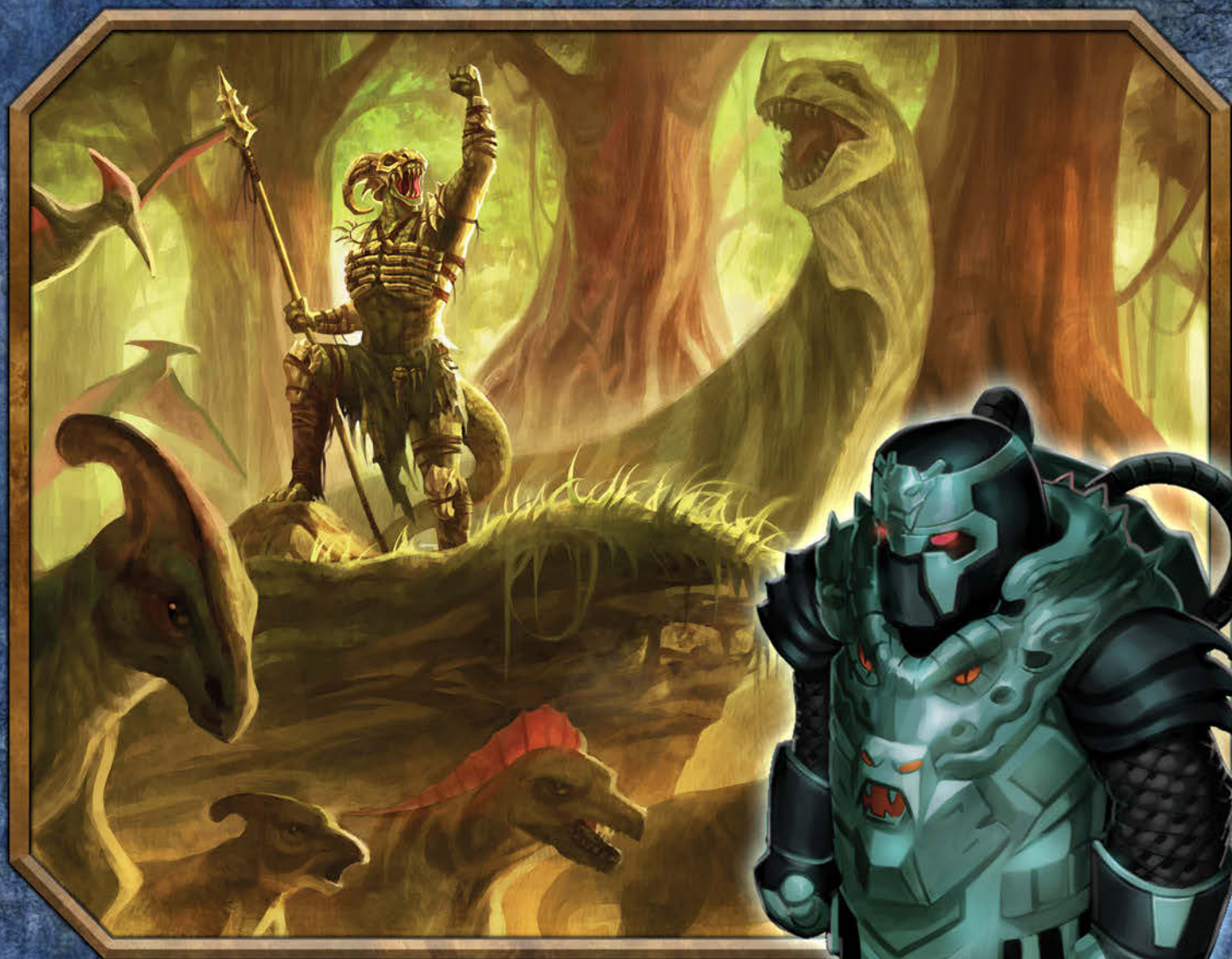


TORG

ETERNITY



DAY ONE

TORG

ETERNITY

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USING DAY ONE ADVENTURES

The *Day One* adventures are meant to serve as an introduction to the game mechanics and unique realms of *Torg Eternity*. All across the world, the villainous Possibility Raiders have invaded Core Earth. Where they land, the laws of reality bend to resemble the strange worlds they came from—known as cosms in *Torg Eternity*.

Each adventure is set within the first 24 hours of this coordinated attack. The characters all start as normal people caught in the overwhelming chaos and confusion of each invasion. However, these characters are fated to face a “Moment of Crisis” and become Storm Knights—powerful heroes who fight back against the Possibility Raiders and their High Lord masters.

As each adventure progresses, the heroes may learn more about their dreaded foes and how they operate.

LEARNING THE GAME

Throughout these adventures the text calls out examples of relevant rules, insight into how to use them, and tactical advice for the players.

Advice directed specifically toward a new Game Master (GM) appears like this to set it apart from the regular text.

All the advice is meant to help a group learn the game—not enforce a single way to play it. The most important rule of the game is to have fun. Keep that in mind if a piece of advice conflicts with the GM’s or group’s style of play.

It’s worth noting that while *Day One* adventures are a useful introduction to *Torg Eternity*, they are atypical in a few crucial ways.

In a normal *Torg Eternity* game, the adventures follow the continuing exploits of a band of Storm Knights created by the players and drawn from many different realms. Each of the *Day One* adventures, on the other hand, features a cast of pregenerated characters who all hail from Core Earth. The characters for each adventure are different, so the Storm Knights don’t have much chance to earn experience (XP) or gain power.



The arrival of a maelstrom bridge signals doom for everyone nearby.

SUGGESTED ORDER

Each invasion begins within hours of the others, so most of the events are roughly concurrent. The adventures aren't chronological, but instead placed in an order that highlights different aspects of rules as they apply to the style and mood of each cosm.

The adventures may be played in any order desired, but there are a few things to be aware of if changing the order.

The Living Land adventure contains the most advice about basic mechanics and getting started with the game, and also the most information about High Lords and the invasion in general. It's the longest adventure (three acts), but it takes time to introduce key concepts of the game. If the group is already familiar with those rules and concepts, those acts play more quickly than intended.

The Aylse adventure is the second-longest and leverages a setting that most players are more familiar with: medieval fantasy. The players take a more traditionally heroic role here as well, which sets a contrast against what follows.

Each of the other cosms are only one act each, and build upon what's different about that cosm's invasion and play experience. Pan-Pacifica is especially grisly—with a high chance that every character may perish—so it's placed between two adventures where the characters are stronger thanks to the World Laws or equipment.

The Tharkold adventure introduces the rules for chases and vehicles, which may come up again during the Nile Empire adventure. These concepts aren't covered in depth again if they've been introduced in an earlier adventure.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Check www.ulisses-us.com for enhanced materials for these adventures, including frequently asked questions and pre-filled character sheets for all of the default heroes.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Each adventure features a cast of six pregenerated heroes, called the Dramatis Personae. Players may change the names and genders of the characters freely, but the basic character concept and any relationships should remain intact. Each hero is a legal starting character with two exceptions: starting equipment varies wildly depending on the circumstances of the adventure, and the character doesn't start play as a Storm Knight!

TRANSCENDENCE

Normally, the heroes of *Torg Eternity* have already experienced their "Moment of Crisis" before starting play. In *Day One* players get to experience this turning point firsthand.

As they go about their normal, daily lives the characters haven't unlocked the incredible abilities they'll have as Storm Knights. They are talented, even destined for greatness, but they aren't heroes—yet.

That means that at the beginning of the adventure the characters don't start with any Possibilities. Players still draw a hand of Destiny cards (see **Starting Card Hands** below). Some attributes, skills, or Perks may be tied to the character's transcendence into a Storm Knight. Such abilities are [underlined and inside brackets].

Once the character has a "Moment of Crisis," those abilities immediately unlock and the character gains her starting Possibilities—usually three, but perhaps more depending upon Perks. If the character was rolling a test when she transcended, one of those new Possibilities may be spent on the test!

MOMENT OF CRISIS

The transformation into Storm Knight occurs once the character puts herself at risk to help someone else, or takes direct action to fight the Possibility Raiders. Once a hero "steps up," Possibility Energy floods into her, converting her into a more adventurous and powerful version of herself.

Be on the lookout for opportunities to trigger the "Moment of Crisis" as soon as a player does something heroic. Immediately describe the

influx of power and energy, and any physical transformation that accompanies the change.

Each adventure includes multiple opportunities for crises in the opening scenes. Set any characters who haven't transformed yet closer to these events so they have the first opportunity to react.

In adventurous realms like Aysle or the Nile Empire, offer the option to narratively describe the character's crisis if it hasn't come after the first scene. The player doesn't have to use this option, but the game is more fun with Storm Knights. In harsher realms such as Orrorsh or Pan-Pacifica, let the moment come naturally—or not at all!

WOUNDS

Another possible trigger for a "Moment of Crisis" is when the character suffers one or more Wounds. The character has a choice: accept the damage or "fight back" to try to negate it. Fighting back causes the transformation described above, and the character may use Possibilities to Soak damage, including the damage from that attack.

USING DIFFERENT CHARACTERS

It's possible to run each adventure with custom characters, or treat one like an origin story for heroes intended in a normal campaign. There are a few challenges to this approach.

Some heroes available for normal play aren't from Core Earth at all. Such characters might work as spies embedded in the High Lord's troops or advance scouts who made their way to Core Earth in advance of the maelstrom bridges. The real issue is such characters already know what's going on, which changes the tone of the adventure.

As an origin story, Orrorsh and Pan-Pacifica are especially harsh—the entire group is likely to die horribly or disappear forever. On the other hand, heroes who emerge from these stories as Storm Knights feel particularly special.

Finally, some encounters are tailored for the skills, abilities, and especially the starting equipment defined for the default Dramatis Personae. The inclusion (or loss) of a particular relationship, spell, skill, or weapon might significantly change the adventure's difficulty, or require some improvisation to keep things flowing.

STARTING CARD HANDS

Each player draws a hand of four Destiny cards at the beginning of a *Day One* adventure, even though the invasion may not have even started. These characters are still fated to become heroes.

Since a character can't play Possibilities, she also can't play Drama or Hero cards that are spent as Possibilities.

Players aren't dealt a Cosm card at the beginning. Once the maelstrom bridge lands and the axiom wash from the invading cosm begins changing the world, then players are dealt a Cosm card. Some adventures call for Cosm cards to be dealt in the second scene, not the first, especially if the cards assume social or environmental factors that take a little more time to develop.

AFTER DAY ONE

Although each adventure is self-contained, the outcome of each may continue to affect the Possibility Wars.

A player who becomes attached to a specific character from one of the cosms may choose to continue that Storm Knight's career in a regular campaign—assuming he survives. More likely, surviving heroes might show up as useful background characters later.

It adds an extra layer of interest when players interact with one of these survivors elsewhere. Likewise these Storm Knights are a useful resource when background characters are needed as contacts or even for a romance.

The adventures themselves may also serve as an inspiration for different tales happening at roughly the same time—exploring the fates of similar groups of people closer to the maelstrom bridges or even farther away, and how the change in location affects their chances of survival.

ACT AND SCENE BREAKS

Each adventure is split into sections called acts and scenes. This isn't just a stylistic conceit—it's a mechanical necessity.

Scenes matter because Destiny cards don't refill until the scene changes, even if a scene includes multiple encounters. Some abilities may only be used once a scene.

An act is meant to be approximately one full game session, and Possibilities and Cosm cards reset between acts so the break is important. Sometimes an act may take more time, especially if the group really digs into role-playing a scene, or far less if they find a shortcut or pass over all the optional activities.

There are two main ways to handle it when an act doesn't end precisely when a game session would.

One method is to perform the reset exactly when the act ends, and then store each player's cards and Possibilities so next game session the act may pick up exactly where it left off. Take time for a short break between the acts to allow players to grab snacks or discuss the events so far, and deal new cards and reset each player's Possibilities after the break.

Alternatively, the act can be artificially extended or shortened by a scene. This method works best if it there's only time for one more scene, or only part of a scene. The reset that accompanies a new act then comes at the beginning of the next game session as usual.

Either way works, just so long as the act reset happens sometime. Which method is better depends entirely on the exact timing and the personal taste of the group.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE LIVING LAND

OFFICER ISABEL REYES

Isabel is a mounted NYPD officer enjoying some time off. After her tour of the bay she plans to check in at the stables near Central Park to visit the horses there. Though off-duty, Isabel is still carrying her backup weapon. She's a tough, no-nonsense, native New Yorker, and proud to be a cop.

Quote: "You creatures messed with the wrong city."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Beast riding 3, dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 2, intimidation 2, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 1, [reality 1], streetwise 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 10; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: .38 revolver (Damage 12, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 6), badge

Perks: Endurance, Indomitable

PROFESSOR DARNELL MOORE

Professor Moore is a noted paleo-botanist, speaking at the American Museum of Natural History tomorrow on the plants of the cretaceous period. He's taking a sightseeing tour of upper New York before heading back to the hotel to prepare for the large gathering of his peers.

Quote: "Fascinating, that species of fern has been extinct for millions of years."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 11, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 2, find 2, persuasion 1, [reality 2], scholar 3, science 1, survival 2, trick 2

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Book bag, mobile phone, tablet

Perks: [Negation], Situational Awareness

FATHER ALEJANDRO REYES

"Padre Alex" is a Catholic priest taking a few hours off to enjoy the weather and some time with his older sister Isabel. Afterward he plans to prepare for evening mass. He grew up in Manhattan, and now takes every opportunity to connect with his community and offer guidance.

Quote: "The Lord helps those who help themselves."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 10, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, faith 3, find 1, fire combat 1, persuasion 2, lockpicking 1, [reality 2], stealth 1, streetwise 1, taunt 1, unarmed combat 2

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, cross

Perks: Brawler, [Miracles (bless, soothe, and ward enemy)]

COLLEEN BRIDGES [LEENA]

Colleen is a single mother, spending time with her increasingly distant son Wade. Colleen is under stress herself, passed over for promotion several times at her job as an interpreter. She tries not to let her frustration spill over into her personal life.

Quote: "I don't think these things speak English—or French."

Cosm: [Living Land]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 2, [faith 1], find 1, [intimidation 2], [melee weapons 3], persuasion 2, [reality 1], [stealth 1], [survival 2], [tracking 1]

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, purse

Perks: [Relentless], [Whirlwind]

WADE BRIDGES

Wade's mother made him spend the whole day with her. Something about family time. She's normally such a pushover, but today she was adamant. He's brought his hockey stick along, hoping she'll relent and let him go play with the guys later. Maybe if she hangs around to watch him shoot that counts as bonding?

Quote: "Game on!"

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 11, Mind 6, Spirit 7, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, maneuver 2, melee weapons 3, missile weapons 2, [reality 1], scholar 1, streetwise 1, taunt 2, unarmed combat 1

Move: 11; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, hockey stick (Damage Str +2/11)

Perks: [Prodigy], Whirlwind

VANESSA "DOC" DIMASALANG

Vanessa is an EMT at Forest Hills Hospital in Queens. She started there recently after finishing her training and time in the US Army as a combat medic. Today is the first day off she's had in months, and she's savoring the idea of time to herself with no major crises to deal with.

Quote: "Stop squirming, this is for your own good."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 8, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 1, find 1, first aid 3, fire combat 1, persuasion 2, medicine 2, [reality 1], science 1, taunt 1, trick 1

Move: 9; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, tablet

Perks: [Bolster], [Helper]

ACT ONE: THE LIVING LAND

BY AARON PAVAO

Six people, mostly strangers, meet while on a boat trip in the East River near Manhattan when the Living Land's first maelstrom bridge falls in Queens. The axioms of Takta Ker wash across our heroes and everything changes. People panic and transform into brutal versions of themselves, and monsters sweep into Queens and Brooklyn from the bridge. Ships stop working in the low Tech axiom, leaving the survivors drifting near the overgrown Manhattan shore. The group's first goal in this chaos is simple: find a way back to land.

The action continues in Act Two: Manhattan and Act Three: Exodus.

Let each player choose a character. They start as the "Ord" version, so some skills and Perks aren't available yet.

Deal each player a hand of four Destiny cards. They may not be Storm Knights yet, but they are each marked by fate! Destiny cards that spend like Possibilities (such as Drama or Hero cards) don't work until the hero has a Moment of Crisis. Cards that don't use Possibilities work just fine.

Don't deal Cosm cards or hand out Possibilities yet.

SCENE ONE: BEACHHEAD

Standard Scene. The tour boat moves south down the East River, and is currently just north of Manhattan Bridge. The vessel has an open observation deck for sightseeing, as well as a lower main deck lounge enclosed by glass windows where a television plays the pre-game for the Mets' season opener.

THE PASSENGERS AND CREW

It's nearing one o'clock, and storm clouds are just now starting to build overhead after an otherwise clear and sunny day. Describe the other people aboard and let the players introduce their characters.



An edeinos rides a laktén high above the maelstrom bridge.

CAPTAIN BECKY STANTON

A stocky, powerfully built woman in her late 30s. She's boated these waterways all her life. Stanton is an obsessive Mets fan with a thick Brooklyn accent. She's in the pilot house atop the ferry, and has insisted the pre-game be switched on in the main deck lounge.

Captain Stanton wears a Mets bucket hat over her blonde braid, where she should be wearing an official cap or nothing at all.

Quote: "We'll be ashore in about 30 minutes. In the meantime enjoy the game. Go Mets!"

FIN LYNCH

The mechanic is an older, portly man with a thick beard and long, tied-back hair. His speech is peppered with profanity so he tries to stay away from the tourists. He stays out back with the engines the entire journey.

Quote: "Son of a—uh—pardon my French, ma'am."

CAM FRANKLIN

Cam is relatively new to the waterway, and wants to impress Captain Stanton and the passengers. He's tall, lanky, and somewhat shy. He's usually serving refreshments from a small bar on the main deck, but is now outside the enclosure checking the moorings and ramp. Cam has a baby face, and barely looks old enough to work.

Quote: "Anything I can do for you? Maybe some juice?"

GRADY HARRIS

A haughty man in his late 20s. He dotes on his daughter Amber, and they are both on the observation deck looking at the city. He is picky and smug, and has spent most of the trip pointing

out any little slip up the crew (or anyone else) has made. Grady wears his long brown hair in a bun.

Quote: “Is this juice organic?”

AMBER HARRIS

Amber is a precocious young girl of nine. She has long brown hair like her father Grady. She continually gushes about how much she loves dinosaurs and how after this trip she and her father are headed to the museum—the same one Professor Moore is scheduled to speak at. Amber carries a stuffed dinosaur with her at all times.

Quote: “This is Mister Bitey! Rawr.”

LAUREN CLARK

Lauren wears an expensive, tailored business skirt and jacket. She constantly complains about her tyrannical boss. She spent most of the trip in the lounge looking at her phone rather than the sights.

She took this trip in an effort to reduce her stress level—it hasn’t worked. Lauren’s hairstyle is a short, immaculately groomed Afro.

Quote: “My boss is going to kill me if I don’t get that TPS report finished.”

THE STORM ARRIVES

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Captain Stanton’s voice from the pilot cabin directs everyone’s attention northeast, where Citi Field lies out of sight. The first pitch is about to be thrown at the Mets’ Opening Day game, a momentous occasion for the good captain! Strains of “The Star-Spangled Banner” play from the television, but are overwhelmed by a sudden, deep rumbling from the sky that rattles the entire ship.

From the worsening storm above, something black and massive falls, like a pillar of darkness half a mile



A Storm Knight can make technology work in the Living Land — unless it’s already ruined.

wide. Hints of thick green vegetation whip out of the torrent. The lower end disappears beyond the skyline and the whole pillar shivers and straightens, as though it had struck the Earth like a hammer.

The television shows the Mets' pitcher throwing the first pitch of the game. A shadow falls over the field and screams sound as the ball approaches the plate. The feed cuts just before the batter takes a swing, and a "PLEASE STAND BY" screen replaces the ballgame.

Seconds later, a blast erupts from the Brooklyn shoreline, crosses the East River—and the ferry—and pounds into the skyscrapers of Manhattan, sending glass flying.

The blast blows out the windows on one side of the ferry and tosses it sharply in the water. The television and every other modern piece of equipment on the ferry goes dead. Everyone aboard is knocked down and disoriented, ears ringing.

The Living Land's axioms and World Laws are now in effect, though the players and characters may not understand what that means yet. Deal each player one Cosm card.

TROUBLE AHOY

As the heroes regain their senses they notice several brewing disasters occurring simultaneously. Two men plunge into the water, which likely draws attention first.

OVERBOARD

Grady and Cam the deckhand are both knocked overboard by the blast. The boat still rocks violently and the water is foamy and churning in the heavy winds. Grady screams for help; he can't swim. Cam just flails wildly.

Rescuing either man requires diving into the stormy water, definitely an act worthy of a Moment of Crisis! Grady is closer and can be recovered with a Challenging (DN 12) *Strength* test. Throwing life preservers or a rope won't save the floundering swimmers, but does grant a +2 bonus to the test.

A failed test deals Fatigue (2 Shock) to the swimmer. The same or another hero can try again, but after a second failure Grady is lost in the chaos of the churning river.

This is most players' first test, and it's worth walking them through it step by step. A few key things to clarify now that may save players trouble later:

10s and 20s gain another d20 that adds to the first. Add up the total of all dice rolled, then check that total against the Bonus Chart to find the modifier.

Modifiers don't apply to the d20 roll itself. Emphasize this. Always go from the d20 result to the Bonus Chart, then apply any other modifiers. Newer players tend to add modifiers to the roll and then try to compare that result to the chart — which is backwards.

The target for a success, called the DN, is 10 unless otherwise specified (such as attempting to hit a target's defense). The test to rescue Grady is "Challenging" and gets a -2 modifier. That can be expressed either as trying to get a 10 with a -2 modifier, or simply trying to get DN 12.

The player adds all the modifiers together (the bonus generated by the roll, plus any other applicable modifiers) and adds that to *Strength*. If the result meets or exceeds the DN the test succeeds. Beating the DN by 5 or more generates a Good Success, and by 10 or more generates an Outstanding Success. This is true for every test.

On a Standard success the hero rescues an unconscious Grady, but still suffers 2 Shock for the exertion. A Good result avoids any Shock, and an Outstanding result executes the rescue quickly enough that Grady remains conscious.

Cam's situation is worse. The shockwave that hit was the axiom wash of the Living Land, and he's succumbed to it. When a swimmer gets near, the flailing deckhand's uniform is frayed and tattered, and his eyes are wild and confused. The terrified man attacks anyone who approaches him.

Cam must be KO'ed or restrained before he can be rescued. Cam has already suffered four Shock from drowning and fatigue, so three more KOs him.

•**Primitive Human (1, no weapon):** See page 37.

This rescue plays out as a combat. Only rescuers who dove over the side to rescue Cam participate. Grady's rescuer is too busy helping him to participate, unless an Outstanding Success sped his rescue. Reveal a Drama card.

The card shows two Conflict Lines, one for Standard Scenes and one for Dramatic Scenes. This is a Standard Scene, so only that line applies. The line shows whether the Heroes act first or the Villains do, and if either has any special advantages or disadvantages.

Note the Approved Actions. This leads naturally into describing Action Pool. Outside of battle, Destiny cards can be played at any time, but during combat they can only be played from the Action Pool. Remind players to play a card into their pool at the end of their actions. New players often forget, and they'll need them!

Attacks work like any other test, with the target equal to the opponent's defense (usually *dodge, melee weapons, unarmed combat*, or an interaction skill). A Good Success on an attack adds +1BD damage, and an Outstanding Success adds +2BD.

Cam's unarmed combat is 8, so that's the DN to hit him with an attack or try to grab him. Grappling is a good option here. A Standard success deals Strength -2 damage (if the hero chooses). A Good success deals Strength damage and restrains Cam, though he attempts to break free so long as he's conscious. An Outstanding success completely restrains Cam and ends the battle.

Don't worry if only one hero participates in this encounter. It's short, and provides an easy battle as an introduction for everyone.

Cam disappears below the waves if he hasn't been KO'ed and grabbed after three rounds.

He becomes passive and skittish once he regains consciousness aboard the ship and refuses to speak, but there is gratitude in his wild eyes.

Anyone who braves the water sees large, dark shapes moving beneath the surface, but there are no attacks—yet.

INJURIES

Captain Stanton is stunned and badly bleeding in the pilot's cabin. A successful *first aid* test stops the bleeding in time to save her life, but she remains in a deep state of shock. There is an emergency kit in the cabin that makes the *first aid* test Favored if found. Either way, one of the heroes must take charge of the situation.

Anyone who checks the other passengers finds they suffered minor cuts and bruises, but nothing immediately threatening.

HYSTERICIS

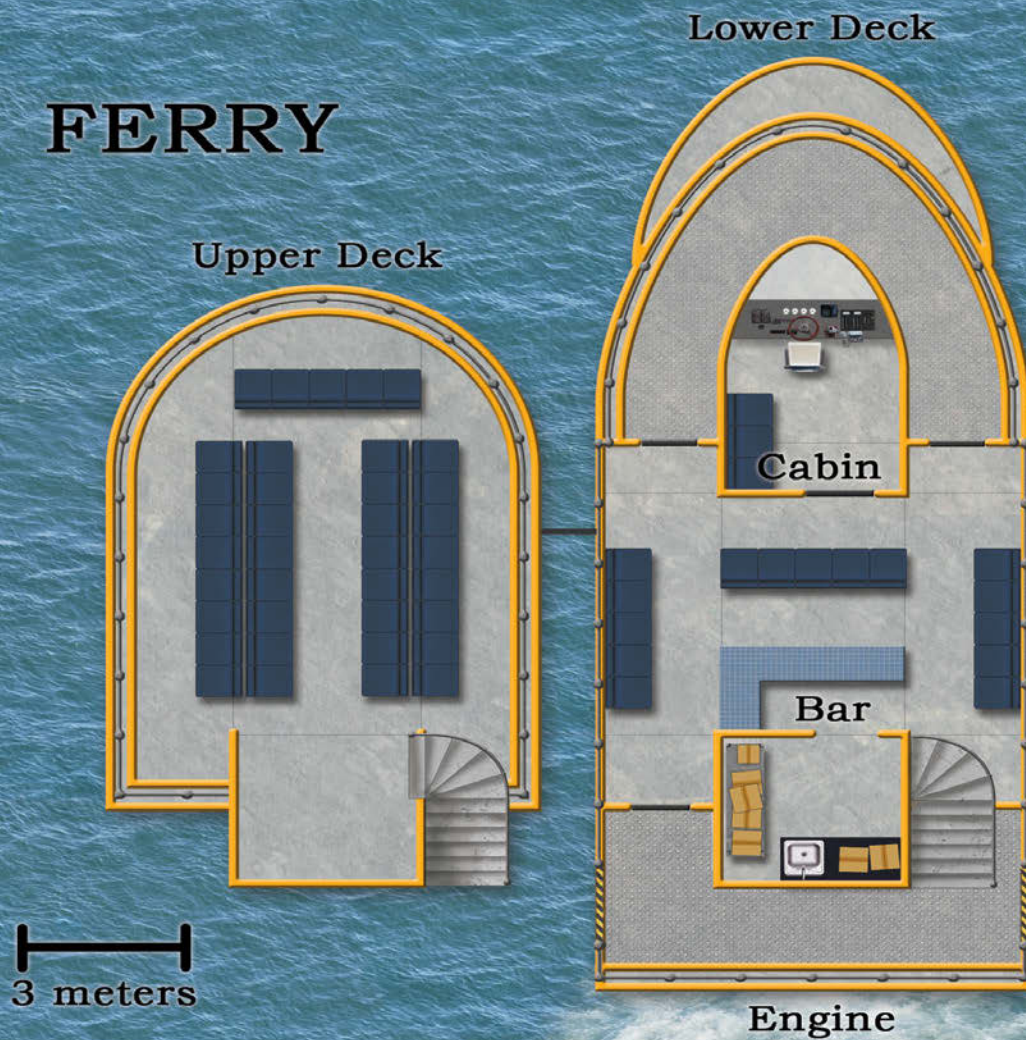
The heroes might choose to panic a little, but the remaining passengers are all coming apart at the seams. A little role-playing or a Standard *persuasion* test calms them down. A Good Success means the person may be assigned a simple task to carry out, and an Outstanding result means that person continues to accept guidance for the remainder of the adventure.

- Amber wails about her father if he was lost or remains unconscious.
- If Grady is conscious he yells about suing the captain, the line, and the city itself for negligence.
- Lauren is distraught that her mobile phone isn't getting a signal, and becomes increasingly desperate to get back to her office.



**VANIESSA
DIMASALANG**

FERRY



THE ENGINES

It's obvious to everyone that the ship's engine has stopped. Anyone who dove overboard to rescue someone in the water noticed the hull is heavily rusted. The ship now looks poorly maintained and weathered above decks as well.

The engines are located behind the main cabin space, in a smaller room with a locked door. The door is Easy (DN 8) to open with *lockpicking*, or Captain Stanton has the keys.

Inside, Fin squints at the ruined engines like he's trying to remember something from long ago. Once the door opens he waves a heavy wrench threateningly at anyone who approaches him.

Fin won't let anyone near enough to examine him or the engine room. He's confused and angry, and blames the strangers aboard the ship for

what's happening to him. A Challenging (DN 12) *persuasion* or *intimidation* forces him to back down and become docile. Otherwise he only becomes submissive after he is KO'ed.

• **Primitive Human (1):** See page 37.

Once the heroes get past Fin, they find all the machinery in the room is rusted and decayed.

THE END OF THE WORLD

Once the initial problems aboard the ferry are resolved, the Storm Knights are distracted by a plummeting airliner buzzing over the ferry. It crashes into buildings on the Brooklyn shore. Black smoke pours from the wreckage. Behind the crash a thick white mist creeps out from Queens toward the East River.

SCENE TWO: DEATH FROM ABOVE

Standard Scene. The East River is littered with disabled boats of all sizes, but none are nearby. Larger ships are listing badly and some of the smaller craft have already sunk. Hundreds of winged creatures emerge from the mist enveloping Queens and attack the craft closest to that shore.

Several of the beasts approach the Storm Knights' vessel. The heroes have only a short time to prepare themselves for the imminent attack.

MAKING PREPARATIONS

Isabella is already armed, but everyone else needs to scavenge weapons or face the attackers with bare hands. Each hero rolls a *find* test and selects an item from the **Searching the Ship** chart below.

Items players ask for that aren't on the chart may be substituted if the GM agrees. Clever players might convert alcohol bottles or diesel fuel from the engine room into petrol bombs with a successful *Mind* test. There are also flotation vests readily available that provide +1 Armor to the torso of anyone who dons one.

LAKTEN ATTACK

The attacking beasts resemble ancient pteranadons. These have a six-meter wingspan, oversized claws, and gnarly teeth. The most startling difference becomes apparent once they swoop in close: a

humanoid lizard man rides upon each creature's back! The riders brandish spears and spur their beasts toward battle.

- **Lakten (1 per 2 players):** See page 36.
- **Edeinos Beast Rider (1 per lakten):** See page 36.

This is a fight, and all the Storm Knights are involved. Reveal the next card from the Drama Deck and begin the battle.

The riders start about 20 meters away. On their first turn they fly toward the ferry and each hurls a hroctt-shoot spear at Medium range (-2). On the second round the lakten land atop the ferry and attack alongside their masters.

If any character hasn't had a Moment of Crisis yet, a rider throws a spear at a passenger who happens to be nearby. The burgeoning Storm Knight may attempt an Active Defense using *dodge* to push the target out of the way—triggering her Moment of Crisis before the test. Make the beast rider's attack against the character instead.

Active Defense is a good option when the villains have an Up or Flurry on the Conflict Line. Once attacked, roll a normal test and add the generated bonus to every defense until next round. Even if the roll wouldn't generate a bonus it still provides a minimum +1. This option never makes things worse!

If Defend is also an Approved Action the character draws a card the first time he's missed, or if no one attacks him at all.

SEARCHING THE SHIP

<i>Find</i>	Usable items
Fail	Improvised Club: Damage <i>Strength</i> +2, become Vulnerable after a miss. Mets Bobblehead: No practical use at all.
Standard	Makeshift Spear: Damage <i>Strength</i> +2, Range 5/20/40 if thrown with <i>missile weapons</i> . Fire Extinguisher: Tech 22, puts out fires. Might be used for <i>tricks</i> or <i>maneuvers</i> .
Good	Fire Axe: Tech 16, damage <i>Strength</i> +2. Flare Gun: Tech 21, Damage 10, Fire, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 1 (two reloads), Small.
Outstanding	.38 Revolver: Tech 20, Damage 12, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 6, Small. Petrol Bomb: Tech 20, Damage 14, Range 10/20/30, Medium Blast, Fire.

When Attack is Approved, note the Living Land's Law of Savagery. All-Out Attacks deal an extra bonus die (+1BD) of damage. This applies to the edeinos and lakten as well! Remember, using the All-Out Attack option also makes the hero Very Vulnerable.

Since weapons with a Tech Axiom above 6 are involved, this fight may feature the Storm Knights' first disconnection. When doing something contradictory (such as using a gun in the primitive Living Land) a 1 on the d20 severs the Storm Knight's connection to his reality.

Disconnection takes away the Storm Knight's ability to use Possibilities. That means the hero can't spend one to add a die to tests. It also means he can't Soak damage, leaving him extremely vulnerable.

At the beginning of each turn a disconnected Storm Knight rolls a *reality* test to reconnect. The test doesn't require an action, it simply happens. Currently the group is in a Dominant Zone, which makes the test Hard (DN 14).

If the villains suffer a Setback on the Conflict Line, one of the riders falls from his lakten and the beast flies away. If the heroes suffer a Setback, another lakten and rider appear to join the fray!

Once the last edeinos is defeated, any remaining lakten break off and fly away. Captured edeinos don't speak English, so interrogation is useless. At the first opportunity a captured lizard man either jumps overboard or attempts a new attack if he feels the odds are in his favor.

After the battle ends, have the players pick up any Destiny cards from their Action Pools and place them back in their hands. At the beginning of a new scene (which is about to happen) each player may discard a card, and then draw back up to a hand of four.

Each character also recovers all Shock. That isn't always true, especially if there isn't any time to rest between fights, but in this case there's just enough time for the heroes to catch their breath.

LEENA'S TRANSFORMATION

Colleen Bridges's transformation into Leena is a little different from the other Storm Knights. Instead of the power of Core Earth sweeping into her, she instead connects to the Living Land. She changes into a primitive human. In this case, her clothing, skills, and attitude all change.

Leena still remembers her previous life, but much of it now seems like a strange dream. For example, she knows what cars do, and has memories of driving one herself, but all the particulars of how she did that are hazy now. If she thinks about the contradictory parts of her life for too long she gets a splitting headache.

Leena may still speak normal English if she wishes, but often chooses terse simple statements. Life is simpler now, and her speech and attitude convey that. Most primitive humans behave the same. They aren't less intelligent, terse speech just serves them better in their new lives.

She may wish to return to her old life, or she could choose to embrace the freedom of her new existence. Whatever her change in perspective, Wade (if he's in play) is still her son, her blood, and she protects him with unmatched ferocity.

Leena also understands that regardless of her own choice, Ords don't get to choose at all. Even if Leena embraces Lanala and the Living Land, she fights on behalf of those who want to go back to their old lives among the "dead things."

Some can't cope with transformation at all, and go completely mad. In the Living Land such people usually become vicious marauders or thoughtless brutes. These lost souls are ruled by their primal instincts, and obey the strongest leader without question. Although Leena hasn't succumbed to such madness, she understands it.

SCENE THREE: DEATH FROM BELOW

Dramatic Scene. After the lakten attack ends, but before the Storm Knights have a chance to implement any plan to get to dry land, they spot an orange-hulled Coast Guard boat paddling toward them from the Manhattan shore. There are six crewmen aboard, rowing the smaller ship toward the ferry. As the craft gets close the captain hails them with a loud shout. "Just hang on, we're here to get you home!"

On cue, the mighty jaws of a mosasaur rise out of the water and snap shut on the patrol boat, splitting it in half. The screams of the crew are quickly silenced, and the great beast's eye turns toward the ferry. One of the remaining survivors aboard screams and the massive beast swings around to charge.

• **Mosasaurus (1):** See page 36.

Dealing with this monster won't be easy. The weapons the heroes have scrounged aren't powerful enough to threaten the beast without spectacular rolls or careful cooperation. The **Facing a Monster** sidebar offers some tactical advice to help the heroes overcome this challenge. If the heroes just try to hide inside the ship, the hungry dinosaur rips open the hull and sinks the ferry.

This is a Dramatic Scene, which makes things even tougher on the heroes. The Conflict Line usually benefits the villains more than the heroes.

A Setback during this battle might have the creature thrash against the ferry, which sends a hero (or a panicked innocent) plunging into the water. The mosasaurus usually attacks whoever did the most damage or got the best interaction against it first. If there are people in the water it prioritizes them, and uses Multi-Target to try bite each of them!



Mosasaur attack!

The beast is always alongside (or atop) the ferry, smashing into it and snapping across the deck with its massive jaws. The creature stays on the surface to attack, so no **Concealment** penalties apply.

A particularly brave Storm Knight might leap into the water and swim to the wreckage of the Coast Guard vessel to recover more powerful weapons. The crew were visibly armed with M4 rifles. Some tried to fire on the mosasaur when it attacked, but the rifles didn't seem to work for them.

Swimmers attempt a *find* test. A Standard success finds one M4 rifle in the wreckage, a Good Success locates two, and an Outstanding Success recovers a third. A total of three rifles remain amidst the wreckage.

M4s deal 13 damage and are capable of Short Burst attacks. The magazine holds 30 rounds. The magazines are all full since the unfortunate sailors were disconnected and couldn't fire.

Using a Short Burst grants a +2 bonus to hit, and uses up 3 shots. On a 1 or 2 the rifle Malfunctions and is useless until the hero uses a full turn to clear the jam, let the rifle cool, or fix whatever problem occurred.

Once the heroes defeat this fearsome threat they gain a well-earned respite, and have time to apply *first aid* and recover any Shock as the ferry drifts downriver with the current.

ALL ASHORE

There's still trouble around—the distant sound of occasional gunshots and the steady decay of the ferry—but nothing that requires attention before the scene ends. With the creature defeated, the Storm Knights are likely eager to regain control of the ferry or swim for shore.

The Manhattan shoreline is reachable, and no more monsters attack if the group attempts to swim for it. The ship's engine is beyond repair, but the rudder can be manually manipulated to take advantage of the current. Sails or oars eventually get the craft to shore as well. If the Storm Knights do nothing at all the ship's hull breaches and the ferry sinks, forcing everyone to swim for shore anyway.

FACING A MONSTER

The Storm Knights have yet to face a threat as powerful as the mosasaur, and it requires some new tactics and coordination to beat. This battle should highlight the Action Pool, and how playing and managing those cards builds tension and allows the heroes to overcome staggering odds—eventually!

Remind players to use interactions to Stymie the beast, or make it Vulnerable. A "Player's Call" isn't likely to drive the mosasaur away, but at least eliminates its next action. If the beast has suffered multiple Wounds a "Player's Call" might force it to disengage and look for an easier meal somewhere else—GM's call.

Each round, the heroes gain access to more cards as they build toward the final blow. Players can exchange cards from one Action Pool to another at any time. A quickly traded *Opponent Fails* card may save a life, or a *Coup De Grace* swapped at a crucial moment could end the fight.

Heroes choose the order they act on their own turn. Players who plan to use interactions or play *Supporter* cards should act first, setting up the later Storm Knights for better success.

This is also a good time to introduce the concept of playing for the Critical Moment. Once per act, a player may play all the cards from their hand as if they were in their pool. This can make or break a tough battle. Note that once a player does this all his cards must either be played or discarded, so make it count!

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

The act ends when the group has managed to get to shore. Depending on the timing, the end of an act marks a good place to wrap up a game session. If it's not time to stop, everyone refreshes Possibilities and draws a new Cosm card and hand of Destiny cards. Each hero also earns (and may spend) five XPs.

ACT TWO: MANHATTAN

Once ashore, the characters discover New York is overrun with edeinos. Lower Manhattan Hospital is the most likely checkpoint for any survivors. As the group journeys across the city they discover the remnants of a lost world previously conquered by Baruk Kaah. After learning vital information about the Possibility Wars, the Storm Knights reach the hospital, only to find it in the grip of a mad Stormer.

This is the start of a new act. Storm Knights refresh their Possibilities back up to three—or four for Wade, who has the Prodigy Perk. Deal each player a new hand of Destiny cards and a new Living Land Cosm card.

If the first act went quickly enough this may be the same game session as Act One. Ending one game session and starting another should be an act change, so the GM has some discretion here. If it's close to the end of the session but everyone wants to continue, Scene One can be played as though it were part of Act One.

SCENE ONE: CONCRETE JUNGLE

Standard Scene. The buildings on Manhattan island are overgrown but intact, although most of the windows are cracked or shattered. Plants both strange and familiar have grown up throughout the city, forcing their way through the cracking pavement. The streets are empty except for rubble and abandoned, rusting cars.

There are noises several blocks away in most directions—screams, roars, and occasional brief gunshots. The Storm Knights may have reached dry land, but they are far from safe.

There are no humans in sight when the heroes reach dry land. Most people are either huddled inside buildings or have fled toward the bridges. Those who ran for the Brooklyn or Manhattan bridges met Baruk Kaah's forces and a cruel fate. There are no bodies here, but the smell of death permeates the air.

The heroes may need a moment to confer about where to go. The characters still with them all have their own short-term objectives now:

- Lauren wants to head for the financial building where she works. She's worried that it's been too long since she's checked in with her boss Brandt. An Easy (DN 8) *persuasion* or *intimidation* test gets her to drop the idea.
- Grady (if he's still alive) wants to head straight for New Jersey via the Holland Tunnel. If he can't convince the others to come, he and his daughter stay with the heroes rather than risking the trip on their own.
- Captain Stanton is still injured, and should be taken to a hospital. Wounded Storm Knights may have the same desire. The nearest is New York Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital. Dr. Dimasalang doesn't work there, but she knows it well, and also knows it was used as a disaster shelter and rally point during the 9/11 attacks.
- Cam and Fin just want to get away now that they're on dry land. So long as they're watched they remain cooperative, but as soon as any kind of conflict breaks out, they flee.
- Isabel may feel duty-bound to head toward her precinct back in Queens. Remind her player that the group, especially the civilians, need her. If she or the whole party chooses to

head back toward the Manhattan or Brooklyn bridges, the horrible noises coming from those directions grow increasingly louder. The rest of Scene One and Scene Two play out the same. If they don't change direction the heroes run into the edeinos forces described in Act Three.

- If the heroes decide to split up, have the gotaks below arrive on the scene immediately to reinforce how dangerous the city is for those traveling alone!

BRING OUT YOUR DEAD

The Storm Knights encounter a group of ghoulish edeinos gotaks dragging human corpses down the street. The large lizard men drag the bodies by the ankles. The corpses' chests are ripped open. The morbid procession is moving south, possibly toward Battery Park.

Have the group attempt a *stealth* test against the gotaks' *find* (DN 8). If any hero fails the gotaks turn to attack. If all the heroes succeed the gotaks pass by, leaving a trail of blood behind them until Amber cries out, "Dinosaurs!" In this circumstance the heroes at least gain Surprise.

If the heroes attack with Surprise, each plays a card into their Action Pool before the first round starts. If the heroes don't go first on

SCAVENGING ON MANHATTAN ISLAND

<i>Find</i>	Usable Items
Fail	Makeshift Club: Damage <i>Strength</i> +2, become Vulnerable after a miss. Food and Water: Preserved items in plastic that haven't begun to rot yet. Electronics: Tech 22, flashlights or mobile phones (useless for disconnected Ords).
Standard	Hrockt-shoot Spear: Damage <i>Strength</i> +2, Range 10/20/40 if thrown. .38 Revolver: Tech 20, Damage 12, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 6, Double Tap, Small. First Aid Kit: <i>First aid</i> tests become Favored.
Good	9mm Pistol: Tech 23, Damage 13, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 15, Short Burst. Riot Shield: +2 bonus to defenses, Minimum Strength 6. Primitive Bow: Tech 6, Damage 10, Range 10/25/40, Minimum Strength 7.
Outstanding	M16: Tech 22, Damage 13, Range 40/250/400, Ammo 30, Long Burst. Police Horse: Move 15, Toughness 13. Befriend it with <i>beast riding</i> . Kevlar Vest: Armor +4, Torso, Max Dex 10.

the Drama card's Conflict Line, the villains' turn gets skipped.

If the heroes defeat the gotaks and have a chance to examine the corpses close up, a Standard (DN 10) *evidence analysis* test discovers a strange seed embedded in each cadaver's chest cavity. The unpleasant thing seems to squirm in the Storm Knight's hand.

• **Edeinos Gotaks (1 per hero):** See page 36.

It's worth noting that this battle is not the end of the scene. Cards from the Action Pool return to each player's hand, but hands aren't refilled until the next scene begins. If a hero is running low on cards, recommend attempting some Approved Actions to get more.

SCAVENGING

The heroes may wish to do some scavenging for supplies before they move on. The Living Land's Law of Life is working overtime in the wake of the axiom wash. Nonliving things are decaying at an absurd rate for Core Earth. Cars, bicycles, boats, and other means of transportation have already corroded beyond usefulness.

Characters who choose to scavenge attempt a *find* test. Each picks one item from the table based on the success level. Specific other items may be substituted if the GM approves.

A Mishap or a second test to scavenge draws the attention of a roving gang of primitive humans. The brutes are out looking for blood, driven wild by their transformation and the Law of Savagery.

• **Primitive Humans (2 per hero):** See page 37.

**PROFESSOR DARNELL
MOORE**

CHECKPOINT

Down a side street the heroes see a group of looters grabbing television sets and other useless devices from a store. The looters wear cloth masks over their faces, and have no agenda other than taking advantage of the power outage affecting the entire city. If approached or challenged they flee.

On the street ahead, a ragtag mixture of humans and primitive humans in tattered, decaying police uniforms huddles behind a makeshift barricade in the middle of the intersection. They are armed mostly with improvised spears and batons.

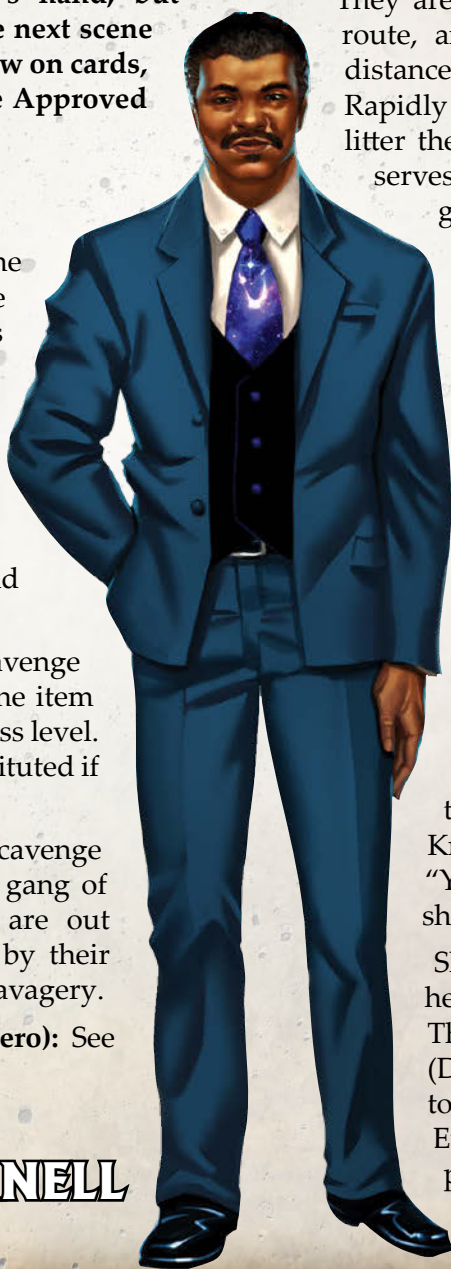
They are directly along the Storm Knight's route, and call out to the heroes from a distance as soon as they come into view. Rapidly decaying bodies (mostly humans) litter the area around the barricade, which serves as a warning that something has gone terribly wrong.

Police Captain Leslie Boyle and her crew have disconnected. They've become unhinged thanks to the lower Social Axiom (which doesn't support concepts like police) and the influence of the Law of Savagery.

They haven't completely lost their minds, but they are all affected and follow Boyle's brutal orders out of loyalty. At least she has a plan, even if her plan is insane.

Boyle declares that the dead bodies around her were all looters, and then she demands that the Storm Knights swear fealty to her tribe. "You're either with us or against us!" she hisses.

She orders her people to attack the heroes if they don't agree to join her. The team may fight, or try a Very Hard (DN 16) *persuasion* or *intimidation* test to force the captain to back down. Even if the attempt fails, half her people stand down and refuse to attack.



If the team tries to play along, she orders them to defend the middle of the street at all costs. She commands the deaths of any civilians who come to the barricade looking for help until the heroes rebel or more edeinos come (the forces described in Act Three).

- **Captain Leslie Boyle:** See below.
- **Primitive Humans (2 per hero):** See page 37.

Captain Boyle and her men aren't evil, but they've been deeply affected by the Living Land. Her group follows her lead, so stopping her with *intimidation* or *persuasion* effectively defeats her group as well. Once combat starts, a Player's Call on *intimidation* may still force her to concede and cooperate.

CAPTAIN LESLIE BOYLE

Stress, the low Social Axiom, and the Law of Savagery have combined to overwhelm this decorated officer. She has disconnected and can no longer cause Contradictions, and in the Living Land that includes acknowledging social structures beyond small groups or tribes.

In her case, she's trying to reconcile her memories of the law with her current reality. She now refers to her group as the "Law Tribe." Almost everyone else falls into a nebulous category of enemies she's calling the "Looter Tribe."

Instinct tells her that she must lead through strength, so she's quick to shout down or attack any threat to her authority. Leslie and her cohorts all wear blue armbands made of the strips of cloth from police uniforms. Boyle is trying to do her duty, as she understands it: defending her barricade against any enemies of her tribe.

Quote: "If you're not Law Tribe, you must be Looter Tribe!"

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 9, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, evidence analysis 9, find 9, fire combat 9, intimidation 11, maneuver 9, melee weapons 10, taunt 9, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Spear (*Strength* +2 damage).

Perks: Vengeful.

Possibilities: None.

Special Abilities:

- **Gloater:** When *intimidation* or *taunt* are Approved Actions the captain may use that action against all the Storm Knights without a Multi-Target penalty. If successful she forces a target to discard a random Destiny card.

TAKING THE BARRICADE

Boyle and her group have disconnected and can't use guns, kevlar vests, or police shields, even though all these are present within the barricade. If the heroes talk their way into the tribe (or defeat them) they gain access to all these items.

In total the tribe has three Kevlar Vests, two working 9mm pistols, 30 rounds of ammunition, and two riot shields. The statistics for these items can be found on the **Scavenging on Manhattan Island** table on page 21.

If Boyle is KO'ed she becomes submissive to the group when she wakes up. She won't try to stop them from taking any equipment and she follows any orders she's given. If allowed, she'll stay at her barricade and continue defending it against invaders and looters.

The former officers describe the situation at the precinct station as even worse than here. All communication is out, emergency services are non-existent, and everyone seems to be going mad. No official rally point was set by emergency services, but Lower Manhattan Hospital is where the National Guard and any relief crews have converged in the past.

The Storm Knights may compel survivors from Boyle's group to come along, or leave them to their own devices. They follow orders submissively, but flee if faced with gunfire or strange technology. Left alone they return to doing something that makes sense to them: defending the barricade.

This marks the end of the scene, so now players may draw back up to their full hand of Destiny cards.

SCENE TWO: THE LOST WORLD

Standard Scene. When the heroes continue on and turn the next corner, the bizarre vegetation overgrowing the city suddenly parts. Blue and red crystals jut out of the pavement instead.

The block is dominated by a steel-gray metal tower, untouched by vegetation or decay. It stretches up over the other Manhattan skyscrapers, and is topped by something akin to a minaret with a smooth crystal projecting from one side.

The Storm Knights feel the same wave of dizziness that hit them when the Living Land's reality first washed over them.

This is a Mixed zone, so the axioms of both Ukhaan (see the sidebar below) and the Living Land are in effect. The World Laws of both apply, and axioms use whichever value

UKHAAN

Magic	Social	Spirit	Tech
8	27	5	27

Ukhaan is a fragment of a cosm that Baruk Kaah invaded and drained of all Possibilities. Thanks to the **Law of Wonders** a remnant of that world reappears in Manhattan. The tower isn't a permanent feature, it may disappear or shift to a new location at any time.

This Mixed Zone has a World Law of its own to contend with:

- **Possibility Drain:** When a Storm Knight rolls a Mishap she also loses one Possibility. If she's out of Possibilities she loses two Shock instead. The same effect occurs on a Surge.

Stolen Possibilities pulse through the crystal webbing that laces the entire structure. The flow goes downward toward a basement that's inaccessible thanks to a thick wall of crystal.

is higher. For this small realm the Cosm cards remain the Living Lands, and if played represent intrusions from the outside.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

The sounds of jungle, war, and danger fade to nothing, replaced by an eerie quiet broken only by a distant voice. The voice seems to emanate from the steel tower. It speaks English, or at least that's the language the Storm Knights hear.

We are lost, crushed by the savage world of Baruk Kaah. Baruk Kaah is a High Lord, a being who invades other realities. He sucks the Possibility Energy from his victims and their lands. We do not know what end these invasions serve. All we gleaned was a single word: Torg.

This realm is the last remnant of Ukhaan, a world of great scientific advancement, reason, and peace. We were invaded by Takta Ker, the Living Land. This outpost is where we made our last stand.

We failed. We used what we learned of Possibility Energy to transmit our knowledge, our art, the very essence of our people away from the Living Land. So little was saved. Hopefully someday, after the storm, explorers will hear this message and find our remains.

If a Reality Raider hears these words, beware: all our power courses through our last guardian. While the storms still rage it will destroy any intruder. If instead you battle against the High Lords, remember Ukhaan, for her daughters and sons can do so no longer.

We are lost...

...and the message repeats in a hollow loop.

EXPLORING UKHAAN

The floor of the tower is covered in patches of red and blue crystal, softly pulsing. If there's a way down, it's covered by the impenetrable structure. The center of the tower is open, stretching upward toward a ceiling countless floors up. Light glows from above, flashing sporadically like some kind of show is playing. A ramp spirals upward along the interior. Every few floors, bridges connect the central ramp to the open entrances of large rooms that ring the ascent.

The tower is tall, but the ramp moves like an escalator, quickening travel. If the Storm Knights

SCAVENGING IN UKHAAN

Find	Usable Items
Fail	Cleaning Kit: Tech 27, refreshing and sanitary! Ration Bars: Tech 27, 10 meals total. The bars are nutritious but unpleasant.
Standard	Universal Translator: Tech 27, transcribes and translates spoken words. Lighting Drone: Tech 27, a silent, hovering robot that provides illumination.
Good	Mediglove: Tech 27, restore 1 Shock to someone touched as a simple action. Powerglove: Tech 27, Damage <i>Strength</i> +4, uses <i>unarmed combat</i> .
Outstanding	Hoverboard: Tech 27, Movement 15, Toughness 12. Memory Breastplate: Tech 27, form-fitting metal provides Armor +4, Torso.

ascend, they find floor after floor of technological detritus, mostly broken machines of inscrutable purpose.

Spaced along the climb are thin metal plates, embossed in alien script. When a Storm Knight touches a plate the impressions change to English, and it becomes clear the plates record findings about the Reality Raiders.

Give the players **Handouts LL-A, LL-B, and LL-C** (found on pages 38 and 39) as they climb toward the top. Each character may attempt a *find* test to scavenge other items of interest. Check the result against the **Scavenging in Ukhaan** table on page 25.

Note that all the devices found here have a Technological Axiom of 27, well above any of the heroes' personal axioms. If they use a device here in Ukhaan it's only a One Case Contradiction. In the Living Land or Core Earth it's a Four Case Contradiction, so they disconnect on a roll of 1–4. Note that if a Storm Knight transforms while attempting to reconnect the device changes too, transforming into an appropriate lower-tech equivalent.

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

The top floor reaches above the other surrounding skyscrapers. It contains a polished gemstone the size of a Core Earth television screen that shows

images of the outside world, as if through a telescope lens. The image slowly pans around the Manhattan skyline.

With a little fiddling, the Storm Knights can figure out how the nearby controls work to aim the lens. Scanning the outside reveals the following:

- In Queens they see the maelstrom bridge. The structure is a dark tangle of vines and branches, reaching from the ground up into the sky and disappearing into a swirling storm. Mist flows down the bridge and hordes of edeinos and dinosaurs clamber down it.
- On the Manhattan side of the Brooklyn Bridge, near where the heroes saw the looters, a tall, muscular edeinos with red markings on her scales rips apart several fleeing humans. This is Thleekik (page 35), and she'll return to harass the group in Act Three. Any characters who were separated from the Storm Knights are seen in the area and meet a grim fate at the hands of this warrior.
- Battery Park and Grand Central Park swarm with edeinos digging graves and planting human corpses into them. Gotaks chant over the bodies, and press small seeds into the chest cavity of each corpse.
- Lower Manhattan Hospital appears intact, and even has a tank parked outside. If any of the heroes intended to search for a particular loved one, by coincidence that person is spotted heading inside the hospital.

Using the scope earns the area map (**Handout LL-D** on page 38). Any other destination the Storm Knights wish to view is destroyed, surrounded by edeinos forces, or hidden by thick mists or storms.

Outside the New York area little is visible beyond a vast expanse of thick jungle and ruins—with one important exception. To the southwest the team spots Philadelphia, its electric lights on and the buildings still intact. The encroaching wilderness forms a ring around it.

It should be clear from the handouts that this is a hardpoint, and the only real refuge from the Living Land the Storm Knights have seen. To reach it the group must cross over into New Jersey. Holland Tunnel looks clear for the moment, but the bridges across are already being harassed by lakten. Lower Manhattan Hospital is directly on the route to Holland Tunnel as well.

TIME TO GO

Once the heroes have learned what they need, the crystal along the walls flares and suddenly grows a few inches. The crystal begins spreading steadily, and within an hour threatens to close off the exit. If the heroes choose to stay they are trapped inside.

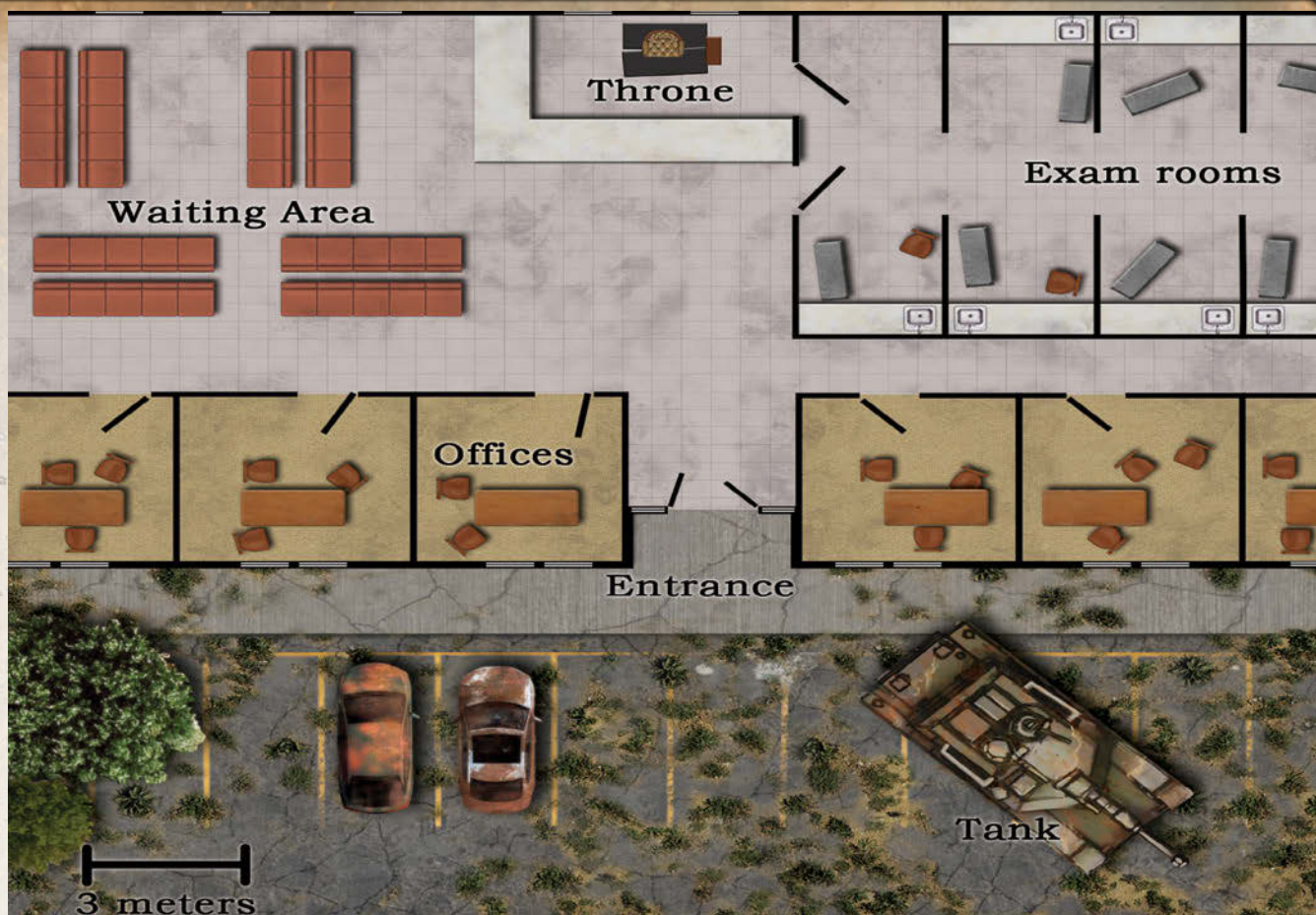
After the group leaves, the mysterious tower vanishes and a dilapidated skyscraper now stands in its place.

All the information the heroes have gathered should lead them toward either Lower Manhattan Hospital to find people to aid, or Holland Tunnel to escape the city. The hospital is conveniently located along the route toward the tunnel.

At the end of the scene players have the option of discarding one Destiny card and then drawing back up to a full hand.



The Law of Wonders brings many strange sights to the Living Land.



SCENE THREE: LORD OF THE WARD

Dramatic Scene. One way or another, the Storm Knights should be close to Lower Manhattan Hospital. The group hears gunfire coming from that direction—possibly people fighting back against the edeinos.

When the heroes arrive on the scene there are no edeinos around, but there are corpses. Several National Guardsmen lay dead near a tank in the parking lot. The tank appears rusted and useless. The dead men have been stripped of their armor and weapons.

A successful *evidence analysis* test determines that the men suffered gunshot wounds, and a Good success proves the shots came from behind. This carnage isn't the work of the invaders.

As the group investigates the parking lot a small contingent (one per hero) of humans in tattered clothing pushes open the automatic door of the hospital and approaches. They carry a mixture

of spears and clubs improvised out of anything wooden and heavy. "You must attend a meeting with the Thunderlord!" they demand.

What happens next depends on how the heroes react. If a fight starts, Thunderlord and the rest of his men emerge from the hospital and attack during the next round.

Any attempt at negotiation makes the primitive humans uncomfortable. They try to defer any decisions to the Thunderlord, and repeat the demand to attend a meeting. If the heroes persist the brutes fall back on something they understand: violence.

If the group cooperates, the primitive humans lead them inside to the lobby. It's possible that one or more of the group may go with the Thunderlord's men while others remain outside or attempt to slip inside quietly. If trouble breaks out it only takes one round for characters outside to sprint in. Sneaky characters test *stealth* against the Thunderlord's *find* (DN 9) to enter through a side door which brings them into the exam cubicles.

INSIDE THE LOBBY

Inside the hospital lobby, tables and benches form a makeshift court. Behind the help counter a sofa chair sits atop a table, forming an elevated makeshift "throne." The Thunderlord sits atop this throne, warily regarding the approaching heroes. If Lauren came along she immediately recognizes the so-called "Thunderlord" as her boss Alexander Brandt.

Brandt is a Stormer using his newfound power for selfish gain. He now rules the hospital like a warlord, and has used his "magical powers" to awe the savage, transformed humans into obeying him.

Those who resisted his sudden coup were killed or fled from the hospital. A few wounded survivors and some terrorized doctors and nurses huddle in the exam cubicles.

Brandt believes his powers make him a god. He brandishes several M-16s and his looted Kevlar vest as proof of his superiority. "These work fine for me!"

If Lauren is present, Brandt claims that she belongs to him and he demands that she be turned over immediately. If that doesn't get a violent response from the heroes, then an enraged Lauren takes matters into her own hands as best she can.

Whether Lauren is there or not, Brandt demands all the Storm Knights' weapons and supplies. If the Storm Knights comply, he and his forces attack anyway as soon as the heroes are disarmed.

Attempts to use *intimidation* or *persuasion* against Brandt or his followers are usually answered with automatic gunfire.

- **Brandt the Thunderlord:** See below.
- **Primitive Humans (2 per hero):** See page 37.

BRANDT THE THUNDERLORD

Brandt is a tall, powerfully built man with great hair and a careful manicure. His clothes still look pressed and undamaged. He speaks like he's giving a motivational business seminar while he enslaves and kills the innocents around him.

Each of the brutes who serve him wear a ragged tie at his insistence. He has nothing but disdain for the "mindless fools" who form his "workforce."

Brandt wears horn-rimmed glasses that he considers quite stylish, but the M-16s slung over his shoulders and carried in each hand make more of an immediate impression.

Brandt is mad with power. He has no real plan beyond being "the boss" of everything he surveys.

Quote: "The best practice here is doing what the Thunderlord commands. Otherwise I'll have to downsize your group with some hot lead!"

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 10, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 10, find 9, fire combat 10, intimidation 12, land vehicles 9, maneuver 9, reality 12, taunt 11, trick 10, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 13 (4); **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Kevlar vest (Armor +4), M-16 (Damage 13, Long Burst)

Perks: Endurance, Negation

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities: —

The Thunderlord is likely the first Stormer the group encounters, and he's full of surprises. He's armed to the teeth, carrying five M-16s. He fires only Long Bursts for a +4 bonus and Multi-Targets any heroes that aren't engaged in melee with his troops. If he gets a Malfunction (a roll of 1–3) he drops the weapon and readies another—he has plenty of guns!

Firing his guns is a One Case Contradiction, so a roll of 1 disconnects him. If that happens he rants and raves about shoddy government equipment and uses interaction attacks against the heroes until he reconnects (DN 14). Note that Brandt is extremely vulnerable while disconnected—not only is he unable to Soak damage, but the ballistic vest he stole doesn't provide Armor while it's a Contradiction.

Brandt's Negation Perk is his biggest surprise. When a hero rolls poorly and tries to spend a Possibility to add another die to the roll, the Thunderlord simply spends one of his own to stop it. He can't negate Soaking, only Possibilities spent to improve a test.



The Thunderlord motivates his workforce.

His Armor, three Wounds, and Possibilities for Soaking combine to make Brandt a tough opponent, especially while he's backed with his gang of men. Interactions to Stymie him can limit the damage he does, as can seeking cover from the bench seating or walls around the lobby. Moving into melee with Brandt's men may also help—even he won't risk shooting his own people, and that would occur on any odd result on the attack roll!

AFTERMATH

If Brandt falls, the primitive humans continue to attack out of bloodlust rather than any loyalty to their fallen "god."

If the Storm Knights are defeated, any survivors are captured and taken as slaves. They are strapped to hospital beds and given medical care by the remaining hospital staff, and awaken as the edeinos arrive in Act Three. Brandt and his men have fled by that point.

Once Brandt is defeated, the hospital staff and refugees he was terrorizing emerge from the exam cubicles and thank the Storm Knights for removing the self-appointed tyrant. If he wasn't killed in the battle it's up to the heroes to decide Brandt's fate.

If Dr. Dimasalang is in play she gains a +2 bonus on *first aid* tests while in the hospital, and those tests are Favored. She can scrounge a first aid kit without a test.

There are plenty of weapons and armor left in Brandt's stash, so the group can arm up without any more tests. Each player may take an M-16 with an extra magazine of ammunition, a 9mm pistol, and a Kevlar vest. The basic statistics for these items can be found on the **Scavenging on Manhattan Island** table (page 21).

The Storm Knights have earned a few hours of rest. The staff and refugees are also eager to hear what the group has learned about the invasion, and what they plan to do next.

ACT THREE: EXODUS

After a few hours of rest at Lower Manhattan Hospital, the first edeinos scouts arrive and more lizard men are on the way. The best option is to escape Manhattan, and the nearest route is the Holland Tunnel. The edeinos pursue, culminating in a harrowing escape and a final showdown. Any survivors escape to Philadelphia, a Core Earth hardpoint.

Refresh each player's Possibilities and deal new Cosm cards for the act. Only a few hours have passed so any Wounds the heroes suffered are still in effect. Healing happens fast in the Living Land, every 12 hours, but not fast enough to have an effect yet.

Now is also a good time to introduce any new characters discovered among the hospital refugees, including any loved ones the Storm Knights intended to search for. If a Storm Knight perished during the previous act, a replacement is either among the people already at the hospital or arrived sometime between the acts.

The heroes also earned five more XP in each previous act, and now have ten to spend. That's enough to purchase a new Perk and increase some crucial skills. Give the players some time to spend these points. They may need them!

SCENE ONE: CONTACT

Standard Scene. The occupants of the hospital are very curious about what the Storm Knights have learned, and listen carefully to every word. The lower Social Axiom prompts people to look for strong leaders, and the heroes are the strongest around. Former occupations or ranks mean little now—the Storm Knights are in charge whether they like it or not!

No one at the hospital has heard from the outside world since the invasion started. Depending on what the heroes share, the inhabitants of the hospital become eager to leave the island by the shortest route possible (the Holland Tunnel) and start for Philadelphia in the hope that things are better there.



Edeinos are strong, savage opponents with a thirst for different sensations — even pain!

Any patients in critical condition have already perished between Brandt's coup and the loss of all modern medical machinery. The rest of the refugees aren't in great shape, but they can travel if motivated. Whether the group is preparing to help everyone escape, hold out at the hospital, or simply leave the other refugees to their fate is up to them.

THE EDEINOS ARE COMING

Just before anyone can leave, or near dusk if the heroes planned to stay, lookouts spot a group of edeinos mounted on triceratops headed toward the hospital. They don't look friendly. The edeinos have come to investigate reports that a large number of humans are holding out within the building, and they won't leave until they've had a look.

The Storm Knights must drive off these advance troops, otherwise they enter the hospital lobby and begin massacring of every human they find. The group may face the riders outside the hospital or once the lizard men dismount and attempt to enter. Either way the map on page 27 still fits the area.

One of the edeinos scouts hangs back in either case, and runs away at the first sign of trouble. This cowardly scout rushes back to his leader, Theeklik (page 35) to tell her about the "Stormers" who dispatched her men.

A Setback for the villains could be a triceratops throwing its rider off and fleeing. A Setback for the heroes brings another edeinos scout riding a lakten (page 36), drawn by the sounds of battle.

The edeinos don't try to fight to the bitter end. Once half are defeated, the remainder attempt to flee just as the one cowardly scout did at the very beginning of the battle. Whether any of the scouts escape, the message still needs to get back to Theeklik. Perhaps a lakten rider observes the battle from afar and serves the same function. Whatever the particulars, the heroes must be aware that a large number of edeinos are likely on the way and it's time to move on before any more arrive.

- **Triceratops (1 per hero):** See page 37.
- **Edeinos Beast Rider (1 per Triceratops):** See page 36.

Since this battle takes place around the hospital, creative heroes may attempt to use the tank's cannon against the edeinos. Despite the condition of the tank, the cannon is loaded with a High Explosive round and capable of firing one shot. The attack uses *heavy weapons*, and deals 30 damage in a Medium Blast. It can affect three targets by default, likely two triceratops and a rider, plus the rider of the second triceratops since he's atop one of the targets. The damage is AP 5 against Very Large targets such as the dinosaurs. The tank's reloading mechanism is degraded beyond repair, so one shot is all the Storm Knights get.

Triceratops aren't very aggressive. If a rider is defeated his mount flees unless its attacked or cornered. A successful *beast riding* test allows a Storm Knight to mount a riderless Triceratops and control its actions, and even attack its former fellows.

EVACUATION

Defending the hospital is improbable. When the attack finally comes it's hundreds of edeinos warriors led by Theeklik. The Storm Knights might be able to escape such a calamity, but any civilians in the hospital are doomed.

An evacuation is more likely, and has a better chance of success. Stretchers are available for carrying people or supplies. All the vehicles in and around the hospital are a total loss. Even if they weren't too degraded from rust and decay of the Living Land, the streets of Manhattan are littered with trees and scrap metal where cars were abandoned.

DESTINATIONS

Everything the heroes have learned so far should direct them toward the Holland Tunnel. The bridges are all heavily patrolled by lakten riders, and other tunnels have already collapsed thanks to the decaying properties of the **Law of Life**.



Getting out of Manhattan won't be easy.

If the group chooses a completely different destination they encounter Theeklik's forces before they arrive.

Any Cosm cards that cause a delay or provoke encounters (*Deep Mist* or *Dino Attack!*, for example) draw the attention of a wandering tyrannosaurus rex, just to complicate matters.

- **Tyrannosaurus Rex (1):** See page 37.

PURSUIT

Theeklik's forces track the Storm Knights, moving cautiously and doggedly along their trail. So long as the group keeps moving west they avoid Theeklik's forces. If the Storm Knights turn back east or move too far north they spot hordes of oncoming lizardmen in time to turn back, but the noose is getting tighter.

SCENE TWO: HOLLAND TUNNEL

Standard Scene. The group halts outside the darkened entrance to the Holland Tunnel. Thick vines cover the walls and hang down from the tunnel ceiling. Ominous piles of human bones litter the pavement. The underpass itself is quiet, but there are sounds of many large creatures moving close by—Theeklik's warband drawing ever closer.

Whether it's day or night outside, the tunnel itself is pitch black. Actions that require sight suffer a -6 Darkness penalty unless the Storm Knights have a light source. Torches are simple enough to make with a *Mind* test and materials from the ruined vehicles. Mobile phones don't get a signal, but applications like the flashlight still work in the hands of a *reality*-rated character.

The walls and ceiling of the tunnel show cracks underneath the vegetation, and the sound of trickling of water echoes throughout the tunnel. The water is less than waist deep at its deepest point—for now.

The real threat comes from the carnivorous plants mixed in with the other growth. They're easy to spot and avoid outside thanks to the bone piles, but not in the dark confines of the passage.

THROUGH THE TUNNEL

The heroes have little choice but to blaze a trail through the tunnel to get everyone to the relative safety on the other side. Doing so is a Dramatic Skill Resolution.

- **Step A:** First the heroes must discover a safe path through the dangerous network of hanging vines and sticky roots throughout the tunnel. This is a Challenging (DN 12) *scholar* or *survival* test.
- **Step B:** A particularly dangerous carnivorous plant blocks the path. Unfortunately it's also holding part of the passage together, so destroying it collapses the tunnel itself! To get past, the Storm Knights must push a rusted-out car into position to block off the plant. This step requires a Very Hard (DN 16) *Strength* test.
- **Step C:** With the way clear, the group must coax or inspire the most timid refugees to move through the dark underpass. This requires a Hard (DN 14) *persuasion* test.
- **Step D:** Finally, the Storm Knights must collapse the tunnel to prevent Theeklik's forces from pursuing them. Destroying the large plant from Step B collapses the tunnel and does the trick. Any attack test may be tried so long as the weapon does at least 12 damage, but the test is Very Hard (DN 16). A fire attack decreases the difficulty by four.

TIME PRESSURE

Normally a Dramatic Skill Resolution must be completed within a set number of rounds. This task doesn't have a round limit, but as time ticks by Theeklik's warriors move into the tunnel in ever increasing numbers. For the first three rounds the heroes only have to deal with the Steps.

On the Villain's initiative of the fourth round one edeinos warrior per Storm Knight appears. They had to run to get there so they don't get to act, but next round they close into melee combat and attack.

Each round from then on, another warrior per hero arrives until the Dramatic Skill Resolution is completed or the heroes are defeated.

- **Edeinos Warriors (see above):** See page 36.

DILEMMAS

When a Dilemma appears on the Drama card, the heroes' efforts in the tunnel become even more dangerous—if the test for the current step fails.

- **Complication:** All the carnivorous plants become excited, and lash out with their tendrils or fire quills blindly. All future tests for Steps suffer a -1 penalty.

- **Critical Problem:** A huge plant in the center of the tunnel puffs up and releases a cloud of deadly spores. Everyone must retreat from the tunnel until the spores settle, which resets the Dramatic Skill Resolution to Step A!

- **Possible Setback:** A mass of spiky vines begins to move and rattles menacingly at anyone nearby. Avoiding the strange thing requires backtracking and tracing a new route. Lose one completed Step.

Note that even though this a Dramatic Skill Resolution, it's not a Dramatic Scene. Even a Standard Scene may have dramatic moments, and getting through the tunnel alive is hard enough as it is.

Multiple Steps of the task may be completed in a single round so long as the Drama card supports them. A single hero might even resolve several Steps at once using a Multi-Action, so long as the steps are completed in order.

Some of these Steps are difficult, so the Storm Knights may need to use Combined Actions to complete them, or let valuable time pass as they build their Action Pools.

If a step isn't available on the Drama card, remember that heroes may test against the current step anyway to gain a Destiny card!

Dilemmas force the heroes to test or suffer a new difficulty, but note that success counts as completing the current step.

Once the edeinos arrive, any hero who isn't working on a Step should attack or Stymie the intruders to keep them from overwhelming the party. The Storm Knights can't hold off the oncoming edeinos forever, but they can buy enough time to finish the Dramatic Skill Resolution and escape.



SCENE THREE: SHOWDOWN

Dramatic Scene. The Holland Tunnel's collapse leaves the majority of the edeinos war party trapped on the other side. The Storm Knights have a few moments to catch their breath (and recover Shock) while the shaken refugees regroup.

A tall, muscular edeinos leading a small band of fierce warriors emerges from the murky waters of the tunnel. This, at last, is Theeklik. She had a larger group with her when she started from the other side, but these are all who remain.

Theeklik knows basic English and has a healthy respect for the Storm Knights' firearms. She and her warriors use the rusted-out cars for Cover (-2) as they approach.

This is Theeklik's last chance to stop the Storm Knights from escaping, and she won't give up. She and her warriors can't go back the way they came—this is a fight to the finish.

- **Edeinos Warriors (3 per hero):** See page 36.
- **Theeklik:** See below.

THEEKLİK

Theeklik leads her own warband of vicious edeinos. She is a particularly tall warrior with crimson patterns painted onto her scales like blood splashes. She wants to kill her enemies quickly to maintain her credibility as a war leader.

The patchy red on Theeklik's scales covers the fact that they're thicker than normal and a dark, grayish color. Her hands are an even lighter gray, ending in long black talons.

Theeklik is obsessed with destroying the heroes and any other "Stormers" she finds.

Quote: "This death-place is a desert that needs rains of blood so life may grow!"

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 6, Spirit 10, Strength 12

Skills: Beast riding 11, dodge 12, find 7, faith 11, intimidation 12, maneuver 11, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 11, reality 12, stealth 11, survival 9, taunt 8, tracking 8, trick 9, unarmed combat 12

Move: 10; **Tough:** 14 (2); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (Damage Strength +2 / 14)

Perks: Death Claw, Stone Skin, Vengeful, Whip Tail

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Stone Skin +2.
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +3 (15), AP 2.

Theeklik knows she and her warriors' best chance is to close into melee as quickly as possible. The spear she carries is for throwing. In melee combat she prefers to use her claws, and her dangerous Whip Tail makes attacks with those Favored!

Try to use Theeklik's Possibilities to boost her attack tests. The extra pressure forces the heroes to Soak. Only Soak if she takes enough Wounds to get KO'ed. Otherwise let her take the damage and take advantage of her Vengeful Perk.

EPILOGUE

With no other obstacles, the remaining Storm Knights and any survivors with them reach Philadelphia. Supplies, information, and reinforcements trickle in from U.S. forces outside the Living Land over the following weeks.

It's a bright morning when lookouts report an incoming vertical-takeoff-and-landing craft. Planes of any kind are a rare sight—disconnecting while in the air is deadly! After the craft lands, its pilot approaches the heroes. He is an older man, with short-cropped gray hair, browned skin, and piercing eyes. His beaming smile belies the worry lines across his forehead.

"I'm glad I found you. I'm from the Delphi Council, the people fighting the High Lords on behalf of Earth. My name is Quinn Sebastian, and I'm lookin' for a few good Storm Knights. Let's talk about how we kick the High Lords off of our planet!"

LIVING LAND THREATS

EDEINOS BEAST RIDER

Edeinos have an affinity with many of the dangerous creatures of the Living Land. These elite riders nearly become one with the beasts they control.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Beast riding 11, dodge 10, faith 9, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 10, stealth 10, survival 8, tracking 8, unarmed combat 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (Damage Strength +2/12)

Perks: Beast Rider

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Beast Affinity:** The rider may divert one Wound from an attack to hit his mount instead of himself.

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (12).

EDEINOS GOTAK

Gotaks are edeinos priests of death. They serve Lanala, the goddess of life, and consider death just another part of her divine blessing. Recently some gotaks have become secretive, and answer only to Baruk Kaah.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 11, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 10, faith (Keta Kalles) 14, find 8, intimidation 13, maneuver 11, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 11, survival 9, unarmed combat 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 12 (2); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (Damage Strength +2/12), hrockt-root armor (Armor +2, Torso)

Perks: Miracles (*bless, wither*)

Possibilities: Rare (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (12).

EDEINOS WARRIOR

Edeinos are trained in combat from the day they're born. They grow up with a spear in their hands and are ferocious in their pursuit and capture of prey, which they rip apart with their savage teeth.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 10

Skills: Beast riding 10, dodge 10, faith 9, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, melee weapons 11, missile weapons 10, stealth 10, survival 8, tracking 8, unarmed combat 11

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Hrockt-shoot spear (*Strength* +2/12)

Perks: Whirlwind

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (12).

LAKTEN

Lakten are leathery-skinned dinosaurs with a five-meter wingspan, short stubby bodies, and a beak full of razor-sharp teeth. Lakten are prized mounts for edeinos scouts.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 11, Mind 4, Spirit 7, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation 9, find 9, maneuver 12, unarmed combat 12

Move: 11; **Tough:** 13 (1); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (14).

- **Flight:** Flies at Move 13.

- **Large:** Most adult specimens have a wingspan over five meters. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.

MOSASAURUS

All jaws and 20 meters long, this creature has a muscular barrel-shaped body, fins, and a powerful tail. It differs from Earth's fossil records with a proportionally larger head.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 10, Mind 5, Spirit 9, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 12, intimidation 13, find 8, maneuver 12, stealth 12, taunt (10), tracking 8, unarmed combat 12

Move: 10; **Tough:** 17 (1); **Shock:** 13; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +1.
- **Bite:** Damage *Strength* +3 (19).
- **Dread:** While the mosasaurus is present, any Standard Scene immediately becomes a Dramatic Scene.
- **Fins:** Move 12 in the water.
- **Very Large:** Most adult specimens are up to 23 meters long or larger. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

PRIMITIVE HUMANS

Almost a third of the population of Manhattan has been transformed to the Living Land's reality. Some have embraced the **Law of Savagery**, banding together to hunt and pillage. Others are confused by the lower Social Axiom and drawn toward strong leaders.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, survival 8, unarmed combat 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Improvised club (Damage *Strength* +2/10, become Vulnerable on a miss)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

TRICERATOPS

Similar to what it was once thought triceratops of ancient Earth must look like, these Living Land creatures have a bony, plated head and three sharp horns. Triceratops are favored mounts for many edeinos tribes. They often decorate their beasts in the same paint and tattoos that warriors wear.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 6, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, intimidation 10, maneuver 7, stealth 7, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 19 (3); **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Bony crest and thick hide +3.
- **Charge:** +2 damage to an attack after the creature moves more than a walk.
- **Horns:** Damage *Strength* +2 (18).
- **Very Large:** Triceratops are up to nine meters long and 5,000 kg in weight. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

TYRANNOSAURUS REX

One of the most terrifying predators ever to walk the Living Land. This massive reptilian killing machine is fast, 12 meters tall, and has a mouth full of teeth the size of daggers. Core Earthers often call them "rexes" due to their strong resemblance to how media has portrayed tyrannosaurs.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 9, Mind 4, Spirit 10, Strength 17

Skills: Dodge 10, intimidation 15, find 8, maneuver 10, stealth 10, taunt (9), tracking 9, unarmed combat 12

Move: 11; **Tough:** 20 (3); **Shock:** 14; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Scaly skin +3.
- **Bite:** Damage *Strength* +3 (20).
- **Dread:** When the mighty tyrannosaur is present, any Standard Scene immediately becomes a Dramatic Scene instead.
- **Fear:** The predatory teeth and roar of a tyrannosaur trigger instinctive terror. Test *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Very Large:** Most adult specimens are up to 18 meters long. Attacks against them gain a +4 bonus.

ARCHIVE LL-A ENTRY 5995A4

The invaders unleashed a terrible new weapon, the "gospog." Edeinos were observed collecting corpses during the initial attacks. The original supposition was as food, or perhaps as a psychological weapon. The truth was far worse.

Some form of malignant plant growth was embedded in our dead. The gestation period is approximately 30 cycles. After the gestation period the plant growth animates the corpse itself. The resulting creature is essentially mindless, very aggressive, and does the bidding of the invaders. Dismemberment, fire, and penetrating damage to the center torso are the best methods for disabling gospog.

Scouts report that gospog fields are planted in neat rows, 100 graves wide by 100 graves deep. After 60 cycles and more implanted corpses a newer breed of gospog appeared, rarer, larger, and more dangerous. The current theory suggests that new bodies produce harvests of increasing power. Cycle 90 should provide definitive proof.

Captured remains of specimens indicate that the implanted seeds are not native to Takta Ker. Are they spoils of war from some other world the edeinos ravaged? Or an indication that these are just servants of some even more dangerous master?

Regardless of origin, these gospog are perfectly adapted to our reality, and the invaders often use them to strike at hardpoints the edeinos themselves shun.

Continued in Entry 5995A5.



ARCHIVE LL-B ENTRY 7325B6

Not everything here in Ukhaan transformed as the maelstrom bridges fell. Approximately one in three were affected instantly, becoming devolved and bestial. Upon examination it was determined that they were the same individuals, but their thought processes had been affected. Intelligence levels measured the same, but cultural touchstones no longer made sense to them. Memories were affected in various ways, and some subjects suffered psychotic breaks.

The surrounding land transformed at a higher ratio than people, indicating sentience or willpower has some effect on the transposing realities. Within cycles, something changed in areas near the maelstrom bridges, accelerating the transformation. Farther away, people still gradually convert to the invading reality, but at a slower pace.

Rare individuals never transform, and gain the ability to sense and manipulate the reality in flux around them. The invaders fear these warriors, and call them "Stormers," likely a reference to the storms that erupt when two realities collide.

Possibly related, there are parts of the world that are extremely stable and resilient against encroaching alternate realities. These hardpoints form a natural barrier that protects Ukhaan's reality and everyone inside. Hardpoints are created by concentrations of monuments and artifacts tied to Ukhaan's history.

At first it was thought that such monuments could be moved, and the stabilizing effect would go with them. That proved untrue when the Indigan Crystal was moved to Xykolo. As soon as it was displaced the crystal transformed, and the hardpoint zone around it collapsed.

Related Entries: 7741B1, 7801B1.

ARCHIVE LL-C ENTRY 1002C4

Stelae aren't ceremonial, as previously thought. They mark the true boundaries of the encroaching reality. The space between three stelae becomes a zone and transforms. As the invaders gain ground, they plant new stelae and more of Ukhaan is lost.

There is a definite geometric form to stelae placement. Three form the boundaries of a zone, but any single stela may only connect to six others. That means there's an optimal pattern for placing stelae, and enemy attacks and movements could have been predicted with much greater accuracy had the mechanics been understood earlier.

In the battle of Uktun the last of our Storm Knights managed to displace the Xykolo stelae. It was a costly undertaking which revealed several key pieces of information.

As hoped, the removal of the stelae caused the invading reality to collapse and return to Ukhaan. Unexpectedly, however, everyone who had transformed was obliterated by the disruption. No theories explain why, but it seems certain that Ukhaan is doomed. Too much of the world has been irrevocably changed.

Additionally, the attack against the stelae provoked an immediate response from the invaders, including the instantaneous arrival of strange reinforcements. The troubling indication is that the stelae are either sentient or connected to some greater evil connected to the entire network.

We are lost.

No further Entries.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE: AYSLE

CONSTABLE ADDISON CORDREY

Addison recently joined the police force and quite enjoys the job. She is bright, cheerful, cool under pressure, and always ready to lend a helping hand. She was happy to be assigned to Trafalgar Square. The people are usually friendly and it's a relatively quiet beat.

Quote: "Please remain calm, I'm sure emergency services have been notified and are on their way."

Cosm: [Aysle]

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 1, intimidation 3, land vehicles 1, maneuver 2, melee weapons 2, [reality 2], streetwise 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 10; **Tough:** 11 (3); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Baton (Damage Str +2/10)/[mace (Damage Str +2/10, Stagger)], stab vest (Armor +3, Torso)/[elven chain (Armor +3, Torso)]

Perks: Bodyguard, [Natural Leader]

JAMIE THACKER

Jamie teaches a class of 12-year-olds. Trafalgar Square National Gallery is hosting an exhibit on modern fantasy art. Jamie scheduled a field trip and enlisted the aid of a teacher's assistant, Jan. Jamie likes to joke that she's a good teacher because she was a bad student, but she's put her misspent youth behind her.

Quote: "Keep an eye on the kids until I get this sorted out."

Cosm: [Aysle]

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 3, find 1, [lockpicking 1], maneuver 2, melee weapons 1, [missile weapons 2], persuasion 1, [reality 2], stealth 2, streetwise 1

Move: 11; **Tough:** 7 (0) / [8 (1)]; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Permission forms, mobile phone, [leather jerkin (Armor +1, Torso)]

Perks: [Shadow Step], [Whirlwind]

CHRIS LARKIN

Chris and Pat met skydiving and soon fell in love. The two American newlyweds are on their honeymoon in London. Chris is a firefighter back home. He's in incredible shape from carrying hoses, equipment, and injured people. He thrives on danger and helping others—traits he shares with Pat.

Quote: "I run into burning buildings for a living."

Cosm: [Aysle]

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 1, find 2, first aid 1, intimidation 1, lockpicking 1, melee weapons 3, missile weapons 1, persuasion 1, [reality 2], survival 1, taunt 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 11 (0) / [13 (2)]; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Camera, mobile phone, [chainmail (Armor +2, Max Dex 8)]

Perks: Endurance, [Relentless]

PAT LARKIN

Chris and Pat met skydiving and soon fell in love. The two American newlyweds are on their honeymoon in London. Pat is an emergency medical responder and rescue worker. She's drawn to dangerous situations and helping people in great need — which is also what drew her to Chris.

Quote: "Stay calm and tell me where it hurts the most."

Cosm: [Aysle]

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 10, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, [faith 2], find 1, first aid 2, land vehicles 1, medicine 1, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 1, persuasion 1, [reality 2], taunt 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7 / [8 (1)]; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Camera, mobile phone, [leather armor (Armor +1)]

Perks: [Miracles (*bless, soothe, ward enemy*)], [Radiant]

BEL PATEL

Bel is descended from Indian emigrants and is a native of London. An engineer by trade, he has encyclopedic knowledge of popular and gaming culture. Bel is looking forward to an afternoon at the National Gallery's latest exhibit on postmodern fantasy art.

Quote: "This isn't a game. If it were that spell would be too high level for a mob like that to cast."

Cosm: [Aysle]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 11, Strength 6

Skills: computers 1, [alteration 3], [conjuraton 3], dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, [reality 1], scholar 2, science 1, trick 2, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Gamebook/[spellbook], mobile phone, [wizard robes]

Perks: [Spellcaster (*diminish, fireball, shield*)], [Situational Awareness]

SEAN MOLLOY

A veteran of the first Persian Gulf War, Molloy is gruff, no-nonsense, and has a penchant for getting things done. He began driving one of the quintessential double-decker tour buses around the city after he was discharged.

Quote: "Woofing Nora. This looks like a job for faithful old Lucy."

Cosm: Core Earth


Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 7, Spirit 9, Strength 10

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, fire combat 3, heavy weapons 1, intimidation 2, land vehicles 2, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 1, [reality 1], survival 1, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 9; **Tough:** 10 (0); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: 9mm pistol ("Lucy", Damage 13, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 17), mobile phone

Perks: Sniper, Trademark Weapon ("Lucy")



ACT ONE: AYSLE

BY HENRY LOPEZ

Tourists and visitors to Trafalgar Square find themselves caught in the crossfire as strange creatures emerge from underground and terrifying dragons fly overhead. In the chaos, a few special people transform into extraordinary heroes able to fight back against the invaders.

Statues come to life. Ominous, robed figures direct savage creatures to capture specific individuals and drag them down to the subway tunnels below. The battle culminates with the arrival of a mighty dragon—wounded but still very dangerous!

The heroes join the refugees holding out inside the National Gallery, and there discover one of the children has been abducted and carried into strange new tunnels. The Storm Knights delve after her and discover wonders, horrors, and potential allies in the realm below.

SCENE ONE: DRAGONS OVER LONDON

Standard Scene. Each of the characters is in Trafalgar Square, either on foot or via the double-decker bus Sean Molloy drives. Jamie Thacker's class of schoolchildren also ride the bus, along with her assistant Jan Taylor.

The morning is cloudy and threatening to turn stormy. The crowds at the square are sparse so far today. The National Gallery opens within the hour.

The only indication that the Possibility Raiders are arriving across the globe is a worsening communications blackout. The media in London blame the outages on server crashes, rerouted traffic, and an insidious new virus affecting Europe. Sensational news outlets are spreading stories of a massive natural disaster striking India and North America.

The Larkins' calls back home to the United States don't connect and local phone service is growing spotty, so characters with mobile phones may already be ill at ease.

Establish where everyone is on the map of Trafalgar Square. All the characters should be on or near Sean's double-decker bus. Give the players a moment to introduce their characters, and then describe the other occupants of the bus.



All manner of creatures now lurk in the tunnels below London.

JAN TAYLOR

Jan is short, fussy, and serious to a fault. She volunteers to help at Jamie Thacker's school because she loves kids and wants to be a teacher herself someday.

Jan's haircut is truly unfortunate. She had it done yesterday hoping to look especially nice for the trip, but it didn't turn out well and she's extremely self-conscious about it.

Quote: "Twenty-eight, twenty-nine...thirty. That's everyone."

AMELIA WALSH

She's 10, and the most friendly and outgoing of the schoolchildren. The other kids naturally defer to her and follow her lead.

Amelia has intense blue eyes and an unwavering gaze, especially for her age.

Quote: "I hope we'll have some free time to explore the museum on our own!"

THE GROUND SHAKES

After setting the scene, shake or slap the table dramatically then read or paraphrase the following:

Your head spins as you pick yourself up from the ground. Distant air raid sirens and thunder compete with the cacophony of a hundred car alarms incessantly beeping. The car alarms go silent, but the rumble grows even louder.

A huge chasm splits open across the street, sending cars and parts of buildings tumbling down into the dark pit.

All around you, people are getting back up. Some look down at the chasm in shock. A few others gape at something in the sky overhead. The ringing in your ears starts to clear, only to be replaced by the cries of the people nearby.

Aysle's axioms and World Laws are now in effect. Don't deal Cosm cards to the players yet. They become more appropriate once the heroes delve underground.

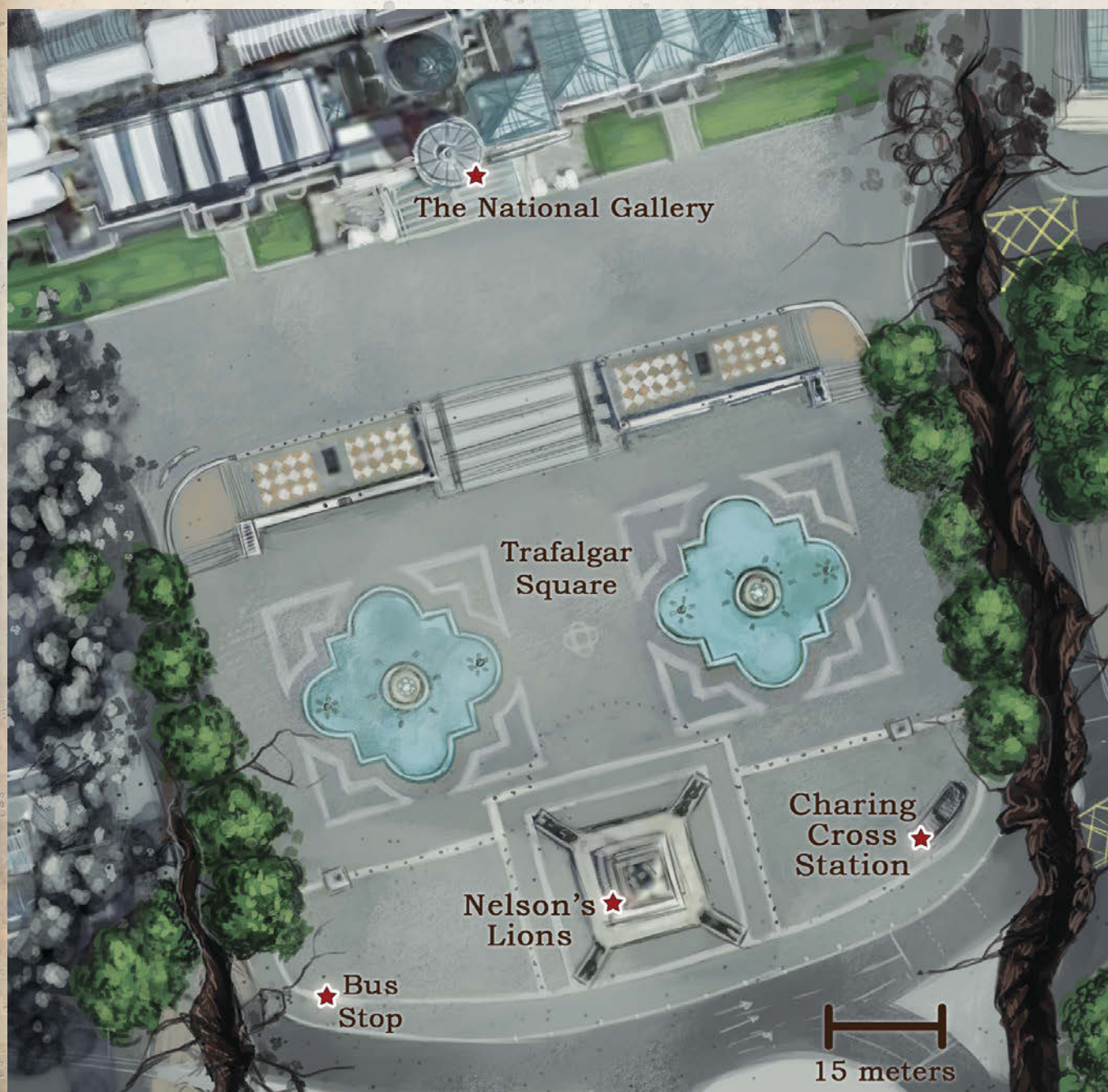
OVER THE EDGE

The fissure that opened in the street threatens Sean's bus. The characters are either nearby or already aboard. The bus teeters on the edge. Its wheels are useless so it can't be driven to safety. The only option is to get everyone out before it plummets into the abyss.

There are different approaches to evacuating the passengers. A Challenging (DN 12) *Strength* test stabilizes the bus, allowing extra time for people

to escape. An Easy (DN 8) *persuasion* test motivates Jan and the children to leave without panicked trampling. A Standard *Dexterity* or *Strength* grabs and pulls passengers to safety before it's too late.

Any attempt to help triggers a "Moment of Crisis." Amelia also distinguishes herself during the operation. She's especially calm, and lets the other children flee in front of her. She's the last child out. Any grab for a passenger is likely to rescue Amelia at the last moment.



A STATUE ATTACKS

During the chaos, a strange transformation takes place around the square. Chasms open across many of the streets and buildings tumble down, blocking exits. The only two clear routes are toward the Charing Cross station or the National Gallery building.

The museum remains intact, but other structures within venerable Trafalgar Square seem to change before the heroes' eyes. Streetlights morph into oil lamps and the stone changes from polished white marble to a darker and coarser limestone.

A bolt of lightning strikes down from the growing storms overhead. It hits one of the newer statues in the square, a large metal lion sculpted to look as though it were made of clockwork. After the bolt hits, the gears begin to whirl and the lion begins to move!

A stunned onlooker falls to the ground near the statue. It turns and prepares to pounce!

If the heroes don't intervene, the creature crushes the hapless civilian with its leap and then plays with the broken body in its jaws. If the heroes make any attempt to stop or distract it, the clockwork lion turns its full attention to them.

- **Clockwork Lion:** See below.

CLOCKWORK LION

This sculpture comes to life and menaces the people in the area. The statue behaves like a real lion, even though it's a construct. It flinches from gunfire and can be startled by aggressive movements. Interactions may stall it, but eventually it swats back at the heroes with its massive paws. It's larger than a normal lion and composed of hollow, burnished bronze.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 5, Spirit 10, Strength 14

Skills: Dodge 10, find 7, intimidation 14, maneuver 10, taunt (10), unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 18 (4); **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 2

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Metal plates +4.
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (16).
- **Large:** The statue is over two meters tall at the shoulders. Attacks against it gain a +2 bonus.

TRANSFORMATIONS

When a Storm Knight transforms to another cosm, Perks and equipment change to match. He remembers his old life, although portions that relate to higher axioms are fuzzy and muddled. Formerly alien concepts become clear instead. Bel, for example, may use magic as if he had been an expert for years.

It isn't just the character's mind that changes. Items and clothing transform to equivalents for the new reality. Mobile phones become parchment or torches. Casual street clothing converts into the latest Ayslish fashion, or even armor if the hero is lucky!

Addison Cordrey is most affected. Her standard bobby equipment transforms into fantastic equivalents. Her speedcuffs become a pair of iron manacles. Her protective stab vest becomes elven chainmail and offers the same protection. Her modern baton changes into a mace, which still deals *Strength* +2 damage, but it now has the Stagger property (if she deals damage to a target, it becomes Stymied).

Bel Patel's clothes become wizard's robes, which is all the prompting he needs to try out his new magical abilities. The others' clothing upgrades to armor befitting their roles.

Sean Molloy's items don't transform at all since he connects to Core Earth instead of Aysle. If he transforms later thanks to a Mishap reconnecting, Lucy changess into a light crossbow (Damage 12, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 1) and he swaps his *fire combat* adds with his *missile weapons* add.

TROUBLE IN THE SQUARE

Once the lion is dealt with, several other problems erupt simultaneously.

STAMPEDING CROWD

Some of the crowd are trying to take pictures of the changes, but most panic and stampede toward the Charing Cross Underground Station.

As people push forward, an elderly woman is knocked to the ground and is in danger of being trampled. Characters trying to help her need to push against the crowd with a Standard *Strength* test. If the test fails the hero still manages to protect the woman, but gets shoved for two Shock.

TRANSFORMING PEOPLE

Some of the people around the square physically change. Clothing transforms into medieval garb and flowing cloaks. Mobile phones become parchment scrolls.

A mental change accompanies the physical one. Those affected now have a lower Social and Tech Axiom, so various aspects of the modern world just don't make sense to them anymore.

AMMUNITION

Sean's pistol, Lucy, is illegal, but he's a rough man who doesn't take chances and ignores the rules when it suits him. Lucy is special to him—she's saved his life more than once!

When Sean transcends he connects to Core Earth, which makes him something of an action hero. That connection also leaves him vulnerable to disconnection, since the Tech Axiom of his beloved pistol is higher than Aysle allows.

It also leaves the question of ammunition for his trademark weapon. In a normal game Storm Knights have the opportunity to prepare for the mission and bring plenty of extra ammunition. Sean, on the other hand, wasn't expecting to go into combat today.

He has only one magazine of ammunition for Lucy. It's loaded with all 17 shots, because Sean's just that kind of guy. He may find spare magazines of 9mm ammo on the body of the pilot who crashes in Scene Two—if he looks.

Once underground, no more bullets are forthcoming. Sean must conserve what he has, or risk running out at a crucial moment.

Calls to the emergency numbers, such as 112 or 999, cannot be completed. Phones either fail to operate or there's simply no signal. The characters might try to make the victims as comfortable as possible with an Easy (DN 8) *first aid* test. A Good success or better reveals that the afflicted person suffers from shock and also short-term memory loss—perhaps from a severe concussion.

CHARING CROSS ATTACK

Two jets shriek overhead, and a huge shape with massive, bat-like wings swoops past after them. The creature's loud roar sets off a new wave of panic among the crowds trying to flee the square. The throng pressing into Charing Cross station halts as a thick cloud of dust erupts from the stairs leading downward.

Screams of panic ring out as bestial creatures swarm from the Charing Cross entrance, slashing at the crowd and laughing gleefully. Amid the bedlam, horrified voices yell out: "Run! They're coming up from the Underground! Run!"

The vicious humanoids, known as "lurks" in Aysle, wear fetid armor and carry wicked-looking weapons, including spiked clubs and bows with barbed arrows. They delight in taking the time to torture the weak and helpless, and they mercilessly cut down anyone who stands against them. After they cut down a foe the creatures savagely riffle through his clothes and discard wallets or anything else that doesn't look like gold or a weapon.

Among the creatures stand other beings, tall humanoids with pasty white skin and sharp features. They wear ornate robes, unlike the shabby armor of the savage warriors around them. They point at a few of the struggling humans, making utterances like, "Take that one below for the ritual," and, "That one will suit Lord Antenoch's purpose!"

The heroes see one of these pale priests point across the square, where Amelia leads the students toward the National Gallery. "And that one!"

The lurks swarm forward toward the fleeing civilians at the priest's bidding. One priest joins the attack on the surface, while the others turn back underground. More lurks carry the slumped bodies of people deeper into the tunnels. If the heroes engage, the lurks focus on them and leave



A mighty dragon enjoys the fiery rubble of a building it has destroyed.

the other innocents alone. If the heroes attempt to flee, the creatures pursue and the doors of the National Gallery are locked at the moment.

If the Storm Knights are nearing defeat or attempt to leave the area completely, proceed directly to Scene Two to keep them in the square.

- **Lurks (3 per hero):** See page 60.
- **Priests of Corba'al (1):** See page 60.

Half the lurks should charge forward and attempt to engage in melee. The rest spread out along the edge of the battle and take pot shots at unengaged heroes when they can. Some of the heroes start unarmed, so they'll want to take weapons from fallen lurks to get the most out of their skills.

Using a map really makes a difference here. If no map is in use, have the lurks run to get into melee range, and assume the short bows are at medium range.

SCENE TWO: DRAGON DOWN

Dramatic Scene. When the last lurk falls, or if any Storm Knight moves to exit the square through the National Gallery or Charing Cross, two shapes crash down from the sky above.

One is an F-35 fighter. The RAF plane crashes into the Charing Cross entrance, sealing it in a terrible explosion. The other is a huge, red dragon, just like those seen in big-budget fantasy movies. The dragon is visibly wounded, likely from a battle with the two F-35s. The other fighter's fate is unknown. One of the dragon's wings is broken, and fiery liquid drips from its mouth instead of blood.

It turns its serpentine eyes toward the Storm Knights. The eyes burn with rage. "Who else dares stand against Bezladrakus, the Living Inferno?!" it snarls.

Bezldrakus is enraged, and the Storm Knights make a good target for his ire. He's wounded, out of Possibilities, and unable to fly, but he's a dragon and fights to the death anyway. If the heroes attempt to flee he breathes fire to cut them off. There's no running from destiny.

- **Bezldrakus, the Living Inferno:** See below. This dragon has already suffered 10 Shock and three Wounds, and he has used all of his Possibilities battling a squadron of F-35s.

BEZLDRAKUS

This gigantic, scaled dragon claims he is fire incarnate, "The Living Inferno!" He has glistening red scales, massive talons, and a serpentine head. Even wounded, the mighty dragon scoffs at what he considers insignificant humans, and misses no opportunity to tell them just how powerless and delicious they are.

Bezldrakus has a large mane of yellow hair around his scaly face and at the tip of his long tail.

Quote: "I am fire and death! You are nothing before me but ashes floating in the wind!"

Attributes: Charisma 10, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 12, Strength 16

Skills: Conjuration 14, dodge 10, intimidation 15, find 12, maneuver 10, missile weapons 12, taunt 13, unarmed combat 14.

Move: 8; **Tough:** 21 (4); **Shock:** 16 (already suffered 10); **Wounds:** 5 (already suffered 3)

Equipment: —

Perks: Whirlwind

Possibilities: 5 (now 0)

Special Abilities:

- **A armor:** Scaly skin +4
- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (19).
- **Dread:** While a fearsome dragon is present, any Standard Scene counts as a Dramatic Scene instead.
- **Fire Breath:** Damage 16, Medium Blast, Range 20/40/60. This uses *missile weapons* for the attack.

• **Flight:** Normally Move 12 in the air, but Bezldrakus is wounded and may no longer fly.

• **Gloater:** When *taunt* or *intimidation* are Approved Actions, Bezldrakus may affect the entire party without a Multi-Target penalty, and any affected hero loses one random Destiny card from her hand.

• **Very Large:** Bezldrakus is 20 meters long, and attacks against him gain a +4 bonus.

If this weren't already a Dramatic Scene the presence of a dragon would make it so. There was no time to recover between scenes, so the heroes might start off in bad shape.

This is a new scene, so all cards in the Action Pool go back into the player's hand.

Players may discard one Destiny card, and then draw back up to four.

This can be a very challenging battle, especially if combat against the clockwork lion or lurks didn't go well. Even wounded, the dragon is a deadly opponent. Award Possibilities generously—the Storm Knights need them, and still don't have Cosm cards to fall back on.

If the heroes are nearing defeat bring back the other F-35 just long enough to obliterate any remaining lurks and cause another Wound to Bezldrakus. Use the dragon's attack to destroy the fighter.

Don't forget the dragon suffers a -3 penalty on every test thanks to its Wounds. When it takes a fourth Wound the penalty remains -3, the maximum.



SEAN MOLLOY

Remind the players of the tips for bringing down tough bosses found in the Facing a Monster sidebar on page 19.

If the dragon is KO'ed by Shock rather than defeated with Wounds, its fires go out and the creature slowly petrifies into stone as it cools.

If the heroes manage to defeat Bezladrakus without help from the other jet, make sure the survivors from the square and even a few villains witness it and remark upon it later. Wherever they go, the Storm Knights are met with awe and cries of, "Dragonslayer!"

SCENE THREE: UNDER THE GALLERY

Standard Scene. The heroes have time to scavenge Trafalgar Square for weapons and armor if they desire. Maces (*Strength* +2 damage, a hit Stymies an opponent), short bows (Damage 11, Minimum Strength 6, Range 10/25/40), and arrows are all in abundant supply. Anyone looking for better armor can put on the leather worn by lurks. It's foul smelling and unpleasant, but provides Armor +1, with Maximum Dexterity 10.

There's no reason Bel Patel couldn't wear armor. If he refuses to wear armor because it might theoretically diminish his ability to cast spells, award his player a Possibility for getting into the spirit of things!

Meanwhile, the other survivors have all congregated within the National Gallery. There's no power, but the building itself seems intact and stable. Refugees huddle inside, away from the doors. They all look to the Storm Knights for leadership, and batter them with questions about what's going on and how they did all those amazing things outside.

Jan, Jamie's assistant, takes a headcount of the students and finds one missing: Amelia. According to the other children she went to look at the exhibits while the adults were busy yelling or making plans.

A quick search reveals that things are out of place, partially from the earthquake that shook the area, but also some of the exhibits have been ransacked.

An Easy (DN 8) *find* test determines that several of the movie props on display as part of the "Fantasy Art" exhibit are missing, along with some museum pieces made of precious metals. There are no apparent signs of Amelia.

Suddenly, a muffled shriek echoes through the gallery, coming from somewhere downstairs. "She cut me!" a shrill voice screeches. By the time anyone can get there, the room the sounds came from is empty. The entire floor of the room is gone, collapsed down into a dark and winding tunnel. There's blood on the precipice, but a Standard *evidence analysis* test determines it's lurk blood, not human blood.

The eerie tunnel beckons. If the Storm Knights hesitate, Amelia's distant scream echoes up through the shaft.

TRAPS AND TREASURE

The tunnels are a great place for Storm Knights to play Cosm cards and gain Possibilities or items. Traps encountered in the tunnels are most often deadfalls set up by wily lurks or fiery runes placed by the priests of Corba'al.

The most likely enchanted items are movie props stolen from the museum, imbued with actual magical energy by the axiom wash and found in the possession of lurks, or dropped in a secret crevice for later recovery.

Sword of the King: A longsword (*Strength* +3 damage) that sends bright sparks flying upon any hit, making the target Very Vulnerable afterward.

Ring of the Dark Master: A golden, rune-inscribed ring that grants *invisibility*, just as the spell. Each use requires a *Spirit* test to activate. If the test fails the hero gains the Shadow Step Darkness Perk for free. A second failure grants the Frightening Aspect Darkness Perk. A third failure grants Smiling Deceiver, but after a fourth the hero turns completely to Darkness and is controlled by the GM.



The vermin in Aysle are large and cunning. Some are even intelligent!

Anyone who hasn't had a Moment of Crisis certainly experiences one if they brave the dangerous tunnels underneath the Gallery.

Deal each player one Aysle Cosm card once they enter the tunnel and begin exploring underground.

There's no power, so the delvers need to provide their own light once underground. Transformed or makeshift torches are easy to come by.

The initial passage winds its way under Trafalgar Square. Water drips into one section, perhaps from the fountain above. Finally, the tunnel opens into the Charington Cross underground station.

The group sees mauled bodies strewn across the turnstiles. An Easy (DN 8) *tracking* test reveals signs of people being dragged away.

The lurks leave a trail of blood and bodies that can't be missed. Their path leads deeper into the tube system and into a new, more natural-looking tunnel that opened up along the side wall.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Not everything in this new realm is deadly and brutish. In one tunnel characters see a bright golden glow from behind a rocky outcropping. If they investigate, they find a large, pulsating globe of light—its shape in constant flux. It emits a warm glow and mild static field that raises the character's hair gently.

The sphere seems like a living thing, a creature equal parts light and emotion. Once the group approaches it separates into a thousand tiny globules, like a dandelion caught in a strong wind. The minuscule lights drift over the Storm Knight who has taken the most Wounds—if any. That hero feels a tingling sensation as cuts close, bruises fade, and the character immediately heals one Wound.

Afterward the sphere reforms, dimmer than it was before, and glides back toward a rock outcropping. The light fills a slender, hollow tube tucked behind the stones. The result is a glowing wand.

The Storm Knights may take the wand along. It acts as a light source, and also as a source of magical healing. Each scene, the light recharges and grows brighter once more. When pointed at a wounded character the sphere emerges and heals another Wound. It's up to the heroes to name and care for this wondrous device.

THE WEBBED TUNNEL

As the characters descend into the Underground's depths, the cavern walls give way to rough-hewn stone corridors with bizarre markings crudely etched into the walls. Some corridors feature blazing torches, or piles of unidentifiable material set aflame to provide dim light.

Webbing coats the walls as the hallway opens up into a much larger space. The large room is more like a natural cavern than the halls that preceded

it, and strange stalactites covered in webbing hang down over the Storm Knight's heads. Probing into the webbing reveals that these aren't stalactites at all, but the dessicated bodies of lurks wrapped in webbing.

A tittering voice rings out from the dark, distant reaches of the room:

"Hee hee! More warm guests, sisters!"

Large arachnid shapes move in the darkness, and light reflects back from hundreds of tiny black eyes. Liling voices make excited noises that sound like "nibikrid" and skittering legs echo in the darkness.

The chamber has multiple exits. Finding the correct one and escaping before the foul spider-things overwhelm the group is a Dramatic Skill Resolution with the following steps:

- **Step A:** Find the correct door. A Standard *find* test spots signs of disturbed webbing or blood where lurks battled the spiders.
- **Step B:** Clear the webbing from the door. A fresh, thick layer of webbing blocks the door. A Hard (DN 14) *Strength* test brushes all the webbing aside.
- **Step C:** Unlock the door. Unfortunately the door is also locked, as the heroes discover once the handle is uncovered. A Standard *lockpicking* test or a Very Hard (DN 16) *Strength* test opens it.
- **Step D:** Brace the door to keep the spiders out. A Very Hard (DN 16) *Strength* test pushes any spiders in the hallway out and keeps the door slammed tight against them until they give up and leave.

The group has five rounds to complete the task before an overwhelming number of spiders appear. Dilemmas represent the spiders weaving deeper webbing or even the discovery that the heroes picked the wrong door.

Several of the larger, talking spiders—called nibikrids—scuttle toward the heroes as the encounter begins. Each round more appear to join the fray. Smaller spiders flit through the webs and crawl across the character's hands and legs as they fight.

Nibikrids are chatty creatures. They don't know why so many lurks are carrying people through their domain, but they're happy about the feast. They become enraged once any of their "sisters" are slain, and crow with sadistic glee whenever they deal damage to the Storm Knights.

If the task fails, the heroes are forced to flee down the wrong passage, and it takes much longer to find the lurks' trail again. The time this takes grants Antenoch (the main villain of Act Two) three extra Possibilities thanks to the extra rituals he's able to complete.

• **Nibikrids (1 per hero):** See page 60. Two nibikrids arrive each round.

Some of the tests for this task are very difficult, and may require Destiny cards, Possibilities, or combined actions to resolve. A few Storm Knights must battle the nibikrids, or weight of numbers soon allows them to stymie the heroes or deal deadly venom attacks.

If the Drama Deck is unkind, remember any player may attempt a Last Ditch Effort, rolling for all the remaining steps with the Multi-Action penalty, but if the attempt fails the task resets to Step A. It's risky, but on Round Five if the Drama cards aren't favorable it's the only way.

THE WAY DOWN

Eventually the slowly descending tunnel gives way to a wide, dark chasm. Several crude grappling hooks are wedged into the tunnel's floor, and a coarse rope trails down into the darkness below. If the heroes balk, a few echoing cries from Amelia assure them they're on the right track.

Characters who don't trust the rope may scale down unassisted with a Challenging (DN 12) *Strength* test. The rope is safe, and makes the test Standard (DN 10). If the test fails the Storm Knight tumbles down to a ledge far below. The fall deals 15 damage plus a bonus die. There are outcroppings to grab on the way down, so a successful *Dexterity* test reduces the falling damage by five points.

Once the Storm Knights descend, the act ends.

ACT TWO: UNDER LONDON

The heroes follow a trail left by kidnappers into the dark spaces underground that connect Aysle to Core Earth. Along the way they have the option to rescue a dwarf and learn more about the strange world around them.

The dangerous trail leads to the temple of Corba'al, where an evil sorcerer and his minions enact a ritual to drain the Possibilities from captives taken from the surface. The Storm Knights must disrupt the ritual and put a stop to the sorcerer's schemes once and for all.

Refresh each player's Possibilities and deal new Cosm cards for the act.

SCENE ONE: TORMENT OF THE DWARF

Standard Scene. The climb down leads to a ledge about two meters wide. The ledge forms a path that continues out of sight to the left and right. Only the end of the hanging rope offers any indication of the tunnel entrance high above.

A Standard *find* test reveals signs of foot traffic (lots of it) going both directions, but no indication which direction the lurks with Amelia went. Regardless of the result, the heroes hear sounds from the left—cursing interspersed with cruel laughter.

If the Storm Knights ignore the noises and press on toward the right, skip directly to Scene Two.

If they approach quietly and cautiously, have each hero make an Easy (DN 8) *stealth* test. A success allows them to approach the lurks unseen and attack with Surprise.

If the group just rushes forward they see only the dwarf described below. The lurks in the area are hiding in an attempt to ambush the newcomers.

Toward the left, the ledge leads past a corridor cut from the rock wall, similar to the one the heroes emerged from above. The walls, floor, and ceiling are all large, interlocking stone blocks.

Down the long hallway, just after a junction, a squat, heavily armored figure stands trapped inside a doorway. A huge stone block presses down



The halls of the Land Between are unstable and always shifting.

on the dwarf, partially closing off the entrance. The figure shoulders the stone block and strains to keep it from falling all the way shut.

Under the dwarf's feet lies a unconscious and bleeding man who would surely be crushed if the dwarf let go of the stone. His slender frame is draped in green leather armor, and sharp-eyed heroes spy pointed ears protruding from underneath his long amber hair.

If the party approached quietly, the armored dwarf is surrounded by mocking lurks. The creatures taunt and prod the dwarf with spears, and then dance back out of range when the frustrated figure fires a burst of flame at them from an armored gauntlet.

If the heroes made too much noise or didn't try to sneak at all, the lurks are hiding in a corridor near the doorway. They hope to ambush the oncoming strangers as they rush to help the dwarf, but the dwarf signals the group before that can happen.

The dwarf curses loudly at the motionless elf on the floor. "Get up, you stupid elf! I can't hold this up forever! Another mess caused by you elves. Why is



The heroes enter from along the ledge.

everything always your fault?!" The dwarf's voice is tinny and distorted by her helmet.

The lurks are led by a canny chief named Rakaya. He's a Stormer, and may surprise heroes who have become used to dispatching hordes of lurks with little trouble.

- **Lurks (2 per hero):** See page 60.
- **Rakaya:** See page 61.

If the heroes manage to ambush the lurks, they each get to play a card into their Action Pool before the first round of combat. The villains don't get to act until after the heroes do, so if the Drama card's initiative order is Villains first, they are skipped.

Once battle begins the dwarf keeps holding the stone barrier until someone pulls the elf out from underneath the doorway. A Hard (DN 14) *Strength* test helps get her out from under the slab without being crushed too. Once freed the dwarf defeats a lurk each round. Don't roll tests—her revenge is swift and certain.

Rakaya attempts to flee once things turn against him. He runs out onto the ledge and turns to the right, and keeps going until he reaches the Temple of Corba'al described in Scene Two. If he escapes he participates in the battle during Scene Three.

If the heroes choose not to help the dwarf, eventually she cries out in frustration and rolls back inside the hallway. The stone barrier falls and crushes the elf.

The ledge outside eventually stops at a dead end, leaving the Storm Knights nowhere else to go but back and to the right.

THE DWARF'S TALE

Once the strangers are rescued, the dwarf is quick to introduce herself. "Thank you! I am Tworek, and this useless elf is Nurin."

Her words are rough, and she kneels over the elf to slap him awake. She appreciates any help the heroes provide, although she doesn't show it. She suggests a short rest (enough to recover all Shock) while Nurin revives.

TWOREK

The dwarf is a Dragon Warrior. She's one of the last elite soldiers of her dying people. She has turned herself into a weapon of vengeance, and is completely focused on her mission.

Tworek is genuinely curious about the strangers' realm, and hopes they'll become allies in her struggle against Uthorion.

Her armor is stylized to evoke dragons. It looks more advanced than medieval plate mail.

Quote: "You hit pretty hard. I respect that."

NURIN

Nurin is a tall, lanky elf. He's a scout helping Tworek track lurks, but he's sorely outside his element in these stone tunnels.

Nurin has three Wounds and suffered a permanent injury when he was defeated. Even if he's healed he remains cautious and withdrawn.

Both he and Tworek suggest that the group leave him behind to make his own way back. He tags along if the group asks him to, but he's just as useless as Tworek claims.



TWOREK

Even in his current state, Nurin has a winning smile and he uses it freely.

Quote: "I've been punctured. I want to go home."

WHAT TWOREK KNOWS

Tworek has much to say to the heroes:

- She and Nurin are Storm Knights, just like the characters. She explains how Storm Knights are the chosen defenders of their realms, and suggests the heroes wear the title with honor.
- Tworek and all the creatures the heroes have encountered are from Aysle, a realm that's been battling the High Lords for 500 years. Angar Uthorion is the High Lord of Aysle. She knows of a few other High Lords, including the Gaunt Man.
- She explains that they are in the "Land Between" of Aysle, a vast maze of tunnels and corridors that weaves all through the crust of her world. The Land Between was once the home of the dwarves, before they were all but wiped out. Uthorion has somehow managed to connect the Land Between to Earth.
- One of her people was recently captured, a "Seeker" — someone with an unerring talent for finding pathways here in the Land Between. She and Nurin believe the Seeker was taken to the Temple of Corba'al for some vile ritual.
- Corba'al is the god of corruption. Tworek doesn't know much about him, and prefers to keep it that way. His worshipers tend to be necromancers. The sect's high priest is named Antenoch.
- If asked what happened back in the corridor, Tworek sheepishly admits that they fell into an ambush — thanks to that "idiot" Nurin. He was felled by arrows just as the lurks triggered that deadfall.

Once everyone has had a chance to rest and she has answered their questions, Tworek suggests the group move out toward the temple.

SCENE TWO: THE TEMPLE OF CORBA'AL

Standard Scene. Following the ledge to the right eventually leads to a strange sight.

A temple made of irregular, black stone floats in the middle of the chasm. Sickly vines wrap around the temple and hang off the structure, trailing down into the bottomless chasm below.

A slender rock bridge connects the ledge to the temple. There are no handrails, and it's a sheer drop on all sides. There's only empty space beneath the bridge and the temple itself, so magic of some kind must be at work.

As the Storm Knights approach, they see one of the robed priests from Trafalgar Square crossing the bridge toward the temple. In the distance they can barely hear him muttering some strange incantation. As he walks forward, the irregular blocks of the temple wall move aside to form an opening then reform into a solid wall after he passes through.

The only approach to the temple is along the thin stone bridge. As the characters get closer they spy that the irregular stones of the walls are actually charred, blackened bones. Some of bones in the wall are complete skeletons! Vines twist through the wall's bones.

THE DOOR OF BONES

Opening the doorway requires a Hard (DN 14) alteration test. If no hero has the skill, a Very Hard (DN 16) Strength test pushes the bones aside without the use of magic.

If the alteration test succeeds, the heroes may move forward without incident. If the test fails or Strength is used instead, the bones and vines of the walls knit together into humanoid creatures and attack!

- **Gospog of the First Planting (2 per hero):** See page 60.

The group is still on the bridge when the gospog attack. The bridge is only five meters across. A Mishap sends a character teetering on the edge, leaving him Very Vulnerable.

A gospog who rolls a Mishap falls off the bridge instead, plummeting to certain doom below. A Player's Call on any interaction may also send a gospog over the edge.

THE CHARNEL GALLERY

Once past the outer wall, the characters emerge into the main gallery, a large room filled with piles of discarded bones. At the far end of the room a statue dominates the interior of the temple. The stone figure is a man with a gaunt face and wide brimmed hat. He holds a cane and wears clothes that look more Victorian than Ayslish.

If Tworek is present, she wonders aloud if that's supposed to be a statue of the Gaunt Man, the reputed leader of the High Lords. "What's he doing in a temple dedicated to Corba'al?"

Behind the grim altar is a winding stairwell leading down. The steps are made from the same vine-strewn bone as the rest of the temple.

The sound of a loud, indistinct chant echoes up from below.

SCENE THREE: THE RITUAL

Dramatic Scene. The stairs wind down into a massive chamber. A tall figure in black robes stands in the very center of the chamber, hands raised and leading the others in a chant. He has slender, handsome features, but red eyes and alabaster white skin mark him as one of the undead. This is Antenoch, one of the many necromancers of Corba'al and High Priest of this sect.

Seven hooded figures, his chosen priests, encircle him. The priests face Antenoch and chant in unison. Magical energy flares around them all.

Behind the priests, nine people are manacled to a long chain. They are positioned between two pillars and a statue much like the one in the charnel gallery above. Amelia is one of the prisoners.

The captives look disoriented and fatigued. Their skin pulls taut and starts losing color as the chant continues. The Storm Knights all feel the Possibility Energy buzzing in the air.

A small contingent of lurks stands behind the prisoners, watching the proceedings with awe.

THE FALL OF TWOREK

Tworek, if present, acts before anyone has a chance to stop her. She bellows a war cry and leaps down to the base of the stairs—where a trap door opens beneath her feet! She disappears into the dark chasm below the temple.

THE LURKS ATTACK

Whether alerted by Tworek or not, the lurks still catch sight of the heroes and move from the prisoners to intercept them.

The ritual continues unabated as the battle begins, and at the end of each round Antenoch gains an extra Possibility!

- **Antenoch:** See page 58.
- **Lurks (2 per hero):** See page 60.
- **Priests of Corba'al (7):** See page 60.
- **Rakaya (if he escaped):** See page 61.

DISRUPTING THE RITUAL

So long as the ritual continues, Antenoch is invulnerable. Any attack against him stops at the circle formed by the chanting priests. The circle is also a physical barrier which the characters can't cross.

The priests forming the circle have no such invulnerability! Participating in the ritual makes each Very Vulnerable. They continue the ritual so long as any priests or captives remain. Once all the prisoners are freed or all the priests are slain the ritual ends, the circle is disrupted, and Antenoch himself becomes accessible. He and any remaining priests join the fight.

"I could have had so ... much ... more!" he rages, and commits to repelling the intruders with any of his remaining forces.

FREEING THE PRISONERS

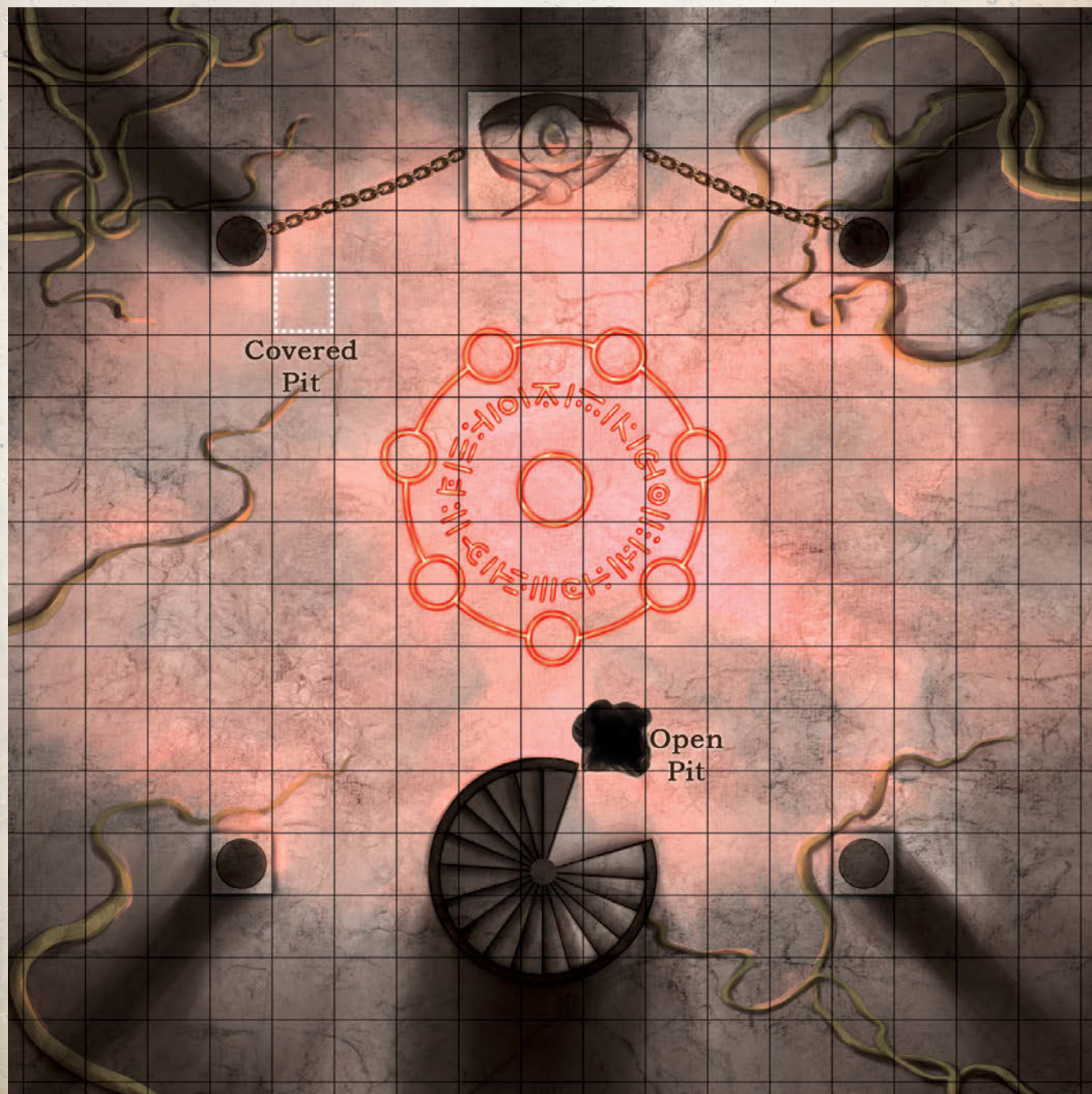
The chains and manacles binding the prisoners are Toughness 13 objects, or may be broken with a Heroic (DN 18) *Strength* test. There are two chains linking the prisoners, each attached to a pillar on one side and the statue on the other. Each chain has the same Toughness as the manacles.

A Standard *lockpicking* test opens a captive's manacles. There are locks on the chains themselves at either pillar. If a chain is unlocked (or destroyed) all the prisoners attached to it are freed.

There's one last trick waiting for a hero who tries to unlock the ends of the chains. Another trap door is hidden by one of the pillars, right near where the chain end is locked.

If a hero moves to pick that lock allow a Challenging (DN 12) *find* test to spot the trap and avoid it. If the hero fails, a Hard (DN 14) *Dexterity* test offers one last chance to leap to safety as the floor underneath crumbles away. If that too fails the character appears to fall into the abyss below—at least for a moment.

In actuality, Tworek is clinging to vines hanging below the temple. She catches the falling Storm Knight. On the heroes' initiative next round the





The magic of the priests of Corba'al is the only thing keeping the temple from collapsing.

mighty dwarf hurls the Storm Knight back up through the trap door, much to the surprise of heroes and villains alike!

ANTENOCH

Antenoch is tall and slender, and wears the ornate black robes of a priest of Corba'al. His eyes are blood red, and his fingers end in long, black claws.

So long as the ritual continues he remains completely focused on it, absorbing as much Possibility Energy as he can. Once the ritual stops he seethes in anger, casts his *shield* spell, and uses all the deadly magic in his arsenal to destroy the interlopers.

The pointed ears of an elf hide under Antenoch's white hair. He was likely a High Elf long ago, before Darkness twisted him and undeath claimed his body.

Quote: "In the Name of Uthorion and the Gaunt Man, I shall drain your energy dry!"

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 10, Mind 11, Spirit 11, Strength 9

Skills: Conjunction 14, divination 14, dodge 12, find 12, melee weapons 12, maneuver 12, reality 13, taunt 11, trick 12, unarmed combat 12

Move: 10; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Staff (Damage Strength +2/11)

Perks: Spellcaster (*lightning, possibility rend, shield*)

Possibilities: 3 (plus 1 for each round the ritual continues)

Special Abilities:

- **Life Drain:** Antenoch's touch deals 13 damage, and he immediately heals the same number of Shock or Wounds he deals.

- **Ritual Protection:** So long as any of his priests remain alive to participate in the draining ritual, Antenoch is immune to all damage and interaction attacks.

- **Undead:** Wights are immune to effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.

THE FALL OF THE TEMPLE

As Antenoch falls, he cries out:

"I am but one of many! My brothers shall avenge me!"

With the necromancer gone, the bones that form the temple start to shift and shake. The heroes feel the entire place starting to come apart and topple. Any remaining lurks or priests scatter in terror or fall through the floor as chunks drop away.

Everyone who races up the stairs, including the captives, makes it to the bridge in time. After the last person reaches the ledge the temple falls away into the darkness piece by piece, leaving only a stone walkway out into the empty chasm, and a few last hanging vines.

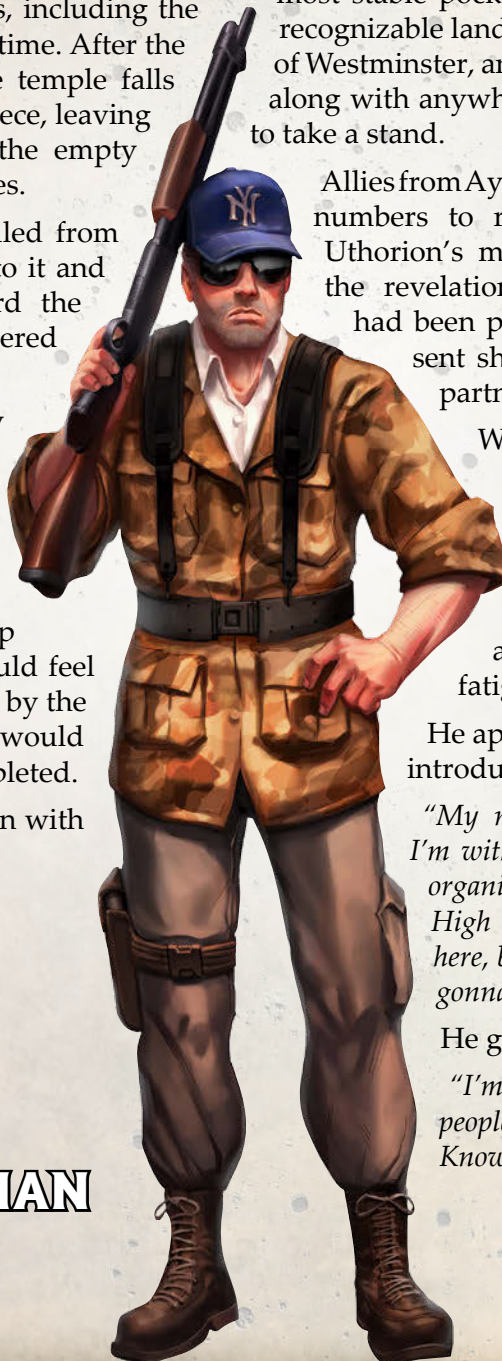
One of those vines twitches, pulled from below. Tworek appears, clinging to it and pulling herself slowly up toward the ledge. She won't say no to an offered hand up!

The surviving captives profusely thank the Storm Knights. One is the dwarven Seeker that Tworek was looking for. Another is an elf. The rest of the captives are people taken from London. The survivors are grateful to the group for rescuing them. All of them could feel their life force being drained away by the ritual, and shudder to think what would have happened if it had been completed.

Amelia breaks up the conversation with a simple query:

"Can we go home now?"

QUINN SEBASTIAN



EPILOGUE

The trip back to the surface is easier than the delve down. Amelia seems to know the easiest way, leading the heroes back along a different path. Within an hour of climbing, everyone is back at the museum. When asked how she knew which way to go Amelia shrugs and replies, "I just knew."

In the following weeks attacks from above and below continue to ravage the countryside. The most stable pockets of resistance form around recognizable landmarks like Big Ben, the Palace of Westminster, and even the National Gallery... along with anywhere the Storm Knights choose to take a stand.

Allies from Aysle have appeared in increasing numbers to reinforce the troops fighting Uthorion's minions. Tolwyn's return, and the revelation that Lady Pella Ardinnay had been possessed by Uthorion's spirit, sent shockwaves through these new partners.

Weeks later, the heroes are still in London helping out where they can when they hear jet engines—a rare sound on the Isles now. A tilt-winged aircraft comes to a landing and an older man in combat fatigues emerges.

He appraises the Storm Knights and introduces himself in a gruff voice.

"My name is Quinn Sebastian, and I'm with the Delphi Council. We're an organization dedicated to kicking the High Lords off the Earth. Not just here, but everywhere. To do that we're gonna need heroes. The best."

He grins widely.

"I'm looking for the Storm Knights people are calling the Dragon Slayers. Know anyone like that?"

AYSLE THREATS

GOSPOG OF THE FIRST PLANTING

Gospog of the First Planting are human corpses entwined with rotting vegetation and putrid flesh. They are common to all realms, a gracious gift of death from the Gaunt Man to his fellow Reality Raiders. They are strangely adaptable and function without Contradiction in every realm.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 8, stealth 8, unarmed combat 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (10)
- **Fear:** Gospog are horrific amalgamations of a corpse and rotten plant matter. Test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Mindless:** Gospog are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions.
- **Relentless:** Gospog ignore Shock.
- **Undead:** Gospog are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

LURKS

Lurks are degenerate humanoids with mottled green or pale white skin, slightly oversized heads, and gnarled, sharp teeth. They rob, torture, and loot at the behest of their masters—and they enjoy every minute of it.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 5, Spirit 6, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 9, maneuver 8, melee weapons 9, taunt 9, trick 9, unarmed combat 9, missile weapons 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 9 (2); **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Leather armor (+2), mace (*Strength* +2/9), short bow (Damage 11, Range 10/25/40)

Perks: Shadow Step

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

NIBIKRIDS

Nibikrids are arachnids almost the size of a person. They are hairy all over and possess gray-bearded faces with glistening rows of black eyes. They speak with high-pitched voices.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 8, Mind 6, Spirit 6, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 9, maneuver 12, stealth 11, taunt 8, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Damage is *Strength* +1 (9), plus the victim is affected by nibikrid venom if the damage exceeds Toughness.
- **Nibikrid Venom:** The target's *Strength* decreases by one. Note that this does decrease Toughness. If *Strength* drops below 5 the target is KO'ed and must test for **Defeat**. After one minute (six rounds) the target tests *Strength* to end the venom's effect. If the test fails the effect lasts another minute, and then the target tests again.

PRIESTS OF CORBA'AL

Hooded, humanoid figures with pale skin and white hair. These priests are all vile sorcerers. These priests serve Antenoch, and are loyal to the death. If they serve well, their dark master has promised to reward them with a new, undead existence.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 9, Mind 11, Spirit 9, Strength 7

Skills: Conjuration 14, dodge 11, find 11, melee weapons 11, maneuver 11, taunt 11, trick 12

Move: 9; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Staff (Damage *Strength* +2/9)

Perks: Spellcaster (*lightning*, *mage dark*, *shield*)

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

- **Profound Sight:** Thanks to a ritual, these priests can perceive potential “Seekers,” or Storm Knights.

RAKAYA

Rakaya is the boss of a filthy band of lurk cutthroats. He's a cunning hunter, and a Stormer. When possible, Rakaya likes to *trick* or *taunt* heroes to make them Vulnerable to his lackeys.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 8, Mind 6, Spirit 6, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, find 8, maneuver 9, melee weapons 10, reality 8, taunt 9, tracking 9, trick 9, survival 8, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 10 (2); **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: Leather armor (+2), mace (*Strength*+2)

Perks: Shadow Step

Possibilities: 2

Special Abilities:

- **Gloater:** When *taunt* or *intimidation* are Approved Actions, Rakaya may affect the entire party without a Multi-Target penalty. Any affected hero loses one random Destiny card from her hand.

- **Minions:** Rakaya may transfer any hit to a lurk within a few meters if he succeeds at a *reality* test.



Not all lurks are wretched and cowardly.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: PAN-PACIFICA

GIN "GINNY" INOUE

Stay cheerful! That's Ginny's motto, and she's built her life around it. She's a 20-something fashionista, drawn to outfits with bright colors and patterns to liven up her otherwise dull receptionist job. She's spent the day shopping and seeing what the youth are dressing up like this week. But first, a hot bowl of tasty ramen!

Quote: "Wait, that isn't makeup?!"

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 9, Dexterity 9, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 1, persuasion 3, scholar 1, [reality 1], stealth 1, streetwise 1, taunt 3

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, large purse

Perks: [Grant Possibilities], Helper

JURO FUKOZAWA

Juro is middle-aged, cynical, and a bit flabby. He's also a bit lazy. He works as a security guard during the day, never needing the judo skills that made him a champion in his youth. He's off duty and stopping for some noodles on the way home.

Quote: "Stay behind me when things get rough, I'll try to protect you."

Cosm: [Pan-Pacifica]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 1, intimidation 1, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 2, missile weapons 1, [reality 1], stealth 1, streetwise 1, unarmed combat 3

Move: 9; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Flashlight, taser (Damage 12, Stymies and deals +1 Shock, non-lethal)

Perks: [Block Strike], Brawler

KOSUKE "KO" WATANABE

Big Brother Ko is a dropout with authority issues. He takes it upon himself to look after the rest of his gang. The others are headed for a construction site near the Meiji Shrine, hoping to pilfer something cool. Ko stayed behind to check out a strange new girl who caught his eye at the ramen machine.

Quote: "Just stay out of my way and you won't get hurt."

Cosm: [Pan-Pacifica]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 11, Mind 6, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 2, intimidation 1, land vehicles 1, lockpicking 2, maneuver 1, melee weapons 3, [reality 1], stealth 1, streetwise 2, unarmed combat 2

Move: 11; **Tough:** 10 (1); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Switchblade (Damage *Strength* +1/10), leather jacket (Armor +1, Torso)

Perks: Trademark Weapon (Switchblade), [Whirlwind]

SUN HYONG

Sun immigrated from North Korea over a decade ago, and never speaks about why he left, or what he did before coming to Japan. He's an affable man with many acquaintances but few friends, who owns a small day stall in the Harajuku. He's closed up for the night and needs to make a drop at the bank after a stop for dinner.

Quote: "Useless."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 9, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 2, fire combat 1, first aid 1, land vehicles 1, melee weapons 1, persuasion 2, [reality 1], streetwise 2, taunt 1, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, dropbox envelope containing \$6,000

Perks: Endurance, Indomitable

KIKU OONISHI

Kiku makes a meager living writing science-fiction and fantasy stories. She spent the day at the Meiji Shrine contemplating if she should give up writing in favor of a boring but better-paying corporate job. She popped over to the Harajuku to treat herself to dinner out, and ended up settling for vending machine ramen.

Quote: "At least this would make a good story."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 9, Spirit 10, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 2, find 1, faith 1, melee weapons 1, [reality 3], scholar 1, science 1, stealth 1, trick 2, unarmed combat 1

Move: 9; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Fresh flowers, novel, mobile phone

Perks: [Prodigy], [Tenacious]

AYAKA KURODA

Ayaka isn't popular at her high school. She's considered creepy and doesn't get particularly good grades. She's had terrible nightmares for months, and the only image she can remember from them is a particular noodle machine in a shop alley. She's been searching for the location for weeks, and has just found it.

Quote: "We're all going to die."

Cosm: [Pan-Pacifica]

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 6, Mind 12, Spirit 10, Strength 5

Skills: Dodge 3, find 2, maneuver 2, [precognition 3], [reality 1], scholar 1, stealth 2, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 6; **Tough:** 5; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Backpack, mobile phone, school books

Perks: [Psionic (awareness, foreshadow, psychometry)], [Situational Awareness]

ACT ONE: PAN-PACIFICA

BY BILL KEYES

Pan-Pacifica's invasion isn't quiet or subtle, but it isn't obviously an invasion either. Rather, it's a disaster. An outbreak.

Kanawa Corporation has been secretly consolidating its power over the past several months. Earlier it planted biological bombs in major cities throughout East Asia, including Hong Kong, Nanjing, Shanghai, Taipei, Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo. At the appointed time, these devices release a genetically modified and extremely virulent disease. Those infected go berserk, viciously attacking anyone nearby. Some mutate into monstrous creatures.

The heroes are inside Tokyo's Harajuku shopping district when madness erupts all around them. The group lingers inside a shuttered store, then flees to an embattled shrine to stay ahead of the chaos and rioting. Finally the survivors are driven to a site that contains a link to Kanawa's deadly plot.

All the while, the infected horde spreads and follows the characters wherever they go.

SCENE ONE: HORROR IN HARAJUKU

Standard Scene. It's evening in the fashionable Harajuku district in Tokyo. This area is filled with fashionable boutiques, cafés, and international chain stores. It's a center of youth culture, where fashion-conscious teenagers and 20-somethings show off the latest trends. Harajuku is not, and has never been, a red light district, and the entertainment is mostly all-ages friendly.

Elsewhere in the district the contagion is released. It spreads quickly, and as people succumb the raving throngs spread the infection even faster. The heroes are unaware of what's happening nearby—for the moment.

THE SIGHTS OF HARAJUKU

The streets buzz with activity as usual this evening. Businessmen head home after a long day's work, hungry diners eat, shoppers come and go, and teens meet up with their friends. On side streets, the day businesses close, pulling down metal shutters as the night businesses begin to open.



The infected hunger for something other than noodles.

A few of the sights the characters may see as they walk the district include:

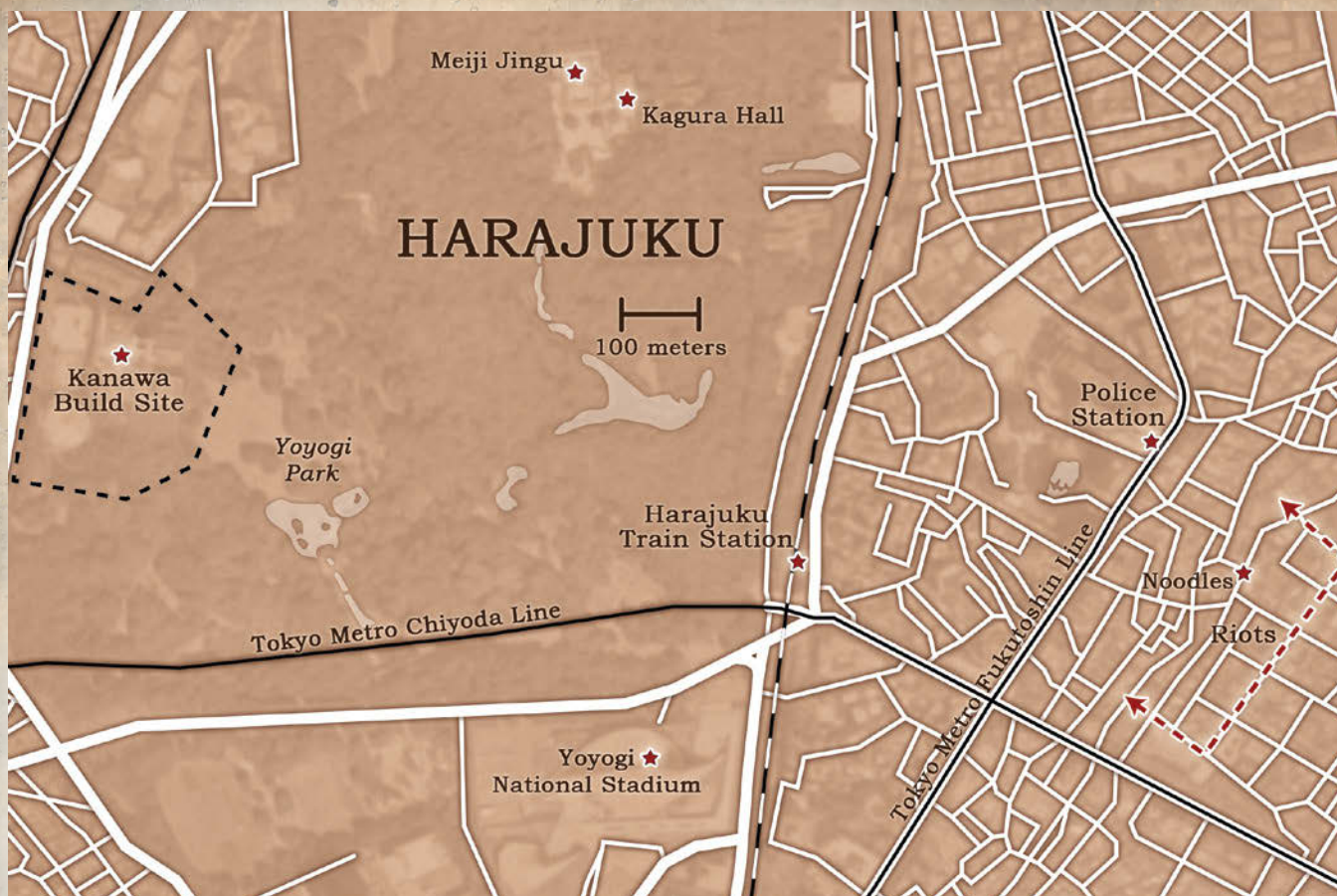
- Neon lights and giant TV screens light up the streets as though it were still daylight.
- Pretty girls stand at busy corners, handing out packages of tissues advertising everything from mobile phones to night clubs.
- Restaurant workers put out plastic replicas of the house specialties.
- A smiling girl in a bikini waves to passers-by from inside a pizza shop.
- A group of slightly drunk office workers stagger toward a Karaoke Box, while giggling schoolgirls form knots and push into shops together.
- An impromptu street fashion show is performed by teens in elaborate costumes reminiscent of renaissance plague doctors.

There's a metallic tang in the air, a sense of tension that makes everyone slightly edgy. Maybe it's the news stories about strange attacks in India and the United States, and massive riots across China and Korea.

There aren't many details about the unrest, but that hasn't stopped the news from broadcasting live images and speculating wildly. All anybody seems to know is the riots started spontaneously, and the police are overwhelmed. Thousands are dead, and atrocities are happening within the rowdy crowds. Rumors claim the Chinese military has been called out to quell the disturbances in Beijing.

THE NOODLE SHOP

Each of the characters happens to be in the same place at the same time, just outside a vending machine ramen shop on a quiet side avenue. The



machine is a large device built into the wall which dispenses hot noodles with various flavors. There are a handful of small tables scattered around in front where people can eat and chat.

The characters are unknown to one another; they just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Everyone is hungry and stuck waiting while an older man stares at the machine, unable to make a choice. Actually he's just being rude, and if anyone comments or shows signs of impatience he delights in dragging out his decision and making them wait even longer.

The claustrophobic alley twists at an angle and is hemmed in by closed storefronts. This has the advantage of blocking most of the noise from the busy streets. The evening has been marked by a light drizzle, but the umbrellas atop the ramen shop's tables keep this area mostly dry.

The Pan-Pacific axioms and World Laws are now in effect. Deal each player a Pan-Pacific Cosm card as a new sprinkle of rain starts, then make a low, hissing or sucking sound.

If anyone asks about the sound, allow a *find* test. Success doesn't pin down the source, but does prevent the character from being surprised when the attack comes moments later. A Good success picks out the sound as coming from an alley wall, and an Outstanding success pinpoints the sound coming from atop the wall!

If Ayaka is present have her test against *precognition* to see a strange vision of teeth tearing into flesh. Whether anyone notices something amiss or not, the characters hear a sudden swell of screams around the corner toward the street.

JIANGSHI ATTACK

Just then, a figure in a torn business suit leaps down from the roofs above and lands on the rude man in front of the ramen machine. There is a sickening crunch as the man's head hits the pavement, and the creature takes a deep bite out of his neck.

The attacker looks like he's already sustained mortal wounds himself. One of his legs looks broken, and black blood drips down his chest.

Somehow he is still moving, and the blood of the man by the vending machine now drips from his jaws as well.

The madman, actually a jiangshi, looks up at the characters and makes the sucking sound heard before. It's time for a Drama card and a fear test!

First thing up is a fear test. Each character must test *Spirit* (DN 10). If the test fails the character is immediately Very Stymied. Note that fear only applies once each act for each type of creature, so further encounters with jiangshi don't require another test—but encountering a new and different monster later on (such as the yokai) prompts a new fear test.

If a character didn't inquire about the sound or failed the *find* test, he's surprised and can't play a Destiny card into his Action Pool at the end of his turn. A character who succeeded at the *find* test places a Destiny card in her Action Pool at the end of her turn normally.

The characters are ordinary citizens unprepared for violence. Some have weapons of their own, but the rest have to make do using chairs or table umbrellas as improvised clubs (*Strength* +2 damage, become Vulnerable on a miss).

It's unlikely for any heroes to experience a Moment of Crisis during this encounter—there aren't really innocents to save or invaders to fight. Technically the jiangshi is an invader, but for now the characters are simply fighting for their lives.

An attempt to move past the jiangshi and apply *first aid* to the rude man by the vending machine is fruitless (the man is beyond saving), but does trigger a Moment of Crisis.

More likely the heroes attempt to flee, which only makes the situation worse. A number of infected are just around the bend. At first they stand in creepy silhouette, sniffing the air. The heroes can immediately tell something is wrong with them. Once approached, these figures snarl and attack with animal ferocity.

- **Jiangshi (1):** See page 78.
- **Infected Humans (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 78. These creatures don't become active unless someone tries to leave the alley.

TRAGIC ENDINGS

Pan-Pacifica isn't a very nice place, and the standard ending of this adventure involves the certain doom of each of the heroes—except perhaps one. The best the players can hope for is to discover the depth of Kanawa's involvement before the curtain falls.

In part, this helps reinforce the horror infused theme of the cosm, and establish it as a dangerous place for Storm Knights, even if no overt High Lord or invasion has been revealed.

If Ayaka is in play she should get constant visions of inevitable doom. Even if not, every character can feel doom coming with all their senses. Let that fatalism seep into every description.

A truly spectacular idea by the players or a little GM intervention may lighten the ending for groups who just won't enjoy such a downbeat finale. But without changes, only one character is ever seen again.

If the heroes suffer a Setback or someone plays the *Mutation!* Cosm card, the rude man at the vending machine rises to his feet as a jiangshi.

Beyond the alley are hundreds more infected, tearing through the crowds in the busier streets. Bodies litter the pavement, and crazed throngs prowl for fresh meat. The group sees bodies littering the street and dozens of crazed "rioters" chase them back toward the alley.

Suffering Wounds may also trigger a Moment of Crisis!

THE SHOPKEEPER

Once the initial threat is defeated, or at a dramatic moment if it looks like the heroes are about to be overwhelmed, one of the shuttered storefronts suddenly rolls open and an elderly man waves the group inside. "In here, quickly!" he cries, and then rolls down the steel shutters after everyone runs inside.

COSM CARDS

Some Cosm cards present a special challenge this early in the Pan-Pacific timeline.

Feud: Any survivor might nurse a grudge if an infected slain by the hero turns out to have been a loved one or family member.

Is That a Bite?: This early in the outbreak it's a paranoid police patrol rather than Kanawa forces. There is one officer per two heroes. Use the statistics for a Kanawa Security Troopers (page 79) but they aren't wearing armor, and carry only 9mm pistols (Damage 13, Ammo 15). The officers attack any wounded hero, or demand the group head for the "safety" of the police station if they all look healthy.

Mutation: If played in a scene with a jiangshi (page 78), even a slain one, that jiangshi begins to writhe and transform into the yokai (page 79) that pursues the heroes starting in Scene Three. If played while only infected are present one of them becomes a jiangshi.

If played in Scene Four when the yokai is present things get really nasty. Its *Strength* increases by two, and it may spend a Possibility to heal all of its Wounds as a free action!

Outbreak: The scenes at the shop and the Meiji Shrine both inevitably end with the group being forced to flee as infected arrive. Playing this card in either situation just puts the timing in the hands of the players, and gives them some Possibilities for their trouble.

Sold Out: Any of the introduced characters might betray the group in hopes of surviving just a little while longer. This may mean leaving the heroes in a sticky situation or pointing out a bite at an inconvenient time.

You Don't Look So Good: Rain, tainted blood from combat, or even the initial release of the spores may have affected the character. Treat him as if he's been bitten—see the **Bitten?** sidebar on page 80.

SCENE TWO: ESCAPE FROM HARAJUKU

Standard Scene. Outside, the sounds of a violent storm, torrential rain, and distant screams penetrate the thick walls. Any infected that remained outside scratch at the metal-shuttered doors and windows, but stop once the storm reaches its height.

MAKOTO

The shopkeeper's name is Makoto. He lives in an apartment above his business—a souvenir and toy shop. He looks terrified and paces nervously, but his place is secure, at least for now.

Makoto has no family of his own, and is inclined to treat the younger characters like his sons or daughters—if they allow him to. He'll sacrifice his life for his new family if that bond is forged.

He wears large, saucer glasses and is nearly blind without them.

Quote: "I never thought I'd see a night like this. We must stick together if we hope to survive until morning."

BAD NEWS

The news plays quietly on a television set while Makoto paces around the room. The major stories tick by, and seem to get worse by the minute:

- Spontaneous rioting has broken out in Shanghai, Nanjing, and other cities nearby. Chinese officials have begun referring to the rioters as "jiangshi," a term which means "jumping vampires." The most recent claim is the jiangshi are victims of a biological terrorist attack.
- Japan is suffering outbreaks of an infectious madness linked to the jiangshi phenomenon seen in China. The worst incident so far is in the Harajuku district where hundreds, possibly thousands, are dead. Police and military forces are attempting to quarantine the area to stem the spread of violence. Fires have begun spreading across the western portion of the district. All public transportation within Tokyo has stopped, and other services may be suspended at any time.

• Reports from Korea indicate military strikes against population centers in and around Busan. Neither government has issued a statement.

At this point Makoto turns off the television in horror and disgust.

LOOTING THE STORE

The group has a chance to check over Makoto's business (and his private room) to scrounge for weapons. Each hero may make a Standard *find* test and compare it to the **Scavenging in the Shop** chart below. Alternatively, a character may test *persuasion* to ask Makoto for something instead of searching for it!

COMMUNICATING WITH THE OUTSIDE

None of the characters' mobile phones work correctly; numbers all come through as busy and internet access is unavailable. This could be from usage and strain caused by the disaster, interference from the other invasions, or a mixture of both. Any features that don't rely on connectivity still work fine.

LEAVING HARAJUKU

Outside the storm lessens, but fresh sounds of infected clawing or pounding on the storefront's shutter have started. "We have to get out of here," Makoto whispers.

The group must decide where they plan to go. The news stories should tip the players off that between the quarantine and the fires they aren't likely to get far. Makoto argues strongly for finding somewhere safer nearby to hold out until morning.

Kiku and Kosuke both have potential destinations in mind if either are in play. Makoto suggests the Meiji (*mey-jee*) Shrine if no one else does, and heartily supports Kiku if she suggests it. From what Makoto's seen, he believes the infected are a supernatural threat. The shrine offers the best protection if that's true.

If the heroes push for the train station or subway Makoto reminds them that the trains aren't running, and those sites must be crowded with other people or the infected. The police station is likely the same or worse, especially if the police are enforcing the quarantine.

Once the group has a destination in mind (or if they take too long to decide) have the shutter shake and dent inward from a stupendous impact. Then another. Then another. Something on the other side of that door is very strong, and wants inside. It's time to leave!

TRAVEL IN HARAJUKU

Whatever the group chooses as a destination, getting there alive is a Dramatic Skill Resolution. They have five rounds to arrive without a major confrontation with the infected hordes.

SCAVENGING IN THE SHOP

Find	Usable Items
Fail	Claw Hammer: It deals <i>Strength</i> +1 damage, and beats having nothing at all. Box Cutter: <i>Strength</i> +1 damage, small.
Standard	Petrol Bomb: A bottle of alcohol and a strip of cloth combine to make this weapon. Damage 14, Range 5/10/15, Medium Blast, Fire. Thrown with <i>missile weapons</i> . Makeshift Shield: Grants a +2 bonus to defenses, and also a +2 Toughness if the character uses it for an Active Defense.
Good	Scent Masking (5 doses): A combination of unappetizing sprays and lotions makes the wearer stink—but not like a human. Each dose makes <i>stealth</i> Favored against the infected for one scene.
Outstanding	.38 Revolver: Hidden in a drawer. Damage 12, ammo 6, small. Souvenir Katana: It's a tourist knock-off, but it still deals <i>Strength</i> +3 damage.

In this case each round represents minutes of cautious travel. If the task fails, the Storm Knights must face two bonus dice of infected (page 78). Rolling the ∞ symbol brings five infected, plus the result of another die roll! Once the infected are defeated, the survivors arrive at the destination without any more trouble.

The steps for traveling to any destination inside the quarantined area are:

Step A: Avoid wandering infected in the area. This is a Challenging (DN 12) *stealth* test.

Step B: Discover a viable route. Treat this as a Standard *find* or *Mind* test.

Step C: Avoid a clumsy accident. Setting off car alarms or tripping over piles of rubble are classic examples, and cost the group time to reroute as the noise draws more infected. Avoiding an accident is an Easy (DN 8) *Dexterity* test.

Step D: Keep up the pace. This is a Challenging (DN 12) *Strength* test. The character who attempts the test is helping others along, scouting ahead, or generally performing the most strenuous activity.

Dilemmas usually represent groups of infected or jiangshi along the route, fires, or effects of the worsening storm.

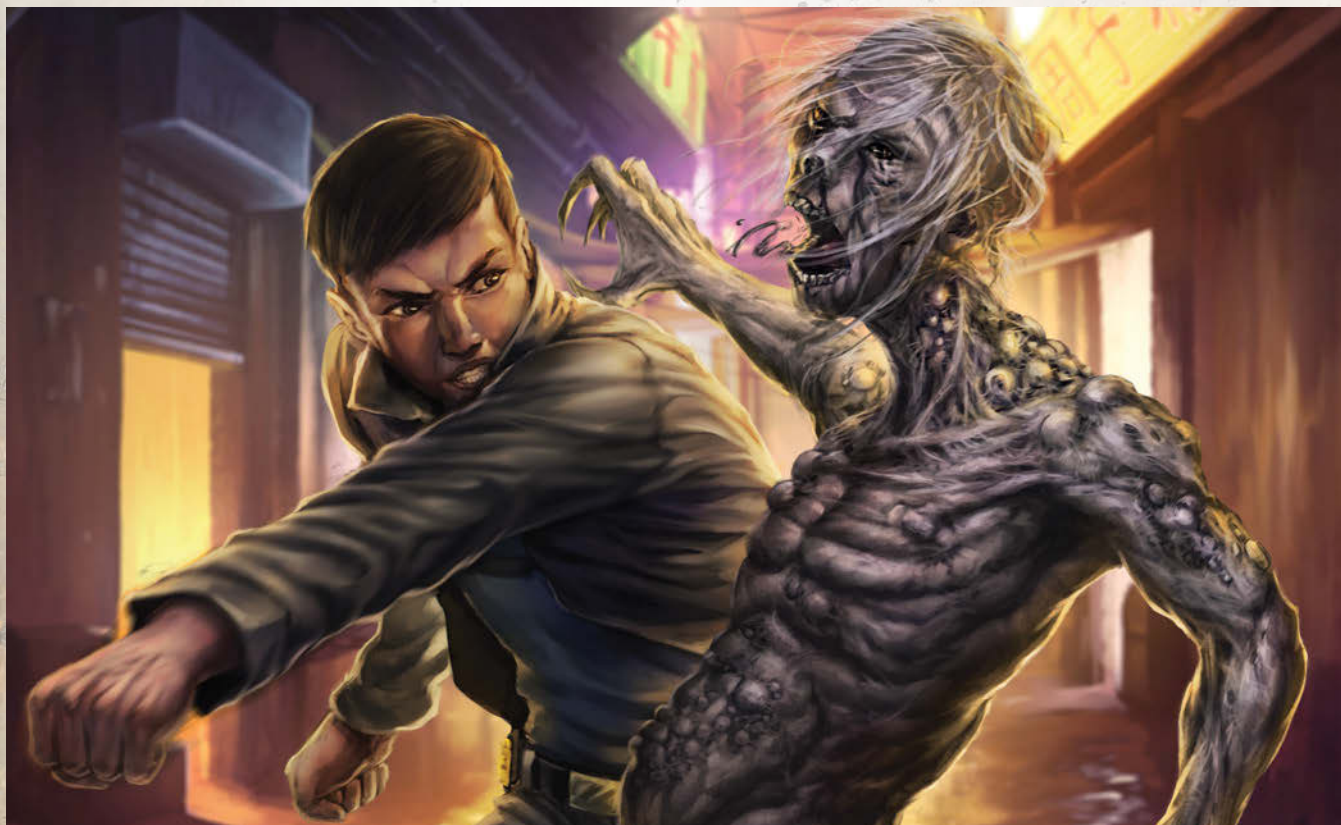
OTHER ENCOUNTERS

Sprinkle these short encounters in between steps of the Dramatic Skill Resolution as flavor.

- **Barricade:** Several empty cars are aflame near a shattered police barricade. There are piles of bodies with what appear to be gunshot wounds. A jiangshi (page 78) prowls among the bodies, and attacks if the group comes too close.

- **Hanged Man:** A man's corpse hangs from a nearby street light. The corpse is still twitching, and black blood runs down from his mouth and drips to the ground. His eyes are open and seem to be staring directly at the characters.

- **Wheelchair:** The characters find a broken and overturned wheelchair. There is a trail of blood leading behind a stack of trash cans, as though someone were dragged back there. If the characters investigate they find the unmoving



Mutating jiangshi are an ever present danger.

corpse of an old woman. She was badly injured in the rioting and dragged herself behind the trash cans to hide.

- **Weeper:** Curled up in the middle of the street is a softly weeping girl. Her face is pressed against her legs but trails of black liquid clearly stream from her eyes and drip down to the ground. If disturbed she looks up with pitch black eyes, mouth open in a silent scream, and then she gurgles and dies.

DIFFERENT DESTINATIONS

If the heroes pick a destination other than the Meiji Shrine or the Kanawa Construction site they find it strewn with bodies and crawling with infected. Roll two bonus dice to determine the number of infected present, just as if the group had failed the Dramatic Skill Resolution.

Traveling to another destination requires a repeat of the Dramatic Skill Resolution, with the same steps.

- **Infected Humans (2BD):** See page 78.

SCENE THREE: THE SHRINE

Standard Scene. Meiji Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and Empress Shōken. It sits just west of Harajuku, in the midst of a beautiful evergreen forest. The shrine and the forest are normally a sea of serenity in the heart of Tokyo, but tonight the forest is unsettling—there may be monsters lurking behind every tree.

The shrine is composed of an inner and outer area. The inner precinct holds the shrine itself and includes a museum which houses artifacts from the Emperor and Empress. The outer precinct includes public art works, a variety of sports facilities, and the Meiji Memorial Hall. The hall was originally used for governmental meetings but today is utilized for Shinto weddings and other private events.

Once the group arrives at the Shrine they find the gates closed. As they approach, someone calls down to them, asking who they are and what they

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

If Ayaka is in play, she should occasionally get flashes of grim future events. These visions help set the horrific tone of the adventure and provide clues that move the plot along.

Early glimpses should be of jiangshi rending flesh or pursuing the group, and possibly flashes of the yokai from Scene Four that pursues them.

She might also see the face of Makoto the shopkeeper before he opens his shuttered door, or images of the weapons at the Meiji Shrine.

Her last glimpse of the future should be the Kanawa construction site. Beyond that there's no future for poor Ayaka to see.

want. A *persuasion* test convinces those inside to let them in; otherwise they must climb the walls or find another way in.

SURVIVORS

Inside, the characters find four other survivors. All of them are eager to hear what the characters have seen and heard. Television broadcasts have reported the general situation, but that's different from firsthand accounts. They have been arguing constantly about whether to leave (as most of the crowds did) or remain in place until the authorities get everything under control.

AYUMU KATO

Ayumu is a young Shrine Maiden, a Shinto priestess who performs cleansing rituals and sells souvenirs. She's depressed, and believes the emergence of monsters outside is a sign of the end of the world. She's still wearing the traditional red and white dress of her station.

Quote: "Empress Shōken was very kind and very devout. I wonder what she would do, surrounded by creatures such as these."



The Meiji shrine is surrounded by thick woods and well tended paths. The main site is protected by walls and gates, but the dojo and museum are a short hike away.

AKIRA SATO

Akira is an older man who was visiting the park with his friend Yusei. When the chaos hit he and Yusei fled here, and his companion convinced him to stay when the other visitors and most of the staff evacuated. Now Akira is growing restless, and thinks it's only a matter of time before the shrine is attacked. Akira wears a Western style fishing hat and a dumpy t-shirt.

Quote: "Don't be a coward. We should have left with the others."

YUSEI FUJIMOTO

Yusei has been Akira's friend for decades, though the two seldom see eye to eye. He's cautious and mild, which balances well with Akira's hot temper. When Ken arrived with his tales of violence at the train station it reaffirmed Yusei's belief that hiding here in the shrine is the only option.

Yusei only has three fingers on one of his hands. He learned a powerful lesson about taking chances at a young age!

Quote: "Don't be a fool. The only thing outside these walls is death."

KENSHIN "KEN" MATSUO

Ken is a well-dressed businessman who fled here from a disastrous scene at the train station. He's still shaken from his experience, and is drunk. He tries to cover up his fear with belligerence and bravado.

Quote: "If I'm going to die I don't plan to do it sober."

TREASURE IN THE SHRINE

If the group looks (or asks Ayumu) it turns out there are a surprising number of weapons available within the shrine.

There's a dojo in the outer precinct that has various practice weapons (mostly blunt, but some sharp) that deal *Strength* +2 damage. Best of all, there are suits of kendo armor in the lockers, which provide +2 Armor to the torso.

There's also the treasure museum in the inner precinct. Among the exhibits at the moment are true katanas (*Strength* +3 damage, AP 1), "Gusoku"

Samurai armor (+3 Armor, Min Str 10, Max Dex 8, Fatigues), and even black-powder pistols (Damage 14, Ammo 1, Reload, Mishap on a 1-2).

Ayumu has no issues with raiding the dojo, but strongly protests against taking of any of the treasures. A Very Hard (DN 16) *persuasion* test convinces her of the need. She won't try to stop the Storm Knights from taking the weapons if the test fails, but the disrespect shown may prompt her to make her move early (see **Fire in the Temple** below).

THINGS TURN BAD

Although the survivors are safe for the moment, tensions at the shrine already run high and the influx of newcomers doesn't help the situation. As the night deepens, the following events occur whenever dramatically appropriate:

KEN'S OUTBURST

Ken continues to drink, growing louder and more belligerent as the night passes. He attempts to pick arguments with everyone. Yusei is quick to point out that Ken's shouting may attract the infected. An *intimidation* or *persuasion* test settles him down. A failed test or a physical attack pushes Ken too far and he storms out of the Shrine.

AKIRA'S DISAPPEARANCE

Akira and Yusei mostly bicker with one another. When no one is watching, Akira climbs over the wall in an attempt to sneak home. Once Yusei realizes what has happened, he pleads with the others to go out after his friend.

A Hard (DN 14) *tracking* test finds the exact spot Akira leapt the wall. If any heroes attempt to follow him into the woods they begin hearing the telltale sounds of jiangshi in the trees. The creatures attack unless the heroes turn back immediately.

• **Jiangshi (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 78.

FIRE IN THE TEMPLE

Ayumu grows increasingly unhinged and spends most of her time away from the group. She passes through occasionally to see the latest news and cry a little. In her mind, her duty is to make the shrine itself into a funeral pyre.

She has prepared the upper level of the tower to burn, and plans to light it (and herself) aflame unless someone catches on and stops her.

If she's talked down with a Hard (DN 14) *persuasion* test or incapacitated then lightning from the storm strikes the temple, igniting her arson materials anyway.

THE INFECTED ATTACK

Regardless of how the fire starts, the burning shrine draws the infected. It's time to abandon another potential sanctuary.

Any remaining survivors flee into the forest, away from an oncoming tide of infected and (unknowingly) toward the Kanawa Corporation construction site. Yusei stays and tries to hide in the shrine unless convinced to come along with a Standard *intimidation* or *persuasion* test.

A group of infected attack the Storm Knights as they leave. A Setback on the Conflict Line brings a jiangshi (page 78) into the fray.

- **Infected Humans (1 per hero):** See page 78.

A NEW MUTATION

After the last infected falls, a much larger creature appears. It leaps onto one of the outer walls, and its grotesque shape is silhouetted against the fire.

This is a yokai. If one was created earlier thanks to a *Mutation* Cosm card this is the same specimen, now actively hunting the group.

This isn't a battle the Storm Knights can win. If they stand and fight, it tries to kill one of the heroes and then take its time mutilating the body, giving the others time to escape. One of the other survivors may appear in time to become its victim instead.

If the heroes manage to deal a Wound to the yokai another wave of infected appear.

If the group tries to flee, they succeed but the yokai follows. They hear the creature's cries in the distance behind them. To get away, the characters must move deeper across the forest, which takes them straight to the Kanawa Construction site and an appointment with destiny.

- **Yokai (1):** See page 79.

SCENE FOUR: THE KANAWA SITE

Dramatic Scene. The shrieks of the infected echo behind the characters as they trek through the forest. The woods suddenly give way to a tall metal barrier surrounding what looks like a construction site. The wall is dominated by large safety signs, and smaller notices reading, "Kanawa Corporation, Building the Future!"

There is a gap in the plates of the wall where one of the metal sheets has been pried outward. If Ko is in play, he recognizes the handiwork of his gang. The wall is bent open enough for one person to squeeze inside at a time—just ahead of the oncoming horde!

AUTOMATED DEFENSES

Just inside are the bloody bodies of Ko's gang, and possibly some of the others who fled the shrine. Beyond the carnage about 50 meters away is a tall, partially constructed building with two strange gun turrets sitting outside its main entrance. Scattered around the construction yard are piles of materials, but no vehicles. There isn't a living thing in sight, but the guns track back and forth menacingly.

The turrets are robots with a straightforward function: scan the area and shoot anything that moves—unless they are recognized as authorized Kanawa personnel. The guns don't fire if a target remains perfectly still.

Don't flip a Drama card yet. Have each Storm Knight take a turn, and then the guns react and open fire.

After that first exchange, it's possible to make a run straight for the building, but that approach is risky. A character can run meters equal to three times his Dexterity, so even the fastest Storm Knights take more than a turn to cross the 50 meters into safety.

There is cover around the outer edges of the construction yard, but none within 30 meters of the guns. The construction materials provide Concealment as normal and +6 Toughness if the turrets only miss by the difference Concealment provided.

The gun turrets don't warrant full statistics, but a few numbers are useful for them:

- All the automated gun's defenses are 8. Each is a Toughness 10 object, so 15 or more damage destroys it. A successful grapple may simply knock the turret down off its tripod, preventing it from firing.
- It's possible to *trick* the turrets (DN 8) by throwing an object or using *maneuver* (DN 8) to switch direction faster than the guns can rotate. A Stymied or Very Stymied condition can save lives!
- Each turret attacks with *fire combat* 10. A hit deals 15 damage, Armor Piercing 2. The guns fire Long Bursts (+4 to hit) and Multi-Target to hit up to three people.

Once a character gets past the turrets to the doorway he's safe. He can approach the turrets from behind and knock them over or switch them off without a test.

The doors are locked, but a Hard (DN 14) *lockpicking* test or a Heroic (DN 18) *Strength* test forces them open. If the effort to open the door fails, the infected begin entering the construction yard. If the automated guns are still functional they hold the horde back long enough for the group to try again. Otherwise the creatures rush to the attack.

- **Infected Humans (3 per hero):** See page 78.

INSIDE THE BUILDING

From the outside, the building appeared under construction, but inside dim blue lights illuminate finished hallways. The scaffolding and girders outside mask a complete (and highly secure) structure.

A man in a white lab coat carries a stack of plastic trays into the hallway just as the Storm Knights enter. The trays are piled with stacked plastic cubes, and inside each cube is a twisted-looking seed about the size of a walnut.



Sometimes there's nowhere left to go but up.

The scientist is stunned to see the heroes in the hallway. He attempts to push back into the room he came from and close the door without dropping his trays. It doesn't even require a test to push into the lab and stop him from triggering a security alarm—so long as the Storm Knights try.

THE YIN SEED LAB

The room the scientist came from is filled with computers, lab equipment, and piles of readouts. The entire far wall is composed of large glass windows with a view into a huge central chamber filled with a hazy green atmosphere. The chamber looks like a greenhouse, with artificial lighting and two men in thick hazmat suits tending rows of strange-looking plants.

The plants look like leafy heads of lettuce. Most are closed, but a few are open like a blossoming flower, revealing a human skull in the center. The chamber is dominated by a single, massive bulb roughly the size of the men in protective gear. Its buds are closed, but quiver slightly as if the thing were breathing.

BETTER KILLING THROUGH CHEMISTRY

The two men inside the chamber don't notice the heroes. The scientist from the hall is not a combatant and an Easy (DN 8) *intimidation* test forces him to answer any questions the Storm Knights ask.

A Standard *evidence analysis* test discovers the information as well—and in a form the heroes can take with them! Between the two methods the heroes might learn the following:

- The large bulb is called a Yin Seed. The scientists are tasked with studying it—and collecting its spores.
- Kanawa Corporation owns this facility, and is attempting to both weaponize the spores and develop a cure for those infected by them.

- The scientists have run tests on human exposure to the spores, and the symptoms are identical to the infected rioting in Harajuku. Not all victims follow the same pathology. The “abnormals” were among the research materials transported to headquarters.

- This facility is collecting data from spores intentionally released in the Harajuku.

- This site has received orders to secure its specimens and data for transport to a lab in the Bonin Islands. An aircraft is on the way to pick up the researchers and materials. There's a landing pad on the building's roof, and once everything is loaded aboard the transport a flash fire is scheduled to burn any remaining evidence and cleanse the lab.

The most crucial piece of information is the arrival of the helicopter, since that offers a potential means of escape. Once the heroes have collected the information the two researchers inside the chamber head toward the airlock back to the lab. How the heroes decide to deal with these men and the researcher they've been questioning is up to them.

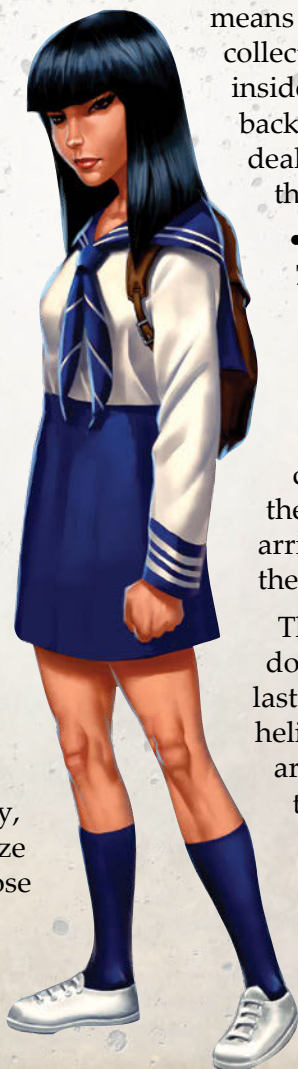
- **Kanawa Researchers (3):** See page 78.

RACE TO THE TOP

A loud crash sounds as something breaks through the building's outer doors. A peek into the hallway or at the security screens reveals the yokai has arrived. It sniffs the air and moves toward the lab, still searching for its prey.

The yokai makes short work of the lab's doors. The heroes have a choice: make a last stand against the creature or flee to the helicopter pad. If any researchers are still around, they beg the heroes to take them to the helicopter pad on the roof.

Whatever the group decides, flip a new Drama card as the yokai smashes through the doors of the lab. If the heroes have already faced the



AYAKA KURODA

creature and managed to deal any Wounds to it, those have regenerated—as have the creature's Possibilities.

After the end of the first round the noise of a large horde of infected becomes audible. During the second round the horde appears, joining the chase or attacking any brave Storm Knights who stayed behind to fight.

For those attempting to make it to the helicopter pad, the scene plays out as a chase. Each Step of the chase represents two floors of unconnected stairwells or elevators. The helicopter pad is atop the eighth floor and reached when Step D is completed.

The yokai and infected may only attack characters on the same step in the chase. If they have a target, they attack rather than trying to gain distance in the chase. If no targets are available, the vile things attempt to reach a step that contains someone to attack.

As a foot chase, each side tests *Dexterity* to gain a step. Each player tests separately, so one character might swiftly reach the helicopter pad and temporary safety while another is still stuck at the beginning being ravaged by infected.

Divide the infected into a group for each character. Gaining steps in a chase isn't something the villains can use Combined Actions for, but attacking heroes on the same step is.

The yokai isn't trying to get to the pad, it's intent on killing any Storm Knights it can reach. It isn't mindless. When necessary it may *maneuver* to Stymie prey escaping its clutches by cutting off escape routes, slashing elevator cables, and so on. The fewer characters who reach the helicopter pad for the finale the better. Be mean. No one should make it out alive.

In the chase, a Dilemma may represent a blocked route, waiting for an elevator's doors, or getting lost.

- **Yokai (1):** See page 79.
- **Infected (4 per hero):** See page 78. They join the encounter during the second round.

END OF THE LINE

Any survivors who reach the roof experience a moment of hope. A vehicle is landing, but it's not a helicopter. It's a sleek, VTOL jet of a type the characters have never seen before. Its wings are rotated and its rear hatch already open as it touches down on the pad.

A squad of 10 men in black, modern armor styled similar to samurai armor fan out onto the helicopter pad with crisp, military precision. Each carries an ultra-modern-looking firearm.

Their commander steps down a few moments later. He wears the same armor but no helmet. His features are Korean and handsome, and he wears his long black hair in a ponytail. His expression seems to be a permanent weary scowl.

"Stormers. Keep one of the intruders alive for study and questioning. Purge the rest," he hisses. "The facility is a loss. Trigger the burn protocol immediately."

The scene fades to black with the sound of gunfire.

- **Kanawa Security Troopers (10):** See page 79.

If the Storm Knights took a particularly clever measure such as disguising themselves using the hazmat suits or clothing from the researchers they may be able to bluff their way onto the VTOL with a Heroic (DN 18) *persuasion* test. In such a case the survivors witness the VTOL launch just as the yokai emerges onto the ceiling, and then fiery explosions collapse the entire structure. After that, the survivors' fate remains ambiguous.

EPILOGUE

Days later, the fires around Harajuku are out. Kanawa Security forces have surrounded and quarantined the entire district. Inside the cordon, a former construction site belonging to the Kanawa Corporation lies in ruins. Deep within that burned wreckage, something (or someone) lurches awake...

PAN-PACIFICA THREATS

INFECTED HUMAN

Infected humans are living beings driven mad by the Contagion. Black tears smear the faces of these unfortunate souls. They are mindless killers bent on consuming the flesh of the living. Most die within 24 hours. A portion of those who perish then mutate into the even more dangerous jiangshi. At present, there is no known cure.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 7, Mind 4, Spirit 5, Strength 8

Skills: Find 6, intimidation (10), find 8, stealth 8, taunt (9) trick (9), unarmed combat 9

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 5; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +1 (9).

- **Horde:** Infected crowd together to overwhelm their prey. Apply any bonus from a Combined Action (See *Torg Eternity*) to Damage as well as the attack itself when multiple infected attack a single target.

- **Infected:** Ords KO'ed or Defeated by this creature become infected themselves. *Reality*-rated characters slain by infected rise as jiangshi sometime within the act.

JIANGSHI

Pan-Pacifica's "hopping vampires" are humans infected with a particularly terrible strain of the virus. The creatures are ravenously hungry and spread the infection with a bite. When a victim becomes a jiangshi, her skin puckers and tightens. Muscles contract until they're wound like springs—increasing their effective strength. Heavier victims contract in the same way, but the additional skin and organs bulge out between the muscular bands.

The contraction leaves this creatures stiff and slow on their feet, but capable of powerful leaps—hence their name.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 11, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation (13), maneuver 13, stealth 10, taunt (11), unarmed combat 13

Move: 5; **Tough:** 11; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Common (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (13). Jiangshi attempt to grapple unless a foe is already restrained, so a standard hit causes straight *Strength* damage (11), a Good hit deals full damage (13) and restrains the target, and an Outstanding hit also makes the target Vulnerable and Stymied. If the target is already restrained a jiangshi uses an All-Out Attack.

- **Fear:** Upon first encountering this twisted creature a hero must test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Infected:** Ords KO'ed or Defeated by this creature become infected themselves. *Reality*-rated characters slain by infected rise as jiangshi sometime within the act.

- **Jump:** A jiangshi may leap double its movement as a simple action, but doing so leaves it Vulnerable.

- **Relentless:** Jiangshi ignore Shock.

- **Undead:** Jiangshi are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.

KANAWA RESEARCHER

These scientists and specialists work inside Kanawa's various secret installations, performing experiments and perfecting the company's biological and technological weaponry. Most are from Core Earth, but project leads may be transplants from Kanawa Corporation's home cosm.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 6, Mind 11, Spirit 7, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 7, evidence analysis 14, find 12, first aid 12, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, science 14, stealth 7

Move: 6; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities: —

KANAWA SECURITY TROOPER

Kanawa's corporate security teams go by many different names depending on their role and the country they're stationed in, but the profile below fits most of their guards and patrol personnel.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, evidence analysis 9, find 10, fire combat 10, first aid 9, intimidation 11, land vehicles 9, maneuver 10, melee weapons 10, stealth 10, streetwise 9, unarmed combat 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Kanawa security armor (+4), katana (Strength +3/11, AP 1), SC Kyogo T11 (Damage 14, Long Burst, Range 50/100/200)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

YOKAI

This specimen has white skin, long clawed fingers, and unnaturally long forearms and ankles. A bony jaw rips out of the bottom of its once human face. Yokai are "abnormal" infected, and may have different appearances or special abilities to reflect that. This one is quick, hungry, and intent on slaying Storm Knights.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 12, Mind 5, Spirit 10, Strength 16

Skills: Dodge 15, find 8, intimidation (15), maneuver 14, stealth 13, taunt (11), unarmed combat 15

Move: 12; **Tough:** 18 (2); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Yes (1 per hero)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Tough hide +2.

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (18).

- **Fear:** Upon first encountering this creature a hero must test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Infected:** Ords KO'ed or Defeated by this creature become infected themselves. *Reality*-rated characters slain by infected rise as jiangshi sometime within the act.

- **Possibility Hunger:** When a *reality*-rated character Soaks damage dealt by this creature, it gains the Possibility spent to Soak.

- **Regeneration (Very Fast):** A yokai may spend a Possibility on its turn as a simple action to heal one Wound.

- **Relentless:** Yokai ignore Shock.

- **Undead:** Yokai are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.



Infected humans are most dangerous in large groups.

BITTEN?

A bite from infected creatures quickly turns Ords into raving monsters themselves. But what happens when a Storm Knight is bitten?

A bite occurs when a creature carrying the contagion (infected humans, jiangshi, or yokai) deals damage equal to or greater than the target's Toughness (even if it doesn't cause a Wound). Less than that just causes scratches. If a Storm Knight successfully Soaks the damage there's no bite—it was a possible outcome that was averted.

A bitten *reality*-rated character who dies for any reason rises as an undead jiangshi. The timing is extremely variable. Some jiangshi spring up immediately after death, others take hours to begin moving.

If a hero is bitten in this adventure, immediately give him one of the Infected handouts on these pages. Encourage the player to keep the text of the handout secret; part of the fun is suspicion others begin to feel. Award Possibilities generously when players do a good job with the symptoms or reactions to them.

At the end of each scene, collect any Infected handouts and then deal a new one to each affected character for the next scene.

These handouts are meant for this adventure, but they may be used during regular play in Pan-Pacific as well. The risk of infection vanishes at the end of an act if the character hasn't succumbed. The GM can change handouts or effects at any time—the Contagion is constantly mutating.

If a character dies let the player control an extra jiangshi during the chase in Scene Four. This jiangshi may or may not be the fallen hero's body.



INFECTED—COLD

You are cold. Shiver and complain about how you can't get warm. If others check, you are cold and clammy to the touch, and your heart rate is extremely low.

At your discretion you may "play dead" at some point in the scene. When you are discovered you aren't breathing and have no heartbeat. An Easy (DN 8) first aid test revives you and you gain a Possibility. If the test fails or no one tries, you die and become a jiangshi.



INFECTED—HUNGER

You are starving, and desperate for food. Complain about your hunger, and let your stomach growl. Actually eating anything makes you feel queasy and doesn't sate your appetite anyway.

You suffer a -1 penalty on all tests for the rest of the scene, but you gain a Possibility for your trouble.



INFECTED—CONFUSED

You are easily distracted by bright lights and loud noises. Your memories are hazy, and sometimes you don't even remember your own name or what you're doing.

At your discretion, sacrifice your turn during an encounter to wander toward lights or noises in a daze. Gain a Possibility when you do so. Next turn you snap out of it and act normally.



INFECTED—AGONY

It hurts! You are stiff, and every little movement causes you pain. Whine about the pain and stiffness as often as you can. Your Shock drops by two for the remainder of the scene, but you gain a Possibility.

If you get KO'ed during the scene test for Defeat, even if you still have Wounds. If the test fails you awaken as a jiangshi.



INFECTED—RAGE

You are irritable and ready to snap. Snarl, growl, and yell angrily to keep everyone away from you.

At your discretion, lash out at another character who upsets you.

Make a real attack against the character, and if you deal a Wound you gain a Possibility. Afterward you can be as contrite as you like.



INFECTED—NUMB

You are emotionally distant, and seem disconnected from your own body.

Constantly test yourself by doing things that should cause pain just to see if they do. For the rest of the scene you don't suffer Wound penalties.

You gain a Possibility if you take a Wound during the scene (without Soaking) and someone else has to point it out to you.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THARKOLD

"OVERSIGHT"

Cynical and commanding, Oversight has led this unit since the days of the Soviet Union. He remains wary of the General Staff, but intensely loyal to his own team.

Quote: "Watch your corners and remain disciplined. This is just another mission."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 8, Spirit 10, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, fire combat 2, heavy weapons 1, intimidation 2, land vehicles 1, persuasion 3, [reality 1], stealth 1, survival 1, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: AN-94, MP-443, F1 grenades (3), combat knife, standard gear

Perks: [Bolster], [Rally]

"STITCHES"

The team's medical specialist has an affable exterior that masks his deadly skills. He cracks sarcastic jokes, even during firefights and surgery.

Quote: "That looks painful. Let me give a prescription for not getting shot."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 7, Mind 10, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 2, first aid 3, melee weapons 2, missile weapons 1, persuasion 1, [reality 1], stealth 1, survival 1, taunt 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: AN-94, MP-443, F1 grenades (3), combat knife, standard gear

Perks: Endurance, [Situational Awareness]

"SALVO"

Salvo is a very big man. He was born to be a warrior and has a reputation for being bulletproof in combat. He's a fearless stoic, but he loves his team and practically worships Oversight.

Quote: "Now it's my turn!"

Cosm: [Tharkold]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 12

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, fire combat 2, heavy weapons 3, intimidation 1, land vehicles 1, melee weapons 2, [reality 1], stealth 1, survival 1, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 16 (4); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: AN-94, Saiga-12, RPG-32, combat knife, standard gear

Perks: [Occultech (Zsn Endoskeleton MK II)], [Relentless]

"DEAD-EYE"

True to her name, Dead-Eye routinely takes top honors at marksmanship competitions. She's calm and cool under fire, and usually assigned to watch over the team from a sniping position.

Quote: "One shot, one kill. Anything else is sloppy."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 9, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, find 2, fire combat 3, heavy weapons 1, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 2, [reality 1], stealth 1, survival 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: KSVK Anti-material rifle, MP-443, F1 grenades (3), standard gear

Perks: Sniper, Trademark Weapon (KSVK Anti-material rifle)

"PROWLER"

Prowler is quiet and professional. He's a knife and infiltration expert, equally at home in urban and wilderness environments. He follows orders and likes getting the job done with clean efficiency—no loose ends.

Quote: "Why must we always do things the hard way?"

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 7, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, fire combat 1, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 2, missile weapons 2, [reality 2], stealth 3, streetwise 1, survival 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 13 (4); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: AN-94, MP-443 with silencer attachment, F1 grenades (3), combat knives (6), standard gear

Perks: [Negation], [Tenacious]

"DRIVETRAIN"

Usually found under a transport or behind the wheel of one, Drivetrain loves speed and machinery. She's the youngest in the unit, but has proven herself behind the wheel and in combat.

Quote: "Right of way is determined by mass times acceleration."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 9, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, fire combat 1, heavy weapons 1, land vehicles 3, maneuver 1, missile weapons 1, [reality 1], science 1, stealth 1, streetwise 1, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: AN-94, MP-443, F1 grenades (3), combat knife, standard gear

Perks: [Prodigy], [Vengeful]



ACT ONE: THARKOLD

During the deadly first day of the Tharkhold invasion, six elite soldiers are tasked with driving into the center of Moscow to recover data and the scientists monitoring the maelstrom bridge.

The soldiers must defeat or avoid Tharkold forces in the area, and decide how to handle any nearby civilians.

Horror awaits the team within the lab. Only one of the scientists remains alive, and he's quite mad. He's certain the group's arrival means High Command has decided to use their last resort: deploying a nuclear warhead against the bridge over Moscow. The soldiers must race to get out of Moscow in time, with thralls and ghuls harassing them every step of the way.

Anyone who escapes is faced with a final choice: return to a military they may no longer trust, or try to find their own way in the new wasteland created in the wake of the fallen bridge.

MOMENT OF CRISIS

For elite soldiers, simply battling the forces of the High Lords isn't enough to trigger a Moment of Crisis. The warriors must make a choice to go beyond their mission and protect civilians or Core Earth hardpoints to transcend.

SCENE ONE: MISSION MOSCOW

It hasn't been a full day yet since a twisted column of dark metal, writhing like a grotesque tentacle dropped from the sky and landed on the Kremlin like a hammer. Technological monstrosities spilled out of it and fighting erupted all over Moscow.

The heroes are in a military staging area in northern Moscow. They are a team of special forces soldiers—Spetsnaz—specializing in high-risk rescues and extractions. They've just arrived at the staging area outside Moscow on a transport plane.

All around them, soldiers dismantle equipment and pile boxes of ammunition and supplies into large transport trucks. The battle apparently is not going well and what's left of the conventional forces are leaving.



The Battle of Moscow did not go well for troops on the ground.

The men encountered on the way to the briefing all seem shaken. There are rampant rumors of entire divisions lost, massive civilian casualties, and demonic foes.

THE BRIEFING

After setting the scene, paraphrase or read aloud the mission briefing from Col. Morozov, the officer in charge.

"Seven hours ago a strange object appeared in the sky over the Kremlin. Its landing precipitated an invasion that has left our forces in tatters and untold civilian casualties in its wake. The General Staff have called a full retreat. Moscow is lost to the enemy.

"But there is something within the city we need. A hidden scientific research outpost lies at the coordinates in your packets. Your priority mission is to enter the base and secure all data collected on the Moscow Event. Your secondary, and optional, objective is the recovery of the three scientists working within the lab.

"The hated enemy are jamming all communications, so you will be on your own. Once you have recovered the data you are to immediately extract to rally point Trinity, approximately 70 km north of your target. You are expected to arrive by 2100 hours, no later.

"Good luck, comrades."

The team is assigned a GAZ Tigr (page 97) for transport, and the compliment of weaponry found on their character sheets. The team is on a strict timetable so there's no time to requisition or scrounge extra equipment.

Morozov answers question about the mission, but some aspects remain classified. Due to the jammed communications and demonstrated air superiority of the enemy, no aerial support or extraction is possible. He has no details about the hidden research outpost other than its geographical location. Questions about why the outpost even exists are met with an awkward and immediate dismissal.

The staging area where the heroes are now is about 20 km north of the heart of Moscow. They must travel south to the coordinates then back north beyond Moscow to the meeting point at Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, a monastery being converted to a military forward base.

Sunset is at 2100 hours, which is also when the team is due at the rally point. It's 1700 hours by the time the briefing ends and the operation begins, giving the team roughly four hours to get in, find the lab, and then get out.

As the Tigr rolls toward Moscow the soldiers get their first sight of Tharkhold's maelstrom bridge. The city around it is obscured by smoke from fires. Dark storm clouds swirl above. Strange lightning arcs down into the city or skitters across the dark shape in the sky. Between the ground and the storm stretches a huge, metallic tower, wider than a city block. The structure looks almost organic, like a tentacle or a finger. Its presence on the horizon is jarring.

On the outskirts, the heroes see people trudging away from the city carrying heavy sacks. Some pull makeshift carts. Small vehicles speed past the Tigr, heading north away from the storm as fast as they can.

TRAFFIC JAM

The driver must attempt a Very Hard (DN 16) *land vehicles* test to avoid the evacuation traffic streaming from the city. A success avoids traffic and trouble, but a failure lands the vehicle in the middle of a wall of unmoving, honking cars filled with desperate people.

The drivers are shouting and angry, calling out to see if the soldiers know what's happening. A *find* test determines the main culprit of the traffic jam is a collision between two cars, neither of which is able to move.

Kinder characters might try to organize the traffic or rally people to push the vehicles out of the way with a Hard (DN 14) *persuasion* or *intimidation* test. Alternatively, the Tigr is capable of simply driving over the top of the stalled cars with an Easy (DN 8) *land vehicles* test. Doing so is fast but damages more vehicles and may harm civilians on a failure.

Inside the city proper, the Tharkold World Laws and axioms are on the table.

WORKER AND FARMER

Heading deeper into Moscow, the warriors begin hearing the familiar sounds of automatic weapons, mixed in with the less familiar sounds of the

WEAPONS AND GEAR

Weapons	Tech	Damage	Ammo	Notes
AN-94 Assault Rifle	23	14	30	Range 40/80/160, Long Burst
KSVK Anti-Material	23	16	10	AP 4, Range 100/1K/2K, Bulky
MP-443 Grach Pistol	22	13	15	Range 10/25/40
F1 Grenade	22	16	1	Range 10/20/30, Medium Blast
Saiga-12 Shotgun	23	14	12	Range 10/20/30, Short Burst
RPG-32	23	25	1	Range 100/250/500, AP 4, HEAT, <i>heavy weapons</i>
Combat Knife	20	Str +1	—	Range 10/20/30 if thrown with <i>missile weapons</i>
Standard Gear	Tech	Notes		
Extra Magazines	23	Each hero carries five reloads for each of their weapons		
Hands-free Comms	23	Verbal communication, 100-meter range due to Tharkold jamming		
Flashlight	21	May be attached to any weapon		
First Aid Kit	23	<i>First aid</i> tests are Favored		
Multi-tool	23	Useful for repairs, works as a lock pick		
Tactical Armor	23	Max Dex 8, Armor +4, Fatigues		

strange energy weapons used by the invaders. In the distance they spy the entrance to the VDNKh (*ve-de-en-kha*) exhibition, and outside the famous "Worker and Kolkhoz Woman" statue of a man and woman raising a hammer and sickle, respectively.

The soldiers have no understanding of Core Earth hardpoints, but this is one. A group of 10 humanoid figures in collars and thick padded armor plant explosives around its base as 20 more pour into the exhibition, likely to do the same to the Cosmonaut Museum and other historical artifacts.

Protecting the site isn't part of the mission, but nationalistic pride might cause the soldiers to try to intervene anyway. Such an act triggers a Moment of Crisis, but earns the fury of the thrall forces in the area.

The fact that a hardpoint is involved adds a few wrinkles to this conflict. If the heroes move close to the statue (within 50 meters) only the Core Earth Cosm World Laws and axioms apply. The heroes don't understand what's happening, but they feel the changes, and can draw any conclusions they like.

The Thralls close to the statue are in a Core Earth Dominant Zone, that means their weapons won't work at all thanks to the lower axioms, and a Surge result on the Drama card could make them disconnect (and flee). The first chance they get, they move out of the hardpoint's Dominant Zone.

• Thralls (4 per hero): See page 96.

THE OUTPOST

No other obstacles block the path to the outpost's coordinates. The sounds of war shake the area, including artillery fire. This close, the sky is dominated by the maelstrom

GENDER AND CUSTOMIZATION

It may seem unusual that this group of soldiers is a mixture of men and women, but Russian special forces have been of mixed gender for over a decade.

Beyond this adventure, any of the characters provided may be switched to different genders, ethnic backgrounds, or personalities as desired. Most of the names selected work equally well for men and women. The skills and statistics for each remain the same, but anything else is player's choice.

bridge, and slender tendrils stretch from the main body to plunge into the ground kilometers away. Using binoculars or a sniper scope on a nearer tendril reveals that the black metal is covered by thick, clear slime, oozing off the structure like mucus.

The site of the outpost itself is a burned-out old housing block, one of the ugly, concrete kind erected in the Sixties. A quick reconnaissance reveals that it is occupied by refugees.

About a dozen civilians have taken cover in what's left of the structure. There are no signs of the scientists or any research equipment, but the coordinates are definitely here. There's no way to search the location without moving into the area with the civilians. It's up to the team how they interact with the non-combatants. The most notable personalities among them include:

VASILY

A young boy of about 10. He lies silent and motionless with a komar drone (page 96) wrapped around his head, its proboscis





The coordinates lead to concrete housing ravaged by recent fighting.

inserted into his skull. The creature appears dead and inactive, but removing it seems risky. A Heroic (DN 18) *medicine* test removes the thing without causing the boy to bleed out.

Quote: "Mmph..."

OLGA

Vasily's mother, and the spokeswoman for the other refugees. She has deep worry-lines that belie her young age, and a tangle of brown hair. Her main priority is getting her son help, but she pulled both Gennady and Zoya into cover from where each fell outside.

Quote: "Please help him, he's only a boy!"

GENNADY

A young soldier. He's been blinded and has deep lacerations on both his legs. Olga's done what she can for him. Gennady softly asks for water, often.

Quote: "I'm so thirsty, just a little water is all I need."

ZOYA

A fearless old woman buried under four layers of clothing with a typical babushka wrapped around her head. As a young girl Zoya witnessed the battle of Stalingrad herself. She has no remaining family and a sharp tongue she happily deploys against any soldiers who seem lacking in humanity or humility.

Quote: "Tomorrow comes whether or not you or I are there to see it."

All the civilians are hungry to know what's going on, who the invaders are, and what the government plans to do about it. They beg the heroes to spare time to look at Vasily and Gennady. Meanwhile, outside the sounds of combat grow ever closer.

A successful *find* test detects instrumentation and sensors along the walls, ground outside, and what's left of the roof. The electrical connections for all of them lead down to the basement and then straight into the floor. A search of the basement reveals a hatch hidden under the floor (no test needed).



The race use everything they can, even the weapons of their enemies the technodemons.

Just as the hatch is discovered there are signs of trouble up above. If any of the team stood watch they see small, flying drones shaped somewhat like mosquitoes floating toward the building. Each is about the size of a small dog. If no one stayed on watch the refugees spot the creatures and cry out in terror instead.

Behind the drones, in the distance, a group of armed humanoids move carefully up the street. Unlike the thralls at the museum, these look like burned bodies, with portions of skeleton showing through charred flesh.

They have cameras inside their sunken eye sockets, and every one of them is missing its lower jaw. Instead, a long, segmented mechanical tongue juts out from the creatures' throats, made of the same material as the maelstrom bridge and drones.

The soldiers can quickly move through the hatch and close it behind them. That avoids the creatures, but surely dooms any refugees left behind. Vasily in particular can't be moved even if the drone was removed. If the group wishes to take the refugees into the lab, remind them of its classified nature.

The team could also stand and fight, especially if they fear the enemy might discover their Tigr transport. Even damaged, the concrete walls provide Concealment and Cover (+6 Toughness) against enemy attacks. There are plenty of spots for a sniper on the second floor.

Either way, the group must choose quickly. There's no time to argue.

- **Ghuls (3 per hero):** See page 95.
- **Komar Drones (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 96.

SCENE TWO: THE LAB

Standard Scene. The chamber below smells of blood and death. The lights are off, but flickering screens provide some ambient light. Surprisingly, hooked chains dangle from the ceiling. A closer examination reveals some of them are coated in dried blood.

BLOOD AND CHAINS

A metal operating table stands near the base of the winding stairwell. It drips with blood, and

a skinless corpse is chained to it, lidless eyes staring at the ceiling in horror. A second corpse is suspended in the chains above, staring back down into the eyes of the one on the table.

A successful *evidence analysis* test concludes that the corpse chained to the table was female (it isn't immediately obvious due to the damage done), and her height and assumed weight are a match for Dr. Petrova, one of the scientists stationed here according to the team's mission packets. A Good Success adds that her skin wasn't sliced off; there are no incisions in the muscles or soft tissues visible. It was somehow dissolved. An Outstanding result proves the cause of death was blood loss, which indicates she was still alive when her skin was removed.

Checking the corpse in the chains above reveals little more information. He has multiple lacerations, and some of the chains pierce his limbs and torso. Based on the mission files he should be either Dr. Volkov or Dr. Smirnov, but there's no way to tell which.

Toward the back of the room equipment still hums, screens show unintelligible graphs, and reams of paper with streams of numbers roll out of printers.

DR. SMIRNOV

In the corner of the room, slumped and groggy, is the third scientist. He's short, unshaven, and his lab coat is splattered in blood. He's still wearing an ID badge with his picture and the name "Smirnov" emblazoned on it. He startles awake once approached.

WHAT SMIRNOV KNOWS

First and most important, he notes that the presence of the retrieval squad means things must be desperate, and the General Staff are preparing to invoke the **Svarog Protocol**: a nuclear strike against the city itself. He stifles an awkward laugh as he says this aloud, and then pleads that the team must find some

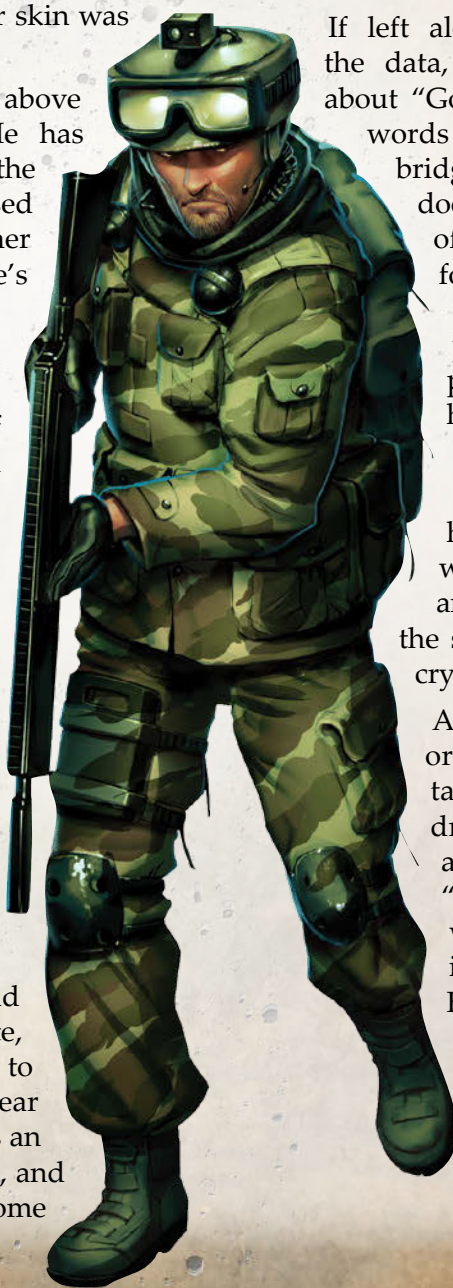
way to stop the strike. Then he becomes suddenly fearful and says they must all get away from Moscow as quickly as possible. "50 kilotons would probably do the job, but why chance it? They'll probably use 200."

If asked about Petrova and Volkov he solemnly states that they were patriots, and he admired their courage in the face of what they all had to do. He rubs his lab coat pockets absently when he speaks of them. If he's checked, the soldiers find the skin from each of doctors' faces in his pocket, cut out like masks. He grins sheepishly and laughs nervously if the masks are discovered, like a child caught with a forbidden toy.

If left alone while the heroes gather the data, Smirnov babbles to himself about "Gorgabuus." Then he whimpers words like "Kranod," "maelstrom bridge," and "stelae," though he doesn't seem to know what any of those words mean. Prompted for additional information the doctor looks wild-eyed and points at the chains, then tries to put one of the skin masks over his face and blubbers, "Perhaps now Gorgabuus can't see me."

Smirnov knows what was happening in the lab, but doesn't want to speak about it. He sneers and answers any questions about the subject of the lab's research as cryptically as possible.

A Standard-difficulty *persuasion* or *intimidation* test makes him talk. He points to the thumb drives which the heroes may already have collected, and says, "It's all on there! Everything we could collect when the invader's bridge came down." He warns that those in power won't be grateful once the data is delivered. The team has already seen too much, such as the fact that the research post was in place before the invaders came. Smirnov is



certain that suicide missions await the team once this job is done, and even worse is in store for him.

This lab was sealed from the outside weeks ago, and an *evidence analysis* test of the gathered data verifies that. Smirnov claims he had orders, but had no idea what was coming. He begs the team to get him out of Moscow—but also not to deliver him or the data to the government.

He's crazed and obviously dangerous, but Smirnov makes no aggressive moves toward the group unless they attack him first. If he's attacked he suddenly defends himself, calling the chains that fill the room to his aid!

• **Dr. Smirnov:** See page 96.

THE DATA

If anyone takes the time to look at the data before collecting the thumb drives and any papers strewn about, an *evidence analysis* test pieces together that the data has been recording for weeks, though all the major activity is confined to the last 20 hours. Apart from that, the actual readings being collected seem like nonsense.

The real problem is what the team chooses to do with the data and the doctor. No matter what they decide, leaving the area before the nuclear strike is likely a high priority!

SCENE THREE: CONVOY OF DEATH

Dramatic Scene. The crew emerges from the lab but there are new faces among the refugees that stayed above—or checking the bodies if the refugees were abandoned to their fate.

These newcomers are humans dressed like the thralls the soldiers saw (or fought) back at the VDNKh. They quickly raise their hands and signal peaceful intentions.

KIODAE

She has sad eyes and a deep scar around her neck where she once wore a Tharkoldu slave collar. She is wary but friendly, and answers questions as best she can.

Quote: “We can work together or die separately.”

CAPTURED WEAPONS

At some point, the team is likely to recover weapons from the invaders and attempt to use them.

All the Tharkold weapons are Tech 25. A Storm Knight who has switched to the Tharkold cosm may use them without Contradiction, since the local zone supports them. However, a Core Earth Storm Knight (or a soldier who hasn't transcended) invites a One Case Contradiction when using them, since the weapon's Tech Axiom is above his own. That means on a roll of 1, the character disconnects.

Worth noting, Malfunctions and disconnection are different, so a Long Burst is used a roll of 1 disconnects the hero on a One Case Contradiction, but a 1–3 still causes the weapon to malfunction.

The bigger issue is the Alphs use the *energy weapons* skill, which none of the heroes have adds in! Not only is the character using only his Dexterity for the attack, but a roll of 20 doesn't roll again since the skill is untrained. The Thavs use the fire combat skill, so at least those work like weapons the heroes are used to.

All of this adds up to the soldiers being best served using the equipment they've trained with, especially since they have plenty of ammunition.

- **Alph Sprayer** (Tech 25, Damage 14, Ammo 30, Range 40/80/160, Bulky, Long Burst)
- **Thav-9** (Tech 25, Damage 13, Ammo 60, Range 20/40/80, Short Burst)

WHAT KIODAE KNOWS

The leader of this band of escapees shares what she can.

- The construct that landed in the Kremlin is called a maelstrom bridge, a gateway to a different realm known as Tharkold.
- Tharkold is ruled by the technodemons: foul creatures of dark magic and twisted technology. They are led by a demon named Kranod.



By sunset Moscow is going to be engulfed in fire. It's time to ride!

The technodemons have ruled Tharkold for centuries, and in that time began invading other realities, although never one as strong or dangerous as this one.

- The Race have been slaves of the demons for generations. Some thrive in the vicious conditions on Tharkold, but many more wish to win freedom.

- Kiodae and her crew escaped when their slave collars malfunctioned in a Core Earth hardpoint. She has a basic understanding of how reality and stelae behave, and passes on this information if asked.

- Kranod has formed an alliance with other Possibility Raiders to attack Earth at the same time. Such an alliance is unprecedented. She expects the treacherous demons to turn on their allies as soon as it suits them.

- Kiodae's former master is a technodemon named Gorgabuus. She spits when she says

his name, and explains he was an abusive master who never got very high in the demonic hierarchy. Whenever he suffered a setback he took it out on his thralls. She jumped at the chance to get away from him. She warns the soldiers not to underestimate technodemons. Even the lesser examples like Gorgabuus can tear through dozens of men. Occultech weapons can destroy trucks and even tanks! The best way to deal with such a creature is to run.

RIDE OR DIE

Thanks to Smirnov's ravings, the team should be aware the entire area is scheduled for imminent destruction and time is short. Warning others isn't possible thanks to the broad-spectrum jamming used by the technodemons. Getting out in time is a Chase. The nuclear blast detonates at the end of the fifth round.

The group needs vehicles for this chase. The soldiers should still have their Tigr transport, which can fit up to eight people. The Race arrived in a stolen Kamaz truck which carries up to 12 people, and two Yamaha R1 motorcycles. They offer the driver's seat for any of the vehicles, so long as the team agrees to bring along the refugees and freedom fighters. Any vehicle that doesn't have a player driving or on board disappears from the Chase early on—separated by debris or enemies. The fate of its passengers remains a mystery.

Vasily, if still alive, poses a special problem due to his injuries. If the vehicle carrying him suffers a Mishap, or if any Setback appears during the chase, he begins bleeding profusely. A Challenging (DN 12) *first aid* test stops the bleeding, otherwise he dies after one round.

Possible Setbacks in this chase could be routes cut off by destruction, abandoned vehicles, or enemy forces. Complications might represent mechanical trouble such as overheating engines, damaged suspension, or low fuel. A Critical Problem may be a raging fire that forces the convoy to turn around and choose an entirely new route out of the city!

HOT PURSUIT

As the chase begins, komar drones appear to harass the convoy. At the beginning of the second round 10 ghuls riding Yamaha R1 motorcycles join the chase, summoned by the drones. On the third round a T-90 tank captured by thralls appears. They've taken the time to "decorate" their prize with skulls and chains. At the start of the fifth (and last) round, swarms of Russian aircraft streak overhead toward the maelstrom bridge, alerting the heroes that they are almost out of time.

At the end of the fifth round note what steps everyone has completed. The blinding flash of the nuclear blast stops everything at that point.

- **Komar Drones (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 96.
- **Ghuls (2 per hero, starting on round two):** See page 95.
- **Yamaha R1 (1 per ghul):** See page 97.
- **T-90 Tank (1, starting on round three):** See page 97.

The fastest vehicles in the Chase have a Top Speed value of 13, so that becomes the DN for gaining steps in the chase. The vehicles are all Fast and gain a +2 bonus on tests to gain steps in the chase, but also suffer any listed Maneuverability Rating (MR) penalty. Those on foot (including the komar drones) test *Dexterity* to gain steps.

Both sides have weapons, and are likely to attempt to shoot at one another during the chase. Every Step of difference counts as a -2 Range penalty. Thus a vehicle that hasn't completed any Steps at all firing at a vehicle that had completed Step B suffers a -4 penalty to the shot and vice versa. Drones and humans on foot use *dodge* as a defense, while vehicles use the driver's *land vehicles* skill, minus any MR penalty.

Collision damage is based on the vehicle's Top Speed value (see *Torg Eternity*). Drones and runners don't suffer Collisions, those only apply to vehicles.

The driver of each vehicle should focus on completing Steps. Each Step takes them farther away from the explosion and also makes it harder for pursuers like the T-90 to hit with a devastating cannon shot.

Others may fire personal weapons, the Tigr's turret, or use interactions to Stymie the pursuers. Interactions suffer the same Range penalty that attacks do.

Stunts are another option for drivers. They use the *land vehicles* skill and success adds conditions (Stymied or Vulnerable) to the target, or a collision on an Outstanding success.

The drones focus on interactions against the convoy, attempting to Stymie drivers to buy time for reinforcements to catch up.

Roll a single test for all the ghuls unless they split into smaller groups to chase different heroes. There's no Combined Action bonus for gaining Steps, but the bonus does apply when they attack. The ghuls' defense is 11 (9 for the driver's *land vehicles*, no penalty from the motorcycle's MR, and +2 because it's Fast).

The T-90 tank enters the chase late. Each round it takes a shot at the Tigr, and uses a Multi-Action to attempt a Step if one is available. A lucky hit from the main cannon is devastating, so Stymie that tank! Its defense is only 8 (10 for the driver's *land vehicles* skill, -4 from MR, and +2 from its Fast from Top Speed.)

Passengers suffer the Shock from attacks against a vehicle. If the vehicle is destroyed (or suffers a collision) everyone aboard takes the damage as well. Survivors remain at their current Step, and could opt to continue on foot or try a *find* test to procure a new vehicle or motorcycle.

DESTROYER OF WORLDS

The exact effect of the explosion depends on which steps of the chase a vehicle completed:

- **No steps:** Damage 50 +1BD. The surrounding area is completely leveled and dosed with lethal radiation.

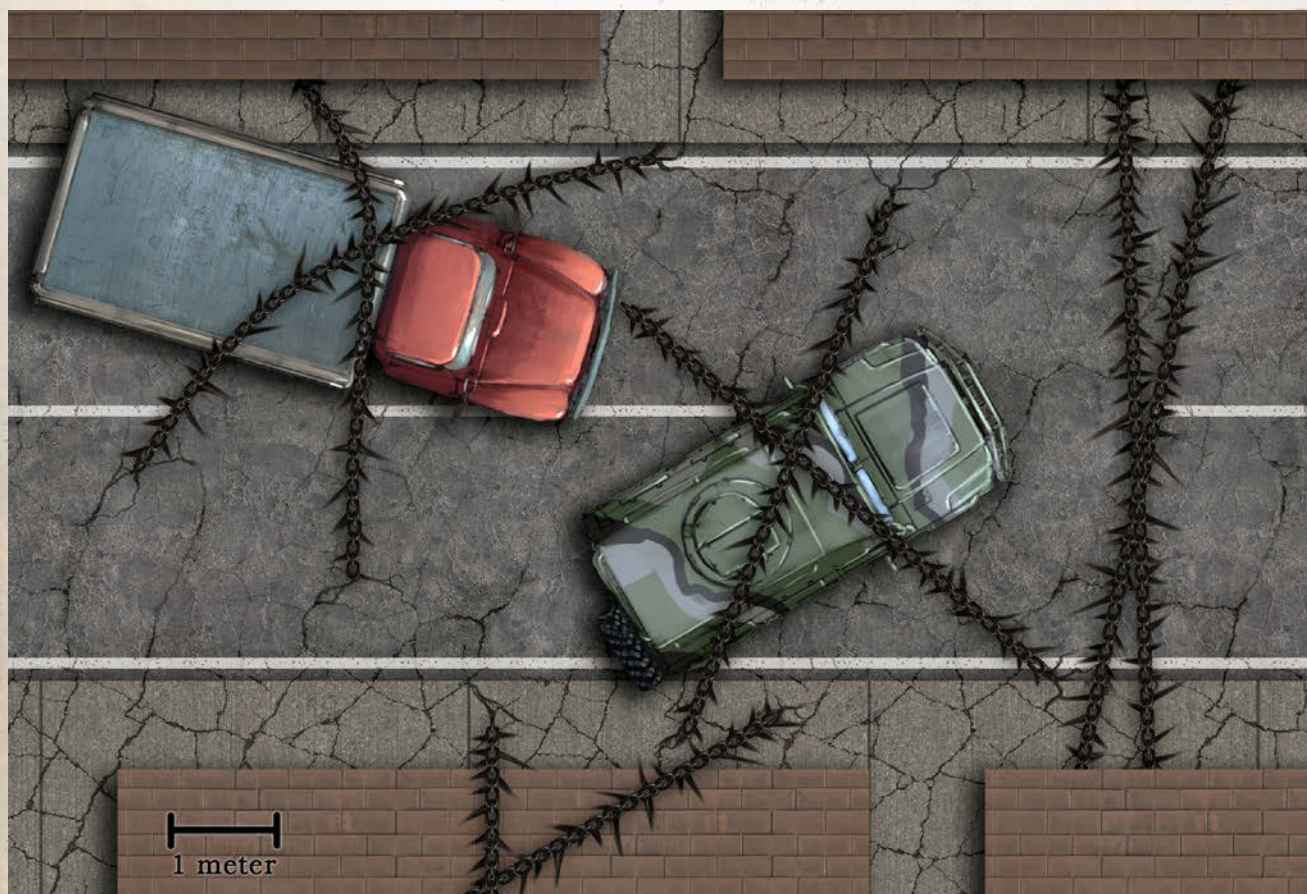
- **Step A:** Damage 40 +1BD. Waves of fire and pressure destroy most structures.

- **Step B:** Damage 30 +1BD. Shockwaves damage most buildings, thermal radiation scorches surfaces.

- **Step C:** Damage 20 +1BD. Burns occur even through clothing, pressure hurls debris through the air.

- **Step D:** Damage 10 +1BD. Exposed skin suffers first- or second-degree burns, but no significant damage is done to structures.

The blast occurs at sunset. The explosion shatters the maelstrom bridge and scatters debris in every direction. The reality storm over the city grows even more intense. Lightning crackles throughout the sky above, and strong winds carry much of the fallout far to the north.



It's not over yet. The convoy is ambushed by technodemon magic.

SCENE FOUR: GORGABUUS

Dramatic Scene. The survivors of the blast have a few minutes to recover Shock and let the weight of what they've just witnessed sink in. Any foes who completed Step D of the chase flee the area for now, and the rest are destroyed by the blast.

Just as the rest of the world grows quiet and still an enraged bellow pierces the sky, and a huge figure lands heavily in front of the convoy. Chains erupt from the ground to ensnare the vehicles' tires and pin down surviving allies. If Dr. Smirnov (page 96) is still with the party some of the chains erupt from his eye sockets, and he howls like a lost soul and moves to aid his master. Any survivors from the Chase arrive and join in as well.

This is the technodemon Gorgabuus. "Worms! Pathetic fleshy things! I may terminate your suffering some day, but for now you are mine!"

Gorgabuus followed the heroes via the drone attached to Vasily, through Dr. Smirnov's eyes, or if nothing else thanks to a previously undetected drone attached to one of the vehicles.

The demon is nearly blind with rage due to the destruction of the maelstrom bridge, and has lost sight of his original goals. Now he wants to fight and eventually kill the humans and traitors he holds responsible for this violation. Any hero who hasn't had a Moment of Crisis yet experiences one the moment they stand and fight this being of pure evil.

• **Gorgabuus:** See page 96.

EPILOGUE

If the Storm Knights defeat the demon or escape his wrath there are no further threats from Moscow. Now they must make the fateful decision of whether to report back to base with their findings, or take their chances in the strange new world created by the fallout from the destroyed maelstrom bridge.

Any surviving members of the Race wish to strike out on their own, and encourage the soldiers to join them.

Those who return to the rally point are congratulated for their success and hailed as heroes of the federation. Unfortunately, according to official records they are lost in combat some weeks later, after the government reaches a detente with the Tharkoldu.

Those too cynical to return find the world around them has changed drastically. The World Laws of Tharkold extend across huge swaths of Russia, as far away as the debris scattered. All that's left is survival of the fittest, by any means necessary.

Until one day a United Nations VTOL aircraft lands, and a strange American steps out looking for those strong enough to fight the invaders. A fight without quarter or compromise. A fight to the bitter end. "Interested in some payback, comrades?" he growls in Russian.

THARKOLD THREATS

GHULS

Ghuls are dessicated human corpses controlled by a mechanical "tongue." The body's lower jaw is always removed when the machine crawls in and inhabits the carcass. When a ghul is destroyed the tongue wriggles across the ground like a worm, looking for a new host.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 8, Mind 5, Spirit 7, Strength 9

Skills: Find 8, fire combat 9, energy weapons 9, land vehicles 9, intimidation 12, stealth 9, taunt (10), trick (10), unarmed combat 11

Move: 8; **Tough:** 11 (2); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Thav-9 (Damage 14, Short Burst, Range 20/40/80)

Perks: Occultech (Thav Integrated WeaponMount, Zan Spinose Plating)

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

• **Cyber-tongue:** Used as an unarmed attack the metal tongue deals *Strength* +2 (11) damage. If the attack deals a Wound the target is also restrained.

- **Fear:** Ghuls are animated corpses controlled by writhing cybernetic tongues. When first encountering them test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Relentless:** Ghuls ignore Shock.

- **Undead:** Ghuls are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

THRALLS

These deranged servants have had their will broken by their sadistic technodemon masters. Most wear explosive slave collars and intimidating armor.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 6, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 10, find 8, fire combat 10, land vehicles 10, maneuver 10, taunt 8, trick 8, unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 10 (2); **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Leather armor (+2), Thav-9 (Damage 14, Short Burst, Range 20/40/80), slave collar

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

GORGABUUS

Gorgabuus is a relatively minor demon, forced to the front lines by his lazier and more formidable superiors. The only lucky break he’s had since the invasion started was while out trying to recover his escaped thralls when the maelstrom bridge was destroyed. He’s seething with rage and just looking for someone on whom to take it out.

Quote: “Pathetic monkeys! I’ll flay your skin!”

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 12, Strength 16

Skills: Conjunction 14, dodge 12, energy weapons 15, find 11, intimidation 16, melee combat 15, unarmed combat 12

Move: 8; **Tough:** 19 (3); **Shock:** 14; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: Pain whip (Strength+3, Stymies), Alpha pulverizer (Damage 17)

Perks: Cybertech (Digan Darksight Eye, Integrated Weapon/Alpha Pulverizer)

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Cybernetic plating +3.

- **Chains:** A Technodemon may use *conjunction* to summon chains and attack a target within 50 meters (Damage 15). This attack may use the Standard grappling rules.

- **Dread:** While a Technodemon is present a Standard Scene becomes a Dramatic Scene.

- **Fear:** Technodemons inspire instinctive horror in creatures who see them. Test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Flight:** Move 6 in the air.

- **Large:** Most Technodemons stand three or more meters tall. Attacks against them gain a +2 bonus.

- **Minions:** The Technodemon may transfer any hit to a lackey within a few meters if he succeeds at a *reality* test.

DR. SMIRNOV

Dr. Smirnov is a smallish, bearded man with sunken eyes and an annoying giggle. His mind snapped during the initial invasion. He’s now a thrall of Gorgabuus, but he doesn’t really remember that except in his most lucid moments.

Quote: “We knew it was coming, and we chose to study it rather than stop it. We’re the true monsters.”

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 6, Mind 11, Spirit 6, Strength 6

Skills: Conjunction 12, dodge 7, evidence analysis 13, intimidation 12, science (metaphysics) 14

Move: 6; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Masks made of human skin

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Chains:** Smirnov may use *conjunction* to summon chains and attack a target within 50 meters (Damage 15).

- **Crazed:** On any Mishap Dr. Smirnov stops what he’s doing and gibbers to himself for the remainder of the encounter (even if he is attacked).

KOMAR DRONE

Insectoid fliers with four adjustable rotors in place of wings. Komar have extensive sensor packages, and a sharp metal proboscis they plunge into

people or animals to “refuel,” since these drones are powered by blood. The creatures are half-a-meter to a meter in length.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 13, Mind 7, Spirit 6, Strength 5

Skills: Dodge 15, find 10, maneuver 14, stealth 14, tracking 8, unarmed combat 13

Move: 4; **Tough:** 6 (1); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Digan Darksight Eye (ignore up to four points of Darkness penalties)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Cybernetic plates +1.
- **Flight:** Move 13 in the air.
- **Mindless:** Komar are immune to *intimidation* interactions and telepathic powers.
- **Proboscis:** Deals Strength +3 damage, AP 2. If it deals a Wound the drone grapples the target.
- **Relentless:** Komar ignore Shock.
- **Small:** Attacks against the drone suffer a -2 penalty for size.

VEHICLES

GAZ TIGR TRANSPORT

A modern, military grade 4x4 with rugged suspension and strong off-road capability. The passenger compartment is lightly armored, with a roof-mounted heavy weapon.

Speed: 140 kph (12); **Tough:** 20 (4); **Wounds:** 3

- **Armament:** 7.62 mm machine gun (Damage 19, Range 250/1k/4k, Full-auto only, Ammo 250).
- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.
- **Large:** Attacks against the Tigr gain a +2 bonus due to its size.
- **Maneuverability:** -1 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.
- **Passengers:** 8.

KAMAZ TRUCK

Common work vehicles in Russia. Similar models have been in production for the last half decade.

Speed: 120 kph (12); **Tough:** 16; **Wounds:** 2

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.
- **Large:** Attacks against the truck gain a +2 bonus due to its size.
- **Maneuverability:** -2 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.
- **Passengers:** 12.

T-90 TANK

A modern variant of the T-72 with upgraded armor, engines, and fire control systems. This tank was captured by thralls and has been redecorated to their taste, including various unnecessary spikes, skulls, and chains welded to the chassis.

Speed: 60 kph (11); **Tough:** 31 (10); **Wounds:** 4

- **Armament:** 125mm cannon (Damage 30, Range 1k/3k/5k, HEAT ammo), 7.62 mm machine gun (Damage 19, Range 250/1k/4k, Long Burst only, ammo 250).
- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.
- **Juggernaut:** The vehicle may ignore its MR while gaining a step in a Chase, but it suffers a collision.
- **Passengers:** 3.
- **Maneuverability:** -4 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.
- **Very Large:** Attacks against the T-90 gain a +4 bonus due to its size.

YAMAHA R1 MOTORCYCLE

A performance sport bike popular in the region. Various different makes and models are similar enough to use the same statistics.

Speed: 140 kph (12); **Tough:** 12; **Wounds:** 1

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.
- **Maneuverability:** No penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or chases.
- **Passengers:** 1.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE NILE EMPIRE

ADEBOWALE KHALIL

Tourists usually have a hard time with his name, so he just introduces himself as Khalil. Adebowale was always drawn to the pyramids, and the ancient culture that constructed them. He began working as a tour guide just to spend time around the ancient splendors and found it suited him. He loves to learn and share his newfound knowledge.

Quote: “To your left you see the mastabas and rock cut tombs of the 5th and 6th dynasties.”

Cosm: [Nile Empire]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 11, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 1, faith 3, find 2, first aid 1, intimidation 1, language (Coptic) 1, maneuver 1, melee combat 1, persuasion 1, [reality 1], scholar 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7 (0); **Shock:** 11; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Guidebook, mobile phone, staff (Damage Strength +2/9)

Perks: [Miracles (heal, strike, ward enemy)], [Extra Miracle (lightning strike)]

HEIDI EKLUND

Born in Heidelberg, Heidi learned about machines by taking them apart and putting them back together. She’s an engineer for the Airbus Group, a massive aerospace and defense conglomerate. This is the first proper vacation Heidi has taken in more than a decade.

Quote: “That airplane is primitive—but effective!”

Cosm: [Nile Empire]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 11 [12], Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Air vehicles 2, dodge 1, find 2, [energy weapons 2], [reality 1], scholar 2, science 3, stealth 1, trick 2

Move: 9; **Tough:** 7 (0) / [9 (2)]; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Multitool, tablet, [raygun], [leather coat]

Perks: [Electro-Ray], [Super Attribute (Mind)]

JAVA

Java is a student in Cairo. She’s fascinated by all history, especially military tactics, and fancies herself an armchair general. Today is the first time she’s managed to visit the pyramids despite living so close to them her entire life.

Quote: “I prefer analyzing invasions from a safer distance!”

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 10, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, [fire combat 2], language (Coptic) 1, maneuver 1, [melee weapons 1], , [reality 3], scholar 3, science 1, stealth 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6 (0); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Notebook, pens

Perks: [Negation], [Situational Awareness]

"LION" KAMIL

Lion was a cop in Giza, a good one, but he was taken off regular duty for insubordination. Now he spends all day making sure tourists or teens don't deface the tombs around the pyramid. Lion chafes at this duty, and longs to get back into the real action where he belongs.

Quote: "This is what I was born to do."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 9, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 11

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 3, intimidation 1, land vehicles 2, melee weapons 2, [reality 2], unarmed combat 2

Move: 9; **Tough:** 11 (0); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Baton, .38 revolver, walkie-talkie, ticket book

Perks: [Relentless], [Vengeful]

KELSEY KAVANAUGH

Kelsey is a recent divorcé from America. He's shy and quiet, practically invisible to even his family and friends. He surprised himself as much as everyone else when he used the last of his savings on this trip to finally see the pyramids like he'd always promised himself he would.

Quote: "Don't mind me, I'm not that important."

Cosm: [Nile Empire]

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 11 [12], Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, land vehicles 1, [lockpicking 1], maneuver 2, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 2, [reality 1], stealth 3 [5], trick 2

Move: 11; **Tough:** 7 (0); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Camera, mobile phone, [throwing daggers (two, Strength +1 Damage, Range 10/20/30)]

Perks: [Super Attribute (Dexterity)], [Super Skill (Stealth)]

"THE KID"

"The Kid" is an orphan and world-traveling vagabond. He never knew his parents, or even where he was born. He considers himself a "citizen of Earth" and has lived by his wits since he was a child. He's happy-go-lucky and always ready with a lie, quip, or quick escape plan when things go wrong.

Quote: "We'll get out of this somehow. There's always a way."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 10, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, fire combat 1, melee weapons 1, persuasion 2, [reality 2], stealth 1, streetwise 1, survival 1, taunt 3, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6 (0); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Backpack, water bottle, knife (*Strength +1 Damage*)

Perks: [Grant Possibilities], [Prodigy]

ACT ONE: THE NILE EMPIRE

BY DEAN GILBERT

A group of tourists and workers are at the Pyramids of Giza when the Nile Empire's maelstrom bridge descends from the sky, crushing the visitor's center and unleashing a horde of goose-stepping invaders upon the site. The attackers eventually drive the heroes underground into a network of tunnels that shouldn't exist.

The tunnels lead back to the Great Pyramid of Khafre, but they are riddled with death traps, puzzles, and stone guardians animated by the magic of the place. At the center of the network a giant stone scorpion protects a golden scroll that contains some answers to what's happening—if anyone can read it!

By the time the explorers emerge from the pyramid night is falling. The strange stone portal is gone, but some villains and troopers remain behind searching for the scroll and the Storm Knights. They are holding other tourists hostage, and it's up to the heroes to escape to Cairo with the scroll and anyone they can rescue.

SCENE ONE: THE SANDS OF GIZA

Standard Scene. The characters are all at the site of the Pyramids of Giza. Some are there strictly as tourists, others work there as tour guides or police. They are currently on the walkway between the Great Sphinx and the pyramid of Khafre, just parallel with the Pyramid of Khufu.

SEEING THE SIGHTS

The majority of the crowds are still congregating down at the visitor's center, the Sphinx, or across the plateau at Khufu. The group traveling with the heroes is closer to Khafre and is relatively small.

MARTA JONES

Marta is here on a once-in-a-lifetime trip with her son Moe. Her husband fell ill and is back at the hotel in Cairo. Marta is more nervous than excited at this point, between her husband's illness and the communications blackouts affecting most of her home in the United States. Marta herself is high-strung, with brown frizzy hair and a nervous demeanor.



Hooded Cobra prepares to strike!

Quote: "Please try not to talk about what's going on in America in front of my son. He's...sensitive."

MOSES "MOE" JONES

Moe is a young boy of 10, but he's short for his age and looks even younger. He's extremely shy and would be hiding behind his mother or playing a handheld video game if he wasn't so completely enthralled with the pyramids.

Quote: "Uh, I'm not supposed to talk to strangers."

JESSIE CARMEL

Jessie is a minor celebrity back in the United States, just ask her. She has bleached blonde hair and immaculate makeup, and seems disappointed that neither the Jones family nor the heroes has heard of her.

Quote: "Yeah, I'm kind of a big deal back in the real world."

HALIL BIN MASAUD

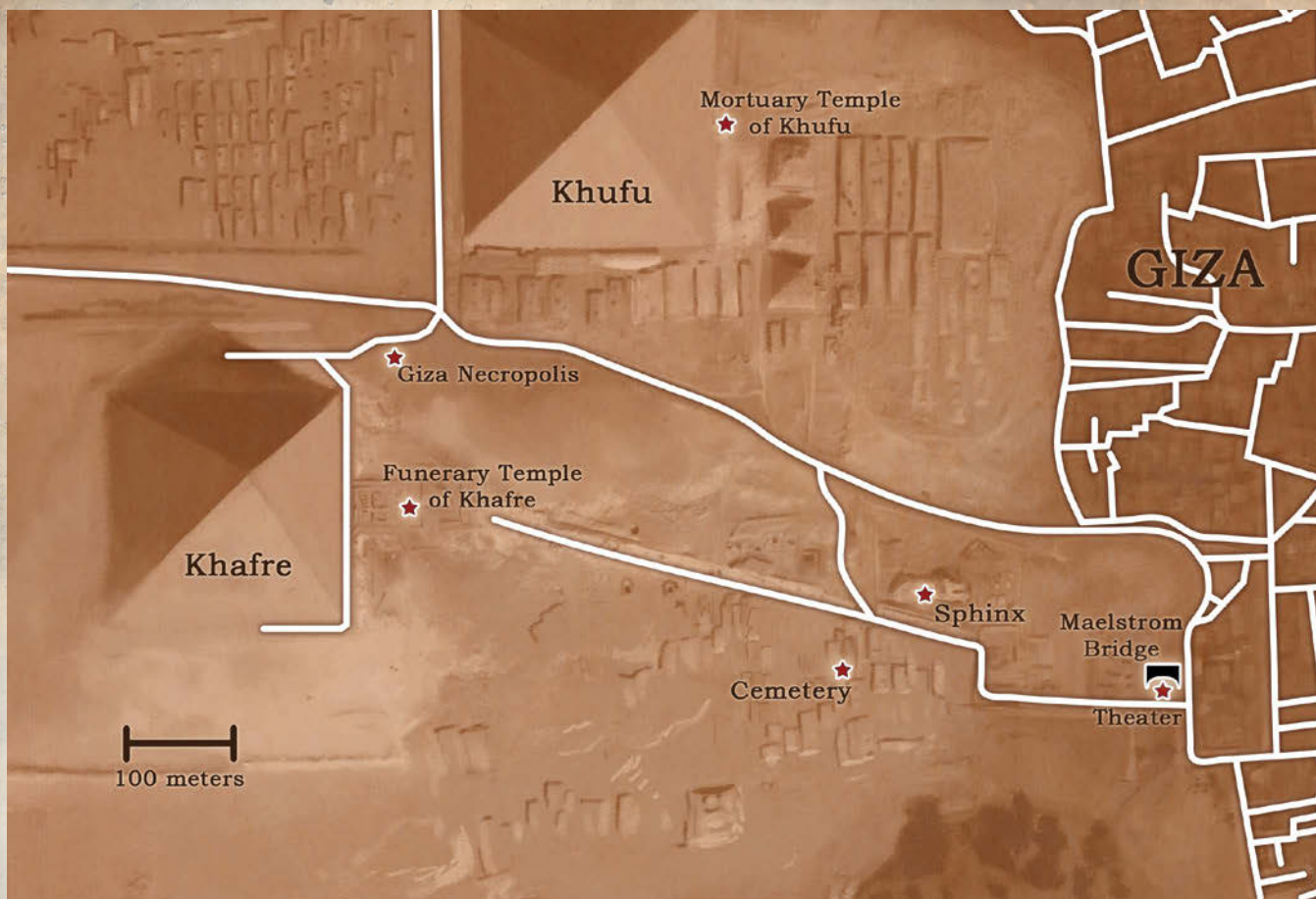
Halil is a student from Saudi Arabia. He's the same age as Java and The Kid (if either is in play) and tries to tag along with either if they let him. He has a shy smile and a quiet voice. He isn't careful about hiding that he comes from a wealthy family, as evidenced by his expensive clothing and gear.

Quote: "What a splendid sight, and a beautiful day."

THE BRIDGE LANDS

When the scene is set and the characters have time to introduce themselves to the other individuals in their group, read the following aloud:

You hear a crack of thunder and look up. On the other side of the Pyramid of Khafre, you see a strange-looking storm develop suddenly. It's the only cloud in the sky. Others in your group mutter at the strange



An overview of the Giza plateau. The group is on the southern path to Khafre near the edge of the cemetery.

sight as the storm cloud grows—it's the wrong time of year for thunderstorms to happen, and besides, it's supposed to be clear and hot for days.

The crowd gasps as they witness the impossible. A wide, twisting sandstone column drops down from the spreading storm cloud like a vortex. It tilts and arches downward, slamming into the visitor's center and crushing it flat.

You see a flash from the point of impact, feel the shockwave like a thunderclap, and smell an odd odor like ozone. You grow dizzy for a moment, and then all around you things begin to shift.

The ruins shimmer and change. The nearby walls of the Southern Cemetery are now adorned with billowing tapestries covering fresh inscriptions and hieroglyphics. The stone is no longer crumbling, and the intact structures form a thick maze of buildings, some gleaming with gold plating.

The pyramids, just moments ago looking like ancient

structures, are now smooth, painted white, and capped with gold.

The whole world seems to shake with a rhythmic pounding, like the fall of a million marching feet stepping in time.

The Nile Empire's World Laws and axioms are in effect. Deal each player a Cosm card.

TRANSFORMATIONS

It's not only the ruins and distant vehicles that are changing—some of the people are affected as well.

Moe transforms while holding his mother's hand. His clothes change to those fitting a boy in the late 1930s: trousers, a blazer, and a tie. His game pad becomes a slingshot (Damage 5, Range 5/10/20). Marta remains under Core Earth axioms and begins to panic and scream!

A persuasion test calms her down, but otherwise she remains hysterical and oblivious to the other

dangers brewing. An Easy (DN 8) *first aid* test verifies that Moe is physically unharmed.

Jessie swoons demurely and her clothing reforms into a tight fitting, slinky dress. Her hairstyle changes to the curled coiffure of a Golden Age movie star, and anyone who examines her discovers she's now a natural blonde. Her memories are scrambled, and her personality has shifted from slightly vapid to completely selfish. She plays dumb or vamps to get protection from the heroes, but she's just waiting to latch on to someone stronger.

A COBRA STRIKES

Any character who isn't engrossed in the sudden transformations notices a new danger. A very large cobra slithers out of the nearby rocks and prepares to strike Halil. If warned, the unfortunate youth merely stumbles back in surprise and falls to the ground still in danger.

A quick-thinking do-gooder can attack the snake (Moe's slingshot is available as a weapon), or distract and stymie it with an interaction. Taking direct action against the dangerous creature could fuel a Moment of Crisis.

EGYPTIAN COBRA

This two-meter specimen is unusually large. Cobras are uncommon on the plateau. The snake's hood flares while it menaces tourists with its deadly bite.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 8, Mind 5, Spirit 5, Strength 5

Skills: Find 8, dodge 10, intimidation 8, stealth 10, taunt (15), unarmed combat 10

Move: 8; **Tough:** 5; **Shock:** 5; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Small:** Attacks against the snake suffer a -2 penalty.
- **Bite:** The cobra's vicious fangs deal *Strength* +2 (7) damage. If the attack equals or exceeds the target's Toughness it also injects venom.
- **Venom:** An affected target is Stymied. A second dose increases this to Very Stymied, and a third KO's the target and forces a test for Defeat.

ITEMS AND TRANSFORMATION

When most people transform to a new reality, their clothing and items likewise convert into some equivalent applicable to the new reality. Everything they wear or carry is what they would have if they had lived their entire life in the invading reality.

For Ords this transition takes time, usually 10 to 20 seconds, and leaves the individual confused and in shock. A Storm Knight transcending, however, is nearly instantaneous, and may happen as she takes the triggering action. That means she can spend Possibilities to add dice to the outcome, or employ powers or items that didn't exist when she started the act which led to transcendence.

When possible, alert the player to these new options immediately as the Storm Knight transforms.

STRAFING RUN

The pillar that dropped from the sky twists like a braid, and troops and vehicles rumble down the sides in defiance of gravity. The constant pulse of thousands of feet marching in time grows louder as the columns near the base.

Strange fighter planes skim along the structure, and then break off near the base to soar into the desert sky. Anyone who attempts to identify the planes may test *find*. Success determines they are single-engine prop fighters, roughly equivalent to those used during World War II. Their silhouettes don't match any known historical craft, but they are definitely armed. They have ankh markings on their sides and wings, and one has crocodile jaws painted along its fuselage.

The fighters split up and begin strafing Giza and the surrounding area with machinegun fire. One plane heads straight toward the touring group. The heroes have moments to act before its deadly guns begin to fire!

The pilot fires his machineguns (Damage 15) at the entire party. He gains +4 for Rapid Fire and a +1 for the dual weapon mount to his *heavy weapons* 8, but a -2 for range and another -2 for each extra person he's strafing.

Anyone looking for protection they can run to make it into the Southern Cemetery, the structures of which provide Concealment and Cover. The other tourists are *dodge* 6, and need encouragement (a standard *persuasion* test) to reach cover in time. A character may use an interaction to Stymie the plane, or an Active Defense to dodge out of the way. Helping others first certainly triggers a Moment of Crisis. After a single pass the fighter pulls up and rejoins the others flying east toward Cairo.

An Opponent Fails Destiny card causes the attack to fail, thus missing everyone.

• PM1 Paket (1): See page 113.

UNSTABLE GROUND

The pounding of the marching troops increases in volume and intensity. The ground shakes, and in some places across the plateau buildings crumble and fall. Jessie made it into the Southern Cemetery to take cover whether she was helped or not. One of the slabs breaks loose and falls directly toward her! Someone who hasn't had a Moment of Crisis is closest to her, and an Easy (DN 8) *Dexterity* test pushes her to safety in time. Otherwise, she's apparently crushed under the stone, and only resurfaces in Scene Three thanks to the **Law of Drama!**

GOOSE-STEPPING HORDES

Column after column of troops march from the maelstrom bridge onto the sands of Giza. These men are shocktroopers. They are

bare-chested, and wear a headdress and kilt styled similarly to ancient Egyptian warriors. The weapons they carry look more modern, like World War II submachineguns, and their belts and bandoleers are covered in bullets. They march heavily, in perfect time, and the world trembles every time their sandaled feet stomp the ground.

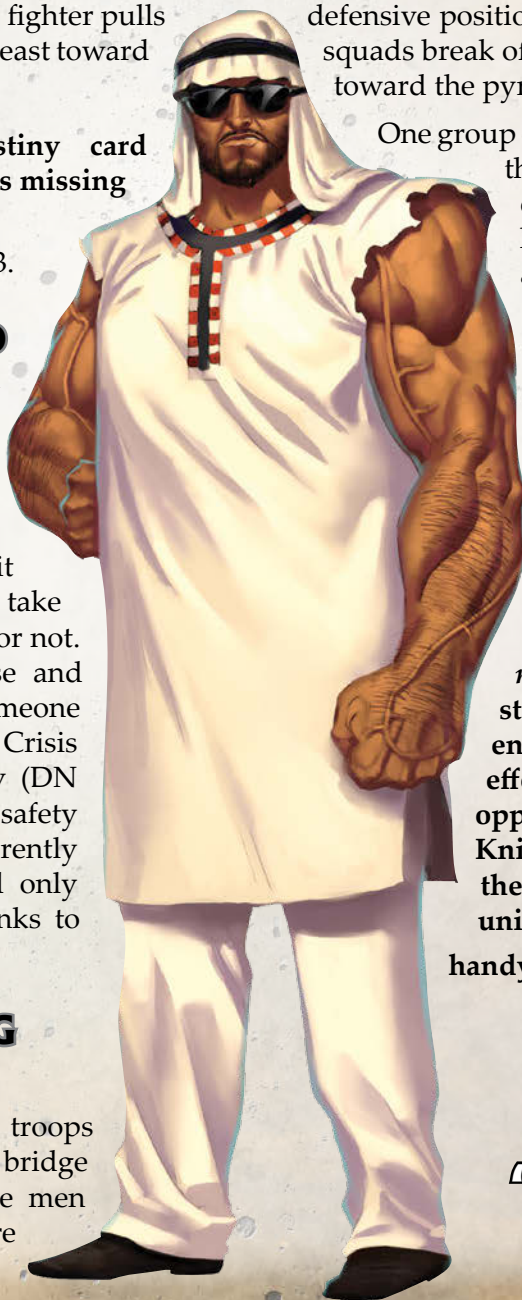
Above the throngs a massive zeppelin with the same markings as the fighter planes floats down from the bridge. Older-looking tanks rumble and clank between the columns of troopers. Most of the emerging army heads directly eastward, following in the wake of the planes, but some take up defensive positions around the pillar's base, and squads break off from the main group and rush toward the pyramids, tombs, and the Sphinx.

One group of soldiers heads directly toward the Storm Knights. A successful combined *stealth* test allows the heroes to ambush the patrol at close quarters inside the cemetery structures, otherwise the troopers open fire once inside short range.

"Kneel before the army of Pharaoh Mobius!" they cry as they engage.

• Nile Empire Shocktroopers (2 per hero): See page 112.

Interactions like *trick* and *maneuver* may knock down stone columns, eliminating enemies on an Outstanding effect. This battle is also an opportunity for the Storm Knights to gain weapons from the fallen troopers, and possibly uniforms that may come in handy later.



"LION" KAMIL

PHAROAH HIMSELF

Just as the Storm Knights dispatch the last of the patrol, a different kind of vehicle rolls out of the maelstrom bridge—an angular tank three times the size of the others. Banners stream behind it, and atop its turret sits a cowled figure on an ornate, golden throne. The heroes don't yet know his name, but this is High Lord Mobius.

The hooded face turns to look directly toward the Storm Knights, and as he does so another tremor shakes the plateau. The ground opens underneath the group's feet and they tumble into the chasm below. Rocks and sand crash down around them as everything goes dark. Could this be the end?

SCENE TWO: UNDER KHAFRE'S SHADOW

Standard Scene. When the dust settles, the adventurers find themselves in an underground chamber. The other tourists who were with them didn't fall into the shaft. They are likely still on the surface and now in the invaders' clutches.

Boulders and rocks have tumbled into the chasm above and filled in the passage completely. The whole mass shifts occasionally, causing rocky sand to tumble onto the floor. A major shift might collapse the chamber.

There is no light. Characters still connected to Core Earth have working flashlight apps in their phones, and those who transformed discover an older-style flashlight or walkie-talkie in place of their smartphone.

A quick look around determines that this is not a natural cave the Storm Knights have landed in. The walls are carved with ancient hieroglyphs, and there's a single hallway leading away into deeper darkness. A Hard (DN 14) test against *scholar* determines the writings are from roughly the time the Pyramid of Khafre was constructed. The most common symbols are a scroll and scorpions of various sizes.

THE EGYPT THAT NEVER WAS

It isn't that these chambers and tunnels always existed under Giza and just happened to remain undiscovered. They didn't exist at all until the axiom wash from Mobius' maelstrom bridge transformed the area.

The ancient Egypt of these transformations isn't like the Egypt or our Earth, or even the Egypt of Mobius's Terra. It's a unique amalgam infused with spiritual and magical energy.

Secret treasure chambers and living gods unknown to both Storm Knights and the invaders spring up wherever the land transforms, which might benefit either side—depending on who gets there first!

THE CHAMBER OF SANDS

The large chamber at the end of the passage has wide walls and a large doorway at the far end. The door itself is composed of two massive stone blocks pressed together. A seam is visible, but too small to pry into, and requires a Near Impossible (DN 20) *Strength* test to force apart even if leverage is gained.

The sandstone walls of the chamber are gloriously painted with colorful murals featuring robbers being eaten alive by thousands of scorpions. The high ceiling is painted with lines of priests, each carrying a quill. They march into the Pyramid of Khafre. A gigantic scorpion looms over the pyramid and the priests, and a golden scroll floats above its head.

At the midpoint of each side wall is a lever shaped like a scorpion stinger. Pulling a lever is a Challenging (DN 12) *Strength* test. Once pulled, the door slab on that side retracts but as one block moves the other slides forward to fill any empty space. Only when both levers are pulled simultaneously do both slabs retract at once, opening the way to a new passage beyond.



The stone automatons that protect Khafre from intruders are dangerous despite their small size.

The last two people who remain behind to hold the levers must make a Standard (DN 10) *Dexterity* test to leap through the closing doors before they slam shut. If only one of the two makes it, the other appears to be trapped forever—but actually reappears later in the scene thanks to the **Law of Drama** (see **The Shaft** on page 108.)

THE INFESTED MAZE

The explorers have no time to rest once they are through the doorway. A scratching sound at the walls alerts them that something is coming, while ahead dark passageways wind in different directions like a maze.

This is a Chase against the stone scorpion swarm (see page 107) that's starting to pour into the passageway. Each side tests *Dexterity* to gain steps.

The scorpion swarms move mindlessly forward to fill the corridors and rend the flesh of any creatures in an area they have overrun. If a step is available when the swarm acts it attempts to advance, but it only ever attempts one step per action. If no step is available the swarm rolls a single *maneuver* interaction against all the heroes (no Multi-Target penalty) hoping to Stymie them or drop them back a step on a Player's Call result.

Any character on the same step or lower suffers the swarm's damage automatically at the beginning of each turn. Once a runner completes Step D they pass into the pyramid itself and the swarm doesn't pursue any farther. If the swarm completes Step D any hero who hasn't already escaped is engulfed and presumed slain until the end of the scene (again, see **The Shaft**).

Dilemmas in this Chase usually represent dead-end corridors, getting lost, or passages that constrict into crawlspaces.

STONE SCORPION SWARM

Each scorpion is a stone about the size of a fist, carved with legs, pincers, and stingers all wrapped tight against their shells. Slowly some of the statues begin to uncurl and move!

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 5, Spirit 5, Strength 5

Skills: Find 6, dodge 8, intimidation 8, maneuver 8, taunt 6, trick 6

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7 (2); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 5

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** These creatures are made of stone, and gain +2 Armor all over.
- **Engulf:** Any character inside this swarm suffers *Strength* +1BD damage at the start of his turn.

- **Mindless:** The scorpions are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions.

- **Relentless:** The stone scorpions ignore Shock.

- **Swarm:** Single-target weapons do no damage at all. Unarmed stomps and thrashing deal half damage. Area attacks do normal damage.

THE CHAMBER OF THE SCROLL

The maze ends in stairs rising up into a spacious antechamber. This area is well-lit by torches, circled by rough pillars, and has a high, vaulted ceiling. In the center of the chamber a huge shape shifts—the giant scorpion of the murals! Built into a brace atop its head is a golden scroll case.

There is no visible exit from the chamber at ground level, but there is a shaft at the top of the peaked ceiling leading upward. It can be reached by climbing the walls and pillars. Unfortunately the giant scorpion moves to sting or claw anyone who attempts such a climb.

The scorpion statue is nearly indestructible by conventional means, but it has an intentional weakness: If the scroll can be snatched from the



Not all of Khafre's defenders are tiny.

holder on its head it immediately crumbles into sand. Hint at the creature's weakness by having it raise its claws protectively to cover the scroll when anyone attempts an interaction.

An Idea or an Alertness card reveals this weakness immediately.

A Player's Call interaction accomplishes this, likely with *maneuver* or *trick*. Either could work if the action makes sense. An Outstanding attempt to grapple with a Called Shot to the scroll (-4) also grabs the scroll.

The scroll itself is indecipherable without weeks of work, but based on a cursory examination it seems to contain the locations of other artifacts and tombs across transformed Egypt.

GIANT STONE SCORPION

This limestone statue is immense and threatening: all spiky segmented armor, arachnid legs, vicious claws, and a menacing stinger with a point like a sword.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 5, Spirit 6, Strength 18

Skills: Dodge 8, find 7, maneuver 8, trick 6, tracking 6, unarmed combat 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 22 (4); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 4

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** This creature is made of stone, and gains +4 Armor all over.
- **Bite/Claws:** An even attack roll indicates a hit by the creature's claws, an odd represents a stinger attack instead. The stinger deals *Strength* +3 (21) damage, AP 2. The claws deal *Strength* +3 (21) damage and always attempt to grapple, so a standard hit only deals 19 damage.
- **Mindless:** The giant stone scorpion is immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions and telepathic powers.
- **Relentless:** The stone scorpion ignores Shock.
- **Very Large:** This creature is 10 meters long, granting any attack roll against it a +4 Size bonus.

THE SHAFT

When the scroll is gained the giant scorpion and all its smaller brethren in the other chambers fall to pieces. At this point any heroes who were apparently slain in previous chambers crawl into the chamber or shaft from tight adjoining tunnels and may describe their narrow escapes from death!

It's a long, slow climb up the tunnel, but it's relatively safe thanks to the many handholds and outcroppings along the way. There's a large stone blocking the top of the shaft, but a good hearty shove topples it out of the way to let fading sunlight and fresh air wash over the emerging survivors.

The Storm Knights have regained the surface, but where are they, and what dangers still await them there?

SCENE THREE: ESCAPE FROM GIZA

Dramatic Scene. The shaft emerges about halfway up the side of Khafre's Pyramid. The block the Storm Knights dislodged looks the same as the other large blocks that form the surface of the pyramid. From this high up they have a good view of the entire plateau, and no guards spot them.

The sun is setting in the west, painting the entire site in an eerie red hue, indicating that the delvers were down below the pyramid for many hours. A large dust storm with violent lightning rages to the west, heading quickly toward Giza. Surprisingly, the massive sandstone maelstrom bridge is no longer present.

In the far distance in every direction there are signs of the invaders' army on the move, mostly furrows and tracks from large numbers of tanks. Some forces remain at Giza, but only a few hundred men compared to the multitude that poured through earlier.

The remaining forces have set up a base camp around the Sphinx and are spread between several outposts. The remaining tourists are tied up in this encampment, except for Jessie Caramel. She's carrying one of the invaders' submachineguns and is practically draped across a hooded figure who seems to be in charge of the camp.

Halil and Marta make some kind of request to Jessie, but she merely laughs at them and tightens their bonds.

Now it's up to the intruders to decide how to proceed. Likely, they have three objectives in mind:

- **Escape from the Giza plateau:** They might be able to slip away during the storm under cover of darkness. The outskirts of the city are very close, less than a kilometer away, but it may still take some time to get far enough into the city to lose pursuers. Stealing a vehicle dramatically increases the odds of reaching safety before they're caught.

- **Free the hostages:** The Jones family and Halil bin Masaud are grateful if rescued. Even better, they've overheard the invader's conversations and warn their rescuers about the villains' powers as soon as possible. They know that Jessie has thrown in with the invaders, and isn't in need of rescue.

- **Keep Khafre's Scroll out of Mobius's hands:** The Storm Knights might simply destroy

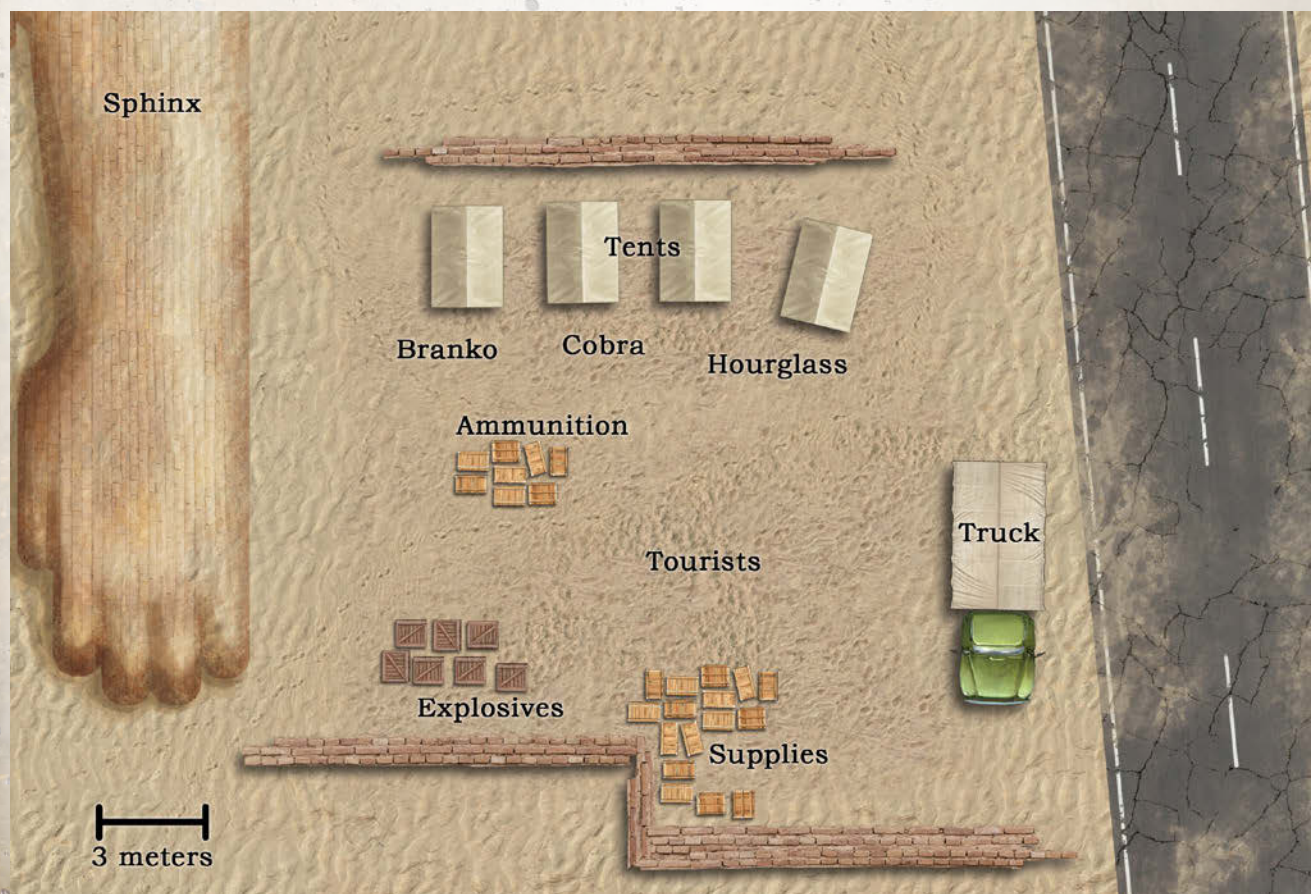
the scroll. There is no magical protection preventing it from burning or being torn to shreds. Remind the Storm Knights of the potential value of the artifact to any developing resistance movement.

ENEMY FORCES

The Storm Knights' position gives them a good look at the forces arrayed against them on the plateau:

- **Vehicles:** One zeppelin hovers around the site on patrol. Two tanks are on station, one parked at the entrance to Khafre, the other at the entrance to Khufu's Pyramid. A troop transport truck is parked in the main encampment near the Sphinx.

- **Villains:** There are three colorfully dressed villains among the troops of the main camp. Hooded Cobra wears an elaborate snake themed costume. He's the one giving orders to the other villains and regular soldiers. Another standout is a huge man wearing stone boxing gloves. This is Brick-knuckle Branko. The last is a stylish woman wearing a monocle: Lady Hourglass.



Troopers: There are squads of five shocktroopers spread across the site. One squad per hero is at the main camp, aboard the zeppelin, and spread throughout each of the three cemeteries on patrol.

- **Nile Empire Shocktroopers (see above):** In groups of five, see page 112.
- **Khepera Tanks (2):** See page 113.
- **Troop Transport Truck (1):** See page 113.
- **Zeppelin (1):** See page 113. The craft is on patrol above, about 50 meters above the site. One group of shocktroopers is aboard, and a PM1 Paket is attached to its undercarriage.
- **Villains (3):** Hooded Cobra (page 112), Lady Hourglass (page 112), and Brick-knuckle Branko (page 112). All three start in the main camp.

RUNNING THE ESCAPE

The escape features many moving parts a GM might need to handle, depending on what kind of plan the Storm Knights try to implement. Here are a few things that may come up:

SNEAKING

Moving from one area of the map to another is a *stealth* test. Nightfall and the coming storm act as a Darkness penalty to the patrol's *find*, so the target to slip past is only DN 7 (*find* 9 -2). Each character must test, and anyone who fails is spotted by a squad of patrolling shocktroopers. When the villains act they yell and fire weapons, which draws attention from all the other camps and brings two more squads into the conflict.

ONCE THE SHOOTING STARTS

Each group is roughly 300 meters away, so gunfire or explosions alert the entire camp that something is going on. The patrols in the area engage after one minute (six rounds). The tanks hold position and only fire if attacked or if no shocktroopers are engaged with the intruders.

THE ZEPPELIN

The flying machine is on patrol and equipped with spotlights that eliminate Darkness penalties if the heroes wait until night to attack. It moves into position to assist any embattled force after half a minute (three rounds). It drops down to only five meters above the ground, and half of the shocktrooper squads aboard slide down ropes into the fray.

Those on the ground may likewise climb up those ropes to board the aircraft. Climbing a rope is a *strength* test (DN 8). A success ascends one meter, a Good success two meters, and an Outstanding success climbs three meters.

Once the storm gets close enough the zeppelin must break off and leave the area, or attempt a Very Hard (DN 16) *air vehicles* test each round to avoid being dashed into the ground and destroyed.

STEALING TANKS OR TRUCKS

Each tank has a crew of three shocktroopers. The truck currently has no crew at all. All are military vehicles, so they don't require keys to start.

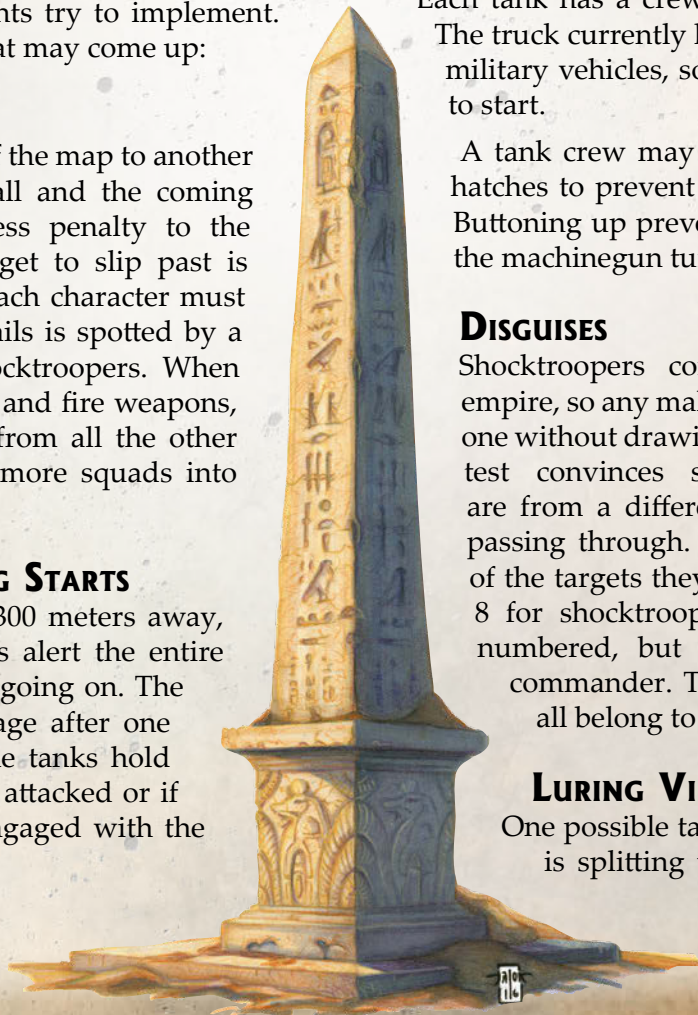
A tank crew may "button up," locking its hatches to prevent access from the outside. Buttoning up prevents the crew from using the machinegun turret on the top.

DISGUISES

Shocktroopers come from all over the empire, so any male character could pose as one without drawing attention. A *persuasion* test convinces soldiers the infiltrators are from a different battlegroup and just passing through. The DN is the *find* skill of the targets they're trying to fool, so DN 8 for shocktroopers. Battlegroups aren't numbered, but rather named for their commander. The troops stationed here all belong to Battlegroup Cobra.

LURING VILLAINS AWAY

One possible tactic the raiders might try is splitting up to lure villains away from the captives. In general the villains can't tell what's



going on in other locations, only that there is gunfire and trouble. Brick-knuckle Branko races toward any sounds of battle. Lady Hourglass leaves at the same time but doesn't run, so it takes her two minutes to get anywhere. Hooded Cobra always remains in the main camp, screeching orders and cajoling his forces to engage.

THE AMMUNITION DUMP

There's a pile of ammunition, shells, and other explosives at the main camp. Setting it off with a grenade or cannon shot causes a Damage 25 explosion across a Huge Blast area. That means up to 15 targets are affected by the blast, likely including at least one of the villains—and the captured tourists unless they are removed from the area first!

THE SANDSTORM

A dangerous sandstorm arrives if the raiders really get into trouble—or if they specifically wait for it. Once it hits, *stealth* tests are no longer necessary to move from area to area, visibility drops to around 50 meters, and even gunfire doesn't alert distant groups that others are under attack. The zeppelin leaves the area or crashes. A Setback blinds that side with blistering sand for the round, causing a -6 penalty to any test that requires vision! The storm also wards off any pursuit and eliminates the escapees' tracks.

There are many dangerous villains arrayed against the heroes, including three powerful Stormers. The World Laws of the Nile Empire actually give the Storm Knights a significant boost here. The Law of Heroism grants each of them an extra Destiny card, and it's likely that once a fight starts the heroes are ambushing the villains—which allows one of those cards to be played into the Action Pool immediately.

The Law of Action allows a second Possibility to be spent on any test, and the Storm Knight uses the better roll. Snappy one-liners, daring actions, and bold banter should all earn the heroes extra Possibilities to really use this boon, and hopefully generate some outrageous totals.

AFTER GIZA

How the insurgents proceed is entirely up to them. Depending on their approach, the group may get away cleanly or eliminate enough of the opposition to escape within the storm. Either way they find allies in Cairo building a resistance to the cruel invaders. If they tried to take everything head-on they may find themselves overwhelmed. Any Storm Knight unfortunate enough to be captured is delivered to Cairo too, but into the waiting clutches of the insidious Wu Han!

EPILOGUE

In the intervening weeks the adventurers eventually take up full-time residence in Cairo. The tumultuous city becomes a hotbed of resistance to Pharaoh Mobius's forces.

His main force didn't linger in the city, but left it under the care of the insidious Wu Han, one of his sadistic military governors. On the surface Wu Han maintains control, but the city draws Storm Knights and troublemakers like a magnet.

If the Scroll of Khafre was recovered, the Storm Knights have just deciphered enough to pin down the exact location of one of the hidden treasures noted within when news arrives of a visitor. He knows about the scroll and the role the characters played in its recovery or loss. This stranger introduces himself as Quinn Sebastian. He smiles.

"I'm with the Delphi Council, and we're doing everything we can to fight this Mobius fella and his kind everywhere they've landed. We need special people—those with abilities and the gumption to use them against the High Lords. Men and women who can succeed against impossible odds. Any of you know anyone like that?"

NILE EMPIRE THREATS

BRICK-KNUCKLE BRANKO

Branko is a giant of a man, with massive arms, broad shoulders, and a polished bald head. An extravagant waxed mustache extends well past his face, a clear point of pride. He wears athletic tights, laced boots, and stone gloves that look large even on him. Branko speaks in single-syllable words with a vaguely Eastern European accent. Though evil, Branko is a sportsman and tends to fight fairly.

Quote: "I vill crush you!"

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 10, Mind 6, Spirit 12, Strength 14

Skills: Dodge 13, intimidation 14, maneuver 13, stealth 14, taunt 10, unarmed combat 15

Move: 10; **Tough:** 16; **Shock:** 14; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Stone gloves (Damage *Strength* +2/16).

Perks: Endurance, Relentless, Super Attribute (*Strength* +2, Gadget: stone gloves, unusable after being KO'ed)

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities: —

HOODED COBRA

Hooded Cobra's attire is similar to that of the shocktroopers he leads, but he wears a full leather jerkin. His headdress is larger and forms a mask over his face, and he carries strange-looking pistols he refers to as "The Cobra's Fangs" (Electro-Rays). His voice is shrill and tinged with madness.

Quote: "Get them, you imbeciles!"

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 10, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, energy weapons 12, intimidation 12, land vehicles 11, melee weapons 11, reality 13, stealth 10, taunt 9, trick 13

Move: 9; **Tough:** 11 (2); **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Cobra's Fangs—two pistols that project his Electro-Ray ability, leather armor (+2)

Perks: Bolster, Electro-Ray (Damage 15, Ammo 15, Short Burst, Gadget: pistols, unusable after a Mishap, requires both hands)

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Diatribes:** When Hooded Cobra rolls a Mishap he becomes Very Vulnerable, frothing ineffectively about how he is surrounded by fools.

- **Gloater:** When *taunt* or *intimidation* are Approved Actions, Hooded Cobra may affect the entire party without a Multi-Target penalty. Any affected hero loses one random Destiny card from her hand.

- **Minions:** Hooded Cobra may transfer any hit to a shocktrooper within a few meters if he succeeds at a *reality* test.

LADY HOURGLASS

Lady Hourglass dresses in a slinky, impractical evening gown with an hourglass pattern embroidered on the front and back. Her hair is wavy, long, and black. Over her right eye she wears an odd monocle, shaped like an hourglass. She constantly primps, vamps, and smirks. She has a particular loathing for damsels in distress, and taunts them mercilessly for depending on some undependable man to rescue them.

Quote: "Let's see if you're as useless as the rest."

Attributes: Charisma 12, Dexterity 7, Mind 9, Spirit 9, Strength 6

Skills: Dodge 11, find 11, fire combat 11, maneuver 11, persuasion 16, reality 11, stealth 10, taunt 15, trick 12, unarmed combat 9, willpower 12

Move: 8; **Toughness:** 6; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mauser C96 (Damage 13, range 10/25/40, ammo 10)

Perks: Indomitable, Mind Control (uses *persuasion* skill, Gadget: monocle, only works against men.)

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities: —

NILE SHOCKTROOPERS

These bare-chested soldiers are well-trained and inclined toward evil. Cowards and the craven are culled and employed as guards or the subjects of experiments.

Shocktroopers wear leather skirts, headdresses, and various belts and holsters. The result is more ceremonial than protective.

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Beast riding 8, dodge 8, find 8, fire combat 8, first aid 8, heavy weapons 8, intimidation 9, land vehicles 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 8, streetwise 8, survival 8, taunt 7, trick 8

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Club (*Strength* +2/10), MP-40 (Damage 13, Range 10/25/40, Short Burst).

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (1)

Special Abilities: —

VEHICLES

TROOP TRANSPORT TRUCK

Common work vehicles used by the Nile Empire. A cab seats a driver and one passenger. Supplies or troops fill the back, covered by a canvas shell.

Speed: 80 kph (11); **Tough:** 16; **Wounds:** 2

- **Maneuverability Rating:** -2 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or tests.

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Passengers:** 22. Two in the cab up front, up to 20 seated in the back. Those outside the cab are concealed by canvas and gain partial Cover (+4 Toughness) from the sides of the truck.

PM1 PAKET

The Paket is a support and reconnaissance fighter. It's armed with wing-mounted .30 caliber machineguns. Its bent wings give it a striking silhouette. Standard Nile Empire pilots resemble shocktroopers with one add in *air vehicles*.

Speed: 600 kph (16); **Tough:** 17 (2); **Wounds:** 3

- **Armament:** Two .30 caliber machineguns (Damage 15, AP 2, Range 500/1k/2k, Long Burst, Ammo 200 each).

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Maneuverability Rating:** -2 penalty to *air vehicles* for defenses or tests.

- **Passengers:** 1.

- **Very Fast:** Speed grants a +4 bonus to complete steps in a chase or a -4 penalty to be hit.

KHEPERA TANK

The Khepera is the main battle tank of the empire. It has thick armor and a tall, curved silhouette. It represents cutting-edge technology within the cosm's axioms. Reality bombs dropped by supporting aircraft ensure kheperas rarely have to face anything more modern.

Move: 60 kph (11); **Tough:** 26 (6); **Wounds:** 4

- **Armament:** 75mm cannon (Damage 28, AP 6, Range 500/1k/2.5k, Ammo 30), top-mounted machinegun (Damage 15, AP 2, Range 500/1k/2k, Long Burst, Ammo 250).

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Juggernaut:** The vehicle may ignore its MR penalty for a test to gain steps in a Chase, but it suffers a collision for doing so.

- **Passengers:** 3.

- **Maneuverability:** -4 penalty to *land vehicles* for defenses or tests.

NILE ZEPPELIN

These hydrogen-filled rigid-skin aircraft are generally used for aerial transport. They are seldom armed due to their fragility, but shocktroopers aboard may fire their own weapons, or descend up to 20 meters on rappelling lines.

Move: 100 kph (12); **Tough:** 15; **Wounds:** 4

- **Fast:** Speed grants a +2 bonus to complete steps in a Chase or a -2 penalty to be hit.

- **Flammable:** The Nile Empire favors dangerous hydrogen for their lighter-than-air craft. If a fire attack causes a Wound to the zeppelin it ignites and suffers another Wound every round until it is destroyed.

- **Maneuverability Rating:** -6 penalty to *air vehicles* for defenses or tests.

- **Passengers:** 24. Bridge crew of four, plus an optional compliment of 20 shocktroopers.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: THE CYBERPAPACY

THEO TENAILLON

Theo had the desire to serve God since he was a child and joined the Roman Catholic Church at a young age. Recently he's become burned out and hopeless. He's currently taking some personal time to visit his cousin Raine, and go to Avignon to hopefully find his calling again.

Quote: "They are preaching hate instead of love. That's not the God I know."

Cosm: [Cyberpapacy]

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 7, Mind 8, Spirit 10, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 2, faith 3, find 1, first aid 1, land vehicles 1, intimidation 2, persuasion 1, [reality 2], unarmed combat 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, Bible

Perks: [Miracles (*healing, repel, ward enemy*)], [Conviction]

HARLEQUIN

"Harlequin" has lived on the streets since he (or she?) ran away from a bad home as a child. Harlequin steals stereos, hacks bank machines, and stays one step ahead of the police. Darcy Delaine is the one bright spot in Harlequin's life, and the two are normally inseparable.

Quote: "You learn a few things growing up with nobody to count on but yourself."

Cosm: [Cyberpapacy]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 10, Mind 10, Spirit 6, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, lockpicking 2, maneuver 1, melee weapons 3, persuasion 2, [reality 1], stealth 1, streetwise 2, trick 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 10; **Tough:** 9 (1); **Shock:** 6; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Switchblade (*Strength* +1 damage), leather jacket (*Armor* +1), stolen watches

Perks: Survivor, [Vengeful]

CHLOE BEAUMONT

Chloe teaches history, and is pursuing her Doctorate in ancient history. She's on a sabbatical, studying the Roman sites here in Orange. Her sibling Adrien came along for the ride, and of course got swept up in some romantic adventure. Those sorts of exciting things never happen to her.

Quote: "This isn't the first time invaders have come through here."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 7, Mind 11, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, evidence analysis 1, find 1, fire combat 1, first aid 1, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 1, [reality 3], scholar 3, trick 2

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Camera, mobile phone

Perks: Indomitable, [Situational Awareness]

ARIELLE FAVREAU

Arielle is well known as the town's resident "Wiccan." She's well-liked and owns a corner shop where she sells candles and trinkets. The shop is closed today. Arielle had planned to spend the day with her lover Raine, but Raine didn't show up and hasn't called.

Quote: "May the Goddess guide you."

Cosm: [Cyberpapacy]

Attributes: Charisma 6, Dexterity 8, Mind 11, Spirit 9, Strength 6

Skills: Alteration 3, divination 3, dodge 2, faith 1, find 1, intimidation 1, persuasion 1, [reality 1], streetwise 1, unarmed combat 1

Move: 8; **Tough:** 6; **Shock:** 9; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Business cards, mobile phone, Wiccan necklace

Perks: [Spellcaster (*diminish, enhance, stun*)], [Extra spell (*pathfinder*)]

CAMILA DELAINE

No one in Orange knows that in her youth Camila was a notorious jewel thief. Now she's retired, relaxed, and quite wealthy. She's devoted to her only child, Darcy, who has no idea about Camila's sordid past. Darcy's been spending time lately with some hustler calling himself "Harlequin" and she suspects both are in trouble.

Quote: "Amateurs. Please allow me to assist."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 11, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, fire combat 1, lockpicking 3, maneuver 1, melee weapons 1, missile weapons 1, [reality 1], stealth 3, streetwise 1, taunt 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, lockpicks, knife (*Strength* +1 damage), jewelry

Perks: [Realm Runner], Whirlwind

MANDEL "MERVEILLE" MONET

Mervielle is the backup operator on the Avignon train line, and overdue for promotion. Right now he's off shift and enjoying a layover in Orange. He was supposed stop off in Avignon, but on the way here he met Adrien, and the whirlwind romance that started was worth the change in plans.

Quote: "Why do these things always happen to me?!"

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 9, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 9

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, intimidation 1, land vehicles 3, lockpicking 1, melee combat 1, persuasion 1, [reality 2], stealth 1, taunt 2, trick 1

Move: 9; **Tough:** 9; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, toolbelt

Perks: [Prodigy], [Tenacious]

ACT ONE: THE CYBERPAPACY

The Cyberpapacy arrives in Orange, France heralded by trumpets and talk of salvation. As people become aware of the horrors that occurred the night before, a riot breaks out and the heroes are swept up in the flow of events.

Each Storm Knight has a loved one who was lost in the bustle—possibly the same loved one! They search a sinister clinic and find certain “undesirables” are being sent to Avignon in a train car.

Can the Storm Knights rescue the prisoners and escape the Cyberpapacy’s influence before it’s too late?

SCENE ONE: ORANGE SKIES

Standard Scene. The characters are residents or visitors in the French city of Orange. Orange is quiet, rural, and has a population of around 30,000 people. The old city has narrow streets and restored facades, intentionally giving the impression of an old-fashioned village. Notably, several ancient Roman structures remain, including a triumphal arch and a large, restored amphitheater.

Avignon, a famous tourist destination known for its palace and cathedral, lies 30 km to the south. Avignon’s main claim to fame was as an alternate Vatican during a historical schism in the Roman Catholic church. The skies in that direction are dark and stormy. Strange lightning flashes and threatening wind blows through the streets of Orange in gusts. The air itself feels charged with static electricity.

The mood in Orange is nervous. The storm looks strong enough to cause problems, but what has really set people on edge is the prophecy of a strange priest who passed through Orange about a month ago making wild proclamations about the end of the world.

Most of what he said sounded like lunacy: Dragons, demons, and nightmares would appear to punish the world for its hubris. All this devastation would be preceded by a terrible, unnatural storm. No one really believed the stranger’s ravings, but he became the gossip of the town for weeks.



The Church Police, flanked by a Host, move in to put an end to a riot.

Starting late last night there have been sporadic power outages. Internet and mobile phone communications have been down for hours. Such things happen, but the strange storm to the south has reminded the town of the priest's words, and everyone is on edge—though no one wishes to admit it.

Adrien, Darcy, and Raine (all associated with the heroes) rushed into town earlier in the morning to run errands and grab supplies before the storm arrived in full force. The characters are in town looking for their overdue loved ones, and have just met one another to trade updates. No one has spotted anything thus far, and phone service is still out.

THEATER OF THE NEW ORDER

The ground shudders slightly and a palpable wave of energy passes through the group. Mobile phones suddenly have signal again, but screens are locked with a message that reads "Upgrade In Progress... GodNet Installing," and a swiftly filling progress

bar. Once the install completes, phones reconnect and a news scroll appears on the display. Messages such as "Remain calm!" and "Emergency town hall happening at the Roman Theater" pop up.

The Cyberpapacy World Laws and axioms are in effect. Deal each player a Cyberpapacy Cosm card.

The Roman Theater is a huge, open-seating amphitheater well known to all residents. Anyone surfing for news sees headlines about demonic attacks across Europe, a plague devastating Asia, and some kind of natural disaster in America.

Attempts to call or locate a missing person's phone don't work, and the system apologetically asserts that phone may not have upgraded and joined the network yet.

Before the characters can disperse they are stopped by a strange sight. Translucent heralds float above the streets of Orange, looking like blue, semi-transparent birds.



Once the Law of Suspicion is in effect, it's all too easy to become the focus of unwanted attention.

Trumpets sound as the heralds fly overhead. A clear voice emanates from them, and from all the connected phones, perfectly synchronized:

"Peace be with you. An emergency meeting is occurring right now at the Roman Theater. Please proceed there immediately in an orderly fashion. Do not fear. Salvation is at hand."

Everywhere, dazed people follow the herald's flight, forming lines toward the theater. Most murmur among themselves in confusion and concern.

AVOIDING THE MEETING

If for some reason the heroes don't wish to go to the amphitheater, remind them it's the most likely place to find their missing loved ones. If that's still not enough motivation the hovering heralds begin following the characters, repeating the message.

Eventually the Church Police arrive on the scene. Their uniforms are strange—the armor is of a design the group has never encountered and the weapons they carry seem impossibly advanced.

At first the Church Police try to reason with the heroes. They ask, very seriously, if any of them have headaches or feel ill. They recommend fervently that the stragglers head to the theater before the storm arrives. Glorious news is here, and the characters should hear it with the rest of their community.

If anyone makes anti-religious or anti-authoritarian comments, or disrespects the Church Police, they quickly become frustrated and draw their weapons. After a final warning they attack with riot sticks. They transport any defeated and captured heroes to Sanctuary for baptism (see Act Two).

If the rebels win, Father Anonyme (see page 121) rushes by and bids the Storm Knights to come with him so he can explain everything.

• **Church Police Streetbeaters (1 per hero):** See page 128.

THE ASSEMBLY

The Roman Theater is crowded with people by the time the latecomers arrive. The huge stone backdrop behind the stage is covered with bright, 3-D holographic projections. The largest, in the center, is a giant copy of the strange priest standing on stage, his amplified voice booming from the screens, the heralds, and also people's devices.

Around him, the other screens show images and headlines of disasters around the world—the invasions of the other High Lords!

The priest is Father Verel Laval. His eyes are covered by a metallic visor. He wears rich robes of black and red and carries a long staff criss-crossed with wires and circuitry. A glowing crucifix rotates slowly at the top of the staff. Images from other invasions flash behind Father Laval, especially from *Day One* adventures the players have already experienced. Father Laval is already speaking to the crowd:

"Elsewhere in the world nations are being punished for their hubris and lack of faith. Demons ravaged Europe last night, and still ravage Russia.

"In contrast, Cyberpope Jean Malraux's arrival here is a blessing, a boon awarded for France's piety and advanced philosophy. The Cyberpapacy has come to shield France from the evils around them. We hope to shield all of Europe soon."

Near the stage, a throng of people surround a hovering bus. Church Police usher some people aboard. Laval gestures grandly to the vehicle.

"Unfortunately, due to the harshness of our world being torn asunder by these evil raiders, people may need upgrades to survive. If you experience pain in your limbs, headaches, or even blindness, speak to a priest or the Church Police. We'll transport you to Central Hospital for the needed upgrades.

"Do not worry about any expense, all upgrades in zones under the Cyberpapacy's protection are completely free. This is Cyberpope Malraux's doctrine: To each, the deserved. From each, the possible."

Father Laval grows somber and quiet for a moment before proceeding. The images on the screens switch to photographs of demons taken the night before.

LOCKED WEAPONS

Storm Knights may initially be exultant when they get hold of some of the Church's powerful weapons, like the GodMeeter or Tower of Babel, but that happiness is doomed to be short-lived. Just about every device the Church Police use except the Riot Stick is connected to the GodNet, and that connection isn't passive.

The devices aren't intelligent, but they know authorized users, and can disable functions when wielded illegally. A GodMeeter won't fire, and instead a pleasant synthesized voice lectures the Storm Knight about which laws he's violating by possessing a stolen firearm, and recommending that the perpetrator turn himself in and confess his sins. Connected devices transmit their location, which draws even more trouble.

Father Anonyme has rare, hacked weapons for the resistance. These devices function for anyone and no longer spout platitudes. Being caught in possession of such weapons, however, is a serious crime.

"Finally, a warning. Demons are real, and the humans who worship and draw power from them, witches, are also real. They walk among you, spreading poison and lies.

"If you see or hear a witch practicing magic or pagan worship, report them immediately to the Church Police—for the continued safety of the entire community!"

At this point an image of Arielle's shop and her face appears on the screen. The crowd gasps. Some immediately begin to denounce her, others shout back that she's been a fine member of the community her entire life.

The arrival of Church Police marching roughly through the assembly toward Arielle (whether she's controlled by a player or not) is the match that sets off the powderkeg—suddenly the assembly turns violent.

THE RIOT

A Very Hard (DN 16) *find* test determines conclusively that the absent loved ones are not in the amphitheater crowd. They've either already taken one of the transports to the hospital or are somewhere else entirely. Phone calls still go to voicemail. Any hero who attempts to use a "find my phone" style application succeeds: The phone is located at Central Hospital.

But first the searchers must escape the burgeoning riot. Arielle is actually somewhat forgotten in the brawl as tear gas streaks into the crowd and Church Police use riot sticks on the unruly mob. Random fights break out all around.

Ignore the other fights breaking out. There are many more Church Police in the amphitheater, but they're busy with the rest of the crowd. The streetbeaters are intent on subduing the heroes, and fighting back against these invaders definitely triggers a Moment of Crisis.

Even with a Storm Knight's abilities these are tough opponents. Interactions are a must for dealing damage. Church Police armor makes them very durable, and thanks to gas masks on their helmets they are immune to the effects of the tear gas (see below).

A useful tactic is to grab at a mask. That's a grapple attempt with a -4 Called Shot penalty. If the streetbeater's Strength test is lower than the damage then the mask wrenches off and a character may equip it as a simple action.

The streetbeaters only use their riot sticks and the Tower of Babel, though each carries a GodMeeter. The heroes might attempt to steal a pistol from its holster, only to discover the built-in safety protocols (see Locked Weapons,

page 119). Riot sticks aren't connected, so any Storm Knight may use those once gained from a disarmed or fallen streetbeater.

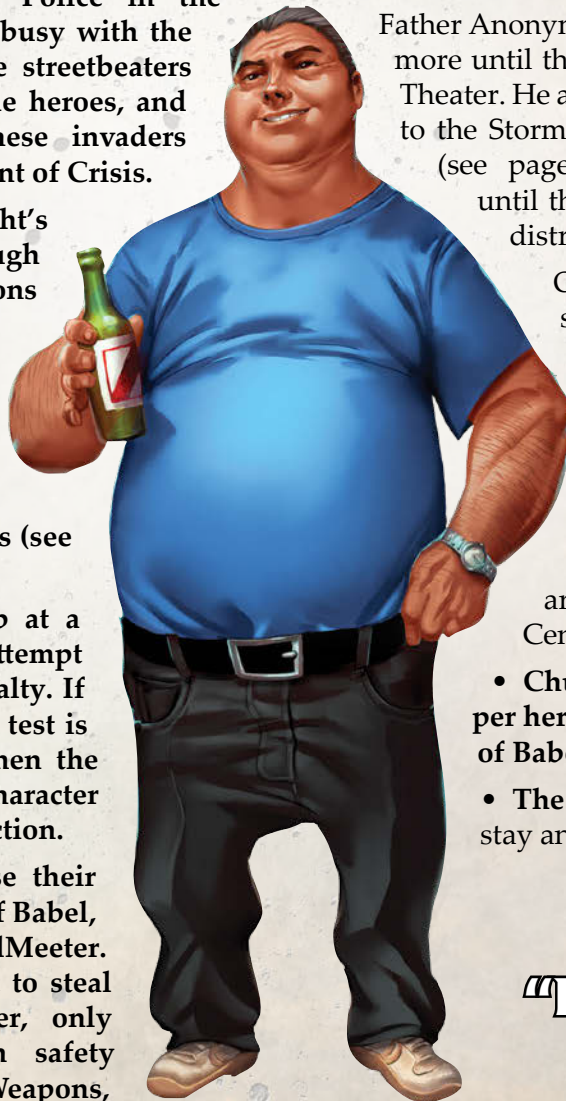
Tear gas Stymies any character without a protective mask each turn. Church Police headgear contains a filter mask and goggles. On a Setback any unprotected individual is Very Stymied and takes two Shock.

If the Storm Knights need help, or once they finish off the nearby Church Police, a bearded man in a ragged robe charges through the teargas and calls out, "Hurry, this way! We must flee before the Host arrive!"

Locals recognize this man as the priest who came through about a month before, preaching doom and destruction. He introduces himself as Father Anonyme, but he doesn't wish to say more until they are away from the Roman Theater. He also has weapons he can throw to the Storm Knights if they're in trouble (see page 122), but prefers to wait until they are safely away before he distributes them.

Overhead, a bright blue light shimmers through the tear gas, and what sounds like a choir sings. Anonyme looks terror-stricken and flees immediately, begging the Storm Knights to come with him. Any who stay must face the Host, and are likely captured and taken to Central Hospital for processing.

- **Church Police Streetbeaters** (1 per hero, 1 equipped with a Tower of Babel shield): See page 128.
- **The Host (1):** Only if the heroes stay and fight, see page 129.



MANDEL
"MERVIELLE"
MONET

SCENE TWO: BAPTISM BY METAL

Standard Scene. Once the group reaches the relative safety of a nearby alley Father Anonyme introduces himself properly.

FATHER ANONYME

Anonyme wears simple robes and sandals. Those who saw him a month ago remember he was blind. Now a metal visor sits across his closed eyes and plugs into his temples. His long beard is flecked with gray.

Quote: "I may not know my own name, but I know that this is wrong."

THE PROCLAIMER'S STORY

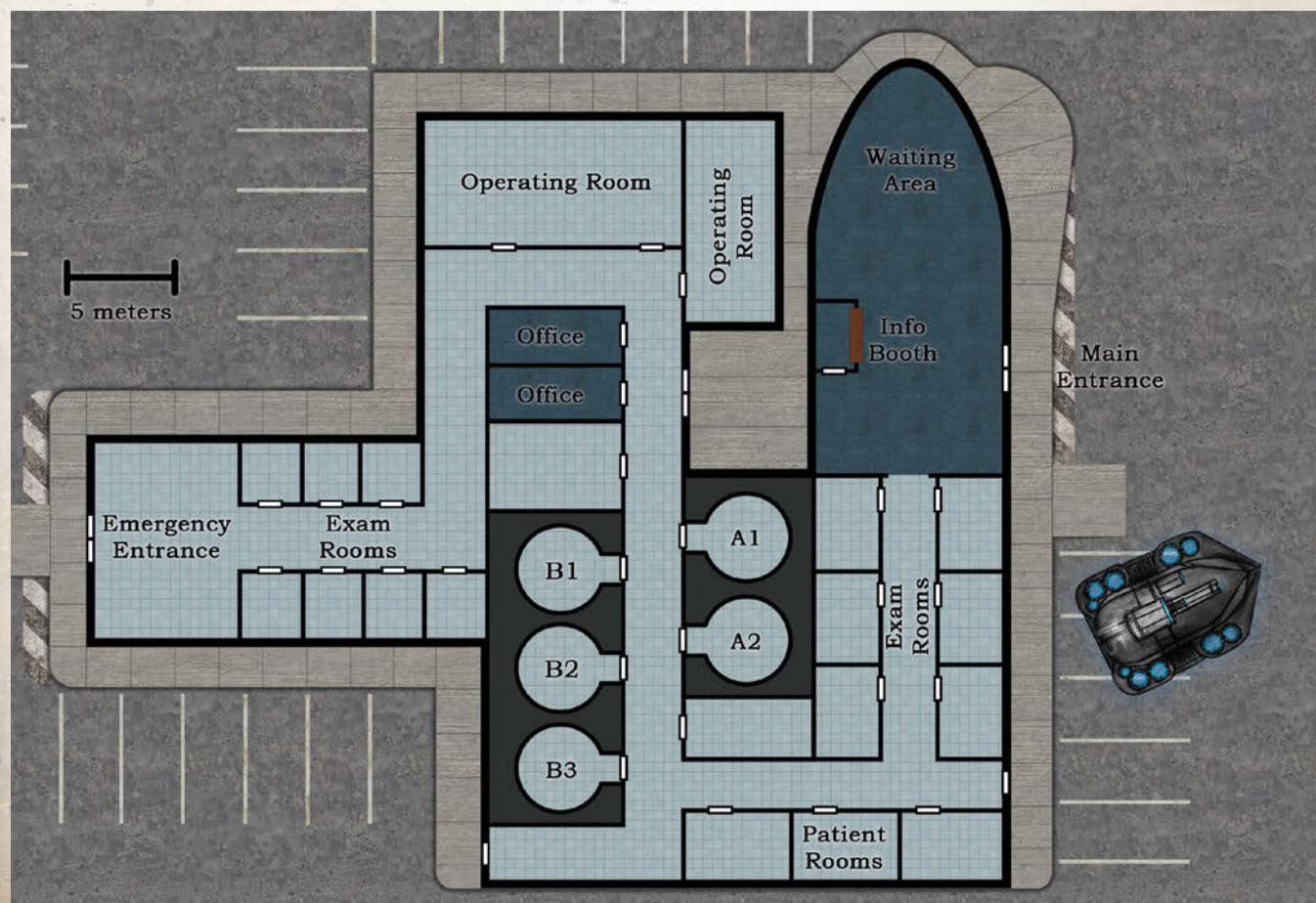
Anonyme explains that he is from a realm named Magna Verita, the birthplace of the Cyberpapacy. He was a Proclaimer, a priest who traveled ahead of the crusade—he thought he was spreading the

good word. Over his lifetime the crusade changed, and he now believes Jean Malraux has fallen to corruption and spreads destruction rather than salvation. The more time he spent on Core Earth the more he felt in his heart that this realm was closer to God than his own.

Father Anonyme understands the basics of reality, and recognizes that the characters are Storm Knights. That's what drew him to them in the riot. According to him, Storm Knights are chosen by God. They're rare, and he's never seen so many appear at once before.

Anonyme suggests the missing people are likely in Central Hospital being processed for "upgrades." He warns that if they've already been upgraded it may be physically dangerous to take them outside the Cyberpapacy's influence:

"Those at the hospital are being baptized in metal. The weakest organs are replaced. Within the reality of the Church this prolongs life and allows for beneficial enhancements. Outside the Church's borders such



advanced machinery...fails. If you wish to flee from here, you must get to them before they are converted. The hospital is a dangerous place, but I have something that may help."

GIFTS OF THE RESISTANCE

Anonyme has a few hacked weapons to give to the heroes:

- **GodMeeter (1):** Damage 15, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 25. Unmodified versions switch to different ammo types based on voice commands, but this hacked model can't do that. Tech Axiom 26.

- **Power Dagger (1):** When switched off, the blade still deals *Strength* +1 damage. Once activated, that increases to *Strength* +2. Tech Axiom 26.

- **Riot Sticks:** The heroes may have any of these they picked up from Church Police in the riot. While powered down it works as a club dealing *Strength* +2 damage. Switched on the damage increases to *Strength* +3, and any hit deals an extra Shock. Tech Axiom 26.

The characters all know the location of Central Hospital. Father Anonyme balks if asked to go along. He's wanted by the Cyberpapacy, and is afraid being seen could ruin the group's chances of getting inside. He plans to look for more Storm Knights and hopefully stay ahead of the Church Police.

ENTERING CLINIQUE D'ORANGE

Getting into the Clinique d'Orange Hospital is the easy part. A GWI Samson hover tank and a squad of Church Police occupy the parking lot but they aren't turning people away. Rather, they encourage anyone who approaches to go inside and await processing and medical attention, especially if they look injured from the riot.

A holographic banner projects from the front of the building, announcing, "Please pardon the mess, we're upgrading!" Perched on the roof above, an ominous figure much like the stone gargoyles that adorn cathedrals peers down at the street. It moves from side to side and red beams scan from its eyes.

If Anonyme is still with the heroes he points it out and cringes back, certain that if the gargoyle spots him it will raise an alarm. A *persuasion* test or an attempt to disguise him convinces him to go anyway; otherwise he ventures off on his own.

If the Storm Knights approach directly the gargoyle shifts and looks directly at them, but then continues scanning without an apparent reaction. If they all succeed in a standard *stealth* test (DN 10) the gargoyle doesn't react at all.

THE WAITING ROOM

Those who have been to the hospital before find it very different now. Technicians wearing Church insignia stand on ladders or crouch near the floor throughout the corridors, working on arrays of glowing cables and hanging wires.

In place of nurses and staff, nuns in blue habits now roam or sit behind advanced computer terminals. One such nun looks up from her terminal as the heroes approach and asks if she can help them. If the group lets her (or somehow lures her away and operates her terminal themselves with an *Easy computers* test) they quickly learn disturbing news.

One of the three sought individuals (Adrien, Darcy, or Raine) is here and being prepped for conversion in chamber B2. The others aren't here; instead they've been tagged as "Collected for Confession" and are at the train station awaiting transport to Avignon for further processing. Discarded phones and other personal items from all three are in a bin marked for recycling. The bin, if checked, also contains confiscated weapons, including a 9mm pistol (Damage 13, Range 10/25/40, Ammo 15) and several knives (*Strength* +1 damage).

CHAMBER OF HORRORS

How the characters choose to get to Chamber B2 is up to them. A Challenging (DN 12) *persuasion* test spins a convincing enough tale to get past any church orderlies in the halls. The security forces and number of people in the halls makes using *stealth* to get in without being seen at all Near Impossible (DN 20). The intruders could opt to go in guns blazing, but that triggers the **Attack of the Cybergoyle** below, which complicates the rescue effort.



A cybergoyle scans the horizon for enemies of the Cyberchurch.

However the group travels to Chamber B2, they arrive just in time. The prisoner is strapped into the machine but it hasn't been activated yet. One Church Police streetbeater stands guard, and two orderlies work the machine. The rescuers may have Surprise depending on how they entered. Freeing the captive from the gurney is an Easy (DN 8) *Dexterity* test. Church personnel resist the heroes if they can, but after one round an alert is sounded (see below) and they obey the mandate to remain still after that.

- **Church Police Streetbeaters (1):** See page 128.
- **Church Orderlies (2):** See page 128.

In each of the other chambers a person is strapped to a kind of gurney, arms spread as if on a cross. Machines whir and cut flesh, replacing organs or limbs with cybernetic equivalents. Each victim sweats, mouth contorted in a grimace of pain or rapture as some kind of beam feeds visions provided by the Church directly into his eyes.

Disrupting this process, once begun, is fatal to the patient. If the raiders wish to disable the operating machines anyway each is Toughness 15, or a Very Hard (DN 16) *Mind* test to sabotage. Any such attempt certainly triggers alarms and brings the cybergoyle.

ATTACK OF THE CYBERGOYLE

Once the workings of the hospital or conversion chambers are disrupted, a humorless voice booms from speakers throughout the hospital.

"An admonition is now in effect. All faithful shall remain still and silent. For the sake of your body and eternal soul, comply. I repeat, this is a Church admonition, remain motionless and silent."

The hospital becomes eerily silent. No one speaks to the Storm Knights or impedes their progress if they choose to move.

There are two exits from the waiting room, one that leads out the main doors to the parking lot—and into the Samson tank and Church Police who now lie in wait—or deeper back through the hallways toward a rear entrance. If the group heads for the main entrance they meet the cybergoyale head-on as it enters. If they flee toward the back (or try to remain in place) they hear its heavy form stomping toward them through the halls.

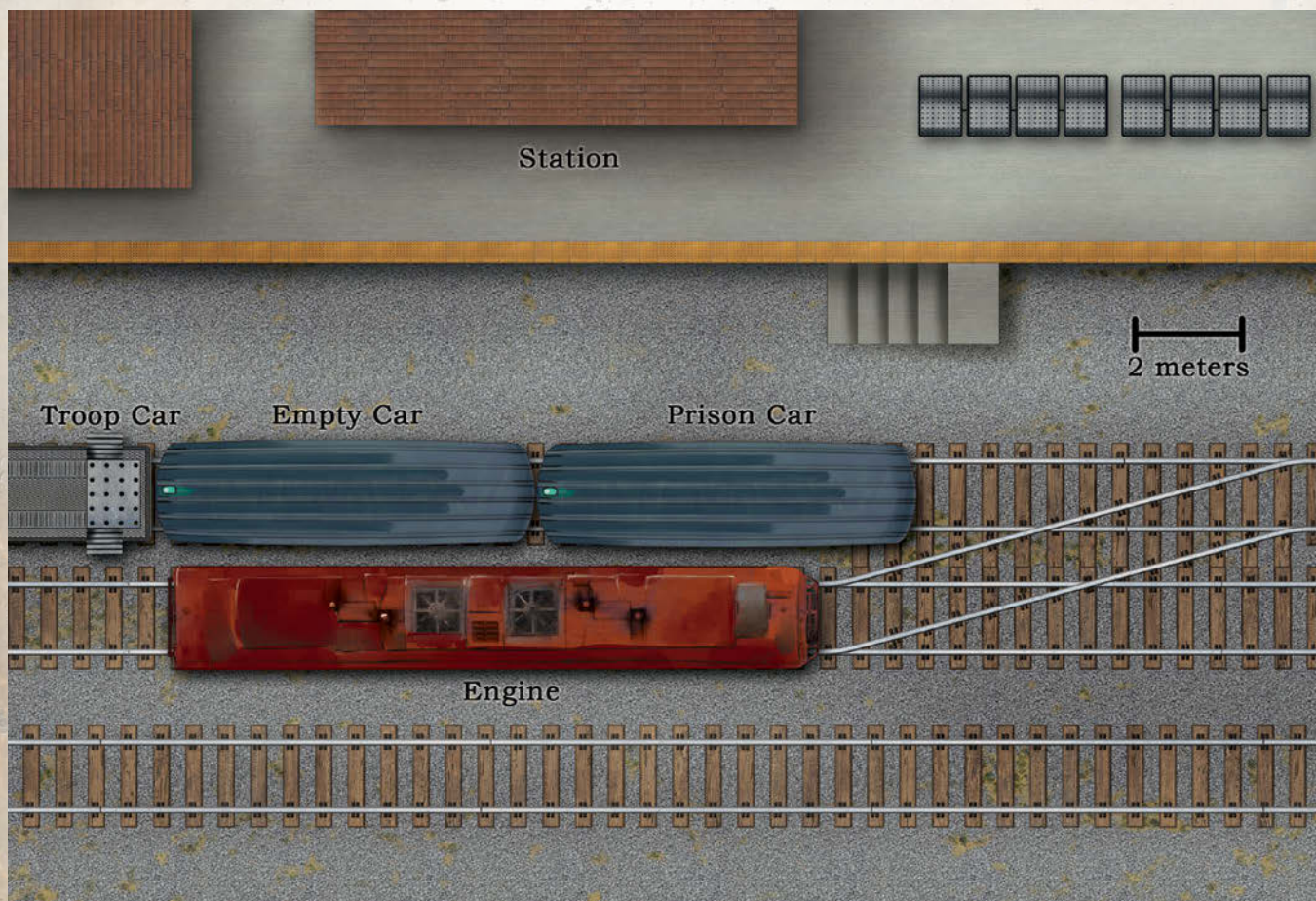
The metallic gargoyle from atop the building hunches inside the hospital, its wings folded close against its body. It stares with blue, glowing eyes and launches itself at the interlopers immediately if it spots them. Just standing still won't work; the creature already knows what the group looks like thanks to the ubiquitous security cameras.

This encounter might play out as a Chase or as a combat depending on the Storm Knights' approach. The DN for each step of the Chase

is highest Dexterity involved. Once a person finishes Step D he gets away through the rear exit. Don't test for the rescued person; he or she escapes if the rest of the group does.

The cybergoyale doesn't stun or capture people. It strikes to kill. It cuts through hostages without concern, regardless of their rank or pleas. If the party fights and manages to defeat the cybergoyale they may leave without further incident, while everyone else remains completely still. Anyone captured is taken to the train station in Scene Three for transport to Avignon with the rest of the undesirables!

• **Cybergoyale (1):** See page 128.



The train station offers many opportunities for rescue or escape.

SCENE THREE: ALL ABOARD!

Standard Scene. The Storm Knights have discovered that the remaining missing people and other “disruptive” figures are being loaded onto a train bound for Avignon. There’s only one train station in Orange, and approaching it undetected is an Easy (DN 8) *stealth* test thanks to the winding streets and ongoing storm. If the test fails, the herald patrolling the yard spots the infiltrators (see **Caught in the Act** below).

A sleek locomotive unlike anything the rebels have ever seen hums on the tracks. It faces south, toward Avignon. The tracks at the station stretch northwest across the Rhonde. The train has only three cars. One looks like a troop car, complete with a wicked-looking laser in a turret atop it (Damage 16, Ammo 50, Rapid-fire). A second car seems empty, and the third is locked—but protesting voices from inside reveal that it’s filled with prisoners.

On a parallel track, a standard diesel engine slowly moves up alongside the cybertrain, shuttling toward a junction for a different mission.

There are four Church Police in the area for every hero present. Half are inside the troop car and only come out if there’s trouble. The rest are inside the station or wandering the platform and yard. They are on guard, but they’re not expecting trouble or paying much attention.

- **Church Police Streetbeaters (4 per hero):** See page 128.
- **Herald (1):** See page 129.

CONJUNCTION JUNCTION

The heroes have many options on how to proceed.

Show players the map and point out the major features like the station, the older locomotive, and the cars. Give an idea of where the Church troops are, and note the hovering herald that patrols the whole yard. Don’t be afraid to list the details of possible tasks, and give the players time to discuss their approach and make a plan. An Idea card played here outlines all the options, including any drawbacks.

Some possible tasks include:

DISTRACTING THE GUARDS

Some of the team may try to draw the attention of the guards away. Pretending to be someone who belongs there is likely a *persuasion* test, and is Hard (DN 14) since the train station is supposed to be clear. Other skills may be substituted depending on just what the players are trying to do.

Simply making some noise and then escaping is a standard *stealth* test. Success draws away the herald, a Good success sends two of the Church Police on a fruitless search far away, and an Outstanding result increases that to four Church Police. On a failure four streetbeaters open fire on the prowler with their GodMeeters but don’t leave the site.

RECONNECTING THE LOCOMOTIVE

The man currently operating the diesel engine isn’t part of the Cyberpapacy, and has little idea what’s going on. He received strange orders to move this locomotive and make room for an unscheduled express from Avignon. A Standard *persuasion* test convinces the engineer of the situation and he offers to help. He can either move the locomotive onto the other train’s track and hook up to the prisoners’ car, or people can pile aboard his locomotive and he can head straight out on the current track. If the Storm Knights don’t wish to deal with him, a Standard *unarmed combat* or *melee weapons* test KO’s him.

With the engineer’s help, the tracks are switched and the locomotive is hooked to the prison car without a test. Without the engineer’s help, a Hard (DN 14) *land vehicles* test completes the job. The movement of the locomotive is certainly noticed by the Church Police, but it doesn’t seem unusual in and of itself—unless the test fails and a small accident draws their attention!

FREEING THE PRISONERS

The car holding 20 prisoners, including the remaining loved ones, is padlocked on the outside (–4 to *lockpicking*). Once it’s opened, the prisoners follow the Storm Knights’ lead, either staying in place or scattering if bidden. When any prisoners leave the car, the herald or any Church Police in the

yard notice them and raise the alarm.

SABOTAGING THE TRACKS

The Storm Knights may wish to disrupt pursuit by locking the brakes on the cybertrain's cars, or even destroying the tracks at a strategic spot. Locking the wheels on the empty car only requires a standard *stealth* test to accomplish. Anything more requires moving onto the troop car itself—a Near Impossible (DN 20) *stealth* test. Once in position the saboteur could padlock the troop car's doors shut from the outside, or even take control of the laser turret atop the car. The tracks are Toughness 12, and a Wound makes them impassible for trains.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

A failure on any test alerts the hovering herald, which floats down to check out what's going on. The team may try to eliminate it before it can raise an alarm, or avoid it by testing *stealth* against the herald's *find* (DN 10). If the herald issues a warning, combat rounds begin and all the Church Police act. The rescuers may fight it out or continue trying to execute their plan while under fire.

A Setback for the heroes marks the arrival of the Host (see Scene Four).

SCENE FOUR: THE HEAVENLY HOST

Dramatic Scene. A bright blue light streaks across the sky and descends directly toward the fugitives. Hopefully the Storm Knights rescued the prisoners, including the last of their missing loved ones, and are racing northwest on the diesel locomotive. They may also be at the train station or on foot, in which case escape is unlikely. They must face Malraux's angel of death and defeat it to escape alive!

If they're on the train, it barrels northward at top speed toward a raging storm wall. If the riders took any measures to prevent pursuit they face only the Host. Otherwise any remaining Church Police follow in the other train and take Long Range shots with their GodMeeters. Destroying the tracks as noted above puts an end to any pursuit other than the Host.

The Host is a powerful opponent. It's skilled enough to Multi-Target anyone near it, or Multi-Action to attack some heroes and use interactions against others. If it suffers a Wound it flares a righteous orange color and its wings spread like blazing fire.

There's a major benefit to facing the Host on the train: the reality storm still raging to the north. The storm hits after one minute and marks the border of a Core Earth hardpoint. When it hits each side must attempt a *reality* test. Failure loses a Possibility, success avoids losing anything, a Good Success gains a Possibility, and an Outstanding Success gains two.

Inside, the axioms and World Laws switch to Core Earth! **The Law of the Underdog** triggers immediately, allowing the players to put an extra Destiny card in their Action Pools. **The Law of Glory** is also active. Anyone who still has an unplayed Cyberpapacy Cosm card must exchange it for a Core Earth Cosm card at this point.

The Cyberpapacy World Laws and axioms are no longer in effect.

Cyberpapacy weapons are no longer supported by the local Tech Axiom, which means the escapees may have to deal with One Case or Four Case Contradictions depending on their origins. The Host also causes a One Case Contradiction, and disconnects on a Mishap.

If the Host disconnects it gives up the pursuit immediately. It also turns back at the end of the ninth round, presumably to find and eliminate whatever is creating this hardpoint. If the Host isn't destroyed before it's forced to break off pursuit it hovers to a stop in the air as the train slips away. It's music-like voice rumbles as the Storm Knights speed away.

"We know who you are. We do not forget. As the Church spreads, we shall find you. The storm knows your name."

It points at the heroes, and then its glowing light fades and it disappears in the distance.

• **The Host (1):** See page 129.



The Host are incredibly dangerous, powerful, and utterly ruthless.

EPILOGUE

Weeks later, any surviving escapees hide in the underground catacombs of Paris. Much of France is dominated by the Cyberpapacy, which spreads across Europe like a cancer. Parts of Paris, at least, remain free and fighting.

Whispers spread of a visitor from the United Nations, a warrior with special ties to *La Resistance* who is organizing counterstrikes. He wishes to speak to the Knights of Orange specifically. The stranger is an older man, with close-cropped gray hair and leathery skin. He introduces himself as Quinn Sebastian.

"I'm with the Delphi Council, a special resistance group tasked with fighting Jean Malraux and those like him. We're looking for people—the brave and resourceful type—to take the fight to these High Lords. Can I count on your help?"

CYBERPAPACY THREATS

CHURCH ORDERLY

As the Church takes over institutes, they install their own specialized staff. The nuns and orderlies who populate most hospitals oversee cybernetic conversions and look after the residents' physical and spiritual health.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 7

Skills: Energy weapons 9, evidence analysis 9, faith 10, find 10, first aid 10, medicine 2, melee weapons 9, science 2, taunt 8, trick 9

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

CHURCH POLICE STREETBEATER

The Cyberpapacy's police forces can be found on most every corner in major cities. They are trained in basic detection, crowd control, and of course, combat. Streetbeaters are equipped with audio-visual recording equipment in their helmets connected to the GodNet. They aren't given cyberware or other enhancements—those are saved for the more elite CAT teams.

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 9, energy weapons 9, evidence analysis 9, faith 10, find 9, fire combat 10, heavy weapons 9, intimidation 10, land vehicles 9, melee weapons 9, taunt 8, trick 9, willpower 8

Move: 8; **Tough:** 12 (4); **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Armor of God (+4), GodMeeter (Damage 15, Range 10/25/40), riot stick (*Strength* +3/11 damage, non-lethal), one officer is equipped with a Tower of Babel shield (+3, may not move and attack without *Strength* 10+)

Perks: —

Possibilities: Rare (2)

Special Abilities: —

CYBERGOYLE

Cybergoyles are mechanical constructs, pure robot with a projected "skin" of stone. The type of stone varies, but most appear gray or obsidian. Rare specimens show chrome trim along their wings, claws, and teeth—their true metallic frame showing through. As a cybergoyale suffers damage more of its projected skin fades. They all have wings, and their faces resemble snarling beasts. Cybergoyles can speak but usually remain eerily quiet.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 10, Mind 8, Spirit 10, Strength 13

Skills: Dodge 11, find 10, intimidation 12, stealth 10, tracking 10, trick 13, unarmed combat 13

Move: 10; **Tough:** 16 (3); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 1

Equipment: Believew 20-20 Cyber Eye

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Metal frame (+3).

- **Camouflage:** Cybergoyles gain a +5 to *stealth* when they remain still in an urban environment.

- **Bite/Claws:** Damage *Strength* +3 (16).

- **Fear:** If a motionless cybergoyale suddenly activates and begins moving, a witnessing hero must test *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Flight:** Move 10 in the air.

- **Mindless:** Cybergoyles are programmed machines, and are immune to *intimidation*, *taunt*, and *telepathy*.

- **Relentless:** Cybergoyles ignore Shock.

HERALD

A herald is small drone with holographic projectors set to make it appear as a bird or cherub. Heralds are designed to observe or broadcast images and sounds, but not to directly engage the Church's foes.

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 12, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 5

Skills: Dodge 11, find 10, intimidation 12, stealth 10, taunt 9, trick 13, unarmed combat 13

Move: 12; **Tough:** 7 (2); **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: Bellevue 20-20 Cyber Eye

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Metal frame (+2).
- **Flight:** Move 12 in the air.
- **Mindless:** Heralds are programmed machines, and are immune to *intimidation*, *taunt*, and *telepathy*.
- **Relentless:** Heralds ignore Shock.
- **Small:** Attacks against the Herald suffer a -2 penalty for Size.

THE HOST

The Host are terrifying holographic projections of glowing war angels. The hovering device at the center contains an artificial intelligence and projects light and forcefields to create a physical manifestation of the GodNet's will. The projection changes color depending on the angel's mood and purpose. Few people see a red angel and live.

The Host mostly remain quiet, but when they speak their voices are loud and multifaceted, more like a choir singing than a person speaking.

Attributes: Charisma 12, Dexterity 12, Mind 15, Spirit 15, Strength 15

Skills: Dodge 14, energy weapons 15, faith 18, find 16, intimidation 16, maneuver 13, melee weapons 15, reality 16, taunt 13, willpower 16

Move: 6; **Tough:** 20 (5); **Shock:** 15; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: 5

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Protected core +5.
- **Energy Lash/Sword:** The Host's projected weaponry can reach up to five meters away, and deals *Strength* +3 (18) damage. On an Outstanding hit the Host may choose to either grapple the target or apply the damage as fire.
- **Energy Shield:** If the Host uses an Active Defense it projects layers of forcefields. Its Toughness increases +4 until its next turn.
- **Flight:** Move 12 in the air.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: ORRORSH

DIVYA NALAN

Divya has been invited to Rajan's wedding because she's good friends with his little sister, Koeyli. Divya is aimless, pursuing a career in chemistry due to pressure from her family, but she's still trying to figure out what she really wants for herself.

Quote: "With this gun I have found my purpose. Monsters beware."

Cosm: [Orrorsh]

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 10, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 1, find 1, [fire combat 3], language (English) 1, maneuver 2, [melee weapons 1], missile weapons 1, [reality 1], science 2, stealth 1, taunt 1

Move: 10; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: [Slayers gun], [silver shells x6], large purse (contents become slayer's gun and ammo)

Perks: [Bulletsmith], [Sniper]

SHILPA REVENKAR

Shilpa is going to the wedding as one of Rajan's co-workers. The two dated some time ago but nothing came of it. She was surprised he agreed to go through with the wedding, and she's agreed to come along with Shyam and support the union as a friend.

Quote: "Heedless flight is not a strategy, it's a consequence."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 8, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 1, evidence analysis 2, find 2, language (English) 1, language (Kannada) 1, melee weapons 1, [reality 2], science 2, stealth 1, trick 3

Move: 8; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 8 [10]; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Camera, mobile phone, blender (wrapped for the wedding)

Perks: [Endurance], [Situational Awareness]

KOEYLI AJEN

Koeyli is guaranteed a place at the wedding because she's Rajan's younger sister. She's just graduated from Senior Secondary school. She's visited her brother at work often and knows Shilpa and Shyam from there, but she's spent much more time with Divya, who works nearer to her school.

Quote: "I can take care of myself. Let me show you."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 8, Mind 8, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 2, find 2, first aid 2, language (English) 1, land vehicles 1, maneuver 1, missile weapons 1, [reality 1], stealth 1, survival 1, [unarmed combat 3]

Move: 8; **Tough:** 8 [2]; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Video camera, mobile phone

Perks: [Brawler], [Indomitable]

SHYAM VEERAPUR

Shyam is Rajan's best friend and best man. They have worked together for years. Along with Shilpa they were the inseparable "terrible three" in the office. He's not sure this wedding is right for his friend.

Quote: "I don't know what's happened to my friend, but whoever did this is going to pay."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 10, Dexterity 7, Mind 8, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 2, find 1, land vehicles 1, language (English) 1, language (Kannada) 1, melee weapons 2, persuasion 2, [reality 2], science 1, taunt 3

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 7; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, bottle of tequila (wrapped for the wedding)

Perks: [Grant Possibilities], [Tenacious]

SUJIT THAMIKAN

Sujit is a transport driver. He owns his own mini-bus and usually charts it to drive into the protected forests throughout the area. The trip started badly, with a surprise mechanical issue putting them behind schedule (and calling his competence into question). He's dead set on proving that was a fluke.

Quote: "It's not my fault! This vehicle is in peak condition."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 7, Dexterity 10, Mind 7, Spirit 8, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 1, find 1, faith 1, fire combat 2, land vehicles 3, lockpicking 1, maneuver 1, melee weapons 2, [reality 2], streetwise 1, stealth 1

Move: 10; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Mobile phone, bus, multi-tool

Perks: [Prodigy], [Realm Runner]

VIKAS KARUNANITHI

Vikas is a Hindu puraji. He's known the groom for years, and is both a friend of his family and his spiritual counselor. Rajan's bride has asked him to give her away (her father died when she was young) and preside over the ceremony, much to his pride and joy.

Quote: "Ganesha protect us from sorrow and fear."

Cosm: Core Earth

Attributes: Charisma 8, Dexterity 7, Mind 8, Spirit 10, Strength 7

Skills: Dodge 1, faith 3, find 1, intimidation 1, language (English), language (Sanskrit) 1, melee weapons 1, persuasion 1, [reality 2], scholar 2, taunt 1, trick 1

Move: 7; **Tough:** 7; **Shock:** 10; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Bronze bell, bronze bowl, prayer beads, mantra book

Perks: [Miracles (bless, soothe, ward enemy)], [Protected]



ACT ONE: HORRORS

A formal wedding is scheduled to happen in two days at the small rural village of Chokmalli. The characters are participants or guests making the trip in a rented bus.

The trip is perilous. The road is empty and fraught with ill omens. At an out-of-the-way petrol station, the heroes encounter monsters for the first time and a survivor with information about what happened the night before.

Chokmalli itself is abandoned. The visitors must race against time to investigate what happened there and to prepare for nightfall. When the sun sets, the monsters come out whether the Storm Knights are ready or not!

The village is home to a backup stela and its guardian. Swarms of corrupted bats sweep across the countryside after dark. A powerful figure called the Tiller oversees the planting of a gospog field all too near Chokmalli. The group must face all these horrors and survive until morning.

SCENE ONE: BAD TRIP

Standard Scene. The characters are staying in Madurai, on their way north to a small village named Chokmalli for a wedding. Chokmalli is the home town of the groom, Rajan. Rajan, the bride, and her parents went on ahead in his car. The rest of the travelers hired a bus to get there, but they fell behind when the vehicle had mechanical troubles.

Last night one of the characters received a call from Rajan saying he was nearly home, but that unseasonal storms are forming. Chokmalli is nestled in the jungle and reached by unpaved roads which become quite treacherous during storms or at night, so it's important the bus arrive before dark.

There are no more messages from Rajan in the morning, but mobile phone coverage is notoriously spotty there. In fact, the network went down completely last night, and this morning no one is getting signal, e-mail, or anything else.

Around Madurai everything seems normal, but as soon as the group hits the road heading north everyone aboard feels a weird tingle, like someone walking over their graves. Because Madurai is a



The Gaunt Man's terrifying creatures spread quickly during the Night of Screams.

hardpoint, the shiver passing through the potential Storm Knights marks them crossing from the Core Earth reality within its borders into the Orrorsh zone that was established last night.

The Orrorsh World Laws and axioms are now in effect. Deal each hero an Orrorsh Cosm card.

THE TICKING CLOCK

Put six tokens on the table. Let the players know that each token represents several hours of time, and once all the tokens are gone it grows dark and the roads become even more dangerous.

In reality, this tracks the number of hours of daylight remaining. Orrorsh becomes much more dangerous in the dark. If a player uses the *Sunset?! Cosm card*, take six hours off the clock. If the players dally along the road start

reaching toward the tokens. Make a show of removing an hour if the players continue undeterred.

BAD OMENS

The road to Chokmalli isn't usually busy, but today the road is completely empty. At first there are a few abandoned cars pushed off the side of the road, or in some cases still on the road, forcing the bus to dart around them. There isn't a soul in sight, as if everyone is at some festival rather than out traveling. There are a few carts mixed in with the cars, but no oxen in sight.

If any of the group asks to stop the bus and check the cars, they start and run normally. There's no sign of the drivers or passengers. If the characters take too long investigating (or take the time to siphon petrol or search the vehicles for tools) reach for the time tokens and remove one if they persist.

THE CARRIAGE

Farther down the road the jungle grows thicker and greener than the locals remember. Stranger still, they pass what looks like an old horse-drawn carriage along the side of the road, rather than a car or motorcycle. It looks fancy, but dinged and worn from use, but there's no sign of horses or oxen. If the group takes the time to check it out they find a kerosene lantern and a short sword (*Strength+2 damage*) inside. There is blood in the carriage, and on the sword, but no other evidence of what happened here.

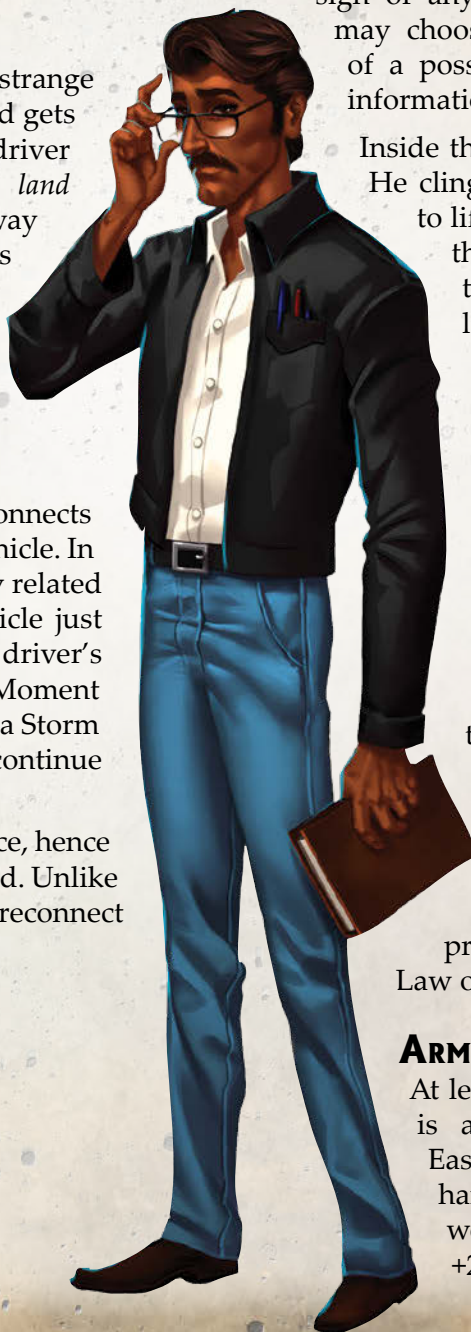
RAIN AND MUD

As the journey progresses, the strange storm grows worse. The dirt road gets muddy and difficult. Have the driver make a Challenging (DN 12) *land vehicles* test. On a failure take away three time tokens as the bus gets stuck in the mud and must be freed. A success only drops one token to slowed travel; a Good or Outstanding success makes great time and no time tokens are eliminated.

On a Mishap the driver disconnects and can no longer operate the vehicle. In part, he's lost all muscle memory related to driving, and in part the vehicle just won't start while he sits in the driver's seat. He can't reconnect until his Moment of Crisis arrives and he becomes a Storm Knight. Another character may continue the drive to the petrol station.

This is a situation many Ords face, hence the cars abandoned along the road. Unlike a Storm Knight, Ords can only reconnect inside Core Earth's axioms.

SHYAM
VEERAPUR



THE PETROL STATION

As the bus travels deeper into the rural surroundings the road grows rockier. The jungle becomes even more oppressive, branches scraping along the side of the vehicle as it grinds forward. Finally the road opens up into a clearing, which any locals recognize as the lone petrol station servicing vehicles from outlying villages. The bus doesn't need fuel, but a top-off wouldn't hurt.

Whether the bus stops or not, the occupants hear a child's scream from inside the station—the first sign of anyone along the road at all. They may choose to keep going at the expense of a possible Moment of Crisis and vital information.

Inside the station's garage is a young boy. He clings to a pulley on the ceiling used to lift engines. He's just out of reach of the monsters lunging at him from the ground below. The creatures look like dessicated human corpses with jungle vines entwined all throughout their rotting flesh. The few patches of rotting clothing on the bodies is strange, both Western and archaic. The things turn to face the new arrivals and attack!

- **Gospog of the First Planting (1 per 2 heroes):** See page 142.

This is a moment of truth for the travelers. If they try to fend off the creatures or at least rescue the child, they experience a Moment of Crisis. Unfortunately, a Storm Knight in Orrorsh doesn't have quite as much protection as elsewhere thanks to the Law of Perseverance!

ARMING UP

At least finding weapons in the garage is a fairly simple matter. A Very Easy (DN 6) *find* test spots various hammers, pipes, or tools that work well as improvised clubs (*Strength+2 damage*, become Vulnerable on

a miss). A Good Success spots tools with better reach or balance, dealing *Strength* +2 damage with no extra consequence for a miss. An Outstanding result discovers a welding torch that can be lit and deals Damage 12. The torch is Tech Axiom 20, and has fuel for one minute of operation. It Malfunctions on a roll of 2 or less, and becomes useless on a Mishap.

JAYASH

If the young boy, Jayash, is rescued he has quite a tale to tell. He and his parents lived in a home nearby until last night. In the dead of the night many of those creatures broke in. His parents bought Jayash time to escape and screamed for him to run. He saw his parents killed and ran weeping toward the road to hide in the garage.

A standard *persuasion* test calms Jayash down and he remembers a few more details. There was another figure with the monsters, wearing a mask and not covered in vines like they were. He was speaking English and called the creatures “gospog.” The man ordered some of the gospog to take his parents’ bodies north, assigned a few to chase Jayash, and took the rest to, “continue the night’s work.”

From this point on Jayash clings to whichever hero shows him the most kindness. He mostly remains quiet and tries to stay out of the way or help out if he can.

If the travelers want to try to go back to Madurai after hearing Jayash’s tale, let them try. After 10 to 20 minutes of driving the road simply disappears, swallowed by a wall of thick jungle. The bus must be driven in reverse to get back to the petrol station; the jungle doesn’t even leave enough room to turn around. The side trip costs a time token.

ON THE EDGE

There’s one last problem to face before reaching the village. Part of the road runs alongside a now swollen and raging river, and one section has partially fallen away. What’s left is barely wide enough for the bus, and the weight of the vehicle could cause further crumbling once it starts across.

Getting to the other side is a Dramatic Skill Resolution. All four steps test *land vehicles*. Steps A and D are Standard (DN 10), but steps B and C are both Difficult (DN 12). There’s no reason for anyone but the driver to be aboard the bus as it crosses, and characters walking ahead can even try to guide the bus and cooperate with their own *land vehicles* skill.

After five rounds, if the bus hasn’t completed Step D the section of road collapses. The driver has time to jump out without a test before the bus tumbles into the river below. Losing the bus eliminates two more time tokens as the unhappy wedding party must walk the rest of the way to the village. If the task succeeds they keep the bus and no time is lost.

Note that the heroes might choose to simply leave the bus on the safe side of the road. They lose the two tokens for walking, but the bus is still there on the road if they manage to return for it later.

WHEN DARKNESS FALLS

If the last time token is eliminated move on to Scene Two, skipping anything else from Scene One the heroes didn’t get a chance to deal with. They enter Chokmalli just as night falls, so they don’t have time to investigate before the monsters arrive!

SCENE TWO: HOME SWEET HOME

No one comes to meet the heroes as they arrive in Chokmalli. The small town is silent and empty, much to the horror of those who have family here.

If the time tokens from Scene One haven’t run out there’s still daylight remaining. The new arrivals may search the houses of the village looking for survivors or clues to what happened. If darkness has already fallen, describe the village and then skip to Scene Three—the heroes are in trouble!

THE VILLAGE

Chokmalli is tucked on the hillside, near the edge of the jungle. Or it was, but now the thick vegetation has thickened and encroached to engulf some of the outlying buildings, and touches most of those in the center of town.

Previously, the most notable feature of the village was the expansive rice fields to the east, closer to the flooding river that threatened the bus on the way here. The fields are accessed from a wide path that winds down the hill.

There is a public well in the center of town. There wasn't central power or telephone here before, and mobile phone coverage was weak at best. Some of the houses had portable generators, a fact any locals know.

The largest house in the village belongs to Rajan's family. It's two stories tall, sturdily built, and brightly painted and decorated for the upcoming wedding. See the **Scavenging in Chokmalli** table for what the characters may find. There's also a ghastly new addition to the village, **The Hanging Bones** (see below).



SEARCHING THE VILLAGE

The houses of the village are empty of people, but evidence abounds that something terrible happened last night. *Find* lets the investigator scavenge for items, or *evidence analysis* discovers clues about what happened. Searching or scavenging uses up a time token. If enough are left the newcomers have time for multiple tests.

If the *evidence analysis* test fails, the examiner finds bloodstains, broken-in doors, shattered windows, and damaged furniture in every house checked. The walls and what's left of doors have small scratches all over them. A success determines each house was broken into, the occupants fought back the best they could, and the bodies were dragged outside and down the path toward the rice fields for some unfathomable reason. A Good success uncovers small bits of vine, implicating gospog creatures like those encountered at the petrol station. An Outstanding success reveals that battery-powered clocks all stopped at 3:42 a.m. There's nothing wrong with the clocks. In fact, the clock begins ticking again for about 10 seconds if a Storm Knight fidgets with the batteries.

All the vehicles expected by the natives (several motorcycles and Rajan's car) are still in town, but an Easy (DN 8) *tracking* test finds furrows in the

muddy road to the west toward Dindigul where someone drove in or out. If the heroes continue down the road, see **Leaving Town** (page 140).

THE SURVIVOR

In Rajan's family home there's one more difference beyond the wedding decorations: a survivor! The only living person in the village lies wounded on the floor, unconscious and bleeding. He's Caucasian with brown hair and an elaborate mustache and beard. He's barefoot and wearing only trousers, though his chest is wrapped in makeshift bandages. An Easy (DN 8) *first aid* test brings him around to answer some questions.

THE VICTORIAN

The stranger's name is Edward Gant, and he speaks English with a pronounced British accent. At first he's confused about where he is, can't remember how he came to be there, or what happened. On the other hand, he's desperate to know what time it is, specifically how long until nightfall. As Edward calms down he remembers and shares more and more.

Last night there was an attack. He remembers swarms of vicious bats, and decaying corpses he knows are called gospog. They were led by a

SCAVENGING IN CHOKMALLI

<i>Find</i>	Usable Items
Fail	Kerosene Lamp: Provides light, or may be used as a Damage 10 petrol bomb. Farming Tools: <i>Strength</i> +2 damage. Barricade Materials: Five tokens' worth, or +5 tokens for each level of success.
Standard	Portable Generator: Tech 22. Enough fuel to provide power for lights all night. Shotgun: Tech 18, Damage 13, Range 10/20/40, ammo 2. Hunting Rifle: Tech 18, Damage 13, Range 20/50/100, ammo 10.
Good	.38 Revolver: Tech 22, Damage 12, Range 10/20/40, Rapid-fire, Ammo 6 Medical Kit: Tech 23. Gain a +1 bonus on <i>first aid</i> or <i>medicine</i> tests. Petrol Bombs (3): Tech 22, Damage 14 Fire, Medium Burst Radius
Outstanding	Ganesh Talisman: Spirit 18. It has one Possibility the holder may spend. Silver Cudgel: Tech 18, Damage <i>Strength</i> +3, has embossed images of Hanuman. Ammunition: 20 extra shots for each firearm (shotgun, rifle, pistol).

creature called the Tiller. Everyone was killed, and the Tiller took the bodies down to the rice fields to the east.

Gant isn't from Earth. He's from a world named Gaea. His world was invaded much like this one, and a dread figure known as the Gaunt Man turned it into a realm of nightmares and endless horror and corruption known as Orrorsh. He knows the basic workings of reality, about Storm Knights, and a few things about what's happening in rice fields:

- The gossip the Tiller uses are from Gaea, brought here through constructs called maelstrom bridges. He can make more, and that's what he plans to do with all those corpses.
- The altar in town is called a stela, and serves as a boundary for Orrorsh. This stela is a backup, so destroying it won't affect reality, but may still draw the wrath of the Gaunt Man. Stelae usually have guardians, so Gant warns everyone to stay well away from it.
- The Tiller and his creatures likely sense living people in the village and are awaiting nightfall to attack. Gant doesn't think they could get far enough away if they run, and suggests fortifying one of the houses until sunrise instead.

Gant doesn't quite realize it, but he himself is a monster.

He arrived via the maelstrom bridge, and murdered many—including Rajan. When darkness falls he'll become a beast, some kind of monstrous bat, and kill again. He begins to remember if his questioners treat him with kindness, or as soon as the light of day begins to fade.

He shakes with horror and weeps when he comes to this last realization. He doesn't wish to kill or be killed. If the heroes decide to kill him, he puts up weak resistance but

succumbs (no combat is needed)...only to rise again days later unless he's killed with silver.

A Very Hard (DN 16) *persuasion* test convinces Gant that his death is for the best. He suggests silver as an effective weapon against him. There is silver in the house, none of it in the form of a weapon, but definitely usable to finish the deed while Gant is cooperating.

• **Edward Gant:** See page 142.

THE HANGING BONES

Near the edge of the village square's clearing, impossible to miss, is a grisly structure. From a distance it looks like a figure made of bound-together sticks. A little closer up it becomes clear that it's made of bones, distinctly human bones, and fused together into a kind of altar.

The bones still have traces of blood on them.

The site crackles with a kind of power that all the heroes can feel. More than that, investigators definitely feel like something is watching them, and a low growl from inside the jungle or a glimpse of red eyes alerts them that some kind of creature stalks nearby.

The altar is a stela, actually a backup stela in this case.

The heroes have no way of knowing what that means. If they try to physically destroy the foul thing or pull it apart they're actually attempting to uproot the stela. That immediately starts a Dramatic Skill Resolution and brings the creature tasked with guarding it (see **Attack of the Guardian**). Regardless of how the heroes try to destroy or dismantle the stela, they test *reality* with a Standard difficulty to complete each Step.

A Setback means Heketon, the connected Darkness





Gospog are frightening creatures of supernatural evil that emit an aura of fear.

Device, notices the intrusion and uses a dimthread to move two gospog for each hero from the nearby fields into the village to protect the stela.

If the attempt fails, blood oozes from the altar itself, and the skulls fused into it emit bloodcurdling screams. A physical wave of force pushes the Storm Knights away. If the heroes withdraw there's no further effect, although if the guardian is still active it pursues them. If they try again Heketon reanimates every destroyed creature, and sends in another wave of gospog as reinforcements.

If the Storm Knights succeed, the bones crack and burst apart. Each hero gains two Possibilities, a boon from Core Earth itself for their role in fighting back against the invaders. This was a backup stela, so the zone doesn't collapse or change, but it's still an impressive victory—one the Tiller wishes to avenge.

PREPARING DEFENSES

Even on failed *find* tests the Storm Knights find materials to board over windows, cover doors with furniture, and get lights going either through a portable generator or kerosene lamps. An Easy (DN 8) *Strength* test builds up the barricade. Each level of success gives it one Wound (maximum three).

Storm Knights inside a barricaded house gain Concealment (−4) if they fight back (attacking through windows, cracks in the doorways, and so on) and Cover (+6 Toughness). Anyone who isn't trying to fight back can't be targeted at all.

No more than three villains can attack a character who's fighting back; there's just not enough room for more. Any unoccupied villains try to break in. They roll a regular attack against an inanimate object (DN 6) with Toughness 12. Once the barricade's Wounds are eliminated the antagonists may enter the house and attack normally.

THE GOSPOG FIELDS

If any Storm Knights choose to follow the trail to the east to check the rice fields, each must make a DN 8 *stealth* test to gain a vantage on the grisly spectacle below without being seen. Otherwise they see the Tiller, but he sees them as well and immediately dispatches his gospog to chase intruders back to the village and destroy them all.

There are dozens of hunched figures working the former rice fields. Most of them are gospog digging shallow, muddy graves in the fields or dragging bodies down the sodden rows. One figure stands apart: a hunchback wearing what looks like

Victorian-styled clothing and a stylized mask with a ghoulish, frowning face. When the heroes first see him he's driving his clawed fingers into a corpse's chest, pushing something into the cavity. Then he waves to one of the gospog and orders it in formal-sounding English to plant the body down a row where he's gesturing.

The true horror of this operation is its scale. There are piles of hundreds, perhaps thousands of dead bodies in the fields, and evidence that many more have already been buried here.

It uses up a time token getting down to the fields and back to the village. It's probably not a good idea to engage the gospog and their leader, "Tiller" here if the heroes have a choice. It's also possible the heroes may be ambushed by the stela guardian (see below) on the way there or back!

- **The Tiller:** See page 142.
- **Gospog of the First Planting (5 per hero):** See page 142.

ATTACK OF THE GUARDIAN

The backup stela in Chokmalli has a full-time guardian—the flayed corpse of a large tiger, repurposed by the Darkness Device to prowl the area and destroy any intruders. It slinks through the dark jungle around the village.

It attacks immediately if the heroes attempt to uproot the stela, or if anyone is foolish enough to venture into the jungle. Otherwise it stalks the heroes and strikes if an opportunity arises.

If it attacks from Surprise give the heroes a chance to spot it in time, a Hard (DN 14) combined *find* test. If they fail it ambushes them—the Storm Knights don't get to play cards into their Action Pool on the first turn!

- **The Stela Guardian:** See page 143.

LEAVING TOWN

If the Storm Knights choose to drive away rather than fortify and hold out through the night (via either road), they manage to travel about an hour before the vehicle becomes completely mired in a thick tract of mud. The trees close in as if the jungle



The jungles are filled with ominous totems constructed by the Gaunt Man's grim forces.

itself were against the escapees. They have just enough time to return to the village before dark, or press on and face whatever the night brings in the jungle.

Wherever the wanderers end up, the creatures from the final scene find them and attack, although only half the gospog make the trip.

The bat swarm (see Scene Three) can't be outrun. The gospog can be outrun for a time, but the corrupted bat swarm (see Scene Three) and Gant catch up quickly. Although the gospog are slower they are relentless and never need to rest!

SCENE THREE: DEAD BY DAWN

Night has fallen, and now the survivors must fight for their lives. Depending on how the previous scenes played out, the Storm Knights are likely either barricaded inside the village, on the road somewhere in the jungle, or just arriving in Chokmalli. Ready or not, now the monsters are coming.

DEVIL BATS

As the last of the light fades behind the storm clouds an unearthly chorus of shrill screeches erupts across the jungle, and a mass of innumerable large bats winds into the sky like a ribbon. The bats spread out to form a thick blanket, illuminated by occasional flashes of lightning. The screeches grow louder as the mass approaches.

If any characters are on watch and witness the bats approach, they notice the creatures flinch and dart away from lightning whenever it flashes—a clue to their aversion to light of any kind.

The bats cover the entire village, but won't come within two meters of a light source. That won't stop them from attacking anyone out in the dark!

If the swarm of bats suffers enough damage to KO it then the bats separate and fly away. If Edward Gant hasn't been dealt with, he leads the attack of the bats and specifically targets light sources! If he's slain the swarm disperses immediately.

- **Edward Gant:** See page 142.
- **Corrupted Bat Swarm:** See page 142.

TILLER AND HIS CROP

The gospog arrive in two waves, drawn from the monsters still at the gospog fields. The first wave contains three gospog per hero and arrives shortly after the attack of Gant and the bats. The defenders have time to recover Shock and attempt *first aid* between the attacks.

The second wave arrives after another lull to recover Shock. This wave contains the Tiller and any remaining gospog from the fields—probably two per hero unless their numbers were cut down earlier. This is the final assault. Any survivors remain untouched for the rest of the night.

- **The Tiller:** See page 142.
- **Gospog of the First Planting (3 per hero, then 2 per hero with the Tiller):** See page 142.

EPILOGUE

When the sun rises, the storms have settled and the remaining members of the party have time to get back to the relative safety of Madurai before darkness falls again.

Any survivors are helping to fortify and defend Madurai from the tides of monsters that now swarm across almost all of India. The situation is beyond grim. Millions are dead, and untold millions more are still in the clutches of the Gaunt Man.

Aircraft of any kind are a rarity these days, so it causes quite a stir across the city when an advanced jet swoops in, and then its wings rotate so it can hover to land in an open market square.

A weary-looking American disembarks, and asks to meet the gallant group who returned from Chokmalli specifically. He introduces himself as Quinn Sebastian.

"I'm here as an envoy from the Delphi Council, an organization formed to fight these invaders, and free the Earth. Things are bad all over, but here is where it's worst. The Gaunt Man is the most powerful, the most evil of these High Lords. Will you join us? Together maybe we can beat him, and if we can beat him, we can beat the rest of them."

ORRORSH THREATS

GOSPOG OF THE FIRST PLANTING

Gospog of the First Planting are human corpses entwined with rotting vegetation and putrid flesh. They are common to all realms, a gracious gift of death from the Gaunt Man to his fellow Reality Raiders. They are strangely adaptable and function without Contradiction in every realm.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 7, Mind 7, Spirit 7, Strength 8

Skills: Dodge 8, find 8, maneuver 8, melee weapons 8, stealth 8, unarmed combat 10

Move: 7; **Tough:** 8; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** —

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Damage *Strength* +2 (10).
- **Fear:** Gospog are horrific amalgamations of a corpse and rotten plant matter. Test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.
- **Mindless:** Gospog are immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions.
- **Relentless:** Gospog ignore Shock.
- **Undead:** Gospog are immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

TILLER

The Tiller is a broad-shouldered hunchback in a tattered Victorian coat. There are traces of mold and fungus growing in different spots across his clothing and his flesh. His face is obscured by a mask. If the mask is removed its revealed the Tiller has no face, only a disgusting growth of mold where his features would be and a slit for a mouth.

Quote: “Once your body goes into the ground it becomes mine.”

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 8, Mind 10, Spirit 12, Strength 11

Skills: Alteration 13, divination 14, dodge 9, find 13, intimidation 15, maneuver 9, stealth 11, tracking 13, unarmed combat 11

Move: 8; **Tough:** 11; **Shock:** 12; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: Pick (*Strength* +2 damage)

Perks: —

Possibilities: 3

Special Abilities:

- **Cloak of Darkness:** Tiller gains a bonus to his Toughness equal to the current Darkness penalty.
- **Mold Touch:** Tiller may make a melee attack using his *alteration* skill. If he succeeds, the target is Stymied by growing mold. A Good Success makes the target Very Stymied. An Outstanding Success KO's the target until a *first aid* test frees the target's face from the foul growth.

CORRUPTED BAT SWARM

This huge swarm of bats blots out the sky. Each bat has glowing red eyes and rotting, blistered skin. Eliminating one or even dozens of bats has no real effect on the swarm as a whole.

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 9, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 5

Skills: Find 10, intimidation 10, maneuver 10, stealth 10, tracking 10, unarmed combat 10

Move: 5; **Tough:** 5; **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 5

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: Never

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Each round when a swarm acts, anyone inside during any portion of its movement suffers 2 Shock. The swarm may make a single attack against barricades or fortifications, dealing *Strength* +1 damage.
- **Echolocation:** The swarm ignores Darkness penalties.
- **Flight:** Move 9 in the air.
- **Swarm:** Unarmed and crushing weapons deal base damage normally and automatically hit without a test. Area attacks deal damage normally. Blades, bullets, or weapons that can't hit dozens of creatures at once deal no damage at all.

EDWARD GANT

Gant is cursed to become a rampaging beast as darkness falls, part man and part bat. During the day he's nearly lucid, but suffering from memory

loss and wounds. At night he becomes pure animal, and viciously attacks even those who were kind to him during the day. During the day he loses all Special Abilities except for Lycanthrope.

Quote: "If you value your lives then run. The accursed creature who hounds my every footstep has no mercy."

Attributes: Charisma 5, Dexterity 11, Mind 5, Spirit 8, Strength 14

Skills: Dodge 12, find 10, intimidation 12, maneuver 11, reality 9, stealth 11, tracking 9, unarmed combat 14

Move: 11; **Tough:** 17 (3); **Shock:** 8; **Wounds:** 3

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: 1

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Thick, furry hide +3.
- **Bite/Claws:** 16 Damage.
- **Cloak of Darkness:** Gant gains a bonus to his Toughness equal to the current Darkness penalty.
- **Echolocation:** Gant ignores Darkness penalties.
- **Flight:** Move 11 in the air.
- **Lycanthrope:** Silver weapons deal +4 damage against this creature. Wounds inflicted by other types of weapons automatically heal at the end of each Scene.

STELA GUARDIAN

This particular guardian is a large Bengal tiger, its corpse corrupted and repurposed by Heketon to watch over a backup stela. Although a mindless undead creature, the guardian stalks and hunts with the same instincts that served it as a living predator.

Attributes: Charisma 4, Dexterity 10, Mind 4, Spirit 8, Strength 13

Skills: Dodge 11, find 8, intimidation 10, stealth 11, unarmed combat 11

Move: 10; **Tough:** 13; **Shock:** —; **Wounds:** 2

Equipment: —

Perks: —

Possibilities: None

Special Abilities: —

• **Bite/Claws:** Damage 15.

• **Fear:** This unnatural beast looks like it should be dead and decaying. Test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

• **Large:** Attacks against the guardian gain a +2 bonus due to its large size.

• **Mindless:** The creature is immune to *intimidation* and *taunt* interactions and telepathic powers.

• **Relentless:** The guardian ignores Shock.

• **Undead:** The guardian is immune to effects that require breathing, eating, or other "living" processes.



SHILPA
REVENKAR

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