covets. The Guardian is not even the hero Dr. Frest had originally chosen to lead the group. When the Guardian and Dr. Frest first met to discuss the group, they each agreed that Dr. Mystico would be the best choice to lead the group. But Mystico vanished, and rumors from sources close to Mobius' advisers claim that Dr. Mystico has been killed. Frest urged the Guardian to become the

leader as the need for the Mystery Men was apparent. The Guardian agreed, but often wonders whether or not he is the best hero for the job.

The Guardian holds a personal grudge against Pharaoh Mobius. Mobius' sources could not locate the Guardian's family, or even ascertain whether the Guardian still had a family. But the evil mastermind did discover that the Guardian had roots in a village called Allendale, and that the hero still had an interest in the village. So Mobius had every villager killed on the off-chance that he would kill someone important to the Guardian. The hundreds of goons and villains who performed the task were given specific instructions to cause as little damage to the properties as possible, to leave the town standing. The last act was to replace the signs one read upon entering the town with signs which said:

*Allendale**Population: 0**Dr. Mobius, mayor*

After that ghastly night, Allendale became a ghost town as no one dares resettle there.

Mary Ann McKay

Mary Ann McKay is a spunky young reporter who at one time worked for Terra's *New York Sentinel*. She won the Terran Pulitzer Prize for a series of exposes on Dr. Mobius, but unfortunately was unable to print her last story, describing Mobius' discovery of the cosmverse.

Mobius captured the intrepid reporter and brainwashed her into changing the thrust of her newspaper column. Mary Ann began to write scathing critiques of what she called the "psychotic vigilantism" of Terra's costumed heroes.

The Guardian and Dr. Frest worked together to free Miss McKay's mind. Everything came back to her suddenly, and she tried to expose Mobius' cosmverse schemes, but it was too late. Mobius had left Terra for good.

The Guardian invited Mary Ann to join the Mystery Men, knowing that her special skills might be of great use to them on Earth.

Since the invasion, Mary Ann has joined the realm-wide daily, *Nile*

Newsday, based in Khartoum. Using a special code developed by Dr. Frest, Mary Ann sends hidden messages to the Mystery Men in the articles she writes every day. The Guardian uses her column as his primary communications source.

Mary Ann is also a very knowledgeable source concerning Mobius and his operation. Through her investigative research she has uncovered more about the evil Pharaoh than any other person outside Mobius' inner circle.

Mary Ann McKay**DEXTERITY 9**

Dodge 10, fire combat 11, lock picking 13, maneuver 12, stealth 11, swimming 10, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 7

Climbing 9, lifting 9

TOUGHNESS 7**PERCEPTION 13**

air vehicles 16, disguise 15, evidence analysis 20, find 16, first aid 15, land vehicles 17, language 14, scholar (Dr. Mobius) 20, trick 16, water vehicles 15

MIND 10

Artist (writer) 15, artist (photographer) 13, survival 12, test 12, willpower 12,

CHARISMA 11

Charm 15, Persuasion 13

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Christian) 14, intimidation 13, reality 11

Inclination: Good**Possibilities:** 26

Equipment: portable reel-to-reel tape recorder, note pad, 22. revolver (carried in purse) with special weird science ammunition designed by Frest; damage value 18, hairpin (gives +1 bonus to *lock picking*).

"Diamond" Jack Murphy

"Diamond Jack" is a world-famous crime-fighter, adventurer, big game hunter, architect and escape artist. His reputation as a millionaire playboy is equally as impressive, and his society connections have always allowed him to rub elbows with the elite.

But the side of Diamond Jack that very few know is that dedicated to serving the common good. Jack did not squander his hard-earned millions, rather he used the money to surround

himself with brilliant men and women who could all help him to "give something back" to society.

This elite group of intrepid adventurers is known as *Facets of Justice*. They are a diverse group, representing a wide range of talents and abilities, many of them Terra's finest at what they do. They work out of the team H.Q., a high-tech yacht known as "the Island."

Not long ago, Jack got involved in a treasure hunt, leading him to an ancient wonder which was buried beneath the Great Pyramid of Giza in Terra's Egypt. There he stumbled upon ancient magics which opened the way to Khem. Jack and his young assistant, Kwok, were captured after a week-long pursuit and a series of desperate encounters with the forces of Doctor Mobius. There they were thrown into the "Pit of Dread," an ancient well, filled with ravenous crocodiles blessed by Sebek.

But Mobius had underestimated his foe, forgetting that Diamond Jack was perhaps Terra's greatest escape artist. If not for Sebek's blessing, it would have been a relatively easy trick for Jack to escape with his assistant. As it was, they just managed to escape. Jack's right hand is indented with the scars given him by a crocodile's bite.

When they escaped, however, Jack and Kwok were stunned to find out that they were *no longer on Terra*! This mysterious isle of Khem was actually in a different reality, a different cosm.

Separated from the tremendous resources and backup talent of *Facets of Justice*, Jack and his youthful sidekick struck out from Khem in search of their own home cosm. Instead, they found themselves in an embattled reality known as Core Earth.

Before long, Jack and Kwok made contact with the Mystery Men. The *Facets of Justice* came to Earth with the rest of the Mystery Men, and now mentor and team are reunited.

"Diamond" Jack Murphy

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 15, dodge 17, fire combat 18, long jumping 14, maneuver 13, melee 15, running 15, stealth 18, unarmed combat 17.

STRENGTH 10

Climbing 12

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 13 (12)

Air vehicles 14, find 15, first aid 14, land vehicles 14, language 16, scholar (architecture) 15, trick 15

MIND 10

Artist (painter) 13, science 12, survival 13, test 15, willpower 13

CHARISMA 12 (10)

Charm 18, persuasion 15

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 14, reality 12

Inclination: Good

Possibilities: 19

Equipment: pearl-handled colt revolver; damage value 15, lock picking set (+3 to lock picking skill).

Skill Notes: "Diamond" Jack Murphy has *super attribute* with an adventure cost of three.

The Wraith

To most, the Wraith is known as a mysterious being who, for some unknown reason, is dedicated to protecting the human race from the cryptic evils of the occult. Hundreds of thousands thrill to his exploits as chronicled by C. Michael Stone, probably the best known pulp author in the Nile Empire.

In truth, the Wraith is actually Dr. Mystico, a hero who disappeared about two years ago. Dr. Mystico fought a glorious, doomed battle against Ahkemeses, Rama-Tet, Muab and dozens of minions. The trio succeeded in banishing Dr. Mystico to the netherworld. When Mystico was banished to that limbo, a creature from the netherworld was simultaneously sent to earth in exchange, to "keep the balance," as the ritual required.

But Mystico had anticipated his defeat. He had long studied the Book of the Dead, and understood the religious magic of the Nile. He prepared several hundred pages of mystically imbued papyrus. He discussed an outline with C. Michael Stone. C. Michael Stone then wrote an 80,000 word origin story for the Wraith, chronicling his ascent from the netherworld to possess the body of the netherworld beast, escaping the horrors of the netherworld. The demon that was sent to Earth had retained its evil visage, but it housed the incredible mind of Dr. Mystico to become the Wraith. Writing the story upon the

mystic papyrus mimicked the spells in the Book of the Dead, only in reverse; Dr. Mystico's soul was given safe passage to Terra where he took possession of the demon.

Once back on Terra, Mystico decided to use his "death" to best advantage. He took on the persona of *The Wraith*, and was able to pick up his work where he had left off, with none of his old enemies suspecting that Mystico was alive again. Other than C. Michael Stone, no one knows of his new persona — not even his former student and sidekick Kid Mystico. Naturally, C. Michael Stone's story can never be published.

As the Wraith, Mystico has found himself to be possessed of new and potent powers, brought on by his demon persona. Darkness and fear are the weapons of the Wraith, and he uses them to battle those who would bring these same weapons to bear upon unknowing humanity.

The Wraith joined the Mystery Men on Terra, journeyed to Core Earth, and now roams the dark alleys and shadows from Luxor to Alexandria.

The Wraith

DEXTERITY 12 (9)

Acrobatics 19, dodge 15, long jumping 16, maneuver 13, running 13, stealth 19, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 14 (8)

Climbing 15, lifting 15

TOUGHNESS 13(10)

PERCEPTION 13

Alteration magic 17, divination magic 16, disguise 14, Egyptian religion 16, hieroglyphics 16, find 15, first aid 14, language 16, mathematics 18, scholar (arcane lore) 18, tracking 14, trick 16

MIND 11

Apportation magic 15, conjuration magic 15, hypnotism 16, test 11, willpower 17

CHARISMA 10

Persuasion 11

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Egyptian) 15, intimidation 17, reality 15

Inclination: Good

Possibilities: 26

Equipment: netherclaws have damage value of STR+6, but are used only when the demon personality takes hold.

Mathematics Spells: *Animate mummy, calculate weakness, commune with crickets, contemplation, crocodile legion, death shout, detect magic, dream, find water, mesmerize, prepare mummy, rot, sundew, ward off evil, wing of the hawk*

Skill Notes: The Wraith has three *super attributes* and the following powers *darkness 19, fear 12, fog screen 18, mega-scent 18, ultra sight 13* for an adventure cost of 24. Whenever the Wraith gets involved in a violent confrontation, there is a chance that his emotions will give the demon's personality a chance to reassert itself. The demon (who is Possibility rated with 6

Possibilities) generates a *Spirit* total from a value of 15. The total is compared to the *faith* value of the Wraith. Result points are read on the Intimide/ Test column. If a *stymied* results, the Wraith is *stymied* for the scene; this counts as a *stymie* flaw for all powers, worth 24 Possibilities. A *setback* or worse allows the demon's evil, violent personality to take over for a scene; this is a *setback* flaw for all powers worth 48 Possibilities. The demon personality gains a Possibility each time he successfully *stymies* the Wraith, or worse.

The Icarus Club

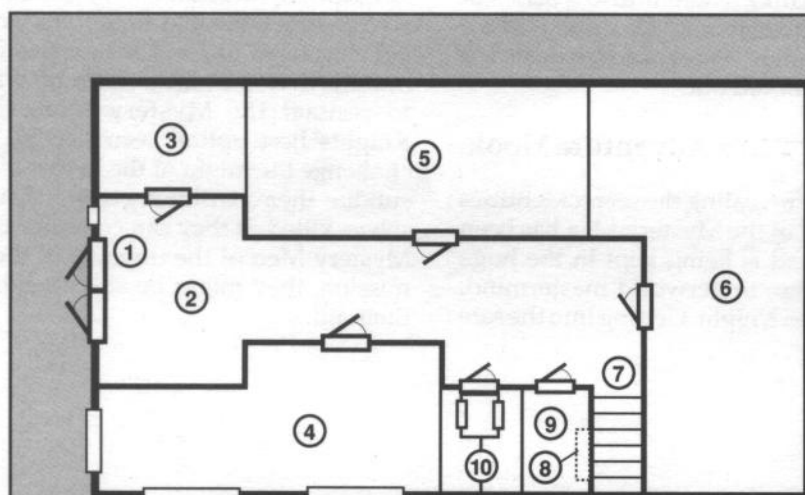
Nestled in the poshest section of Thebes, the exclusive Icarus Club is a gathering place for the "movers and shakers" of the Nile Empire: wealthy traders, Imperial councilors, and even the occasional overgovernor.

One walks through the beautiful golden doors into a marble-floored lobby, there to have your staff taken by a well-groomed manservant. From there, you have the choice of spending your time in the luxurious bar/restaurant, pursuing the study of your choice in the library, or simply relaxing in the



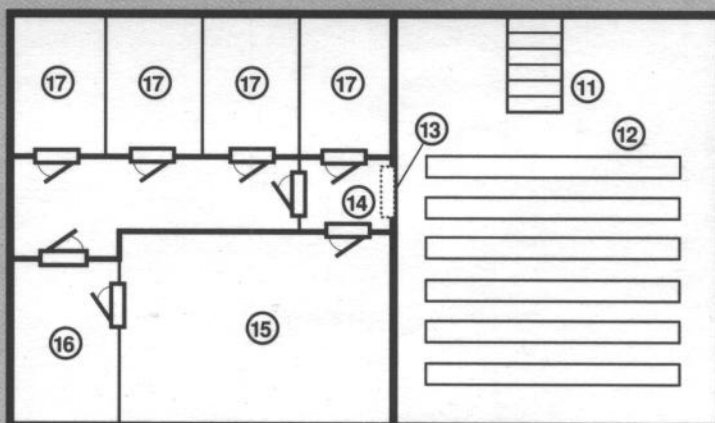
Infiniverse Update: Map 3

The Icarus Club



Key

1. Main entrance
2. Lobby
3. Coat room
4. Common room
5. Library
6. Bar/restaurant
7. Stairs to wine cellar
8. Secret door
9. Bennington's office
10. Restroom
11. Stairs
12. Wine cellar
13. Secret panel
14. "Welcoming" room
15. Trader's room
16. Bennington's lower level office
17. "Green rooms"



common room with your fellow club members.

But there is a darker side to the Icarus Club, one catering to a distinctly different clientele. For the club is in truth a front for a "crime exchange" — a place where gangs and pulp villains can trade for specialists required for particular jobs (say a safecracker for a big heist in Alexandria, or a torch to light up a paper that's been critical of the Empire). In exchange, they provide henchmen or specialists of their own to other gangs to be used in their operations. The exchange then receives a percentage of the take from these crimes.

This unique facet of the club is the brainchild of Paul Bennington, formerly the pulp villain known as the Asp, who gave up his costumed career in favor of more lucrative (and safer) criminal pursuits. Bennington has successfully transplanted his operation from Terra to Thebes, and has shown a willingness to deal even with Storm Knights (providing the price is right, and negotiations are handled discreetly, so as not to arouse the ire of Mobius).

One reaches the exchange offices by entering the club's wine cellar and rapping a set number of times (changed daily) on the rear wall. Visitors are then asked to provide the day's pass-

word, and if this is done satisfactorily, a portion of the wall slides away and admits the newcomer.

All exchange guests are frisked upon entering, and then conducted into the trader's room. Here Bennington's men man a bank of phones and keep track of the availability of specialists on a "big board." Spirited bidding wars have been known to erupt between rival gangs over talented lockpicks and wheel-men, which is part of the reason Bennington rarely allows clients to visit the exchange (bloodshed is bad for business, and might disturb the wealthy people lounging in the rooms above).

This underground complex also features Bennington's office (complete with wall safe — this safe rarely has more than 5000 royals in it at any one time. Bennington avails himself of the services of an as yet unknown underworld bank). There is also a series of small "green rooms" for valued "items of exchange" to relax while deals are being worked out.

Icarus Club Adventure Hook

A file revealing the secret identities of many of the Mystery Men has been stolen and is being kept in the huge vault of an underworld mastermind, the Green Knight. Getting into the safe

requires the services of "Digits" McCoy, the Nile's most adept safecracker who is currently in hiding following a job in Cairo. It is up to the Storm Knights to find McCoy.

The Icarus Club proves to be the only means of contacting McCoy, and Bennington is perfectly willing to provide him, if the Knights will do a little job for one of his clients — assassinate one of the Mystery Men!

There are plans afoot for a major raid on a gold warehouse in Thebes, a job which is certain to attract the attention of the Mystery Men. The perpetrators requested back-up from the Icarus Club, good trigger-men who would be able to take out the pulp heroes when they arrived on the scene.

The Knights are left with a serious problem: failing to carry out the assignment means the Mystery Men will be destroyed by having their identities exposed. In addition, the gold that is to be stolen belongs to Mobius, and is being used to fund his expansion into Libya and Tunisia. With no way to contact the Mystery Men, the Knights best option seems to be to challenge the might of the heroes and subdue them, without getting themselves killed. If they can convince the Mystery Men of the urgency of their mission, they might be able to enlist their aid.



CHAPTER FIVE

Nippon Tech™



yuchi Kanawa allowed himself a rare display of emotion, mouthing a curse as he read over 7710's de-scrambled report.

The situation in California had grown worse — Ichi Entertainment stock had dropped another 50 points, with only the Houston-based Ichi Publishing still showing a modicum of profit. Four more executives had been found murdered, their bodies torn to shreds.

Damn the Tharkoldu, those motherless sons of filth! He had been expecting some hostile action from them should they return, but not this single-minded obsession with spilling Nippon blood. The Western US, once the site of his greatest coup, was beginning to be a serious and unprofitable drain on the resources of his realm.

Daikoku was not pleased.

The techno-demons' timing had been ... inconvenient, to say the least. With Orrorsh growing more and more unstable and the Hellion Court on the verge of open rebellion against Thratchen, the horror realm was ripe for takeover. Upon 3327's orders, strike teams had already been assembled to go in and rip up stelae, replacing them with those of Nippon Tech. When the great and mighty Gaunt Man returned, he would find he had no realm awaiting him.

An excellent plan, frustrated by the actions of a horde of metallic monstrosities and their cow of a High Lord. The secretive leader of Nippon cleared the screen of his laptop and began to compose instructions for his trusted employee. The Tharkoldu would soon learn that in the game of revenge, they were mere children who had to be taught the folly of annoying their elders ...

State of the Realm

Of the seven High Lords involved in the invasion of Earth, 3327 has enjoyed the most spectacular success. His realm has expanded at a faster rate than any other, save perhaps the Living Land. He has discovered ways to profit from the Possibility Wars, selling arms to both sides in the conflict. His home cosm of Marketplace has been relatively quiet, with the predat-

tions of the priests of Palan less of a problem now than they had been in months past. And most importantly, he has maintained his cover as a wealthy industrialist among those in power in Core Earth, despite efforts by various factions to expose him as a High Lord.

But of late it has begun to appear as if 3327 has outsmarted himself in the first 18 months of the war. His actions have alienated the other High Lords, with only the weakened Uthorion and the notoriously untrustworthy Mobius still willing to deal with him. The need to protect his investments in California from the Tharkoldu has forced him to divert his energies from expanding farther into China, and the Cyberpapacy has successfully rooted out and destroyed his manufacturing facilities in that realm.

Currently, the Nippon Tech realm encompasses all of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, with a maelstrom bridge in Osaka; an area along the Southeastern coast of China, from Nantong to Foochow, including the port city of Shanghai; the southern section of

North Korea; and a pure zone surrounding the city of Sacramento, California, where the second Nippon bridge is extant.

Core Earth hardpoints in the realm include the Imperial Palace in Chioyoda-Ku; Peace Park in Hiroshima, ground zero for the atomic bomb that levelled the city in 1945; and Matsue Castle in Matsue, a museum of ancient samurai weapons and armor. The Nippon realm has thus far proven to have the fewest hardpoints of any of those established in the cosm, and those that do exist do not stand out because there is not a radical difference between the realm and pre-invasion Japan.

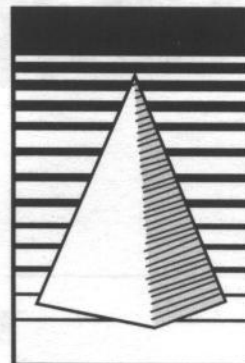
The High Lord 3327's approach to hardpoints has been distinctly different than that Mobius or Baruk Kaah, who persist in attempting to capture them by force. Whenever possible, the Kanawa Corporation uses its subsidiaries in real estate to tender offers for hardpoint sites and prevent their use by opponents of the High Lords. Serious negotiations are currently continuing for the purchase of Matsue Castle,

Stelae Placement

Latitude and longitude coordinates for Nippon stelae are as follows:

22*N, 119*E (South China Sea)
24*N, 123*E (East China Sea)
28*N, 123*E (East China Sea)
30*N, 129*E (East China Sea)
33*N, 134*E (Phillipine Sea)
35*N, 139*,30s E (Japan)
37*N, 145*E (Japan Trench)
38*, 30sN, 141*E (Japan)
43*N, 145*E (Japan)
45*N, 141*E (La Penouse Strait)
41*N, 138*E (Sea of Japan)
36*N, 136*E (Sea of Japan)
37*, 30sN, 132*E (Sea of Japan)
35*N, 130*E (Japan)
40*N, 129*,30sE (North Korea)
36*N, 127*E (South Korea)
32*N, 125*E (Yellow Sea)
38*N, 123*E (Yellow Sea)
34*,30sN, 122*E (Yellow Sea)
30*N, 121*E (Shaozing, China)

25*N, 119*,30sE (Formosa Strait)
32*N, 117*E (China)
27*N, 116*E (China)
40*,30sN, 125*W (Cape Mendecino)
38*N, 118*W (Nevada)
36*N, 120*W (California)



though the Imperial Palace refuses to negotiate.

In the wake of recent setbacks, 3327 has begun crafting plans for a major coup which will rock the other High Lords and shift the balance of power back to Nippon: the dropping of a maelstrom bridge into Beijing and the commencement in earnest of the conquest of China.

Baptism of Blood

When 3327 went into the invasion of Earth, he had no intention of being a mere sheep in the Gaunt Man's flock. While he respected the Orrorshan High Lord's power, he had his own agenda, which did not include his horrific ally's becoming Torg. He saw the potential for great profit on Earth, and any small reluctance he might have felt about betraying Salisbury was dispelled during the period the Earth's rotation was slowed by the Orrorshan Infernal Device.

This was a hard lesson, one apparently unheeded by the other High Lords, that the Gaunt Man felt no obligation to be loyal to them. In keeping with his own realm's Law of Intrigue, 3327 decided to take steps to upset the "great plan" to conquer Earth.

His first, and most fateful, step along this path occurred in the Soviet Union in the early days of the war. Kanawan representatives provided aid and information to the Soviet government which, combined with the psychic services of Russia's Project: Omen, resulted in the destruction of the Tharkoldu maelstrom bridge and the end of their hopes for invasion.

Although he well knew this would enrage the Gaunt Man, he counted on that High Lord's directing his wrath at the incompetence of Kranod and the Tharkoldu. In addition to forestalling the arrival of another technologically superior realm, the assault on the Tharkold bridge solidified the Kanawa Corporation's reputation as a firm ally of the Core Earth war effort. This led to

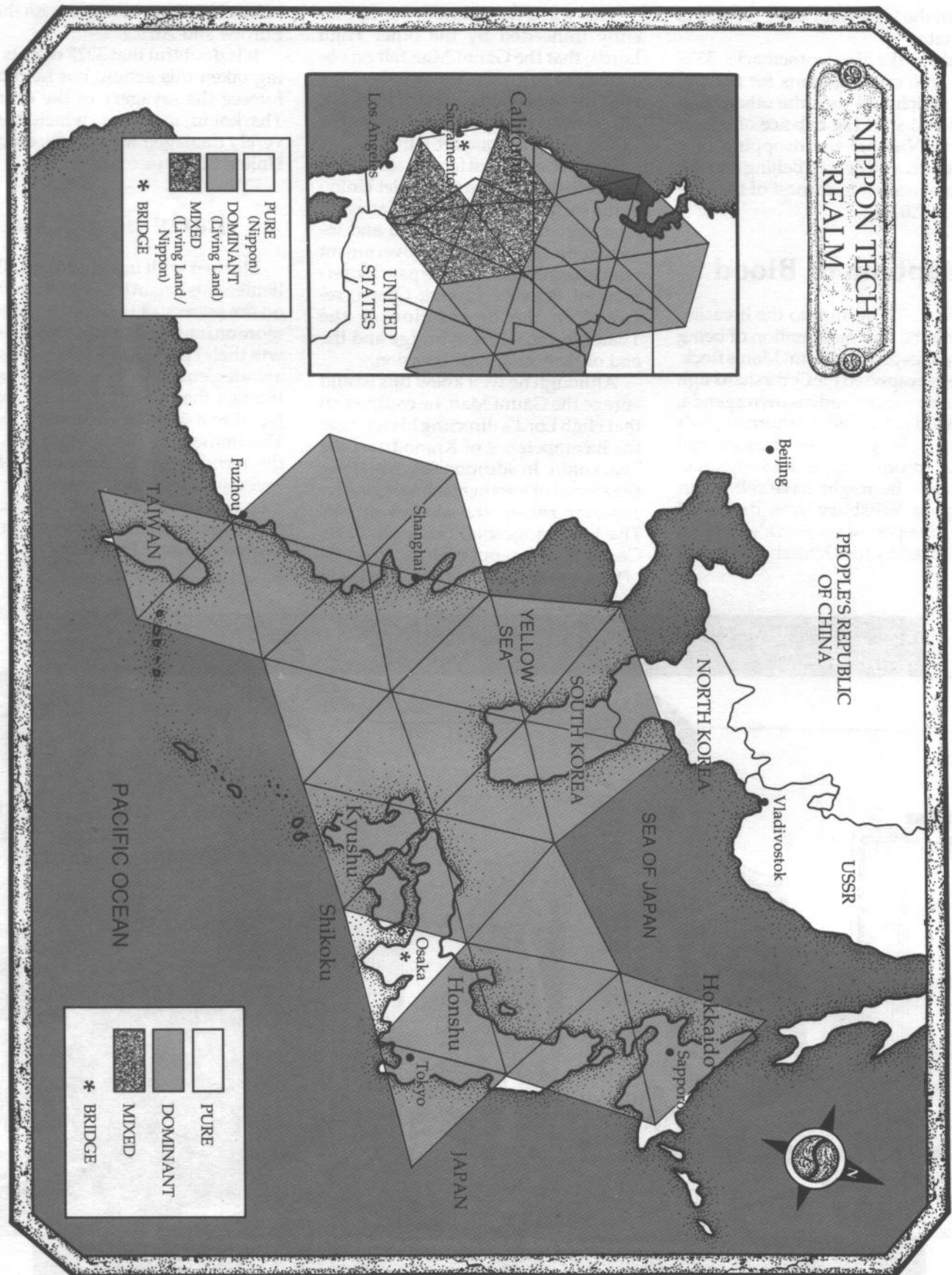
billions of yen in business with the US, Europe and Africa.

It is doubtful that 3327 regrets having taken this action, but he did not foresee the savagery of the eventual Tharkoldu response, which has severely damaged his operations in the United States (see below).

Early Setbacks

Flushed with initial success, 3327's lieutenants began to put less emphasis on the secrecy of their operations and more on intended results which would win their High Lord's favor. This was a strategic mistake, one which revealed the fact that a High Lord controlled Japan to a number of Storm Knights. The immediate result of all this was the termination of a number of top executives and their replacement by men and women whose methods of operation were more in line with those favored by their High Lord.







The Relics of Power

The first such operation was the pursuit of the Possibility Chalice and the Forever City. It was a Nippon satellite which pierced the artificial cloud bank surrounding the Himalayan site of the Signal Fire. As information began to flow in pinpointing the site of the Chalice off the coast of Thailand, steps were taken to acquire it. But by using a Kanawa firm to attempt the salvage operation (rather than an untraceable undersubsidary), the connection between that mega-corporation and the invasion began to be revealed.

Later, Nippon operatives came out second best in the race to reach the Forever City. With the revelation that the lighting of the Signal Fire resulted in the arrival of the Space Gods, and their subsequent interference in Nippon's South America operations, the failure to comprehend and disable this device looms large.

An Ill Wind

The second early failure did, admittedly, have a few positive benefits for Nippon. Kanawa Corporation set out to ruin the reputation of the Do-Lung Conglomerate and exterminate a cell of Sons of the Wind at the same time. Convincing Do-Lung (through falsified documents) that the martial arts masters occupying a Shinto temple in Hong Kong had no legal claim to the land, Kanawa sold the land the temple rested on to Do-Lung. The Sons of the Wind were given 30 days to vacate, and Chinese police were called in to enforce the order.

Storm Knight interference prevented a bloodbath, but the main objective had been achieved: Do-Lung's directors were humiliated and forced to sell the firm to Kanawa. In a flash, 3327 controlled major chunks of real estate in Hong Kong, which he proceeded to cover with steel and glass skyscrapers. In addition, financial hooks were sunk into the Bank of Hong

Kong, paving the way for the placing of "ATM machine" stelae in the city.

Then things began to unravel. An opposition conglomerate, Taihachi, began combatting Do-Lung operations in Hong Kong. Kanawan lieutenants made the decision to set the Yakuza upon the troublemaking firms, and were foolish enough to let Storm Knights establish a connection between them and the Japanese gangsters. Another piece had been placed in the Nippon puzzle, and another of 3327's weapons had been compromised.

The forces now controlling Do-Lung proceeded regardless. Corporate ninja began planting stelae, and plans were made for the dropping of a maelstrom bridge into the Do-Lung skyscraper headquarters. Officials in the Hong Kong government were bribed and subverted and the social order in the city began to break down.

But too much information had been leaked to the Knights, and they acted, pulling up stelae and preventing the

dropping of the bridge. The operation was an extremely costly failure for the Kanawa Corporation, significant enough to attract the attention of 3327 and spur him to take a more active role in operations.

The Hand of 3327

Angered by this series of failures, 3327 called a special board meeting to reiterate to his lieutenants the importance of secrecy and stealth in their operations. The meeting was highlighted by the execution of the president of Kanawa Enterprises, Nippon's first US-based firm. This action sent a shudder through the rest of the Kanawan corporate structure, and helped to drive home 3327's point.

The Nippon High Lord immediately initiated two successful programs, the harassment of Orrorsh and the western expansion of the realm. Nippon's holdings expanded rapidly, moving through Korea and across the

Yellow and East China seas into China. Progress was slowed somewhat by the fact that Nippon's aggressive capitalism went against the grain of hard-line Chinese communism. The Chinese resisted the imposition of this economically harsh reality, and high government officials began to mysteriously "expire of natural causes at the end of great lives."

Then 3327 also used his political influence to "persuade" the Japanese Diet to offer a 40 billion yen economic aid package to China, as well as make minor trade concessions and call for greater diplomatic dialogue. The stated reason for this was to improve relations between the two countries, but the true purpose was to make the Chinese government more amenable to the idea of Japanese investment. Premier Li Peng looked upon the offer with favor, concerned as he was with instability in the Soviet Union and the Orrorshan conquest of Indonesia.

Li Peng might have been less enthusiastic had he known that Nippon

interests were also actively supporting the democratic reform movement in China. Although he has been forced to turn his attention from that huge nation in recent months, the acquisition of territory in Asia remains a priority for 3327.

The California Coup

The Nippon High Lord's most inspired (and unexpected) maneuver took place not in Asia, but in the continental United States. Seeing that Baruk Kaah's forces were weakening in the Western Land, Nippon attempted an unprecedented theft: Living Land stelae around Sacramento were pulled up, with Nippon stelae being used to replace them. A Nippon bridge dropped into the city, and Kaah suddenly found himself fighting a two-front war.

While this did not result in a tremendous increase in possibility energy for 3327, it did have a number of beneficial effects. It ensured that the



port of San Francisco would remain open for the receipt of Nippon goods; buoyed the spirits of Core Earth nations everywhere, making them feel they could beat the invaders and encouraging them to purchase more arms from Kanawa's Hachiman arms division; and, obviously, it gave Nippon a foothold in a land likely to welcome a profit-oriented reality.

In the wake of the coup, the "Sacramento Miracle" became a major media event throughout the US and the world. Kanawa representatives, with the assent of the Delphi Council, began purchasing land and buildings in the Sacramento area to build a "weapons factory west." Business in the area has improved dramatically, with hard sell replacing soft peddling and many residents who survived the Living Land occupation being forced out of their homes by ruthless financial ma-

neuvurers.

Kaah, of course, was an annoyance. Working hand-in-glove with the Spartans, Nippon agents began working to exterminate edeinos in California and bring resistance groups "home" to the Nippon zone. Their most ambitious effort was an attempt (frustrated by Storm Knights) to poison the water supply in an area of Washington state and slaughter hundreds of edeinos (and thousands of resistance community innocents as well). Kanawa has also used brainwashed, transformed edeinos to foment rebellions against Baruk Kaah in the Western Land.

Kanawa Enterprises' California office went so far as to construct an amusement complex built around a theme of the Possibility Wars being fought around the globe. The park, known as KanawaWorld, features rides and displays relating to some of

the realms (Nippon itself is excluded, of course. That is except for a commercial celebration of Japan's technological achievements known as "TechLand." Plans for a Cyberpapacy exhibit were scrapped after protests from religious groups.)

The largest portion of the park is devoted to AysleLand, primarily because dwarves, elves and Ayslish seeking employment have been more than willing to run games and put on shows for tourists. Visitors can engage in swordplay with real Vikings, learn some rudimentary conjurations from Ayslish sorcerers (actually, only novelty magic tricks) and see a dragon up close (a baby Draconis Terra, who is overfed and kept sedated most of the time).

EdeinosLand is popular for its live-action version of "Lizard Hunt," and its romantic "Tunnel of Lanala," where

Miko Tzun

An enigmatic, beautiful woman, Miko Tzun has proven to be one of 3327's most ruthless and tenacious foes. Serving Hantu Ltd., the mysterious firm which stands neither with Kanawa nor the Rauru Block, Tzun has made a reputation for swift thinking and the ability to improvise in the face of unexpected developments.

Tzun's most impressive act was the firebombing of Korubishi Plastics, an undersubsidiary of Omi Electronics. What made the sabotage so effective was the planting of evidence implicating Nile Empire agents, which served to cool relations between 3327 and Mobius for some months afterward.

Relatively little is known about Tzun. Storm Knights have managed to determine that she is not a native of Marketplace, but rather a Core Earther who transformed to Nippon axioms. She is said to make more yen in a year than most mega-corporate

CEOs, but the money is placed in a Swiss bank account. She is said to dislike firearms, but has killed more than 25 agents of 3327 in her brief career. She recently disappeared for some months, and it is believed she was undergoing intense training in the martial arts and the techniques involved in successful disguise. Where Tzun's loyalties lie remains a mystery.

At least one concerted effort has been made by Kanawa agents to apprehend her. An assault was made on a Tokyo townhouse and, though she escaped, it is said her lover was not so fortunate. In the weeks that followed, she tracked down and brutally murdered all of the men involved in the attack, leaving their bodies in front of the Kanawa Corporation headquarters in Tokyo.

Miko Tzun

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14, fire combat 13, maneuver 14, martial arts 16, melee

weapons 14 missile weapons 13, running 14, stealth 15, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 10

Climbing 11

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 12

Disguise 15, evidence analysis 14, find 14, land vehicles 13, scholar (espionage) 15, trick 16

MIND 10

Business 12, test 15, willpower 15

CHARISMA 12

Charm 17, persuasion 16, taunt 14

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 15, reality 16

Possibilities: 20

Style: Red Lotus (master)

Equipment: S-L stiletto, damage value STR+6/16; electrostars, damage value STR+5/18, range 3-5/10/15; personal radar vest; 35mm microcamera; Allied micro-transmitter; smoke screen pellets/lenses; electronic lockpick; electronic safecracker; Omi signal scrambler

lovers can snuggle as they travel through the Deep Mist à la fog machine. OrrorshLand has been the least popular tourist attraction, primarily because some of the monsters are obviously fake, and others (particularly one lycanthrope who lost control and mauled a Florida family) are all too real.

The coup did leave open a window of vulnerability, however. Where Japan and China were largely proof against the interference of other High Lords, the assault on Kaah was the equivalent of waving a red flag in their faces. Malraux and Thratchen offered aid to Kaah in his war with Nippon, but with little effect against the Nippon defenses.

What has damaged 3327's plans for

expansion has been the arrival of the Tharkold realm in Los Angeles. Its new High Lord, Jezrael, has taken steps to revenge herself and her people against Nippon. Kanawa investments in LA have been destroyed, executives slaughtered, and progress in California brought to a grinding halt by the actions of techno-demons. Now that 3327's fear of Jezrael and Kaah forming an alliance has borne out, he is pouring vast amounts of yen into the defense of his stelae triangle there. He is hoping that he may receive unintentional aid from the Cyberpapacy in resisting the Tharkold, as Malraux hates the hellish creatures almost as much as the Nippon High Lord does.

The ultimate result of the Tharkoldu terrorism has been a loss of confidence

in the Kanawa Corporation, and ripples of uneasiness throughout the Japanese business community. The Nikkei took a week-long dive some months ago, plunging more than 5500 points. A number of corporations were forced to borrow money in place of issuing stock. In addition, the American Security and Exchange Commission has begun an investigation of illegal stock transactions on the part of Kanawa subsidiaries in their purchases of US firms.

All of this has forced 3327 to open his coffers and spread a bit more yen throughout the business community to quiet fears and refrain from doing too much wholesale corporate sabotage. Even though there are a number of Rauru Block firms open for take-

Red Wind

Many people — agents of other realms as well as Marketplace or Nippon natives — have attempted to strike at 3327 and his empire. The Rauru Block, the priests of Palan, the Kashi and the Shiki all have made the effort, but none have been so successful as the female assassin known only as "Red Wind."

Armed with what witnesses described as a miniaturized crossbow that fires explosive bolts, Red Wind pierced security at 3327's Nijo Castle stronghold and killed executives from Borubokan Textiles and Soto Industries. Severely injured in the attack was 7710, who at that time was the High Lord's liaison with Marketplace. Over 30 MarSec troopers were slain and three Kanawa R-1 Defense Robots destroyed in the attack as well.

Red Wind first appeared in Shanghai shortly after 3327 made inroads there, and it is believed she is of Chinese descent. She has been linked in intelligence reports with the mysterious agent dubbed "Haiku," who has

crossed katanas with 3327's operatives in the past. The reward for Red Wind's capture has recently been increased to 10 million yen. She was last reported in Taiwan, meeting with local business leaders who may have been attempting to retain her services.

"Red Wind" (real name unknown)

DEXTERITY 13

Acrobatics 15, dodge 18, energy weapons 15, fire combat 19, lock picking 15, long jumping 14, maneuver 16, martial arts (Red Lotus) 19, melee weapons 17, missile weapons 17, stealth 19, unarmed combat 18

STRENGTH 11

Climbing 12

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 12

Evidence analysis 15, find 16, first aid 14, language 14, tracking 15, trick 16

MIND 11

Artist (actress) 14, meditation 13, test 15, willpower 13

CHARISMA 13

Charm 18, persuasion 18,

taunt 16

SPIRIT 12

Intimidation 16, reality 16

Possibilities: 25

Equipment: LOV 9mm, damage value 16, ammo 12, range 3-10/25/40; hand laser, damage value 17, ammo 20, range 3-30/100/200; S-L stiletto, damage value STR+6/20; throwing stars, damage value STR+3/17, range 3-5/10/15; IriMesh armor, TOU+3/20; mini-crossbow, damage value 22/19, range 3-10/150/300 — crossbow bolt does initial damage of 22. If *missile weapons* result was *Good* or better, bolt embeds itself in target and explodes one round later, doing damage value 19. Target must generate a *Strength* total of 12 or a *first aid* total of 14 to pull shaft from body before explosion.

Description: "Red Wind" is an incredibly beautiful, unbelievably lethal woman. She first attempts to *charm* opponents — if they fail to surrender to her wiles, she flies into a rage, and her resistance to *taunts* drops by three.

over, sudden business failures at this time would only increase investor's fears of an economic collapse.

The Kanawa Corporation is also contemplating exporting rudimentary fusion technology from Marketplace to lessen Nippon's dependence on natural resources exported from other nations. He sees the need to purchase oil, coal, lumber and steel from the US and Europe as a major weakness of his realm, and one his enemies will be quick to exploit, given the opportunity.

A Gathering of Foes

No other High Lord has made dealings with other realms so great a part of his overall strategy as 3327 has. Whether it is selling arms to resistance organizations or trading information to Uthorion in return for access to North Sea oil rigs, Nippon agents can be found throughout the world.

Among their recent exploits have been:

- An attempted raid on the Potala, the famed "golden palace" in Lhasa, Tibet which once housed the Dalai Lamas. The agents were instructed to search for and acquire eternity shards, but were stopped by a combined force of Storm Knights and Chinese soldiers.

- An expedition to Cerne Abbas, England, to recover an ancient tablet connected to the Space Gods. This mission proved to be unsuccessful due to Storm Knight and Cyberpapal interference.

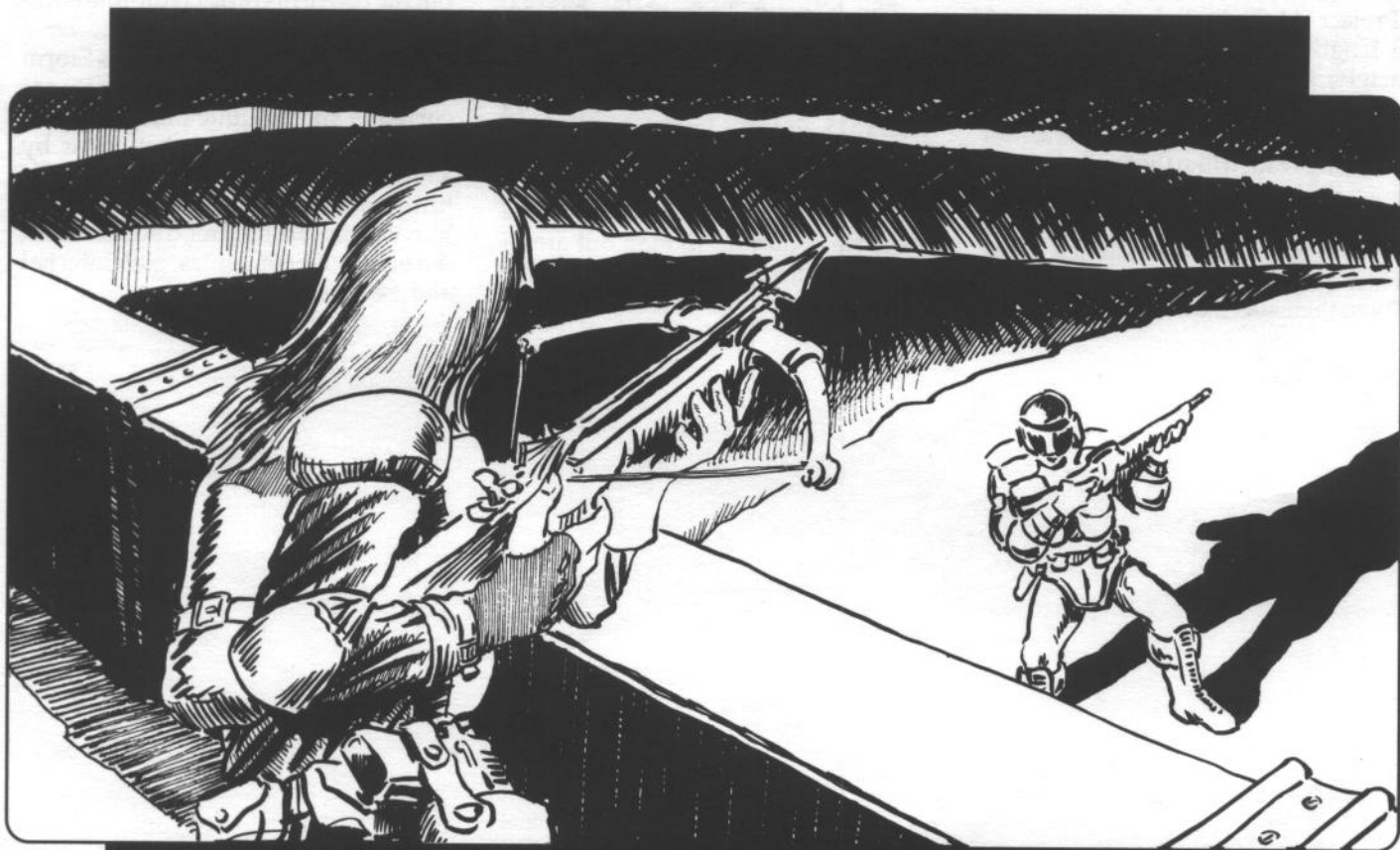
- Numerous incidents of corporate espionage directed against Hantu Ltd. and its mysterious "special projects director," Miko Tzun.

Aside from the Living Land, 3327 has turned his realm's power against the Cyberpapacy and Orrorsh most frequently. He has conquered a great deal of territory which Thratchen had coveted (and would surely have taken, had he been in contact with Heketon). The Nippon High Lord has overseen several cyberware manufacturing op-

erations — from within the Cyberpapacy itself! — and sold the equipment to members of the Resistance. This maneuver has been checkmated by the Inquisition's destruction of most of the Nippon facilities in CyberFrance.

One of 3327's most cunning (and successful) plans has revolved around Ayslish conjuration futures, the backbone of that realm's economy. Two Nippon operatives recently made large investments in the market, driving futures up tremendously. Ninja assassins were being deployed to kill mid- and low-level conjurers to ensure that the value of those still living increases. Profits from this project were being diverted to finance oil drilling in the North Sea.

As stated above, currently only Mobius and Uthorion are still dealing with 3327. Uthorion purchases large amounts of equipment from the Hachiman Arms Division of Kanawa, and Mobius is continually fielding proposals for trade agreements from the Nippon High Lord. Mobius is re-



portedly fascinated by the advanced tech used by the denizens of 3327's realm, and 3327 would love to get his hands on a Nile reality bomb.

Research and Development

Like a shark, the technology of Nippon must ever advance if the realm is to stay competitive with those of the other High Lords. Along those lines, 3327 has placed increased emphasis upon mastering the principles of cyber technology, both to maintain parity with the Cyberpapacy and to better resist incursions by Tharkold. In addition, Nippon scientists are currently studying samples of Akashan biotechnology, and agents are attempting to acquire reality tree seeds for possible reproduction in the laboratory.

Realm researchers have also dabbled in genetics, with one of their greatest successes thus far being the creatures known collectively as "Project V." These beings, six meters in length with wing spans of seven meters, were bred to protect nuclear plants and other hazardous areas from saboteurs. They have chitinous armor and wings much like those of a hornet, along with teeth and claws capable of shredding metal like tissue paper. They are able to thrive in irradiated areas which would prove fatal to humans. Given their success as guardians, 3327

has directed that they be used in offensive operations against Cyberpapal and Core Earth power facilities.

Project V

DEXTERITY 16

Dodge 17, flight 18, maneuver 17, stealth 18, swimming 17, unarmed combat 19

STRENGTH 24

TOUGHNESS 18/23

PERCEPTION 11

Tracking 15, trick 13 (19)

MIND 6

Survival 21, test (15)

SPIRIT 5

Intimidation 18, reality 14

Possibilities: all

Natural Tools: armor, TOU+5/23; wings, speed value 12; claws, damage value STR+2/26; teeth, damage value STR+3/27

The Immediate Future

The Nippon Tech realm has assumed a defensive posture for the time being. While salvos are still being fired against Orrorsh, Cyberpapacy, Tharkold and the Living Land, 3327 has diverted most of his resources to the protection of his extant stelae areas, rather than the conquest of new ones. He continues to map out ambitious plans for expansion, but until the threat of Tharkold has been lessened

(or better yet, ended completely), he is wary of putting them into action.

Another area of concern for the High Lord is the sudden reluctance of the Delphi Council to intervene on the part of Kanawa-owned corporations in the United States. Should the Council take the plunge and admit to themselves that he is a Possibility Raider like Kaah and the others, 3327 could rapidly see his American markets dry up and a major source of natural resources disappear. Many of his covert operatives are currently at work gathering information on council members, with an eye toward blackmailing them.

Should the Tharkold situation continue unabated, 3327 is planning to cement a firm alliance with Mobius against the Cyberpapacy. If the Nile Empire's High Lord agrees to keep Malraux's forces occupied, it will free Nippon agents to war against Jezrael and her techno-demons. Given the relatively small size of the Tharkoldu realm, 3327 is confident he could prevail swiftly enough to allow him to put the rest of his projects on-line without undue delay.

The wild card in this hand is Storm Knight activity. Nippon resources are currently spread quite thin — a series of hard, fast strikes on key areas by Knights could seriously cripple 3327's future operations, and possibly leave him vulnerable to utter destruction at the hands of his enemies, both internal and external.



CHAPTER SIX

*Orrorsh*TM



orthington paused for a long moment before pushing open the basement door. He could hear the footsteps of his comrades as they explored the floor above him. They had been reluctant to split the party, but with so little time remaining before sunset, the search of the house had to be done quickly.

He stepped into the musty chamber, chill and damp like a tomb ... an apt description, indeed, if what he suspected was true. A rat, red eyes gleaming in the light of his lantern, skittered across the floor in front of him. It left behind a pile of bones ... *human?* ... it had been gnawing on and retreated into a hole in the wall.

Worthington stepped carefully over piles of masonry and rubble. It would not do to twist an ankle now, not with night only a quarter hour away. He adjusted the necklace of garlic around his neck, and groped in his pack until he felt the reassuring solidness of his hammer and stake. This night would be the end of Tarleton and his thirst for blood. This night would see revenge for what the monster did to sweet Catherine.

He pushed aside a spider web and held his lantern before him. There, just before him, rested the coffin, sealed against the threat of any shaft of sunlight. Moving around it, he tore the boards from the high windows, allowing golden light to flood the room.

There was no need to call the others. He felt strangely calm, now that the time had finally come to do the deed, as if a shackle had been loosened round his soul. He put down his pack and took out the tools of his newfound trade, took a deep breath and, with a sudden, savage motion, flung wide the lid of the coffin.

Empty.

The rats that filled the basement squealed as if in pain and began to dash madly about. His mind told him that he had simply made a mistake — Tarleton had gone to ground somewhere else this night — and he need only pour the Holy Water into the soil that lined the coffin to despoil it for the vampyre's use.

But his heart had begun to beat faster, and sweat collected on his brow,

and he could hear the rushing of his blood in his ears. Then from behind him came a hideous sound, much like the keening wail of a bean sidhe Worthington had once encountered in Aysle. He turned, stake raised —

Before he could complete his motion, an iron grip closed around his wrist, squeezing as if to grind the bones to powder. He cried out and dropped the stake, then raised his eyes to look into those of ... the vampyre. The undead creature stood smiling, sunlight bathing his face and form, but doing no harm to its evil countenance.

Tarleton released his hold, and gestured toward the bright beams of the setting sun. "You old fool!" he said, laughing. "I am not one of *those* vampyres! I fear neither sunlight, nor running water, nor that odoriferous herb you wear about your neck! You have failed, my dear Worthington, as your companions will fail — yes, I know where they are. Your daughter is attending to them even as we speak."

Worthington charged the creature, and was batted away like an insect. "Catherine told me of your ... *antiquated* notions about vampyres, old man. It amused me to allow you to get this far, so confident in your victory, only to snatch it away from you at the

last moment."

Seeing an opening, Worthington grabbed the stake from the floor and plunged it into the vampyre's heart. Tarleton grimaced in momentary pain, and then pulled the bloody piece of wood from him and threw it aside. "An impressive instrument, indeed, but it holds no terror for me. The method of my death is known to myself alone, and you will not live to learn it.

"But I will confess to being flattered by your attentions," Tarleton said, fixing Worthington with his gaze and holding him paralyzed like a sparrow before a snake. "You are a most ingenious, if misguided, man. And you will make an excellent addition to my legion of the dark."

Worthington's last thought was of Catherine, his last sensation a stinging pain in his neck before death claimed him.

Three days later, he would rise again, at Tarleton's bidding. In a week, he would stalk and kill the only member of his vampyre-hunting party to have survived the foray to Tarleton's lair. He would ... exist ... for six months as one of the undead, before an Ayslish paladin would discover his true death



and behead him with a sword blessed by the Sacellum.

State of the Realm

Despite all the terrors visited upon it during the Possibility Wars, much of the world can be grateful that events have conspired to keep the realm of Orrorsh from spreading beyond Indonesia. Within that dark realm, monstrous horrors stalk the night, slaying the innocent and thriving on the fear created in the survivors. In the twisted halls of Illmound Keep, Thratchen paces restlessly — if he leaves the realm, he risks incurring the vengeance of Jezrael and the Tharkoldu. If he remains, he faces almost assured destruction on the day the Gaunt Man at last emerges from the maelstrom in which he is held prisoner.

Unable to gain control of Heketon, the Orrorshan Darkness Device, Thratchen has vented his frustration on Storm Knights operating in his realm, as well as on the agents of 3327. Distracted by the arrival of Tharkold in Los Angeles, Thratchen has allowed the members of the Hellion Court perhaps too much leeway in pursuing their own agendas, something which might pose a future problem both for the techno-demon and the Gaunt Man, once he makes his inevitable return.

Meanwhile, Orrorsh continues to stand as the most lethal of the realms, with only the bravest (or perhaps most foolhardy) Storm Knights willing to set foot in the domain of horror. A lack of stela has made it impossible for the realm to expand, and this has allowed Nippon Tech to conquer much of the territory the Gaunt Man was known to have coveted. It remains to be seen when the reckoning for that action will come.

A History of Horror

Though without the leadership of the Gaunt Man, the Orrorshan Nightmares and their minions have fulfilled his dark dream of spreading fear and death throughout Indonesia. The enormity of the sheer terror that permeates the realm is staggering, and the death toll among Storm Knights has been

extremely high. Storm Knight recruiter/organizers, like Hawaii's Guildmaster, are now taking special care in choosing operatives for missions in Orrorsh — the choice is between sending agents of the highest calibre, and risking their loss, or sending expendable Knights, and risking almost certain failure of the mission.

Without a strong High Lord dominating the area, it has fallen more and more upon the individual Nightmares to maintain control of the death rate in the realm. This has been a mixed success, with a number of valuable horrors having to be exterminated when they went out of control. Most recently, the werewolf Valniar went on a killing spree in the village of Altshire and his master, Toral, was forced to dispatch vampyre Kerim Bey to kill him. Storm Knight interference resulted in the deaths of both Valniar and Bey, although whether Bey met his true death is unclear.

Here are some of the more significant events to have taken place in Orrorsh over the first 18 months of the war:

Kibos and Kane

One of Thratchen's earliest projects was an effort to gate in a fellow Tharkoldu, Balezar, with the aid of an Orrorshan sorcerer named Kibos. Working with a former operative of the Gaunt Man, Malcolm Kane, Kibos oversaw a string of brutal ritual murders in Singapore designed to provide him with the occult power to open the way to the Tharkoldu cosm.

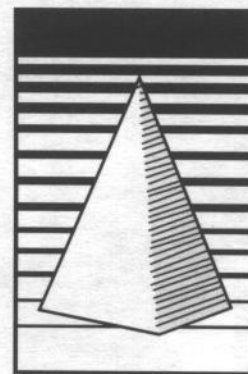
(Why Thratchen wished to bring another techno-demon to Orrorsh might be a puzzle to some, as he himself had been responsible for the destruction of the Tharkoldu dimthread. The explanation is that Balezar had long ago submitted to Thratchen, and owed him total loyalty. Thratchen hoped to use him as a spy in the Tharkoldu cosm, after providing him with instructions on what to look for, with Kibos' spell acting as the means of transportation.)

Unfortunately for Thratchen, the plan went wrong. By choosing Singapore as the site for the ritual, Kibos ensured Storm Knight interfer-

Stelae Placement

Current positions of Orrorshan stelae are as follows:

92°E, 7°N	116°E, 6°S	121°E, 9°N
94°E, 4°N	120°E, 9°S	124°E, 7°N
98°E, 0°	124°E, 12°S	127°E, 4°N
101°E, 3°S	128°E, 11°S	
104°E, 6°S	125°E, 18°S	
108°E, 8°S	121°E, 5°S	
111°E, 11°S	118°E, 3°S	
115°E, 10°S	114°E, 30°S	
112°E, 7°S	111°E, 3°N	
119°E, 13°S	113°E, 7°N	
108°E, 5°S	116°E, 4°N	
105°E, 3°S	119°E, 1°N	
102°E, 1°N	121°E, 2°S	
99°E, 4°N	126°E, 4°S	
96°E, 7°N	128°E, 7°S	
98°E, 11°N	129°E, 3°S	
101°E, 8°N	126°E, 0°	
104°E, 5°N	124°E, 3°N	
107°E, 3°N	120°E, 5°N	
110°E, 1°S	117°E, 8°N	
113°E, 4°S	118°E, 12°N	





ence (the Nightmare Skutharka's willingness to allow some technological devices to function has convinced some Singaporeans that their city has been unaffected by the invasion, and some areas have become in-realm bases for Knights). Kibos and Kane were forced to flee the city before the ritual could be completed.

They fled to Borneo where, again acting ostensibly for Thratchen, they made an effort to retrieve the mystic talisman known as the Black Eye. The ebony gem provided the ability to see into the future, at the price of total insanity. Working with a band of Core Earth renegades and Orrorshan gospog, they succeeded in wresting the gem from the chief who possessed it, only to have it taken from them in turn by a group of Storm Knights.

At this point, Kibos panicked, and fled with Kane and the surviving raiders to the island of Ninjoku. The Knights followed, walking into the middle of another of Thratchen's schemes — that of using the residents of this Storm Knight haven as sacrifices to bribe the local volcano god into destroying the island. The Storm Knights prevented this from happening, and were able to win the deity to their side, resulting in the burning of a number of Orrorshan gospog fields.

Now out of favor with Thratchen, Kibos readily agreed when Kane suggested an expedition to Belize to search for another object of power. Little did Kibos know at the time that what Kane was seeking was a Darkness Device of his own (see Chapter Three for the results of this quest).

The Mark of Maletretius

Efforts by Maletretius to subvert a cult of demon worshippers and use their rituals to increase his power met with success, despite efforts by Storm Knights to stop him. Maletretius has gone into hiding following more recent clashes with Knights, and is said to be planning a rebellion against his Nightmare, Sabathina. His chances for success may have been increased by her preoccupation with the creation of a vampyre coven in the Cyberpapacy.

Here are the post-ritual stats for Maletretius:



Maletretius

DEXTERITY 13

Acrobatics 22, dodge 20, maneuver 18, melee weapons 17, running 18, stealth 22, unarmed combat 20

STRENGTH 17

Climbing 19, lifting 19

PERCEPTION 12

Alteration magic 16, evidence analysis 14, find 15, language 15, scholar (arcane lore) 16, trick 18

MIND 15

Occult 21, survival 18, test 24, willpower 24

CHARISMA 14

Charm 26, persuasion 21, taunt 17

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Orrorsh) 17, intimidation 21

Possibilities: 25

Powers: *life drain (Strength), infection, regenerate, shape change (wolf), resistance to normal weapons, attack form resistance (magical physical damage)*

Corruption Value: 25

Fear Rating: 2

Perseverance DN: 23

Weakness: gold, rose thorns

True Death: immolation

Natural Tools: fangs (STR+1/18)

The Nocturna

Thousands of years ago, the cosm of Orrorsh bore witness to the creation of an obscenity: a sorcerer seduced by the occult penned a tome called the Nocturna. Within its blood-red covers are collected spells, curses and arcane knowledges, the knowledge of which would drive even the strongest man mad.

For centuries the book, unable to be destroyed by any known force, passed through some of the most infamous hands in Orrorsh, Gaea and other cosms conquered by the Gaunt Man: seers, occultists, demon-worshippers, and maniacs, and all of their names were cursed by its evil.

The Nocturna was smuggled across the maelstrom bridge into Indonesia shortly after the invasion, and is currently hidden somewhere in the realm. Efforts by Storm Knights to retrieve the book have, in general, not been successful, and a number of Knights have even succumbed to the book's power and had to be slain by their comrades.

It is believed the tome is currently being used in the preparation of some

grand destructive stroke, but who has it and what they plan remains a mystery.

The Diabolical Dr. Sconce

Among the busiest of the Orrorshan Nightmares in recent months has been Dr. Wilhelm Sconce. In his continuing quest to impress Heketon and secure the High Lord's position for himself, Sconce has implemented a number of fiendish projects.

His most successful thus far has been the discovery of a means to draw human souls out of possessed bodies, thus giving the demon within free reign. The souls are then trapped within marionettes, which Sconce imprisons and tortures to gain information and pleasure. It is believed that he used an offshoot of this process to gain long-range control of the bodies of Victorians without harming their minds, leading distinguished citizens to kill themselves before witnesses, all the while screaming for someone to stop them.

A less successful effort has been one to sew together 66 corpses of Scarabuusi victims and transform them into a single monstrous creature with the aid of a spirit from a Waiting Village. The problem has been in finding the right number of corpses, as lesser Horrors and creatures of Majestic's jungles often feed on the corpses of the unfortunate, leaving little left for Sconce to work with.

Sconce's most conspicuous contribution to the Orrorshan efforts to export the Power of Fear has been his creation of demonic beings resembling rakshashas, the demon guardians of Hell in Hindu mythology. These creatures have launched attacks on population centers as far away as India, with devastating effect. Sconce has yet to reveal whether these beasts are the result of occult rituals or simply pre-existing demons surgically altered.

Sconce's Rakshashas

DEXTERITY 12

Acrobatics 14, dodge 16, flight 18, long jumping 13, maneuver 14, stealth 15, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 13

Climbing 15

TOUGHNESS 14

PERCEPTION 13

Find 16, tracking 18, trick 15

MIND 7

Survival 13, test 12

CHARISMA 9

Charm (20), persuasion (21), taunt (15)

SPIRIT 7

Faith (Orrorsh) 10, intimidation 17

Possibility Potential: none

Power Rating: 5

Powers: *magical resistance, blur form, silence*

Corruption Value: 16

Fear Rating: 1/2

Perseverance DN: 14

Weakness: severe weakness to objects made of bronze

True Death: freezing

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+3/16; fangs, damage value STR+2/15; wings, speed value 12; eyebeams, damage value 21, range 10-40/80/150

The Coming of Tarot

A vampire is normally one of the most fearless of monsters. Combining formidable powers with keen senses, near invulnerability and great intelligence, they can be among the most difficult to lay low.

But that is by no means the case in Java, where vampire covens are meeting to devise ways to deal with a new nemesis, known only as "Tarot." He first appeared six months into the war, leaving behind a trail of vampyric corpses, each with the Tarot cards for Death and the Devil laid in an "X" pattern on the creature's chest. Witnesses describe him as a young man wearing Victorian dress and carrying a medical bag.

More of Tarot's background has come out recently. The son of a Victorian scientist, Tarot led as happy a childhood as possible in Gaea, given the presence of the Gaunt Man and his minions. After the death of his sister at the hands of vampires, his father set to work devising a cure for the curse spread by the undead creatures. Half-insane with grief, he tested the serum on his son, only to see him transformed into a vampire-like creature. In a panic, he attempted to slay Tarot, but suc-

ceeded only in starting a fire which took his own life and destroyed his notes on the serum.

Tarot soon discovered that while he had many of the abilities of the vampire, the fact that he had attained his powers via a serum, rather than an occult ritual or the bite of another vampire, spared him the corrupting effects. He confined his lust for blood to animals, knowing in his heart that were he to bite another human, even an enemy, his soul would be lost.

Tarot set off on a crusade to eliminate the threat of vampires, and perhaps one day develop an antidote to the serum which transformed him. He has worked alone throughout his crusade, fearing that to spend an extended period of time around humans would make the temptation to draw upon them for sustenance too great.

"Tarot"

DEXTERITY 11

Acrobatics 13, beastriding 12, dodge 15, fire combat 14, lock picking 12, maneuver 14, stealth 13, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 11

Evidence analysis 13, find 15, scholar (realm lore) 14, tracking 13, trick 14

MIND 12

Medicine 14, science (chemistry) 14, test 15, willpower 15

CHARISMA 13

Persuasion 16, taunt 17

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Sacellum) 14, intimidation 18, reality 15

Possibilities: 25

Power Rating: 9

Powers: *hypnosis, life drain, infection, elemental alteration*

Weakness: severe weakness to silver

True Death: none

Natural Tools: fangs, damage value STR+2/15

Equipment: Colt Peacemaker, damage value 19, ammo 6, range 3-5/15/40; wooden stake, damage value STR+3/16; hammer, damage value STR+3/16; garlic; Holy Water; crucifix

Gamemaster note: It is unknown how Tarot was able to take on the



Powers of a corrupt vampyre without becoming corrupt himself. Though he believes it was because of the serum, it is more likely that Tarot's father took the Corruption upon himself, thus accidentally saving his son's soul.

At War with Nippon

Much of Thratchen's energies have been devoted to achieving revenge on Nippon Tech, both for its successful efforts to prevent the Tharkoldu invasion of the Soviet Union and its conquest of territory Thratchen had coveted for Orrorsh. Until the arrival of the Tharkoldu in Los Angeles, Orrorsh had been Nippon primary opponent, both on its own and through its alliance with Baruk Kaah and the Living Land.

One of the earliest successes in this war was the discovery by Orrorshan occultists of a means of summoning back to this plane the spirits of Nippon executives forced to kill themselves (or slain) by MarSec as a consequence of failure. These spirits have given Orrorshan agents information on how best to sabotage Nippon operations, pointing out key computers within the Nikkei network that would be ripe for mystical assault.

Another major offensive has taken the form of special computers which are actually occult devices, produced at an Omi Electronics plant in China with the aid of the Nightmare Skutharka. These computers act upon the human mind, increasing paranoia in executives and leading them to betray their companies before they themselves can be betrayed. After the action has been taken, the computer erases all of the distorted data it had been feeding the executive, leaving Nippon authorities with no clue as to why the betrayal took place.

Thratchen has also authorized the transport of Orrorshan talismans to China, in hopes of bringing to life some of the horrors of Chinese mythology to harass Nippon projects in that region. In addition, increasing numbers of ninja vampyres have been sent to Tokyo, and a number of key executives in Kanawa firms have been slain and enslaved by these creatures.

Look for a stepped-up campaign of terror against Nippon if the Gaunt

Man should return, as he has no less reason to hate 3327 for his actions against the Tharkoldu than does Thratchen.

New Horrors

A number of new Horrors have come into being since the publication of the *Orrorsh* sourcebook. Many of these will be detailed in the upcoming *Creatures of Orrorsh* supplement, but here are a few samples with which to whet your appetite:

Raggs

A creation of the Nightmare Ahjebax, Raggs is a bestial creature who gains strength from the hatred and disgust many people feel for the poor, the homeless, and the disenfranchised. Wearing the tattered clothes of a poverty-stricken human, and a wide-brimmed hat to conceal his horrifying features, Raggs moves among the poor in San Antonio, TX and periodically dismembers one or two. He times these incidents very carefully so as to attract the most media attention, hoping to sow political dissension as well as fear.

Raggs has killed close to 25 people at last count, and city-wide manhunts have failed to turn up any clue to his identity. Already, homeless advocacy groups have begun charging that the police are not doing as much as they could because the victims are poor. This has widened the rift between the middle-class and poor in the city, and strengthened Raggs even more.

Raggs

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, maneuver 13, prestidigitation 14, running 14, stealth 19, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 12

Climbing 15

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 14

Evidence analysis 15, find 16, language (English) 15, language (Spanish) 15, tracking 18, trick 20

MIND 9

Artist (actor) 12, survival 13, test 14, willpower 14

CHARISMA 10

Charm 15, persuasion 15, taunt 12

SPIRIT 7

Faith (Orrorsh) 9, intimidation 14, reality 12

Possibilities: 18

Power Rating: 7

Powers: cold aura, animal control (rats), blur form, darkness

Corruption Value: 20

Fear Rating: 1

Perseverance DN: 14

Weakness: stymie weakness to bright light

True Death: removal and burning of heart

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+5/17; teeth, damage value STR+3/15

Equipment: tattered clothing

Lurkers

Lurkers are minor Orrorshan demons, servants of Dr. Sconce, who take pleasure in tormenting children. Descriptions of lurkers vary widely, although they are almost always described as having huge claws, sharp teeth, and blood-red eyes.

The usual method of operation for a lurker is to use his power of *elemental alteration* to slip into a house unseen (through the chimney, or a crack in the window) and take up residence in a closet or under a bed. There he remains until dark, when he emerges and terrifies any children in the house. If an adult is summoned, the lurker transmutes to mist so he cannot be seen, and then returns to his natural state as soon as the child is alone again.

Lurkers are relatively cowardly creatures, and rarely enter into combat unless in a pack. When surrounded by 20 or 30 of their fellows, lurkers happily rend and tear whoever they encounter. They are occasionally used for simple jobs by various Nightmares, those not seen as crucial enough to waste a more effective Horror upon.

Lurker

DEXTERITY 9

Acrobatics 11, dodge 13, maneuver 12, prestidigitation 12, running 11, stealth 14, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 7

PERCEPTION 11

Tracking 13, trick 15

MIND 7



Test 9

CHARISMA 12

Persuasion 16, taunt 17

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Horrorsh) 9, intimidation 16

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+3/10; teeth, damage value STR+2/9

Power Rating: 3

Powers: *elemental alteration, dark vision*

Corruption Value: 12

Fear Rating: 1/2

Perseverance DN: 11

Weakness: *stymie* weakness when exposed to daylight

True Death: being laughed at by a child it is attempting to frighten

Thermoslith

The creature now stalking the Magnolia Research Station Georgia was once a researcher for ChemCorp, the

manufacturers of REAL-PEP. He was doused by a batch of the chemical transformed by Ahjebax and transformed into a snake-like monster composed of both fire and ice. Christened a "thermoslith" by Ahjebax, the beast has been slaying workers at the research station for the past several months, and Kanawa agents have been unable to stop it.

The thermoslith's presence is normally heralded by a sudden increase or decrease in the temperature of a room. It attacks by wrapping itself around its victim and then either freezing or melting him. (Thermoslith must make a successful *unarmed combat* attack to seize a victim. *Strength* total of 14 required to break its grip. Thermoslith will alternate heat and cold attacks when in combat.)

Thermoslith

DEXTERITY 13

Dodge 14, maneuver 14, stealth 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 14

PERCEPTION 7

Tracking 12, trick (11)

MIND 6

Survival 10, test (15)

CHARISMA 6

Charm (25), persuasion (30), taunt (13)

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Horrorsh) 9, intimidation 18, reality 12

Possibilities: 8

Power Rating: 6

Powers: *cold aura, fire attack*

Corruption Value: 17

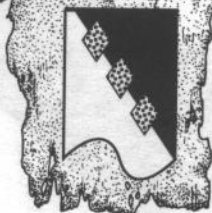
Fear Rating: 1

Perseverance DN: 15

Weakness: seeing its reflection in a mirror

True Death: being doused with gasoline while using its fire attack.

Natural Tools: fangs, damage value STR+2/15



CHAPTER SEVEN

DISPATCHES & RUMORS



Among the continuing features of the *Infiniverse* newsletter is the "Dispatches and Rumors" section. *Dispatches* are adventure hooks, things that we know for a fact are going on in the *Infiniverse* and which require investigation by Storm Knights. *Rumors* are exactly that — things which might or might not be taking place, and reader reaction determines the truth or falsehood of these events.

The Response Form

The mechanism by which readers interact with West End is the *Response Form*, one of which is included in the back of this book. This form allows the subscriber to tell us which dispatches his group has played and how well they succeeded, and also allows them to cast their votes on rumors. Refer to the response form on page 127 while reading the following section, which explains the various sections of the sheet.

Campaign Number

All *Infiniverse* subscribers receive a *Campaign Number* — this allows us to keep track of subscriptions in our computer and make sure the mailings get out right. If you are already an

Infiniverse subscriber and are responding to the dispatches and rumors in this book, write your campaign number in the space provided. If you are not an *Infiniverse* subscriber, you can still respond — simply write "NA" next to "Campaign Number." Your responses will be factored in along with those of regular subscribers.

Storm Knights

Enter the number of player character Storm Knights in your group. Do not include any Storm Knight gamemaster characters who might have become involved in your adventure.

Dispatches

Each dispatch in this book has a number (1-4). In the boxes provided, list the numbers of any dispatches your group has played.

Rumors

Each rumor in this volume also has a number (1-7). In these boxes, list the numbers of any rumors your party investigated. You need not go through all of them if you do not wish to — it is perfectly acceptable to respond to only one rumor, or only one dispatch. Then, in the space after the slash, write "T" or "F" to indicate whether these rumors are true or false in your campaign.

Adventure Realms

This is where things get a little tricky. Under this section, the various realms of *Torg* are listed. First check off each realm in which a significant scene of your adventure took place (i.e., if you fought a major battle in Nippon, and uncovered an important clue in the Nile Empire, you would check off both of those. If you passed through the Cyberpapacy, but nothing of import happened there, you probably wouldn't check it off).

Next you must determine which realms were most affected by your adventure. These are rated on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being tremendously affected and 0 being no effect at all. For example, if you stopped a Kanawa plot to sabotage the Rauru Block in Tokyo, you would probably put a "10" next to Nippon. If you accomplished this, but it led you to a bigger plot in the Nile Empire, which you also stopped, you might put a "5" next to Nippon and a "5" next to the Nile Empire.

Your adventure realm numbers **MUST** add up to 10. That means if you adventure in two realms, you have to make a judgment call: were they both 5s, or was one a 6 and one a 4? A 9 and a 1? Upon what realm did your group have the most impact? Remember, realms you just "passed through" probably only get a 0 or at most a 1.

Adventure Outcome

The adventure outcome measures just how well your group did in their mission on a scale of 1-9. Often, dispatches explain the requirements for achieving certain numbers, i.e., if you stopped Mobius from blowing up Cairo, you receive an adventure outcome of 6 or above. If he was able to blow up part of Cairo, you receive a 3-5. If the whole city has been blasted to rubble, you get a 1-2.

Here are the explanations for each numerical rating:

1: A complete failure. The Knights failed in their mission, and gained no knowledge that can help them in future adventures. It just doesn't get any worse than this.

2: A serious loss. The Knights failed in their main mission, but may have achieved a secondary goal or gathered some information they'll be able to use later on.

3: A costly victory. The Knights succeeded in their mission, but have fewer resources (including Possibilities) than they began with.

4: A decent victory. The Knights accomplished their mission, broke even on Possibilities, and gathered information they can use later against the High Lords.

5: Success. Achieving one's goals and ending up with a surplus of Possibilities rates an adventure outcome of 5.

6: More than Successful. To achieve a 6, the Knights must meet the same criteria as for a 5, plus play a glory card at some point in the adventure.

7: Really heroic. Harder to achieve than a 6, the Knights must have met the goals listed above, plus sparked the people with their story (see page 104 of the *Torg Rulebook*) and resolved any subplot cards in play. There must have been at least one active subplot for a 7 to be awarded.

8: Outstanding heroism. Same as 7, except that two glory cards must have been played in the adventure.

9: Just plain incredible. The Knights accomplished all the conditions of 8, and did it in so spectacular a manner that you, as the gamemaster, felt it deserved extra recognition.

Again, this rating requires a judgment call by the gamemaster, based on how the players performed and what their characters achieved.

Starting and Ending Possibilities

Next to Starting Possibilities, list the total number of Possibilities the Storm Knights had at the beginning of the adventure. Next to Ending Possibilities, list how many they had when the adventure came to a close (make sure to add these up before the players begin spending them to improve their characters.) Next to Card Total, list the number of ending Possibilities the Knights gained as a result of drama or glory cards.

Herald Messages

This is a space to write any messages you wish to send out into the Infiniverse. See Chapter Nine, "Herald Messages," for examples of these.

How do Rumors Work?

Many people ask us how we determine whether or not a rumor is true or false, and how we figure out the numerical value that you'll find listed next to them in each month's "Rumor Update." It's actually quite simple, as the following example will show:

We publish a rumor stating that the forces of Dr. Mobius trapped and killed three Mystery Men in a bar in Luxor, dealing a severe blow to Storm Knight operations in that city. In the month after it's sent out into the Infiniverse, we receive six responses to it, four True and two False.

We find the difference between the two totals by subtracting, ending up with 2. Since there were more Trues than Falses, we know that (for now) it's true. We then check the Bonus Chart, and find the total someone must generate to get a bonus of +2 (15). Thus, the rumor is True (15) to start, and will go up or down as the months pass. After four months have passed from the publication of the

rumor, we publish "The Wrap-Up," stating once and for all whether or not the rumor is true in the Infiniverse.

DISPATCHES

Dispatches, unlike rumors, are always true. When readers send in response forms indicating that they have used a dispatch in their campaign, we send out a Customized Response that continues the dispatch. If the Knights succeeded at their original mission, then they get one type of Customized Response. If they didn't, then they get another. We even have "mixed result" Customized Responses.

Here are some dispatches you can respond to:

1

Cyberpapal divers off the coast of Cassis, France (near Marseilles) have stumbled upon a cavern containing 10,000 year old drawings of animals and people. The divers had been seeking treasure reputed to have been lost in this area centuries ago, but discovered instead the undersea cave.

Preliminary examinations of the drawings revealed that the creatures depicted did not all resemble those known to exist on Earth. In addition, other inscriptions resembled maps of the cavern, with figures apparently symbolizing devices giving off heat and light included in the sketch.

Unfortunately, little more has been learned of the cave. The initial party returned to Avignon with their findings, but a second party sent to explore the cave did not. Malraux has ordered the entrance sealed, but work has not yet begun on that project, so there is still time to discover what secrets the cavern holds.

Storm Knights must proceed carefully, however. The cave is guarded by a sea creature apparently made of stone, approximately six meters in length and looking something like the classic "sea serpent." Its preferred method of attack is to blend into the side of an underwater mountain until its prey is inside the cave, and then attack, blocking off the entrance and

thus cutting off the only apparent avenue of escape as it does so. Whether this thing is a creature of the Land Below or something quite different remains unknown.

Stone Serpent

DEXTERITY 12

Maneuver 13, stealth 22, swimming 20, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 30

TOUGHNESS 21/30

PERCEPTION 8

Find 11, tracking 14, trick 13 MIND 6 Survival 14, test 12

CHARISMA 6

Charm (21), persuasion (25), taunt (13) SPIRIT 6

Intimidation 21

Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: stone hide, armor value TOU+9/30; teeth, damage value STR+2/32

Note: The Stone Serpent operates under the axioms of the Land Below, as listed in that volume.

2

A previously unknown type of alien has made its presence known in Peru in recent weeks. Three creatures calling themselves *Balek* have come before the Akashan High Council and officials of the Peruvian government claiming to be the last survivors of a race decimated by the Lorbaat. They have accused the Akashans of being accessories to the murder of their race by not destroying the aggressive insectoids when they had the opportunity.

According to the Balek, Lorbaat warships attacked their planet shortly after the Akashan armada left for Earth. As their world is located in a part of the Star Sphere never explored by the Akashans, there were no Monitors to protect them from the merciless slaughter. The Lorbaat did not wish to conquer—merely to destroy, and that they did, leaving the planet a radioactive ruin. Only these three escaped to tell the tale, following the path their instruments recorded for the armada to seek the help of the Rotan.

The Lorbaat have denied that there were any plans formulated for such an attack, and, for that matter, deny ever

having heard of a race such as the Balek. The charge has brought to the surface many instinctive Akashan prejudices toward the Lorbaat and widened the rift between the two races.

And that is exactly what the Balek wished. Though they were aware of both the Akashans and the Lorbaat, they have never had contact with either race. The three aliens happened to be scouting in the general area of the stargate to Earth, and followed the Akashans to this verdant, green (if war-torn) world. Unfortunately, their craft was destroyed on landing, and, although they did manage to salvage some parts out of which they plan to build communications gear, they are a long way off.

Ambitious, the Balek believe that by setting the Lorbaat and the Akashans against each other, then allying with the side that will apparently be victorious, they could eventually come to dominate the Akashan realm.

Although the Rotan is concerned by their claims, his attention is required elsewhere and he has yet to announce a decision. Storm Knight action is required to prove the treachery of the Balek.

Balek Warrior (3)

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 14, energy weapons 13, long jumping 11, melee weapons 12, stealth 11, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 10

Find 11, space vehicles 18, trick 15 MIND 7

Test 10

CHARISMA 11

Charm 13, persuasion 13, taunt 12

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 9

Possibility Potential: some (60)

Natural Tools: claws, damage value STR+3/15

Equipment: erkaj blaster, fires pencil-thin beam of laser energy (the preferred method of attack of these three is to shear off the limbs of an opponent (using *vital blows*), which can then be sold to cyborg-construction houses), damage value 27, ammo 30 (rechargeable power pack), range 80/300/600;

translator

Description: Baleks are not really a race, as such, although their various social levels do share similar characteristics. Balek was a prison world long before the Akashans moved out into space, where the scum of various galaxies was dumped. Over the centuries, these various aliens bred and their descendants are now taking advantage of the fact that their origins are unknown to most other races. While the Balek could not be classified as evil, they are certainly unscrupulous and definitely amoral. These three Balek are roughly three meters in height, and are humanoid in all respects save for their hands, which consist of crustacean-like claws. Their skin is dark reddish and it looks tougher than normal human epidermis.

3

A team of Orrorshan monster-hunters has disappeared near New London (Padang), following their discovery of a plot to chemically synthesize fear, and then introduce the solution into the food supply of entire towns. The sheer terror produced would be a great boon to the "ecology" of Orrorsh, and the ability to guarantee massive amounts of fear would go far toward promoting its creator to a position as a Nightmare, or even a spot on the Helion Court itself.

The last report received from the Orrorshans indicated that a portion of Padang had been given the solution and had turned on the monster-hunters, apparently moved by an uncontrollable fear of them. For their own safety, the Victorian government was planning to take the intrepid team to a place where they would be sheltered from the maddened mob.

Unfortunately, that place turned out to be Oldane Hills, a lunatic asylum just outside of Padang run by Dr. Terrence Oldane. It is here that those who persist in accusing certain Victorians of being under the influence of Horrors are sent to rest and recuperate; it is here that those gibbering idiots who have somehow survived monster attacks are dispatched to recover; it is here that even Storm Knights can



get some time away from the war in Orrorsh; and it is here that all of these are used by Oldane in his experiments to create a chemical formula for fear.

Oldane must be stopped before he ensures a steady supply of fear in the realm and strengthens Orrorsh even further against outside attack. Oldane does have a trio of amphids to protect him, but relies also on his inmates, who can be induced to fear (and thus hate) anyone the doctor chooses.

Dr. Terrence Oldane

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 11, fire combat 11, melee weapons 11, stealth 12, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Evidence analysis 15, find 13, scholar (realm lore) 13, trick 16

MIND 12

Medicine 18, science (chemistry) 17, science (psychiatry) 17, willpower 17

CHARISMA 13

Charm 14, persuasion 15

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 11, reality 16

Possibilities: 15

Equipment: Rutherford single barrel pistol, damage value 14, ammo 1, range 3-5/15/25; hypodermic syringe with fear serum. The fear serum has an effect value of 18, and a successful *unarmed combat* attack is required to inject it. Have player character generate a *Toughness* roll against serum effect value to see if chemical takes effect.

If chemical does take effect, the result points for the serum are measured against the target's *Mind*. Compare the results on the Intimidation Column of the "Interaction Results Table." On a *Player's Call*, sheer panic makes the target break and attempt escape, heedless of his own safety. The serum's effects last for three minutes per injection.

4

Agents of Aysle, Orrorsh and the Cyberpapacy have converged on the city of Rangoon in Burma, and are apparently in competition for a powerful eternity shard rumored to be located there. Located within the famed golden temple known as the Shwedagon Pagoda, the shard they seek is the Maha Ganda bell.

The bronze bell, weighing over 23 tons, is said to be enchanted so that it cannot be removed from the temple. The first of its kind was given to the Buddhist temple in 1485 by King Dhammazedhi, but was stolen by a Portuguese mercenary in 1608. The mercenary planned to melt it down to make cannons, but, misjudging the weight, he allowed the bell to fall into the river (taking him with it). Neither man nor bell were ever recovered.

The second Maha Ganda bell was forged in 1779. In 1826, British soldiers



stole the bell and planned to ship it to Calcutta, but again, the bell fell into the waters and they were unable to recover it. Burmese natives later attached bamboo poles to the bell and thus caused it to float to the surface.

Since that time, it has rested on the northwest terrace of the pagoda and been considered inviolate. It is said that if an effort is made to remove the bell from the temple a third time, a great tragedy will befall all of Burma. Storm Knights must make an effort to prevent the agents of the invading realms from stealing the shard.

The Maha Ganda Bell

Cosm: Core Earth

Possibilities: 50

Tapping Difficulty: 19

Purpose: To guard the followers of the path of enlightenment from evil and ignorance

Powers: The Maha Ganda Bell provides a +3 to *Mind-* or *Perception-*based actions to all seekers of truth within a five-meter radius of itself

Group Power: *Stelae Sense*

Restrictions: Seekers of knowledge must be willing to share what they have learned with others to use this shard. The bell's possibilities may not be used to augment violent actions, only those which involve the quest to avoid violence.

RUMORS

1

Tharkoldu techno-demons are said to be experimenting with a new form of Relictin V which would restore the dead to more than just a mockery of life, but actually restore their flesh and allow them to pass for the living. They would, of course, retain their taste for flesh, but would be able to procure it far more easily since their victims would not detect their undead state immediately. If successful, the

Tharkoldu plan to step up their campaign of spraying cemeteries with what will be dubbed "Relictin VI."

2

Nile agents sent to Crete to investigate the possibility of expanding the realm to that area found more than they bargained for, with only one surviving to return to Thebes with the news. While exploring a monastery near Rethymnon on the north coast of Crete, they were attacked by what were apparently the specters of 19th century monks. According to legend, this monastery had been the sight of a decisive battle between monks and invading Turks, which ended when 800 clerics set off a storage room full of gunpowder, killing themselves and massive numbers of the enemy.

Whether or not these ghosts truly existed, or are being simulated for some unknown reason, or are just a soldier's delusion, is unknown.

3

Nippon agents in Eastern China have reported encountering a number of giant lizards resembling Ayslish dragons. They did not appear to be hostile, and, upon closer examination, differences were seen in the scale structure and the height and length of these creatures as opposed to those of Aysle. Local villagers have claimed that these are, indeed, specimens of the dragons that are featured throughout Chinese mythology. A few natives have gone so far as to whisper that the dragons have returned to protect their land from encroachment by the Japanese, and, when the time is right, will level the glass and steel palaces of the enemy.

Whether this is true, or simply the product of wild optimism, remains to be seen. But the Nippon agents are known to be treading more cautiously, and an investigation is underway to determine if accursed Ayslish magic could be somehow responsible for the sightings.

4

Cyberpope Malraux has been intensely disturbed of late by reports of a war taking place in the GodNet between Seraphim, Principalities, and Archangels against Archdemons and their Mephistophelian hordes. Both groups claim to be serving masters other than Malraux, but the truth or falsehood of those claims has never been determined.

What is known for certain is that the battles apparently began in Purga-

tory when demons surged up the datapaths from Hell. Conflicts have been reported in the Trash and Catacombs areas, and have even spilled into outlying areas of church exchanges. The cause of the conflict is not apparent, but Malraux knows that if it is not stopped, the GodNet could well be torn asunder. It is said he has instructed some of his cyberpriests to look the other way if Storm Knights should attempt to mediate the dispute.

5

Berlin has seen an upswing in horrible slasher murders since the execution of Operation Central Fire. Many people of the streets, the middle class, and even the military have been found torn apart, apparently by metallic claws. Fear and anger are becoming commonplace emotions in the large city of Germany.

And Cyberpope Malraux has as much as claimed responsibility. Broadcasting over the airwaves his sermonized propaganda, he blames "the leaders of the Germanic nations for incurring the Wrath of the One True God's Most Faithful."

But there are things that just don't quite click. While the Cyberpope's minions, his HOGs and Hospitaliers, are not above excessive cruelty and violence, the occurrences in Berlin are even above their ability. Reports of people being kept alive and tortured for days and the atrocities that have been committed against the flesh are too derived and planned for Malraux's minions. While they kill, and kill cru-

elly, they do not have the ... finesse displayed by the Berlin slashers.

Rumor states that Malraux is actually covering up for another malevolent force — the Tharkoldu. It is well known that the demons of Tharkold hate the Cyberpapacy — if only because it reminds them of Kadandra and Hachi Mara-Two — but this is the first indication that Malraux fears that anger. It is suspected that he is covering up the truth to hide the fact that Tharkold may be operating in his backyard, apparently unopposed.

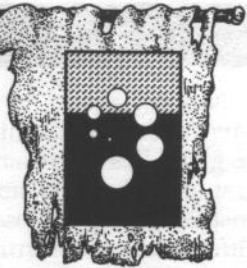
6

Despite the mixed success of the invasion of Sacramento, it is apparent that the High Lord 3327 — "Ryuchi Kanawa" — may be beginning an attempt at capturing another seaport on American soil. Nippon operatives have been purchasing, driving out, or otherwise moving into areas of San Francisco, another free port in the United States.

While this may be a costly operation, it is apparent that 3327 worries about the possibility of losing Sacramento — either to the Tharkold demons or even to Core Earth itself. More and more, Kanawa has lost favor with the American Delphi Council, one of the few governing bodies in the free world that still consider Japan an ally in the fight against the possibility raiders. If Kanawa goes ahead with this further encroachment on the US, he may be costing himself a valuable minion and even his cover as a Core Earth businessman.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Best of YOUR LETTERS



long with the unprecedented influence *Infiniverse* subscribers have over the course of the game, there is a tremendous amount of interaction between the game's designers and its players in the letters pages of the newsletter. Questions are asked and answered and suggestions are given for directions the gaming audience would like to see *Torg* travel in.

Included below are some of the more interesting (and/or most frequently asked) questions culled from the pages of *Infiniverse*.



In the Worldbook and The Living Land sourcebook, the rules say that when certain things are used (i.e., magic in the Living Land) it creates a contradiction. Does this mean the Everlaw of One eliminates the contradiction without having the character make a contradiction check, and he must now try to relink?

— Robert Maxwell
Athens, GA

A contradiction check is always necessary to disconnect. Causing a contradiction is the first step; the second crucial step is being suppressed by the Everlaw of One, which only happens when a character fails a contradiction check.



The rules are unclear as to how the faith/focus powers work. Could we have some more detailed explanation and/or some examples?

— Jeri Haley / Brian Mudd
Twin Peaks, CA

Faith is used to provide the power for a miracle by tapping into the spiritual belief of the faithful character. *Focus* is used to gather this energy for a single purpose, which is the miracle at hand. Both are necessary for a miracle; the *focus* skill is the more closely associated with the knowledge, rituals and skills of the clergy. Strong belief is sufficient for *faith*.

The character who benefits from the miracle must provide the *faith* for the miracle. Another character may provide the *focus*; if a character with *focus* is the beneficiary of the miracle's effect, then he uses his own *faith* to generate the miracle.



How can a character convert over to a new reality and still remain a possibility-rated character?

— Stephen G. Dycus
Evansville, IN

The crux of this answer lies in the fact that it is not possible to transform a possibility-rated character into an ord. Even if you strip a stormer of all possibilities and *reality* adds, he retains possession of the *reality* skill (at zero adds), and thus is capable of stor-

ing and using Possibilities.

Storm Knights can only be transformed as a result of *reality* storms, and not simply by disconnecting and living for a time in a different realm. Thus an Ayslish mage may be caught in a Nile reality storm and transformed, losing all his Possibilities and *reality* adds. But he retains the skill — when next he adventures, he may gain Possibilities at the end of a successful mission, which could be used to purchase an add in *reality*.

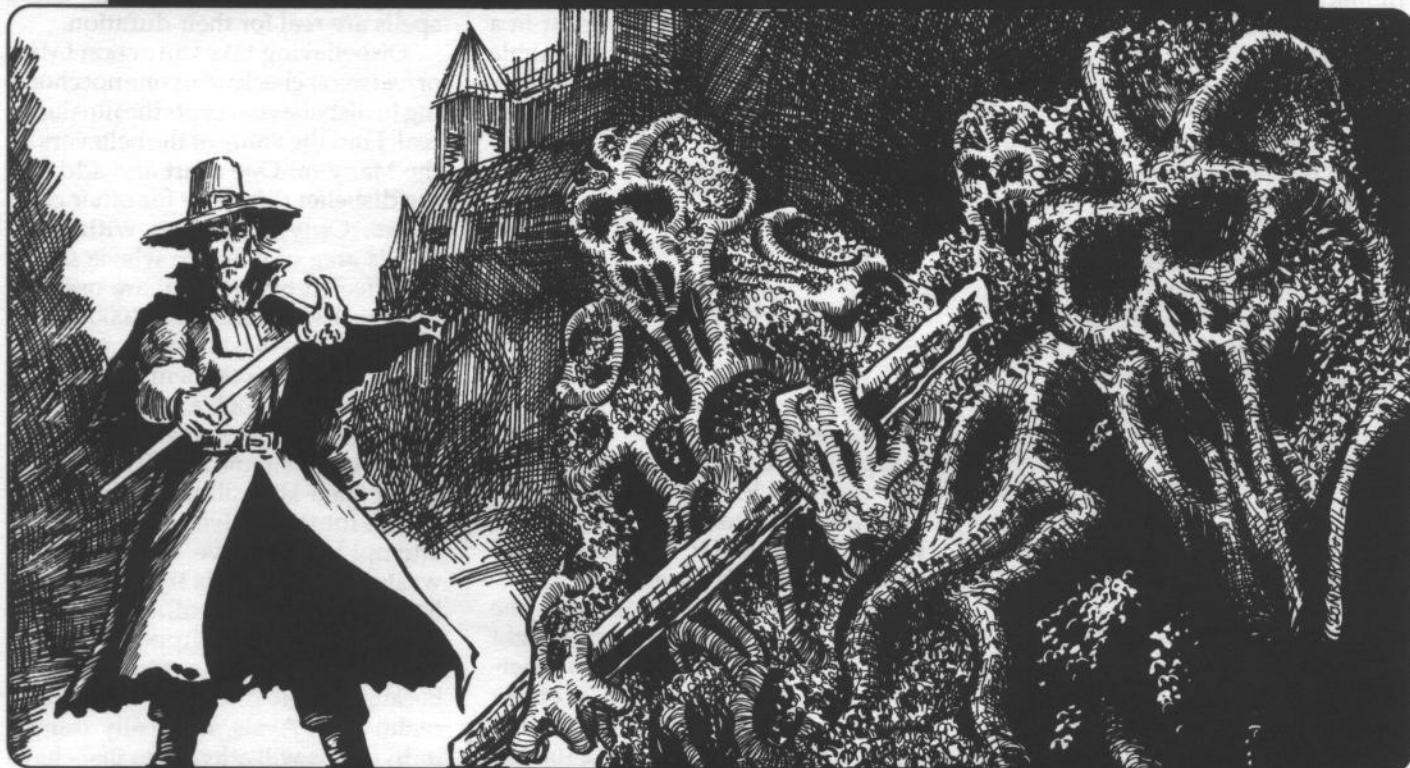
Templates which list a character as being "Nile Empire (transformed)" or "Cyberpapacy (transformed)" are often characters who were *reality*-rated prior to their transformation, and have regained some Possibilities through their actions since their transformation.



Are characters tied to their home cosm's World Laws while in another realm? If not, can Nile Empire characters shift away from their strict Good or Evil inclinations? Can Nippon Tech characters use their stealth and deception bonuses outside of Nippon Tech?

— Tim Martin
Altamante Springs, FL

World laws, like axioms, are part of a character's reality. To use a world law (yours) in another reality requires a contradiction check (with the exception of characters in the Akashan/Space Gods realm, due to their Law of Acceptance. See the *Space Gods*



sourcebook for details). A Nippon Tech character who is using the deception bonus makes a contradiction check when using *persuasion*, even though *persuasion* is allowed in every realm. If a Nile Empire character is using any ability or power from the Nile cosm, she must also use the world laws. But if she chose to forego the use of all Nile skills and powers, she would be able to ignore her world laws (this amounts to voluntary disconnection and a character must reconnect after doing it).

Players who enjoy roleplaying their characters should know that their characters see their world laws as part of the way the world *really* works. Operating under different world laws would seem quite alien to the character. Still, Storm Knights are heroes and unusual people, so they can voluntarily disconnect when they must.



In the Torg Rulebook on page 90, gospog are said to never be possibility

rated. Yet The Living Land sourcebook says that the gospog of the first through fourth plantings may use firearms under the Living Land reality. How is this possible?

— Patrick Flanagan,
Freehold, NJ

The Gaunt Man created gospog to provide serviceable troops, no matter what cosm was being invaded. The key realization was that, while all living things were part of one reality or another at all times, the unliving could be mixed, as the existence of mixed zones proved. Errorsh was uniquely suited to produce unliving troops. Gospog are “walking, personal mixed zones,” a mixture of the invading and the invaded cosms. They may use the tools of either cosm. Whenever they enter a third cosm they must roll for disconnection only if the task would cause a contradiction in both of the cosms which make up the gospog. A Nippon Tech gospog is really a

Nippon/Core Earth gospog, so it could use laser weapons of Tech 24 in Core Earth, but it could not use cyberware in any realm. They do not count as mixed zones for other characters, i.e., an edeinos could not stand on a gospog and cast miracles in Core Earth without fear of disconnection.



How are skill adds done for shapeshifters?

— Tony Perkins
Moscow, ID

A shapeshifter must be from Errorsh, and *shapeshifting* must be his tag skill. A shapeshifter's total attributes must be the same in all forms, though they may be distributed differently. The *Spirit* attribute has to retain the same total.

The shifter has two completely different sets of skills, and a player has 16 skill points to assign to each form (with three going to *shapeshifting*). The hu-

man is confined to those skills appropriate to his template type, and the animal to those appropriate to him. On a shapeshifter's template, all skill numbers are divided by a slash, with the human value on the left and the animal form on the right. Some skills, like *fire combat*, could be used by the human but not the animal.

The skill value depends upon the form the shapeshifter is in. For example, Matt has a *Dexterity* of 9 and one add in *dodge*, giving him a skill value of 10. But when he turns into a wolf under the full moon, his *Dexterity* increases to 10 — he still has one add in *dodge*, but his skill value is now 11. However, his *fire combat* adds are useless in wolf form.



1) What is the Toughness of a maelstrom bridge?

2) After fifth-planting gospog are harvested, does a field become useless? Can another set of first planting gospog be planted?

3) Is it possible for a character to invoke a reality storm against another citizen of her home cosm?

4) Does an object in a hardpoint work even if its power source is outside the hardpoint? For example, would there be electricity in Philadelphia, a known hardpoint, if its power plant was in a Living Land pure zone? What if the power plant worked but the power lines passed through a pure zone?

— Dan Viger,
Bronx, NY

1) Maelstrom bridges have a *Toughness* ranging from 50 to 75. To destroy a bridgehead, the average *Toughness* is 55. The *Toughness* of an entire bridge is 75 or more. When Eddie Paragon blew up California's Living Land bridge in *The Nightmare Dream*, he either rolled a 215 (for a bonus of +46) or played a *Martyr* card.

2) The field may be used for a new planting of first-generation gospog.

3) Reality storms may be invoked against characters in their home cosm by characters from another cosm (if transformed, they switch to the other cosm). If two characters are from the same cosm, a reality storm may not be created, no matter what realm they are in.

4) Moving the electricity is a long-range contradiction. It would be possible for possibility-rated characters in a mixed or dominant zone, or in a pure zone providing a reality bubble was created. Philadelphia has electricity only because of emergency generators.



Can a character with pulp powers use them in the GodNet?

— J. Higginbotham
Litchfield Park, AZ

If a Nile hero somehow found herself within the GodNet, she would find that her powers worked — to some extent. Nile powers are part of that person, so they would be a part of that person's VX self. However, certain powers would be ineffective within the GodNet — the *super-attribute of Strength*, for example.

Devices can be brought into the GodNet as long as the Storm Knight has the *Mind* value necessary to generate the VX image (see page 25 of *The GodNet*). However, it would be the *Mind* of the Knight that gave the device its power — the device itself does not actually exist in the Net.



Can laser weapons destroy vampires? After all, a laser beam is concentrated light.

— Greg Detwiler,
Williamsburg, PA

Traditionally, vampires are vulnerable to *sunlight*, a specific kind of light. Flashlights and torches have no effect. So he would not necessarily be vulnerable to the light from a laser.

But, keep in mind that Orrorshan vampires are not traditional vampires. In that realm, not all vampires are vulnerable to sunlight, and some might even have a resistance to energy weapons. In addition, even though a vampire might be killed by a conventional weapon, unless the method used was that of his true death, his soul will simply return in another form to menace the Knights.



Could illusions be better explained? The rules for casting are sketchy.

— John Maurer,
Nashville, TN

Illusions are magical "cheats" because they use magic to simulate reality and may be disbelieved. Other spells are real for their duration.

Disbelieving takes an action (*Mind* or *willpower* check). Anyone not choosing to disbelieve accepts the illusion as real. Find the value of the believers on the Many-on-One chart and add it to the disbelief difficulty for other characters. Only characters within the spell's area of effect or whose senses are affected by the spell are used for this check (for example, if 1000 people believe in the existence of an illusory bridge, but none of them can see it or are within the spell's effect, they are not used for the Many-on-One. The gamemaster shouldn't tell the characters a spell is an illusion; they must decide for themselves what they will attempt to disbelieve. Characters can waste several rounds trying to disbelieve a spell that is real).

Characters from Nippon Tech and the Living Land are apt to disbelieve because magic doesn't work in their realities. In Aysle, magically trained individuals will attempt to disbelieve when they think it is appropriate; most common people often can't distinguish between realm magic and illusion magic. Once a character has accepted something as real, he will not attempt to disbelieve until prompted to disbelieve the spell.

The spell ends once anyone disbelieves the illusion. To those who disbelieve, the spell's effect disappears. Those who believed will perceive reality but also will have lingering perceptions of the illusion. Wounds and damage caused by illusions *do not vanish* when the illusion is disbelieved — they are real damage because the illusion was, for all intents and purposes, real at the time they were inflicted.



Is it possible to purchase back issues of Infiniverse?

— Dennis M. Bohannon
Los Angeles, CA

Back issues of *Infiniverse* are available direct from West End Games at a cost of \$3.00 per issue. Please specify which issues you want in a cover letter with your check or money order.

CHAPTER NINE



HERALD MESSAGES

When the Storm Knights lit the Signal Fire in the Forever City, they unknowingly opened a line of communication between Earth and the Star Sphere, home of the Akashans. Messages recounting the exploits of Storm Knights began being beamed into space, and it was these which the Akashans intercepted and took to mean the Fire had been rekindled.

Infiniverse has also intercepted many of these communications, and some of the most interesting are collected here. All of these were submitted by *Infiniverse* subscribers during the first year of publication. For your perusal:

The "Stillworld" is no more. Earth turns on its axis once again due to the valiant efforts of a group of Storm Knights.

— Scott Mitchell
Chicago, IL

We have sparked Giza with two stories and Tokyo with one. There is an eternity shard sunk in Tokyo Bay from the Nile Empire. Nippon Tech is stealing eternity shards to sell to the highest bidder.

— Seth Rutledge
Charlotte, NC

FOR SALE: PBY Seaplane, recently "acquired" from the Nile Empire. Has sustained some combat damage, but still flies well. Fully armed.

WANTED: AIM-9L Side-

winder missiles or AIM-132B ASRAAM. Need 4 mounting on somewhat modified L24 Learjet. Contact Hummingbird in Paris, France.

— Michael Levay
Roscommon MI

"... Need a breather
— my F-15 cuts out on me while fighting with this mothballed, takes everything I got to operate the ejector, then I climb up here on the tail of this heap when it crosses my chute. Well, it can't get any worse ... Oh, great, that's just great!"

— Grayson Steward
Somewhere over the Nile

Have any of you ever tried recalibrating a reality bomb from the Nile Empire? Say, setting it to Core Earth standard axioms and letting go? Dr. Mobius won't like it at all.

— Duane Tant
Fairfax, VA

Storm Knights investigating disappearance of a statuette at the New Smithsonian in L.A. discovered an ancient race (but possibly new invaders) on Easter Island. High Lord Uthorion has surfaced in a new body. He seeks the Eye of Morgathni, and now seeks it in an alien cosm ... beware!

— John Kahane
Ottawa, Canada

"If the two of you are that sweet on each other, I know a very liberal priest of Dunad who lives nearby ..."

— Jacona the Mage,
to the lovely human-Uvwe couple who are obviously infatuated with each other

The spirit of Sir Lancelot is residing in a robotic construct and living in CyberFrance. He (with a group of Storm Knights) helped recover Excalibur from Lake Michigan.

— Jeff Campbell
Corvallis, OR

After a few minor setbacks, the Renwick agency rescued Prof. Templeton from the gospog occupying the Empire State Building. In desperation, the gospog called on the dreaded "El Crakken," who Jennifer Renwick sent hurtling to a fiery death from atop the Empire State Building. Next stop, the Cyberpapacy!

— Paul B. Hyson
Alloway, NJ

Miracle in the underside of New York. Catherine has been resurrected! Father says they are all doing well.

— Susan and Lee Manges,
Allentown, PA

Mobius has a pet German scientist who is working on a cybertech/weird science combo. We blew his lab but he and his



robotic gorilla escaped. We think he has a second lab in Khartoum
— Sean Holland
Oregon City, OR

If you've done a thousand impossible things today, come drink your coffee at the Realm Runner Cafe. Located in downtown New Orleans, this is where the elite meet after handing a High Lord defeat. Dining, dancing and drinks. Rated "four stars."
— Jeff Campbell
Corvallis, OR

"Hey, gospog, your mother was a side salad at McDonald's!"
— Edmond the Werewolf

Ndatos are just disguised Orrorsh pirates. Satellite photography shows reality storm front in Antarctica. Team Australia re-

ported cities of ice and steel, and axioms unlike any of the other realms in Antarctica. Further investigation is being prepared.
— Mark L. Chance

While investigating Neuschwanstein Castle, we found a map that led us into the Nile Empire to recover (drumroll, please) the Holy Grail. Pursued by Nile shocktroopers through the Land Below, we reemerged in Canada and extinguished the flame of the Northern Lands, Testacha.
— J. Higginbotham
Litchfield Park, AZ

When flying in the Living Land, all I can say is, "it's all in your glide path."
— Duster
The Martian invasion of Terra

has been crushed by an alliance of Storm Knights and pulp heroes known as "Astrologers for Justice." All of them have training in *divination* magic and will now attempt to undermine Mobius' home base in exchange for the Knights' aid.
— Gregory Detwiler
Williamsburg, PA

The original Rider-Waite Tarot deck has been found in Madrid, and seems to be an eternity shard. Is this linked to recent vampyre hunter activity in Orrorsh? Film at eleven.
— Brian Schoner
Lake Worth, FL

Polyphebo,
It has come to Our attention that the Storm Knight Olin and his out-worlдер comrades are

riding from Land's End to Oxford. It is Our will that they not reach Pella Ardinay. If you wish to retain Our favor, do not fail.

— Thorfinn Bjanni

S/W/M Storm Knight seeks sensitive, intelligent S/W/F. Must enjoy *weird science*, moonlit walks on the beach, and grinding High Lords into a mangled, bloody pulp. Ability to reload quickly a plus. No fatties or lycanthropes, please.

A joint Soviet-Sudanese thrust into the Nile Empire has yielded spectacular success. With the aid of the Soviet psychic group, six stelae were deactivated. In retaliation, Mobius has had four psychics murdered by Nile assassins. In other developments, commandos from Battlegroups Wu Han and Sesetek have captured Crete and Cyprus.

— Patrick Flanagan,
Freehold, NJ

"The Reality Rangers are no more — send more fools!"

— Dr. Mobius

Inclination/seduction can be used against divine mummies. But it does lead to some unusual situations ...

— Jim Ogle
Socorro, NM

Working with the Metropoli-

tan Protectorate in New York, the Plague Paladins have valiantly fought off Delphi Council Spartans and rescued President Douglas Kent, taking him and 300 citizens of Long Island on a barge to Charleston, SC.

— Tasha,
Plague Paladins

S/W/F Storm Knight is eager to hook up with S/W/M from *Infiniverse 9* and *10*. Ask in Rio for "J.J."

Extrac cosmic beings
— come join the Knights of Niceness, a Nile-based super group. All applicants considered.

— Mega-Sparrow

Eternity shard located on Liberty Island recovered, lost to Nile agents, recovered, lost to Nippon agents, stolen from Nippon by Nile agents, and at last recovered by Storm Knights, only to have it teleport to France. Shard was bronze plaque set in base and has *teleport* power. Gearing up for trip to Cyberpapacy.

— William Gill
Corpus Christi, TX

Fred the Galactic Guardsman is dead. He detonated four grenades, destroying himself and an Orrorshan occult object and saving the lives of his comrades and the entire resistance community of Shelby.

Fred was a Storm Knight's Storm Knight, and he never teased me about wearing the crown of King Pellinore everywhere. We gave him something called a "Viking funeral" in the Living Land. He will be sorely missed.

— Skippy the Edeinos

Dear Moby,

Muab and ImageMaster are dead, so you can't transform Hawaii. Hoping to prevent any hard feelings, I will send back the stelae if you send me adequate postage.

— Your Storm Knight,
The Gray Ghost

Mega-Sparrow —

I wish to apply for membership in the Knights of Niceness.

My qualifications:

- High School Graduate, GPA 3.9
- Masters Degree in *Weird Science*
- *Flight, Electro-Ray* and *Force Field*
- Own a half-dozen assorted eternity shards
- Pull up an average of two stelae per week
- Eat gospog for breakfast
- Hope to hear from you soon.

— Shu, King of the Sky

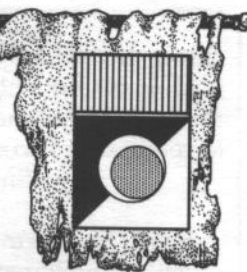
Life is a lot more valuable when you are strapped to an altar.

— Casey Childers
Rex, GA



CHAPTER TEN

NEW RULES & ERRATA



Periodically, *Infiniverse* provides subscribers with new rules, clarifications, corrections, or other game aids. Many of these are suggested by questions asked by readers, or "house rules" sent to us which we consider solid enough to adopt into the "official" canon. Included here are some of those which have already been published, along with some new ones.

Increasing Skills Over Time

The skill rules cover the spending of Possibilities to increase skills, and this is the quickest way for a Storm Knight to advance. But a Storm Knight may also train to gain skills; training is the only way an Ord may improve his skills.

To train, a character must devote himself exclusively to training in that skill, spending eight hours a day, at least 25 days a month to count as one month of training. The number of months needed to improve a skill is equal to the value of the number of Possibilities which would be required to raise the skill to the next level.

Example: A character wishes to improve his running from +3 to +4 in running. It would require four Possi-

bilities to raise the skill. The value of four is six, so the athlete would have to train for six months to raise his running skill to +4.

The same rule applies for learning the first add in a skill, so training for +1 in *alteration* magic, without a teacher, would require 10 Possibilities, or 100 months training.

A Storm Knight may either train for a skill add or spend Possibilities for the add. He may not mix and match. The only skill increases possible for an Ord are through training.

Gamemasters should emphasize the story elements of player character training — the difficulty of finding a teacher, the tests that must be passed, etc. For example, an entire adventure could be built around a character seeking a Sons of the Wind temple where he could receive *martial arts* training. Remember, possibilities are not magic — they don't just "give skills" to characters; skill acquisition should be worked into the story.

Card Play and Group Size

Group size does affect the probabilities of card combinations being played from players' hands. We balanced the card deck for what we considered to be the most likely size of

groups, which is three to six players. From the *Infiniverse* responses, it is apparent that many people are playing in groups which do not fit in this range. The following optional rules help keep game balance when you have fewer or more than three to six players.

One Player: The player receives eight cards. Each time he starts a card pool, he may play three cards. Play of a *leadership* card allows the player to add two cards to her own pool, then refill her hand to eight. A *rally* card also completely refills the hand. *Supporter* cards may be played to support a gamemaster character, or the player may discard it immediately upon drawing it in favor of another card.

Two Players: Each player receives six cards. When each player starts a card pool, each may play two cards into their pool. *Leadership* cards allow the player to refill her hand to six. A *rally* card completely refills each player's hand.

Three to Six Players: Card play is unchanged.

Seven or More Players: The maximum number of cards a player may trade and/or receive through play of *leadership* cards in a round is six. So if a player receives two cards from the play of a *leadership* card, she may only trade four cards that round. This limit balances the superior card selec-



100

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect Ax: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Cosm: Aysle

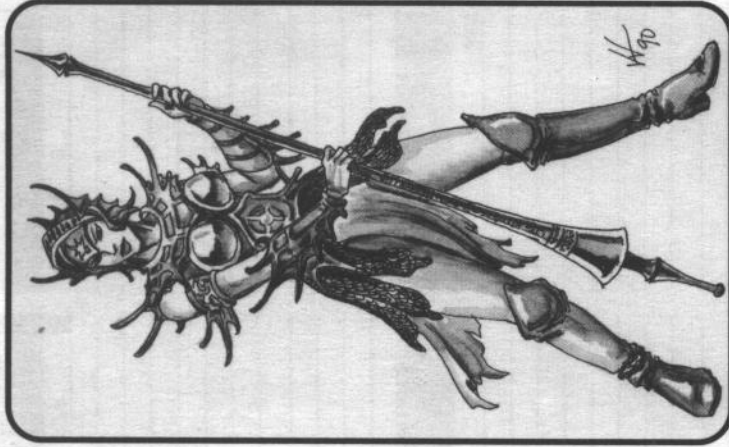
Background: From the time you were a child, you had the happy talent of being able to calm monstrous dragons with your soft words. As you grew older, you found the creatures would let you fly with them through the skies, and you soon joined the ranks of the dragonriders.

You fought many battles among the clouds, but it was not until you came to Earth that you met any of the people you were trying to conquer face to face. You found them not very much different from your friends on Elveim, and could not understand why Ardinay demanded their destruction.

When it was revealed that the Lady of the Light had been possessed, you wasted no time in offering your services to her army. Tolwyn of Tancred welcomed you, but said that your abilities would best be put to use by the side of Storm Knights, and she introduced you to a group. Now you fight beside them against those who would bring death and despair to this new land.

Personality: Brash and impetuous, you are happiest when you are on your mount and soaring high above the realm. You are firmly convinced that most problems arise from the fact that so many must spend their lives chained to the ground.

Equipment: elfmail, armor value TOU+6/14; lance, damage value STR+5/13; short sword, damage value STR+4/12; sword scabbard; glass mirror; sleeping mat; silken cord; cloth



cloak; Draconis Aysle (see pages 110-111 of the *Aysle* sourcebook); 400 trades

Quote: "He is truly a great, proud beast. See the rich, golden color of the flames he breathes?"

Skill Notes: See the "Determining Magic by Birth" chart on page 23 of the *Aysle* sourcebook to discover your innate magical skill and knowledge. Your tag skill is *beast riding*.

NOTES



Player Name: _____

Miracles	
Name	C D E Ax

[illegible][illegible]

CR: Cyber Rating R: Range

*D: Difficulty B: Backlash E: Effect Ax: Axiom Level C: Community Rating CR: Cyber Rating R: Range



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

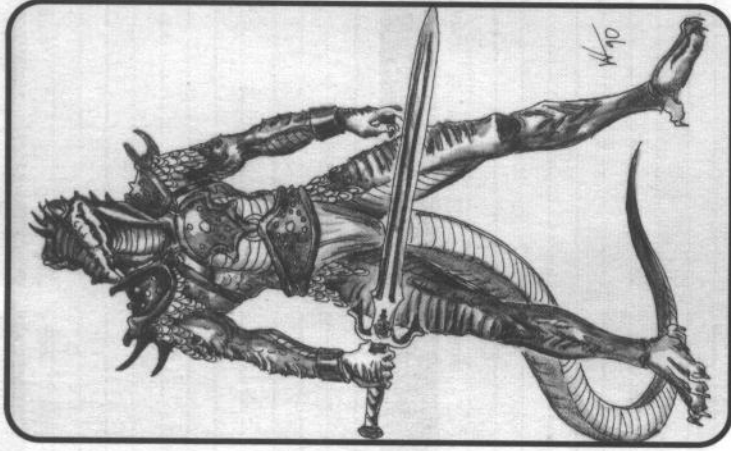
Cosm: Aysle (transformed)

Background: Confronted in the Eastern Land by a panicky Ayslish Storm Knight, you found yourself on the business end of an invoked reality storm. Suddenly, your world view changed — you realized that there was more to life than just watching the grass grow, and that someone who believes in truth and justice has an obligation to do something about it.

Once you had convinced the Ayslish you didn't intend to bite him, he agreed to take you on as an apprentice paladin. Unfortunately, he died in battle before he could finish teaching you the things you needed to know. You now carry his sword, and try to live up to his memory.

You recently made your first trip to Aysle, and were surprised and flattered to discover that people mistook you for a smaller version of the proud and fierce dragons that fill the land. It's an erroneous impression you have used to good advantage in battle with cutpurses and highwaymen throughout the realm.

Personality: You are determined to prove that you can be just as noble as the next guy. You spend a great deal of time reading the classics, trying to learn what a chivalrous paladin is supposed to be like.



Equipment: bronze armor, TOU+4/14; broadsword, damage value STR+6/15; torch; sleeping mat; 100 trades

Quote: "No, I am not a dragon. But I do appreciate the compliment."

Skill Notes: Your tag skill is *melee weapons*. You must take one add in honor.

NOTES



CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Ustanah Warrior

Player Name:

Character Name		Home Land Below		Possibilities	
		Cosm			
Age	Wound Level	Shock Damage	Magic 12	Social 8	10
Height	Hvy Wound		Spiritual 17	Tech 10	
Weight	Mortal Dead	K O			

Skill	Add	Attribute	Value
Dodge		DEX	
Maneuver		DEX	
Melee weapons	3	DEX	13
Missile weapons		DEX	
Running		DEX	
Unarmed combat		DEX	
Climbing		STR	
Find		PER	
First aid		PER	
Language		PER	
Scholar		PER	
Tracking		PER	
Trick		PER	
Test of wills		MIN	
Willpower		MIN	
Taunt		CHA	
Intimidation		SPI	
Reality		SPI	

Attributes		Approved Actions
Dexterity	10	Maneuver
Strength	10	
Toughness	12	
Perception	8	Trick
Mind	9	Test
Charisma	8	Taunt
Spirit	9	Intimidate
		Reality

Weapons & Armor	Value	Axiom Level	S	Range M	L
Armor					
Chitin	+2/14				
Weapons					
Pincers	+2/12				
Mandibles	+3/13				
Club-atlatl	+3/13	9			
Crystal disks	+3/13	9	3-10	40	100

[illegible]

Bonus Chart	
Die Roll	
1	3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
2	4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
3	5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
4	6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
5	7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
6	8 10 12 14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
7	9 11 13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
8	10 12 14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
9	11 13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
10	12 14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
11	13 15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
12	14 16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
13	15 17 19 21 26 31 36 41 46
14	16 18 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 +5
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CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Cosm: Land Below

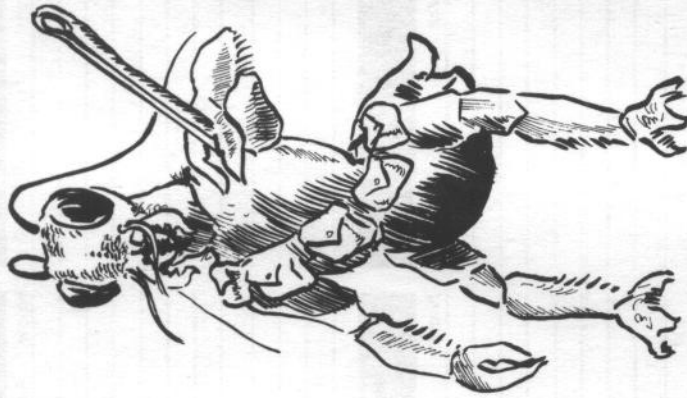
Background: All your life, you have heard the tales of how the edeinos armies destroyed the ustanah, driving them out of the mountains of Takta Ker and forcing the few survivors to take refuge underground. Long have you dreamt of introducing Baruk Kaah to the sensations of death.

How your tribe came to be in this lush, savage world is lost in the dim recesses of the past. But when you first encountered Storm Knights, and learned that edeinos were ravaging another world beyond your own, you chose to accompany them. At last, the opportunity you had longed for had arrived — the chance to avenge your ancestors.

Many of your comrades are not as single-minded as you, and treat the war as if it were a game. You consider them fools, and feel compelled to remind them the fate that surely awaits them all should the High Lords triumph.

Personality: You know what it is to be part of a conquered people, and are determined to lead your tribe back to greatness. You have a special hatred for Core Earthers who are collaborating with the edeinos.

Equipment: club-atlatl, damage value STR+3/13; crystal disks, damage



value STR+3/13, range 3-10/40/100

Quote: "One day, my people will reclaim what is rightfully theirs. If I must wait patiently until that time comes, I can at least keep myself amused by slaying edeinos."

Skill Notes: Your tag skill is *melee weapons*.

NOTES



Mini-adventures



Dance of the Demons

Gamemaster Note

Mini-adventures or adventure hooks are frequently featured in the pages of *Infiniverse*. These allow us to support this ever-expanding game on top of our regular product schedule, and provide more swiftly the kinds of adventures the players have asked for, in the settings they most enjoy.

The major thrust of this adventure is the Knights' search for the three fragments of a ritual that can destroy the demon, Azoreth, while at the same time being ritually prepared for sacrifice to the demon. The preparations consist of three steps — bathing in fresh blood, speaking to a dead man, and slaying a maiden. You should have the *Orrorsh* sourcebook at hand to play this adventure. In addition, one of the player characters should have *divination/darkness* at a total of 14 or higher, although the adventure can still be played minus this aspect.

It is possible that the Knights will "break out of the box" and not undergo one of the steps in your adventure. That is not the end of the world, nor the end of the adventure — it simply means that if a Knight is killed in the final battle, his soul won't go to Azoreth. He'll still be just as dead, though, and Azoreth, being a generally nasty guy, will still prefer him that way.

If the Knights take another route, you may have to shuffle things around a bit. The important thing is to make sure they get the pieces of the ritual, or they are DEAD in the last scene. If you must put a fragment in a different room than it is in this scenario, go ahead. Even if you have to shift a monster from one place to another because they patently refuse to go down the dark tunnel, well, do what needs to be done. The adventure should still work fine. But remember; this is *Orrorsh*.

Even Storm Knights die horribly.

The Major Beat

Summoned by an urgent plea for aid from a comrade, the Knights arrive in Surabaya in the realm of *Orrorsh*. Their friend does not appear at the inn he had specified for a rendezvous, but someone else does — a Victorian gentleman, Josiah Winslow, who claims to have employed their missing colleague. He explains that his house is infested by demons, and the Knight was helping him fight them before he mysteriously disappeared. He asks the Knights to return to his home and aid him, and perhaps discover the fate of their friend in the process. As they depart, the Knights notice the first sign of the supernatural — a pentagram the color of blood has formed on the floor around where they had been seated.

Returning to Winslow's home, the Storm Knights meet the rest of his household — a grim and frightened manservant, Stark, and Winslow's beautiful, ethereal, and strangely sad daughter, Eva. They gather a bit more information about the circumstances surrounding their friends' disappearance, (including a note from Stark implying all is not as it seems) and witness a few minor poltergeist occurrences. They are then shown to their rooms for the night.

As darkness settles over the house, the Knights hear a strange, slithering sound from behind the walls. Exploration reveals a hidden panel that opens on a passageway, leading down into the unknown. The Knights investigate, only to stumble upon the horrific sight of huge leeches. When the creatures are defeated, they burst, drenching the Knights in blood. The Knights find a journal that reveals that Winslow is an occultist who has been experimenting with spells to summon demons to this plane. One such spell ended in disaster, with the demon demanding Winslow's soul in payment for his intrusion in matters be-

yond his ken. Winslow went so far as to offer Eva's soul instead, but the demon refused. That, it seems, was the origin of the infestation.

Further down the passage, they come to Winslow's occult laboratory, where they find the body of Stark, impaled on spikes which had erupted from a wooden door. At his feet is an occult tome, featuring a spell that allows the caster to speak with the dead. Under its influence, Stark tells them that Winslow had originally hired their comrade to help him find the true death of the demon, Azoreth, but when they were two-thirds done, Winslow hit upon a better plan. He would trade the souls of Storm Knights for his own at the stroke of midnight on this very night!

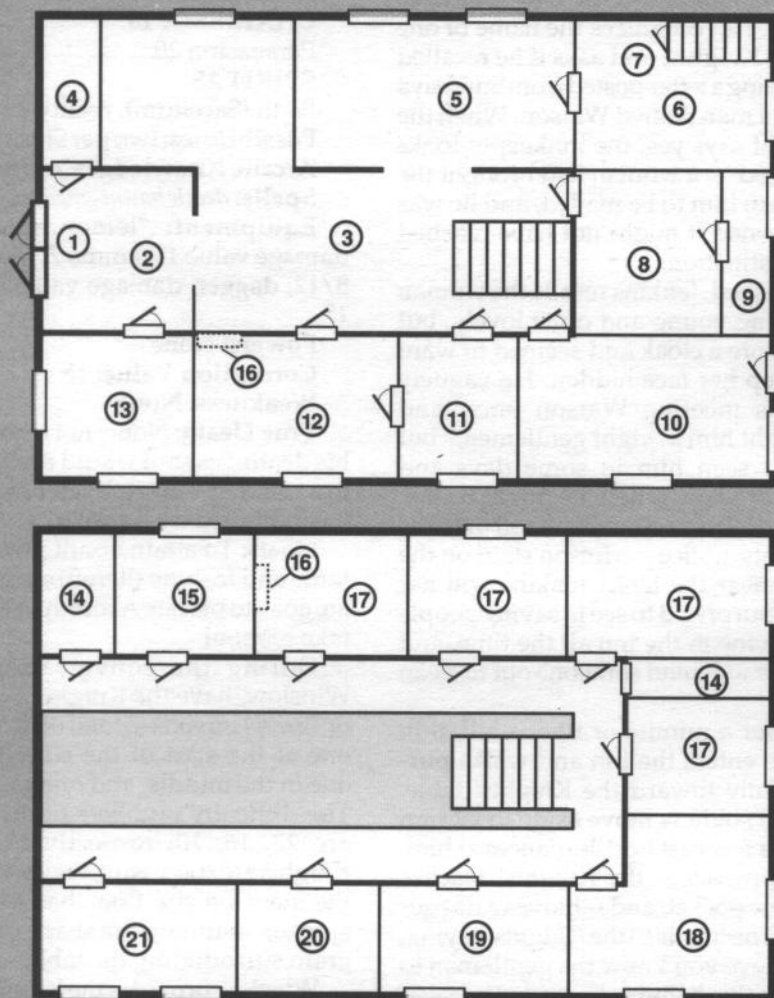
The Knights only hope is to find the pieces of the ritual that will destroy the demon. The first was to be buried with their friend in the lower chamber, but Stark is unsure if Winslow did it. When they open the sealed coffin, they attacked by a chthon, and find the first two quatrains of the ritual.

The Knights discover a second passage that leads back to the main floor of the house. There they discover that escape is impossible — a slimy growth has covered the outside of the house, and resists all attempts to pierce it. On the way to find Winslow, they are met by Eva, who, it seems, casts no shadow. She pleads with them not to hurt her father, saying their friend is not dead, but has been hidden by her since she realized the extent of her father's madness. She asks them to wait a moment and then come up to her room.

When they arrive there, they find the door locked. Breaking in, they find their friend dead, his body horribly mutilated. When they turn upon her, she metamorphoses into a monster (the demon had, indeed, accepted Winslow's offer to claim his daughter). Just as they deliver the killing blow, she becomes Eva again and dies. On their friend's body, they find the



Infiniverse Update: Map 4 Winslow Mansion



Key

1. Main entrance
2. Foyer
3. Living room
4. Closet
5. Dining area
6. Kitchen
7. Stairs to basement
8. Music room
9. Bathroom
10. Lounge
11. Winslow's study
12. Library
13. Stark's quarters
14. Closet
15. Bathroom
16. Secret panel
17. Guest bedroom
18. Winslow's room
19. Eva's room
20. Lounge
21. Library

second part of the ritual.

The Knights find Winslow in his occult library. Confronted, he explains that, even with the ritual, Azoreth is too powerful to be defeated by mere mortals. He had searched his library for the third part of the ritual, but decided it would be easier simply to trade the souls of others for his own. As the Knights begin to search for the third part of the ritual, disembodied hands attack them. They find the third piece of the ritual.

In the climactic scene, Azoreth appears, revealing he intends to take Winslow's soul as well as that of the Knights. He tells the Knights that they

have unwittingly taken all the steps in a ritual that makes them fit to be demonic sacrifices — bathing in blood, speaking with the dead, and slaying a maiden. The Knights must defeat the demon to have any hope of escaping the house alive.

Adventure Background

Dr. Josiah Winslow was a medical man in Victoria who became convinced that his colleagues were more successful than he because they made use of

sorcery to aid them in their researches. Winslow turned to the black arts, ignoring his practice and becoming more and more immersed in necromancy and the rituals used to summon demons. Shunned by his fellow physicians, Winslow was more than happy to travel to Earth with his manservant and his daughter to continue his work.

In Surabaya, he attempted his most ambitious spell yet, calling the demon Azoreth to Earth to do his bidding. But Winslow foolishly left out part of the ritual, angering Azoreth, who demanded that the doctor forfeit his soul in payment.

Winslow hired an Orrorshan detective, Jeffrey Watson, to help him find the means to destroy the demon. Watson worked diligently on the project, falling in love with Eva in the process. Discovering Winslow's true plan to placate the demon, Watson tried to secretly get help from his fellow Knights, not realizing that Azoreth knew all. The demon allowed him to summon the Knights through Eva, then unleashed the creature she had become to slay him. The demon accepted Winslow's terms, and agreed to aid him in seeing to it that the Knights would be ritually prepared for their sacrifice.

The *Perseverance Difficulty Number* for this adventure is 19.

SCENE ONE: Doctor of Demons

The Situation

Standard. The Knights arrive in Surabaya, summoned by a message from Storm Knight Jeffrey Watson. In a Victorian tavern, the White Bengal, the Knights encounter Dr. Josiah Winslow, a man beset by terrors and claiming to have information on Watson's fate.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The White Bengal is packed with Victorian soldiers and tradesmen, seeking the feeling of safety that comes in numbers. Even here, though, the talk focuses on the many terrors that thrive in Orrorsh — the pack of werewolves defeated by a Victorian regiment last week, the cleric found torn to pieces in the jungle, the mysterious rash of bloodless corpses found in Surabaya, which has sparked fears of vampyres.

You can still recall the urgency in the message your friend and fellow Storm Knight, Jeffrey Watson, sent you. He implied that he had stumbled upon something horrible, and it was more than he could handle alone. He asked that you meet him in this inn on this eve, but looking around, you see no sign of him.

The Action

Once the Knights are seated, the innkeeper, Jenkins, a big, friendly sort, comes over, welcomes them, and asks their names and what they'll have to drink. He recognizes the name of one of the Knights, and asks if he recalled receiving a letter posted from Surabaya from a man named Watson. When the Knight says yes, the innkeeper looks relieved — a woman had brought the letter to him to be mailed, and he was concerned it might not have reached its destination.

If asked, Jenkins recalls the woman as being young and quite lovely, but she wore a cloak and seemed to want to keep her face hidden. He vaguely recalls meeting Watson once, and thought him a "right gentlemen," but hasn't seen him in some days and doesn't know where he might be.

On a *find* or *Perception* roll of 8, the Knights notice a crimson stain on the floor near the table. Jenkins will not seem surprised to see it, saying people spill wine in the inn all the time, and that he will send someone out to clean it up.

After a minute or two, a tall, thin figure enters the inn and walks purposefully toward the Knights' table. As the soldiers move aside to let him pass, a few cast hostile glances at him. He approaches the Knights, reaches into his pocket, and removes a dagger which he hands to the Knights, saying, "I believe you know the gentleman to whom this belongs."

The dagger has the initials "J.W." carved into the hilt. A *Mind* roll of 8 allows the Knights to recall that Jeffrey Watson carried just such a weapon.

The visitor introduces himself as Dr. Josiah Winslow, a physician just outside Surabaya. He won't reveal to the Knights his interest in the occult, but attempts to pass himself off as an innocent victim of the supernatural.

Dr. Josiah Winslow

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, fire combat 11, maneuver 11, stealth 13

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 13

Alteration magic 21, evidence analysis 22, find 22, first aid 25, language 21, trick 24

MIND 13

Conjuration magic 21, medicine 24, occult 23, test 23, willpower 23

CHARISMA 18

Persuasion 20

SPIRIT 15

Faith (Sacellum), reality 19

Possibilities: two per Storm Knight

Arcane Knowledges: *entity 9, folk 8*

Spells: *death haunt, madness*

Equipment: "lemon squeezer,"

damage value 11, ammo 7, range 1-5/8/12; dagger, damage value STR+3/17

Powers: None

Corruption Value: 15

Weakness: None

True Death: None; not a horror. At his death, his soul would normally go to a Waiting Village, but it has already been claimed by Azoreth

Goals: To attain occult power gain fame and fortune therefrom; immediate goal, to placate Azoreth so he won't take his soul

During the conversation with Winslow, have the Knights make *find* or *Perception* rolls (a total of three rolls, one at the start of the conversation, one in the middle, and one at its end). The difficulty numbers of these rolls are 22, 16, 10, respectively. If the Knights are successful, they notice that the stain on the floor has begun to spread, assuming the shape of pentagram surrounding the table.

Winslow provides the Knights with the following information:

- His house has been the target of demonic attacks for the past three weeks. Furniture moves of its own accord, blood drips from the walls, unearthly screams are heard at all hours. It has disturbed his work and frightened his household, and he has been concerned that their safety might be threatened. They attempted to simply leave the house and live elsewhere, but the demons followed them — and being a proud man, he decided to fight the creatures and drive them from his home.

- He is aware of Watson's letter to the Knights — indeed, had his daughter, Eva, post it. He had hired Watson to investigate the occurrences at his

home and help him discover a means of driving the demons out. Mere days ago, Watson disappeared while researching methods of exorcism, and only his dagger was left behind.

- The atmosphere at the house has grown worse in the days since Watson vanished. He had told Winslow that his fellow Storm Knights would be able to help, and he has come to plead for their assistance. He is, of course, willing to pay for their services — 100 sterling a Knight to accept the position, and another 100 after the demons had been destroyed or forced to leave.

- Winslow is unable to explain why the demons have targeted him. He is an honest, churchgoing man, and his researches do not extend beyond means to prolong the lives of his patients. But, then, many people have been struck down, seemingly at random, by the horrors of this land.

- If the Knights are prepared to leave, he has a carriage waiting outside to take them back to his mansion.

If the Knights comment on the hostile looks the doctor is getting from some of the bar patrons, Winslow comments that no doctor can save every patient, and often relatives hold the medical man responsible for acts of the Lord.

When the Knights notice the pentagram, have them make a *Perseverance* check against a difficulty number of 19. (If they do not notice it until the end of the conversation, it will be completely formed.) If the Knights attempt to touch the stain at any time, they suffer burns, taking damage value 15. Winslow is afraid of the pentagram, and states it shows the demons have even followed him here.

Variables

If the Knights fail to notice the pentagram, a cleaning woman dispatched by Jenkins comes over to clean it up, and suffers a seared hand.

Flags

If a *Personal Stake* card is played, one of the Knights had been a close friend of Watson's, and is determined

to take on this mission to discover the truth about his disappearance, and avenge him, if necessary.

If a *Suspicion* card is played, one of the Knights does not trust Winslow or his version of events. Winslow takes notice of this, and targets that Knight for assault later in the adventure.

Perseverance Awards

Award the Knights one Perseverance point for encountering Winslow, who is ostensibly in "need of help."

SCENE TWO: The Blood of Innocents

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights encounter the first of Azoreth's creatures, and learn that their host is, in fact, an occultist responsible for the coming of evil entities to this plane of existence. The Knights also discover that Winslow had gone so far as to offer the soul of his daughter to the demon.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

Winslow's home is a great, rambling mansion high on a hill just outside of Surabaya. Although the grounds are wild and overgrown, the house itself shines as if brand new. The door is opened by a stocky man in a dark suit, who Winslow introduces as his manservant, Stark.

The Action

Stark greets the Storm Knights, and takes Winslow's hat and coat as the doctor enters. He says no more to the Knights than he absolutely must, afraid to voice any kind of a warning in earshot of his employer. If any of the Knights are wearing a hat or coat, Stark offers to take it from them. If they refuse, he politely insists (Stark has *persuasion* at 10) — when he reaches out for it, he presses a note into the Knight's palm.

The note reads:

"Must speak with you tonight. Wait until the house is quiet. Until then, be on your guard and do not advance boldly into the dark. You are being used by a Power far more deadly than you can imagine, and are in great danger."

Winslow offers the male Knights brandy and cigars, and if there are any female Knights, calls for his daughter Eva to come down and meet his guests. (If there are no female Knights, Eva will come down of her own accord.)

Eva is young and beautiful, perhaps 22, with black hair, blue eyes, and a pale complexion. She wears a flowing white gown and gives the impression of being quite delicate, perhaps even sickly. She reluctantly welcomes the Knights, but with some prodding from her father, grows more effusive about how desperately they are needed and how frightening the situation is.

At this point, a *find* or *Perception* total of 10 reveals that the brandy decanter is rising into the air. It flies directly at one of the Knights (its ectoplasmic tosser has *missile weapons* at 13). If it hits, the decanter does damage value 15.

At this point, all hell breaks loose. Furniture upends, the ceiling begins to crack, the gas lights flicker, Eva screams, etc. Feel free to toss a few more objects at the Knights, but try to keep actual physical damage to them at a minimum. This is intended merely to unsettle them. Have the Knights make a *Perseverance* roll.

The tumult lasts for only 30 seconds. Eva leaves, sobbing, and returns to her room. A shaken Winslow apologizes to the Knights and offers them dinner. If they accept, the meal is uneventful.

After the meal, Winslow shows the Knights to their rooms. The rooms are spacious, with large bay windows and comfortable beds. If there is more than one room, owing to the number of Knights, they should be adjoining, with a connecting door between them. Winslow will bid the Knights good evening, saying he intends to retire to his study and will see them in the morning.

Searching the House

It is possible that at this point in the adventure, or later on, the Knights may wish to surreptitiously search Winslow's home. If so, consult your map and the following capsule room description's below. Rooms not included have nothing of interest to the Knights.

Stark's Quarters

A small, neat bedroom. The bed has not been slept in. There is a desk, a dresser and a closet. A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 in the desk will turn up the beginning of a resignation letter Stark was writing to Winslow, citing "health reasons."

A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 in the closet will reveal a "lemon squeezer" pistol.

Lemon Squeezer

Tech 19, damage value 11, ammo 7, range-15/8/12

Downstairs Closet

Cloaks, hats, anything the Knights gave Stark to hang up.

Dining Room

A *find* or *Perception* total of 9 underneath the table reveals a small pouch of tobacco with the initials "J.W." on it, apparently dropped there at some point.

Kitchen

Fairly common, except for some jars of blood on ice. A *science (biology)* total of 12 will hint that it is animal, not human, blood.

Stairs to Basement

The basement is dark, creepy, suspenseful and empty. You cannot get into the tunnels from here.

Winslow's Study

If the Knights arrive here just to talk, Winslow chats with them while he is apparently reading his medical

journal. If they are coming convinced he is an enemy and demanding answers, cut to Scene Five.

Library

The tunnels emerge here. The books are mainly dry medical stuff. A few of them have old blood spatters on them.

Upstairs Bathroom

Very nice and well-appointed, except that the bathroom mirror has been smashed.

Knight Rooms

Complete with secret door and tunnel. Cut to "Tunnel of Terror."

Winslow's Bedroom

A list of the Knight's names, underneath that of Watson, which has been crossed off. A hurriedly scrawled note reading "Pentagram appears."

Eva's Bedroom

When the Knights arrive here, cut to Scene Four.

Tunnel of Terror

Allow the Knights to settle in, then have them make *Perception* rolls. On a 7, the occupants of one room hear a noise coming from behind the wall opposite the window. It is a wet sound, as if something slimy were crawling along the inside of the wall.

If the Knights seek the source of the noise, they find that it definitely comes from the opposite side of the wall, and there is no room there. On a *Perception* or *find* total of 9, or an *engineering* total of 8, the Knights spot what might be a secret panel in the wall. The only way to be certain is to tap on that area and see if it sounds hollow — the instant the Knights strike the panel in any way, it slides open, revealing a wide, dark tunnel sloping downward. As the light spills into the passage, the Knights notice what appear to be small, circular prints made in blood on the floor of the tunnel, clustered close together. There is no sign of their cause,

or of the source of the sound.

Once all the Knights have entered, the panel slides shut behind them. There is no handle or other opening on the inside for the Knights to try and open it with, and the panel has been treated with Azoreth's *tough door* spell, which has left it with a *Toughness* of 40.

If the Knights move on in the passage, they round a corner and encounter the giant leeches. (If the Knights are spending too much time trying to break down the door, have the leeches crawl toward them). There are as many leeches as there are Knights — they average a meter in length, are whitish and engorged with blood. They are clinging to the walls, floor and ceiling — if the Knights are proceeding in the dark, one of them might step on a leech. Either way, have the Knights make a *Perseverance* roll when encountering the leeches.

The Knights automatically have the initiative when encountering the leeches. If at all possible, DO NOT have the leeches attack the Knights first, but only respond to their almost certain attack. The leeches are effectively blocking the passage, and the Knights must get past them to go on.

Once they are engaged, the leeches attempt to wrap themselves around a Knight and squeeze him to death prior to draining his blood.

Giant Leeches

DEXTERITY 10

Maneuver 11, stealth 14, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 15

Climbing 18

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 5

Find 11, tracking 12, trick (18)

MIND 4

Test (16), willpower (17)

CHARISMA 4

Charm (25), persuasion (25), taunt (20)

SPIRIT 4

Intimidation 15, reality 11

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: suckers. Once the leech has made a successful *unarmed combat* attack, thus wrapping itself around a victim, it makes use of its suckers, which cause intense pain, to kill or knock unconscious its victim, at

which point it begins raining blood. The suckers do damage value 16 per round after the victim is trapped. To remove a leech requires a *Strength* total of 15 or the slaying of the creature.

Power Rating: 1 (*dark vision*)

Corruption Value: 16

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: none

True Death: any death

Note: When leeches are KO'd, killed, or incapacitated in any way, Azoreth will cause them to burst, spraying the blood they had drunk on anyone or anything within a three meter radius. This does no damage to the target.

If the Knights attempt to simply get past the leeches and continue on their way, the leeches follow. Once the Knights have defeated the leeches, their clothes should be covered in blood.

Have the Knights travel on for another minute or two, and then make a *Perception* or *find* roll. On an 8, they find a book in the middle of the passage, as if someone threw it down while in a great hurry. Upon examination, it will be revealed to be Winslow's journal, with the last entry dated four days ago. The last few entries read as follows:

"June 21. The time has come. All of my work, all of my planning, will come to fruition this night. At last, I have the knowledge to summon Azoreth to this plane and make him do my bidding. And my command will be that he take vengeance upon my colleagues who branded me a 'black magician' and drove me from their dark towers of academia. Tonight, as Azoreth rises from the flames, the chain of events that will lead to the deaths of those hypocrites will have been begun."

"June 22. I cannot explain it. I read the runes, I burnt the incense, I drank from the skull, all as prescribed in the ritual. But when Azoreth appeared, he refused to serve — he was angry at being roused from his slumber, and demanded my soul as payment for my folly. I pleaded, even offering Eva's soul — he licked his great, foul lips and muttered, 'A tasty morsel, in-

deed, and weak — weak souls taste lovely. But I would have yours, mortal.' I pledged to deliver him my spirit at midnight on July the 5th. I feel as if I will go mad."

"June 24. A light shines through. I have retained the services of a Storm Knight, Jeffrey Watson—he has promised to help me find the mode of Azoreth's true death and to slay him. Naturally, I did not tell him that I am responsible for the demon's arrival, and I am confident that I can keep my fascination with the occult a secret from him for as long as need be."

"June 30. Watson and I have made some progress. But I believe he suspects — perhaps Azoreth told him the truth as a further means of tormenting me. Eva is also behaving strangely, and I begin to believe she and Watson have fallen in love. This must not be — once the demon is destroyed, I will have to deal with Watson."

If the Knights glance further down the passage, they see what appears to be the flickering of a torch from within a chamber. To continue their search for the truth, they must plunge deeper into the bowels of the house.



Perseverance Points

Award the Knights two Perseverance points for confronting the leeches and one for finding the journal.

Variables

If the Knights are reluctant to enter the passage, have them hear Stark screaming from deep within it. Then run the leech encounter.

If the Knights do manage to escape through the secret panel without exploring the rest of the passage, cut to Scene Four and have Eva tell them at some point that they will find an important clue at the end of the passage.

Flags

If a *Romance* card is played, Eva may be attracted to one of the male Storm Knights, or Winslow to a female Knight.

If a *Nemesis* card is played, one of the Knights has had dealings with Azoreth before, and perhaps lost loved ones to the demon's clutches. He is determined to destroy the demon once and for all.

SCENE THREE: Dead Man Tells a Tale

The Situation

Standard. The Knights discover a dead (but possibly talkative) butler, a shallow grave, a nasty surprise, and the first step on the road to Azoreth's destruction.

The Action

The Knights proceed down the passage and enter a large chamber, within which they come upon a ghoulish sight. Read aloud or paraphrase:

You enter a large chamber hewn from the earth beneath the house. In the far corner of the room is a shallow depression with a pile of fresh earth beneath it, and a man-sized coffin on a pedestal. But the room is dominated by a great wooden door, and the horrible figure affixed to it — Stark, looking like nothing so much as a broken doll. Viciously sharp wooden spikes seem to have sprung of their accord from the door and impaled the servant, and now, their tips clotted with blood and gore, they keep him suspended above the floor. A dusty volume lies open at his feet.

Subtract a *Perseverance* point from the Knights for seeing this sight. Have them make a *Perseverance* check.

A *medicine* total of 8 reveals that Stark has been killed within the last 15 minutes. The Knights can, if they wish, remove his body from the spikes, at which point the spikes will vanish.

If the Knights examine the volume, a *Perception* or *evidence analysis* total of 8 reveals that it is a book of spells, unlike any grimoire ever seen by the Knights. The words on the exposed page look as if they were burnt into the parchment. The other pages in the book are made of the same paper, but are blank.

The spell contained in the book is entitled "Speak with Dead," and is listed below:

Speak With Dead

Axiom Level: 12

Skill: *divination/darkness* 14

Backlash: 12

Difficulty: 13

Effect Value: 16

Bonus Number to: duration

Range: 5 (10 meters)

Duration: 12 (four minutes)

Cast Time: 10 (90 seconds)

Manipulation: control

To cast this spell, the sorcerer must be in the presence of the corpse he is targeting. He must reach out and manipulate the body's jaws to simulate speech, while saying, "Speak to me from beyond the darkness, talk to me of things beyond the grave."

If successful, the body will be capable of speaking in the voice it used while alive for the duration of the spell. Whether it will choose to speak, and whether it says will be the truth, is entirely up to the corpse.

Stark (as speaking corpse)

DEXTERITY 0

STRENGTH 0

TOUGHNESS 6

PERCEPTION 8

Trick 9

MIND 8

Willpower 9

CHARISMA 8

Charm 9, persuasion 9, taunt 9

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 8

Possibilities: none

If Stark is asked about any of the events described in Winslow's journal, he confirms them all save for the doctor's offering Eva's soul to Azoreth, which he is not sure about. He can also provide the following information:

- Watson and Winslow completed two-thirds of their research into Azoreth's true death before Winslow decided to abandon the quest.

- Winslow reasoned that, even if they uncovered the proper method, they lacked the will to be able to defeat Azoreth. Winslow decided that he would strike a deal with the demon, by luring Storm Knights to his home and offering their souls in exchange for his. The trade is supposed to take place at midnight tonight.

- Watson disappeared shortly after Winslow conceived this plan. Stark is not sure what happened to him, but believes Winslow killed him and placed him in the coffin in this chamber, intending to bury him in the shallow grave.

- Stark had been aware of the passage constructed underneath the house, and had been intending to visit the Knights by way of the secret panel and give them this information before he was killed. Evidently, Azoreth was aware of his plans and acted to stop him.

- Stark knows nothing about the leeches.

After he has imparted the above, Stark mouths prayers and then gibberish before his voice fades completely. Casting the spell again has no additional affect on Stark (it only works once per corpse).

If the Knights examine the coffin, they find it is nailed shut. There is a hammer (damage value STR+3/18) lying on the floor. Removing the nails is a simple action — let the Knights get most of them out, and then call for a *find* or *Perception* roll. On a 9, they hear scratching coming from inside the coffin, as if whatever was inside was trying to get out.

If the Knights stop pulling nails out at that point, the coffin lid splinters and a chthon, a two meter high creature made of the bodies of insects, attacks them.

Call for a *Perseverance* check.

Chthon

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, flight 15, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 16/25

PERCEPTION 9

Find 12, tracking 12, trick 12 (15)

MIND 8

Test (15), willpower 15

CHARISMA 11

Taunt (15)

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 15, intimidation 14

Possibility Potential: none

Power Rating: 2

Powers: armor-defeating attack (insects swarm between armor and skin and strike)



Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: None

True Death: impalement with wooden stake

Natural Tools: pincers, damage value STR+5/19; layered bodies as armor, TOU+9/25; wings, speed value 11

After the creature is defeated, a *Perception* or *find* total of 9 allows the Knights to see a scrap of paper float to the ground. Upon it is written the first of the three parts of the ritual needed to destroy Azoreth, and it reads as follows:

*The demon's defeat we do seek,
And so these verses we do speak,
Their lines the knives that we shall
plunge,
The demon's evil to expunge.*

*Of Azoreth, we would be free,
This ritual, its parts are three,
The first will open wide the door,
And the demon shall stalk never-
more.*

The Knights can go through the wooden door and continue up the passage, emerging in the dining room on the first floor, or they can attempt to go back the way they came. Either way, cut to "Scene Four: Deliver Us From Eva."

Variables

If the Knights should somehow get out of the tunnel before reaching Stark's chamber, cut directly to Scene Four. Eva can provide them the information that a piece of the ritual is in a chamber at the end of the tunnel, which should spur them to go get it. They can encounter Eva's mutated self either before or after they explore the chamber, gamemaster option.

If the Knights somehow avoid killing the Chthon, but survive the encounter. The paper can be blown towards them by a mysterious wind. Azoreth wants them to find it so they

can keep going.

Perseverance Points

Award the Knights two Perseverance points for finding Stark's body, one for encountering the chthon and defeating it, and two for finding the first part of the ritual.

SCENE FOUR: Deliver Us From Eva

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights discover the fate of Jeff Watson and the second piece of the ritual, while Eva Winslow lets herself go.

The Action

No matter where the Knights exit the passage (their room or the first floor), this scene can be run essentially as it is written. If the Knights pass through a room with a window, a *Perception* or *find* total of 8 reveals a yellowish ooze covering the outer surface of the glass. (It also covers the exterior of all outside doors.) Have the Knights make Perseverance rolls.

The ooze is a creation of Azoreth, designed to keep the Knights trapped in the house. It is a sentient creature, but will take no offensive action against the Knights. Its only purpose is to take punishment without yielding. It will immediately reseal any holes made in it until it is destroyed, or until Azoreth is banished from this plane of existence, at which point it will fall away and dissolve.

The Ooze

DEXTERITY 4

Stealth 13

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 40

PERCEPTION 5

Trick (20)

MIND 5

Test (25), willpower (25)

CHARISMA 4

Charm (35), persuasion (35), taunt (35)

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 13, intimidation 21

Possibilities: none

Power Rating: 3

Power: regeneration

Corruption Value: 15

Fear Rating: 1/2

Weakness: frigid air (*stymie* weakness)

True Death: defeat of demonic master

After what they have learned in the tunnel, the Knights should be anxious to escape (difficult because of the ooze), find the rest of the ritual, and/or find Winslow. Once they begin searching for any of the above, have them encounter Eva, looking anxious and feverish. She calls the Knights aside and whispers to them that she knows where they can find their friend, Jeff Watson.

Whether or not the Knights ask, she will volunteer the fact that she and Watson had become romantically involved, and he had even talked of asking for her hand when all this was over. But then she learned of her father's horrible plans for Watson and his friends, and grew fearful that her father would never let him escape alive. So she hid him in her room, and secretly took a note from him to be sent to the Knights. Unfortunately, her father found out about the note, though he did not discover Jeffrey, thank Heaven — Winslow decided that Watson had simply saved him the trouble of luring Knights in, and decided to take advantage of the note for his own purposes.

If the Knights are willing, she offers to take them up to her room to meet with Watson, who has a second piece of the ritual. If the Knights want proof, she offers to go up to the room and return with the piece of the ritual (which she will do). But she insists that Watson must speak with them, to tell them the location of the third and final part of the ritual.

An *inclination* check of Eva will reveal a mixture of good and evil. A successful *true sight* check reveals her true form, and causes her to mutate and attack. Cut to "I Fall to Pieces."

If the Knights absolutely refuse to accompany her, even after they have received the ritual parchment, she mutates and attack them right then. Cut to "I Fall to Pieces."

If the Knights do agree to accompany her, cut to "Doesn't He Look Like Himself?"

Eva Winslow (human form)

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, stealth 11

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 12

Find, trick 13

MIND 11

Willpower 12

CHARISMA 12

Charm 14, persuasion 13

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Sacellum) 12

Possibilities: none

Corruption: 20

Note: Eva Winslow is deranged, and is not aware of what she mutates into or the true condition of Jeff Watson. She truly believes that he is safe and well in her room, and in this form, does want to help the Knights. While in this form, the only evidence of her new nature is her corruption value.

Doesn't He Look Like Himself?

Eva leads the Knights up the stairs and down a carpeted hallway, all the while signalling them to be quiet. When they reach the door to her room, she opens it, peek in, and then beckons the Knights to enter. If possible, she enters last, and closes the door behind them. If not, she moves toward the door once all are inside and shuts it.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The room is large and tastefully decorated, dominated by a canopied bed. A dresser rests against one wall, littered with a mirror, a brush, and a small bottle of perfume. On the far side of the room, facing a window, is a wicker chair in which a man sits. Only the top of his head is visible over the back of the chair, and he appears to be gazing thoughtfully at the waning moon, its light filtered through the ooze that covers the window.

If the Knights call out to Watson, he doesn't respond. If they move to where they can see him, it appears as if he is sleeping in the chair — eyes closed, looking quite peaceful. If they nudge him or touch him in any way, they hear a soft sound like an eggshell cracking. Small, then larger cracks appear on his head, until the pieces of his face collapse and red goo spills all over the shoulders of his coat. Similar cracks appear in his neck and hands, and soon his entire body cracks open, and a suit filled with bloody gelatin sags to the floor.

Automatically subtract one point from the Knights' Perseverance for this, and then have them generate a Perseverance total.

I Fall to Pieces

The Knights turn and see Eva screaming and writhing in pain. Bits of her face are beginning to flake off, and soon larger and larger pieces of flesh are being sloughed off her body, like a snake shedding its skin. When it is done, Eva has mutated into a creature that seems to be composed of fungus and pus. She shambles toward the Knights, intent on their destruction.

Before she attacks, she explains in a voice like breaking glass that her father was duped by Azoreth — the demon did indeed claim her soul, as an appetizer of sorts. Her human half is mad, unable to bear the thought of what it changes into.

The Eva Monster

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, maneuver 14, stealth 13, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 15

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, tracking 12, trick 14

MIND 8

Test 12

CHARISMA 7

Charm (19), persuasion (18), taunt 10

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Orrorsh) 16, intimidation 17

Possibilities: none

Power Rating: 5

Powers: *shape change* (value 26); *burning touch*, damage value 25 — Eva must touch an unarmored spot on her target (which may require a *vital blow* attack, depending on the intended victim). Her touch feels like fire, and when an enemy is killed, his inner substance is liquified. This effect does not make itself known until after the target's death.

Corruption Value: 20

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: Eva suffers an automatic *setback* for a round if shown her reflection in a mirror while in creature form

True Death: any

If the Knights escape the room, Eva pursues until she is destroyed. Her own willpower will be fighting for control all through the battle, causing

her to transform back and forth between human and monster. Her human half will plead with the Knights to slay her, which the Knights can do.

If they kill her in monster form, she will transform back to human as the death blow is landed, so the blow is delivered to an innocent maiden and not a creature. Once she is defeated, the Knights can inspect the room — if they do not already have the second piece of the ritual, a *Perception* or *find* total of 9 reveals that the second piece of the ritual is floating in the gruel that was once Jeff Watson. Picking it up is a simple action, but a *willpower* total of 10 is required for the Knight to be able to bring himself to do it.

The second part of the ritual reads as follows:

*Undo the lock, fling wide the gate,
Its lust for death it will not sate,
Blow, winds of Hell, and him
surround,
Fingers of flame, drag him down.*

*Evil undying is his repute,
In our midst, he's taken root,
Burn him for his thousand sins,
As we finish, it begins.*

Perseverance Points

Award the Knights two Perseverance points for Watson's death and their resultant determination to destroy Azoreth, two for destroying Eva, and one for finding part two of the ritual.

Flags

Any Knight who had a Romance subplot going with Eva has to generate a *willpower* total of 10 before he can bring himself to fight her directly in her monster form. If he chooses not to make the roll, he can still attempt to *trick*, *test*, *taunt* or *intimidate* her.

If the monster is incapacitated, but not killed, she begins calling for Azoreth to come and claim the Knights. She takes whatever action possible to force the Knights to kill her.

SCENE FIVE: Oh, Bring Back My Demons To Me

The Situation

Standard. The Knights confront Winslow and uncover the third part of the ritual, but not without effort.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

With two pieces of the ritual in hand, you have at least a slim chance of avoiding the fate Winslow and Azoreth have planned for you. But you must find the third verse, and judging by the timepiece in Eva's room, you have only 30 minutes to do it.

The Action

The Knights should be wise enough to assume that the third piece of the ritual — the one which was not uncovered by Watson — is somewhere in the materials he was researching. The most logical place for these to be is Winslow's study, the very place the doctor said he would be for part of the evening.

If the Knights haven't a clue as to where to go, let them start searching, but warn them that the clock is ticking. Don't let them waste a lot of time — build up a little suspense if you'd like, but get them into the study soon.

The study door is unlocked — Winslow expected the Knights to be too paralyzed with fear by this point to mount any opposition to his plans. Thus, he is not expecting them, and will not mount overt opposition to them when they arrive.

Interrogating Winslow

Winslow, of course, denies everything, and attempts to persuade the Knights that he was telling them the truth. He is genuinely shocked at the news about Eva (he didn't know Azoreth had claimed her).

He tells the Knights that he was busy searching for the third piece of the ritual when they arrived. He offers

to let the Knights examine the book he was perusing to bolster his story. His medical journal is also lying on his desk.

Both books have the *madness* spell **focused** into them. Any Knight who touches one of them is attacked by the spell, which gives him paranoid delusions that his comrades actually intend to sacrifice him to Azoreth to save themselves, and this whole search for a scrap of parchment is an elaborate ruse.

Madness

Axiom Level: 13

Skill: *alteration/folk* 20

Backlash: 16

Difficulty: 15

Effect Value: 15

Bonus Number to: effect

Range: 10 (100 meters)

Duration: 29 (one week)

Cast Time: 9 (one minute)

Manipulation: control, duration

Effect value is compared to the target's *Mind*. On a *Minimal* through *Good* success, the character is insane only for the duration of this scene. On a *Superior* or better success, the target is deranged for the remainder of the adventure.

Winslow maintains a fair-sized library of occult tomes, in which Watson found the first two pieces of the ritual, and in which, presumably, the third could be found. Winslow offers to help the Knights search, but if they refuse, he simply sits quietly.

He won't be completely inactive, however. He attempts to cast the *death haunt* spell on the nearest Knight, providing the target with vivid images of his own death.

Death Haunt

Axiom Level: 12

Skill: *conjuraton/folk* 19

Backlash: 18

Difficulty: 12

Effect Value: 21

Bonus Number to: effect

Range: 7 (25 meters)

Duration: 9 (one minute)

Cast Time: 5 (10 seconds)

Manipulation: control, duration

The target of this spell is obsessed with images of his own death for the spell's duration. He sees the images as concrete, 3-D images.

Compare the final effect value of the spell to the victim's *Spirit*. The result points are read through the Power Push Table, and the final result points are added to the difficulty number of any task the victim attempts while under the influence.

The images are real, so the victim does not get to make a *Mind* or *will-power* roll to shake off the effects.

Hands Across Orrorsh

Winslow's bookshelves are roughly 2.5 meters high. A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 will reveal to the Knights that there is something on top of them, but not enough of it is visible to determine what it is. It looks as if Winslow had hidden something up there.

If the Knights reach up, they will find a number of packages (equal to the number of Storm Knights). When they unwrap the cloth, they will find themselves to be holding disembodied hands! (Once one has been freed, the others will free themselves within one round.)

Call for a Perseverance check.

The hands will immediately begin climbing up their arms and trying to make attacks on their throats. The hands will not attack Winslow — they were created by him, though they now serve Azoreth.

Disembodied Hands

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 15, stealth 16, unarmed combat 16

STRENGTH 14

Climbing 15

TOUGHNESS 13

PERCEPTION 9

Tracking 13

MIND 8

CHARISMA 6

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 12

Possibilities: none

Power Rating: 1

Power: attack form resistance, melee

and missile weapons (TOU+10)

Corruption: 12

Fear Rating: 1

Weakness: None

True Death: Any death

The hands attack by getting close to their target's throat and then making an *unarmed combat* attack. If it is successful, it does damage with its *Strength* every round it is attached. Pulling the hand free requires the victim or a companion to generate a *Strength* total greater than the *Strength* of the hands.

Searching for the Ritual

The third part of the ritual is indeed on the bookshelves, along with instructions on how to use it against Azoreth.

Finding these last pieces of parchment requires a *Perception* or *find* total of 12. The final part of the ritual reads as follows:

*The final verses now we reach,
The final sermon now we preach,
Begone, dark one, back to the Pit,
Only for Hell are you fit.*

*Rising above nameless dread,
With spirit strong, these words are read,
Heedless of all fear and pain,
We banish Azoreth from this plane.*

Instructions for Use

By the end of the adventure, it is likely that at least some of the Knights will have been ritually prepared for sacrifice, while others may not have.

The instructions for the use of the ritual state that it must be read aloud in the presence of Azoreth, with each of the six quatrains being read by a different person, if possible (see below). It will take six rounds to complete the reading. The reading must be uninterrupted — if, for instance, a Knight is in the middle of a verse and is struck down, the Knights will have to start the ritual over at the beginning. If, however, he has not yet begun his reading when he is killed, someone else can grab his fragment and read it.

The ritual is most effective if it is read by those who have been prepared for demonic sacrifice, while those who have not fend off Azoreth. This may not work out in your adventure — there may only be six Knights left alive, or there may not be six who have been prepared for sacrifice. If that is the case, anyone can read a quatrain — but make clear that those who have been prepared for sacrifice **MUST** read a quatrain if they are able.

If there are fewer than six Knights left, the one who read the first verse can read the last, etc.

If a ritually prepared Knight is killed before the ritual is finished, his soul goes to Azoreth, who torments it for eternity.

Variables

If the Knights should fight with Winslow and kill him, it is not a *twicked* act, nor does it adversely affect the rest of the adventure. They can find and use the last piece of the ritual without him.

If the Knights do not find the ritual, have either Winslow or one of the hands snatch the book from the shelf and try to get away with it. Once the book has been identified, it takes only a *find* total of 9 to turn up the parchment.

If prior to Scene Five, the Knights have failed to take part in the steps preparing them for demonic sacrifice (bathing in blood, speaking with a dead man, and slaying a maid) Azoreth will simply be out to slay them and Winslow in Scene Six. He will be unable to claim the Knights' souls, and so will just want them dead on general principles.

Perseverance Points

Award the Knights two Perseverance points for confronting the hands, one for confronting Winslow, and three for finding the last piece of ritual and the instructions.



SCENE SIX: Smolder When You Say That

The Situation

Dramatic. A pretty straightforward scene — the Storm Knights encounter the menace that is Azoreth, and either banish him back to the netherworld or

get turned into charcoal briquets. Read aloud or paraphrase:

Clocks all over the house begin tolling midnight, then cease to function. Suddenly, there is a flash of light, unholy peals of laughter and a stench like rotting flesh. Azoreth has arrived.

Have the Knights make Toughness rolls against a difficulty number of 8 to keep from getting sick from the smell. If they fail, they take two shock points.

Azoreth appears in a ball of fire, the

classic horned, clawed demon of Christian mythology. His appearance actually seems to warp physical space, as he towers 6.5 meters high (**Knights receive an automatic +5 to attempts to make physical attacks on Azoreth, because of his size**).

Azoreth

DEXTERITY 11

Maneuver 15, stealth 15, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 20

Lifting 18

TOUGHNESS 35

PERCEPTION 16

Alteration magic 20, divination magic 23, evidence analysis 19, find 19, language 18, tracking 17, trick 20

MIND 14

Test 21, willpower 20

CHARISMA 12

Charm (25), persuasion 19, taunt 20

SPIRIT 20

Faith (Orrorsh) 25, intimidation 25, reality 24

Possibilities: 10

Power Rating: 7

Powers: fire attack, magical resistance, ward breach

Corruption Value: 22

Fear Rating: 3

Perseverance DN: 19

True Death: Reading of the three-part ritual of banishment

Arcane Knowledges: plant 4, folk 5

Spells: tough door, youth, boiling blood

Natural Tools: claws, damage value

STR+5/25; teeth, damage value STR+6/26

Description: Azoreth is a sadistic, arrogant demon who enjoys making his victims active participants in their own destruction. He has no intention of honoring his bargain with Winslow, but plans to take his soul along with those of the Knights.

Knowing that the Knights have the ritual that can destroy him, he will attempt to slay the Knights first.

Reality Storms

Even if the Knights have overcome the Power of Fear, by having a *Perseverance* value of 31 (the DN +12), invoking a reality storm against Azoreth is really not a good idea. Besides the fact the demon will probably win, the storm will completely fill the room, making it impossible for the Knights to read the banishment ritual. If the Knights want to try this option, well, it's their funeral.

Azoreth, Mon Amour

When Azoreth appears, he scoffs at the Knights for thinking they can match his power. He reveals to them that the things they have done — bathing in the blood of the leeches, speaking to the dead man, and slaying Eva — were all part of an elaborate ritual designed to make them fit sacrifices for him. Now that he has arrived, he will claim their souls.

Winslow mouths prayers to the demon at first, until Azoreth gets around to telling him that he is to be slain too. If Azoreth has the opportunity, he swats Winslow like a fly, killing him and then wrenching his screaming soul from his body.

Adios, Azoreth

The Knights will have to read the complete ritual for Azoreth to be banished. This requires three uninterrupted rounds of reading — if the Knight doing the rite is interrupted, he must begin again.

Azoreth will attempt to destroy whichever Knight is reading the ritual, using his powers.

Note that the parchment upon which the rite is written is an occult object, and immune to Azoreth's flame and talons.

Azoreth taunts the Knights that

when he is done with them, their souls will be sent back to Earth to inhabit the bodies of monsters in the thrall of the Gaunt Man.

His primary goal is to kill the Knights and take their souls before they can read the banishment ritual.

If the Knights succeed in reading the first two quatrains of the ritual, a door appears in the space behind Azoreth. It opens, revealing a bright white light, and a howling wind swirls through the room. It makes it difficult to hear (-4 modifier to any *Perception* rolls that require hearing), but does no damage to the Knights.

If the Knights succeed at reading the second pair of quatrains of the ritual, great flaming hands emerge from the doorway and reach for Azoreth.

If the Knights read the final two quatrains of the ritual, the hands seize Azoreth and drag him back through the door, screaming in rage. The door closes after him.

If the Knights are interrupted at any point in the ritual, the effects already present vanish, and the ritual must be begun again.

Variables

If the Knights flee the room, Azoreth appears wherever they run to, laughing maniacally. If the Knights split up, Azoreth pursues the one bearing the parchment.

If a Knight is slain in the battle with Azoreth, banishing the demon will not restore life to him.

Awards

Award each surviving Knight 10 Possibilities, plus 1 or 2 more for superior roleplaying. If Azoreth survives on this plane, then nobody gets any possibilities (and they'd better be dead).

Tablet of Terror

Prologue

Rama-Tet approached his pharaoh cautiously. Although the forces of the Tenth Empire had achieved a glorious victory over the enemy at Mecca, Mobius had seemed tense and distracted of late. The old vizier knew that in such a mood, his master was capable of anything.

"Your pardon, Revered One," Rama-Tet said quietly. "I bring news from the Land of the Dead."

Mobius turned to him, his eyes blazing through the slits in his hood. "Then speak, Rama-Tet! The sands of Time will not cease to flow in anticipation of your message, and every moment may be crucial to the success of my plans!"

Even Rama-Tet, who had seen Mobius enraged, hysterical, and flushed with victory, was taken aback by the Pharaoh's vehemence. "We have received a message from Professor Harlov. The translation of the hieroglyphics has begun, and a partial rendering of the inscription is included. Would you have me read it?"

Mobius nodded and sank back into his throne, his fingers drumming on its golden arms. Rama-Tet unfolded the parchment and began to read.

"When Isis, Osiris, and Ra are joined,

When Horus smiles, and Sebek seeks the darkness,

Then all shall be as it was ...'

"There is more, Revered One, but the translation is not yet completed."

Mobius had risen and was anxiously pacing the room, his fists clenched, his body seemingly gripped by some nearly uncontrollable emotion. "It is enough, and more than enough," he rasped. "Tell me, Rama-Tet — who besides you and I have seen or heard the contents of this message?"

"It was sent over the wireless by Harlov, and our operator, Fahoud,

brought it directly to my chambers. To my knowledge, no other eyes have seen these words."

Mobius nodded, and then snapped, "It is well for you that I still have need of your services, Vizier. These are my commands: have Fahoud, and any he might have spoken to since this message arrived, executed immediately. Who is currently in command of the Land of the Dead bridge outpost?"

"With so many of the senior officers of Battlegroup Red Hand engaged in the conquest of Mecca, Most Holy One, I believe Captain Karim Ardebil holds that honored position."

Mobius returned to his throne, but his restless had not abated. "Contact Captain Ardebil and order the immediate arrest and execution of Harlov and any assisting in the translation. Have the tablet shipped to Thebes. Understand, Rama-Tet: its translation must not be completed, and any who have read so much as a line of the inscription must die."

Rama-Tet wisely said nothing to reveal his confusion at Mobius' orders. After all, the inscription sounded like a thousand others that had been encountered by Imperial historians since coming to this world. Why was the Pharaoh so concerned by this one?

But a servant of Mobius learned quickly to ask no questions and follow orders. Leaving the throne room, Rama-Tet set off to issue the orders that would lead to the deaths of Harlov, Fahoud and any others so unwise as to allow their eyes to wander across words inscribed thousands of years before.

The Major Beat

"Tablet of Terror" is a one-act adventure which takes the Storm Knights from the Nile Empire to the Land Below, there to rescue an archaeologist

from pursuing shocktroopers and the myriad dangers of the domed world of Merretika. At the end of the quest is a shocking revelation inscribed on an ancient tablet, one which promises both opportunity and great peril for Dr. Mobius, High Lord of the Nile Empire. You will need The Land Below supplement to play this adventure.

The Storm Knights are in Ethiopia when word comes from the Mystery Men: an archaeologist hired by Mobius to translate an Egyptian tablet found in the "Land of the Dead" has disappeared. Last seen fleeing toward the levitation device which leads to the bizarre Land Below, Professor Harlov was being pursued by Nile shocktroopers, apparently bent on retrieving the tablet and "killing the messenger." It is believed Harlov escaped into the Land Below, and will need Storm Knight aid to survive there.

Once past the guards and down the dimthread to Merretika, the Knights find that Harlov and a companion did indeed pass this way, only slightly ahead of the shocktrooper party. Their trail leads through the Mountains of the Beast to the domain of the Pyrian Fire Tamers, where they discover that an elderly man was captured by the strange race. Freeing him requires that the Storm Knights defeat a rogue creature of the flames who has been threatening the Pyrian village.

With that done, they find that the elderly man is not the archaeologist, but her father. The true Professor Harlov was captured by Darooni Wasp Riders, who intend to use her as the sacrificial victim in their Hatching Ceremony.

The Storm Knights must brave shocktrooper ambushes, bizarre and deadly creatures, and the fierce Darooni warriors to save Harlov from certain death, retrieve the tablet, and learn the secret of its inscription.

Adventure Background

Professor Sandra Harlov discovered the tablet whose existence would one day threaten her life while on an Imperial-sponsored archaeological dig in Ethiopia with her father, Maximillian. Although she was no friend of Mobius or his minions, such expeditions were far more difficult to undertake without the approval of the Pharaoh.

The tablet's hieroglyphics were unmistakably Egyptian, yet there was no easy explanation for how it wound up so far south in Africa and so near the surface of the sands. At Mobius' behest, she began to translate the tablet, and sent off partial results to Thebes. Mere hours later, she received a warning from one of her bearers that Nile shocktroopers were coming for her, her father, and the tablet.

Her only avenue of escape was the tunnel to the Land Below, and tablet in tow, she and her father bluffed their way past the guards and journeyed to Merretika. The shocktroopers pursued, and the pair were forced to trek through the domed world, desperately seeking sanctuary and facing a very bleak (and possibly very brief) future.

SCENE ONE: A Passage to Merretika

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights are asked by the Mystery Men to find and rescue an archaeologist believed to have fled into the Land Below from pursuing shocktroopers.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

In the brief time you have been in what the Nile denizens call "the Land of the Dead," you have decided that is a very apt phrase. In a land where starvation and death have always been fixtures, the people now must try to survive in the harsh grip of the Nile Empire. In the time since the maelstrom bridge dropped, things have

grown progressively worse in this area, and it's believed that Storm Knight activity might inspire a popular resistance movement against the Pharaoh's troops.

Tonight, you received a message to meet a courier from Cairo near the Nile-Core Earth border in central Ethiopia. What he brings you is unknown, but the site of the rendezvous — an abandoned diamond mine — implies that secrecy is of the utmost importance.

The Action

The message the Knights received was from a man named Luther Hill, who they may know (personally or by reputation) to be an agent of the Nile Mystery Man known as The Whisper. The diamond mine to which they travel is well-hidden in the jungle and has long been undisturbed, having been played out long before the Nile troops arrived.

The message said for the Knights to approach the mine opening and speak these words: "We come seeking a gem of price, and are prepared to pay." Once they do so, a hand will appear out of the darkness and beckon them inside.

The Knights may bring a light source in with them if they wish to — if they do not have one, their contact advises that they all link hands and follow him. After a few moments, they round a bend and come into a lighted cavern filled with radio apparatus and maps of the Nile Empire.

This is the "office" of Luther Hill, from which he contacts the agents of The Whisper based in this part of the world. He is a small man, almost mousy in appearance, but with a mind that's razor-sharp and a genius for organizing.

Luther Hill

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, fire combat 10, lock picking 9, stealth 10, unarmed combat 9

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 12

Air vehicles 14, evidence analysis 17, find 17, first aid 14, land vehicles 14, language (Egyptian) 13, lan-

guage (Aramaic) 13, scholar (realm lore) 15, trick 16

MIND 14

Artist (actor) 15, science (electronics) 17, weird science 17

CHARISMA 11

Charm 12, persuasion 13, taunt 14

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 12, reality 15

Inclination: Good

Possibilities: 20

Equipment: 9mm P38, damage value 15, ammo 8, range 3-10/25/60; binoculars; camera; backpack radio; shortwave radio; flashlight; jungle gear; rope; Imperial military uniform (rank: shocktrooper footsoldier, Battlegroup Red Hand)

Hill invites the Knights to sit down, and hands them a sealed envelope. Inside, the Knights find a message from The Whisper, and a photograph of an elderly, bearded man and a young, beautiful woman with blonde hair. Both are clad in khaki outfits appropriate for work in the jungle.

The message reads as follows:

Friends,

Professor Harlov, a noted archaeologist, is being pursued by Nile shocktroopers, who are reportedly seeking a recently-discovered Egyptian tablet Harlov was translating. Harlov fled to the Land Below eight days ago using the levitation machine, with the shocktroopers following shortly after.

There is apparently something on this tablet that Mobius fears. It is imperative that we find it — and Harlov — and learn the secret it bears. Regrettably, my agents are occupied on other matters at the moment, and so I must ask you to undertake this mission. I have instructed Luther Hill to give you any aid you might require.

— The Whisper

If the Knights are completely in the dark about the Land Below and the levitation machine, Hill will explain that the *weird science* device was constructed to transport Nile troops down a tunnel and into a strange and wondrous place called "Merretika." Hill himself has never been there, but the tales of the place refer to savage tribes and dangerous creatures.

Hill tells the Knights that the device

is currently guarded by five veteran shocktroopers. There are normally more guards, but many have been called away to fight in Mecca, and the device's creator, Dr. Halim Hoffet, is in Thebes consulting with Mobius on the situation. Hill also tells them that someone must stay on the surface to operate the device, and will volunteer to do so for the party.

Hill offers them any equipment he has (save the P38 and the shortwave radio) to take with them on their journey. He strongly suggests that they take the backpack radio and contact him when the levitation machine is nearing the ground, so he can shut it off. (For further information on the levitation machine, see page 30 of *The Land Below*).

Flags

If a *Suspicion* card is played, Hill is uncertain whether the Knights are who they claim to be. He knows of many of their past exploits, and quizzes them on these events to ascertain the truth about their identities.

If a *Personal Stake* or a *Connection* card is played, one of the Knights knows Sandra Harlov, and can tell the others that she is the archaeologist and the old man her father.

If a *Romance* card is played, one of the male Knights is attracted to Sandra's picture. If the card is played by a female Knight, Hill will fall in love with her and want to protect her from danger.

Come Fly With Me

There are a number of ways the Storm Knights can gain access to the levitation machine and thus to Merretika. They may attempt to take the device's chamber by force, and have Hill send them down; they may attempt to trick the shocktroopers into thinking they are stormers ordered by Mobius to join the search for Harlov; or one of the Knights may disguise himself as a shocktrooper and use that to get himself and his friends into the chamber. Let them use whatever method they feel will be most effective.

Hill shows them the way to the tunnel leading to the levitation machine chamber. Keep in mind that, because of the dropping of the Nile bridge, this area is now in a Nile pure zone.

A single shocktrooper stands guard at the mouth of the tunnel and the other four are inside the chamber. They are hostile to any efforts to persuade or charm them, unless the person taking the action is successfully disguised as a shocktrooper, in which case their attitudes are friendly.

Shocktroopers (5)

DEXTERITY 9

Beast riding 11, fire combat 12, heavy weapons 12, melee weapons 10, missile weapons 11, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 9

Climbing 10

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 7

Find 9, first aid 9, tracking 9, trick 9

MIND 7

Survival 9, test 9, willpower 12

CHARISMA 7

Taunt 9

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Egyptian) 12, intimidation 12

Inclination: Evil

Possibility Potential: few (50)

Equipment: KK81 (damage value 19, ammo 24, range 3-40/400/1k); grenades (2), damage value 19; bayonet/knife, damage value STR+4/13; backpack radio; flashlight; field kit

Once the Knights are past the first guard, they have to crawl through the exceedingly narrow tunnel to reach the chamber in which the device rests. It will take three rounds to get through the tunnel, and *Strength* totals of 6 are required to pull one's self along. If a Knight fails a roll, he cannot progress that round, and those behind him cannot progress until he is moving again.

If a *hero setback* occurs, one of the Knights may suddenly discover he is a trifle claustrophobic and really doesn't like crawling on his belly through a narrow tunnel. Handle this as you see fit.

When the Knights emerge from the tunnel, they find themselves in a circular, vaulted chamber roughly 12

meters in diameter, guarded by the four remaining shocktroopers. In the center of the room is a two-and-a-half meter hole, which looks like the classic "bottomless pit." Dominating one side of the cavern is a three meter high weird science device, a round disk with a barrel pointing straight down into the pit.

After they either trick or dispose of the shocktroopers, the Knights must activate the machine (a *weird science* total of 12 to operate, if Hill is not there to do it. In that event, one of the Knights has to stay on the surface to operate the device, or else instruct a shocktrooper how to turn it off when they signal). Once it's turned on, the Knights can step into the beam and can be levitated to the bottom. The trip will take 8 hours and 15 minutes, and while in the beam, all *Dexterity*-based skills will suffer a +6 to the difficulty numbers.

Flags

If a *Mistaken Identity* card is played, the shocktroopers are convinced that the Knights are a civilian inspection team sent to observe them by Mobius because of their error in letting Harlov get down the the Land Below. Attempts to *persuade*, *intimidate* or *trick* the guards receive +3 bonuses.

Hitting Bottom

When the Knights reach the end of their journey, they must radio the operator of the device to slow the speed so they do not crash into the floor of the cavern (if they fail to do this, the shocktrooper guard at the bottom will do so). If they *tricked* or *persuaded* the guards to send them down, the shocktrooper on watch at their destination will be expecting them and will welcome them, providing directions on how to reach the Nile outpost in Merretika.

If the Knights took the device chamber by force, and did not avail themselves of the opportunity to disguise themselves, they have to disable the lone guard at the bottom (use the same stats as the other guards). A *find* or *Perception* total of 8 while searching

his body will reveal a map from the chamber to the Nile outpost in Merretika.

Variables

If the Storm Knights failed in their first effort to get access to the levitation machine, they must either try again or find some other way to reach the Land Below. Their best hope of doing the latter would be to find some Ethiopian villagers who might have seen strange creatures emerging from caves in the area. The Knights should be aware, though, that besides being dangerous, trying to reach Merretika through the cave network could mean years spent wandering the tunnels.

Once the Knights have reached the bottom of the Nile pit and obtained directions to Merretika, cut to Scene Two.

SCENE TWO: O, Brave New World, That Has Such Creatures In It ...

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights get their first taste of life in the Land Below, and their first clues to the track taken by Professor Harlov.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

As you emerge from the caverns and into the jungle that marks your entrance into the domed world of Merretika, it is hard to believe that the legends about this place — tales that it is a world of perpetual sunlight — are true. For above you stretches a green canopy that filters the light from the yellow orb, and in the distance you can hear the cool sound of a river rushing. Plants the like of which you have never seen before grow from the jungle floor, and the area is alive with sound: screeches, roars, strange cries, and one scream that sounds almost ... human.

The Action

The Knights have essentially two options here: they can head directly for the Nile encampment to see if Harlov was captured and is being held there, or they can investigate the scream they have heard. If they choose to do the latter, cut to "Native Son." If they head for the Nile camp, cut to "Stories Told 'Round the Campfire."

Native Son

If the Knights choose to track down the source of the scream they heard, a *find* or *Perception* total of 9 reveals it came from deeper in the jungle. After a round, it comes again, and this time a *find* total of 7 reveals the source is just ahead.

The Knights break through the brush into a clearing. The area is dominated by a massive tree, so wide across that no man, not even a giant, could put his arms all the way around it. Hanging on for dear life from a limb is a naked boy roughly one meter tall, with dark hair and brownish red skin. At the foot of the tree are three arhet crows, creatures which resemble crocodiles and are roughly four meters in length with grey hides. They have "treed" the boy and are waiting for him to tire and fall so as to make a meal of him.

Arhet Crom (3)

DEXTERITY 8

Running 12, stealth 10, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 3

Find 10, tracking 9, trick (8)

MIND 2

Test (15)

CHARISMA 2

Charm (12), persuasion (11), taunt (8)

SPIRIT 3

Intimidation (8)

Possibility Potential: none

Natural Tools: hide, armor value

TOU+2/12; teeth, damage value STR+4/12; tail, damage value STR+1/9

Note: Once bitten by an arhet crom,

a *Strength* total of 16 is required to pry open the creature's jaws.

If the Knights attack, the creatures respond by forgetting the boy and turning on them. If they are able to slay two of the creatures, the third departs to find an easier kill.

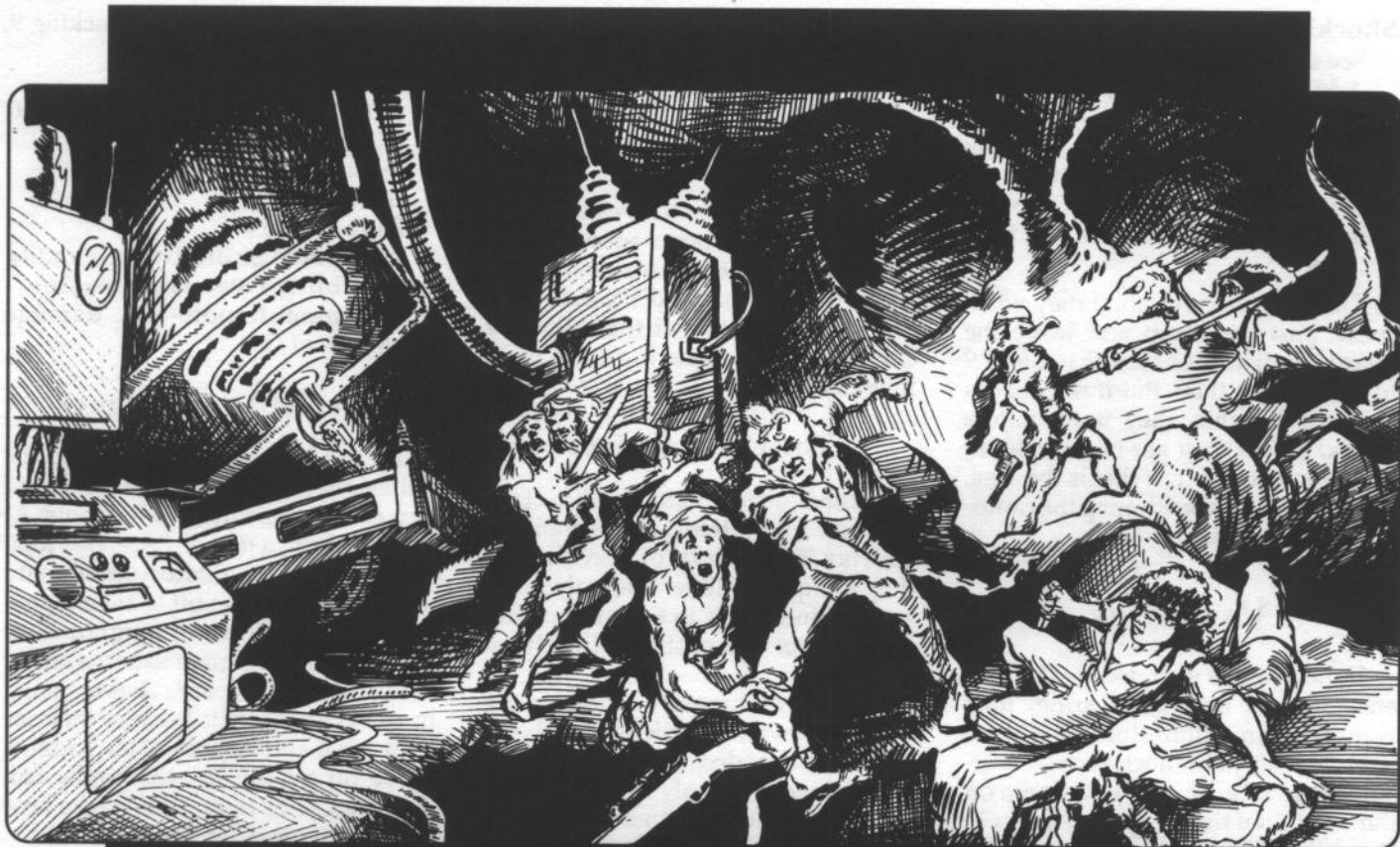
Once the creatures are gone, the boy climbs down the tree and speaks excitedly to the Knights in his native tongue (Ohibi). A *language* total of 12 is required to understand him. If the Knights fail the roll, the boy tries speaking in broken Egyptian he has picked up from the Nile shocktroopers who camp nearby. A *language* total of 9 is required to understand this.

The boy tells the Knights he is a member of the Ohibi tribe, and his village is nearby. His name is Taka-bet, and he was gathering roots and berries when the arhet crows surprised him and he was forced to climb the tree.

If the Knights ask about the Nile camp, Taka-bet tells them that there was much shouting and moving about there at the time he found the heknet nest (that's the best he can do as far as fixing the time), and because of that, he has been told not to allow any strangers to approach the village on pain of death. Though he considers the Knights his friends for saving him from the crows, he won't tell them the way to his village or agree to take them there.

If the Knights ask about the Harlovs, Taka-bet recognizes the descriptions. He saw them on the same day the people in the camp were so excited. They were heading "Wul-Heleph" (away from the sun) along the "Wild River." Taka-Bet gladly shows them to the banks of the river, and tell them that beyond it is the valley of the Keefee. But he can offer no advice on how to cross the waters, because the Ohibi do not know how — and besides, the people the Knights seek did not go this way.

If the Knights show the boy the photograph of the Harlovs, he is badly frightened by it. A *persuasion* total of 13 will be necessary for the Knights to convince him they are not devils who shrink people and trap them forever in magic squares. If they fail to per-



suade him, Taka-Bet runs off at the earliest opportunity. Attempts to pursue him are difficult, and require a tracking total of 18. He leads them away from the Ohibi village, and once they give up the pursuit, tracking totals of 8 are required to find their way back to the clearing or to the banks of the river.

If the Knights decide to follow the information Taka-Bet gave them and avoid the Nile camp, they can follow the Wild River. It is quite easy to pick up the trail of the Harlovs, because a squad of shocktroopers were following it as well, and their footprints are everywhere in the soft earth. Tracking totals of 6 allow the Knights to follow the path.

Cut to Scene Three, "The Fire Down Below."

If the Knights wish to check out the Nile camp, cut to "Stories Told 'Round the Campfire."

Stories Told 'Round the Campfire

The Nile encampment is largely deserted. Ten of the soldiers, including Field Major Achmed Tunakakan, have gone with the shocktroopers sent down from the surface to find the Harlovs. Due to fears of Storm Knight involvement in the situation, the two shocktroopers remaining have been armed with 7.92 KARs as well as their standard swords.

Stealth totals of 10 allow the Knights to approach the camp undetected. Perception totals of 9 allow the Knights to overhear the troopers' conversation. They can learn the following:

- The majority of the encampment's force went a week ago with five elite shocktroopers sent by Captain Abdeli in pursuit of the Harlovs. They were following the trail along the Wild River, into territory the shocktroopers have never explored.

- The morale of the troops is low following Abdeli's order that Footsoldier Assel be shot for allowing the Harlovs to get past the encampment at all. Considering that no one knew they were fugitives from the Empire, it seems unfair that the camp's troops were being punished for not stopping them.

- The shocktroopers doubt either the Harlovs or the search party will ever return. The tales the Ohibi have spread about some of the things that lurk Wul-Heleph make it sound far more dangerous than a mere 15 shocktroopers could handle, let alone civilians. Privately, the two are hopeful that if the expedition meets with disaster, the encampment will be closed and they can be transferred back to Khartoum.

The Knights can, of course, attack the camp if they wish to. They will be able to find radios, food supplies, swords and KARs.

Shocktroopers (2)

See stats above.

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibilities: 1

Equipment: 7.92 KAR, damage value 19, ammo 14, range 3-40/400/1k; sword, damage value STR+6/15; knife, damage value STR+4/13; field kit; rope

The Knights can also, if they wish, sneak past the camp and leave the guards undisturbed (*stealth* totals of 9 to accomplish this). But if the guards spot the Knights, they immediately attack, unless they are outnumbered by more than 2 to 1. If that is the case, the guards flee, abandoning the campsite to the Knights.

Variables

If the Knights visit neither the Nile encampment nor the clearing, they wander around until stumbling upon the trail left by the shocktroopers pursuing the Harlovs. That cuts down on the amount of time they have to act in Scene Five.

If the Knights are captured by the shocktroopers, the troopers tie them up and hold them for interrogation by the senior officers when they return. The Knights must escape or risk failing in their mission.

Once the Storm Knights are on the trail of the shocktroopers and the Harlovs, cut to Scene Three, "The Fire Down Below."

SCENE THREE: The Fire Down Below

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights travel through the Mountains of the Beast and find one of the Harlovs a captive of the Pyrians.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

After days of following the trail through dense jungle, you emerge into a startlingly beautiful savannah, tall brown grasses dancing in the wind

and odd-looking trees with what appear to be violet berries. In the distance, you can see a great mountain chain, and from somewhere beyond the mountains, plumes of smoke rise into the air.

A *tracking* total of 6 reveals that the trail of the shocktrooper squad continues on toward the mountains. The trek across the savannah and into the mountains of the beast, but the following can be used to make it a little more interesting.

The Dalberry Tree

If the Storm Knights wish to take berries from the trees in the savannah, a *science (botany)* total of 9 reveals that they are quite edible. The only other way to find out is to taste them, and the Knights will probably find them quite tasty.

Within moments of consuming them, however, the Knights find themselves surrounded by Keefee — humanoid warriors only 30 centimeters tall who consider the tree and its fruit to be sacred. They demand an explanation from the Knights for why they ate of the tree (*language* total of 12 to understand them, unless one of the Knights speaks Keefee, in which case the total need is 6). If the Knights refuse (or are unable) to answer, the Keefee begin herding them toward the mountains. They fight the Knights only in self-defense, but they make it clear to the Knights that they are not wanted in their lands.

If the Knights are able to explain to the Keefee that they did not realize the tree's significance, the warriors accept their word, but ask that they not eat of the tree again (as only Keefee are allowed to do so). If asked about the Harlovs and the shocktroopers, the Keefee gesture toward the Mountains of the Beast, and warn the Knights not to go there. If asked why, they pantomime the actions of a giant ape, and repeat "Ungrosh" over and over again.

Keefee Warriors (20)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 10, melee weapons 9

STRENGTH 4

TOUGHNESS 5

PERCEPTION 8

First aid 9, language 9, tracking 9, trick 11

MIND 9

Artist 10, medicine 10, survival 10

CHARISMA 9

Persuasion 10, taunt 11

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Raya) 9

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (36)

Equipment: pole-axe, damage value STR+1/5

Cat Got Your Tongue?

As the Knights walk through the valley, they see in the distance a herd of creatures resembling elephants. At that moment, a *find* or *Perception* total of 8 allows the Knights to hear a throaty growl coming from off to their right.

Atop a rocky outcropping crouches a smileodon, the great sabertooth cat of the Merretikan plains. It is focusing its ire on the Knights because they are between it and its prey. If the Knights move on peacefully, the smileodon goes back to its hunt. If they take hostile action toward it, the cat attacks.

Smileodon

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14, long jumping 14, maneuver 14, stealth 15, unarmed combat 15

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 15 (17)

PERCEPTION 13

Find 15, tracking 16, trick (14)

MIND 8

Test (17)

CHARISMA 6

Charm (10), persuasion (11), taunt (12)

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 14

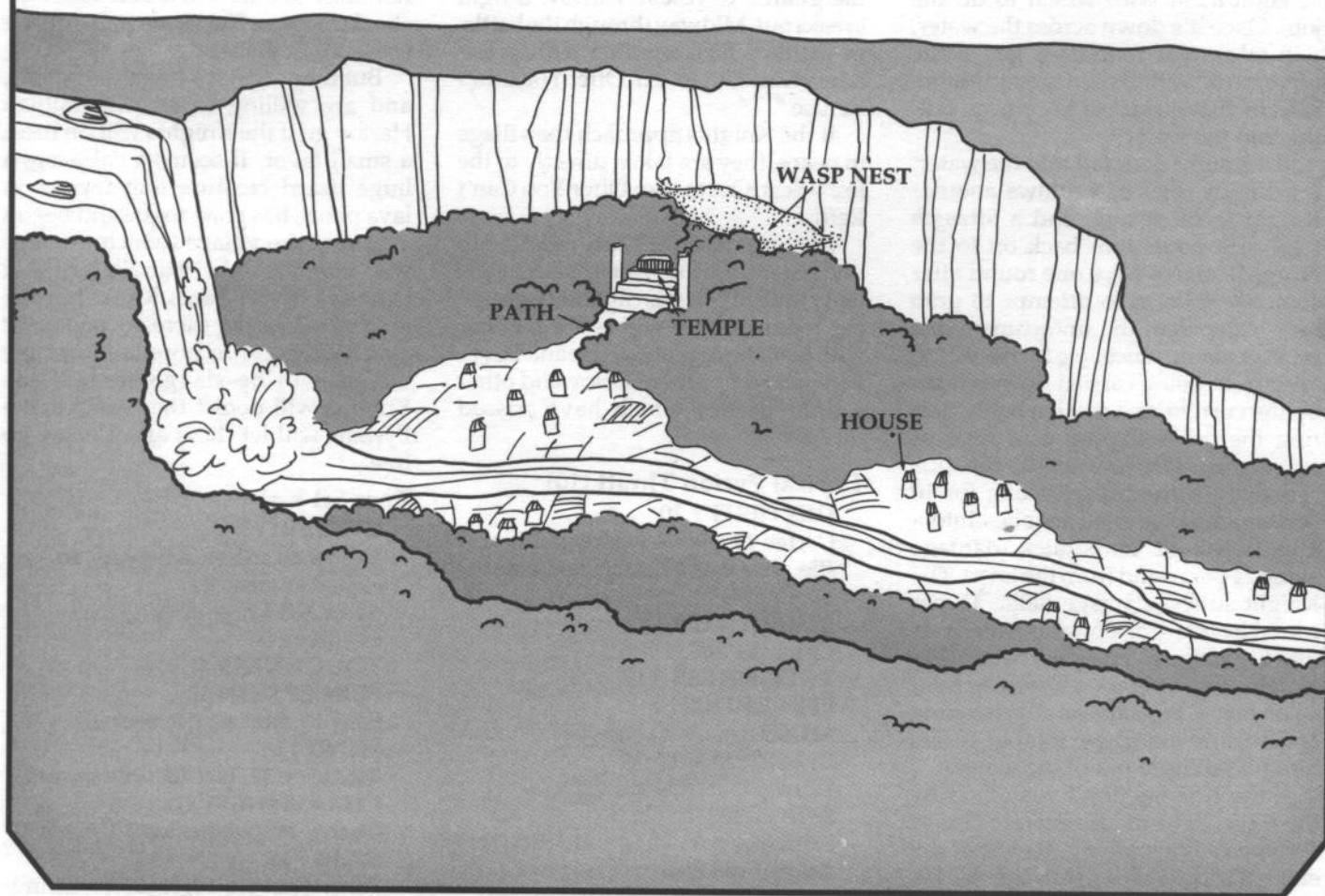
Possibilities: none

Natural Tools: fur, armor value TOU+2/17; teeth, damage value STR+3/16; claws, damage value STR+2/15

Description: The smileodon is a squat, stocky great cat with curved canine teeth (resembling the extinct sabretooth's) that reach lengths of up to 20 centimeters. Not being a particularly swift creature, the smileodon tiger relies on ambush to down its prey.



Infiniverse Update: Map 5 Detail of the Misty Gorge



Ungrosh

At some point after they reach the foothills of the Mountains of the Beast, have the Knights sight Ungrosh, the 20 meter tall ape who dominates the mountain chain. He is currently occupied eating a herd of elk-like creatures, and takes no notice of the Knights, but it's good for them to know he's around. He will, of course, react if the Knights should be so foolish as to attack him or cause lots of commotion.

Ungrosh

DEXTERITY 13

Running 20, swimming 16, un-

armed combat 17

STRENGTH 28

Climbing 31, lifting 32

TOUGHNESS 26

PERCEPTION 20

Find 23, tracking 22

MIND 7

Test (16)

CHARISMA 6

Taunt (12)

SPIRIT 13

Intimidation 19, reality 15

Note: Ungrosh's movement limit value is 14 do to his great size and stride.

Possibilities: 9

Natural Tools: fur, armor value TOU+2/28; fists, damage value STR+1/29; teeth, damage value STR+2/30; stomping attack, damage value STR+5/33

The River With No Bottom

After passing through the mountains, the Knights come upon a raging river beyond which a small village can be seen. The Knights must cross the river to reach the settlement.

There are a number of ways to do this, including leaping across or building a makeshift bridge. If they find a narrow point in the river, a leap can be

made with a *long jumping* or *Dexterity* total of 13 (if you want to make it really difficult, have a cloud of steam rise up from a nearby lava flow to obscure the opposite bank, and add +3 to the difficulty of the *jump*).

Felling a nearby tree so that it bridges the water is a simple action (provided the Knights have some kind of equipment with which to do the job). Once it's down across the water, will takes two rounds to get to the other bank, with *Dexterity* or *acrobatics* rolls of 10 required to keep from falling into the water.

If a Knight does fall into the water, a *Dexterity* total of 8 allows another Knight to catch him, and a *Strength* total of 9 hauls him back on to the bridge. Knights have one round after someone falls in to attempt to grab him. After that, the unfortunate one must generate *swimming* totals of 21 to keep from being carried downstream by the current and reach a bank. Barring the quick tossing of a rope or successful *swimming* totals, the current sweeps the Knight along for 10 rounds until the river empties into a lava flow and evaporates (damage value 24 per round from the lava). The Knight suffers damage value 11 per round he is swept along, as water gets into his lungs. Every other round, the Knight may attempt a *Dexterity* total — on an 11, he grabs an overhanging branch, and a *Strength* total of 10 lets him pull himself out of the water.

If the Knights don't wish to cross the river, have them generate *find* or *Perception* totals. On a 7, they spot the elder Harlov walking through the village, apparently guarded by armored soldiers carrying swords and spears.

Some Say the World Will End in Fire ...

The village seen from the other side of the River With No Bottom was one of the frontier outposts of the Pyrian Fire Tamers, a militaristic race that thrives in the harsh, inhospitable southern region of Merretika. They are slender and pale skinned, with finely-chiseled features.

Stealth totals of 10 allow the Storm Knights to approach the village unde-

tected. *Evidence analysis* or *Perception* totals show that the majority of the people in the village are laborers who are hard at work, while the perimeter is patrolled by warriors armed with *melee weapons*. If the Knights have not seen Harlov yet, they do so now.

If the Knights fail the *stealth* rolls and are spotted, or attempt to attack the guards to rescue Harlov, a fight breaks out. Midway through the battle, no matter who is winning, a fire priest intervenes. Cut to "An Offer You Can't Refuse."

If the Knights approach the village in peace, they are taken directly to the fire priest. Cut to "An Offer You Can't Refuse."

Language totals of 12 are required to understand the Fire Tamer's language. Only the fire priest is capable of speaking tongues the Knights are familiar with (smatterings of English and Egyptian picked up from Harlov and other Knight parties which have passed through the area).

Typical Pyrian Thrall (10)

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, *melee weapons* 12, *missile weapons* 11, *unarmed combat* 11

STRENGTH 9

Climbing 10

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

MIND 8

CHARISMA 9

Taunt 11

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Karruk) 11, *intimidation* (12)

Additional Skills: three at +2 adds

Possibility Potential: some (45)

Equipment: leather and bronze armor, TOU+3/12; spear, damage value STR+4/13; bronze sword, damage value STR+4/13

An Offer You Can't Refuse

Midway through any battle with the thralls — or if the Knights enter the village peacefully — an aged male fire priest named Tora Sil Kel demands their attention. Once the Knights have made it clear they seek the elder Harlov and his daughter, the priest takes them

to see the old man, who is unharmed, but a prisoner.

The priest explains that Harlov arrived in their village acting like one afflicted with madness, pleading for Pyrian aid against one of their neighbors. Naturally, the Fire Tamers refused — they war at times of their own choosing, against their own enemies, not those of others. If asked about the shocktroopers, Kel is unaware of their presence in the area.

But they are not a heartless people, and are willing to let Maximillian Harlov go if the Knights will do them a small favor. It seems a *caleacon*, a huge lizard creature that thrives in lava pools, has gone rogue and begun attacking the village (which explains why there are only 10 thralls left). Aid from the city of Tanta Kallar has not arrived yet, and if there are any more attacks, the entire population of the village will be slaughtered. If the Knights will defeat the creature, the Pyrians will let them and Harlov go free.

Tora Sil Kel

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, *melee weapons* 10, *unarmed combat* 9

STRENGTH 8

Climbing 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 12

Find 13, *first aid* 13, *trick* 15

MIND 11

Medicine 12, *test* 13, *willpower* 13

CHARISMA 13

Charm 14, *persuasion* 15, *taunt* 14

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Karruk) 15, *focus* 16, *intimidation* 12, *reality* 15

Possibilities: 11

Miracles: cloud of ash, Darok's breath, flame aura (see page 73 of *The Land Below*).

Equipment: knife, damage value STR+3/11; robes; bronze and cloth headdress

If the Knights refuse the deal, Kel tells them they are free to leave, but Harlov must remain to be used as a sacrifice to appease the *caleacon's* anger. If the Knights attack the priest, thralls attempt to kill Harlov right then and there. If the Knights fight their way through the thralls and save



Harlov, make their way back across the river and way from the Pyrian lands, cut to Scene Four, "Sunday in the Savannah with Shocktroopers." But keep in mind that the Knights will have made enemies of the Pyrians, and a Fire Tamer hunting party can be expected to be on their trail through the rest of this adventure and any time they return to the Land Below.

If the Knights agree to fight the caleacon, cut to "Beast of Flame."

Beast of Flame

The Pyrian thralls show the Knights the lava pit in which the caleacon lives, but won't approach too closely. The lava pit lies at the bottom of a steep depression, and *stealth* totals of 11 allow the Knights to get to the edge of the slope without attracting the creature's attention. It has recently fed, and is near slumbering in the pool. However, because of its deep orange color, it is difficult to pick out against

the lava (*find* or *Perception* of 20 to spot it).

If the Knights make any loud noise or do anything to rouse the beast (it's a light sleeper), it opens a heavy-lidded eye, assesses the situation, and rears up out of the lava to attack the Knights. The caleacon will fight to the death, and the Pyrian thralls flee at the first sight of it. If the Knights do spot the creature and continue to use *stealth* as they approach the ideal spot from which to attack, they automatically get initiative in the first round. They can, of course, use ranged weapons or explosives to attack the beast, but once the fight has begun, the caleacon makes every effort to close with them.

Caleacon

DEXTERITY 10

Swimming 12, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 21

TOUGHNESS 21 (25)

PERCEPTION 9

Find 12, trick (10)

MIND 4

Test (12)

CHARISMA 3

Charm (13), persuasion (12), taunt (10)

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 22, reality 12

Possibilities: 5

Natural Tools: hide, armor value TOU+4/25; fangs, damage value STR+4/25; claws, damage value STR+2/23; *heat* attack, damage value 20, range 25/50/100 (note that creature suffers *fatigue* result whenever using heat attack)

Note: creature receives a +2 bonus to *Toughness* against heat-based attacks, and a -2 penalty against cold-based attacks.

When the Knights have defeated the creature, the Pyrians allow Harlov to go free with them. He takes them to an extremely narrow part of the river over which he had jumped to reach the Pyrian settlement (*long jumping* total of 10, water penalties same as above). Once they are out of Pyrian

territory, cut to Scene Four, "Sunday in the Savannah with Shocktroopers."

Flags

If an *Idea* card is played, one of the Knights realize that a creature which lives in a scorchingly hot environment might be vulnerable to cold.

If a *Romance* card is played, one of the natives is attracted to a Knight, and will wish him/her to stay and join the tribe.

Variables

If the Knights fail to defeat the caleacon, they must find another way of getting Maximillian Harlov away from the Pyrians. This probably means breaking in and freeing him, with the repercussions mentioned above.

If the Knights fail to defeat the caleacon and fail to save Harlov (or he gets killed), they must move on without him. They can go back across the river and pick up the shocktroopers' trail again (*tracking* difficulty of 8), which leads them into Scene Four. Though Harlov does have valuable information to give them, they can make it through the rest of the adventure without it, if need be.

SCENE FOUR: Sunday in the Savannah with Shocktroopers

The Situation

Standard. The Knights learn of the horrible fate which awaits Sandra Harlov, come upon a shocktrooper-Leopard Man battlefield, and if they act quickly enough, gain an ally in their quest to save the archaeologist.

If the Knights have failed to save Maximillian, cut directly to "Blood of the Leopard." Otherwise, read aloud or paraphrase:

It has been several hours since you left the Pyrian camp with the elder

Harlov, and he has yet to speak. Now, as the jungle comes into view once again beyond the savannah, he seems to overcome his grief and recount his tale of horror.

The Action

Harlov tells the Knights what happened after he and his daughter, Sandra, reached the Land Below and made it past the Nile encampment. Occasionally, his voice breaks from grief, and he frequently implores the Knights to help him save his daughter. He is obviously still in shock from his experiences.

Maximillian Harlov

DEXTERITY 8

Beast riding 9, fire combat 9, long jumping 9, melee weapons 9, stealth 10

STRENGTH 8

Climbing 9

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 11

Evidence analysis 14, find 15, first aid 13, land vehicles 12, language (Egyptian) 13, scholar (historian) 14, tracking 12, trick 12

MIND 13

Science (archaeology) 14, survival 15, test 14

CHARISMA 10

Persuasion 12, taunt 11

SPIRIT 10

Intimidation 11, reality 15

Possibilities: 9

Equipment: jungle clothing; first aid kit

Maximillian gives the Knights the following information:

— Although he does have a degree in archaeology, it is his daughter who is truly renowned in the field. It was her idea to do a dig in Ethiopia, which has become so much richer an area since the coming of the Nile Empire. Although both resented Mobius and the other invaders, they felt it more prudent to work with them in the interests of science than to openly oppose them.

— Sandra's interest had been piqued by the discovery of a tablet covered with apparently Egyptian hieroglyphics in an area where artifacts

of that culture are rarely found. Sandra completed a partial translation, and came to the conclusion that the tablet was not from Earth at all, at the time the shocktroopers came for them.

— After they escaped into the Land Below, they pushed themselves for days to stay ahead of the shocktroopers. Both had experience surviving in the jungle, even one as strange as this, and it served them well.

But when they reached the western section of the world, they found themselves near a river and a gorge whose contents were obscured by fog. Suddenly, bizarre warriors harnessed to giant wasps rose out of the mist and began to pursue them. They fled into the jungle, where Sandra hid the tablet (Harlov is not sure exactly where). But before they could escape, the wasp riders were upon them. Sandra was scooped up and carried into the gorge, and Maximillian heard one of the warriors refer to the "hatching ceremony."

— He knows at least some of the shocktroopers were in pursuit of him as he fled east searching for help to save Sandra. He stumbled into the Pyrian village, but they refused to help and took him prisoner. The rest of that tale the Knights know.

— He has no idea why Mobius would fear the translation of the tablet so.

Blood of the Leopard

When the Knights reach the border between the savannah and the jungle, they come upon a scene of carnage. Read aloud or paraphrase:

There is suddenly a stillness in the air, and the smell of death you have come to know so well in your adventures. In the air, carrion eaters have begun to circle. Something has occurred up ahead, something which promises another new danger to your party.

When the Knights push through the brush, they see what was a battlefield as recently as a few minutes ago. The corpses of shocktroopers lie on the ground, their bodies torn open as if by the claws of the predatory cat. Beside them are the bodies of warriors clad in leopard skins, most of them



stabbed or shot. In the center of the field, a warrior lies upon the ground, wounded, about to be stabbed by a wild-eyed shocktrooper.

It does not matter if the Knights used *stealth* or not when approaching this area — both of those still living are too absorbed in their private conflict to notice newcomers. The Knights must make a snap decision — try to stop the shocktrooper, or allow him to kill the fallen warrior.

If they make the attempt, and wound or miss him, he flees into the jungle (the shocktrooper is already wounded and suffering from four *shock* at this point). If they do not try to stop him, he kills the prone Leopard Man. In that event, they can make an attempt to capture the shocktrooper and learn what they can from him.

If they choose the latter course, cut to "The Shocktrooper Sings." If they save the Leopard Man, cut to "Unlikely Ally."

Unlikely Ally

The Leopard Man is suffering from a wound and will benefit from first aid. If the Knights fail *language* rolls (difficulty number of 12), Harlov may be able to communicate with the warrior. If successful medical treatment is done, the warrior grasps the hand of the one of the Knights and proclaims him a friend.

The Leopard Man explains that his hunting party was ambushed by the shocktroopers and many lives were lost. His band had been hurrying back to their village, because there was talk that the Darooni Wasp Riders were preparing for a ceremony. This meant the Leopard Men had to beware that none of their children were stolen for use as sacrifices by the dwellers in the Misty Gorge.

If the Knights ask the Leopard Man about the Hatching Ceremony, he explains that the Darooni kidnap one not

of their kind, paralyze her, and then the queen wasp lays her eggs inside of the captive. When the eggs hatch, they devour the victim. The ceremony is due to occur in two days, and the Darooni warriors are already sailing up the Tall River to reach the gorge in time to witness it.

Saka Att, the Leopard Man

DEXTERITY 10

Acrobatics 12, dodge 13, maneuver 12, melee weapons 14, stealth 13, unarmed combat 14

STRENGTH 13

Climbing 14

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 10

Tracking 11, trick 13

MIND 8

Survival 10, test 11, willpower 11

CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Holuku) 12, focus 12, intimidation 14

Possibilities: none

Equipment: leopard claws, damage value STR+3/16, +2 to climbing

Saka Att declares that the person who saved him to be worthy of respect, and gifts him with a pair of leopard claws. If the Knights tell him that they are on their way to the gorge to save a friend from the Darooni Wasp Riders, he offers the help of his tribe. Many of the Darooni are off gathering food for the feast which follows the Hatching Ceremony, so until the warriors on the river arrive, the gorge is lightly defended. His tribe will harry the Darooni on the waters and delay their arrival to give the Knights time to save their friend, as payment for their bravery.

After saying this, the Leopard Man wishes the Knights good luck and returns to the jungle.

Once the Knights begin their trek to the gorge and their confrontation with the Darooni, cut to Scene Five, "Darooni, Where is Thy Sting?"

The Shocktrooper Sings

Whether or not the Knights saved the Leopard Man, they may have captured the shocktrooper who was threatening him (same stats as those above). If they successfully *interrogate* him, he reveals that his shocktrooper squad had been ordered to follow Maximillian and capture him, while Field Marshal Tunakakan and the five elite troopers searched the area around the gorge for the tablet. He also reveals that one of the veteran troopers had let slip that the tablet was a Terran artifact, not one native to Earth, which had apparently been smuggled down the bridge into the Land of the Dead.

Cut to Scene Five, "Darooni, Where is Thy Sting?"

Flags

If a *Connection* card is played, the shocktrooper recognizes one of the Knights as the person who saved him from gang enforcers in Cairo (he owed money on a gambling debt). He offers to guide the Knights back to the gorge, but deserts at the first sign of trouble.

Variables

If the Knights neither save the Leopard Man nor capture the shocktrooper, they have to proceed to Scene Five without the information they provided. If one of the Knights is wearing a shocktrooper uniform, the party may be set upon by Leopard Man hunters before they reach the gorge, who believe them to be responsible for the massacre of the other band.

Should one of the Knights be a Nile hero and wish to attempt an *Inclination Seduction* on the shocktrooper, it is possible. But, good or evil, the shocktrooper is not brave and will not be much help in a fight.

SCENE FIVE: Darooni, Where is Thy Sting?

The Situation

Dramatic. The Knights learn what happened to the shocktroopers searching for the tablet, and must execute a daring rescue of Sandra Harlov before she is used as part of the dreaded Hatching Ceremony.

Read aloud or paraphrase:

The Misty Gorge is a place of fear. It is the home of a fearful race who have tamed giant wasps to serve as their mounts, and judging from the legends of the Land Below, care little about any lives beyond their own. But it is to this scar in the earth that you must go if you are to fulfill your pledge.

The Action

As the Knights pass a small cavern along the path to the gorge, a shot rings out from within it. A human voice with an Egyptian accent warns them away, and the next moment, a Nile field marshal will emerge, holding a pistol on them.

This is Achmed Tunakakan, commanding officer of the Nile outpost in the Land Below. He orders the Knights

to stop where they are, and if Maximillian is with them, demands to know where the tablet is.

Field Marshal Achmed Tunakakan

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, fire combat 13, heavy weapons 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons 15, stealth 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

Find 12, hieroglyphics 11, scholar (small unit tactics) 14, trick 11

MIND 12

Survival 14, test 13, willpower 14

CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Egyptian) 13, intimidation 14, reality 14

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: 15

Equipment: 7.63 Mauser, damage value 14, ammo 8, range 3-10/15/40; sword, damage value STR+6/18; backpack radio; rope; crude map of the gorge

Tunakakan is obviously shaken, and tells Harlov and the Knights that he and his men were attacked by giant wasps. He escaped, but his men were carried off by the wasps to their nests in the gorge. He knows Sandra Harlov is down there—at one point, the mists cleared, and he saw her being brought to a crude temple near the wasp nests. But all he cares about is the tablet and getting away from this hellish place.

The Knights have to overcome him before they can move on. Tunakakan refuses to help them, as he is too frightened of facing the wasps again. He gives them a crude map he drew of the gorge (feeling that if they rescue Sandra, she will lead them to the tablet, which can then be recovered after they return to the surface world).

The Gorge

Tunakakan's directions can give the Knights a general idea of where the temple is in the gorge. If the Knights formed an alliance with the Leopard Men, they need not fear the arrival of Darooni coming upriver. If they did not earn the trust of the Leopard Men,

within 10 minutes of their arrival at the gorge, canoes carrying Darooni begin arriving.

The Knights have essentially two possible approaches (see map): they can cross the Tall River (*swimming* total of 10) below the gorge, and then descend into it on the same side as the temple. This means they are roughly two kilometers from the nearest Darooni home, but also means they have to descend directly past the wasp nests. They can also descend on the far side of the gorge, cross the river, and sneak through the Darooni settlement to reach the temple and Sandra.

Most of the wasps and wasp riders are away from the gorge seeking food, so there are only about 100 Darooni and 10 wasps in the gorge. The Darooni are scattered along the length of the river, and the wasps are all in the nests.

A Long Way Down

Descending the gorge is no easy task. Visibility is extremely poor (+10 to the difficulty number of any skill which requires having clear vision of objects more than a meter away while descending). The canyon walls are slick shale and descend for a kilometer. If the Knights descend on the far side of the gorge, they have a four kilometer hike to reach the temple.

Scaling the gorge walls requires a *climbing* total of 14, and the standard falling rules apply (see page 52 of the *Torg Rulebook*). If the Knights have mountaineering gear, the difficulty is 11; if they are using daggers as pitons and vines for rope, the difficulty is 12. Magic or *flight* powers can also be used to descend the gorge.

With most of the wasp riders gone, there is little chance of the Knights being spotted on the climb down, unless they discharge a weapon or do something else to draw attention to themselves. Once they are on the ground, they need *stealth* totals of 12 whenever they are near settlements to keep from being spotted. Any Darooni who attack in the village have the same stats as the wasp riders detailed below.

If the Knights are descending past the nests, they need *stealth* totals of 16

to keep from rousing the insects. If the rolls are failed, two wasps emerge immediately, and one more every five rounds until nine are out (the queen will remain in the nest until all the others are defeated).

Giant Wasps (10)

DEXTERITY 10

Flight 14, maneuver 12, unarmed combat 11

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 8

Trick (8)

MIND 5

Test (15)

CHARISMA 4

Charm (20), persuasion (20), taunt (12)

SPIRIT 6

Intimidation (16), reality 11

Possibilities: all have three Possibilities

Natural Tools: stinger (damage value 17); wasp venom (damage value 16; if KO results, victim is paralyzed); wings, speed value 11; carapace, armor value TOU+1/13

The Temple

The Darooni temple consists of four three meter tall wooden posts supporting a roof of dried mud and brambles. An altar made of wood rests below the roof, and it is here that Sandra is bound, awaiting the time of the ceremony.

The temple is guarded by six wasp riders and a Darooni priestess. If the Knights descend past the wasp nest and rouse the insects, the temple guard will be forewarned and waiting for the invaders. If the Knights descend on the far side but are spotted in the settlement, the guard will still be forewarned, but the wasps will only emerge if summoned by the priestess.

Darooni Wasp Riders (6)

DEXTERITY 11

Beast riding 14, melee weapons 13, missile weapons 14, unarmed combat 12

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 10

Direction sense 13, tracking 13

MIND 9

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Olakaa) 12, intimidation 12

Additional Skills: two at +2 adds

Possibility Potential: some (37)

Equipment: lance, damage value STR+4/13; javelin, damage value STR+3/12; javelin venom, damage value 15, but only causes "K" or "O" results

Darooni Priestess

DEXTERITY 9

Beast riding 10, melee weapons 10, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 9

Direction sense 12, trick 11

MIND 10

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9

SPIRIT 11

Faith (Olakaa) 15, focus 14, intimidation 14, reality 14

Possibilities: 10

Miracles: call giant wasp (difficulty 8, community rating 8, range 15 (1k), duration N/A, summons wasp to invoker); wasp touch (difficulty 11, community rating 12, range touch, duration N/A, poisons victim with effect similar to wasp sting — damage value 16, and if KO results, victim is paralyzed for one hour).

The Great Escape

If the Knights did not rouse the village on their way through, no one there is aware of the battle at the temple, and the Knights can get through it with only light opposition on their way out (save, of course, for those giant wasps chasing them).

Climbing difficulties and mist penalties are identical to those for getting into the gorge. Once the Knights are safely away from the edge of the gorge, the wasps will give up pursuit and start seeking about for another victim to use in the ceremony.

Once the Knights are safely into Leopard Man territory, cut to "Aftermath."

Variables

If the Knights fail to save Sandra, they may make another attempt during the ceremony. She will have been rendered cataleptic by then. Medical treatment does her no good in that state, but she comes out of the coma on her own when the miracle's duration lapses, in two weeks. If the eggs have already been laid in her, she is doomed, because medical treatment to remove them would kill her in her weakened state.

If they fail to save Sandra and cannot make another attempt, they can search for the tablet on their own. A *find* or *Perception* total of 18 is required to locate it. Translating requires a *scholar (hieroglyphics)* total of 17, or transporting it to someone on the surface capable of doing the job. If they recover the tablet and get it translated, cut to "Aftermath."

If the Knights are being overwhelmed in the battle with the Darooni and/or the wasps, there are a few things that can be done to give them a fighting chance. Maximillian will gladly sacrifice his life to save his daughter, if need be. Also, the Leopard Men may mount an all-out attack on the Darooni in conjunction with the Knights' rescue efforts, which could provide the distraction they need. Use these events as you see fit.

Aftermath

Once safely away from the Misty Gorge, attention can be turned to deciphering the rest of the tablet (see difficulty numbers above). When the translation is completed, the inscription is revealed to read:

"When Isis, Osiris and Ra are joined,

*When Horus smiles,
And Sebek seeks the darkness,
Then all shall be as it was.*

When warriors spring from the blood of the righteous,

When a fledgling star is cast from the heavens,

Amat-Ra shall return."

Amat-Ra was the Terran pharaoh who preceded Sutenhotep/Mobius in that cosm. Overthrown in a bloody coup led by Mobius, Amat-Ra was mummified alive, but before dying, he pronounced a curse on his murderer. This curse has dogged Mobius throughout all his years, siphoning off much of the possibility energy he absorbs from cosms and bringing about the failure of many of his schemes.

A "return" of the dead pharaoh would represent both a threat to Mobius and a golden opportunity to (perhaps) end the curse that has robbed him of some of his greatest triumphs.

For further information on Amat-Ra, see pages 9-13 of *The Nile Empire* sourcebook.

There are any number of ways the Knights can return to the surface world. The Leopard Men might give them information on another exit, or have knowledge of another levitation device (at least one is known to exist in the Land Below); the Knights could perform a *trick* on the Nile troopers in the device chamber using their backpack radios and have themselves brought up; or a shocktrooper encountered in the Land Below could be forced to signal for the device to be switched on.

Adventure Awards

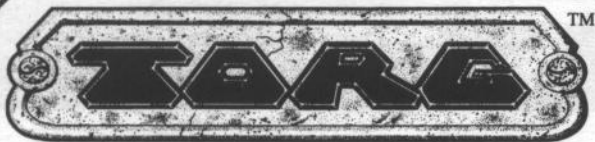
If the Knights recovered the tablet and saved both Sandra and Maximillian, award them 8 Possibilities.

If the Knights recovered the tablet, but were able to save Sandra only (Maximillian dying by some means other than his own sacrifice), award them 6 Possibilities.

If the Knights saved both Harlovs, but failed to regain the tablet, award them five Possibilities.

If the Knights recovered the tablet but could not save either Harlov, award them 4 Possibilities.

If the Knights did not recover the tablet, nor save either of the Harlovs, they receive no Possibilities for this adventure.



Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

Response Form

Name _____

Address _____

Campaign No. _____

Issue No. _____

Number of
Storm Knights

Dispatches

Rumors (# / T or F)

☐ Adventure
Realms

☐ Aysle™ _____

☐ Cyberpapacy™ _____

☐ Living Land™ _____

☐ Nile Empire™ _____

☐ Nippon Tech™ _____

☐ Orrorsh™ _____

Other: _____

☐ Adventure
Outcome

Herald Messages

- ☐ Starting
Possibilities
- ☐ Ending
Possibilities
- ☐ Card
Total

WEG Notes



CHARACTER SPELLS SUMMARY

CHARACTER:	HOME COSM:	MAGIC AXIOM:
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PERCEPTION:	ALTERATION:	MIND:	APPORTATION:
	DIVINATION:		CONJURATION:

ESSENCES	DEATH:	LIFE:	TIME:	TRUE KNOWLEDGE:			
PRINCIPLES	DARKNESS:	LIGHT:	MAGIC:				
MIXED FORCES	INANIMATE FORCES:	LIVING FORCES:					
ELEMENTS	AIR:	EARTH:	FIRE:	METAL:	PLANT:	WATER:	
KINDRED	AQUATIC:	AVIAN:	EARTHLY:	ELEMENTAL:	ENCHANTED:	ENTITY:	FOLK:

PROCESS THEOREMS	CAST TIME:	CONTROL:	DURATION:	RANGE:	SPEED:	STATE:
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SPELL NAME	AXIOM LEVEL	SKILL	BACKLASH	EFFECT VALUE	RANGE	DURATION	MANIPULATIONS
DESCRIPTION			DIFFICULTY	BONUS NUMBER TO		CAST TIME	

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INFINIVERSE™

CAMPAIGN GAME UPDATE

by Greg Farshtey

When Apeiros the Creator fled from the Destroyer, the Nameless One, worlds beyond worlds were created. Different realities separated and evolved. The Infiniverse™ was born.

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This supplement to Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™ features detailed information on the progress of the War so far. New realm maps, new adventures, and new developments in the Wars are reported here. The Campaign that is the quest for the Torg™ continues between these covers.



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Fantasy/Games

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