

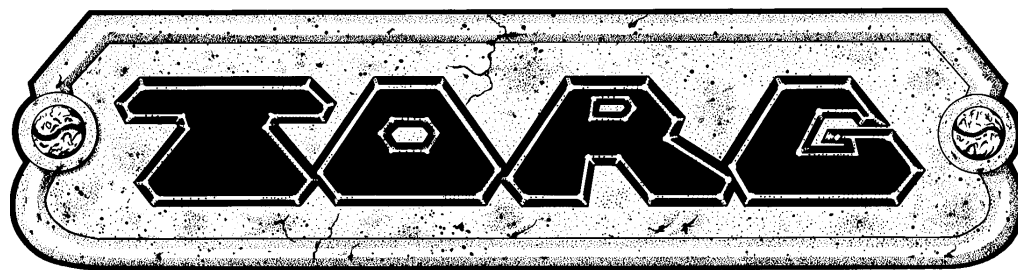


REVISED AND EXPANDED

A MORE PERFECT UNION



AN ADVENTURE FOR TORG 1.5 REVISED AND EXPANDED



A More Perfect Union

an adventure for Torg 1.5 Revised and Expanded

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Prologue

The beginning of the war brought the death of the New York skyline. Of course, few people knew the war had begun then. The only elements they comprehended were smoke and chaos; the one sensation that struck them all was the sheer impossibility of it all. What hit us? Who were these others out to attack us? Will it happen again?

President Leland Nicklaus looked away from the window and rubbed his eyes. What he didn't see disturbed him: Most of the city's tallest, most well-known buildings were nothing more than rubble or flatland now.

"I've heard our scientists discuss what happened," he said. If the Secret Service officers shifted nervously, they did so imperceptibly. "Several of them have a theory about an infinite number of universes, all coexisting; they theorize that the actions of one can influence the others. Can this be true? Has this war raged across a thousand worlds?"

Emanuel smiled. "Words are grains of sand. They are insignificant and meaningless alone, but can be rearranged to form a truth as mighty as a castle."

Nicklaus unfolded a paper clip absently. "Does this mean there were worlds spared the horrors of the invasion? And if so, if all worlds are part of one ... infinite universe, did

the invasion affect those as well?" Nicklaus' furled his brow, his mind trying to wrap around the notion of an Earth changed by the effects of the invasion, yet removed from the invasion itself.

"Events are in motion, and all that is may not be when it is done. A net that is never dropped in water casts ripples noticeable by its absence." Emanuel took the clip from Nicklaus' hand, now rebent into the shape of a pronged oval. "You will be called to serve soon."

"I would willingly die for you."

Emanuel narrowed his lips, an enigmatic gesture to Nicklaus. "Would you serve me, even if it meant you would cease to exist? If it meant you would never be?"

"I think there might be an even greater love: Laying down my life for strangers." Nicklaus paused, remembering the current unrest in the Middle East. "For enemies."

"With enough love, there are no strangers ... no enemies."

Nicklaus ran his hand along the window's curtain. "With enough love, it seems there will be no me."

Hearing a knock at the hotel room door, the leader of the world's remaining superpower turned around. The taller of the Secret Service men checked the peephole, then opened the door. Press secretary Lorraine Snyder entered. "Mr. President? Were you speaking to someone, sir?"

The two Secret Service men looked at each other, then to President Nicklaus, who was the only other person in the room. One second passed, then another. "No. No one," said the President.

Ms. Snyder nodded, seeming unconvinced but unwilling to press the issue. "Air Force One is ready."

"Good. Let's go back to Washington and congratulate ourselves," Leland said, his voice flavored with the mischievous charm that propelled him to electoral victory two years ago.

As they walked to the ballroom, Emanuel's voice rang in Nicklaus' ears. "No matter what happens, I will still know your name. Always." Hanging from the chain encircling the President's neck, the tiny gold cross felt warm and comforting, in stark contrast to the icy hallway and his disquieted thoughts.





Introduction

The War is over. Humanity won. The future is now ... and it's not what anyone expected.

"A More Perfect Union" is set in August, one year after the death of the Gaunt Man and the end of the war in *War's End*, although this can be adjusted depending on the needs and desires of the gaming group.

Many details have been left purposefully vague, since ongoing campaigns have had a decade to sort out how the ravaged world has rebuilt after the effects of the War. However, there are some presumed effects.

Certain areas have had their alternate realities "burned" in; the degree this has happened primarily depends on the amount of time the invaders spent in the area, and the purity of the zone in the first place. Unless otherwise stated, in the intervening time the following changes have occurred. (Refer to the *Infiniverse Update III* for the most recent canonical maps.)

1) All zones that were pure are now considered dominant.

2) All zones that were dominant are now considered mixed with Core Earth.

3) All zones that were mixed have, for the most part, reverted to Core Earth, although there are reports of occasional eruptions of weirdness that seem tied to the previously occupying cosm(s).

Hopefully these requirements aren't too onerous. Many elements of the adventure can be tampered with regardless. For example, this adventure might be set 10 years after the end of the War; in this case President Nicklaus would obviously be a mere memory, and a new president might be filling the same role. If nothing else, hopefully this adventure and others like it will give you some insight as to how other corners of the Infiniverse are dealing with the aftermath of the war ... and offer some ideas for what's to come.

The New Land Above

The United States has fought to reclaim the northeastern portion of its country, and reality — for its part — seems to be cooperating.

The Land Above has reverted to (in essence) a mixed Core Earth/Land Below zone, with the following axioms:

Magic: 12

Social: 21

Spiritual: 17

Tech: 23

Experts theorize that the Magic and Spiritual axioms seem destined to descend to their Core Earth values, but for the time being, they have remained at the Land Below values.

The Core Earth world laws continue to apply, but the only Land Below law that seems to be in force is the Law of Action. (However, some scientists have begun constructing glorious buildings and other projects, which may indicate that the Law of Wonders is still in effect, albeit using Core Earth's advanced tech axiom as its baseline. If this is the case, the results should be astounding.)

In the months since the end of the War, the U.S. government has used the returned capacities of their modern-day equipment to secure the Land Above areas. Most of the Merretikan species have retreated back underground, although some have stayed as members of either some human communities or of tribes hiding in the wilds, waiting to strike. The government is treating those who have chosen to stay peacefully as immigrants, although the lack of an actual originating government has made this challenging (as has trying to explain the concept of "green card" to Leopard Men); President Nicklaus seems anxious to reaffirm the United

States as the land of opportunity, and in so doing seems willing to allow many of these newcomers entry into the United States.

Aftermath of War, Prologue of Tomorrow

The Earth has been rebuilding quickly following the War, but not without problems. In particular, the United States is having trouble maintaining its superpower status. As the only country invaded by four realities during the War, its standing as the mightiest nation has been under assault, with many countries seeming to circle around, eager to compete ... whether it's financially, militarily, or socially. Among the biggest threats to the United States' supremacy are China, India, and Australia, which are all countries that were relatively untouched by the war.

To that end, the United States — led by President Leland Nicklaus — is seeking to stem the tide of declining public confidence. Ironically, the President is using the most effective “weapon” developed from the War itself — namely, symbolism and inspiration.

The President's Plan

President Nicklaus believes that the most important step he can take to elevate the nation's standing — both in the eyes of its citizens and the rest of the world — is to restore the nation's capital to Washington, D.C. The War was remarkably hard on the seat of America's power; after a Living Land maelstrom bridge dropped on Washington, the branches of government scrambled to reform in Houston, Texas. Then, toward the end of the War, Dr. Mobius caused havoc in the nation again when he dropped his own maelstrom bridge in the middle of Houston, prompting the government to scramble to reform in Miami, Florida.

The need for a symbolic victory came in the fourth year of the war, when — despite the Delphi Council's considerable sway — public sentiment demanded a presidential election. Leland Nicklaus emerged victorious and is seen in a similar light as Harry Truman as being the president who was in command when a global war ended.

Now, two years after his election and one year after the war's end, the president has decided that the only way to stem rumors of the nation's weakness is



Tomorrow's World, Yesterday

Time has always been deliberately vague in the *Torg* campaign setting, and the overall world has been one of an action movie — obviously set in the Now (or Near Now) but not tied to a specific date.

This adventure continues the tradition and is primarily so players don't need to try to remember every minutia of what day-to-day life was like in 1996. "Can I access the Internet? Do we have encryption?" And so on.) The world is assumed to be more or less "now," with as much hand-waving necessary to make that possible.

As a result, rest assured that, throughout the course of this adventure, there will be no references made to specific times or dates (outside of month names, which can usually be tweaked). Thus, there will be no reference to the change of the millennium ... whether it's passed or coming up.

to return the seat of American power to Washington. This maneuver has been questioned by those on the left and right; although the circular Land Above region encompassing much of the northeastern United States is not dominant anymore, it is still considerably more dangerous than the "mundane" reality of the untransformed southern United States.

The Post-War Axioms

Although the original *Torg* campaign started in 1990, for dramatic purposes, it is assumed that the first year of the post-War Earth looks suspiciously similar to today's world. This is primarily due to the exposure of ideas and technology from Nippon Tech; it's easy to be jealous and want to emulate a country where everyone has miniscule telephones, and consumer market pressure is a powerful motivation for refining blocky, bulky technology that already exists.

As a result, for the purposes of this adventure, the technology of Core Earth is assumed to be roughly analogous to modern-day society. The technology is assumed to be only slightly behind the curve; thus, cell phones are everywhere, laptop computers are gaining in popularity (although have not quite yet overtaken desktop models), digital video discs that hold high-quality movies are quite popular, hybrid cars are novelties, and so on.

The *Tech* axiom has not risen; most of the neat toys of Tech 24 are impossible in Core Earth, and the few slight advances from the new threshold that seem likely only really work in the presence of scientists determined to push the envelope.

The one axiom that seems most on the cusp of change is the *Social* axiom. The formation of the European Union in the wake of the invasion has brought about a new understanding in the possibility of balancing both nationalistic and global tendencies. In addition, the spread of information technology such as the Internet has made the way people think about the planet and the interactions thereon. For example, the global retailer BockSmart has become the largest retailer in the United States because of its unconventional data-harnessing powers; in a matter of seconds, their corporate offices in Salt Lake City, Nevada can determine immediately if a store in Tallahassee, Florida is down to a four-week supply of folding porch chairs, and order more from Beijing, China to be delivered in 25 days.

This globalization of the economy has brought with it some heartache for richer nations, as previously high-paying jobs are outsourced to countries such as India and China. However, the advancement of society may eventually prove to be good for the world as a whole, and the *Social* axiom may advance to 22 within a few years ... if the world survives that long.



Act One: Decommission Mission

The Major Beat

Act one takes place in Houston, beginning in the former offices from which the provisional government conducted the early stages War. These offices were decommissioned long ago with the government's movement to Miami, but as part of the forthcoming announcement concerning the government's return to Washington, D.C., the Vice President is giving a speech at the site of the former government.

The purpose of this scene is to provide the characters with a sense of what's going on in the United States after the War; the mighty nation has fallen far as a result of the conflict, but its spirit wishes to rise to its former glory.

Scene One: The Aide's Crisis The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights are assumed to be somehow tied to the United States government in a post-War setting. If they are established heroes, they will be invited to be part of the proceedings in some capacity. This role depends on the heroes' view toward the United States and the level of involvement

with the War; if they are generally supportive of the government and performed great deeds, they might be invited to speak before the Vice President's speech. If they were supportive of the government but haven't made much of a name for themselves, they will be invited to be a supplemental security detail (to augment the Secret Service). And if they have been critical of the government or have had a falling out with it, they will be invited to act as observers, to (hopefully) satisfy the heroic community of the government's sincerity in eliminating the evils of the former Delphi Council. If all else fails, the players might use a *Connection* ("You know a former aide ..."), *Personal Stake* ("The government has uncovered some curious documents regarding you in its former Houston offices, and would like you to see them ..."), *Romance*, or a similar card to become part of the adventure.

Regardless of how they become involved, the scene begins with the heroes within the former governmental offices of Houston, which (for rules purposes) are assumed to be a dominant Nile Empire zone. The former offices are a tangle of boxes, desks, computer cables, and so on. The heroes' role depends on why they're here; more helpful Storm Knights might be helping to pack or move boxes, others might just be observing, still others might be rooting through files for useful information. (All classified material has long since been removed.)

If the heroes try to sift through the reams of random information (which, really, is all there is currently), make an *evidence analysis* check with a difficulty of 14. On a *minimal* or *average* success, the detective realizes that virtually all useful information has been removed long ago. On a *good* success, he realizes that the organization is such that these preparations are being made to move the head of government again. With a *superior* success, he realizes that the government is not being moved to Atlanta, Georgia, as previously speculated and assumed. With a *spectacular* success, the detective realizes that the government is, in fact, moving back to Washington, D.C.

If a Storm Knight is looking for a specific piece of information, he should make a *find* skill check. The difficulty will vary depending on what is sought, although it should start at around 15 for broad, easily findable informa-

tion (any proof of the Delphi Council's misdeeds) to 22 for really obscure material (analyzing the data to indicate which Senators might be corrupt based on their voting records). And, again, anything truly classified — such as the location of all the United States' nuclear missiles — has been taken away long ago. Any success level of a *good* result or less means the hero could figure out the information, but it's beyond the time frame of the adventure. With a *superior* success, it will take the better part of the day, and with a *spectacular* success, it will take less than an hour.

Finally, a character might try to make friends with random aides and workers. If so, assume a base *will-power* of 14 (to find a character who's knowledgeable). However, even the friendliest aide won't know more than the fact that the seat of governmental power is moving (although he might know that it's relocating somewhere other than Atlanta).

The Action

The packing hustle can last as long as the players seem interested. When it seems their curiosity has been sated, the Storm Knights will notice that two Secret Service agents have entered the offices. A moment later, Vice President Hogan will come in, followed by two more Secret Service agents.

At this point, one of the aides, Jeff Godfrey, will pull out a concealed pistol and attempt to shoot Vice President Hogan. (Why is he doing this? Because his grandfather was once wronged by Hogan's grandfather. Oh, and he's evil.) All the Secret Service agents and Vice President Hogan will be surprised by this action, giving the heroes a chance to be heroic.

Assuming the players' characters are a group of Storm Knights (plus the fact that Vice President Hogan is also possibility-rated), this battle should go unbelievably quickly. However, the Law of Drama does still apply, so even though this should be a trivial encounter, it should be an excitingly trivial encounter. For example, if a hero grapples Godfrey, his gun might go off, accidentally hitting the sprinkler system — which sends streams of water everywhere, activating a flurry of aides as they scramble to protect documents ... and so on.

This entire scene should be played mostly light-heartedly; the citizens of Houston, operating under Nile Empire dominance, merely see this act as a typical "day in the life" occurrence (akin to how those in California view the minor biweekly earthquakes) and will react accordingly. Any Storm Knights who overreact or place too much significance on the events will be tsk-tsked at accordingly by the other citizens.

Jeff Godfrey, Evil Temp Worker

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, Fire Combat 9

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Scholar (Politics) 12

MIND 11

Test of Wills 12

CHARISMA 10

SPIRIT 8

Equipment:

Inclination: Evil

Description: Jeff Godfrey is a thin male roughly thirty years old. He maintains a well groomed appearance and, to talk to, seems trustworthy enough. Upon closer examination he seems terribly off, with shifty eyes and a barely noticeable tick in his upper lid. He regularly looks over his shoulders and will views new faces with unease and suspicion.

Secret Service Agents (4)

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 13, Fire Combat 13, Stealth 12, Unarmed Combat 13

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 11

Disguise 12, Evidence Analysis 14, First Aid 12, Land Vehicles 12, Security 12

MIND 9

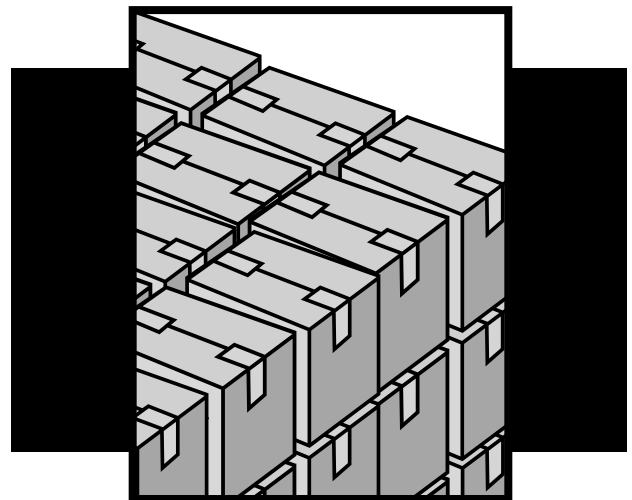
CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 8

Intimidation 10

Equipment: 9mm Sig Sauer P228, Tech 22, damage value 15, range 3-10/25/50; Kevlar Armor (chest), Tech 22, TOU +5/22, concealed; radio ear set.

Description: All of the secret service agents are fairly well built and wear conservative blue suits. There all maintain a business demeanor and take in virtually everything around



them; scanning the room with eyes cloaked by mirrored sunglasses.

If the Storm Knights do nothing but instead let the Secret Service agents do their job, a stray bullet will strike an aide, giving them one more chance to be heroic. If they still fail to pick up the gauntlet to act heroically, then skip to Scene Three.

If Helen is struck and is actually injured (she'll use a possibility to cancel damage), then she will require medical attention before Scene Two. If she is too severely injured, then skip Scene Two and go to Scene Three.

If Jeff Godfrey somehow manages to kill Vice President Hogan — despite the presence of Storm Knights, four Secret Service agents, and the fact that Jeff is an Ord and Helen isn't — then the gamemaster should probably switch from using the 20-sided die that's nothing but 10s.

A *Romance* subplot card might indicate that Vice President Hogan — who remains unmarried — has taken an interest in one of the Storm Knights.

Scene Two: Hogan's Heroes

The Situation

Standard. Assuming the heroes made some positive impression during Scene One, one of the Vice President's aides will seek them out and invite them to lunch with the Vice President the next afternoon.

If they agree, they will meet in a secluded room in a secluded restaurant (The Angel Lake). Two Secret Service agents will remain outside the door and outside of earshot, leaving the heroes to talk with the Vice President privately.

Vice President Hogan is genuinely appreciative of the heroes' involvement and wants them to feel at ease — either assuaging their fears about the government, listening to their concerns, or encouraging their patriotic natures (assuming any Storm Knights are Americans).

This is a quiet scene, but should give the Storm Knights any opportunities they would like to either learn more about what's going on, or to interject their own thoughts as to how the country should rebuild.

Vice President Hogan begins as *neutral*. If she is brought to *friendly* or greater via a *charm* attempt (assuming the heroes are sincere in their desires), she might reveal the following, depending on what the heroes talk about with her:

- The reclamation of the northeast has gone amazingly well; many cities that were previously devastated by the corrupting effects of the Living Land have been rebuilt or are in the process of being rebuilt.

- President Nicklaus wants to shine as an example to the rest of the world about how to handle the post-

Helen Hogan

DEXTERITY 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Land Vehicles 12, Scholar (history) 12, Scholar (law) 12, Scholar (politics) 13

MIND 10

Business 11, Willpower 11

CHARISMA 12

Charm 13, Persuasion 15

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Christianity) 11, Performance Art (Acting) 11, Reality 12

Possibilities: 6

Equipment: Vice President Hogan is dressed in stylish business attire. She has a digital phone and a personal digital assistant.

Description: Vice President Hogan was chosen to appease centrist voters, since being a Michigander offset Nicklaus' South Carolinian roots, and being a 39-year-old woman appealed to a large segment of voters, both younger and female. In a time of turmoil, it was decided that being politically divisive would be dangerous, both for national unity and for electoral chances of success. This gambit paid off, and Hogan's and Nicklaus' party emerged victorious in the election.

Although many believe Vice President Hogan to be plain spoken and somewhat bland, in fact she has a very acute — if subtle — sense of humor, using extreme understatement to make her point. (She once commented, "My dislike of computers is a boon to the administration, since I have a deep empathy. Like so many Americans during this crisis, I also want to pick up a rock and smash my laptop.")

While many believe her to be a basically good person, she has incredible political ambitions. Although she loves her country deeply, and has a strong desire to do the right thing, she also knows that she's on the cusp of being a great historical figure or a trivial footnote, and the desire to be known to the ages eats at her. Furthermore, the fact that she's a Storm Knight means that she understands the true nature of the possibilities before her, and she struggles with her baser nature.



War reality — by cooperating with those remnant elements of the invaders who want to work for America, and rooting out and fighting those who would still wish to do the country harm ... all the while trying to utilize those elements of the remaining reality to the country's benefit.

If Vice President Hogan is brought to *loyal*, she might reveal the following (again, depending on how the conversation flows):

- President Nicklaus understands the need for symbolism and is planning on a big gesture within the next few days to restore confidence in the United States. (She confirms their guess about relocating to Washington, D.C., if they figured this out already.)

- Helen's time within the former Nile Empire area has made her severely question herself; she knows she is good but worries that she might eventually slip and become evil, attempting to serve herself with the same intensity as she currently tries to serve her country. (Any efforts the heroes apply to assuage her fears will do her wonders.)

- President Nicklaus is an extremely pious man (a devout born-again Christian) and has shown great reluctance to leaving the Land Above circle.

This scene can end whenever the players start losing interest; assuming no grievous offense was given or mandates of etiquette broken, Vice President Hogan will invite the heroes to stand with her during her speech tomorrow.

Scene Three: The Watts Riot

The Situation

Standard. This scene take place outside the city hall in downtown Houston, around 4:00 P.M. Central time (giving enough time for the event to be recorded and played out on the evening news). A large platform has been erected, and many of the heroes who defended Houston are standing with their families, along with many who helped keep the government operating during the first stages of the War (at least, those individuals who weren't corrupt or contemptuous). There is a band playing, and this congratulatory tribute to Houston has been presented as a festival celebration, akin to a political convention or a stationary ticker tape parade.

The Action

If the Storm Knights have been invited to speak at this time, they may do so. If they have ulterior motives (such as wanting to sow the seeds for their own political careers), then the gamemaster will need to determine the skill necessary and the effects of success.

Throughout this event, there will be other brief speeches by dignitaries and heroes, interspersed with the live music. This event can go as long or as short as the players seem interested, and the game-master can use this as an opportunity to drop any clues regarding future adventures in this section (perhaps through a speech given by a diplomat).

Eventually, Vice President Hogan will prepare to take the stage. If any Storm Knights make a *find* skill check against a difficulty of 13 at this point (to look for ambushes or other signs of trouble), what they discover depends on their level of success. Any success of *good* or less will reveal that everything seems okay with the platform and band area. A *superior* result will indicate that there seems to be something amiss; people in far outskirts of one side of the crowd seem more interested in something happening down the



street. A *spectacular* result will reveal that, judging by the crackle of electricity and the general turmoil in the air, there's some kind of large conflict down the street ... and it's coming this way!

Lightning Strikes ... Thrice?

In fact, there is a conflict ... only it has nothing to do with the events at hand.

Coincidentally, three villains were arguing at a popular evil underground nightclub (the Ten Gallon Hate) about who could best harness the power of lightning or electricity. The mercenary known as Tine-7 claimed his lightning generation abilities, issuing forth from his eyes, made him clearly the best. The mad scientist Professor Ethorium boasted that his new dynamo-powered suit had at least as powerful an electrical attack, with superior defense and movement abilities to boot. Completing this grudge match is Thunderasp, a practitioner of Egyptian magic who believes the extra boost of magic provides her energy-based powers with more than enough to prove her the master.

What started as a minor squabble turned into a barroom brawl and then evolved into a free-for-all. Professor Ethorium is controlling the momentum of the battle, although (unknown to the other two combatants) this is because a malfunction in his weird science gizmo suit has caused its steering mechanism to falter.

The villains have absolutely no interest in the proceedings at the Houston city hall. However, their lack

of interest isn't going to alter the fact that they are on a collision course for the festival.

Tine-7

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 12, Fire Combat 11, Stealth 11, Unarmed Combat 12

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 9

Trick 11

MIND 9

CHARISMA 11

Taunt 14

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 11

Inclination: Evil

Powers: *Electro-Ray* power

Equipment: Luger (Tech 20 Damage Value 15)

Description: Tine-7 was the seventh experimental subject of Dr. Eli Gaus, although the fact that his number matches his rank is mere coincidence; Dr. Gaus started numbering his subjects backwards from his original 13. (Thus the first subject was Tine-13, the second was Tine-12, and so on.) Tines 13 through 9 have all been killed, Tine-8 is in prison, and Tine-6 through Tine-2 are still with Dr. Gaus. (Tine-1 escaped immediately after becoming imbued with power, and no one has seen her since.)

Although all the other Tine experiment subjects have lightning-based abilities, they are all subtly different; Tine-6's abilities emanate from his hands and also cause some minor disruptions in gravity fields, Tine-5's abilities shoot forth from his chest and also seem to allow some control over electrical devices, Tine-4's powers are invisible, and so on. In addition, the Tines seem to be more powerful the lower their number . . . which, once learned, should make anyone worry about the potential of Tine-1.

Professor Ethorium

DEXTERITY 9 (11)

Unarmed Combat 10 (12)

STRENGTH 8 (9)

Lifting 10 (11)

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 11

Trick 13

MIND 13

Science (*electronics*) 15, Test of Wills 14, Weird Science 16

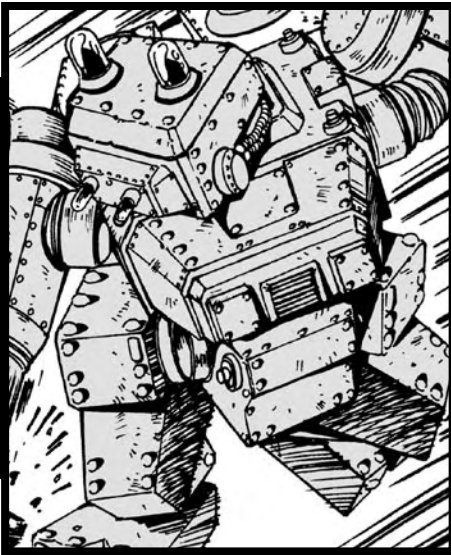
CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 11

Inclination: Evil

Pulp Powers: Dynamo-Powered Suit (gadget with *Electro-Ray* power and *Super Attribute* power [reflected in attributes above])(Armor Value +5/19)



Description: Professor Ethorium's claim to fame is his Ethoria Deviant Device, although in reality this is little more than a renamed possibility capacitor. At 57, Professor Ethorium has achieved relatively little notoriety despite his age; this is because he was transformed into his new identity from electrical engineer Edward Thoar, a university professor.

Thunderasp

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, Unarmed Combat 11

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

PERCEPTION 10

Alteration Magic 12

MIND 12

Conjuration Magic 15

CHARISMA 11

Charm 13, Performance Art (*dance*) 12, Performance Art (*singing*) 12

SPIRIT 10

Inclination: Evil

Arcane Knowledges: Folk +1, Inanimate Forces +3

Description: Sara Alto was a down-on-her-luck showgirl when she started dabbling in the occult, trying to turn her life around. Although she was successful — both in the powers she harnessed and the speed with which she learned to do so — her hunger for power coupled with her fear of reaching her former depths have pushed her to new and ever-bigger arcane pursuits.

Her insecurities coupled with a need to establish herself as a "name" within the villainous community go a long way toward explaining her desire to rush into a fight... although, really, she doesn't need much of an excuse.

A Lightning Rod Made of Irony

Strangely enough, much of the battle for electricity-based supremacy is moot, since all three villains' powers render them naturally (or artificially) resistant to electrical attacks; Professor Ethorium's suit is well insulated, Tine-7's augmentation makes him resilient to other attacks, and Thunderasp cast an electrical protection spell right before stepping outside.

In game terms, all damage the villains do to each other is assumed to have a damage value of 0, although positive modifiers from attack rolls might still feasibly pierce their defenses.

Since Professor Ethorium has attacks beyond the electrical ones, he is theoretically more able to emerge victorious. However, he won't realize the immunity situation until a D appears on the Dramatic Skill Resolution line, by which point it will be too late (as far as the adventure is concerned). Regardless, the villains' resilience in conjunction with their stubbornness has resulted in the situation as it stands now: a snowball rolling out of control, coincidentally into an important event.

As an aside, any electrical attacks the Storm Knights attempt against the villains are assumed to have the same effect ... which is to say, not much.

Texas Steel Cage Deathmatch, Sans Cage

The Storm Knights objective will be to ensure the celebration event is not bulldozed by the battle; ideally, they will do so without the bulk of the crowd knowing the type of danger they were in.

The fight will proceed using the Dramatic Skill Resolution line to determine the effect the combatants have on the fight; keep using the line each turn until two of the three enemy combatants are out of commission. (Even if Professor Ethorium is taken down first, he will have instilled the momentum of the other two to continue moving down the street.) Once there is only one person remaining, that enemy attempts to flee or fight the Storm Knights directly, depending on how injured everyone is.

Start: The three combatants are fighting, much to the consternation of passersby and businesses on their portion of the street.

A: The fighting villains are within extreme visual range of the presentation stage, although the sound of their lightning and electricity effects are audible from much further away (leading some in the crowd

to conclude that the cloudless sky might actually be concealing some freak rain).

B: Many in the crowd notice that something is wrong, and they begin to react with some panic. Non-combat-oriented Storm Knights might take the opportunity to calm the crowd or otherwise try to keep the situation under control.

C: The battle is now fully noticed by everyone at the celebration, and the crowd becomes a mass of near-panic. If the heroes have shown any initiative in trying to solve the crisis, Vice President Hogan will continue onward with her speech, believing that attempting to appear normal is the best way to fulfill President Nicklaus' desire to portray the United States as strong.

D: The combatants' stray lightning strikes the metal platform of the fleeing speakers, killing many people and seriously injuring Vice President Hogan. (If the gamemaster doesn't know which effect caused this stray shot, generate a total for a damage value of 15.)

The Law of Drama dictates that there will be complications commiserate with the Storm Knights' abilities erupting as a result of the characters' conflict: Stray blasts may start a blaze in a fireworks showroom, a car may veer to avoid the fight and careen into a fruit cart, and so on. Ideally these supplemental challenges are designed to help give neglected Storm Knights a moment in the sun, with tasks that complement their unused abilities.

The Sound Byte

Assuming the villains are incapacitated and Vice President Hogan gets to make her speech, the following segment is what will appear on the six o'clock news:

"The nation's heart and brain may be its capital, but its soul is composed of all Americans themselves. Twice the enemy sought to rip out our hearts and destroy our minds, and twice the soul of the American people lived on. The nation's capital is more than a symbol ... more than a collection of bureaucrats ... more than a place of political turmoil. It is where the will of the people strives every day to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, and — above all — form a more perfect union.

The wrongs our capital has done does not diminish the burning desire in its soul to do right, nor does it diminish the President's desire to make amends and set things right, it its thoughts and in its deeds."

(The rest of the speech is spent commending Houston on its contributions to the War effort, thanking various people, and expanding — without concrete details — more about the importance of the seat of government.)

Variables

If the Storm Knights don't make their initial find checks, or otherwise prove unvigilant in watching for danger, they will be alerted to the crisis by one of the Secret Service agents. However, by the time he does so, the conflict will already be at Stage A.

If the Storm Knights try to get the other heroes on the platform to help, most of them will point out that they are there with their families and wish to protect them; the rest will try to keep the peace amid the crowd and try to prevent collateral damage (thus ensuring the spotlight remains firmly on the players' characters).

If the Storm Knights fail to stop the rampage in Houston but showed any initiative in attempting to save the day, then they will be invited — grudgingly — to continue helping the government in the next act. (All the better heroes weren't answering their phones.)

Awards

Each Storm Knight gets two possibilities for completing this act, or three if they manage to stop the incidental assault on Houston with no one getting seriously hurt.

Cut To ...

Again, assuming the heroes are victorious (even if it's only marginally so), the United States government will continue trying to work with them. The action continues in act two.





Act Two: Boom Over Miami

The Major Beat

The heroes have proven themselves to be an asset to the United States government and are invited to continue helping them. They are asked to provide a security detail for the decommissioning of the current governmental seat in Miami, Florida. Word gets out that the governmental seat is changing, although there's no formal announcement yet as to where to.

Meanwhile, hurricane Gil has made an unexpected turn, and is barreling toward Miami. The heroes are called to rescue a scientist, who stayed behind to secure the United States' code-cracking formulas for the NSA. He became trapped in the third floor of a hotel when the flood waters knocked out the power-controlled doors; he is awaiting rescue. Meanwhile, agents from a multinational corporation based in Japan have learned of the formulas and are seeking the scientists themselves.

The symbolic theme of this act — and, especially, scene two — is “heroes against nature.” There isn't anything terribly weird going on (outside of the Nippon Tech agents in scene three), but the scale of the problems the Storm Knights might face may impress upon them that there are still limitations to their abilities

... especially when faced with an epic natural disaster. (Or, conversely, they may learn that not even a hurricane can thwart them.)

Scene One: Getting There Is Half the Fun

The Situation

Standard. The heroes are assumed to be at least somewhat in the good graces of the United States government, and are called to help with the continued movement of the federal government out of Miami.

The Action

In the aftermath of the battle in Houston, the Storm Knights receive a call from Secretary of State Dennis Watison, who will explain the government's current problem:

“As you may or may not be aware, the federal government is currently relocating from Miami, Florida. As such, we had intended to ask you to accept a ride to Atlanta with some of the Air Force's finest. Unfortunately, we've got a bigger situation on our hands.

“Hurricane Gil was a Category Two storm that was forecast to hit somewhere along the east coast within the next week. However, in the past 30 hours, it has escalated to a Category Four and picked up enough speed to hit Miami within the next few hours. Frankly, our meteorologists are baffled, since a storm isn't supposed to get both faster and stronger simultaneously; their best guess is that this has something to do with residual reality storms in the Atlantic.

“However, our big problem is that one of our NSA agents has been lost; he had to stay behind to make sure all the government's top secret codes were secured, but he disappeared at the beginning of the evacuation. Worse, we have reason to believe that he is in possession of a laptop containing a lot of classified information, and we fear that device becoming lost or even falling into the wrong hands.

The president, and the nation, again needs your help.”

Dennis Watison is a straightshooting patriotic man who was one of the nation's foremost legal

experts before being tapped by President Nicklaus to become Secretary of State. Although he was criticized by many for his seeming lack of organizational or leadership experience, his understanding of the legal and constitutional issues involved in a post-War America have made him uniquely qualified for the job, allowing him to navigate thorny issues such as the legal rights of U.S. citizens who define themselves as “evil” yet who have not yet been convicted of a crime.

The Storm Knight who is speaking with Watison on the phone may press him for more information by attempting to *charm*, *persuade*, or *interrogate* him. (The official has a *willpower* of 13.) Watison begins with a *neutral* attitude toward the Storm Knights, unless they are belligerent toward him or they were amazingly incompetent in act one, in which case his attitude is *hostile*.

The following information will be revealed freely by Watison, if asked:

- The NSA scientist’s name is Phillipe Shannon, a 36-year-old Quebecois who received security clearance after coming to America during the War to lend his computer and code-breaking skills to the War effort. Outside of extensive familial dedication, he has no other security risk elements associated with him.

- The laptop has a transponder unit in it to allow for satellite detection. Unfortunately, the chaos of the coming storm means that the satellite can’t get more

accurate than locating the device within a large section of the city.

Watison will only reveal the following if he is rendered *friendly* by some means (each piece of information is valued as *friendly* to him for interrogation purposes), although he may reveal it if presented with educated guesses:

- He has reason to believe that earlier cell phone correspondence about the device’s missing status has been intercepted, although he is unsure of who or from where.

- The government considers the laptop very important, and would not hesitate to use extreme measures (such as carpet bombing a general area) to keep it from falling into enemy hands. However, all parties involved are extremely reluctant to use these measures unless absolutely necessary.

Watison will only reveal the following if he is rendered *loyal* by some means (he is *loyal* to each piece of information for interrogation purposes), although if presented with good guesses or suspicions of these facts a *friendly* result will suffice:

- The laptop contained vital government codes that could prove detrimental if they were to fall into the wrong hands.



- The government is not relocating to Atlanta but is instead taking up residency in its old capital of Washington, D.C.

When the conversation seems to be concluded, Watison will present his proposal for getting the heroes involved: They will be transported by military plane to a spot safely outside Miami, where they will be given motorcycles from the plane to go to the site. (The Storm Knights can also “locate and borrow” a car within Miami, if the terrain is such that it can be driven safely.) The plane will then take off. The Storm Knights will be given a photograph of Phillippe Shannon and a device that will serve as a locator the laptop, although its range is only within 100 meters — better than their satellites can currently do but still not pinpoint accuracy. Once the heroes locate the laptop — and, hopefully, Shannon — they will secure their quarry to a location where a helicopter can land (either scouting a suitable landing strip ahead of time or finding one afterwards).

Watison is open to other suggestions, plans, or alterations, especially those that involve fewer resources from the U.S. government. For example, if the Storm Knights have their own pilot and/or plane, they are welcome to use them.

However, it will not be possible to land the plane close to Miami proper, both because it’s a major metropolitan area and the fact that the hurricane will make any such maneuvers near-impossible.

The rest of this scene is devoted to their preparations and getting to Miami. The hurricane is expected to reach landfall in seven hours; the Storm Knights will require about four hours to get there (three by plane and one by vehicle) and another hour to await the helicopter once they are successful ... assuming they are, of course. This doesn’t leave them a lot of time.

As long as the heroes don’t do anything unexpected, the flight from Houston to outside Miami will be uneventful, except for some rough weather as they leave the Texas/Nile territory and the discomfort of riding in a 1940s-era bomber. If the Storm Knights don’t change the plan, the plane will land safely about 100 kilometers from the site. If the Storm Knights choose to land themselves, or use some alternate means of getting there, assume a base difficulty of 8 to land, with this difficulty increasing by +2 for each step down the Value Chart from 1,000 they try to land the plane, reading the resultant value as the kilometer distance. (For example, landing 600 kilometers from the approximate site would be difficulty 10, landing 400 kilometers would be difficulty 12, and so on.)

(Of course, if the gamemaster wishes to spice things up, any enemies made in act one or in previous adventures might choose this time to strike. For example, if Professor Ethorium, escaped he might have a flying apparatus to attack the Storm Knights while aboard the plane. After all, the Law of Drama is still in effect, and what better way to do in some meddlesome heroes than by relying on gravity to do the dirty work for you?)

Variables

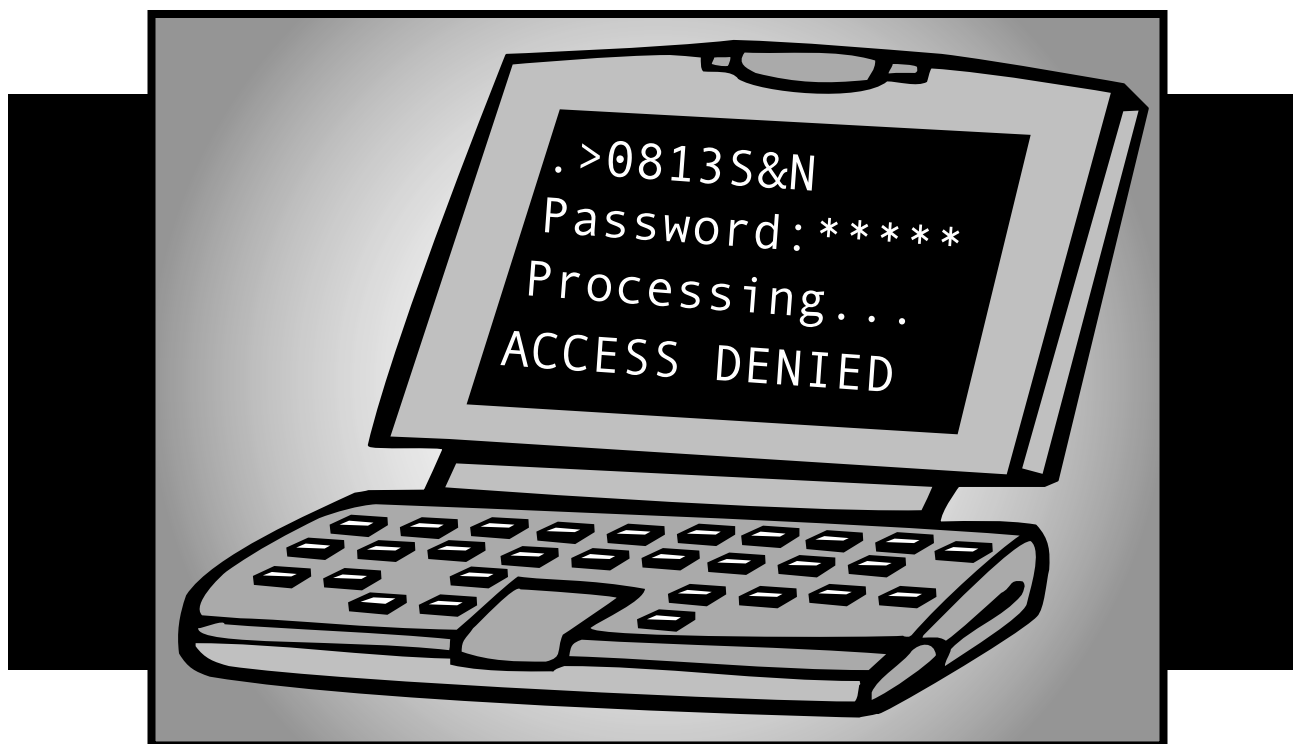
If the Storm Knights refuse to serve the government in this capacity, Watison will ask what it would take to persuade them to do so; he can offer a fair reward for the retrieval of the laptop (and, hopefully, Shannon). If they still refuse, the adventure will proceed to act three (although the heroes will be at a significant disadvantage).

If the heroes try landing themselves and they fail in a catastrophic fashion, they will suffer a damage value of 12 plus the amount the *air vehicles* roll was failed by. In addition, the radio they were going to use to summon the helicopter will be destroyed, and they’ll need to figure out a Plan B to get out of there.

If the Storm Knights want to wait for the hurricane to pass through before attempting a rescue mission, Secretary Watison will impress upon them the government’s desire to get the laptop ASAP. If they remain unconvinced, he will confide that the laptop contains vital information, and the government’s earlier telephone correspondence has been intercepted by party or parties unknown. If the Storm Knights still refuse, he will understand and send another team (who will fail; the Nippon Tech agents from scene three will end up with the laptop); proceed to act three in this case.

Scene Two: Danger Management The Situation

Standard. The heroes are assumed to be in the vicinity of Miami, with a tracking device from the government (or some similar equipment or ability) able to locate the laptop. Here they will face the coming of the hurricane, which is scheduled to make landfall Very Soon ... within a dramatically appropriate period of time.



The Action

This is an exploratory scene, with the heroes using their tracking information to locate the laptop.

Using the tracking device is an *average* (difficulty 8) *computer operations* action, with (9 minus the result points) equaling the value in minutes it takes to track the person from a reasonable distance. (For example, a *computer operations* result of 10 means there were two result points, which has a value of 25; it takes 25 minutes to get close to the signal.) Failure on this roll means that the Storm Knights lose five minutes before they're able to try again.

Once the heroes get within 100 meters, they can make another *computer operations* roll, only this time the base difficulty is 10 and the value is interpreted as seconds (thus 3 result points would mean 15 seconds).

These times don't mean terribly much, except the hurricane is scheduled to make landfall approximately one hour after the heroes land outside Miami. For its part, Miami is remarkably quiet. Outside of a skeleton crew of emergency personnel, all but a few hundred people have been evacuated, and these hundreds are either too dumb, oblivious, or stubborn to leave.

This scene should be spiced up according to the abilities of the Storm Knights and the overall pacing of the adventure. While these encounters shouldn't be anything terribly trying (especially for experienced Storm Knights), they will take time to resolve. These encounters should also be used to give a little bit of

spotlight time to a character who is being ignored. (For example, a character with a knack for repairing vehicles might find a citizen in distress whose car won't work and is in need of a quick fix.)

Some sample mini-encounters that can spice up this scene include:

- An eight-year-old girl (named Amelia Caroline) has been separated from her parents and has been hiding in an office building. As the storms have intensified, she's gotten scared, and she seeks out the heroes if they look remotely like they're good guys.
- Flooding from the coming storms has rendered the route the heroes were taking impassible, requiring a workaround or dangerous fording ahead.
- The heroes pass across some looters who are taking advantage of the quiet streets to reallocate material possessions.

Once the heroes get bored of dealing with a pre-storm Miami, they should be close to their destination.

After they get within range, the Storm Knights will confirm that the device can't pinpoint anything beyond 100 meters. However, getting that close will yield two likely targets: the four-story Hotel Angelica and the adjacent Megarita Bar & Grill (home of Miami's biggest margarita). A search of the Megarita will turn up a sign of a struggle, with the most notable evidence of this being the dead body on the floor; an *average find* roll will reveal that there was some kind of fight (evidenced by the blood splatters on the floor, the overturned tables, and so on). An *evidence analysis*

roll can piece together what happened, depending on the result points rolled. (Material in parentheses should not be revealed but is presented for the gamemaster's information.)

8: There was a fight between at least three people here; the cash register's been shot open, so robbery is a likely motive.

10: The dead person is a gang member. He was shot by a powerful but small handgun

12: Of the three people involved in the fight, one is dead, one ran far away, and the last probably staggered somewhere nearby.

15: Someone (Phillipe Shannon) was on his way out of town when he stopped at the Megarita for a meal. (Phillipe didn't call his superiors because he was maintaining radio silence and wanted to wait until he was away from the panic of the evacuating Miami.) During this time, he was interrupted by two gang members who were taking the hurricane evacuation as an opportunity to rob the Megarita. After emptying the register, the gang members saw an item of interest (Phillipe's laptop) belonging to the first person and demanded it; after refusing, a fight broke out. The first diner pulled out a concealed weapon and shot one of the gang members dead; the second gang member shot back. Judging by the blood splatters, the diner was badly injured. The diner returned fire, and the second gang member, only lightly wounded, ran away. The diner staggered out of the restaurant and has to be either somewhere nearby or else carted off.

In fact, Phillipe staggered back to the Hotel Angelica. He had an expensive arrangement with the hotel to permit him to stay here no questions asked; as a result, when he staggered in, heavily wounded, and crawled up to his room on the third floor, the hotel staff didn't call the police or authorities. (Besides, they were too busy making arrangements to flee the hotel because of the hurricane.)

An *average find* roll at the hotel will locate evidence of Phillipe's passing (various blood stains), and a successful *tracking* roll against a difficulty of 13 will reveal Phillipe's room (room 313).

At the time of his injury, Phillipe was in a state of shock, and he has since passed out and is on the cusp of death; it will take quick and heroic medical action to save him — a *first aid* check with a difficulty of 15. (Phillipe believed his injury was much less serious than it seemed, and he had retreated to his room to "rest his eyes a few minutes" and recover. This did not happen.)

Phillipe Shannon

DEXTERITY 10

Dodge 11, Fire Combat 12

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Computer Operations 13, Find 12, Stealth 12

MIND 12

Computer Science 15, Linguistics 10, Test 10, Willpower 11

CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 8

Equipment: 9mm (Tech 22 Damage Value 15), Digital Phone, Laptop Computer

Description: Phillipe still has his laptop, as well. It is hidden inside the room's wall safe (difficulty 13 for *lock picking* purposes, although the key is in Phillipe's pocket).

If roused, Phillipe will deny all accusations about being a double agent or having turned (this is true; he's just had a really bad day). However, he will admit to bad decisions and bad luck.

Unless the heroes have been amazingly efficient or lucky, their hour should be just about up (or slightly passed). Assuming they make contact with the helicopter and attempt to escape, they should find themselves with a double-pronged escape problem: getting there in time with the laptop protected from the elements and the heavily wounded scientist.

As they leave the Hotel Angelica, they realize there's a new complication: the black oversized sedan of well-dressed Asian gentlemen pulling up with their guns drawn and their sunglasses intent on the laptop.

Cue scene three.

Variables

In the event the heroes can't find Phillipe (because they didn't try very hard or they rolled poorly), they may run into either the escaped gang member from the Megarita or the hotel manager. A successful encounter with either of those might get them back on track. Alternatively, they may stumble across the well-dressed assassins from scene three pulling up to the Hotel Angelica in their oversized sedan, guns drawn.

If Phillipe dies, it isn't the end of the world; the government is mostly concerned with the laptop's retrieval. However, any good Nile or honorable Ayl-ish heroes may have moral quandaries if they didn't do enough.

Far more dangerous to the government is if Phillipe is captured or allowed to fall into Nippon Tech hands from the goons in scene three. Although it won't have

any repercussions on this adventure, if he is turned or successfully interrogated, it could prove devastating to the U.S. government.

Scene Three: Shooting the Messengers

The Situation

Standard. The heroes have located Phillipe Shannon and his laptop and are escaping to some kind of rendezvous (either the government's helicopter or their own escape plan).

When suddenly ...

The Action

Agents of the Nippon Tech forces who intercepted the government's communication about the laptop have hunted down Phillipe using the same tracking technology as the heroes.

Nippon Agents (8)

DEXTERITY 12

Dodge 14, Fire Combat 15, Unarmed Combat 13

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

PERCEPTION 10

Computer Operation 11, Find 11, Stealth 11, Tracking 12

MIND 8

Streetwise 10, Test 10, Willpower 9

CHARISMA 8

SPIRIT 9

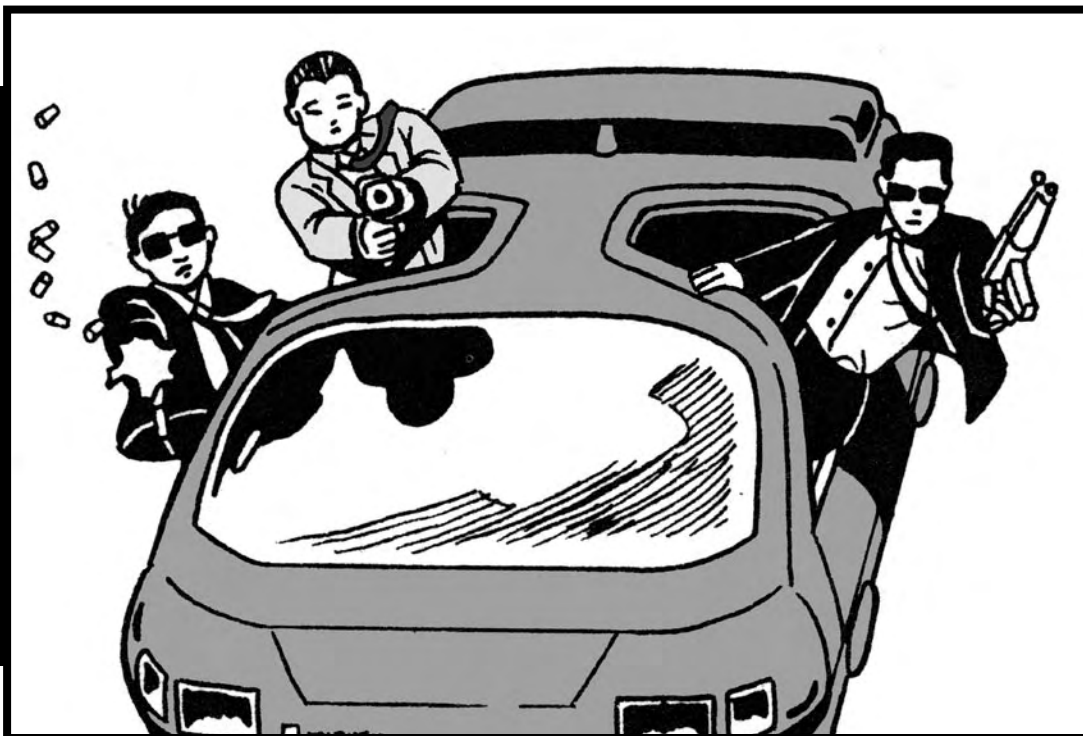
Intimidation 11

Equipment: SC Kyoto T11 (Tech 24 Damage Value 21), IriMesh Clothing (Armor Value +3/20)

Description: There are eight agents total: six in the sedan and two who have taken up sniper positions in surrounding hotels. The agents' objectives are to acquire the laptop, acquire Phillipe, and kill the heroes — in that order.

The newly arrived hurricane has its own plans, mostly revolving around wanton destruction and continuing north. For each round, the gamemaster should use the results of the Dramatic Skill Resolution box to determine the effect. (Note that the list is not a sequence of events; rather, cross reference the letters with the following list to determine what happens each round.)

A: The omnipresent thunder deafens everyone, increasing difficulties to communicate or coordinate efforts by +5.



B: Raging rains increase all difficulties by +1, and all effects involving ranged weapons or attacks by +2.

C: Hurricane-force winds pelt everyone with a damage value of 16, +1 for each previous time a “C” result has turned up.

D: Roll a d20; on an even number, lightning strikes the character with the most metal. (If there’s no obvious candidate, pick someone randomly.) This has a damage value of 18.

These effects are cumulative in a round, so if an “A B” result is drawn, both the “A” and “B” effects take place.

On a Possible Setback result, all future effects of the hurricane are increased by +1. On a Complication, all future effects of the hurricane are increased by +2. On a Critical Problem, something dramatically interesting happens; perhaps the Storm Knight drops the laptop, or a flash flood threatens everyone.

This scene should be played for maximum dramatic impact. Although the action itself is relatively easy (for all but the weakest Storm Knights), the complication of the hurricane, the need to keep the laptop intact, the desire to keep Phillippe alive, and the necessity of making a rendezvous with the escape plan should all make this much more challenging.

Variables

The heroes may copy or steal the information on the laptop for themselves. Given its encryption, a *computer science* total of 10 avoids setting off any of its anti-tampering alarms, a *computer science* total of 15 acquires the useful information, and a *computer science* total of 18 gets all the useful information and erase any traces of the Storm Knights’ involvement. (Only one such roll is necessary.) Any Storm Knights who successfully access the information on the laptop (regardless of the repercussions) will quickly learn that the government is relocating the seat of power from Miami back to Washington, D.C., not Atlanta, as previously rumored. Beyond this, the effects of having this information are outside the scope of this adventure — except for how it impacts act three — but if the U.S. government discovers the transgression, then the heroes will be severely questioned at best and labeled as must-kill threats at worst.

If the Nippon Tech agents acquire the laptop, they (or other representatives of theirs) may well be present for scene two of act three.

Cut To ...

Assuming the heroes win (or at least survive and escape), the action proceeds to act three.

Awards

Each Storm Knight gets two possibilities for completing this act, plus one if they acquired the laptop and another one if they successfully saved Phillippe.



Act Three: Half of Knowledge Is Knowing Where to Steal It

The Major Beat

In this act, the heroes learn of a strange anomaly that threatens the northeastern United States, following it as best they can over a one-day period. They learn about the U.S. government's plans for relocating the government (if they didn't know already), and they attempt to survive an attack on that seat of power, from a curious avenue. They also gain the first clues of a threat to the United States (and, ultimately, the Earth).

Thematically, this should be a race against the clock of a grand epic scale, given the geographical distances this adventure covers. Although the time frame is measured in hours, not minutes, it should nevertheless always feel like a nonstop race to get to the bottom of things before it's too late.

Scene One: Indianapolis or Bust

The Situation

Standard. Whether victorious or not in act two, the heroes are flown to Atlanta, Georgia, to talk with Secretary of State Watison. (A

successful *evidence analysis* roll against a difficulty of 12 will indicate that there is no sign of the U.S. government relocating here.)

If the heroes were successful in act two (and they did not do anything that could be seen as traitorous or against American interests), they will be warmly congratulated. If they were unsuccessful, then Watison will be disappointed but sympathetic, depending on how bad situation was. ("The laptop was destroyed" is much more soothing to his ears than "the laptop was stolen by evil people who were keenly interested in its information.") If the laptop was stolen, the damage of this failure can be mitigated if any of the Nippon Tech agents were captured, which may provide a lead on where to go to recover it (by another team or in a future adventure.)

Regardless, assuming the heroes are not considered enemies of the state, they will be given another mission from Watison:

"In Indianapolis, some of our scientists are somewhat nervous about some readings they're getting up there. Unfortunately, much of the information they need to analyze is from scientists before the LandAbove phenomenon struck, so they were hoping to utilize the information and codes from the laptop you acquired in Miami to help with that endeavor."

If the laptop was recovered, Watison will continue:

"To that end, you will be transporting a complete backup of the laptop, including an unlock code that only you will have (to prevent the same problem we had in Miami)."

If the laptop was not recovered, Watison will say:

"Unfortunately, since we no longer have the laptop, the best we can offer is some of the code-deciphering material that was on there. It's not as useful as the entire swathe of information that was the computer contained, but it's better than nothing."

If Shannon was recovered, Watison will add:

"If you're agreeable, we'd like you to take Shannon with you as well. He worked with the original data from this laptop and may be able to provide some additional assistance to the science team there."

Assuming the Storm Knights are agreeable, they will be flown via military transport to Indianapolis. (Of course, if they have their own means of flight, they will be permitted to use that, instead; in this case, they can choose whether or not they would like a military escort.)

Once they make it to Indianapolis, the heroes will be escorted to the research laboratory. There, they will meet Jennifer (Jen) Connor. Jen is a beautiful and good-natured gal with an advanced doctorate in applied game theory and another in seismographic analysis. She will gladly accept whatever information and aid they can offer, and retreat to the office to work.

If asked about the work she's doing, she will explain that she's been accumulating unusual seismographic readings from many points within the Land Above circle, and she was trying to find a pattern or cause. Her efforts have been stymied because the Land Above phenomenon is so new, and there isn't a lot of historical data in these underground activities to draw conclusions; she was hoping that, by being able to filter through data taken from pre-Land Above

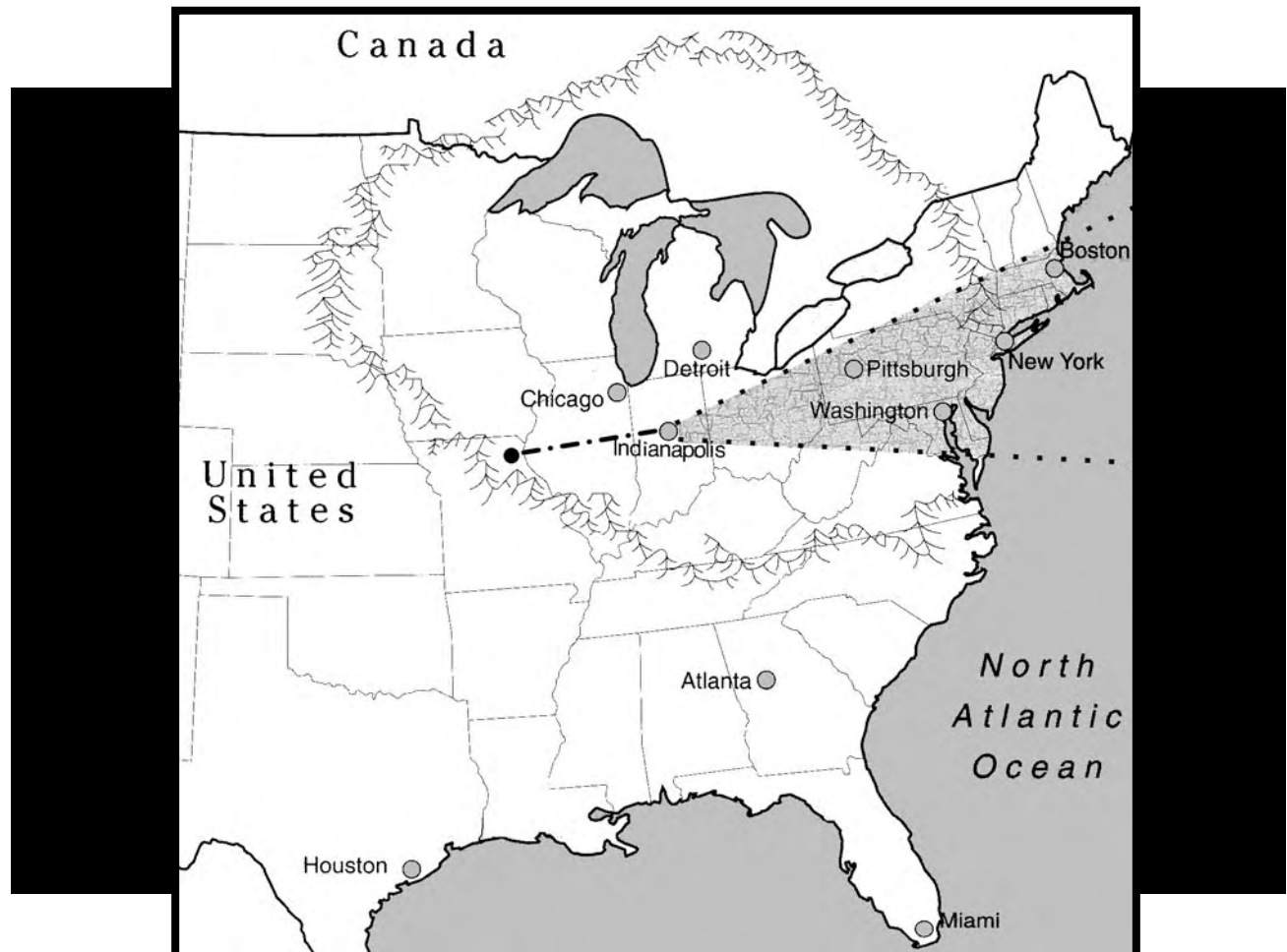
phenomenon (encoded using data from the recovered laptop), accumulated data from post-Land Above activity, and her current readings, she might be able to piece something together.

Here, Jen will need to make a *scholar (geology)* roll with a difficulty of 8. If they recovered the laptop, it will provide a +2 bonus. If Phillippe is along, he will provide +1 as well. Any Storm Knights who wish to help with this effort can do so, using standard Many-on-One rules; any Supporter or similar cards can be used in this situation, as well.

If Jen fails, she will try again each hour until successful; after three hours, she will automatically be (minimally) successful.

Once Jen is successful, she will be deeply concerned and share her thoughts:

"According to this data, there is some kind of underground anomaly that seems to be moving on an easterly vector. There are two items of concern. First, it is accelerating slightly. Second, it is growing in magnitude."



She will show the projected map of the phenomenon to the Storm Knights.

“At this point I don’t have any idea of what to do except to follow it and see what happens. Unfortunately, we don’t have much ability to track it from afar, so we need someone to keep apace with it on the ground, probably using a car or similar ground vehicle. Are you willing?”

Assuming the heroes are agreeable, the heroes will have a small amount of time to get ready. How much time depends on how fast Jen was able to draw her conclusions; the result points of Jen’s *scholar (geology)* roll read as a value in minutes (to a maximum of 250 minutes), minus 60 minutes for each hour Jen took to figure things out. Thus if Jen ended up with 10 result points, they will have 100 minutes to get ready.

During this time, the heroes may wish to accomplish the following:

- **Develop a means of tracking the phenomenon.**

This will require a *science (geology)* roll of 20 or greater to kit-bash something in time.

- **Report to Watison.** Watison will be grateful for any information they can provide, and he will encourage them to follow the phenomenon. He will mention that the president is keenly interested to learn if this anomaly will affect Maryland or Virginia. (If the heroes don’t know about the relocation of the government to Washington, D.C., making an *evidence analysis* roll against a difficulty of 12 will enable them to figure that out.)

- **Get a vehicle.** Jen is willing to loan her 1990 Taurus, but the heroes may wish to get any other type of vehicle (including extra gasoline) instead. If they contact Watison, a *friendly* result on a *charm* or *persuasion* roll will get the heroes access to as much as they can spend on a car in the time allotted.

- **Get any other equipment.** Again, talking to Watison will get them as much funding for gear as they can spend in the time allotted (and the players can specify — if they don’t mention it, their characters forget to pick it up). They’ll simply have to justify their expenses as related to the mission. Remember that they won’t be able to get any military-grade equipment — only items available at the local army-navy surplus or sporting goods store. Gamemasters can also use the time limit to restrict the amount of goodies the heroes obtain: “Oooh... you couldn’t locate that before you had to leave.”

Once all preparations have been made (or as many as time will allow), the heroes will be off to chase the strengthening tremor, as it moves faster and faster toward its date with destiny.



Jennifer Connor

DEXTERITY 9

Land Vehicles 11

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 11

Computer Operation 13, Evidence Analysis 12, Scholar (*geology*) 14

MIND 12

Science (*Physics*) 13

CHARISMA 11

Charm 13

SPIRIT 9

Reality 10

Possibilities: 3

Equipment:

Description: Jen Connors is an attractive women in her early 30’s. She wears a white lab coat over a mouse colored suit.

Variables

If the heroes request Jen to come along, she will agree to do so if made *loyal* via a *charm* roll (she starts out as *friendly*).

Scene Two: Drive to Succeed

The Situation

Standard. The Storm Knights should have a good lead on the underground phenomenon and should be chasing it as best they can as it travels eastward.

The Action

The scene should be treated as a macro-scale car chase (or whatever other means the heroes have of keeping pace). This should be an excuse for any speed-loving or vehicle-skilled heroes to have their moment in the spotlight.

It is approximately 600 miles from Indianapolis to Washington, D.C. (a value of 30), and the heroes have to get there in 10 hours (value of 23). How this is handled is up to the gamemaster and heroes, and should depend on the means they used to follow the anomaly. However, they will need to make a *tracking* roll every hour to maintain the trail, or risk losing it (and an hour). The difficulty of this *tracking* roll is 18, modified by the following:

- The heroes have a tracking device: -3.
- The heroes maintain contact with Jen and/or her lab (if they don't have a tracking device): -1.
- The heroes succeed at a *science (geology)* check of difficulty 12: -1 per result point.
- Every two hours that pass: -1.

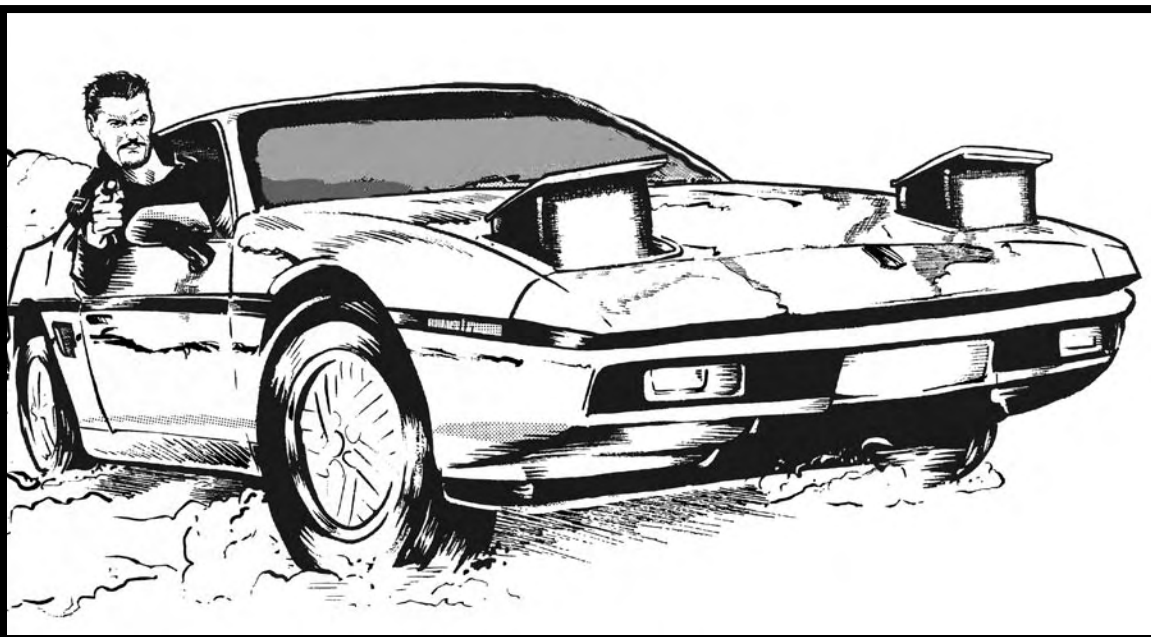
Even if the heroes don't make their roll, they might (correctly) guess that the anomaly is going to Washington, D.C., and make plans accordingly. Alternatively, they may dutifully follow it to Washington D.C.; in this case, a successful *tracking* result against a difficulty of 15 will reveal its target: the Library of Congress.

Variables

If the Nippon Tech agents from scene three of act two are still alive and recovered the laptop, they will have the information they need to reach the same conclusions as the heroes, and they will be chasing the same phenomenon. This might provide for an exciting high-speed car-to-car combat between the Storm Knights and the occupants of the mysterious sedan, or they might escape unnoticed to serve as wild cards in scene three of this act.

If the heroes are late, or fail the *tracking* roll to guess where the phenomenon was going to emerge, but are still somewhat on track, they may get to the Library of Congress at the point where the Disciple has completed Part A or even Parts A and B of her plot.

If the heroes call ahead to try to get military forces to scramble, there will be some aid available but not much (depending on the gamemaster's whim and the results of *charm* or *persuasion* rolls); rolling tanks through downtown Washington D.C. is something of a political nightmare, and the Powers That Be would really rather let the players' characters deal with this crisis.



The Phenomenon

The tremors are caused by a giant tunneling monster — the Dekara-rar — as it makes its ascent from beneath the earth to the Land Above. This is the reason the tremors are getting louder (it's following an upward angle).

Cut To ...

Once the heroes know the target (either in a broad or specific sense), skip to scene three.

Scene Three: Monster-A-Go-Go

The Situation

Dramatic. By this point the heroes should have some idea that something big is moving under the earth toward the East Coast, and they should have

The Library of Congress

Besides being the United States' oldest federal cultural establishment, the Library of Congress is also the largest library in the world. (Actually, it's three buildings, having grown over the years ... and this doesn't count the satellite offices around the world, charged with acquiring rare or otherwise unobtainable books.) It contains 130 million items, which are stored on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves. It is, in a word, huge.

The Library of Congress remained relatively unscathed by the War. Experts believe this is because of the Gutenberg Bible it contained (one of three perfect vellum copies in the world), which may have served as a hardpoint.

the pieces necessary to determine that its target is Washington, D.C.

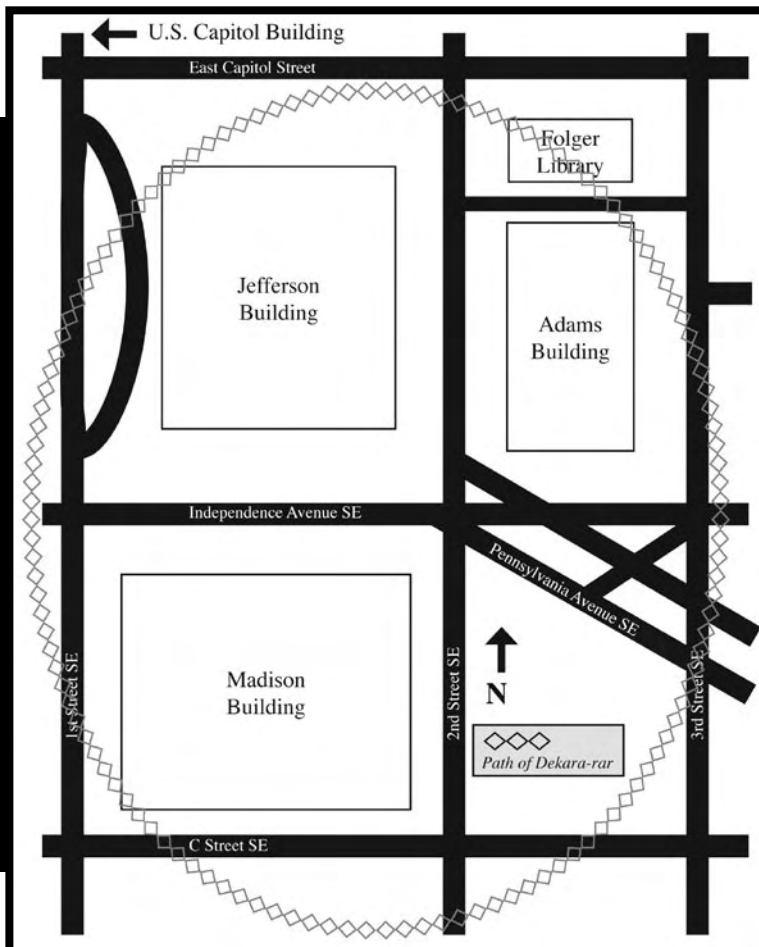
However, they may not know the actual target of the attack is the Library of Congress. They will know this, however, once the giant creature has emerged and begins attacking.

The Action

Dekara-rar, an impossibly large reptilian beast, has tunneled up from the earth. It's being ridden and controlled by the Disciple, an edeinos who has been sent by a mysterious being known as the Visionary, to complete that being's miracle.

The goal of the Visionary (acting through the Disciple) is the completion of the Miracle of the Shadow Crossing — a means of transporting large objects into the Unliving Dimension. In this case, the Visionary's goal is the theft of nothing less than the entire Library of Congress.

Although the Disciple has almost no understanding of the means of the Visionary, she does un-



derstand that being's goals. She will do everything in her power to bring them to fruition.

The Plan

The Disciple must complete the Miracle of the Shadow Crossing, so named because it forms a horizontal triangle that looks akin to the shape formed by the rising sun against a tree and its shadow. After this ritual is complete, all three buildings of the Library of Congress will be shunted off to the Unliving Dimension. Once this is done, the Disciple and Dekara-rar will make every effort to escape ... but their first goal is the completion of the miracle.

The miracle has four broad stages. First there is the initial preparation, where the Disciple must ride the Dekara-rar around the entire site of all three buildings in a broad circle.

Then the Disciple, through the Dekara-rar, must mark the three buildings in order of smallest to largest: the Adams Building, the Jefferson Building, and finally the Madison Building. Once the proper sigils and marks are made on the Madison building, all three buildings will seem to wink out of existence.

Game Mechanics

The Disciple and Dekara-rar have no interest in attacking others, killing, or even causing unnecessary property damage (although it would take a successful *evidence analysis* roll against a difficulty of 18 to discern this). Their only goal is the completion of the miracle and the acquisition of the Library of Congress. (However, once they are attacked, they will perceive the Storm Knights as being antithetical to the completion of this miracle and retaliate accordingly.)

To this end, the Disciple and Dekara-rar will use the Dramatic Skill Resolution line to complete their miracle.

A: The Disciple must precisely control the Dekara-rar by riding in as perfect an oval as possible around the three buildings of the Library of Congress. This requires the Disciple to complete a *beast riding* skill



check with a difficulty of 13. (This only necessitates one roll but takes three rounds to complete.) This will clip the corners of all three buildings, and utterly decimate the Folger Library.

B: The Disciple must control the creature to use it to make precise claw marks on the smallest building (the Adams Building); this requires a *persuasion* skill check against a difficulty of 12.

C: The Disciple must control the creature enough to make precise claw marks on the medium-sized building (the Jefferson Building); since the Dekara-rar was recently controlled to do something similar, this instead calls for an *artist* skill check against a difficulty of 13.

D: The Disciple must control the Dekara-rar enough to make precise claw marks on the final building; this needs a *persuasion* skill check against a difficulty of 12.

Once a stage of the miracle has been completed, it cannot be undone (or, more correctly, it does not matter if it is undone); thus, even if enterprising Storm Knights manage to, say, mark through or disrupt the circle made by the Dekara-rar in Step A, it doesn't matter to the completion of the ritual.

The only exception to this is if a portion of the miracle target is entirely destroyed (for example, if the heroes decide to completely destroy the Adams Building themselves). In this case, the miracle will utterly fail ... leaving an enraged Disciple and Dekara-rar to pick up the pieces.

After all four stages of the miracle are completed, the Disciple must make a *focus* skill roll with a difficulty of 20 to complete the miracle. If she succeeds, then

all three buildings are immediately shunted into the Unliving Dimension; any living objects (such as the workers and civilians within the building) will fall to the ground, providing for more rescue opportunities for heroic Storm Knights. If the Disciple fails, then she may continue praying (using her *focus* skill) until she succeeds or is defeated.

If the Disciple and the Dekara-rar are successful in completing the Miracle of the Shadow Crossing, then their next plan is to escape. They will follow roughly the same tunnel back the way they came; enterprising (or suicidal) Storm Knights might be able to kill or follow them.

If either the Disciple or the Dekara-rar are killed, the miracle will be impossible to complete. If the Dekara-rar is killed, the Disciple will attempt to strike back if she feels her odds are good; otherwise, she will escape. If the Disciple is killed, the Dekara-rar will bellow out in rage and strike out indiscriminately against the Storm Knights, unless it is close to death, in which case it will seek to escape underground.

This should be a phenomenally challenging battle for the Storm Knights; both combatants are tough in their own right, and together they have more than enough power to complete their ritual. However, the Storm

Knights do have the advantage in that the antagonists do not wish (at first) to cause them harm; in fact, they would prefer not to, if possible.

The Disciple: Edeinos Optant

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 12, Swimming 12, Unarmed Combat 12

STRENGTH 12

Lifting 13

TOUGHNESS 14

PERCEPTION 11

MIND 9

Survival 13, Willpower 11

CHARISMA 7

SPIRIT 12

Faith (Keta Kalles) 14, Focus 17, Intimidation 13, Reality 14

Possibilities: 8

Dekare-ra: Giant Tunnering Dinosaur

DEXTERITY 8

Unarmed Combat 10

STRENGTH 27

Tunneling 30

TOUGHNESS 20

PERCEPTION 7

Find 14, Trick 9



MIND 5

CHARISMA 3

SPIRIT 6

Intimidation 16

Equipment: Natural Hide (Armor Value +15/35), Claws (Damage Value +5/32),**Description:** Dekara-rar is a massive reptile with large, sharp claws that it uses to rapidly burrow into the ground. Although Dekeara-rar is virtually blind, it's powerful sense of smell, and ability to detect even minute vibrations in the ground, more than makes up for it's lack of vision.

Variables

If the heroes attempt to call in the cavalry at any point (by alerting the U.S. military, for example), they should receive help commiserate with their abilities. For example, a team of neophyte Knights might get the support of several tanks and Ord military men, while more seasoned heroes might get very little, if anything ("the National Guard is currently tied up quelling a massive Serpentor rebellion in Virginia ...").

If the heroes capture the Disciple, the U.S. government will be profoundly grateful, especially if she is turned over for questioning. If the heroes interrogate her themselves, they will learn she knows little. About six months ago, she was discovered by a mysterious being in her Land Above home in Northern Michigan and taken under the wing of the Visionary (who is always shrouded in light fur cloaks); during this time, she was given the training and spiritual discipline necessary to complete the Visionary's miracle. She knew what the Visionary was attempting to accomplish (the acquisition of the Library of Congress) but not why. She does not know the Visionary's current whereabouts, although she was going to be contacted afterwards if she achieved her goal. (Any attempts at trapping the Visionary — by, say, persuading the Disciple to act as bait — will fail.)

Awards

The Storm Knights should receive at least nine possibilities; this raises by three if the heroes manage to save the Library of Congress, and three more if they manage to kill or capture both the Disciple and Dekara-rar.

The Unliving Dimension

This ritual has taken the Visionary over a year — if not longer — to put together. It has involved constant prayer and preparation ... most of which the Visionary doesn't understand but which somehow serves Lanala's will.

Although it may not be obvious, the effects of this ritual are to shunt the target (in this case, the three buildings of the Library of Congress) into a pocket dimension. This pocket dimension is closely tied to the Living Land by its mystical effect over dead things. In this case, however, the pocket dimension doesn't serve to break down and destroy dead things but rather store them indefinitely, with no deterioration or degradation, like a fly trapped in amber. In fact, this dimension can only be accessed by nonliving materials, creatures, or beings; all attempts by the living will either fail immediately or result in the being's transformation into an unliving state (i.e., being killed).

As a result, this dimension is most useful (at least to the Visionary) as a means of storing unliving material. If the Visionary prevails, it will be exceptionally difficult for anyone else to access this dimension, even assuming it could be found. However, it could present an opportunity for those who are robots/androids, vampires or other undead, or those who can otherwise utterly extinguish or transform the mark of life while still remaining mobile and sentient.

Wrap-Up

If the heroes managed to save the Library of Congress, they will be regarded as heroes, up to and including special recognition at the Library (where busts of the heroes will remain on display for a time, if the heroes are agreeable). The matter will be significantly downplayed in the media ("Why is the *New York Times* referring to it as a 'minor disturbance near the Library of Congress'?!?").

If the heroes failed to save the Library, the media will have no choice but to report on what happened; however, President Nicklaus will note the significant lack of lives lost as proof that his plan to relocate the government was successful and sound. Assuming the heroes tried their hardest, they may well still be in the government's favor at the end of this mission.



Epilogue

Part 1

That evening, President Nicklaus addresses the nation from the oval office ... a site that hasn't been seen in over half a decade. These are excerpts from that 20-minute speech.

"My fellow Americans:

"I speak before you tonight from the Oval Office, in the White House, in Washington, D.C.

"This great city was the center of our government for two centuries. And, I am proud to say, it is that center again.

"From this day forth, the United States capitol is here, in Washington, D.C. And, God willing, it will be so for centuries to come.

"As President Lincoln once said when this great city was attacked during the Civil War, 'If people see the Capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on.'

"Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to Houston and Miami, for their willingness to serve their country in a time of war, and to Atlanta for their readiness to do the same. But generations have called Washington, D.C. the capitol of the United States, and generations may do so again. Safety has returned, and peace is at hand. While there are still struggles to be faced — such as the incident

today at the Library of Congress — we will always persevere, so long as there are brave God-given souls, such as the Storm Knights who sought to help.

"From now on, then, we must strive to make the United States better than it was before. As we look to the past to reaffirm our government here in Washington, so, too, must we look to the future as we dedicate ourselves to making the nation stronger than before.

"I speak to you, my fellow Americans, of the need to reforge the country from the crucible of war. And we will be rejoined, not as disjointed regions struggling among ourselves, but as a new whole, a strong nation.

"Our founding fathers began the laws that define this nation with the words: 'We the people, in order to form a more perfect union.'

"From the ashes of the old, I would ask each and every one of you to work toward this. Together, we can — and we will — form a more perfect union.

"Thank you, and good night."

Part 2

The Visionary stood in the open field, hands outstretched beneath the cloak to the sky darkening above.

"Can you hear me, Lanala? Why did you want the giant dead things? What purpose do they serve?"

The Visionary walked an ever-widening circle from the central bonfire, all the while chanting, chanting:

"The dead things cannot grow.

"The dead things cannot know.

"The dead things cannot sing.

"The dead things cannot love.

"Why have I used moon after moon to give you death?

"Why have I used moon after moon to give you cold?

"Why have I used moon after moon to give you silence?

"Why have I used moon after moon to give you pain?

"Speak to me, Lanala.

"Sing to me, Lanala.

"Give me the light, Lanala.

"Give me a sign, Lanala."

The Visionary fell over, raspy voice chanting Lanala's name over and over.

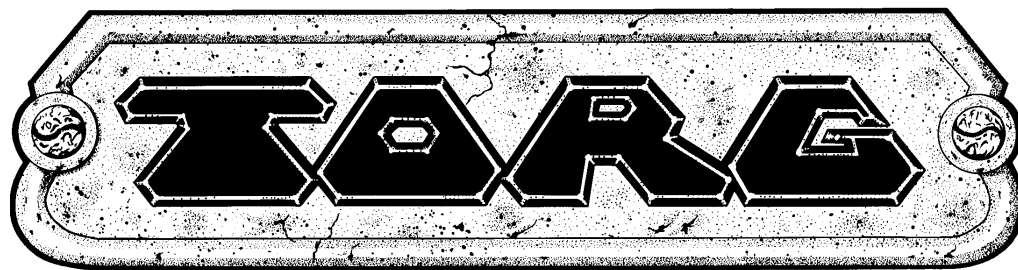
On the cusp of tears, the Visionary grasped the earth and drew a handful of dirt, letting the loose granules slip between scaly fingers.

All that remained was an acorn.

The Visionary began to cry and began to laugh and clutched the acorn close to the robes that clung to the chest of the beating heart that yearned for growth. It yearned for the growth of a future better than this most blessed day that Lanala had bestowed. It yearned for the joining of seed and sky, of passion and possibility. They would join, and it would be better than now, because now was ending.

This was all the Visionary wanted ... a more perfect union.





A MORE PERFECT UNION

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