

BESM

GAME MASTER'S SCREEN









Julia Dillon
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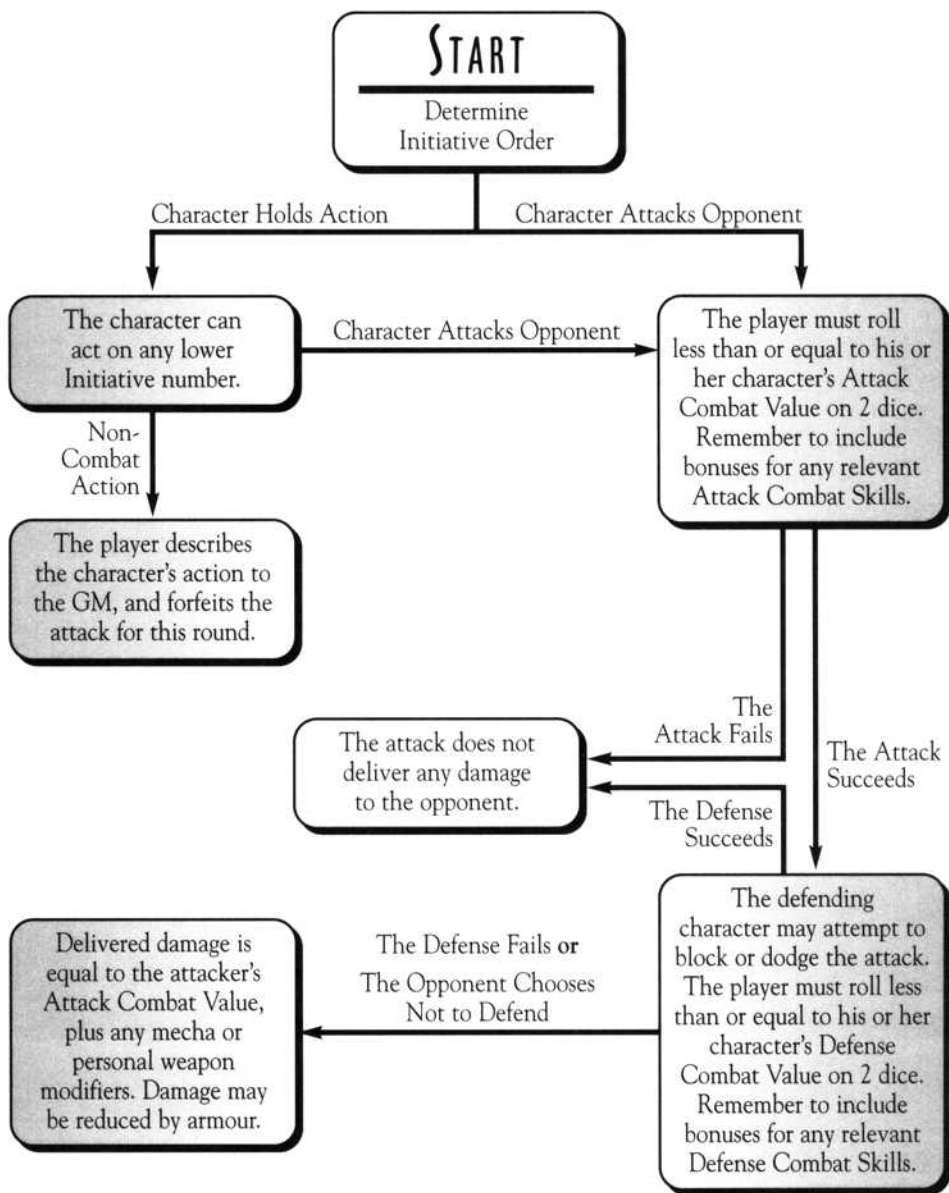


TABLE 4-1: DEGREES OF SUCCESS

Roll is greater than the target number by 8 or more	Critical Failure
Roll is 6 or 7 greater than the target number	Extreme Failure
Roll is 4 or 5 greater than the target number	Major Failure
Roll is 2 or 3 greater than the target number	Minor Failure
Roll is 1 greater than the target number	Marginal Failure
Roll is equal to or 1 less than the target number	Marginal Success
Roll is 2 or 3 less than the target number	Minor Success
Roll is 4 or 5 less than the target number	Major Success
Roll is 6 or 7 less than the target number	Extreme Success
Roll is less than the target number by 8 or more	Critical Success

DEFENSE SITUATION	MODIFIER
DEFENDING AGAINST:	
Multiple attacks:	+2 per attack after the first
Spreading attack:	+1
Flexible attack:	+1
DEFENDER'S STATUS	
Attempting a Total Defense	-2
Attacked from behind	+2
In awkward position (seated, etc.)	+1
Using <i>Kensei</i> "Two Weapons" Ability defensively	-1 (vs. melee attacks only)

ATTACK SITUATION	MODIFIER
WEAPON ATTACK ABILITIES:	
Accurate	-1
Homing	-2
Indirect (to perform indirect fire)	+2
Flexible (to perform stunt)	+2
WEAPON ATTACK DISABILITIES:	
Inaccurate	+1
TARGET BEYOND MELEE RANGE, AND:	
Concealed by trees or brush	+1
Concealed by darkness, fog, or smoke	+2
Taking cover	+1 to +3
Diminutive Size (3 BP)	+2
Diminutive Size (6 BP)	+4
ATTACKER IS:	
Making a Total Attack	-1
Taking an action to aim	-1, or -2 with scope
Firing personal weapons from a moving vehicle	+2 to +3 (0)
Firing personal weapons while swimming or performing acrobatics	+2 (0)
Using <i>Kensei</i> Two Weapons ability to attack and defend	+1
CALLED SHOTS:	
Targeting a partially armoured point:	+2 (0)
Targeting a vital spot	+4 (+1)
Targeting a large weak point	+2 (0)
Targeting a small weak point	+4 (+1)
RANGE MODIFIERS:	
Attacking at up to twice range:	+2 (0)
Attacking at up to five times range:	+4 (0)

SKILL LEVEL 1	A character is awarded a -1 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -2 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.
SKILL LEVEL 2	A character is awarded a -2 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -3 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.
SKILL LEVEL 3	A character is awarded a -3 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -4 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.
SKILL LEVEL 4	A character is awarded a -4 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -5 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.
SKILL LEVEL 5	A character is awarded a -5 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -6 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.
SKILL LEVEL 6	A character is awarded a -6 bonus on the Skill check dice roll if he or she does not possess a relevant specialty or a -7 bonus if the character does possess the relevant specialty.

DICE ROLL MODIFIER	ACTION DIFFICULTY
-4	Trivial. Why roll dice?
-3	Nearly Trivial
-2	Extremely Easy
-1	Easy
0	Average Difficulty
+1	Slightly Difficult
+2	Difficult
+3	Quite Difficult
+4	Extremely Difficult
+5	Outrageously Difficult
+6	Practically Impossible

DICE ROLL	DAMAGE MODIFIER
1-3	Double Damage
4-5	Triple Damage
6	Quadruple Damage (or an Instant Kill)

DAMAGE	CRASH SPEED	FALLING DISTANCE
20	20 kph	
30	30 kph	5 to 10 metres
40	50 kph	10 to 30 metres
50	75 kph	
60	100 kph	30 to 60 metres
70	150 kph	60 to 150 metres
80	200 kph	150 to 500 metres
90	300 kph	500+ metres
100	500 kph	
120	1,000 kph	
140	2,500 kph	
160	5,000 kph	
180	10,000 kph	
200	25,000 kph	
200+	25,000 kph+	

WEAPON	DAMAGE	ABILITIES	DISABILITIES	SKILL	ITEM
MELEE WEAPONS					
Battle Axe	10	none	Inaccurate, Melee	Melee (axe)	mundane
Baton or Club	5	none	Melee	Melee (baton/club)	mundane
Bo (wooden staff)	5	none	Melee*	Melee (polearm)	mundane
Bokken (wooden sword)	5*	none	Melee	Melee (sword)	mundane
Broadsword	10	none	Melee	Melee (sword)	minor
Combat Yo-Yo	0	Accurate Concealable, Flexible	Low Penetration, Melee	Melee (whips/chains)	minor
Katana (long sword)	10*	none	Melee	Melee (sword)	minor
Knife	5	Concealable	Melee	Melee (knife)	mundane
Naginata (bladed staff)	10	none	Melee*	Melee (polearm)	minor
Nunchuku	5	Flexible	none	Melee (whips/chains)	minor
Yari (spear)	10	none	Melee	Melee (polearm)	mundane
Wakazashi (short sword)	10	Concealable	Melee	Melee (sword)	minor
Whip	5	Concealable, Flexible	Low Penetration, Melee	Melee (whips/chains)	minor
BOWS					
Crossbow	10	none	Slow, Static*	Archery (crossbow)	minor
Dai-Kyu (long bow)	5	none	none*	Archery (bow)	minor
GUNS					
Assault Rifle	10	Auto-Fire	Limited Shots (6)*	Gun Combat (autofire)	major
Light Pistol	5	Concealable	Low Penetration, Short Range	Gun Combat (pistol)	minor
Heavy Pistol	10	Concealable	Short Range	Gun Combat (pistol)	major
Hunting Rifle	10	none	none*	Gun Combat (rifle)	minor
Machine Pistol	5	Auto-Fire** Concealable	Inaccurate, Limited Shots(6) Short Range	Gun Combat (autofire)	minor
Medium Pistol	5	Concealable	Short Range	Gun Combat (pistol)	minor
Shotgun	15***	Spreading	Limited Shots(6) Low Penetration, Short Range*	Gun Combat (rifle)	minor
Sniper Rifle	15	Accurate	none*	Gun Combat (rifle)	major
Submachine Gun	5	Auto-Fire	Limited Shots(6), Short Range	Gun Combat (autofire)	minor
Blaster Pistol	10	Concealable	none	Gun Combat (pistol)	major
Blaster Rifle	15	none	none	Gun Combat (rifle)	major
HEAVY WEAPONS					
Machine Gun	15	Auto-Fire	Static	Heavy Weapons (machine gun)	major
Rocket Launcher	30	Area-Effect Penetrating	Inaccurate, Limited Shots(1) Slow, Static	Heavy Weapons (launcher)	major
THROWN WEAPONS					
Grenade	15	Area Effect Concealable	Limited Shots (1) Short Range	Thrown Weapons (grenades)	minor
Shuriken	5	Concealable	Short Range, Limited Shots (4)	Thrown Weapons (blades)	minor
Thrown Knife	5	Concealable	Limited Shots (1), Short Range	Thrown Weapons (blades)	mundane
DEFINITIONS					
"Damage" is how much damage the weapon inflicts. The character's Attack Combat Value will be added to this number to determine total attack damage.					
"Abilities or Disabilities" are any special capabilities or limitations the weapon possesses. See Weapon/Special Attack, pages 160 to 172. Note that unless noted otherwise, a weapon has Medium range.					
"Skill" is the Skill and specialization that provides a bonus when firing the weapon.					
"Item" is whether the weapon counts as a major or minor item of Personal Gear, or is a sufficiently mundane item that it does not count as Personal Gear (anyone can have it).					
NOTES:					
* most effectively wielded with two hands; a <i>katana</i> and <i>bokken</i> , when used two-handed, give a +5 bonus to damage.					
** if firing single shots, ignore the Auto-Fire Ability and the Inaccurate and Limited Shots Disabilities. *** Some shotguns are "double barrelled" and can fire both barrels at once. If so, treat as Auto-Fire, but a maximum of two hits can be scored. Double Barrelled shotguns have the Limited Shots (2) Disability.					

BESM

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First Printing — November 2000 Printed in Canada.

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ISBN 1-894525-12-4



9 781894 525121

Product No. \$12.95 US
02-102 \$17.95 CAN

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"SO, WE HAVE...AN OBELISK?" (Part One)

*Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself! up, up, and see
The great doom's image!*

— Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

"*So, We Have...an Obelisk?*" is a two-part scenario for *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*, set in a cross-genre world that exhibits elements of medieval fantasy, science-fiction, and everything in-between. It is designed for 4 to 8 players, and is an ideal introductory adventure to the variety of themes that can serve as a focus in an anime role-playing game. As the GM, you will ply your gaming skills to incorporate character elements from diverse backgrounds, while maintaining a cohesive story.

"SO, WE HAVE...AN OBELISK?"

GENERAL OVERVIEW — The overall arc of the two-part scenario.

OTHER WORLDS — Some specific points on the world(s) where the adventure takes place.

CHARACTERS — Suggestions about the types of characters that players should design, including Attribute and Defect limitations.

PART ONE OVERVIEW — Summary of the first half of the adventure.

STORY BACKGROUND — The critical and specific points for Part One.

SETTING — Greater detail about the key areas.

IMPORTANT NPCs — Information describing the important non-player characters.

INTRODUCTION AND START — Background information the players need and where the scenario opens.

ONE ROUTE — Suggestion for continuing the adventure (one method is highlighted).

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT — Key plot points.

RESOLUTION AND PART TWO — The end of Part One.

PART TWO OVERVIEW — Summary of the second half of the adventure.

STORY BACKGROUND — The critical and specific points for Part Two.

SETTING — Greater detail about the key areas.

IMPORTANT NPCs — Information describing the important non-player characters.

INTRODUCTION AND START — Background information about the time between the scenarios and where the scenario opens.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT — Key plot points.

RESOLUTION AND CAMPAIGN EXPANSION — The end of Part Two.

General Overview

There are an infinite number of worlds, universes, dimensions and realities, all subject to the Great Powers of Law and Chaos. Nearly every possibility exists in this spectrum of reality, and yet no two worlds are exactly the same. On one particular world in this vast multiverse, an expansionist empire has found a way to grow forever by feeding from other worlds. The rulers of this empire have learned the secret of crossing dimensions, and have harnessed a great power to channel the energies of the worlds they find back to their own homeland. They have ensured their immortality, but their hands are covered with the blood of billions of lives. This is the doctrine of The United Dominions of the AmeriCorp Imperium ("AmeriCorp").

The player characters are each from a different world/universe, but they share a common bond: they are all Guardians of Order, defenders and protectors of Law (see the Characters section for more information). Each of their worlds has seen the sudden arrival of a strange, great steel-grey obelisk — an omen of Chaos, that brings with it utter destruction. As the game starts, the PCs each witness the destruction of their respective worlds; their attempts to stop the Chaos failed. In the moments of annihilation, each character was touched by an outside voice and offered a chance to live in return for his or her help. They have all been summoned to an alien world, where an Obelisk has recently materialized, prophesizing this world's end. The characters have been given another chance to influence the battle between Order and Chaos, and can perhaps prevent this apocalypse. They are on a dying world, consumed by fanatical religion, and they shall quickly discover that the great choices are never easy.

This "apocalypse" is a man-made event, driven by the machine of the Obelisk, a tool of the corporate empire. AmeriCorp's agents on this world appear as locals to facilitate the harvesting process of the world's energies. If the players are smart and attentive they will learn this quickly enough to save this world. With determination, they may also find themselves in the heart of the empire itself, with a chance to stop the harvesting of future worlds (all detailed in Part Two).

Other Worlds

"*So, We Have...an Obelisk?*" is a cross-genre game that spans a multitude of worlds. The game will shift from the homes of the player characters, to a medieval apocalypse, to a high-tech star-spanning empire. The events of Part One can play to a light comedic anime style, or one filled with tragedy and terror. Your actions, and the actions of the players, will set the themes and tones of the game. There are more than enough intense hooks to test the PCs' mettle and challenge them to bond in an alien setting during their second chance at redemption, but the primary focus is exploration, deduction, and action.

Characters

This scenario is for 4 to 8 players, each playing a "Guardian of Order." The players should design their characters separately, using 35 Character Points and 20 Skill Points. Characters from high-tech or magical worlds are equally valid, but they must all be Guardians of Order.

The term "Guardians of Order" is open to interpretation. The characters are, and have always been, protectors of Order and Law in their worlds, whether they accept their positions or rebel against them. They work against the forces of Chaos which threaten their societies and civilizations. They have a sense of duty, and know that they are of the Chosen. Each player can decide if he or she welcomes this responsibility openly as a heroic defender, or has been press-ganged into duty by forces beyond their control. They all know that this is a destiny from which they cannot escape.

Genre-Appropriate Attributes

Since the players come from a variety of worlds, nearly all of the Normal and Special Attributes in *BESM* are appropriate. You may wish to exclude some socially-oriented Attributes such as Organizational Ties or Flunkies, however. Character options from the FIRST EDITION *BESM* supplements *Big Robots*, *Cool Starships* and *Hot Rods and Gun Bunnies* may also be used with your approval. Use of other Tri-Stat RPG books, such as *Sailor Moon*, *Dominion Tank Police*, *Demon City Shinjuku*, *Ghost Dog* and *Tenchi Muyo!* is at your discretion as well (although point costs will probably vary).

Characters should still have access to their items and special objects whenever they travel through a portal if they used Character Points to acquire them.

Genre-Appropriate Defects

Almost all Defects listed in *BESM* (and other Tri-Stat books, with your approval) are acceptable in this adventure. Due to the limited scope of this scenario, however, you may wish to disallow Defects that are tied to the PCs' destroyed worlds. For example, Owned by a Megacorp will have little effect in the game, since the Megacorp has been reduced to ashes. Similar problems may arise with other limitations based on social circumstances, such as Nemesis or Skeleton in the Closet.

Adventure-Appropriate Skills Costs

Acrobatics	4 points/Level	Piloting	5 points/Level
Animal Training	1 point/Level	Poisons	2 points/Level
Architecture	1 point/Level	Police Sciences	2 points/Level
Artisan	1 point/Level	Riding	1 point/Level
Biological Science	1 point/Level	Seduction	2 points/Level
Boating	1 point/Level	Sleight of Hand	2 points/Level
Business Management	1 point/Level	Social Sciences	1 point/Level
Computers	5 points/Level	Sports	1 point/Level
Controlled Breathing	1 point/Level	Stealth	4 points/Level
Cooking	1 point/Level	Swimming	1 point/Level
Demolitions	4 points/Level	Urban Tracking	3 points/Level
Disguise	4 points/Level	Wilderness Survival	1 point/Level
Driving	4 points/Level	Wilderness Tracking	2 points/Level
Electronics	4 points/Level	Writing	2 points/Level
Forgery	2 points/Level	COMBAT SKILLS	
Gaming	1 point/Level	Archery	4 points/Level
Interrogation	3 points/Level	Gun Combat	6 points/Level
Intimidation	3 points/Level	Heavy Weapons	4 points/Level
Mechanics	4 points/Level	Melee Attack	4 points/Level
Medical	3 points/Level	Melee Defense	4 points/Level
Military Sciences	1 point/Level	Ranged Defense	6 points/Level
Navigation	4 points/Level	Thrown Weapons	4 points/Level
Performing Arts	1 point/Level	Unarmed Attack	4 points/Level
Physical Science	1 point/Level	Unarmed Defense	4 points/Level

Part One Overview

The PCs all witness the deaths of their respective worlds. Several weeks of destruction began with the sudden appearance of a mysterious Obelisk, and culminated in armageddon. As they feel their own lives fading, the characters each hear a delicate voice offering them salvation. This voice pulls them into a new world, one torn by a devastation paralleling the destruction they have just left. There is still a chance to save this new place. The PCs find themselves standing on a muddy road at the edge of a polluted lake with a group of people who feel "familiar" to them (the other PCs). The other PCs may even resemble lost friends and comrades, but the true bond the PCs share is the result of their duties as Guardians of Order. The people of this world, mostly peasants and religious Zealots, believe the new arrivals to be great spirits sent to save them. The PCs will be escorted to a tent village at the base of this world's Obelisk, where the priests will introduce them to their Teacher, the head of the religion. The Teacher will try and give the PCs what direction he can, and will offer suggestions on how to stop the Obelisk. In truth, the Teacher is a member of the AmeriCorp empire, and will try and prevent the PCs from interfering. Can the characters find the voice that first brought them here? Will they unravel the Teacher's deceptions? Will this world also be lost?

Story Background

An idyllic and simple world, Náru could have been a paradise if left to develop on its own. Instead, with the arrival of the Obelisk, it is in its death throes. The Obelisk suddenly appeared three weeks ago, bringing with it doom and destruction. Its arrival has been accompanied by freak monsoons, terrible flooding, wild fires, freezing temperatures, droughts, and tremendous earthquakes. With each earthquake the Obelisk has grown in size (it now towers over the land, at a height of 100 metres) and there has been no end to the crises.

There is one glimmer of hope. A prophet has come to lead the people of Náru through these terrors to salvation. He is simply called Teacher, and his arrival coincided with that of the Obelisk. In the short time he has been travelling the roads of Náru, he has spread his message far and wide. While the kingdoms and cities have crumbled, people have faith that there is a chance to pass through the destruction and find salvation. They have absorbed the Teacher's words, and many have flocked to his side. The Teacher speaks of having faith, and believing in justice for yourself and your fellow man. He says that the Obelisk is a Time of Testing, and a Portent of Change — that it itself is not evil, but a symbol of what the people must endure to improve themselves. He reminds them that Náru was filled with much sin, pettiness, and small mindedness, and that this is the gods' way to blow the chaff from the wheat.

The Teacher has brought peace where there were those willing to listen. Most of those who did not listen have fallen to the disasters and plagues. Now the Teacher stays near the Obelisk, watching for the final challenge. Many of the survivors and refugees have travelled to his side, and a tent village of believers has sprung up near the Obelisk. They pray with the Teacher, and adore him, and wait.

The Teacher's name is Adam Smythe, and he is the head of an AmeriCorp expeditionary force, sent to harvest this world and drain it of its resources. He has taken up this identity of the Teacher, a prophet of the apocalypse, to more easily manipulate the natives into working towards his agenda. Hence, he has directed those who did not believe away from the Obelisk, has arranged for the deaths of those who might have opposed him, and has turned the easily manipulated into a herd of blind Zealots. While he did not know that the peasants would flock to him, he now has an insidious plan to use them. He believes they are no threat, for they are simple and trusting. The Teacher's more fanatical Zealots keep the refugees controlled.

Suddenly having a few thousand devout followers gave Teacher an idea of how to accelerate the harvesting process. He has developed an extraction process that will directly channel the “freely given” life energies of the believers into the Obelisk, which will rapidly charge the device and ready it to finalize the harvest. The process will of course result in the deaths of the peasants, but they would be dead soon regardless, once their world is completely harvested. If Adam Smythe can increase the production rate, the bonuses back home will be tremendous. To this end, Teacher has arranged prayer ceremonies, where all of the believers stand before the Obelisk and pray for themselves, and for each other, and to the great gods. Meanwhile the Obelisk drains them of more energy, and continues to destroy their world. The process is almost complete, and the next stage will certainly be the last. Once the world’s energy is reclaimed and Nāru is harvested, Adam Smythe will return home.

Something has just gone wrong for the Teacher, however. One of the newer arrivals to the village, a pure and innocent girl, has unwittingly complicated matters. Her name is Seiko, known to all the peasants to be gentle, warm, extremely compassionate, and unselfish, even in these dark times. Seiko is an unknowing agent of Order. At the beginning of the last prayer ceremony, Teacher instructed the believers to pray for salvation, and told them that if they truly believed in their hearts, the gods would spare them. Seiko prayed with all her might, not for herself but for the world and everyone around her. She said, “I just want to end the destruction,” and channelled the energy of the ceremony through the Obelisk and out of this world, and thereby pulled the PCs here.



Setting

Following are descriptions of some of the adventure's important locations.

Náru

Once a simple world, Náru is now torn by the ravages of its death. In the past it was idyllic, with vast, rich forests, long plains of fertile grounds, and bountiful oceans that were deep enough to hold all of the stars in the sky. The world was predominantly temperate, with mild seasons and a delicate balance of precipitation and sunshine. The days were long and lazy, and the nights full of charm and warmth.

Náru was medieval in its technological development. The largest cities were mid-sized seaports, and travel was limited for the ships could not sail beyond the coast. Also, dirt roads were few, and paved highways even scarcer, found only in a handful of advanced urban centres. Still, the people were happy, ruled by enlightened monarchs with strong faith in their gods, and an understanding that to keep their cities strong they must keep their people happy.

Now that is all gone. All of the larger cities have been consumed by plague or fire or been lost beneath the earth. The fields are barren, and the coasts are shattered by the storms. Floods have covered the lowlands, while the forests burn with wildfires and drought. The people are starving, sick, and dying, and soon they and their world will perish.

Crossroads

This is where the PCs will first appear on Náru. The area is now nothing more than the remains of a dirt road, flooded recently and torn up. It was once a major highway between two city-kingdoms, Kírei Na and Junketsu Na, but now it is a muddy lane with ruins two days away in either direction. The highway used to run along a great lake, known for golden bass and flying fish, but the crystal waters have flooded and become polluted. A brackish lake choked with weeds is what remains, flowing along the highway, about a kilometre across, up to the base of the hill where the Obelisk stands. The villagers believe the lake now holds monsters (giant snakes and leeches, at the very least), and the water is certainly no longer safe to drink.

Village of the Believers

This medium-sized tent village has sprung up near the Obelisk. The peasants have built on the side away from the lake, and have started to encircle the hill upon which the Obelisk stands. The village stretches from the muddy lane up and around the northern slope. It is kept clean, but it has been thrown together with whatever materials have survived, and is thus a mismatch of cloth, wood, and a little stone, all mixed with a great deal of mud. Villagers have tried to build above the soggy ground, but it continues to be worn away from under them.

The village holds just over 3500 people currently, most living five or six to a small tent. There is an equal mix of men and women, although there are few children and even fewer of the older generation. They are all suffering from some level of starvation and dehydration, (even though the villagers are the strongest of the survivors of the destruction) and more are falling sick every day. They are good people, and do the best they can without bitterness or argument. They know they only have each other, and fighting would reduce what little they have to ash. There are only a few animals, and a small amount of fruits and vegetables. During this serious shortage of food and water the villagers all share with each other as best they can.

Tents of the Zealots

A small section of the village, closest to the base of the hill where the Obelisk rests, has been taken over by the Zealots. These are the True Believers of the Teacher, He who can do no wrong. The Zealots follow him with a fanatical devotion, and thus live closest to Him and the Obelisk. They keep the general population somewhat farther back and away from the Holy artifact. Their tents tend to be somewhat nicer, because they force the peasants to help them build the area. The tents are also less crowded because there are only 200 or so Zealots. Since they do everything in complete support of each other, they should not be considered a weak force.

Pavilion of the Teacher

The Teacher's tent is more of a grand pavilion, made of the finest materials that have been salvaged by the peasants. It is a large, silk tent, luxuriously furnished with satin pillows and ornate rugs, with mahogany chests, bottles of liquor and basins of water. While the Teacher makes small, polite objections, he does not actually dissuade them from providing him with the best, and has no problem eating while they go hungry (not publicly, of course).

In the tent, Teacher does have a few items he has brought with him, in a locked metal chest (titanium alloy, with an advanced security lock — voice recognition and DNA check):

- Powered armour: AmeriCorp flag on left arm
- ID tag: full hologram picture, ASM Adam Smythe
- High-tech devices, as needed
- Digital paper, with a long list of co-ordinates, listed as sets of four 3-digit numbers, and a STATUS field, with designations like: Testing; Unsuitable; Immediately Available; and Harvested. For example:

255-255-155-001	STATUS: Testing
193-383-459-132	STATUS: Testing
933-120-343-293	STATUS: Unsuitable
744-289-382-849	STATUS: Testing
556-909-131-231	STATUS: Immediately Available
773-825-888-019	STATUS: Harvested

Obelisk

This giant steel-grey device is made of an alien metal. It was originally 30 metres tall when discovered, but now reaches almost 100 metres into the sky. The cool metal is covered with thousands of spidery runes, covering every inch of the obelisk in what appear to be random shapes. The runic images do repeat, in larger and smaller copies, inverted and parallel, but not in a pattern that can be understood (see Tattoos, page 18). The device is virtually indestructible, and simply absorbs all energy directed at it. It also seems to regulate its own density, for it always stay upright, no matter what surface supports it, and it cannot be lifted or toppled by any known means.

The Obelisk is situated on a low hill, and the next growth 'spurt' will shatter the ground as it grows and channels energy from the world's core. It is an alien device, unrecognizable to even the most knowledgeable sorts of people. Its operation is fairly simple once the interface is understood, however.

The Obelisk is recharging when the PCs arrive, and cannot really be affected until the time of the final ceremony.

BESM

Seiko

Body **3**

Mind **4**

Soul **9**

Health Points **60**

Energy Points **65**

Attack Combat Value **5**

Defense Combat Value **3**

Attributes

Appearance Level 4, Divine Relationship Level 2, Dynamic Sorcery ("Guardian Summoning and Personal Protective spells only") Level 5, Heightened Awareness Level 2, Highly Skilled Level 2

Defects

Marked (Guardian of Order, 1 BP), Magical Restrictions (limited to one set of Guardians at a time, 2 BP) Nemesis (Teacher, 2 BP)

Skills

Acrobatics (Balance) Level 2, Artisan (Ceramic) Level 2, Controlled Breathing (Cyclic Breathing) Level 1, Disguise (Make-up) Level 2, Medical (First Aid) Level 3, Performing Arts (Speaking) Level 2

Appearance

A young girl of 17 years, Seiko has beautiful dark hair that falls to her waist, framing a very pretty face and crystal-blue eyes. She dresses in simple clothes, generally a cotton dress, and ties her hair into a long braid. It is obvious that she is weak, and her last exertion drained her badly — dark rings are evident under her eyes, and her complexion is very pale.

Special

Seiko has a birthmark of a Balance symbol right above her heart; this is new, having appeared when she channelled the energies of the Obelisk. It is just like the tattoos of the PCs. She has kept it hidden, and continues to do so as long as possible since she is unsure what it signifies.

Character

Seiko is still very young, torn between wanting to remain a child and knowing that she needs to be mature to face the crises that arise each and every day. She has grown rapidly, but still has a tremendous air of innocence and naiveté. The peasants all care deeply for her and look up to her; yet due to her youth she lacks the wisdom to see through the Teacher's deceit. If the PCs contact her, she will recognize that they are the heroes that she had called. If she sees their symbols of Balance she may reveal that she too bears a similar mark, but she does not see herself as a hero or Guardian. She will do what she can to help them, but is limited by her own fears and inexperience.



Teacher (Adam Smythe, ASM)

Body **7** Mind **8** Soul **6**
 Health Points **65** Energy Points **70**
 Attack Combat Value **7** Defense Combat Value **5**

Attributes

Art of Distraction Level 5, Extra Attacks Level 2, Servants Level 3, Highly Skilled Level 2, Own a Big Mecha Level 2 (see page 12), Personal Gear Level 1

Defects

Addiction (gambling, 1 BP), Owned by a Megacorp (2 BP), Unique Defect (In the Red/Owes Large Debts, 2 BP)

Skills

Acrobatics (Jumps) Level 1, Business Management (Banking) Level 1, Computers (Field Tests) Level 3, Demolitions (Natural Structures) Level 1, Disguise (Costume) Level 4, Electronics (Computers) Level 1, Gaming (Gambling) Level 1, Interrogation (Drugs) Level 1, Mechanics (Armourer) Level 1, Military Sciences (Intelligence Analysis) Level 1, Piloting (Space Plane) Level 1, Gun Combat (Rifle) Level 1, Melee Attack (Sword) Level 1, Melee Defense (Sword) Level 1

Appearance

Adam Smythe, Assistant Senior Manager (ASM), is a tall, handsome man. He is in excellent shape and powerfully built. Smythe has sandy-blond hair, cut short, and deep green eyes. He is well-spoken, very smart, and quite clever. As "Teacher" he dresses in fine robes, and wears gloves at all times. His armour is an ultra-modern power-suit (with a retractable helmet). Upon the left arm is the AmeriCorp flag (similar to the US flag, but the field is black and there is only a single golden star upon it). On the bottom of the left boot is stamped: Inventory #02-004-15-95-21-95, Property of Dimension Resource Division. He carries an energy sword, a laser rifle, and a small pistol ("light pistol").



BESM

Special

Adam Smythe has a tattoo of Balance upon his left hand; all through his masquerade as Teacher he will keep it covered, revealing it only when he needs to activate the Obelisk for the final time.

Character

Adam Smythe is a cunning, resourceful agent of AmeriCorp's Dimension Resource Division. He has harvested a dozen worlds prior to this one, and has a great deal of potential back home. Many VIPs have their eyes on him. Unfortunately, Adam has a tendency to spend his bonuses before he has received them, and is ready to gamble or bet at the slightest provocation, which tends to get him in deeper and deeper trouble. He also has a fancy for the luxuries in life, and these three habits lead him in an endless cycle of debt. He has been taking riskier ventures, and is hoping to rush through the harvesting of this world since the bonus for coming in under the deadline is amazing. In his haste he has been sloppy, however, and everything is riding on how he handles the new arrivals. He sees them only as minor threats to his successful mission and next paycheque, and as such underestimates their potential and usefulness.

AmeriCorp Command Powered Armour (40 Mecha Points)

Mecha Sub-Attributes

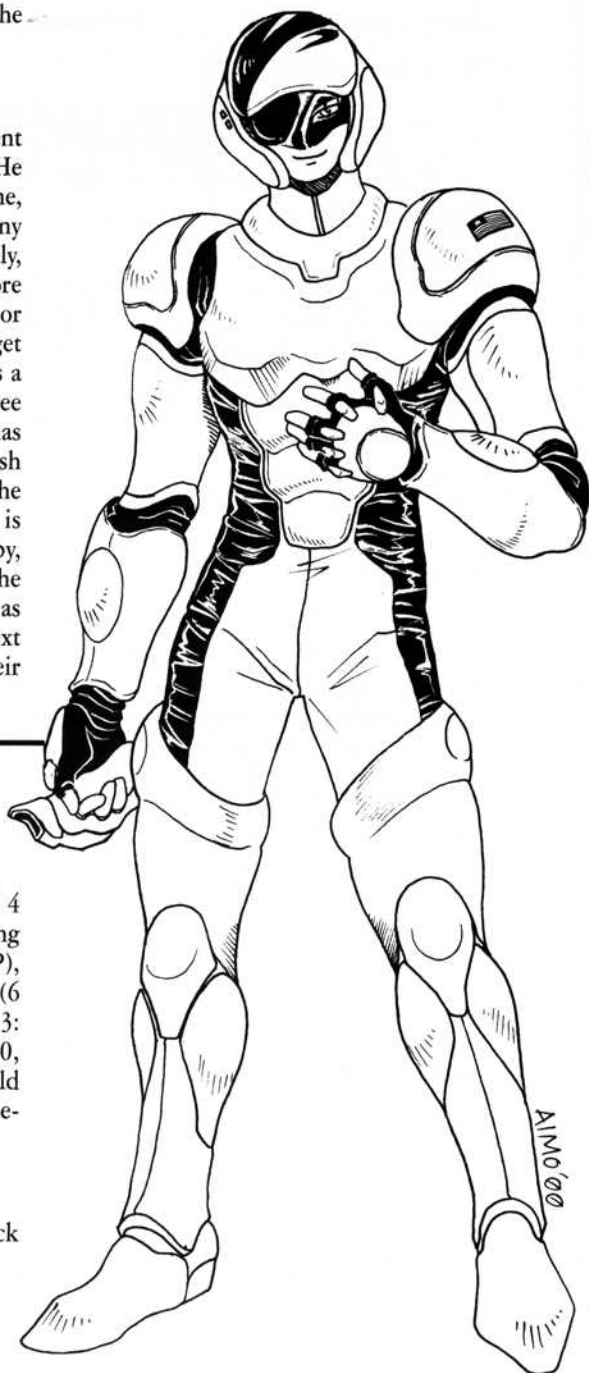
Accessories (radio, 1 MP), Armour Level 4 (partial armour: thin area, 15 MP), Jumping Level 1 (1 MP), Life Support Level 1 (1 MP), Sensors Level 1 (1 MP), Super-Strength Level 2 (6 MP), Toughness Level 1 (4 MP), Weapon Level 3: hand-held Laser Beam Rifle (Damage 30, Accurate, 12 MP), Weapon Level 2: hand-held Energy Sword (Damage 30 + 20, Flare, Muscle-Powered, Contact, 1 MP)

Mecha Defects

Awkward Size (1 MBP), Weak Point (back power-pack, 1 MBP)

Mecha Derived Values

Health Points 60 Armour 40 points



Bodyguards (2-4, see below)

Body **7** Mind **4** Soul **3**
 Health Points **25** Energy Points **35**
 Attack Combat Value **4** Defense Combat Value **2**

Attributes

Own a Big Mecha Level 1

Defects

Owned by a Megacorp (AmeriCorp).

Skills

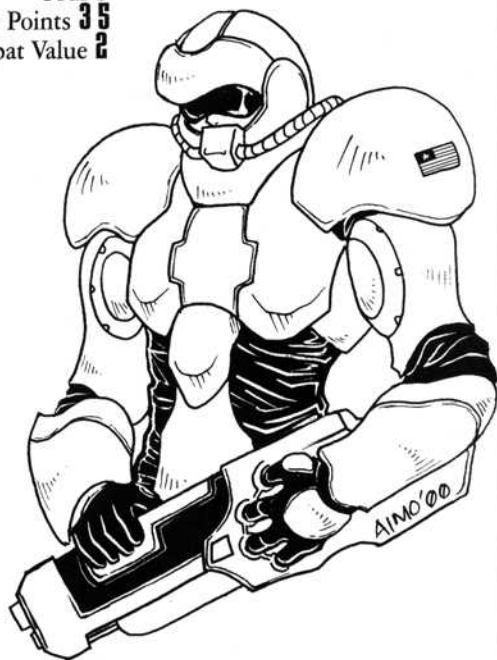
Heavy Weapons (Gunnery) or Gun Combat (Auto-Fire) Level 1, Unarmed Attack (Striking) Level 1

Appearance

The guards wear slick, Marine Powered Armour. They are heavily armed, and bear the AmeriCorp flag upon their left shoulders. They take orders strictly from Smythe, and treat the natives (and by association the PCs) as peasant scum.

Special

The appearance of Smythe's personal guard depends somewhat on the types of characters the PCs play, but there should be one for every two player characters. If the characters are a reasonable match for the Marine-Armour they wear (the PCs are powerful mages, mecha warriors, cyborgs, giant monsters, etc.) then use the guards as described above. If, however, some or all of the characters are more human in scale, then some or all of the bodyguards should also not have any mecha. Instead of giving them Own a Big Mecha Level 1, substitute Personal Gear Level 2, and assign them each a suit of Tactical Body Armour, and either a Submachine Gun or an Assault Rifle (as described under Personal Gear in *BESM Chapter 4*).



AmeriCorp Marine Powered Armour (20 Mecha Points)

Mecha Sub-Attributes

Accessories (radio, 1 MP), Armour Level 2 (partial armour: thin area, 7 MP), Jumping Level 1 (1 MP), Life Support Level 1 (1 MP), Sensors Level 1 (1 MP), Super Strength Level 1 (3 MP), Weapon Level 2: Plasma Rifle (Damage 30, 8 MP), Weapon Level 1: Shock Grenades (Damage 30, Area-Effect, Armour-Penetrating, Stun Only, Limited Shots X 3— one, Short Range, 1 MP)

Mecha Defects

Awkward Size (1 MBP), Weak Point (power-pack and face plate, 2 MBP)

Mecha Derived Values

Health Points 40 Armour 20 points

Demons (variable, 2-3 per PC)

Body **6** Mind **2** Soul **6**
Health Points **10** Energy Points **40**
Attack Combat Value **4** Defense Combat Value **2**

Attributes

Flight (can hover) Level 1, Illusion (sight and hearing) Level 1, Light Armour Level 1, Natural Weapons (claws, fangs, spines, tail striker) Level 4, Sixth Sense (sense a victim's fears and weaknesses) Level 1, Weapon Attack Level 2: poison bite (Damage 15, Linked Attack to fangs, Toxic)

Defects

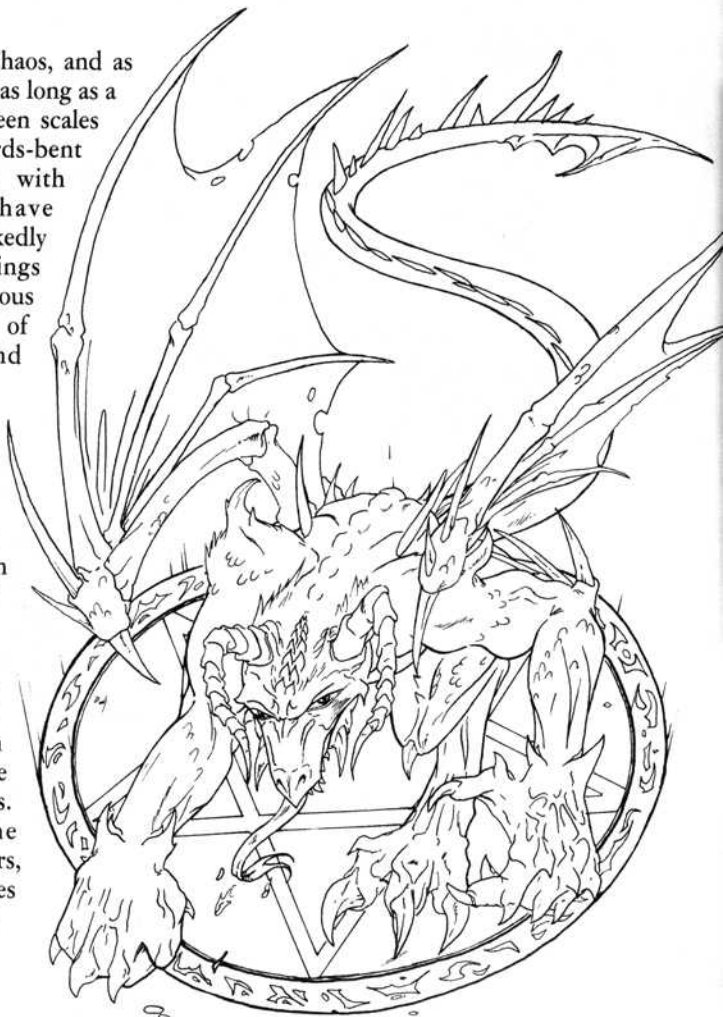
Bane (objects of Order, 1 BP), Marked (demonic, 2 BP), Unique Defect: Unstable (vanish back to Chaos after one successful hit, 2 BP)

Appearance

The demons are beings of Chaos, and as such are unstable. They are twice as long as a man is tall, covered with grey-green scales and bony spurs, with backwards-bent knees and large, webbed feet with hooked claws. They also have enormous arms ending in wickedly clawed hands, huge scaled wings covered in fine spikes, and sinuous barbed tails. They have faces of snakes, with glowing eyes and tongues dripping with flaming ichor, and a mouth full of poisonous fangs.

Special

The demons are Chaos creatures summoned by Adam Smythe. They can smell beings of Order, and this drives them into a killing frenzy. They can also empathetically read their targets, and if a victim has a particular phobia or weakness, they can change their appearance to imitate and grotesquely mimic those fears. They automatically know the Defects that burden the characters, and will try to use those weaknesses against them. Two or three demons should be summoned for each PC.



AkanoBody **5**Mind **5**Soul **6**Health Points **65**Energy Points **55**Attack Combat Value **5**Defense Combat Value **3****Attributes**

Appearance Level 1, Damn Healthy! Level 1, Heightened Senses Level 1, Speed Level 3

Skills

Artisan (Tailoring) Level 1, Biological Science (Botany) Level 1, Medical (Homeopathy) Level 1, Physical Science (Astronomy) Level 1, Social Sciences (Theology) Level 2, Wilderness Survival (Forest) Level 1

Appearance

Akano is a young man, barely 20, who is doing remarkably well under these dire circumstances, due to a healthy body and a knowledgeable mind. He is of medium height, with reasonable looks, long-ish dark hair and dark eyes. He dresses in simple peasant garb (cotton shirt and pants) and carries a journal with him at all times, in which he has written all of the Teacher's lessons, as well as his own experiences.

Character

Akano is young, and somewhat shy, but also very eager. He means well, and while he believes in the Teacher he can also think for himself. He will ask the PCs if they are the Chosen Ones before he automatically assumes what they are. He will note what they say and not just believe rumours and the Teacher's edicts, and may help them uncover some of the Teacher's deceptions (although they will come as a surprise to him).



BESM

Zealots

Body **6** Mind **4** Soul **5**
Health Points **55** Energy Points **45**
Attack Combat Value **5** Defense Combat Value **3**

Attributes

Massive Damage Level 1, Personal Gear Level 2

Skills

Gaming (Cards/Dice) Level 2, Interrogation (Physical) Level 2, Urban Tracking (Villages) Level 1, Wilderness Survival (Forest) Level 2, Wilderness Tracking (Forest) Level 2, Melee Attack (Club) Level 1, Unarmed Attack (Throws) Level 1

Defects

Easily Distracted (women, luxury items 1 BP), Phobia (magic, 1 BP), Unique Character Defect (blindly loyal to Teacher, 2 BP)

Appearance

The Zealots are the blindly loyal fanatics who follow Teacher. They are not necessarily all large, burly, ape-like men, but it certainly seems that way most of the time. They dress in religious robes of white cotton, embroidered with symbols from the Obelisk upon the back and breast, that are much nicer than what the peasants wear. They wear jewellery, have nice tents, and certainly eat well.

Character

The Zealots are tight-lipped, gruff and bullying. They harass the peasants, and are suspicious and distrustful of the PCs. They follow Teacher unquestioningly because they believe his promise of a better world. They do not think the unbelievers have a place in that paradise except as servants. They do not openly hate or abuse the peasants, but their dislike and tribal mentality is clear.

Peasants

Body **3** Mind **3** Soul **4**
Health Points **20-25** Energy Points **20-25**
Attack Combat Value **3** Defense Combat Value **1**

Appearance

The peasants who live in the tent village are the survivors of the world's devastation. Most are suffering from hunger, dehydration, exhaustion, disease, injury, and shock. They have little in the way of worldly goods, few clothes that are not torn and mended, and little to eat. There are very few old or young people here — the usual age range is from 15 to 50, an equal mix of men and women.

Character

Many peasants have travelled for days, and this place is their last and only hope. They range from the well-adjusted folk who try to help others as best they can, to the shell-shocked individuals who are numb and unresponsive. None are particularly aggressive or violent, since those people are not allowed to join the village. Those peasants who are healthier than the others and are fooled by the Teacher tend to fall into the ranks of the Zealots. The peasants will see the PCs as Holy Ones, and will give up everything they retain in hopes of salvation.

Introduction and Start

(1) - Death of The Home

If time allows, you should do a small scene with each of the PCs, allowing them to witness the deaths of their worlds. The other players should get to watch this, because it will give them some small understanding of the other characters, which the characters will intuitively know since they are all Guardians of Order, but which is sometimes difficult to convey to players. The scenes could be purely descriptive, but it is nice to give the players a small role before the world dies. A typical scene would highlight the Obelisk, the forces of Chaos, and the destruction of everything that the PC holds dear.

The PCs themselves do not have to die, but they know that their deaths are imminent with the climax of Armageddon. The Obelisk consumes all life energies. As their world dies, so too do they — they see their own worlds empty of life, crystallize, and shatter.

FOR EXAMPLE: (to a character playing a techno-knight) You and your horse stand upon the rooftop of the convention centre. Below you all of the highways spill into a great pit, and from the depths of the pit emerges a giant, steel-grey Obelisk. It reaches higher than the skyscraper towers, and the dark energies emerging from it have shattered the glass and steel from the buildings surrounding it. Robotic hunchbacked mutants crawl around the streets, assaulting the citizens and dragging them to the Obelisk, to hurl them into the pit of energy that surrounds its base. On the horizon terrible storm clouds have sprung up in the last few minutes, raining electric fire upon the city. You wonder if the airport is still safe, and if your mother's plane has gotten away safely.

If game time is short, it is enough to tell the PCs that they all remember what has just happened. They know that the final hours and minutes of their worlds have just expired. The last vision was one of doom, of a great steel-grey Obelisk reaching for the sky, draining all life from the world. In the final moments of the apocalypse they felt their own deaths, as their worlds froze and broke apart...

...and just as they too begin to perish, an angel reaches to them and offers salvation (a sweet woman's voice, though the exact words are indistinct). They touch her hand...

(2) - Darkness of the In-Between

There is a moment, right after life but just before death, which is complete darkness. Darkness of sight, of sound, of smell, of taste, of touch. There is nothing. Then, suddenly, it changes. There is a moment, right before death but a little after life, when they all become aware of each other. In many cases they recognize each of the people, or at the very least they are familiar. They knew people who seemed identical at home, and while they know that these new people are not their friends and loved ones, they are very similar, in face, in name, in attitude (although often the trappings differ, such as a gun for a sword, or gold for silver). They sense that these people are also Guardians of Order, and there is a feeling of comfort and familiarity. They are not safe, but the danger does not come from these people.

BESM

(3) - Tattoos

While they are still in the In-Between they notice that they have each been marked with a tattoo on their left palm — each symbol is different and unique, glowing for a moment, then fading (the glow will be visible even if the character is wearing gloves, but once the glow fades the mark will only be visible on the naked flesh).

The tattoos are symbols of Balance, and can represent either Order or Chaos. There are a very limited number of people who are able to manipulate the Obelisks due to a magical power. Upon first travelling through an Obelisk this becomes apparent as it marks the characters with one of the Great Symbols of Balance. For the moment, the Symbols do nothing; later, they will unlock the secrets of the Obelisk. When the Obelisk is examined, the PCs will recognize that the tattoos they have appear on the Obelisk — sometimes in different sizes, or flipped, but the symbols, and many others, are all present somewhere on the surface.



(4) - Arrival

The PCs arrive together, surrounded by a glow that fades, on a muddy road (the Crossroads), near a brackish lake. They have all heard the woman's voice, and have each touched her hand, but she is not with them. The landscape is clearly ruined. On the far side of the lake the PCs can make out a tent village surrounding the base of a giant steel-grey Obelisk. There is a clearing at the base of the Obelisk, where many people can be seen distantly — and there is a brief glow in their midst, which fades, as does the glow around them. For anyone with excellent sight, they can see a woman floating in the air, glowing, and then collapsing. The glow around her matches the glow around them, and they may guess that she is the one who summoned them. She is Seiko.

(5) - Envoys

The crowd of villagers at the Obelisk has clearly seen the arrival of the characters. Over the distance the PCs can hear what sounds like astonished cries of shock and wonder (a few sound frightened, but for the most part the arrival is seen as a miracle). In a few moments the mass of villagers will begin to move towards the PCs, in a non-threatening manner, but the PCs have a little bit of time to interact with each other and this new world before the villagers arrive.

The villagers move *en masse*, a mix of peasants and Zealots, shuffling at various speeds but clearly towards the PCs. No one runs or appears frantic or the least bit violent. They have no weapons and are bare-handed. There is no leader nor organization to the mass, but the first person to arrive is a young man, somewhat shy, but also eager. This is Akano. He is a peasant, and a follower of Teacher, but also a free thinker. He arrives a few moments before the rest of the mass, and will ask the PCs direct questions: are they the Chosen Ones, the Great Kami? The Ones who will save them? As other peasants arrive they will throw themselves prostrate on the ground, murmuring prayers. Akano stands upright until a handful of Zealots arrive. He has asked his questions, but the others arrive before they can really talk, or before the PCs can really answer him. The Zealots are all big and burly; they knock Akano to the ground, with a nasty comment such as: "kneel before the Great Kami, dog!" before they too bow and fall prostrate before the PCs. The Zealots believe fully that these are the Great Spirits, and will not tolerate questioning from the peasants.

The Zealots greet the PCs with much awe and trepidation. They will try and lead (somewhat forcefully, but never disrespectfully) the PCs to the Village of the Believers, and to Teacher who will know what to do. They will answer a few of the PCs' questions, but mostly continue to guide them towards the village, and growl and browbeat any peasants who become too vocal or uppity.

The Zealots will answer, if asked:

- The Village of the Believers is under the benign guidance of Teacher.
- Teacher will see them soon, after he recovers from the ceremony.
- The name of the girl that collapsed is Seiko; they don't know what happened to her, but she passed out and is now resting.

They avoid every other question or answer with practiced axioms: Teacher knows; Teacher will speak of that; Praise Teacher; I am but a lowly servant, oh Great Kami; we know you will save us; etc.

One Route

At this point a great deal of the action depends on how the PCs compose themselves. At any point from here, the PCs may deviate heavily from the path of this adventure. One particular "route" is mapped, but you should have enough background information so that you can modify the game as to fit the needs and actions of the PCs.

(1) - Arrival at the Village

The Zealots will murmur and pray and lead the peasants in chants as they guide the Chosen Ones to the village. They will speak if spoken to, but will try and avoid direct conversation. They will not generally make eye-contact, nor speak directly to the Great Kami. The characters will be taken to the Village, and brought to a great tent (which was emptied while the PCs were met). A great feast is brought to them, a tremendous amount of food and fine drink. The Zealots tell them they must refresh themselves and relax, and as soon as he is able, Teacher will come and speak to their Greatness. As they begin to take in their surroundings a line of peasants forms, with gifts of clothes, finery, jewellery — anything that the peasants might still have of value that they wish to sacrifice and donate to the Chosen Ones.

The peasants and Zealots see the PCs as the Holy Ones, the answer to their prayers, and the path to salvation. As such they will give the PCs anything they might want — all of their last treasures, their meagre portions of food and drink, and even men or women as servants as the Chosen Ones require. The gods are sometimes harsh in their demands, and they are willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to save their world.

Of course this is a refugee village, and in truth they have little in the way of supplies or luxuries. The people are shell-shocked survivors of the chaos that has plagued their world. They will starve in order to feed the Kami, and the PCs should slowly learn (if they do not see it already) what their indulgences will cost the people.

The PCs may wish to explore, discuss amongst themselves, or question the villagers. These are some typical outcomes:

Important Notes

- Exploring — The Zealots will suggest (somewhat forcefully, if needed, but never disrespectfully) that they stay in the tent. If they choose to ignore them, the Zealots will try and keep them to the village. They will try to keep them from the Obelisk, but the only place they will be denied is Teacher's tent (where Seiko is resting; they will not be allowed to see her until Teacher says that she can receive such eminence).
- The Village is small for the number of people it holds; it is a very rag-tag affair, and in poor shape due to extremely limited supplies.
- The tents of the Zealots are cleaner, sturdier, and there are considerably fewer people. The Zealots, however, are less useful on the whole, and act as if they are too base to even look at the Kami, let alone have a conversation with one.
- The Pavilion of the Teacher is a silk tent, fitted with all manner of fineries. Teacher clearly wants for nothing. Two burly Zealots guard the tent at all times. This is where Seiko is currently kept.
- Crossroads — Nothing particular marks the spot where they arrived, although symbolically it makes sense as a point of arrival. If they take the time they can travel to either of the nearby ruins, Kírei Na and Junketsu Na (both two days away by foot).
- The Obelisk can be explored and examined (they should notice the marks upon its surface match some of their tattoos), but it is recharging, and will not react until it is fully empowered.

- Privacy — The Zealots, if asked, will leave the tent and keep the peasants out. The PCs can certainly have privacy upon request. If they speak or act in the open, the Zealots will pay close attention to them, and will often relay such information back to Teacher.
- The Zealots will all give standard answers when questioned. They are more concerned with fawning and adoring rather than being useful. They will answer questions posed directly to them, but their answers are generally short (abrupt and shy, rather than curt). The peasants are more of the same. The two characters who can answer more of the PCs' questions are Akano and Seiko, if they can find either of them (Akano will try to stay near the edge of the group surrounding the Kami; he knows that his questions are disliked by the Zealots, but he wishes to learn what he can).

Answers the PCs may uncover

- The Village is made of survivors and the Teacher's Zealots.
- The Obelisk appeared 3 weeks ago, and has been growing in spurts with each earthquake (there have been over fifty quakes).
- Quakes have been happening more and more frequently and with greater intensity. The last was two hours ago (just before the ceremony started).
- The Village has existed around the Obelisk for about one week. Earthquakes are actually more intense the farther one gets from the Obelisk. The Obelisk itself is like the eye of a storm.
- All of the people look weak and frail (the Zealots less so).
- Teacher has come to help, and arrived around the time the Obelisk did.
- Teacher is benevolent and compassionate. No one doubts him, although a few of the more cynical or wise peasants (like Akano) are not so keen on all the Zealots.
- Seiko is resting in Teacher's tent. No one has ever seen anything like what happened to her before.

(2) - Teacher

The Teacher arrives soon, after the PCs have had some time to discuss and/or look around a little for themselves. Teacher calls them the Great Kami, and is very respectful, although he treats them as equals as opposed to as his superiors (or with just slight deference, at the most). He knows, of course, that they are not spirits, but he does not know what they are. If he sees the tattoos on their hands he will quickly determine the possibility that these new arrivals may be a threat. Teacher tells them whatever they want to hear to keep them dependent on him and to control their flow of information.

Notes about the Teacher

- He thanks them for coming and offers whatever help he can.
- He offers them whatever treats and excesses that he can provide.
- He tells them that the people have been praying, under his guidance, for their arrival.
- He tells them that Seiko (if asked) is a bright if naive young girl, and that she exhausted herself in the ceremony. He does not know what happened to her, and tries to dismiss it as superficial and unimportant.
- He will constantly try to evaluate them and see what he can discover of the PC's desires and weaknesses.
- If he needs, he will try and turn the people against the characters, twisting their words and noting their indulgences and vices — great spirits can easily become demons of temptation, and if there is any "proof" at all, no matter how circumstantial, the people are most likely to trust Teacher.

What Happens Next

From this point, the game depends on how much time is available for play, and what directions the PCs want to take. A Short Scenario option is listed first, and should be used when game time is constrained. You can use this as a guideline for the end-game structure, no matter how long it takes to get there. The scenario should end with conflict at the base of the Obelisk. After the Short Scenario description is an Extended Scenario that the PCs may wish to explore. This scenario can make it easier for you to extend the game over several sessions.

Short Scenario

Two hours after the PCs arrive at the village, the Obelisk is recharged and ready for Teacher's next attempt at the Ceremony of the Apocalypse. In those two hours the PCs can research and plan and investigate as much as they would like, but they probably should not wander too far away from the village. While Teacher would be very happy for them to head down the road to look at the wonderful ruins of Junketsu Na, it would probably benefit the PCs more if a helpful soul, such as Akano or Seiko, gave them an approximation of when the next earthquake will be. This allows the PCs to be around when the Obelisk is recharged and when Teacher and the villagers conduct the next ritual.

Assuming the PCs are nearby as the hour draws close, Teacher will want to get them out of the way, for fear that they will disrupt the ceremony. He plans a trap to occupy them while he begins the ceremony. He directs them back to the Crossroads, the place where they arrived, to wait for the Sign. He strokes their egos, and tells them that they are the Great Kami, and the ceremony will show them how to save this world. He should sound sincere, and it should not prove that difficult to get them back to the other side of the lake.

Demon Attack

Once the PCs get back to the Crossroads (or anywhere else the Teacher thinks is suitable), he will begin the chant. The Obelisk will begin to glow. The villagers are all assembled in front of it, including Seiko and Akano, and they chant with Teacher. Teacher first uses the Obelisk to open a portal and summon Demons that will appear near the PCs (they will explode from the water of the lake, or from under the earth, etc.). The Demons will draw on the fears and phobias of the PCs, appearing as nightmarish serpents (see Demons, page 14).

As the PCs are being attacked, Teacher will begin the ritual proper. The Obelisk will increase in brightness, begin to grow in size, and begin draining the life energies of the peasants and Zealots who are all praying around its base. The PCs will obviously see the glow, and will hear screams from the villagers as their souls are consumed. All of the sigils on the Obelisk begin to glow, and the tattoos on the PCs hands will echo that effect.

There should be two or three Demons for each PC, but they are weak and die after a single hit. Teacher has seriously underestimated their strength, but will be somewhat more prepared when they finish with the Demons and come towards the Obelisk (as they will certainly do). It takes some time to travel from the Crossroads all the way to the Obelisk, as is melodramatically appropriate.

Teacher's Last Stand

As the fastest PCs arrive, the villagers are all clearly in the thrall of the Obelisk's deadly energies. The weakest have collapsed. Teacher summons an extra two to four Bodyguards (page 13) from AmeriCorp, who step from the Obelisk to confront the PCs. The PCs will also notice when they get closer that Teacher has donned his own powered armour and carries an energy sword in his right hand while his left hand is bare ... shinning with its own Symbol of Balance.

The PCs must defeat Teacher because his armour is amplifying the energies of his Symbol of Balance via an internal transmitter, and then sending those signals to the Obelisk to maintain the ritual. Incapacitating him or seriously damaging his armour will end the ceremony, and the villagers will stop dying (see TRANSFER INTERRUPTED, page 26).



Extended Scenario

If time allows, you can certainly lengthen the scenario by delaying Teacher's final ceremony. The recharge time of the Obelisk could be extended from two hours to six, or twelve, or whatever seems appropriate. If it is extended much more than a day you might wish to lessen the frequency of the earthquakes. An earthquake every other day is more than enough to be cataclysmic — but whatever the rate is, the PCs should learn approximately when the next quake will be, for it should still herald the final ceremony.

If you have decided to increase the amount of time the PCs have to explore, here are some possible paths they may take:

Seiko

If the PCs manage to talk to Seiko, they may learn a great deal. Even talking to her is something of a challenge, because Teacher knows she is somehow responsible for bringing them here. The Zealot guards, under Teacher's orders, are to keep Seiko safe and undisturbed until the ceremony. If Teacher had an easy way to kill her he would, but he would prefer not to have anything more upset the villagers. Should a tragic accident befall Seiko, confusion and chaos might result, and the people might not line up and die for him, causing the whole process to take longer and his bonus to be reduced. For the moment Teacher just wants to contain Seiko.

Once Seiko wakes up, however, she will want to know what happened, and will try to get out and see the Great Kami. At worst, if they are off exploring, or the Zealots keep her contained, she will join the villagers at the final ceremony, and her calls can be used to guide the PCs.

It is reasonably likely that the PCs will get a chance to talk to Seiko, however. They will have seen her when they arrived and are probably curious. Villagers, such as Akano, certainly know what happened to her and can direct the PCs to find her. They could sneak by or even force their way past the Zealot guards. Alternatively, Seiko herself might seek them out, when she awakens, for she will be very eager to see them. Her naiveté means that while she does not see through Teacher's deception, she is not struck with the same awe towards the Kami, and may be more helpful since she is not constantly bowing to them. She knows all of the standard information that is available, and is happy to answer whatever she can.

If the PCs ask her about the last ceremony, she does not really know what happened. She remembers it clearly, but is confused. She remembers Teacher telling them to pray for salvation, that they must believe in their hearts and that maybe the gods would spare them. She prayed with all her might, and said "I just want to end the destruction," and suddenly she saw them all and felt them each touch her hand, and then she collapsed. She now has a symbol of Balance tattooed over her heart, which she keeps hidden unless the PCs ask her about their own tattoos. She does not really know anything about them other than her personal experience: it was as if the energy of all the people went into her, and from her into the Obelisk, and then it was like a door was opening and there was fire on her chest as the tattoo appeared. No one in the village, not even Teacher, knows about it (she has not had the time to ask). The tattoo appeared upon her chest rather than her hand, because she was channelling so much energy and doing so in a completely original way that it had to come out through her heart.

She will offer whatever help she can to the Kami. She believes in the Teacher, and is puzzled if the PCs show any distrust or suspicion. She has been inside Teacher's tent and has seen his metal chest, although she does not know what it contains (she is not particularly concerned about it, but if the PCs ask her about the tent, she might mention it).

Akano

Although he has not had Seiko's direct experience, Akano could prove a useful ally to the PCs. He is willing and able to help them, however he can, and like Seiko he is not fawning over the Chosen Ones. He is respectful, but not sycophantic. He thinks and questions, and he is somewhat more distrustful than Seiko of the Zealots and Teacher ("distrust" is too strong a word, but he dislikes the behaviour of many of the Zealots). Again he is respectful of Teacher, but wishes that Teacher was not so private an individual. Akano is more curious than suspicious. Now that the Kami are here, he wonders if they know more than Teacher, and if they should be leading?

Akano at least can tell the PCs the name of the floating girl, and where she is to be found. He is also happy to act as a guide for them, and to help whenever needed. If the PCs, however, indulge too much at the expense of the villagers, Akano will be somewhat put out. He thinks it is foolish and distressing that the villagers who have so little give so much to Teacher, and now to the Kami. Gods should not demand sacrifices that are this cruel.



Questioning the Villagers

It is quite reasonable for the PCs to wish to talk to as many villagers as they can, to get a better idea of what is occurring. Akano and Seiko are the most helpful, but many other villagers would be willing to give whatever help they can to their Great Kami. All the villagers should respect and revere the Chosen Ones. The Zealots on the other hand are less helpful; they are too much in awe, and guided too directly by Teacher whom they can understand (unlike these Spirits who are too big for them to comprehend).

Exploring the Area

The PCs could certainly choose to explore the countryside near the village and the Obelisk. It is almost ruined, but if they have fantastic means of transportation they could see some of the process of the devastation (far too similar to the deaths of their own worlds, perhaps). One possibility might be to find a few other clusters of survivors in the ruins — survivors who could have stories of distrust and disbelief in this "Teacher," and how their cities were then destroyed, as if by the Teacher's capricious whim.

- No one knows the origins of the Teacher.
- Bands of refugees are certainly still trying to reach "safety" or at the least find answers to why the gods are doing this. The PCs could certainly help them get to a place of relative safety, but if they do not determine how to stop the root of the problem, there is little hope.

TRANSFER INTERRUPTED

The Obelisk is part of a large network of machines, and is an extremely complex and powerful machine. The ceremony that Teacher was performing was super-charging the Obelisk's power supply to maximum capacity, to be followed by the instructional co-ordinates for world harvesting. Unfortunately, with Teacher's defeat (and/or the damaging of his armour), the ceremony was interrupted, and the Obelisk is now on the verge of collapsing.

If Teacher is defeated, the energy drain upon the villagers will clearly stop, but the Obelisk is still glowing with captured energies. A disembodied voice will be heard, from the Obelisk, stating: "INPUT STREAM INTERRUPTED, PLEASE RE-INITIATE COMMAND SEQUENCE."

The PCs can do whatever they wish at this point since the Obelisk is now charged, and will respond to anyone with a tattoo of Balance. The problem is that it is over-charged, and the energy must somehow be spent. Simply telling it to "turn off" will not work, and will generate the reply: "WARNING — CAPACITORS HAVE BEEN ENERGIZED AND MUST BE DISCHARGED." If they give it any commands to release the energy, they must be very careful as to how they phrase it so as not to destroy the village (or the world). If the PCs wait for the energy to simply dissipate, the Warning will repeat, and it may sound another: "ALARM — CHARGED CAPACITORS MUST BE DISCHARGED — SAFETY LEVELS EXCEEDED — CRITICAL MASS HAS BEEN REACHED." If they do nothing or are careless, the Obelisk will explode.

Assuming you intend to run Part Two, the PCs will survive whatever they effect. If they accidentally allow the Obelisk to explode, they will be swept up in a vortex of energy, very similar to their arrival to this place, knowing perhaps that they have killed yet another world. If they are clever and manage to find a way to redirect the energy into a positive effect (at your discretion), then they will also be sucked into the Obelisk's tides, but as they enter the darkness between worlds, they will know that this world at least has been given a new dawn.

The Guardians of Order have found a way, albeit inadvertently, to the Obelisk's home world (Part Two).



"So, We Have...an Obelisk?" (Part Two)

*Hold thou the good: define it well:
for fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell*

— Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*

For this second part of the adventure, it is assumed that all of the players have worked through Part One. Part Two is considerably more open-ended, far less linear, and much more serious. It will highlight a different style of anime, moving from the lighter, medieval-fantasy elements of the first part, to a grim and melancholy futuristic empire, where opulence and luxury are bought with the blood and souls of those unfortunate enough to be "harvested." In this place, the PCs will have no easy choices and must force themselves to answer the hardest of questions.

"So, We Have...an Obelisk?"

PART TWO OVERVIEW — Summary of the second half of the adventure.

STORY BACKGROUND — The critical and specific points for Part Two.

SETTING — Greater detail about the key areas.

IMPORTANT NPCs — Information describing the important non-player characters.

INTRODUCTION AND START — Background information about the time between the scenarios and where the scenario opens.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT — Key plot points.

RESOLUTION AND CAMPAIGN EXPANSION — The end of Part Two.

Part Two Overview

At the end of Part One, the PCs are caught in a wave of the Obelisk's energies — either because they stopped it, or because they failed to halt the harvesting procedure. The explosive release of energy destroys the Obelisk, but the backwash pulls the PCs into its homeworld, the centre for The United Dominions of the AmeriCorp Imperium ("AmeriCorp"). They find themselves unharmed, on a new world, a megalopolis of glass and steel that stretches across the horizon. They will be met by an agent of AmeriCorp, who quickly recognizes their abilities to manipulate the Obelisk-Gate technology via their symbols of Balance. He will begin by offering generous hospitality, and slowly build up to offering them jobs in the Company. The pay is good — quite close to wish fulfilment to be exact — but the hours are long and the Company does not worry too heavily about moral choices. The PCs will get to wander through the territories of AmeriCorp, pondering their choices — do they join, and cause the deaths of a thousand worlds, each like their lost homes; or do they fight, and jeopardize the colonists on a thousand worlds; or do they do nothing, and let Balance remain unchanged?

NOTE: It is strongly recommended that you Game Master Part One before attempting to use Part Two. The PCs will have a greater connection to each other, and they will have a better intrinsic understanding of the insidious nature of AmeriCorp and the Obelisks. If you decide that you only wish to use Part Two, however, you should first read Part One so that you will at least understand the Harvesting process and what would have happened. The events of Part One can be skipped by jumping the characters from the destruction of their respective worlds to the Start point in Part Two (page 27). Certain details, especially of their arrival, will need to be changed or modified slightly as needed. For example, perhaps Adam Smythe was attempting a risky and untested new procedure, to harvest multiple worlds simultaneously, and as a result, destroyed the PCs' worlds, the Obelisks, and himself in the process.

Story Background

The history of AmeriCorp goes back well over 500 years. Long ago, the corporate empires from Earth sent ships to colonize and develop the stars. World governments had become little more than skeletal border guards that allowed giant franchises to negotiate over no-man's lands. The corporations held territory, and had the responsibility for not only defending it, but also for supporting settlers and ensuring their well being. Time, however, was always of the essence — no matter how fast their ships could travel, or what new kinds of communication technologies developed, corporations were always limited by distance. There were planets that were just not economically feasible to cultivate, and thus many resources had to be abandoned to the chill of space. Colonies were incredibly expensive to build and maintain, for they had to be virtually self-sufficient in case supply lines were cut. Expansion occurred, but very slowly.

Then, by purest serendipity, an explorer vessel was forced to set down for repairs on an unknown planet, in an uncharted quadrant of space. The vessel, *Revere 202*, and its crew were the property of AmeriCorp, one of the most powerful companies on the North American continent. AmeriCorp was a fusion of the decaying military-industrial complex of North America and the old government-owned national space program. In those days, AmeriCorp only ran from the tip of Baja California to the northern tip of Alaska. Soon, that would all change.

The vessel encountered an alien artifact, the likes of which had never been discovered before. In over 500 years of extensive space travel, no one had uncovered evidence of extra-terrestrial life. The crew of *Revere 202* found clear evidence that something else was out there. Navigating through a thin, but breathable atmosphere, they found an awesome monument, a great spear thrusting into the Heavens. It was an enormous Obelisk, made of a steel-grey alien metal, covered with faintly glowing markings. Its base was on the top of a low mountain range, but it then stretched inconceivably high through the clouds, towering 8,000 godly meters above the ground.

AmeriCorp quickly capitalized on its findings. An extensive research colony was established around the Obelisk, and the company jealously guarded its discovery. Many years were spent cautiously probing the structure before a few of its secrets were revealed; yet even those paltry few findings resulted in phenomenal success and expansion for AmeriCorp. They discovered that the Obelisk could replicate smaller versions of itself and that each Obelisk could act as a tremendously powerful transmitter — instant communication could now

happen across the universe. AmeriCorp's success and profit margin grew considerably, and soon they became one of the world's greatest powers. More resources were funnelled into the Obelisk Project. Scientists and researchers across the corporate territory could transfer ideas instantaneously, which enabled them to unlock the next great secret: matter could be transformed into energy and sent to any other Obelisk, where it could then be returned to matter. Instant transportation, from anywhere to anywhere. AmeriCorp's military machine was unmatched and within two months Earth fell to AmeriCorp. By the end of the next fiscal quarter, the territories of virtually every other company had also been acquired.

When the costs of such success were first revealed, a tiny trickle of concern soon flooded to a deluge of fright. The Obelisks were no longer self-sufficient. There were too many of them working all the time and they needed external sources of energy. The Obelisks began taking the energy from the environment around them, or from the matter-transference process. Up to 40% of shipments would be consumed, which was tremendously significant when valuable natural resources, foodstuffs, cattle, or people were involved. The Obelisks did not discriminate between organic and inorganic material — all was consumed equally to feed the machine. If the Obelisks did not get the energy they needed, they simply shut down, cutting off branches of the network.

More funding, more scientists, and more desperation all resulted in a one-in-a-million discovery. Not only could the Obelisks travel to anywhere in this universe, they could also open gateways to other universes. A million new worlds became the playground for AmeriCorp's manifest destiny, but these would not be anything more than the raw materials which would keep the Corporation alive and healthy back "home." The Board of Directors dictated that worlds in other universes would never be colonized, but that they would be the battery to fuel the corporate engine. AmeriCorp grew, and grew, and grew, sending their Obelisks across space and through dimensions.

There were difficulties with the expansion, of course. Something in the composition of the Obelisk required the presence of a certain genetic structure in the user to properly operate it. The genetic key can be examined, but to date AmeriCorp has been unable to replicate it. The Path-Finders who can send an Obelisk into another dimension are rare, and are consequently very valuable — fewer than one in a billion humans exhibit the proper coding. Since AmeriCorp spans over a thousand worlds, they are able to find enough Path-Finders to ensure some level of stability.

In the AmeriCorp files there are a few reports of failures or "accidents." Occasionally, when an Obelisk and an Explorer Team are sent to Harvest a world, they encounter bizarre and supernatural opposition. Failures are extremely rare, but they have been educational. Explorer Teams improve with every mission as a result of these failures, and little can shake them. Even fewer in number than the Path-Finders are the dissidents — those who have absurd dreams of a different kind of world. Virtually no one alive can remember a time when AmeriCorp's flag did not fly from the capitol of every world, but a few anarchists vainly wish for a different form of "government."

Welcome to AmeriCorp — we are happy to have you with us.

Setting

Following are descriptions of some of the adventure's important locations.

AmeriCorp

AmeriCorp is a techno-fascist empire, oriented around a totalitarian regime that only competes with itself. There are institutions that are privately owned, naturally, but all are under the governmental umbrella of AmeriCorp. It is not only a one-world government, but a one-universe government.

AmeriCorp spans a thousand worlds, all heavily developed and closely governed. AmeriCorp is run by a Board of Directors, and their appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Beneath that is a complex hierarchy of Vice Presidents, Assistant Vice Presidents, Senior Managers, Operations Managers, Researchers, Project Managers, and Administrative Assistants.

The symbol of AmeriCorp is similar to the old, forgotten flag of the United States of America. Rather than a blue field and white stars, however, the field is black, and there is only one large golden star upon it.

Many Worlds

Most of this adventure will take place at the Research Dimension Division (RDD), but it is certainly possible that the PCs will attempt to explore elsewhere, and so you should have at least a basic understanding of what the universe holds. There are precisely 1012 worlds that are developed and maintained by AmeriCorp. Worlds are named either for the stars they orbit, or for the primary function of the world. Millions of planets have been charted, but only a few are worth the full colonial investment. Some urban centres grow to encompass an entire world ("megacities"), while other worlds are almost fully farms ("bread-baskets"), or forests, or oceans — each provides valuable resources which are distributed as needed to the population. Everyone has a place in AmeriCorp's social welfare state, and everyone's basic necessities are met. To gain a luxurious standard of living, however, one must work hard for the company. Disobedience and opposing ideologies are not tolerated, and vengeance is harsh (there is no real concept of "justice"). Minor acts of civil disobedience are usually punished by relocation to a new colony, while serious acts of disobedience result in termination.

Technology

AmeriCorp is an extremely technologically advanced society, able to travel and communicate across universes instantly. Terraforming, genetic manipulations, and A.I. computers are all commonplace in society. It is possible that one or more of the PCs will also be from a far futuristic universe. AmeriCorp should at least be on par with anything that they have encountered, and should encompass a far greater empire than anything the PCs have ever known. The PCs should be in awe, and at least a little bit afraid, of the power that AmeriCorp has in its hands.

Research Dimension Division (RDD)

The RDD branch of AmeriCorp, is also the operational name for planet Alpha Alpha Gamma Epsilon 4404239. RDD is the centre of AmeriCorp's studies on the Obelisk, responsible for observing and maintaining the Obelisk network and for continuing developmental research upon them.

RDD fills the entire planet; 95% of the world's surface is one giant megacity. Almost everyone who lives here is either on staff at RDD, or is a family member. Staff work and live here, although they often travel elsewhere to "play." Food, resources, and raw materials need to be shipped in regularly, since nothing is grown here. There are no farms, no forests, no oceans. The only lakes are man-made, and there is limited wildlife in carefully regulated zoological institutions.

The work that is done on RDD is crucial to the sustainable development of AmeriCorp, and thus the scientists who work here are amongst the best-paid employees in the government. The department heads are second only to individuals like the CEO and the Board. RDD therefore strives to create the type of work environment that its staff will enjoy, providing the best of the best for work and for relaxation. For example, the Staff Cafeteria in RDD-Central is equipped with: supple leather couches; gourmet food prepared by award-winning chefs; an extensive selection of wines and spirits at the Big Bar on Two; 3-D movie walls; computer terminals for staff to use as they will; high fidelity sound systems; a digital library; 50 different non-stop news feeds; and a full wall aquarium. Each major building complex has a full gymnasium, holo-cinema, health clinic, gourmet café, and rock garden.

Obelisks

There are thousands of Obelisks of various sizes on RDD that dot the landscape like monuments. Small Obelisks open to only one or two other worlds, while the largest can connect to a network of dozens of different planets. There is a large, outwardly moving spiral from the Plaza of Worlds, where there is one Obelisk for every world in the AmeriCorp empire. Then, on the other side of the world, is the Memorial of Sacrifice. These Obelisks all lead to dead worlds — the size of each depends on how rich a world was harvested. There are no names, just endless rows of Obelisks, lining wide black marble boulevards, dotted with ever-blooming cherry trees.

Plaza of Worlds

This is the centre of the entire Obelisk network. Every new colony has its Obelisk placed here, into a rigid pattern. In many ways this is the main artery of AmeriCorp, since everything runs through this point. Worlds like Earth obviously have multiple Obelisks upon them, but in most cases a world has a maximum of one Obelisk Gate. There is a central building beneath the Plaza that houses the observation equipment and managerial staff. All of the Obelisks are monitored around the clock. As well, the building houses a strong legion of Marines, with access to a full complement of armour, weapons and support vehicles, sworn to guard and protect the Obelisks at all costs.

Memorial of Sacrifice

This is the graveyard and the furnace that consumes cross-dimensional worlds for AmeriCorp. The centre of the Memorial houses the buildings of the Dimension Resource Division (DRD). An Explorer Team will be ordered at the construction point of a new Obelisk, will travel through and observe the target world, and if acceptable, will harvest it. When the Harvest is complete, all that remains is this half of the Obelisk Gate. All of the information that the Obelisk and Explorer teams gathered is stored in the databases of DRD — including a complete physical, emotional and mental mapping of each and every world that is consumed. Every detail of every world that has been harvested is somewhere in DRD's computers.

A subdivision of RDD, DRD is a scientific military operation. These individuals are the actual reconnaissance agents of RDD and AmeriCorp, who travel across dimensions and orchestrate the harvesting of worlds. Occasionally they are sent on business trips to gather information, but for the most part AmeriCorp wishes to be self-sufficient and not dependent on (more) alien thoughts or technologies. In addition, many of the bizarre and supernatural elements found in other dimensions lose coherency when they are brought to AmeriCorp.

DRD's labs are located near the Memorial of Sacrifice — in fact, the Memorial stretches from the very doors of DRD north and south for miles. It is a complete research-laboratory and military base, with some of the heaviest security anywhere within the Thousand Worlds. The soldier-scientists are all expertly trained, bright, intelligent, and determined. Those that actually travel with the Obelisk and activate the Harvesting procedure are all Assistant Senior Managers (like Adam Smythe). In addition, all Project heads are Agents of Balance, marked with the genetic ability to manipulate the Obelisks.

Grand Obelisk

The original, primary Obelisk is found on RDD on the only part of the planet still uncultivated. The single mountain peak has no signs of civilization, other than a solitary observation deck. The mountain is bare rock, the capstone of a low mountain range, reaching 5,000 metres above the baseline. The Obelisk reaches from there, up well beyond the heavens. It is solid, made of an alien steel-grey metal, which apparently can change its density so that it is always upright. The metal is virtually indestructible (no damage has ever been observed to the Grand Obelisk), and absorbs most forms of energy easily and completely. Its entire surface is covered with runic markings, like an alphabet of 10,000 unique characters. Clearly the runes are the keys to unlocking the Obelisk's secrets, but the answer may never be found.

There is a 10 kilometre clear radius around the Obelisk, for that is its limit to passively harvest energies. The one observation deck is theoretically at risk, but they have less than one unsafe and unwanted Harvest in all the Thousand Worlds every 10 years, so it is an acceptable risk.

The 10 km border is heavily guarded, and lined with military outposts. The Obelisk is also something of a monument, however, and visitors can travel to it while under the careful watch and escort of the military. AmeriCorp's Grand Obelisk Tour promptly closes every evening at dusk, 6:00 P.M. sharp, East-RDD time.

Earth

Earth is the homeworld of humankind, and the capitol of the AmeriCorp empire. It is many hundreds of light years away from RDD, but with the Obelisks that is inconsequential. Earth has become a pristine garden of landscaping and civilization. There is nothing really called "Nature" anymore, since every part of the world bears the imprint of man's handiwork. Pollution has been eradicated and waste-recycling is nearly 100%. There is also no poverty. Rent anywhere on Earth costs the equivalent of purchasing a star-yacht every month, and those who cannot afford it are found work elsewhere. The truly poor become settlers on new colonies, and are given a second chance to create a rich portfolio and further their chances with future investments.

The CEO of AmeriCorp lives on Earth, and owns an estate in southern Italy that is larger than many small villages, called the Palace of the World. Most of the other Board of Directors have summer or winter estates there as well, but they all have primary residences off-planet, somewhere in the vast menagerie of the Thousand Worlds.



The Board of Directors

The Board is comprised of the vaguely faceless, shadowy members that direct AmeriCorp. They are scattered through the Thousand Worlds, keeping governance in the hands of the few. It is said there are two dozen members — two dozen men and women, living the most opulent lives imaginable, who direct a government that controls the lives of trillions of people. They have one common mission: to ensure that AmeriCorp is as profitable as possible, always. They dictate all policy, and are the last form of appeal, or judges of fate.

The PCs, in the scope of this adventure, will never meet any of the Board in person. It is possible that a meeting will eventually take place between the PCs and the Board, but it will always be done via holo-conferencing. They never expose themselves to unnecessary or foolish risk; they have lived too long and are too powerful to put themselves in a position where their power might truly be challenged, or any physical weaknesses exploited. They evaluate all of their decisions on a cost/profit analysis, and when the equation becomes unbalanced all efforts are made to terminate the mismanaged endeavour.



Charles Marx, CEO

Body **3** Mind **11** Soul **10**
 Health Points **65** Energy Points **105**
 Attack Combat Value **8** Defense Combat Value **6**

Attributes

Art of Distraction Level 4, Divine Relationship Level 3, Flunkies Level 5, Heightened Senses Level 3

Defects

Easily Distracted (valuable artifacts that are not in his possession, 1 BP), Significant Other (Evita Marx, wife of 400 years and mother to his five children, he is extremely devoted to her, 1 BP)

Skills

Boating (Yachts) Level 4, Business Management (Big Business) Level 5, Computers (Programming) Level 3, Navigation (Sea) Level 3, Piloting (Light Airplane) Level 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) Level 3

Appearance

Charles is an ancient man, having lived for more than 600 years. He is one of the few who remembers the time before AmeriCorp. In fact, the year that AmeriCorp discovered the Obelisk was the year that the Board asked Charles to join their team, as CEO. While the Board has changed, he has been in control of the corporation from that day forward.

Charles's body is withered and shrunken, but his eyes are bright and his voice strong. He has no care for vanity of the flesh, and is not troubled by the state of his body. He has another body prepared for when this one eventually fails him, but he is in no rush; he is comfortable in this skin, and is happy to wear it for a little longer.

Charles oversees all levels of AmeriCorp from his offices in the Palace of the World on Earth. He reports only to the Board, and wields more power than any one living being in AmeriCorp.

Character

Charles is a pragmatic, shrewd, clever, and cunning capitalist in a game where he has won, fully and completely. He has certainly seen it and done it all, a thousand times over. Now he is starting, slowly, to think about retiring. He has carried AmeriCorp about as far as he can and sees no more challenges ahead in life. Perhaps when he changes bodies, he will retire, and spend the next lifetime travelling through the wonders of the Thousand Worlds. He is an excellent ally, and a terrifying enemy. He has no qualms about acting once he has decided something, and believes heart and soul in the corporation.

His wife, Evita, is of rich Italian descent, having owned some of the most luscious vineyards throughout Europe. They courted for 10 years many centuries ago, married, and have been together ever since. Evita has grown old with Charles, but also looks forward to the youthful figure of a new body, and a chance to explore with him. Their five children are Ernesto, Isabel, Dino, Francis, and Suzanne.



BESM

Ed Jarvis, SM DRD (Senior Manager, Dimension Resource Division)

Body 8 Mind 10 Soul 3
Health Points 55 Energy Points 65
Attack Combat Value 7 Defense Combat Value 5

Attributes

Appearance Level 2, Art of Distraction Level 2, Extra Attacks Level 1, Flunkies Level 3, Highly Skilled Level 5, Speed Level 3

Defects

Easily Distracted x2 (beautiful alien artifacts or creatures, 1 BP; cannot resist manipulating someone due to their weaknesses, 1 BP), Owned by a Megacorp (AmeriCorp, 2 BP), Skeleton in the Closet (responsible for much of Adam Smythe's debts, 1 BP)

Skills

Business Management (Recruitment) Level 3, Computers (Networks) Level 2, Forgery (Electronic Documents) Level 1, Gaming (Gambling) Level 1, Interrogation (Psychological) Level 1, Military Science (Intelligence Analysis) Level 2, Navigation (Air) Level 1, Piloting (Helicopter) Level 1, Sports (Squash) Level 1, Urban Tracking (Corporate) Level 1, Gun Combat (Pistol) Level 3, Melee Defense (Knife) Level 2, Ranged Defense (Air Vehicle) Level 1, Thrown Weapons (Blades) Level 1

Appearance

Ed Jarvis comes across as slick, corporate, smooth, and maybe a touch dashing. He is the salesman extraordinaire — very intelligent, cunning and sly. He is in excellent shape, and trains regularly and extensively. Ed is only 50, but has the look of a man half his age, with rich dark hair, and pretty blue eyes. He keeps his hair nicely trimmed, and is clean shaven. He tends to dress in power suits of the corporate, individually-tailored kind. He carries a leather attaché case, and is generally armed with no more than a ball point pen and high-end palm-sized computer interface.



Character

Ed is friendly. Very friendly. He could be your best friend. In fact, he probably is. He will be your best friend even after he puts the knife between your ribs. Ed grew up under the umbrella of AmeriCorp, and has thus never known anything different. He likes his world, especially because he is one of the privileged that has seen the other dimensions. He is not an Agent of Balance, however, and thus can only go through the Obelisks when one of his agents opens the door for him. He is utterly fascinated with anything and everything on the other side of those portals, and would give virtually anything to gain the ability to travel by himself.

Ed began life in the military, and was quickly seen to be intelligent enough to train to be an officer, specializing in corporate law. Upon graduation, he served numerous posts, always drifting, whenever possible, towards RDD. He had a reputation for being opportunistic and effective, in the field or in the courtroom. He chose a few lateral promotions over vertical ones to be able to study the Obelisks. In time his hard work was recognized. The combination of military prowess and academic ability meant the Dimension Resource Division. He has been with DRD for 20 years, and has rapidly leapt through the ranks, being promoted to Senior Manager (the top man) in only 10 years. This rise through the ranks, on the deaths of a thousand worlds, has cost him a piece of his soul. Now, Ed only reports to an Assistant Vice-President, the Vice President, Mr. Marx, or to the Board.

Ed loves manipulating people. If he discerns a weakness, he will always try to exploit it. He knew that Adam Smythe was a poor financial manager, but instead of being a good boss, and coming to him as a real friend (perhaps offering advice or money), he chose instead to dangle tremendous bonuses for impossible goals in front of Adam's face. Due to that, Ed feels somewhat responsible for the loss of a valuable asset of AmeriCorp's. He feels that he may have been indirectly responsible for Adam Smythe's reckless behaviour, which resulted in his death. The serendipitous arrival of a new group of Agents of Balance, however, could well offset any short-term loss. He is very eager to recruit the PCs.



Sarah Montgomery, AR DRD, (Assistant Researcher Dimension Resource Division)

Body **4** Mind **7** Soul **7**
Health Points **55** Energy Points **70**
Attack Combat Value **6** Defense Combat Value **4**

Attributes

Accessories (Bionic Computer Implant) Level 1, Appearance Level 4, Divine Relationship Level 2, Heightened Senses (All Five Senses) Level 4, Highly Skilled Level 2, Light Armour (Hidden, Stops 3 points of damage) Level 3, Personal Gear Level 2

Defects

Owned by a Megacorp (AmeriCorp, 2 BP)

Skills

Biological Science (Genetics) Level 5, Computers (Database) Level 3, Medical (Surgery) Level 5, Physical Science (Biochemistry) Level 4, Police Science (Forensics) Level 1

Personal Gear

Laptop/Portable Lab — a powerful, personal computer which allows Sarah to connect with the major networks of AmeriCorp. It contains a wide range of analytical sensors, covering the gamut from comprehensive medical examinations to detailed forensic reports.

Appearance

Sarah Montgomery is a striking younger woman, just under 30. She is naturally beautiful, using only the slightest touches of make-up to accent her professional attire. Her dark hair is usually tied into a simple ponytail. She has golden-green eyes, and a perpetual slight frown whenever she is trying to solve a new puzzle.

Over the past few years Sarah has added some cybernetic enhancements to herself, although they are all sub-dermal and quite discreet. She has upgraded all five of her senses, can directly access local networks through a data port, has a computer implanted in her sub-brain, and has strengthened some of her primary skeletal structure with implants. She also has a laptop that acts as a portable lab — she carries it wherever she goes.

Character

Sarah is the head of the scientific-medical wing of DRD (her AR status is approximately equivalent to an ASM), and has proven herself to be bright, hardworking and lucky. Her discoveries, while not exactly plentiful, have always been regarded as very valuable and needed. She has been working on the Obelisk project (and the related Agents of Balance genetic quandary) since she joined DRD right out of school. She tends to be very inquisitive, somewhat demanding, wilful, and when crossed, downright vengeful. Sarah is a perpetual student of the universe. AmeriCorp is a convenient and well-funded (but perhaps not the only) way to find answers.



Ken Dilamater, OMCD (Operations Manager Civil Division)

Body **7** Mind **5** Soul **4**
 Health Points **75** Energy Points **45**
 Attack Combat Value **6** Defense Combat Value **4**

Attributes

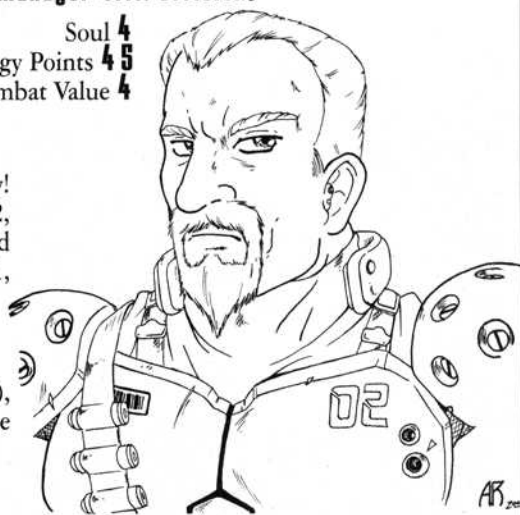
Combat Mastery Level 1, Damn Healthy! Level 2, Extra Attacks Level 1, Flunkies Level 2, Heightened Awareness Level 2, Highly Skilled Level 2, Massive Damage Level 2, OBM Level 1, Personal Gear Level 2

Defects

Owned by Megacorp (AmeriCorp, 2 BP), Red Tape (1 BP), Easily Distracted (attractive women, 1 BP)

Skills

Computers (Intrusion/Security) Level 1, Interrogation (Physical) Level 2, Military Sciences (Tactics) Level 1, Police Sciences (Criminology) Level 2, Urban Tracking (Underworld) Level 1, Gun Combat (Rifle) Level 3, Melee Attack (Baton) Level 1, Melee Defense (Baton) Level 1



Personal Gear

Side Arm (heavy pistol) — (Damage 30, Short Range). A major item.

Shock Baton — (Drain Body — 6 per hit, Contact, Limited Shots — 6 charges, No Damage, Toxic — proper insulation negates electric charge). A major item.

Various police equipment and tools as needed at any particular time. They count as minor items.

Appearance

Ken is a big man, standing at 6'6" and close to 400 pounds, but he carries his bulk well and with surprising speed. His thinning hair is cropped very short, giving him short sides and a balding forehead. His hair is salt-and-pepper, matching his well-trimmed beard and moustache. Ken is in his late 50s, but could easily break a man half his age. He dresses in an AmeriCorp police uniform when in the office or on casual duty, with a side arm, and an extending shock baton. When he is needed on scene, he wears a suit of AmeriCorp Military Police Armour, similar to the DRD Marine powered armour, but slightly modified to his personal tastes.

Character

As the Operations Manager of the Civil Division, he is in charge of the daily operations of RDD. Any major problems, civil or criminal, come across his desk first. The only places he does not have full authority are in the top offices of DRD, but he can even petition for full authorization of legal jurisdiction to be granted him there. His job is to keep RDD running smoothly. At his command are the Military Protection Units, Military Police Forces, Civil Servants, Urban Management Departments, and even Off-World Transportation and Communications.

Ken has a hearty appetite and a warm laugh. It is easy to make friends with him, since his temper is slow to excite, but once it flares, it burns until he has stomped his target into the ground. He is a smart guy, and leads by example and by the charge. If things get out of hand, he will certainly show up.

(1) - The Obelisk at Nāru

The world was dying under Adam Smythe's machinations. The Guardians of Order defeated him, and with luck, saved the world as well from the stored energies of the Obelisk. If they failed to release the energies carefully Nāru was destroyed. No matter what they did, however, the unleashed Obelisk's energies washes over them, and pulls them through a dimensional gate to somewhere else.

The journey echoes the PCs' previous rtravel through an Obelisk. There is darkness in the in-between. All the senses go blind for a long heartbeat, and slowly come back. They know they are travelling together, but this time they do not have Seiko's voice as a beacon. They are on their own. They can certainly speak to each other for a moment or two while in transit, but do not waste too much time on preparation, for they will arrive unharmed, safe, and for a moment alone.



(2) - Welcome to AmeriCorp

The PCs arrive together, on a new world. They are on a low building of polished chrome and glass, around an Obelisk that is cracked and lifeless (the mirror of the one they just destroyed). All around them, as far as the eye can see, stretches a megalopolis of glass and steel. They are at the far end of the Memorial of Sacrifice, and behind them are rows and rows of Obelisks — big, medium, small — dotting the landscape like monuments. Some are on the ground, some are on buildings like the one upon which they stand. The avenues below them are lined with cherry trees.

They should have a few moments to reorient themselves, but soon (before they start trying to leave and explore on their own), a door opens on the roof, and a welcoming party emerges.

One man comes striding out with a curse on his lips that quickly dies to a look of shock, puzzlement, amazement, and finally a hesitant smile. This is Ed Jarvis, one of the slickest managers in AmeriCorp. Ed was expecting to meet Adam Smythe — he had been monitoring the transference, when the numbers plummeted wildly, dropping far into the red. Smythe was going to get a reprimand for certain, but the entire situation has suddenly changed.

Ed is a fast mover. He puts things together quickly and efficiently, and acts. He notes Smythe's absence, and decides to adopt the new arrivals. Even if he cannot see their tattoos, Ed deduces that these are Agents of Balance from another dimension. He scribbles a message to his superiors on his palm computer after he smiles at the PCs, and then moves to warmly greet the new arrivals.

Ed is extremely tolerant and non-threatening, dressed in an expensive executive suit and armed only with administrative accoutrements. He will certainly understand if the PCs are angry or frustrated, and will try to calmly talk to them. He will introduce himself, and answer basic questions about where and when they are (although he will not talk much about the Obelisks, or the Agents of Balance yet), and offer the PCs a chance to rest and refresh themselves.

Choices

At this point, or at any further step, the PCs may decide they want nothing to do with Ed or AmeriCorp and split off to try their own thing. While it would be premature at this stage (antagonizing a militaristic empire of which they have no knowledge or understanding), you should have a rough idea of the possible scenarios that may occur. AmeriCorp will attempt to recruit the PCs until such time as it becomes apparent that they are being wilfully disruptive or destructive to the company. As soon as their actual loss is greater than their potential worth, AmeriCorp will do everything in its power to contain and terminate them. If, however, the PCs choose to listen to AmeriCorp, they will be wined and dined and offered positions in the company (much of that path is described below). They will get a chance to ask questions, meet people, and explore AmeriCorp's world. When the time finally comes to make their choice they will have to decide with their consciences. Some of the possible outcomes are outlined in the Conclusions section. If they ever decide to break away from AmeriCorp, they will find themselves very, very isolated (see the section on the Qs, page 47 for ideas about life outside AmeriCorp).

(3) - Put Your Feet Up

Ed takes the PCs, via hover-limo, down the Memorial of Sacrifice to the headquarters of DRD. It is clearly a high-security building, although most of the guards and cameras and security measures are unobtrusive. Ed is the Senior Manager of DRD, and thus doors that open automatically for him may be impenetrable for the PCs. The characters are treated as honoured guests. Ed takes them to the luxurious staff cafeteria and allows them to recover and discuss. The hour is late, and only a skeleton crew is on duty; there is no one in the cafeteria other than the PCs and a few employees. Ed excuses himself to speak to his superiors and advise them of the new situation. He might leave the PCs with a teaser, suggesting that when he returns he might have a proposition for them to consider.

The PCs now have some time to chat and discuss amongst themselves, uninterrupted. Ed can stay away for as long as productive and useful role-playing is occurring, but since the PCs only have a limited idea of what the world holds, he should probably be gone for no more than 10 or 20 game minutes. They should get the impression that there is a lot of money here. The few bar staff will answer any questions they can. They are just normal citizens, however, and cannot help with significant information.

If any of the PCs comes through the Gate particularly injured, Ed will offer to take them to the infirmary in DRD, where they should meet Sarah Montgomery.

(4) - Initial Proposals

Ed sends a message to his superiors, and it quickly goes up the chain to Charles Marx and the Board. Never before have so many Agents of Balance been discovered at once. While they lost one, finding this new group certainly makes up for any lost profits. Ed is instructed to continue to act as the liaison between AmeriCorp and the PCs, to give them as much information as they need and can handle. He must also determine if they really are Agents of Balance, where they come from, and who and what they truly are.

Ed returns to the group, who still should be in the cafeteria, and will play to them as needed. If they are sheep, he will lead them. If they are aggressive, he will be passive and comforting. If they are suspicious, he will be understanding and attempt to be transparent. Ed will tell them:

- about how AmeriCorp is the great empire.
- how AmeriCorp recognizes their potential, and would like to help them.
- that their worlds were needed for the great engine of AmeriCorp, if questioned, but he will phrase it as well as possible, rather than coming out and saying, "yes, we killed your friends, family, and world so that we could have enough fuel for the winter."
- he has a set of propositions for them to consider, but first he needs to make sure that they are all hale and healthy and would like them to visit the Medical/Research division of DRD.
- if pushed, that his propositions are for employment within the corporation. He will not make any firm offers, however, until they have been examined.

(5) - Turn and Cough

For the first while after the PCs appear, everything they do is watched and closely analyzed: genetic samples are taken from lost skin and hair; fingerprints are lifted; conversation is recorded; any "magical powers" are closely observed; etc. All information is added to each PCs' personnel file.

If the characters are willing to co-operate, Sarah Montgomery's lab is happy to do a full examination on each of them. The whole gamut of physical tests will be done: x-rays, blood-work, CAT scans, etc. You should be creative with these tests and with any psychological profiling as well, especially with people from low-tech backgrounds (medical instruments are always icy cold, and look sharp, while ink blots look nightmarish or provocative). Sarah is friendly and helpful, and will ask them about their backgrounds, history, home world, and abilities. Sarah will also ask detailed questions about the PCs' tattoos. She will be particularly interested in anything the characters say about the Obelisks, but she herself will answer little in the trained medical-professional's way of answering questions with questions ("well, what do you think the answer/problem/question is?").

Sarah's findings will confirm Ed's suspicions that the PCs are Agents of Balance with great potential.

(6) - Job Offers

If the PCs are at all co-operative, Ed will be very happy with the results. As always, a bit of discomfort and disruptive behaviour from the PCs is acceptable, but they should not push it too far. By now they should have calmed somewhat.

Ed will take them out of DRD for a drink at a classy bar/lounge called Alien Letters. The runes from the Obelisk are fashionably etched into glasses and printed on coasters. It is here that Ed will make his opening offer. He recognizes that the PCs are Agents of Balance, and the corporation is truly sorry for any hardships and tragedies they have suffered. As partial compensation, the company extends an offer of employment to each and every one of them as Path-Finders for DRD. These positions come with high salaries, lifetime benefits, and a host of other advantages. Ed is reluctant to discuss all the details now, and asks the characters to sleep on it. He has arranged rooms for them at a luxury hotel called the Peak; a car will be sent for them in the morning.

The PCs will certainly have questions for Ed, and he will be as honest, though succinct, as possible. You can use some of the information in the next section to tease them. Although the PCs apparently have free reign, Ed has informed Ken Dilamater about their presence, and has requisitioned a Special Forces Unit to keep an eye on the hotel and the PCs. They will not be harassed, unless they are wantonly destructive, but they will be observed. Their hotel rooms are certainly bugged as well.

(7) - Formal Propositions

Ed will send a limo for the PCs first thing in the morning, and bring them back to DRD for an official meeting. He has not completed the paperwork yet (it can wait), but does have a binding verbal agreement prepared for them to consider.

AmeriCorp wants to hire the characters as Path-Finders. In this position, the PCs must work to the best of their abilities to ensure that AmeriCorp survives and prospers. They must also help AmeriCorp understand the technologies of the Obelisks. Finally, they must act as

direct agents of DRD, finding, exploring and harvesting new worlds, and, to a lesser extent, pioneering Obelisk expansion in this universe as well.

The information below may be distributed now, or at a further meeting:

Compensation

- Automatic promotion to rank of Assistant Senior Manager. This comes with a salary large enough for a luxury apartment anywhere in the Thousand Worlds (other than Earth), and a week's vacation on Earth every year. The position also offers exceptional family dental/health coverage.
- Access to company resources and materials, from laboratories to cars to bookings on company flights.
- Signing bonus equal to six month's salary.
- Stock options

Additional Incentives for Hard Bargainers

- If service is exceptional, eventual Governorship (equal to a Senior Manager) of a new colony.
- Virtual immortality, achieved through an advanced genetics program. Life expectancy can be prolonged through cloning and mind transference to virtually forever. This benefit is only part of the retirement package, however, since it is unknown if the "Symbol of Balance" quality will transfer into a new body.
- Resurrection of their lost worlds. This is extremely expensive to the corporation, and will only be offered as a desperate measure. The Company believes that the long-term value of the Agents will offset this substantial short-term expenditure. The Obelisks do a complete mapping of each world before they consume it. The maps are comprehensive files of geography, atmospheric conditions, resources, settlements, civilizations, individuals, personalities, and history down to the tiniest detail. All this information is stored in endless rows of computer banks at DRD. Initially Ed may only offer to bring back lost loved ones, but he may eventually admit that AmeriCorp can recreate the entire world. If the PCs are crafty, they can ensure this world creation is part of the signing bonus.

Ed will be more forthcoming with general information about the world of RDD and the rest of the Thousand Worlds. The following information can be revealed at this meeting, or at any later time.

- The discovery of the Grand-Obelisk. No one knows who created it since they have never discovered any alien races in this dimension
- Agents of Balance are the only ones who can properly operate the Obelisk Gates. Travelling between Obelisks in the same dimension (for example, from Earth to RDD) can be done with expensively synthesized chips installed in Gate Ships or cyborg pilots, but crossing dimensions can only be done by Agents.
- AmeriCorp supports both Agents of Chaos and Order. Chaos is used for dynamism and change, and Order to ensure stability and law. They will be asked to harvest worlds, or at least bring through an Explorer Team that will do the work. The PCs might be able to act only as door-openers, and in essence "keep their hands clean," but it's a rather academic point.
- Ed is speaking directly for not just his immediate superiors, but also for the CEO and the Board.
- Adam Smythe failed in his task. The monitors report that the Energy Transfer rate dropped

82% before the PCs arrived. Mr. Smythe was over budget, and the only thing that would have saved him was early completion of project deadlines. When he failed, he did not have much of a future on RDD. Mr. Smythe would have been relocated to a new colony as a settler for his failure (or possibly terminated).

- The PCs are not the first Agents of Balance who have crossed over. The others were given a similar choice of joining. The alternative (for AmeriCorp cannot simply allow the PCs to run loose) is placement on a fledging colony as a new settler. The PCs will be offered full citizenship as settlers, but given no other special compensation. Of the three previous instances, one joined, one went crazy and was terminated, and one became a settler (but soon thereafter committed suicide). Ed is reluctant to talk about what happened to them in more detail.
- There are no alien beings, magical powers, or psionics in this dimension. The PCs are consequently exceedingly rare.
- Beings born with a symbol of Balance are one in a billion, and thus are regarded as Elite members of society.

What Happens Next

Deal with the Devil

At this point, or perhaps earlier, the PCs will need to seriously ponder the implications of what is being offered to them. They should come to the realization that the immortality and expansion of this universe is being continuously purchased with the deaths of other beings. They need to decide if they can be complicit with this, if it is just too much for them to handle (because interfering will result in either their own deaths, or the deaths of many in this universe), or if they should act.

It is virtually impossible to script what will happen at this point, so the next section will broadly outline a few of the possible paths that the PCs may take, as well as important aspects of the universe.

Job Proposal

The time limit for the PCs to ponder the job offer is purposely left open. The PCs can explore as much of AmeriCorp as time allows, but based on the length of the scenario, you should have the Board direct Ed to insist upon an answer within a reasonable time. The Board has patience, but if the PCs are planning to screw around, the members will not sit passively.

Exploring AmeriCorp

Much of AmeriCorp has been left open for you to visit your own vision of extreme techno-fascist-capitalism. In a limited scenario, the PCs will see little more than the Obelisks and military-scientific outposts of RDD. If time allows, Ed might give them a supervised tour of Earth and some of the jewels in the corporation's crown. He will go to great lengths to recruit them. On the other hand, if the PCs decide that they cannot stand the idea of working for the corporation, they might see some of the primitive and harsh outer colonies. Lastly, if they choose to fight against AmeriCorp, they may see many sewers and back alleys and poorer districts as they are hunted by the Military Police.

BESM

The Grand Obelisk

The PCs can certainly tour the Grand Obelisk (most likely with military guard), as it is something of a monument and tourist attraction both. If they actually go to it, they will find that they can connect to it via their sigils (as they connected to the smaller Obelisk on Náru). If a great number of them work together (half or more of the party), they can actually get it to react fully to their commands. Never have so many Agents of Balance been together who could work so well in unison; not only have they survived Náru, but their companions had echoes in each other's worlds. They can send command signals to the Obelisk, asking anything up to and including a self-destruct order, which will destroy all the Obelisks, and forever lose that technology.



Charles Marx & The Board

Marx and the Board initially see the PCs as a healthy investment — the amount of money that they can generate through Harvesting and creating new bridges to colony worlds is staggering. The PCs may well not be of a single mind, and the Board is willing to recruit whomever wishes to join. Ed Jarvis should be capable enough to deal with them, but confirmation of something as drastic as recreating their home-worlds will certainly need the Board's approval. If the Board spends that much on recruiting an employee, it will expect fair return as a result.

Sarah Montgomery

Sarah is very interested in the PCs, for they may answer her genetic queries: what makes an Agent of Balance different from anyone else? She will do what she can to study the PCs, and get to know as much about them as possible. She may become friends with them, and could potentially be a staunch ally. While she works for the corporation, she does because there is no other choice. If the PCs befriend her, and then fight, it is quite possible that she could be recruited down the road. For the moment, she will wish to pursue anything new that they reveal (such as the ability to tap into the Grand Obelisk), and to study everything she can about them.

The Q's

Not everyone buys into the corporate agenda, or AmeriCorp's propaganda. In a world where there is but one choice, however, it is hard to think of any other options. Resistance is met with relocation or death, and the system is all encompassing. Still, there are rumours of a dissident group that works from within AmeriCorp, which wishes nothing more than to end the military dictatorship of Charles Marx and the Board of Directors. This group of freedom fighters are known as the Q's. The leader of the Q's, Roberto Guevara, has never been caught or even seen. Still, people believe in the name, and the man is synonymous with revolution. The name Guevara causes tremors all the way up to the Board of Directors.

The Q's have eyes and ears scattered throughout the Thousand Worlds. The arrival of the PCs will certainly attract their attention, and they will value them as Agents able to manipulate the Obelisk Gates. If any of the PCs indicate that they are unenthusiastic about joining AmeriCorp, it is likely that a member of the Q's will make contact and offer a counter proposal to recruit them as opponents to AmeriCorp.

Then again, it is certainly possible that the Q's do not really exist at all, and are just a figment of paranoid delusions. Roberto Guevara may just be a mirage. The Q's may be a controlled creation of the Board, a type of Secret Police used to expose those who are rebellious. Only the Board knows the real truth.

The concept of the Q's is provided to give you an idea that there actually is more to this universe than just the mono-vision of AmeriCorp. In a limited scenario, this is probably one additional factor that will get lost. The plot element is provided primarily for campaign expansion but, if the group is very unhappy with AmeriCorp's proposal, a member of the Q's could certainly contact them and provide some direction.

Resolution and Campaign Expansion

The end of this adventure is unscripted so that the PCs can chart their own destiny. It is unfair to railroad them to a decision of such tremendous consequence. They can opt to join AmeriCorp, and try to bargain for the best contract they can get. Alternatively, they can choose to combat AmeriCorp, and try to collapse the empire. They can also make no real choice, become new settlers, and give up their roles as Guardians of Order. No choice is easy, and all choices result in billions of deaths. The PCs must make a decision that sits best with their consciences.

If they manage to strike and destroy the Grand Obelisk, they will lose any chance of restoring their worlds. As well, they will indirectly kill billions of people, for AmeriCorp's civilization depends on the Obelisks for vital resources. Many worlds will be lost to famine, war, and plague without them. This action will save that many souls in other dimensions, however.

If you decide you wish to expand "*So, We Have...an Obelisk?*" into a full campaign, here are some potential hooks, or seeds, to direct you:

Back from the Dead

If the PCs join AmeriCorp, they can witness the resurrection of their worlds. Suddenly, they will have old friends and loved ones to revisit who will have no idea that they have just been drafted into the embrace of AmeriCorp. Will the PCs be happy when AmeriCorp starts to amalgamate their home worlds and turn the populations into new corporate-citizens?

Explorer Team

The PCs can be sent to investigate, explore, and eventually Harvest worlds as an Explorer Team, as Adam Smythe once did. Now they will become harbingers of doom, and have to deal with the deaths of those worlds; they might even run into other Guardians of Order!

Secrets of the Obelisk

Perhaps the PCs, with the aid of someone like Sarah, will be able to unlock more secrets of the Grand Obelisk. Where is its origin? Who created it? Where have they gone? The PCs could find where the creators have gone, and the Board might send them to learn more.

The Q's

The Q's might well recruit them, to help fight against AmeriCorp. The PCs might not be willing to destroy the Obelisks, in hopes of one day resurrecting their worlds, but they might wage a guerrilla war. The Obelisk Gates can be used to their advantage, moving freedom fighters from place to place, hijacking vital shipments, and eventually trying to strike at the Board. The Board might need to retaliate by bringing home some of their Explorer Teams, and retraining them to hunt down the rogue PCs throughout the Thousand Worlds.

Turning Members of AmeriCorp

It is certainly possible that the PCs will decide that they need help in their struggle against the forces of AmeriCorp, and may try and recruit some of the key people in the corporation. Sarah Montgomery is one of the most likely to turn, if they can prove to her why AmeriCorp's ideology is wrong. Some, like Ed Jarvis, believe in the corporation heart and soul, but there might be others who can be convinced if the PCs are careful, cautious, and persuasive.

Break-down

Naturally, the Q's could be controlled by the Board as an elaborate scheme to psychologically break the PCs. This can move them to the right and proper side, where they should have been all along. This plot can lead to an atmosphere of paranoia culminating in wide-scale manipulation and betrayal.