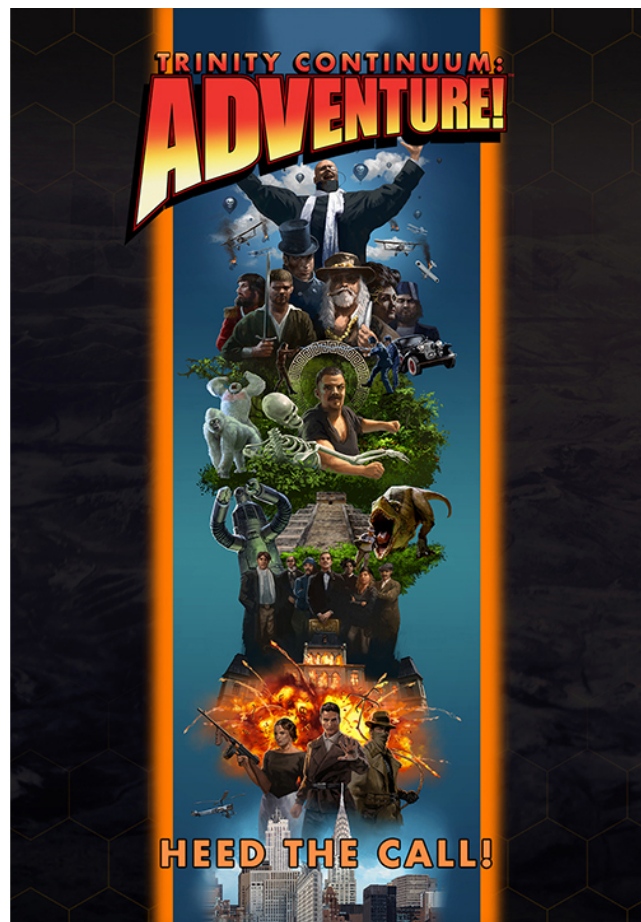


# TRINITY CONTINUUM: ADVENTURE!

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview – Part 2



## Chapter Two: A World of Adventure

*“We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm, and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open”*

— Jawaharlal Nehru

At the turn of the twentieth century, the world was on the cusp of both great and terrible changes. The age of empires, once the foundation much of the modern world had been built upon, began to crumble as fledgling nations began to cast aside the yoke of colonialism for the sake of realizing independent identities. For some, it was a peaceable transition. But for nations that sought greater autonomy in the face of autocracy, it brought about bloody revolutions. And war, so much war.

The First and Second Boer Wars, the Russian Revolution, the Mexican Revolution, the First and Second Balkan Wars, all led up to what is now known as the Great War. Following that, newly forged nations look to find their place on the world stage as former allies reconsider treaties in the light of strained relations. To make matters worse, just as the world seemed to be finding its bearings, it was plunged into chaos as global markets and national economies collapsed.

The following post-war period of economic depression proved to be an even greater struggle than the war itself. As nations struggled against soaring unemployment and their populations rapidly becoming restless, governments were at a loss on how to move forward and provide their people the stability they desired. It was during this period that humanity became aware that the world was a much greater and more mysterious place than it had been just a few decades prior.

Where commerce languished due to the Great Depression, artistic endeavors, scientific discoveries, and exploration into the unknown greatly flourished, giving the world a beacon of hope when it was desperately needed. Intrepid explorers from all walks of life sought out discoveries that would change the world and bring it into a more brilliant future. Out of a dark crucible, hope is reborn. It is a whole new world with endless possibilities, where heroes are born every day with the prayer of hope resting on their lips.

Welcome to the world of **Trinity Continuum: Adventure!**

### Africa

In Africa, as the price of crops continue to plummet in the wake of the Great Depression, colonial taxation exploits farmers and rural communities with export and poll taxes, forcing market production in a time of strife. Unrest sometimes gives way to rebellions, but the shadow of imperialism still falls across the continent, and colonizers brutally suppress resistance.

There is hope, however. With the value of African exports now diminishing, imperial powers are beginning to find that possessing colonies isn't sustainable. But power is insidious, and creditors do not want to relinquish control. Meanwhile, the people themselves face an uncertain future. But it is one they're prepared and willing to fight for.

In the changing world, the secrets within Africa's colonies and countries are emerging at long last. Stories of strange places and artifacts have weaved their way across the world, and with any luck, their discovery (or perhaps rediscovery) may help secure them from evildoers for decades to come...

**[THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE LOOK LIKE A HAND-WRITTEN JOURNAL ENTRY]**

## From the Journal of Salma Mokrani

Monday, 5 February, 1934

Last time I went somewhere without knowing the facts, a lot of Frenchmen killed my friends. It wasn't even that long ago. And up until now, my involvement with the Æon Society has been kept at a distance. When I needed information, they were more than happy to share it, and after testing the waters to make sure they weren't using it against my fellow Moroccans, it became an exchange.

This is new, though. One week ago, the Society contacted me to ask if I knew of any abandoned airstrips where an aeroplane could refuel. I gave them the location and thought nothing of it. Two days later, they asked for my help. One of their members was tracking a lead on a stolen artifact, and the trail led straight through Morocco and south into Africa. Despite what I've told them though, the Æon Society still doesn't know jack about this land. So, they're paying me to guide a woman through French territory, and perhaps beyond.

She arrived only a few hours ago, barely beating the setting sun. A close call; the Atlas Mountains can't be safely navigated at night, so she would've missed our rendezvous. I must admit, I'm a little excited. I've never been on an aircraft before. While we jungled up for the night, this woman, Josefa, told me that she's an archeologist as well as a pilot.

When I asked her what we're hunting though, she stonewalled. Told me she couldn't say. Not yet at least. And that was a curve.

I don't like not knowing all the facts. I'm not just a freedom fighter. I'm a revolutionary. And when you're in this kind of fight, not knowing something gets you killed. It doesn't help that she won't be handy in a scrap.

But we're both smart and capable women. She thinks that her arrival has not gone unnoticed. So, the longer we can give her pursuers the bum steer, the better.

Fuel tank's full. We leave at dawn.

**[END JOURNAL ENTRY]**

## Eastern Africa

First contested by the Portuguese and the Omani Arabs for influence and control of the trade routes to India, the competition in Eastern Africa spiked during the Scramble for Africa, as burgeoning empires sought the most promising lands for colonization and exploitation.

Following the Great War, the lands the German Empire used to control have since been divided among the other world powers which occupy the region.

East Africa is distant and removed from the overarching influence of European powers, although the Suez Canal provides a handy shortcut. Regardless, colonial power here is weaker than in other parts of Africa, and nationalism is gaining some strength as a result. Because of the fertility of the land, the local people are focused on land rights and labor issues in agriculture.

## British Kenya

Once known as the East Africa Protectorate, the Kenya Colony exists on a site of incredibly fertile land. Possessing few mineral resources, these areas were reserved for white settlers early on, and nicknamed the “white highlands” after the British took control in the late 19th century. Its commercial interests in the region eventually dictated the fate of this land, which became the colony of Kenya in 1920.

Following this, local political groups emerged as new taxes and reduced wages caused new problems in the wake of the Great War. Contention rose over the white highlands, which had been tended to by the Kikuyu tribes for generations before settlers colonized it. Nationalism and civil disobedience have been on the rise ever since, in opposition to white colonizers who gained their political voice through market contributions.

When it comes to the Great Depression, the government has shifted most of the financial burden to African laborers through the criminalization of breaching a labor contract. Those trapped in these contracts are frequently treated like slaves as a result. More recently, maize has become so inexpensive that it’s only grown as food for laborers. However, if the government can no longer afford it, then the subsidy is certain to cease, endangering the food supply for hundreds of thousands of African laborers.

Local Inspired have banded together to form a labor outreach program, offering assistance, and sometimes physical force, to those most harmed by their labor contracts. The Order of the Stars has taken note of the group and is seeking to join them, but communication has been lacking in the past few months. Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux has a small presence in the area, led by local labor activists and helped by an underground network of Kenyan nationalists.

## People of Interest

- **Gatimũ Kamau:** When British brute force disrupted the traditional livelihood of the Kikuyu people, its leaders resorted to political resistance, with the rise of the Piny Owacho and the Young Kikuyu Association. Gatimũ Kamau is one of the political leaders who has thrived on the spirit of nationalism for Kenya’s indigenous peoples, despite the increasing population of settlers. His stalwart abilities have given him a keen insight into the hearts and minds of his people, and he uses his force of personality to fight against British forces that deprive his people of their land. Though he is resourceful and clever, his current efforts to organize other Inspired are falling short, creating an uphill battle. His younger sister, Wangaru Kamau, isn’t making his job easier by asking for outside help.
- **Wangaru Kamau:** Part of a family of maize farmers, Wangaru Kamau has recently fallen on hard times. With the subsidy for corn at risk, and prices at an all-time low, her free time has turned her into an investigator and explorer of the region surrounding Nairobi. She supports her brother, Gatimũ Kamau’s, efforts against the British, but knows he cannot do everything

alone. She recently contacted Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux with a message that clandestine forces may be trying to harvest the natural biodiversity of this part of Africa. Witty, sharp, and unyielding, she has vowed to continue these investigations, even if no one else will help her.

## Colony of Madagascar

Previously ruled by the Merina Kingdom for centuries, Europe's colonial powers turned their attention to this island after the Cape Route to India was discovered. Possessing both strategic importance and many riches, the Merina Kingdom repelled multiple attempts by Britain and France to seize control of their territory. The French weren't able to conquer it until the Franco-Hova Wars at the end of the 19th century, due to the terrain and the natives' organizational prowess. Following colonial establishment in 1897, rural guerillas resisted the French colonizers. Nationalist sentiment continued to brew, and throughout the 1920s, the locals fought for equality and labor reforms. Through these efforts, they earned their first concessions, but huge mining and logging rights were still granted to large companies and local leaders who supported the French.

Nowadays, the Malagasy are seeing their anti-colonial movement gain strength, while forced labor has been introduced on behalf of the French companies who exploit this island. Trade unionism is beginning to surface, while the people call for social justice and the abolition of forced labor. While the Great Depression hinders economic development, the remoteness of Madagascar and the expectations of self-financing colonies are providing a small opportunity to develop internally. The Malagasy are hopeful considering these circumstances, and some have found allies among the Archivists, who wish to protect the culture of the Merina Kingdom for the foreseeable future.

The eastern rainforest on the island contains a telluric energy hot spot which Forêt Tranquille, an organization backed by the French government, has been trying to investigate in attempts to harness for their own purposes. Inspired members of Vy Vato Sakelika have organized to investigate the area themselves, especially after discovering evidence of living fossils roaming the area. They know such a discovery could change Madagascar forever, especially if Forêt Tranquille finds a way to capture or tame them.

## People of Interest

- **Kamora Andrianirina:** The chief editor of a recently established Malagasy newspaper, Kamora vies both with attempts to censor her work and debilitating headaches brought on by her uncontrolled mesmerist powers. Only aware of rumors of such abilities, Kamora follows dreamlike visions to expose corruption in the government and wrongdoing against citizens even as she suffers. The Order of the Stars heard rumors of her abilities and would like to make contact and potentially offer aid, but the editor's left leaning politics and increasing attention of the colonial authorities make any such attempts risky...and Forêt Tranquille has offered her a surprisingly large grant in hopes to bribe her to their side before any other Inspired get to her.

- **Enkidu:** A technological genius and applied scientist, Enkidu is a bit of a mystery to those who know him. He and his modest family live in small enclave on the side of a mountain in Madagascar. His native lands are somewhere in Belgian Congo, though he has fled that area

for his own safety. Enkidu is a hyper-intelligent gorilla, and his homeland is populated with people just like him, but with a hatred for humanity. After meeting and befriending humans in a nearby village, Enkidu and his family were exiled and hunted. Enkidu fled to Madagascar before reaching out to the Æon Society in hopes to offer his services, and joined as a full member several years ago. While he owes his allegiance to Max Mercer, he lends aid to Rabia Al-Harrak in finding new Inspired to join the Order of the Stars.

## Northern Africa

Due to the region's proximity to Europe, the colonies in this area receive greater oversight and interference from their imperial rulers. This has sparked a constant stream of activism against imperial powers and scrutiny from other nations. Despite this, colonial forces maintain their military presence, although some have been forced to retreat in peculiar ways.

## Egypt

Egypt's protectorate status from Great Britain came to an end in 1922 with the Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence. Despite granting the Kingdom of Egypt full sovereignty, British forces still continue their occupation, and their influence dominates nearly every aspect of Egyptian life, from politics to the railways and communications, all the way to full control over the Sudan region.

At this time, Egypt is a storm of politics overseen by the British. The nationalist Wafd Party opposes British rule and supports the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Egypt, while the Communist Party and Muslim Brotherhood are emerging as potent political and religious forces, respectively. Citizens of the kingdom consider their land to be a puppet of Britain, but the political parties are largely minor, and stand divided across the Nile Valley.

Fortunately, nominal independence has allowed this nation to retain their economic power during the Great Depression. While taxes are rigid and continue to burden the rural poor, a gold export embargo allowed Egypt to fight the deflation of their national economy.

The Æon Society has a chapter house in this region, which operates as their members' stopping point for investigations and operations across Africa. Howard Carter finished removing the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb only four years ago, so interest in Egyptology remains high. As a result, some dig sites are suspected fronts for the Ponatowski Foundation. Others are staffed by members of the Archivists, who work diligently despite their limited resources in this region. Finally, Cairo is home to one of the chapters of Invictus Umbra — an ongoing side effect of the British occupation — and their members have taken to robbing archeological ruins to safeguard artifacts from the rich.

## People of Interest

- **Majd Gamal:** If you need rare wine in Cairo, digging equipment outside the Valley of the Kings, or guns smuggled over the Sudanese border, Majd is your man. Disdainful of both the ineffectual Kingdom government and the continued British occupation, Majd has turned a legitimate shipping business into a smuggling empire. Burgeoning stalwart powers enabled him to become literally tireless in his pursuit of wealth, influence, and security for his family. Even

with Majd's more-than-human abilities, he's run into trouble with Contedorri interests in the region. Anyone willing to help him deal with the ruthless gangsters would have a powerful ally.

- **Dr. Ismail Hassan:** A skeptic towards imperial ambition and authoritarian overreach, Dr. Hassan has made a life of critiquing, criticizing, and opposing European colonial exploitation in Africa, government corruption in the Kingdom of Egypt, and the various criminal elements which have flourished in the underbelly of the empire. As a result, he's spent many of the past few years dodging official arrest and unofficial "accident" as he attempts to form alliances between local political parties, international anti-imperialist organizations, and groups such as the International Detective Agency to make Egypt and the region a better place.

## Italian Libya

The colonization of what would become Italian Libya began in 1911, when the Agadir Crisis led Italy to acquiesce to nationalist demands for the project. Under a pretext of liberation, the Italians conquered Tripoli and the traditional provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and not long after the Tripoli massacre, declared their sovereignty from the Ottoman Empire.

In 1929, the two provinces were united into Libya, and since then, the number of Italian settlers has increased sharply. During the pacification campaign that followed, crimes against humanity spiked; in the Cyrenaica lowlands, many indigenous peoples were relocated into huge concentration camps. Now closed, 40,000 out of 100,000 internees are missing or dead. Any resistance appears to have been long stomped out, and this loss of life is a festering wound for the people conquered by Italy.

In a suspicious shift, the Italian government is now adjusting their policies in Libya, granting individual freedoms and rights to the locals. Due to the higher urban population in Tripoli and Benghazi, the effects of the Great Depression are harder to gauge. However, Italy's influence in this region has transformed Italian Libya into a perfect oasis for less-than-scrupulous operations. Archeology is on the rise in this part of the world, but research on the Phoenicians has been rejected due to anti-Semitism from Italian academics.

Leptis Magna and Sabratha are both hot spots for research and archeology, and it happens that these ancient Roman sites are overflowing with telluric energy, making them appealing to Inspired scientists. Several Allegiances have moved into the area as a result. The Rational Experimentation Group is rumored to have multiple facilities to conduct experiments in, and while the Archivists have a standing presence in the region, they are spread thin and may require outside assistance if they wish to drive the REG out of Northern Africa.

## People of Interest

- **Mona Fakroun:** Mona is the daughter of a wheat farmer and has seen firsthand the effects of both harsh economic policies and the reign of Mussolini in Libya. Born sometime in the late 19th century, she saw the fall of Tripoli to the French, along with the use of illegal chemical weapons and mass executions against civilians. These events have formed her into an avid activist based in Benghazi. She focuses on protecting Libyan customs, but has turned her sharp attention on the Inspired in the area, and those coming in to investigate telluric energy hot

spots. Her ability to read people's intentions and emotions as a mesmerist comes in handy when trying to deal with the influx of scientists in the area.

- **Abdul Latif ibn Abihi:** Former Ottoman official, Abdul Latif has survived conquest, atrocity, and mismanagement of his native land through luck, determination, and the awakening of telluric powers within him. Originally furious with the Ottoman Empire for its failure to defend its citizens, its destruction convinced Abdul Latif that no state could defend its people against the greed of belligerent nations. Increasingly difficult to harm due to his growing abilities, Abdul Latif seeks ways to awaken such abilities in other Libyan citizens, a quest which may drive him into the arms of the Order of the Stars...or the Rational Experiment Group.

## The French Protectorates of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco

While the history of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco spans centuries, the rise of colonial rule began in 1830 with the Invasion of Algiers by France. What followed was 45 years of militant colonization, and by 1878, hundreds of thousands of resisting Algerians had been killed by the occupying forces when the French took possession of Tunisia. In the beginning of the century, France took advantage of a local rebellion in Morocco to deploy a substantial force in support of Sultan Abd al-Hafid. This became known as the Agadir Crisis, which would see the sultan sign the Treaty of Fes in 1912, sparking riots and revolts across the new protectorate for years to come. While the sovereign state of Morocco still has a sultan, he has no real power under the colonial administration.

Today, the Arab countries are still under French rule, but the Great Depression has begun to worsen conditions across the deserts and coasts. Among major crops, the price of wheat fell first, and all three countries are major producers of it. While hard wheat is cultivated by the locals, soft wheat is grown by European settlers, and only the latter is bolstered by the colonial governments. The ignorance of these problems is now leading many Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians into debt, and creditors have already begun to seize their lands.

Every action has a reaction, though and the preferential treatment of French settlers, along with many military engagements over the decades, have turned the French colonies of North Africa into a bubbling hot spot for resistance. France continues to pursue a policy of pacification, but exploitation and massacres have followed in their wake. In turn, the politics of Algeria and Tunisia are radicalizing even faster than before.

In Algeria, the Star of North Africa is a group that's called for Algerian independence since 1926. Banned three years later, they operated underground and emerged again last year, and its newspaper, El Ouma, circulates among tens of thousands of Algerians. Meanwhile, Islamic reformers have gained popularity and influence, but colonial authorities recently banned them from preaching in the official mosques. Across Algeria, there is religious unrest, but plenty of hope.

In Morocco, a strong independence movement flourishes. Following the end of the Rif War in 1927, tension between European colonists and the Berber-speaking peoples never ebbed away. The signing of the Berber Dahir in 1930 replaced Berber tribal law with the French penal code, and in doing so, sparked Morocco's first true nationalist movements. Today, the Moroccan



intelligentsia is growing into the political consciousness, and the newly formed Moroccan Committee of Action is currently drawing up reforms with the help of French sympathizers. In Casablanca, the Order of the Star has established a hub for their students and members, and as a result, the city has become a beacon for Inspired people of African descent.

## People of Interest

- **Louis Enoch:** The Order of Murder's Moroccan retreat offered a luxurious, relaxing place for its beneficiaries to recover before assuming their new identities and returning to the world. Louis Enoch, retired arch-criminal, former master duelist, and impossibly healthy octogenarian oversaw the retreat's establishment and operation at every step, an integral part of its guests' transformation. But now the financial stresses of the Depression and cultural ferment of rising nationalist movements threatens tiny paradisaical kingdom Louis had made for the Order of Murder's use, and he now turns his considerable abilities to strangling dreams of independent African states in their cradles.
- **Rabia Al-Harrak:** Born and raised in Casablanca, Rabia is the heir to a moderate shipping conglomerate, activist, and philanthropist. They founded the Brahim and Zara Al-Harrak Home for Wayward Youths in honor of their deceased parents, which is a front for the Order of the Stars, an allegiance of Inspired individuals dedicated to helping the various African peoples. Rabia has always been in tune with people's feelings and didn't learn about telluric energy, or that they were a mesmerist until individuals claiming to be from the Æon Society asked them about their activities. Determined to find and educate other Inspired folks throughout the continent, Rabia wants to return African nations back to their people and has deep nationalist sentiments.

## Southern Africa

Some argue that distance from your home is directly proportional to the distance from your soul and your dignity. Initially the stopping point for the Cape Route to India, explorers and merchants started mapping this region around the same time that the effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade reached this part of Africa. Indigenous warfare soon followed, which colonizers capitalized on, and the horrors which have followed seem almost unrivaled across the continent. Southern Africa is defined by rainforests, savanna, and grassland, but the crimes of its colonies haunt the land.

## Belgian Congo

The Belgian Congo is, without question, one of the most economically exploited regions in the world. First organized by King Leopold II as the Congo Free State, it has existed as a major corporate state since the Berlin Conference. Ruthless exploitation and merciless resource extraction have defined his lasting legacy, and with most of these jungles inaccessible, it remains unknown how many lives that terror and disease claimed before the 20th century. At the turn of the century, the Casement Report detailed the many abuses committed by soldiers against the native population, all of which took place under the ownership of Leopold II. The subsequent public pressure led Belgium to reluctantly annex the Free State as a colony in 1908, relinquishing it from King Leopold II.

While the colonial charter for the Belgian Congo laid out worker protections against forced labor, it is now clear that the Belgian government did not enforce this. While the transition some three decades ago improved conditions for a time, the natural and mineral riches of this region were a crucial motivation for colonization. As such, the colonial state is forcing production in brutal yet rationalized ways, taking over lands left vacant by workers forced to migrate to the mines in the south.

The Great Depression, however, has struck the Congo's export-based economy quite severely. Employment has fallen greatly, while the government has returned to its previous system of forced labor. While rebellions are sparking, the government systematically suppressed each one, and the entire colony has effectively become one large plantation, controlling every aspect of the peasantry.

While the government frowns upon outside organizations, several Allegiances have entered the Congo's jungles in search of Strange Places. These expeditions led mostly by the Ponatoswki Foundation are often single interest or patron paid events, and requires large amounts of money paid to the government to look the other way as the expeditions go traipsing through the undergrowth.

## People of Interest

- **Cyrille Dubois:** One of the preeminent explorers of South America, Cyrille Dubois was both in Belgium and immigrated to the United States in the 1920s and a noted mesmerist. Later on, several academic acquaintances urged him to join the Æon Society, which funded two expeditions to explore the Amazon and Andes Mountains. His latest expedition commenced in the Congo in late 1933, and following a cryptic message about a place he calls "The Cradle," Cyrille Dubois went missing under mysterious circumstances. A man of wit and wiles, he is haunted by some of what he's seen, and energized by the little hopes he's found along the way. His last known location was in Léopoldville, and at the request of the Æon Society, the International Detective Agency is hot on his trail.
- **Alice Ekota:** A rare native civil servant "saved" by missionaries during the worst years of Belgian Free State atrocity, Alice received her name and a Western education in the home of foreigners while the Congo suffered around them. Dutifully completing her studies and becoming a member of the clerical staff for the newly established National Institute for Agronomic Study of the Belgian Congo gave Alice rare access to colonial governance and science. Though the Institute's "indigenous peasantry programme" is a clear attempt to maximize cash crop yields for Belgian interests, Alice has put her mind to subverting its research and bending its efforts to restore the Congo's exploited land. All she needs is coconspirators willing to oppose one of the most brutal colonial regimes in Africa.

## Union of South Africa

South Africa's early history with European colonizers is long and complicated. Early settlements switched hands many times, and the Cape Colony was only valued for its strategic importance in protecting the trade route to India. When Europeans first began to explore the interior of this region, they encountered the Zulu Kingdom, whose military expansion displaced several large

populations in Africa. This displacement, combined with the migration of refugees escaping the threat of slavers, resulted in many wars. It also directly led to the creation of several nation-states, some of which were eventually absorbed into the Union of South Africa in 1910.

Unlike many other lands on this continent, South Africa is an independent nation. But as part of the British Empire, its rule over the local population is discriminatory. The 1913 Natives' Land Act designated that only eight percent of the country's land would be available for black occupancy, while the minority settlers held around ninety percent, thus legalizing racial discrimination. A rebellion by the locals was suppressed the following year, but by 1924, the Afrikaner's National Party came to power in opposition to the colonists. As recently as 1930, the government undermined the voting power of black South Africans by granting the right to vote to all white women. In 1931, this was extended to all white men without property, while non-white voters were still required to own property in order to vote.

Today, the Great Depression has taken its toll on miners and black farmhands, but it's not the usual story. With the price of gold on the rise, South Africa's gold mines have enabled it to hold on to the gold standard, even though Britain abandoned it three years ago. However, wages have been kept low, and the only ones who have truly benefited from the reflation economy are white farmers and mine owners. With the National Party in power, and the dilution of black votes, the oppression has no end in sight. There is hope for those who are Inspired though; the Order of the Stars has one of their main hubs in Pretoria, and is active in using its Inspired members' abilities to aid the local farmers.

In response to the Order of the Stars, the small population of white Inspired in the area have created their own allegiance, which they call Inlustris. Their stated goal is to uplift and revitalize the region, making South Africa the shining jewel it could be. Their methods center their British and Dutch sensibilities, and their minority status has them actively recruiting European and North American Inspired to bolster their ranks. They often pit themselves against the Order of the Stars, who barely register the Inlustris as an organization, much less a threat.

## People of Interest

- **Anne-Marie Janssen:** A descendent of the Boer settlers whose land was incorporated into the territory of South Africa, Anne-Marie is known for her independent spirit and hardiness, which eventually turned into both active resistance against the South African government and, eventually, piracy in the seas surrounding the country. Notoriously good at navigating the storms and rocks of this region, she was granted Æon Society membership in 1928 and recently acquired her own ship. While she is committed to hindering the efforts of the British ships supporting the discriminatory administration, recent dossiers have described strange phenomena emerging on the open ocean and threatening her ships.
- **Xolani Tshabalala:** Xolani is an indigenous Zulu and stalwart living in Praetoria. His mother was a day laborer, and his father a Dutch merchant. His father wasn't much in his life, but he paid for Xolani's education. When his mother died, he stopped hearing from his father, and ended up on the streets before finally finding work with a Dutch shipping company who were happy to have a polyglot on the payroll. He might have stayed there had it not been for a shipping dispute that sent him all the way to Morocco searching down a package for his

employer. There he met Rabia Al-Harrak, who instantly recognized he was a stalwart and invited him to stay and learn from them. Xolani felt adrift, so agreed and was one of the first Inspired to join the Order of the Stars. Though he appreciated all Rabia had done for him, he itched to return to South Africa and spread the Order's work there, and just last year he returned to Praetoria to open the Pretoriaanse Raad van Vriende with Rabia's funding.

## Western Africa

Preceded by the establishment of the African slave trade along the coasts, the occupation of Algiers in 1830 opened the door to colonial expansion throughout the interior regions of West Africa. While the initial Portuguese arrival disrupted the trade of gold through North Africa, the world powers of Britain and France eventually established new regimes, while Portugal and Germany upkept minor territories here.

## French West Africa

During the imperialistic Scramble for Africa, the French spread in towards the Sahel from coastal settlements in the late 19th century, attempting to build a colonial empire from the Niger River to the Nile River Valley. Continuing their policy of assimilation and punitive pacification, local nationalism grew rampant, and even today, there are pockets of resistance.

South of their colony in Algeria, France now controls a large federation of colonies. Collectively known as French West Africa, it's composed of eight territories. The French continue their misguided mission to civilize newfound subjects who still lack the basic rights of French citizens. However, while their territory is large, France's economic gains from these colonies are a fraction of what other world powers have exploited in this part of Africa.

Furthermore, France faces the problem of maintaining control over this large swath of land. While their brutal policy of pacification was carried out with small forces, only a few hundred soldiers have been stationed here — an occupational force barely able to cover tens of thousands of leagues. The most remote regions of French West Africa therefore present a serious political problem to colonizers. They also provide a perfect location for one of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux's compounds, along with various resistance groups who oppose the French.

Like Britain's colonies, France lets European trading companies roam unhindered in this region. Ongoing poll taxes are leading to unrest in this era of depression, and only recently, the administrative powers of Togoland had to suppress a rebellion. Any raise in the poll taxes force more and more Africans to leave their homes in the countryside. Many disappear in the slums of coastal towns — enough to pique the concern of the International Detective Agency, although this particular mystery is a low priority. A greater concern is a Ponatowski Foundation expedition, which struck out from this territory before curving south around Lake Chad and eventually disappearing into the Congo, in pursuit of a strange dimension known only as the Cradle.

## People of Interest

- **Binta, the Cartographer:** Born to a nomadic family in the Fouta Djallon highlands, Binta remembers routes and byways as easily as she breathes. Originally using her talents solely to keep her family safe and prosperous, the continued disruption and terror inflicted by colonial

authorities lead Binta to help displaced people find routes to safety. The onset of old age hasn't slowed Binta down but has made her aware of her knowledge's fragility. Now she works to create what may be the most complete map of the region, an invaluable resource for any explorers, freedom fighters, or colonial authorities who lay eyes on it.

- **Isoke Issa:** From Niger to Mauritania, Dahomey to Senegal, Isoke Issa has protected the helpless. Fearless, determined, and (so far) unkillable, Isoke Issa is respectful to traditional authority when circumstances allow, but a terrifying dynamo when innocent life is at risk. Wanted by colonial authorities countrywide, few dare attempt arrest, even as Isoke walks openly among the people. Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux found her a natural and willing ally but consider her as much distraction as collaborator. Isoke's concern is always with the immediate need, which puts her at odds with an organization that shapes the future.

## Gold Coast

Emerging in 1844, the Gold Coast solidified together when Britain protected and purchased the rich coastal regions of this part of Africa. By 1874, they burned down the capital of Kumasi, and in the following decades, forced the local Ashanti people to give up their lands to the south. Today, the British indirectly rule the colony by letting local chiefs take responsibility for their colonial authorities. In doing so, power has consolidated in the capital of Accra, and with it, aristocracy. Their introduction of new crops and infrastructure has also allowed the colonists to reap greater rewards than their French rivals to the north.

Despite the advent of the Great Depression, the British have recently departed from the gold standard, which gives the Gold Coast a competitive advantage in all exports. Furthermore, the use of export taxes as opposed to poll taxes have subdued unrest in the colony.

With this growing economic strength, government power is slowly shifting into the hands of the people, and a national consciousness has begun to grow. Newspapers run by Africans are only provoking this fervor, and the great majority of Ashanti descendants are in favor of the restoration of the Ashanti Confederacy. Even though this African empire was annexed to the Crown in 1901, Asantehene Prempeh I was permitted to return from exile in 1924, but under the title of Kumasihene. His death only three years ago has prompted an extraordinary campaign to elect his nephew, Prempeh II, as the 14<sup>th</sup> Asantehene of Ashanti.

Either way, the hands-off approach of the British means that local peoples are certain to earn more broad representation soon. Despite the best efforts of the British, chiefs and intellectual leaders of the movement are beginning to work together. Insisting on their loyalty to the British crown, this community demands that the rights under the British political system be granted to Africans.

Curiously, the Invictus Umbra have a presence in the Gold Coast. Several land deeds have been stolen in recent months, and while they're being returned to their rightful owners, some are withheld as possible candidates for a new chapter in the region. This has turned the thefts into a mixed blessing, and the aristocracy of Accra is certain to retaliate.

## People of Interest

- **Bekoe Yao Acheampong:** A trader who has successfully navigated the tumult of the depression, Bekoe sells supplies to explorers, colonial capitalist, nationalist ventures, and outright criminals with little hesitation. Both colonial authorities and local leaders ignore his activities, as long as he comes through for them when they need cheap raw materials or hard to get European technology. Becoming indispensable has put Bekoe in the sights of various nefarious gangs; while they have enjoyed his wares in the past, they would rather control his business fully in the future.
- **Kojo Quansah:** Formerly a slave and freed after Britain abolished their slave trade, Kojo Quansah moved from Sierra Leone to the Gold Coast in the 1920s to contribute to the Gold Coast Times, one of the major newspapers that's developing the national conscience of Ghanaians and pressuring the colonial government to shift the balance of power. This has not come without consequence; he has been chased, fought, and even beaten down for his work. His resilience and determination have only stoked the power of his written word. It's only a matter of getting it out there.

## Nigeria

One of many victims of the Berlin Conference, Nigeria's origins as a colony began with the Royal Niger Company, chartered to control the lower Niger River against German competition. In 1900, Britain took control of the company's territory to consolidate holdings and declare Nigeria a protectorate of the British Empire the following year. After 14 years of further war and conquest in the region, the British united most of the Niger area under the protectorate.

Today, the regional difference of the northern and southern halves is marked, and imbalances are blunt. Slavery has yet to be outlawed in the north, while the south has long abolished it. This difference has caused political problems for decades, with opposition to colonial rule largely assumed by religious groups. However, nationalist rhetoric has enabled people to lobby for improvements in education, although there is growing division between activists who seek independence, and activists who desire dominion status within the British Empire, akin to Canada or Australia.

Like other African colonies, Nigeria is suffering from the effects of the Great Depression. Collapsing prices, cut wages, and harsh tariff and tax rates are spreading poverty across rural communities, and the British are attempting to recover their economy at the expense of Nigerians. During the 1920s though, ethnic and kinship organizations emerged in urban areas after the arrival of rural migrants who lost their lands, and this contributes to the ongoing domination of the Nigerian National Democratic Party in elections. Led by Herbert Macaulay in a time of great economic strife, the party calls for educational reforms, economic development, and self-government in Lagos.

British influence has brought several Allegiances to Nigeria, both for good and ill. The largest contingent of Inspired people belongs to Branch 9, though locals have started up a small chapter of the Air Circus in hopes to create flight paths across Africa. The Ponatowski Foundation has attempted several times to lead expeditions into Nigeria's forested areas but find themselves

blocked by a group of fiercely protective Inspired who style themselves the Nigerian Protectorate. This group is insular and dangerous to anyone who would try to disrupt the more wild, and natural areas of Nigeria, and some speculate they are guarding a well of telluric energy or some other strange artifact.

## People of Interest

- **Aneju Dariye:** Raised in the diverse middle belt region of Nigeria, Aneju Dariye became a noted fixer and go-between for various local groups even before she was an adult. Nationalists trust her to talk to Dominionists, Imams to bring concerns to Christian neighbors, and the British ignore her as she settles arguments between feuding families. The Order of the Stars and Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux are interested in contacting her for future use as an agent, but criminal interests from abroad seek to bring her into their power, as a skeleton key to gain access to the complicated region.
- **Olu Gbenga:** Like many children, a young Olu yearned for the sky. His travels gave him the opportunity to become a mechanic and then a pilot for private interests, and his willingness to work hard as long as it kept him flying made him a natural fit for the Air Circus. A chance delivery saw Olu return to Nigeria, and he's stayed both to fly transportation for his compatriots and to support the idea of a local, African aviation. He is concerned that the coming Imperial Airways service will serve only the British, and if Olu doesn't receive help to make his dream a reality, he may be right.

## Sierra Leone

Unique among other colonies, Sierra Leone began as a settlement of former African slaves, brought there after Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807. As a result of this same act though, these people could be assigned to apprenticeships or enlisted, which functioned as its own new system of slavery for several decades.

Following the Berlin Conference of 1884 on West Africa and the Congo, the United Kingdom annexed inland areas in 1896, which would become the Sierra Leone Protectorate. Interfering with the leadership of the indigenous chiefs, the British expanded their government throughout the region. When the Hut Tax War of 1898 broke out, the Temne and Mende peoples fought them at an advantage. The British forces eventually resorted to destroying the homes of these people, forcing a surrender and ending mass resistance to the colonial administration.

Today, unrest is rampant, and rioting can break out at any time. Domestic slavery here was only abolished a few years ago in 1928, and now, the people face the influence of the Sierra Leone Selection Trust, which seeks a total monopoly on mineral mining in their land. In a dangerous move, the British have divided Sierra Leone, establishing the coastal territory around Freetown as a colony, and the hinterland as a protectorate. Both regions are antagonistic towards each other, and the recent discovery of diamonds here may only worsen the situation. Additionally, there's little doubt that the Rational Experimentation Group operates labs out of Sierra Leone, but the current political climate makes it difficult to launch a direct operation against them.

## People of Interest

- **Isaac Abraham Augustus:** When the Rational Experiment Group raided the Selection Trust mines for lens-quality diamonds, the cell leading the operation was unprepared for the calm Sierra Leonean local who had slain the foreman and was already in the process of fashioning a death ray in the mine's machine shop. Isaac Abraham now makes more complicated and powerful weapons for the REG cell that recruited him, while continuing his own experiments. While the REG considers him an up-and-coming genius, it has failed to inquire exactly what Isaac was building his weapons for before they came along.
- **Bangura Sesay:** One of the main political leaders on the ground in Sierra Leone, Bangura Sesay is a member of the Temne peoples who have historically seen the British burn their homes and stomp out resistance. Today, she stands in opposition to the potential monopolization of mineral resources by the Sierra Leone Selection Trust, particularly when it comes to diamonds and the theft of such wealth from her land. In a curious turn of events, she claims that her spouse has discovered a most dangerous secret within the fledging mines of this region, one that could shape the world. Despite limited resources in this part of the world, folk from all backgrounds are marshalling together to help her investigate this matter in Sierra Leone and may very well build a new secret society from the discovery.

## Liberia

Out of all the countries in West Africa, Liberia is special, in that it became the first African republic to declare independence, all the way back in 1847. It kept this sovereignty through the Scramble for Africa, having based its constitution on the example set by the United States. Sadly, the United Kingdom exerted some pressure on it afterwards, which led to the loss of territorial claims. As a result, Liberia struggled to develop infrastructure and industry without the prerequisite investment.

In the last few decades, international forces sought the extraction of Liberia's resources, which largely consisted of rubber production. More recently, an American missionary reported that the country was enslaving tribal peoples and shipping them to the island of Fernando Po. When Liberia invited the League of Nations to investigate the allegations in 1930, the head of the commission, Cuthbert Christy, along with representatives from the United States and Liberia, uncovered a forced labor and slavery scandal that led to the resignation of both the President and Vice-President of Liberia. While Christy's discriminatory opinions on black self-rule and his untimely death two years later have cast a shadow over the inquiry, the damage has already been done. This coincidence has not gone unnoticed though; some suspect that the Order of Murder was involved, although little recourse exists at the moment.

The fallout of this scandal, along with the Great Depression, placed Liberia on the brink of bankruptcy. Unable to make loan repayments, their creditors attempted to convince the United States government to engage in gunboat diplomacy. Instead, the United States suspended diplomatic relations, enabling Liberia to appeal to the League of Nations for help. While negotiations are still ongoing, Liberia has a good chance at securing its loan payments and sovereignty for years to come. With an open-door economic policy in place though, investors from across Europe are searching for opportunity here, be it good or evil. Fronts for the Rational



Experimentation Group have seized this opportunity to funnel investor money through Liberia and into Sierra Leone, which contributes to both of their misfortune.

## People of Interest

- **Angelina Cathar:** There is no one who can better trace the passage of money in and out of Liberia than Cathar. The Order of the Stars suspects her abilities to be Inspired in some way, but she doesn't claim anything other than a keen eye. She has discovered the REG is supporting the company attempting to buy rubber through orders placed to Liberia firms using three separate intermediaries. Cathar can't stop every predatory loan or deal presented to Liberia by foreigners, but for those secretly backed by the REG or similarly foul governments, she attempts to stop by whatever means she has available.
- **Yenseloh King:** Yenseloh is the son of indigenous Kru people who were long at odds with Liberian leadership. An expert fisherman and mariner who has navigated more of Africa's coast than most navies, he finds work guiding or transporting outsiders to ports or illicit landings across Africa's western coast. Smugglers and refugees alike use his services, while Yenseloh attempts to do what a man with boat and unmatched knowledge of the waterways can to help Liberia recover.

## Asia

From the tropical islands of Polynesia to the mountains of Tibet to the deserts of Iraq, Asia has virtually every environment known to humankind, as well as more cultures than anywhere else, with roughly two thousand distinct languages on the continent. Naturally, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has led to major changes here. Just as recent wars have reshaped the face of Europe, violence from the Middle East to East Asia has radically shifted the balance of powers.

The Ottoman Empire is no more, having finally been overthrown by the Arab peoples they'd dominated for hundreds of years. Of course, those people are still re-drawing borders, with Saudi Arabia and Yemen fighting even now. Another former empire, Imperial China, has fallen. After the Manchu-led Qing emperors failed their majority Han people, the people rose up and began sorting out who should lead.

And from the shadows of last century, the Empire of Japan has emerged as a true world power. No longer are they the scrappy country that recently traded their samurai swordsmen for riflemen of yesteryear. Now, they are a fully modernized and heavily militarized nation that threatens to swallow up all of East Asia, much to the chagrin of — well, everyone else.

## The Commonwealth of the Philippines

The newly recognized Commonwealth of the Philippines is a place of many identities. Not only do the over seven thousand islands of the Philippines contain just as many ethnicities and cultures, but the colonial history of the region is so fresh that the ink's still wet. Although the Spanish were ousted from the islands 36 years ago, their legacy can be seen everywhere, from the names of towns to the extensive number of Filipinos who have Spanish surnames, either from intermarriage or because they were legally forced to adopt the family names of their occupiers. Even though the Americans have had a less forceful approach to governance, there's no

mistaking the last few decades as anything but a different Western colonial power dictating life on the islands.

But that all seems to be coming to an end. Manuel Quezon, President of the Senate, has successfully negotiated a deal with the United States to transition from an American colony to a sovereign state over the next five years. Although the American Senate initially proposed a 10-year transition period beginning next year, President Quezon's seemingly indomitable will impressed upon the US Senate the importance of a fully independent Philippines to the security of the region, especially with the Empire of Japan's tendrils stretching outwards.

Now, all the Philippine islands are ablaze with activity and something approaching a sense of national unity. Although the various peoples of the islands are still diverse, they have a familiar face at the head of the government and a fearsome enemy to mobilize against. The main island of Luzon is an exciting hotbed of activity. Everywhere from the bustling port city of Manila to the mountain communities, people prepare for changes and hardships. Although it would be a mistake to say that the Filipino peoples are spoiling for war, they're certainly not going to be caught unaware if Japan invades.

The deeply cosmopolitan city of Manila is both the capital of the Commonwealth as well as the largest city of the nation. Hundreds of ethnicities mix there, making life in the city a multilingual affair, although Spanish, English, and Tagalog are the most common. For anyone seeking to make their name known or to make a difference to the course of history, Manila is the place to do it.

Due to the nature of the area, several groups have made a home in the area. Groups such as the Order of Murder use the cosmopolitan atmosphere to bring their clients in under the guise of tourism, while the Seven Brothers dominate the criminal underground. The Artisans of the Verse race against the Ponatowski Foundation in search of telluric hotspots in the mountains. The Æon Society is attempting to set up a preliminary chapterhouse, and an organization of locals has sprung up near the American military outposts, called The Secret Sword of Kanlaon.

## People of Interest

- **Gloria Santos-Aquino:** As a cultural scholar, Gloria understands the importance of community and preserving traditions. When not giving lectures on Filipino folk dances at the University of the Philippines, Gloria is exploring the islands to gain firsthand experiences. When Gloria encountered what appeared to be a completely other world high in the Luzon mountain ranges, she was prepared to exchange her culture for the avian-like people living there. Now, she struggles to keep their homes and nests safe as other Inspired set out to catalogue the strange telluric events happening near their home.

- **Pia de la Cruz:** An ardent member of the *Asociación Feminista Filipina* (Feminist Association of the Philippines), Pia de la Cruz has never been one to sit idly by as she saw qualified women being passed over for advancement or denied educational opportunities. This also extends to the right to vote, and de la Cruz has been nothing if not a force to be reckoned with on that account — taking her platform to other countries to ensure women have the right to be their own political voice, often flying with members of the Air Circus

## The Empire of Japan

Formally known as the Great Empire of Japan — Dai Nippon Teikoku to locals — the Empire of Japan is the Giant of Asia, having stolen the title away from China some 30 years ago, along with the Korean Peninsula, Manchuria, the Ryukyu Islands, and Taiwan. Despite doubling the size of their holdings, the Empire of Japan seems eager to expand further, something that troubles their neighbors. On top of that, Japan recently exited the League of Nations, leaving diplomatic relationships with the West as fraught as anywhere else.

Known within the Empire simply as the Emperor, Hirohito leads the martial state and is also known by his regnal name, the Showa Emperor. His policies have represented a massive shift from the attempt to democratize Japan during his father's reign. Hirohito's reign has created a swell of imperialist and nationalist furor. Thanks in large part of this, there has been a surge in activity from the ultra-nationalist Koryuukai, the Black Dragon Society.

Originally formed as an elite, government-sanctioned anti-Russian spy network in 1901, the Black Dragon Society has since spiraled into a group of rabid fanatics, led by an enigmatic man in a black bowler hat whose description is inconsistent between eyewitness accounts. Despite the Society's membership of only a few hundred, many everyday Japanese people live in fear of the Black Dragon Society, which looks more and more like secret police with each passing day.

Although the newly elected Prime Minister Okada's control of the Diet doesn't balance the Emperor's desire for war and expansion, the moderate Okada has tempered the more extreme voices of Japan, calming everyone who has attempted to argue for further bloodshed. More astoundingly, the statesman managed to talk down a would-be assassin. Although the gunman dropped his pistol, a police officer shot him dead, in a move that raised more questions than it answered.

The Seven Brothers has a strong hold within the Empire of Japan, but their presence is one of formality rather than strength. The already established criminal organizations keep them from operating too deeply in the area. Several Allegiances have chapters in the area, from the International Detective Agency to Branch 9, though their situation has become tenuous since the Empire left the League of Nations.

### People of Interest

- **Captain Takahashi Isamu:** Almost everything about Captain Takahashi is a fabrication. Originally just a Second Lieutenant in the Imperial Army, Takahashi took it upon himself to falsify two promotions and a history about having participated in missions for the Black Dragon Society. The only certainties about him are that he is wildly anti-crime, anti-Russia, and leans more towards being a conservative than a progressive. The truth is that "Captain Takahashi" died at the hands of The Contedorri during the Russo-Japanese War, and the man masquerading as him is a con artist of the highest caliber believed to be Inspired.
- **Ichikawa Kiyoshi:** All Ichikawa Kiyoshi wants to do is to help other people. A retired Petty Officer, Second Class, in the Imperial Navy, he has found that retirement does not quite do for him what he thought it would. Instead of a life of leisure, Kiyoshi opened a dry goods shop in Chiba. This allows him to keep a solid eye on his community, ensuring that organized crime

elements like the yakuza and the Black Dragons gain little to no foothold in the area. He reports any movements to the International Detective Agency in his area.

## The Empire of Manchukuo

Manchukuo is a geographic conundrum. According to the Republic of China and the League of Nations, the region is officially known as the northeastern Chinese province of Manchuria. Of course, neither the ruling Kuomintang party of China nor any of the League's member states occupy the region, leaving their ability to officially name the area somewhat in doubt. According to Japan and the people of Manchukuo, the ruler is the Kangde Emperor, the last of the Qing Dynasty. The Emperor was briefly the ruler of China before being ousted from the Dragon Throne in Beijing during the 1911 Chinese Revolution.

Despite Manchuria being the original home of the Manchu people — and the Qing Dynasty — the Han people are the majority ethnic group of the region. The recent installation of the Kangde Emperor as regent means that, once again, Han people are under the rule of the minority Manchu people. This irony is not lost on the people of Manchukuo, particularly not the outspoken Mayor Xú of the recently renamed city of Hsinking (formerly Changchun). Japanese occupation forces have taken Mayor Xú from his residence in the middle of the night five times, ostensibly to tour the surrounding countryside. But each of the five times, the mayor was spotted working in his office before the soldiers who 'escorted' him returned. Although most of the morning edition newspapers following each abduction were destroyed, rumors abound that at least one of the headlines read that Mayor Xú died in a tragic accident. The Æon Society has been hoping to get an interview with the mayor, but he proves to be just as elusive to their agents when they seek contact.

Manchukuo's rich natural resources — combined with Japanese engineers — has turned the region into an industrial powerhouse overnight. Although this means there's an ever-increasing presence of the Japanese Imperial Army ready to invade China, it also means there's an ever-increasing amount of modern equipment and weapons near an upset populace.

Branch 9 is active in the region despite their chapterhouse being firmly in the Republic of China. They have put a lockdown on most other Inspired allegiances from gaining a foothold in hopes to control the amount of telluric energy research in the area. That doesn't stop Seven Brothers activity, but Branch 9 cares less about mundane criminals than it does about those attempting to create dangerous tellurically powered artifacts. That honor falls to the Shōwa Weapons Initiative, an elite group of Inspired scientists who are crafting and testing tellurically powered technology for the Japanese Emperor.

## People of Interest

- **Jīn Zhēnzhēn:** A member of the famous Aisin Gioro clan of Manchus, Jīn Zhēnzhēn is a distant cousin of both the Emperor and Jīn Yōuzhī, who works in the palace as a master chef. Since the beginning of the Japanese occupation, Zhēnzhēn has witnessed rampant abuse of her staff: their rations being cut to a quarter of what they were, food being thrown at them after serving, and worse — all by the Emperor himself, whom she loathes. Zhēnzhēn hopes to see the

Emperor overthrown and someone — anyone at this point — else on the throne before this daredevil takes matters into her own hands.

- **Yáng Jūn:** Yáng Jūn was the daughter of merchants in Beijing, which is where she met The Ubiquitous Dragon. As the price to protect her family's bun shop, Jūn was charged with keeping an eye on clone number Fifty-Nine, now Yong, when he wasn't using the body. When Yong cut off his own arm, Jūn was there to cauterize and clean him up. She never once questioned what happened to The Ubiquitous Dragon, but she remained by Yong's side when his brothers arrived. Now a full Brother of the Seven Brothers, Jūn has mobilized Yong's desire to separate himself from his father's legacy by bringing him to Manchukuo, where they currently work to liberate the Han people from Japanese oppression.

## Indochinese Union

Five smaller protectorates — Annam, Cambodia, Cochinchina, Laos, and Tonkin — make up French Indochina. Although Laos and Cambodia are largely populated by the Lao and Cambodian peoples, the other three colonies share the same majority ethnicity: the Vietnamese people. While the official capital of French Indochina, Hà Nội, is located in the northernmost region of Tonkin, the dual city of Sài Gòn-Cholon — located in the opposite end of Indochina in Cochinchina — is the real heart of the region. In Saigon, anyone who is anyone knows the Vietnamese separatist Hồ Chí Minh — or at least thinks they do. Thanks to the up-and-coming communist's international education, connections, and dozens of false identities, it's difficult to tell fact from fiction when it comes to Mr. Ho, much to the consternation of the French authorities.

In slightly better news for the French occupation force, the uprising in Yên Bái four years ago has done little to shake their hold. Although a handful of French officers were killed, all the mutineers and their leadership were executed, at least according to the French government. Eyewitnesses claim that at least two mutineers were shot over a dozen times before falling into the Red River, yet their bodies were never recovered.

As a direct result of the uprising, France has shuffled the indigenous military forces around the country, recruiting heavily from Laos and Cambodia. This, combined with an increase of French Foreign Legion and French regular soldiers, has led half the military forces in the Annam region to be non-Vietnamese. Similarly, the Tonkin and Cochinchina regions' forces are notably less ethnically Vietnamese than they were just a few years ago.

Completely avoiding the scales of power, the influence of the Federation of French Scouting — a sister organization to the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides — has led to Indochinese Scouting organizations sprouting up all over the region, with Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese Scout troops forming in virtually every city and large township. Scouts as young 5 and as old as 25 have dedicated themselves to helping their communities and bettering themselves. The Scouts themselves constitute one of the few organizations devoted to helping all the people of French Indochina. As such, the Scouts of Indochina are welcome most places and can travel around the region without being bothered by locals or French military.

Any allegiances attempting to work in the area do so through the Scouting organizations, or with express permission from Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux. While the Salon keeps a wary eye on people coming into their region, they have made an agreement with the Æon Society for members to work alongside them for mutual benefit: Opposing the Order of Murder who had set up a safehouse in the area. Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux's resources are no match for the secretive organization, meaning they had to seek outside help to remove them.

## People of Interest

- **Leilani:** With the introduction of scouting in Indochina, Leilani finally found a place where she could burn off her boundless energy. The fastest girl in her troop, Tai's penchant for pranks (especially against colonial forces) has resulted in her always carrying around a shovel made of melted-down rifles she stole from a French patrol. Longing for more in life and always curious, this young daredevil wants to leave her small village in Laos to seek adventure wherever it may take her.
- **Minh Truong:** Minh Truong is a pseudonym used by the secretive founder of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux. Many people know her story of escape from her small village overtaken by bandits. The thrill of such a story, of a woman who murdered several armed men to rescue her friends and family resounds with many people. In truth, there is no Minh Truong, but instead a resilient group of women who banded together in the face of adversity and murdered their supposed kidnappers. They came up with Minh as a cover for their own actions, and any one of them could be her when someone needed a point of contact or someone to talk to. After years of organizing the largest woman's organization the world over, Ai Pham is the only one of the original women who continues to use the pseudonym for business, a name she uses more than her own any longer.

## Imperial State of Iran

Persia has a new name and a new ruler, not to mention new borders after Russian forces occupied the nation during the Great War and turned Persia into a battlefield during the Russian Revolution. The capital city of Tehran was under the control of the Russians, with no sign of Ahmad Shah Qajar, the Shah of Persia, nor his soldiers. With the Shah out of the picture and the Red Army running amok, it was up to the Persian people to save themselves. Ethnically Bakhtiari militias ousted the Russians from Tehran and the Persian Cossack Brigade took center stage afterwards, leading a coup against the Shah in 1921. A few years later, the commander of the Persian Cossacks, Reza Pahlavi, officially took control of the country, ending the 136-year reign of the Qajar Dynasty.

Now, Reza Shah has become somewhat of a controversial figure. Although credited with leading the Persian people out of a downward spiral caused by the Qajars, he's also largely responsible for great pressure placed on the numerous ethnic minorities of Iran to conform. Despite Reza Shah himself belonging to the Mazanderani people, he's taken it upon himself to homogenize the peoples of Iran into a single Persian race, an effort that's less than universally applauded. The Bakhtiari people, who saved Tehran from the Russians, pose the biggest obstacle towards the Shah's Persianification of Iran.

Earlier this year, these two factions came close to clashing when Khan Sardar Fatteh challenged Reza Shah to a pistol duel. Despite the strangeness of the challenge, the Shah accepted. Even stranger, the duel ended in a draw, with both men striking the other's bullet. Now, an uneasy truce holds sway, with the Bakhtiari left in control of the southeast of the country and the Shah maintaining undisputed control of the rest.

The capital of Tehran is a hotbed of activity, with virtually the entire city under construction. Under Reza Shah's orders, much of the city has been torn down and rebuilt, with streets being rebuilt to be much wider, to better accommodate modern automobiles. Seemingly overnight, giant four-way intersections with roundabouts spring up around the metropolis. With so much unrest in the capitol city, the old spirit of Tehran is dying, making way for a new, modern capital. Recently the Archivists have moved into the area, hoping to safeguard Tehran artifacts.

## People of Interest

- **Shanti Hakim:** As a young adult when Reza Shah came to power, Shanti has borne witness to the rapid changes happening in Iran. Intelligent, passionate, and carrying the extraordinary luck only seen in daredevils, she has put her passions towards campaigning for minority rights and education. Her bold actions put her at odds with the more traditional Persian mindset, but the Jewish community views her as a leader. She currently attends the Sage College in Tehran, where she organizes community events for likeminded individuals.
- **Soraya Bahktiar:** After helping take back Tehran from the Russians in 1911 as a sniper and tactician for a mixed-gender unit, Soraya Bahktiar witnessed first-hand the duplicity of the Shah. While the Shah publicly called for progress, the Bahktiar people were forced to assimilate into Persian culture — oftentimes by force — and Soraya has made the attempt to fight back against the erasure of her native tongue. These days, she can be found picking fights with the Shah's forces, sending them on wild goose chases, and generally being a nuisance-turned-outlaw seeking the preservation of Bahktiar culture and way of life.

## India

India is a massive country, roughly the size of continental Europe or every US state west of Kansas, *plus* the Territory of Alaska. Even considering its large size, India's population is astounding over 350 million people, approximately 100 million more than continental Europe and three times that of the entire USA. Within this tightly packed area, there are hundreds of ethnic groups and languages. How in the world did the British Colonial Government get control of all these people, you might ask? The answer is simple, by making them all distrust each other more than they did the British Raj. Unfortunately for the Crown, this policy of divide and conquer seems to have fomented too much strife for them to deal with. The Indian people have begun unifying along religious lines, specifically Hinduism and Islam.

From coast to coast, many Muslim citizens of India have joined the Pakistan Movement, planning to break off from India and create their own nation. While the Movement doesn't appear to have enough support to secede in the near future, everyone else worries for the unity of Indian peoples. Lawyer and anti-colonial activist, Mohandas Gandhi, has begun campaigning

heavily for a sense of national pride in the hopes of bridging the divide between the many peoples of India.

In a parallel effort several Indian-led expeditions have begun delving deep into India's past in efforts to find common ground between the various populations of the subcontinent. To the north, archeological teams have been dispatched to find relics from the ancient Gupta Empire, which encouraged multiple religions during its 200-year span. Others focus on the more recent Mughal Empire, which sought to establish equality among the many cultures of India.

Several Allegiances operate across the nation, from Branch 9 to the International Detective Agency, as well as smaller groups such as the Traditional Scholar's Network and Elephant's Luck. A small group of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux has sprung up under the direction of Sara Kaur, who has taken an interest in their work as a counterpoint to that of the Æon Society.

**NOTE: THE FOLLOWING JOURNAL ENTRY SHOULD APPEAR NEAR THE INDIA SECTION.**

**[BEGIN JOURNAL ENTRY]**

— From the journal of Saraswati Kaur Bhurano

Day 1 of the work at Agra, Uttar Pradesh went well as could be expected. The large number of people, as well as the easy access to the river, has proven to be a boon and a bane. On one hand, I hired all the experts, academics, and laborers I needed in a matter of hours. On the other, there are so many more of them, that it's impossible to bring someone onto the excavation team without slighting someone else. Additionally, I'm somewhat constrained by the modern buildings around the site. The last thing I want to do is accidentally destroy someone's house or something else that would engender ill will.

The work itself is simple: find Akbar the Great's hidden library, which is rumored to contain holy texts from every religion in the world at the time, as well as a short-lived syncretic religion that blended them all together. Presented in the right light, such a trove of books would help establish India as a cosmopolitan powerhouse to rival anything in Europe. More importantly, it could give the Indian people a reminder of how great they've been together.

Of course, this, too, is a double-sided blade; if the wrong people get their hands on this, they could easily use his Din-i Ilahi religion to paint the Mughal emperor as an infidel, undoing efforts at national unity and accelerating the Pakistan Movement's exit.

Dammit. Where is Max? I need someone to watch my back.

**[END JOURNAL ENTRY]**

## People of Interest

- **Vihaan Sengupta:** Hiding behind the guise of being a benevolent doctor, Vihaan Sengupta is anything but. A member of the Baidya caste, and part of the Rational Experimentation Group, he uses his position as a healer to work with disadvantaged populations to poison them and has been effectively a serial killer hiding in plain sight. Believing that Saraswati's idealist dream will do more to harm India, Vihaan Sengupta believes the nation



should split and send all the Untouchables to Pakistan — that is, if he does not poison them all first.

- **Saraswati Kaur Bhurano:** Otherwise known as Sara Kaur, Saraswati is the first and most powerful mesmerist in the world. When she immigrated to England, she had no idea that she would be at the forefront of telluric energy studies with Dr. Hammersmith. He hired her as a secretary, but she quickly became his pre-eminent student and towards the end, the only other person as knowledgeable about telluric energy as he. After the Hammersmith Incident, Saraswati returned to India both as a way to distance herself from her past relations, and to begin independent study on the effects telluric energy has on the human body. She is highly active in India's move towards independence and is supporting a local group of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux working towards women's rights.

## The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

With a ruling family nearly 200 years old, it's hard to believe that Saudi Arabia is technically less than two years old. But after three decades of fighting, King Abdulaziz — also known as Ibn Saud — finally established the House of Saud as the absolute rulers of the land in late 1932. Since then, the King has ruled from his heavily protected fortress in the ancient city of Riyadh. Although many of his former rivals (and even some former allies) would love nothing more than to seize the reins of power from him, King Abdulaziz seems untouchable, partly thanks to the funding from Great Britain to fight their proxy war against the Ottomans but mainly because the Saudis control so much territory that their taxes have left their war chest larger than any of their rivals.

Earlier this year, their southern Yemeni neighbors put this to the test and disputed the Saudi claim to the townships of Tehama by sending an occupying army. Within a month, the Saudi Army reminded their Yemen counterparts that they had modern military technology, such as machine guns, tanks, and other armored vehicles. Despite being heavily outgunned, the Yemeni forces were difficult to pin down thanks to their experience fighting in the mountainous terrain of Tehama. Strangely, the Yemens always seem to begin each skirmish with fifty-six soldiers, no matter how many the Saudis claim to have killed in the previous day's fighting. The Saudis and Yemens appear to be in a stalemate. It will take something — or someone — extraordinary to settle this conflict.

Of course, there's much more to Saudi Arabia than fighting. House of Saud controls the Islamic holy city of Mecca, as well as Medina, the second holiest city to Muslims. Muslim pilgrims from around the world make their hajj, traveling to Mecca to experience the land of their prophet Muhammed. Because of this, once a year during the twelfth lunar month, Mecca is the biggest tourist hotspot in the world, with tens of thousands of boats mooring in the nearby port city of Jeddah.

Thanks to this annual influx of money, some of the region's finest scientists and engineers make their home in Jeddah. Periodic visits from Egyptian physicist Dr. Ali Moustafa Mosharafa has enabled the creation the Relativity Society, a group of theoretically physicists who seem at the cutting edge of science. This group is under constant threat from the Rational Experiment Group

who seek to infiltrate and corrupt its members, but so far, their own integrity seems to prevent the REG from getting much purchase.

## People of Interest

- **The Specter:** People whisper of the Specter showing up unexpectedly to help those in need. They once appeared to gift riches upon a poor family displaced by the unification, they saved a man from a sudden sandstorm, they lead a traveler to Riyadh who was nearly dead of thirst, and another time they reunited a lost child to her family after getting separated in Mecca. The Specter seems to be everywhere with an uncanny ability to detect those most in need and delivering exactly the right support. Every description is different: A woman in a red hijab, a non-descript man who was maybe a traveling merchant, and sometimes a foreigner with sandy hair. They have no limitation on who they help, which has garnered attention from the Saudi government who wonder about this mysterious figure that may be helping their enemies.
- **Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Rashid:** A member of the House of Rashid, rival to the ruling House of Saud, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Rashid is foremost a scholar and secondly a cunning opportunist. Though barely 20, Abdulaziz has been hired by the King to geologically survey the country and report to him regarding its natural resources. Unbeknownst to the King, Saudi Arabia is rich in crude oil — enough to make it energy independent and a player on the world stage. Further still, Abdulaziz has uncovered a secondary resource even more valuable than black gold: tellurium. If he plays his cards right, the House of Rashid could rise once more.

## Korea

Although the Empire of the Japan refers to Korea as “Chōsen”, the government of the peninsula bears little resemblance to the Chosen (Joseon) government that it replaced. For the past 24 years, Japan’s growth as a colonial power has further marginalized the Korean people. Of course, occupation by a foreign power is not new for the Korean people. During the rise of the Qing Dynasty in the 17th century, Korea was repeatedly invaded, eventually becoming a tributary state of Imperial China. It’s been centuries since the nation was truly free, leaving the people unsure about how to go about seeking independence. One thing they can be sure of is that they’re tired of outsiders, particularly Japanese, Han-Chinese, and Manchu-Chinese people.

So much so that when thousands of Han-Chinese people fled to Korea during the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, angry locals killed over a hundred refugees. Although some in the Japanese Imperial Diet were horrified by the violence, others fanned the anti-Han flames, capitalizing on the chance to focus the Korean people’s ire on anyone but the Japanese.

This and similar occupation tactics haven’t proven successful at distracting all of Korea; guerilla bands scattered across the mountainous country harass Japanese forces. Though most have had little success, one led by someone claiming to be the 16<sup>th</sup> Century admiral Yi Sunsin successfully stole a Momi-class destroyer and scuttled it in March, blocking access to the port of Gwangyang for most of a month.

Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux has sent members to assist in guerilla warfare to some success. Many other allegiances seem to be vacant from the area, though that might not be by choice as the Korean people do not take kindly to any strangers in the area.

## People of Interest

- **Kim Hee-joon:** A student at the newly opened Choson Radio Training Center in Seoul, Kim Hee-joon has always been a rebel at heart. Using low-level frequencies, Hee-joon has been able to communicate with other radio enthusiasts around the world, making international friends in the process. Hee-joon also knows that there are anti-occupation guerillas using these frequencies to communicate with one another. Wishing he could support the guerillas but knowing he is not a fighter; he does the only thing he can: Withhold these communiques from the Japanese.
- **Lee Ji-yoo:** Born and raised in Hanseong, Lee Ji-yoo has had extraordinary opportunities in her life. She attended primary school in Korea and secondary school in Japan. Upon returning to Korea, she began factory work to help support her aging parents, but soon left to pursue a career in education. When she developed mesmerist powers, it only seemed a natural extension of her already strong empathetic abilities, but she discovered that she could sense others like her. Now she has made it her duty to find and educate any and all other Inspired she can, while simultaneously keeping them hidden from the Japanese occupying forces.

## The Republic of China

Although China, as an idea, is thousands of years old, the Republic of China is a mere twenty-two-years old a country. It's also a country in name only. The Kuomintang claims control of China after the 1912 Chinese Revolution freed the Han people from the last of the Qing Dynasty, the child Xuanton Emperor (now known as the Kangde Emperor of Manchukuo, see p. XX). In truth, there have been over a dozen factions, mostly regional militias, vying for control. To be fair to the Kuomintang, they're indisputably the faction that's closest to controlling the nation; the Kuomintang have defeated most of the other groups, especially after Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's bloody purge of obstacles, including an entire wing of his own party.

Today, there are really three Chinas: the Kuomintang's ultra-nationalist China, the Communists' ever-shrinking democratic China, and the China of those simply trying to survive in an internecine world. The Kuomintang has enjoyed a surge of power thanks to their long-time ally, Germany's, recent political changes. With their Nazi allies providing technical expertise, the Kuomintang is leading a campaign to industrialize China and modernize its military. The Communists' Red Army is on the brink of annihilation, having been driven into increasingly smaller territories, where Chiang Kai-Shek hopes to wipe them out in a single glorious battle. Though the people of China are weary of war, the idea of obliterating China's experiment with democracy doesn't sit well with many.

Among these is a group of partisans calling themselves the Children of Wùkōng. Labeled bandits by the Kuomintang's so-called National Government, the Children have proven themselves adept at talking and fighting their way anywhere they choose to. No one knows if the Children seek to help the Communists or set up a new government, but they certainly seem to be looking out for the common people, claiming to have killed dozens of cruel and corrupt officials, including a General. Despite their criminal roots, the Seven Brothers are funding and supporting the Children of Wùkōng and are the largest organization in the area, criminal or otherwise.

## People of Interest

- **Xú Líng:** Xú Líng was indoctrinated with revolutionary ideas from a young age. Held and educated by Communists, her village was overtaken by the National Government when she was merely fourteen. She escaped and set out to find the rest of the Red Army, but instead found the Children of Wùkōng, who took her in and taught her how to fight. Her extraordinary skill with a rifle is unparalleled and she quickly rose through their ranks. Now she leads a squad in the Jiangxi Province who are so notorious that the Kuomintang has a bounty on their heads.
- **Zhào Juān:** While others are busy worrying about a civil war, Zhào Juān is juggling the trials and tribulations of owning a successful gambling den in an unnamed village in Shaanxi Province that she never wanted. Having gained the gambling den when the Seven Brothers ran the previous proprietor out of town, Juān found herself filling the power vacuum that was left behind. Rather than using her newfound career for immoral ends, with the support of the International Detective Agency, Zhào Juān commands her enforcers to treat locals with respect while handling other, would-be gangs effectively — leading to some stability in a rapidly destabilizing nation.

## The Territory of Hawai'i

The US Territory of Hawai'i is an archipelago in the near center of the Pacific Ocean, a strategic point between the United States and the Empire of Japan, a fact not lost on the multiethnic population of the islands. In addition to the native Hawaiian people, Han-Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and white Americans make up major portions of the population. As the violence in East Asia grows, the locals get increasingly concerned for their families back home.

Of course, “local” has recently become an extremely loaded term, with a recent assault on a white US Navy officer's wife and subsequent vigilante murders bringing a stark contrast between the white Americans and everyone else on the islands. Although racial tensions remain high, particularly between native Hawaiians and white Americans, an uneasy peace holds for the time being. At least in the streets. Corporate boardrooms are an entirely different story, as local businessman Henry Kane has dominated the financial news for the past year, culminating in this February's hostile takeover of the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, marking the first time a local has controlled Hawaiian agriculture since the Dole family overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893. Thanks to some startling about-faces in voting, Kane's detractors' have accused him of being a mobster, but police haven't turned up any ties to organized crime; people just seem to really like him.

Although Hawai'i Island (or the Big Island) is the largest in the Hawaiian Islands, the biggest and most famous city of the Territory lies over on O'ahu: Honolulu. Honolulu is a modern city, rivalling San Francisco for technological achievement. From the street cars that ferry the city's 200 thousand citizens to the 224-foot-tall Aloha Tower to the hustle and bustle of the city, not to mention Pearl Harbors' military and civilian ships, it's hard to imagine that pristine beaches lie just a dozen miles away.

Nearly every single allegiance in the world has a presence in Honolulu, using the island city as a base of operations for both Western and Eastern action. Brother Thirty-Seven of the Seven

Brothers uses it as a way station between mainland United States and Asian nations, and the Contendorri often attempt to steal directly from Seven Brothers in the area. Æon Society, Air Circus, and the International Detective Agency all have major chapters in the area, as well as Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux and the Ponatowski Foundation.

Hawai'i or Hawaii?

In the native Hawaiian language, there is a glottal stop (‘okina) in the word Hawai'i, marked by the apostrophe. Although there is no official letter for glottal stops in English, the consonant exists in both languages, as in the middle of “uh oh.” Thus, Hawai'i is the correct spelling and pronunciation for the Big Island. Confusingly, there is no ‘okina in the adjective “Hawaiian.”

## People of Interest

- **Henry Kane:** There are some who consider Henry Kane a business wizard, and others that wonder if he is an *actual* wizard. A native Hawaiian, Henry has become prolific in the business scene, including a recent hostile takeover of the Hawaiian Pineapple Company, but rather than looking out for himself and his very profitable bottom line he shares his wealth and pays his employees generously. Firmly pro-statehood for Hawai'i, Henry knows that it would give native Hawaiians a voice in their governance as opposed to the current American occupation — something which he believes is desperately needed if Hawai'i is to succeed.
- **Janet McCullough:** Among her friends, Janet McCullough stands out. Not because her parents work for The Honolulu Times, but because most of her friends are native Hawaiian and Janet certainly is not. Born in Honolulu, Janet feels a greater kinship to her island home than she does the mainland where her parents hail from, and it has informed her desire to share the beauty of Hawai'i with the world. Adventurous travelers and researchers alike seek her out to find the hidden mysteries of the islands — all looking to uncover the next big discovery that might change the world.

## Australia and Oceania

From the end of the Great War onward, Australia and Oceania have been undergoing transformations of national identity as well as post-colonial protectorate expansions. Former colonial states have banded together to forge new nations, and once independent kingdoms have welcomed outsider protection for the purpose of consolidating indigenous power using the established might of their new patron-nations.

After the Great War and subsequent pandemic, many nations turned inward, seeking a return to normalcy and focus on strengthening new national identities. Unfortunately, it did not last long as the Great Depression rocked global financial systems and held markets in a death grip. Battered and beleaguered, the world is in desperate need of hope — and a renewed sense of pride and self-determination — after thirty years of uncertainty and looking to Europe for leadership. Half a world away, Australia and Oceania are learning that they can do more on their own than they have ever imagined, and that they have the resources available to become a major player in world politics with the discovery of new wells of telluric energy dotted throughout the Pacific.

## Australia

In the three decades following Australia's move from a federation of colony-states to an independent commonwealth under the dominion of British Empire, a national identity has begun to take shape. Now flying a flag of their own making, feelings of national pride have grown as they have popularized the recreational sport of surfing, produced Vegemite, and built the Shrine of Remembrance as a reminder of the horrors of war. Despite these forward leaps, Australia has had its fair share of internal issues.

Labor strikes during the Great Depression followed by fiscal mismanagement by the central government led to the formation of the Labor Party in 1931. At the same time, despite movements toward greater unity, there was still a disparity in society with immigrants and indigenous peoples being the most marginalized and affected by economic pitfalls. Continued mismanagement saw the Labor Party split the same year of its founding, leading to widespread distrust in the central government.

The general populace has since wondered if the transition away from being a British colony was worth the trouble, with Western Australia all but declaring its intentions to secede from the commonwealth all on its own just recently in 1933. The Secession League remains strong there, with rumors that a group of prospectors have uncovered a wellspring of...something. Even they are not sure of what they have found. They just know they need to keep it secret, lest the central government get wind of it or their secret army of battle-ready emus.

With the new capital of Canberra being less than twenty years old, having beat out rivals Melbourne and Sydney, it set the first foundational stone for this newly established and independent commonwealth. As Canberra grew, so did the sense of hope that Australians are in control of their own destiny. Even though it lost the vote to host the new capital, Sydney still considers itself the cultural and social heart of Australia. The recently established guild, the Artisans of the Verse, set up their primary salon there, with satellite salons established in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, and Perth making them alluring destinations for wealthy patrons looking to support the best and brightest rising stars in art.

The Artisans of the Verse find constant issue with the Ponatowski Foundation who regularly attempt to fund expeditions into the Australian "outback." The Artisans believe they seek out telluric energy hot spots, which could lead them to compromise or exploit indigenous peoples. The Artisans work to keep the expeditions from gaining approval, which has only made the Foundation members more daring about entering the Australian wilds on their own.

### People of Interest

- **Judith Eiland:** Judith Eiland is a newspaper columnist, public speaker, and politician. She has covered women's rights within the commonwealth since starting her career, championing women to stand for Parliament and assisting in election campaigns. She stood for the Labor Party in the 1932 election, though she did not win. Behind the scenes, she runs a small chapter of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux in Brisbane to educate and guide young women. The group keeps up to date on local politics but devotes most of their study to scientific inquiry into

quantum physics. Judith's chapter has happened upon telluric energy, but do not yet know what they have discovered, though harnessing the energy

- **Rose Gleeson:** Descended from the Yolngu people on her mother's side and Irish *balanda* on her father's, Rose took a keen interest in the natural world around her and expressed this interest through artistic endeavors which would eventually lead her to establish The Artisans of the Verse. Considered to be avant-garde, her sculptures and poetry are heavily influenced by the oral and artistic traditions of Aboriginal Australians and other indigenous peoples from around the world. When not vetting new members of her guild, this mesmerist is jet-setting across the globe with her partner, Amélie Brodeur, to preserve and promote the art of other native populations while mapping out new sources of telluric energy.

## New Zealand

A commonwealth state of the British Empire, New Zealand — like its western neighbor Australia — saw a lot of changes following the end of the Great War. It saw the New Zealand Expeditionary Force dispatched to Egypt and German Samoa, war-time conscription and Prohibition introduced, and all public houses being forced to close no later than 6pm. Yet despite such conservative measures, New Zealand was the first country in the world to enact universal female suffrage, recognized the land rights of the indigenous Māori peoples, and create social welfare programs which introduced retiree pensions, maximum hour regulations, and minimum wage laws.

These strides did little, however, to quell the unrest in New Zealand in the post-war years. After a 7.8 magnitude earthquake destroyed Hawke's Bay in 1931, the conservative government reduced social welfare programs and public servant wages to pay for the repairs. To make matters worse, the Great Depression all but destroyed New Zealand's agricultural-based economy. This led to widespread unemployment riots in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin exacerbated by political policies which favor the same businesses and bank ventures that recently collapsed.

Public confidence is at an all-time low as the government struggles to rebuild after the natural disaster and the populace feels ignored. A fair share of day laborers since turned to banditry to make ends meet, holing themselves in the Southern Alps and biding time until they are ready to strike.

The Artisans of the Verse are convinced the earthquake was caused by a spike in telluric energy and are investigating the cause. Scientist at the University of New Zealand have begun experimenting with something the Artisans believe is powered by telluric energy but are having issues gaining access to group. Whatever they are doing, the results have been devastating, and the Artisans need all the help they can muster to get to the bottom of it.

## People of Interest

- **David Wallace:** Jazz Singer. Dancer. Actor. Heartbreaking adventuring scoundrel. Hailing from Invercargill, Wallace was a daredevil from his youth and after the Hammersmith Incident, became a daredevil in truth. Always bucking expectations, moving to the beat of his own drum, and often singing to it whenever provided the chance. Ever on the move, he lends his

special brand of roguish sensationalism to Allegiances, acting as a lucrative courier who can cross international borders under the guise of being a performing artist, flying under the radar of interceptors seeking to undermine the Æon Society.

- **Lottie Franks:** Lottie Franks is an international sensation, or villain, if you read the press. Born in New Zealand, she joined the New Zealand Volunteer Sisterhood and went to the European front during the Great War. While there, she began educating people about safe sex, and would often distribute pamphlets on the subject to any and all camps in several different languages. While in France she met Jake “Danger Ace” Stefokowski who she convinced to carry her pamphlets overseas, in return for a little propaganda writing. Now Lottie acts as the sole creator of Ace Circus propaganda, flyers, and pamphlets, and its members distribute her — often outlawed — materials wherever they fly.

## Samoa

Just prior to the turn of the century, Samoa was highly sought after by American, British, and German forces desiring to expand their territories and gain a stronger foothold in the Pacific. Two civil wars were fought across the archipelago, with each nation offering their support in exchange for continued economic development, to which the modern, albeit weak, native Samoan government agreed to. The Tripartite Convention of 1899 saw the archipelago split, with the western portion of the islands given to the Germans and the eastern portion of the islands going to the Americans, with the British backing out of the matter entirely.

German Samoa, on the western half, enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Imperial Germany, and developed modern infrastructure allowing for civil and social advancements. Tribal chiefs fought for supremacy, but eventually laid down their weapons to establish a centralized government for a clearer, more united front against the Germans. When Imperial Germany went to war in 1914, they turned their focus back to Europe, leaving Samoa vulnerable. Sensing opportunity, the British Empire sent in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to begin a land invasion and eventual occupation that caused widespread devastation that Samoa is still recovering from.

New Zealand, struggling with its own actions, has tightened their grip on the dominion state, going so far as to limit free assemblies, and further earning the ire rather than the adoration of their new subjects. To this day, many Samoans remain dedicated to the philosophy of the non-violent Mau Movement and continue to seek independence — though there are those who are willing to gain that independence through any means necessary.

The Contedorri have infiltrated the area and are using the instability in New Zealand and the unrest in Samoa to grow a criminal empire under everyone’s noses.

## People of Interest

- **Witarina Matafeo-Apa:** Siren of the silent and silver screen, Witarina is the first native Samoan to break into Hollywood, and it is of little wonder as to why. A natural storyteller, she incorporates traditional Samoan culture into every role — be it with costuming, song, or dance. The unofficial ambassador of her nation and budding mesmerist, Witarina is an ardent supporter of the Mau Movement. In a time when it is considered taboo for an actress, let alone a Pacific



Islander, to speak on such matters, Witarina does so anyway winning many over to the cause for an independent Samoa.

- **Lizzie Swan:** A native Samoan — born Elizabeth Thomas — Lizzie Swan is a social powerhouse and proprietor of the Swansong hotel in Apia. Since opening the hotel, it has become an impromptu salon and respite for artists, philosophers, and wayward adventurers, sometimes even acting as a base of operations for the Æon Society when they are in the Pacific. A welcoming hostess, Lizzie never turns away those in need of a respite, no matter their circumstances.

## The Kingdom of Tonga

A Polynesian island nation to the north east of Australia, the Kingdom of Tonga has entered a period of greater stability than it has even known. After nearly fifty years of internal civil war, the future King George Tupou I unified the various Tonga chiefdoms, establishing a constitutional monarchy still led by the Tupou dynasty. To preserve their sovereignty and protect them from German encroachment in the early 20th century, the Kingdom of Tonga signed a Treaty of Friendship with the British Empire and became a protected state. This allowed Tongans to focus inward and forge their national identity and culture while being largely shielded from the political shockwaves that would plunge the world into war.

The end of the Great War saw the ascension of Sālote Tupou III, granddaughter of the first King of Tonga, and the first Queen Regnant of the island nation. What should have been a joyous occasion was overshadowed by the deaths of almost 10% of the population by the Spanish Flu — brought back by the British consular officers from the mainland after the war. Since then, the Kingdom has bounced back and has become a minor economic power in the Pacific, offering up its mineral reserves and vanilla crops to support creating more infrastructure and services for its people and modernizing the nation bit by bit.

What the Kingdom has kept close to the chest is the location of a font of telluric energy, discovered by scientist, Isileli Taumalolo. The Queen Regnant is only barely versed in the implications of this energy source but realized immediately that it could mean a Tonga no longer dependent on outside support and investment. Afraid other leaders will see her interest in the subject as fanciful at best, or unhinged at worst, she keeps it secret. While not public with this information, Sālote has been soliciting the expertise of scientists from across the globe to help her learn more about this resource and how to harness it to usher in a golden age for the tiny island.

## People of Interest

- **Milika Kaufusi:** A fervent believer in Tongan independence, Milika Kaufusi is not content to live a simple life as a wife and mother on her island home. Instead, she dove deep into philosophy and the native spiritual beliefs rather than the faith that missionaries brought with them, which the monarchy then converted to. Upon becoming Inspired and believing telluric energy to be a manifestation of *mana*, Milika has postulated that it can be used to enter Puluotu, the unseen world of the ancient Tongans, but it could be a doorway to more than she ever imagined.

- **Isileli Taumalolo:** A provisional member of Branch 9, stalwart, and recent graduate of the University of Sydney with degrees in Physics and Engineering, Isileli recently stumbled upon a welling of telluric energy while on surveys of the interior of Tonga and has since become the de facto point of contact regarding these wells. Ever the thinker, he has designed several prototypes of new engines that could change not just how Tongan society and commerce works, but the world.

## Europe

It is impossible to understate what the Great War did to Europe. It was one of the bloodiest conflicts in history with over sixteen million military deaths and roughly twenty million civilian casualties. The Versailles Treaty, which formally ended hostilities between the Allied and Central Powers, set the stage for an inevitable resurgence of war. The treaty forced Germany to adopt a democratically elected government, relinquish all its seized territories, and pay reparations. In the end, the United States did not ratify the Versailles treaty with Germany. Russia wasn't even present for it.

Meanwhile, the borders of Europe changed dramatically. The Austro-Hungarian Empire fractured. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia were born. From the war's ashes came Czechoslovakia, a new Austrian republic, a wounded Hungary, a reborn Poland, and a southern Slavic state known as Yugoslavia.

As a first step towards preventing a second war across the continent of Europe, and as a means of holding sovereign nations in check, the continent established the League of Nations. Headquartered in Geneva, it owes much of its initial success to President Woodrow Wilson, though he subsequently failed to persuade his fellow Americans to join the League. Almost at once, the League intervened with some success in disputes between nations which might have otherwise led to armed conflict.

Between the shattering of empires and the creation of the League, a new international order reigns over the world. The days of European political supremacy are over. And while the roaring twenties ushered in great economic progress, most of those gains evaporated with the Great Depression. By 1934, no European power is left unscathed, though some are in a better shape than others.

## France

Beneath their world-famous culture and behind their cosmopolitan artists, musicians, and writers, France remains a wounded creature. Its troubles began with the Great War, the bulk of which was fought on French soil, and whatever gains made during the roaring twenties ground to a slow crawl with the Great Depression. The mood has turned sour, and the masses focus their anger on Albert Lebrun, President of the Third Republic, who struggles to hold together a center-right Democratic Republican Alliance.

Unfortunately, a growing threat of politicized right-wing violence in the streets of Paris has resulted in anti-parliamentarian demonstrations, and the hardened economic mood has heightened French xenophobia. Foreigners and asylum-seekers suddenly find themselves

unwelcome, including thousands of Jews attempting to flee the Nazis. The Contedorri operate freely here, making a fortune as they smuggle individuals out of Germany and into France.

Meanwhile, for twenty-five years, the French Union for Women's Suffrage has fought hard. Since the end of the Great War a women's suffrage bill has passed the Chamber of Deputies four times, and each time the French Senate has blocked it. Given this frustration, Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux has taken an active interest. Under the guidance of an agent known as Le maître d'école, the Salon infiltrated the halls of government, blackmailing, bribing, and at times removing those politicians standing in the way of progress.

Finally, Branch 9's Operative Omega 4 handles all European affairs out of neighboring Lyon. Most believe this is due to its proximity to Operative Omega 1 in Geneva at the League of Nations, located only 150 kilometers away. In truth, it is there to keep an eye on the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in Southern France, home to some of the best-preserved figurative cave paintings in the world and a sizeable font of telluric energy. If its existence became known, the other Allegiances would almost certainly attempt to claim it.

## People of Interest

- **Algernon Demars:** The son of a French general and a Nigerian mistress, Algernon grew up torn between two worlds. He moved to France when he was a teenager joining an academy and entering the military for what would become an unremarkable career. Algernon served as a secretary for a prominent Colonel during the Great War spending most of the conflict far from the front lines. After the war, Algernon moved to Paris to become a liberal writer and philosopher. He built and continues to run *La Fosse Aux Lions*, a salon for those seeking a good time and a declared neutral territory among the Allegiances. If the Æon Society and the Ponatowski Foundation require an impartial place to meet, Algernon is the gentleman they call on.
- **Yvette Martin:** Dancer, singer, and entrepreneur, Yvette Martin is a force of personality that few can stand against. During the Great War she organized dozens of other young women for letter writing to soldiers on the front. What started as heartfelt letters intended to bring comfort to soldiers on the front ended up providing a different kind of comfort. Yvette organized a long-distance relationship service, where women wrote to soldiers as their wives and girlfriends, with all the interesting bits that entails. When the war ended and soldiers came home, she and her compatriots continued offering such comforts, but Yvette had rules and standards. Yvette now runs the largest and best organized brothel in Paris. She employs more women than any single other business in the city, pays a fair wage, and has a set of standards patrons must meet to enter her establishment. And her newfound stalwart powers make it easy for her to eject anyone who refuses to play by her rules.

## Germany

Nearly twenty years after the Great War, the 'Weimar Republic,' named after the town where its constitution was born, is in peril. With the Great Depression, Germany gained six million unemployed citizens, coupled with rampant inflation and widespread civil unrest.

Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party reaped the political benefits. They appealed to the wish of many Germans for strong measures and national unity. They exploited impatience with parliamentary politicians who had failed to prevent economic disaster, and they fueled resentment against the Versailles settlement believed by many Germans to be the root of their troubles as well as being morally unjust. The semi-military 'Storm Troops' of the Nazi movement grew rapidly in numbers as the crisis worsened. Like the early Italian Fascists, they terrorized political opponents and Jews without police interference. In 1930, the Nazis won 107 seats in parliament — just under a fifth of the total. By 1932, they were firmly in the majority.

Field-Marshal Hindenburg, President of the Republic, bent to the political winds and named Hitler as Chancellor. On January 30th, 1933, Hitler took office and immediately called for new elections, promising a coalition with various conservative groups. Instead, five months later, during the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler ordered the execution of two hundred of his political rivals. With President Hindenburg sick with lung cancer, the Nazi Party stands to gain unprecedented control if he were to die.

Of all the Allegiances, the Rational Experiment Group is by far the most prevalent in Germany. Doctor Elmar Striesow, a former member of Æon Society, leads the REG's efforts in Berlin. From his office inside the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture, Striesow has gained strong support for his endeavors, receiving money and resources to further the REG's work. According to Branch 9, the REG is well on their way to developing weapons of mass destruction, including advanced rocket testing on Borkum Island in the North Sea and blueprints for one-hundred-ton spider-tanks out of Essen. Meanwhile, unwilling test subjects, with some assistance from the Contedorri, arrive at the REG's lab in Munich. They never walk out again.

Efforts are currently underway, spearheaded primary through the International Detective Agency and Branch 9, to infiltrate and identify REG facilities throughout Germany. While they have had some success, the German authorities are suspicious of foreigners. This has forced the IDA and Branch 9 to conduct themselves cautiously.

## People of Interest

- **Doctor Elmar Striesow:** Elmar Striesow has always been a thinker. He studied physics under Max Planck in Berlin, but was always interested in germ theory and biology. He married the two in his own studies, using Planck's ideas about quantum theory and applying them to what appeared to be a limitless field of microbiology. Dr. Striesow got almost nowhere with his studies until the Hammersmith Incident sent telluric energy rocketing through the world. Nearly over night, Striesow's studies gained momentum and he began studying the effects of telluric energy on the human body. His studies garnered the most interest from the REG, who offered him a hefty stipend and a directive to find a way to weaponize his studies.
- **Hannelore Ferres:** Officially, Ferres joined the German nationalist youth movement in the 1920s becoming a leader in the Bund Deutscher Mädels, or League of German Girls. On paper, she functions as a female detective and a member of the *Geheime Staatspolizei*, better known as the Gestapo, the secret police answering directly to Heinrich Himmler, head of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). In truth however, she works directly for the Æon Society as a premier mesmerist and serves as a deep cover mole inside the Third Reich. From there, she feeds

intelligence back to the Allegiance, doing what she can to resist the Nazi Party. In spite of her true loyalties, she remains haunted by the things she has had to do in order to maintain her cover.

## Italy

Although Italy was on the winning side of the Great War, it suffered from a weak economy, rampant inflation, and massive unemployment. By 1922 this culminated in labor strikes across the country. The existing government could do little to stem the tide of unrest, and in an act of desperation, reached out to the Fascists for assistance. Led by Benito Mussolini, the Fascists believe in strong, authoritarian measures, executing their policies through fear and violence. Once installed as Prime Minister, Mussolini quickly ended democratic parliamentarianism. He has transformed the nation into a one-party dictatorship and systematically executes his political rivals. Branch 9 can do little but watch in horror.

As Italian Fascism takes hold, German Nazism does as well. The two powers see each other as political rivals and both view neighboring Austria as an extension of their nationalistic aims. Mussolini and Hitler met earlier this year in Vienna to discuss the fate of their eastern neighbor, though these talks ultimately fell apart. One month later, Nazi agents assassinated Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. In the aftermath, Mussolini publicly denounced Nazism. Branch 9 is doing their level best to maintain tensions between the two nations, but at present Mussolini has no immediate plans to retaliate.

The first organization to truly stand against the Mussolini is the Sicilian mafia, known as Cosa Nostra. Mussolini appointed Cesare Mori as Prefect of Palermo and ordered him to pacify the organization. Mass arrests followed, along with confiscated property, families taken hostage, and slaughtered livestock. In return, Don Ciccio, head of the Sicilian mafia, paid a small fortune to the King of the World for assistance. Now the Contedorri actively reinforce Cosa Nostra by targeting Fascist shipping routes, supply depots, prominent politicians, and rank-and-file Blackshirts.

Ironically, this is one of the few areas where the King of the World works in concert with Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux. The Salon have good reason to despise Mussolini, and for the moment, both Allegiances have a common enemy.

By contrast, Northern Italy is less chaotic, with Æon Society working out of the RMS *Percy*, currently docked at the Port of Venice. From their mobile base of operations, the Society provide aid to those most damaged by the unrest in Austria. They also smuggle antiquities out of Rome, sometimes using the Air Circus to do so. Unfortunately, several Society members have died over the past year, leading some to suspect a double agent somewhere within the local Society chapter's hierarchy.

## People of Interest

- **Gregorio Romano:** An Italian Jewish political leader, historian, philosopher, and anti-fascist activist, Gregorio has set himself as an enemy of the state. In Mussolini's early years, he publicly decried Fascism and is now wanted by the Italian government. From his hiding place in Rome, he organizes small resistance cells which actively attack Blackshirts and engage in open

resistance to the government. Gregorio is a man who is hard to pin down, for good reason, but makes himself available to anyone with anti-fascist leanings.

- **Iniga De Luca:** Italian poet and scholar, Iniga De Luca had lived a very full life even before she moved to the island of Sardinia to explore its beautiful landscape in retirement. She never expected that when she arrived, she would find near her home a portal to another dimension. Now she has taken on the mantle of explorer and linguist as she attempts to find a common way to communicate with its avian inhabitants.

## The United Kingdom

The past two decades have seen the United Kingdom relinquish control over several commonwealth nations. Geopolitically, former colonies, including Egypt, Iraq, and Ireland all claimed independence from Britain, though the Crown does continue to rule over Northern Ireland. After the Irish Free State declared independence in 1922 the two have been in an economic war which has only been exacerbated by the Great Depression. All parts of the United Kingdom suffer under economic downturn, though Scotland has been hit the hardest as industrial efforts grind to a halt in Glasgow.

By 1934, King George V's reign approaches its end. He is an admired monarch, and his son, Edward, Prince of Wales, waits in the wings. The heir-apparent has had a string of romances, causing great concern among the royal family. Little do they know, Edward has already become enamored with an American divorcee by the name of Wallis Simpson — a clandestine member of Le Salon des Femmes Nouveaux.

Meanwhile, Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald governs a Conservative majority. With rampant unemployment and widespread financial hardship, the country seesaws between the political left and right. Labor unrest, increased poverty, and a sense of isolationism contribute to a deeply divided nation. Political tension leads to a disjointed foreign policy, often conducted at cross purposes. As such, Britain has opted not to renew its Japanese alliance, choosing instead to partner its powerful navy with the up-and-coming United States.

Crime has increased, fueled in part by Contedorri agents out of London's Soho district. With an interest in gambling and racketeering, independent street gangs from Birmingham to Saffron Hill clash over territory, but quickly encounter the International Detective Agency. From an estate in Islington, the Old Man empowers the IDA to end the violence and remove the Contedorri from England altogether.

As the two political parties clash, the various Allegiances do so as well. From an office inside the Secret Intelligence Service building at Vauxhall Cross, Branch 9's UK analogue pushes for aggressive action, while Æon Society, with some influence within the House of Lords, pushes for a more diplomatic approach.

## People of Interest

- **Lucy Hebron:** Born in the Jamaica, Lucy's parents immigrated to Great Britain when she was just a child. Ever curious and infinitely clever, Lucy was always in trouble in during primary school for distracting the class with her desire to get more out of school. She later turned that inquisitive nature into a career when she happened across Sherlock Holmes during one of his

investigations and led him straight to his quarry with her own questions. Not to be outdone, he offered Lucy a position with his irregulars, and quickly became his most promising protégé. Now Lucy enjoys her own business as a private investigator and is a prominent member of the International Detective Agency.

- **Sir Henry Lyle:** After serving in the trenches of the Great War, a conflict which took his right leg below the knee and left him wielding a crutch for life, Sir Henry Lyle attended the University of Bristol. Afterward, he accepted a low-level position at the British Museum of London specializing in Ancient Greek antiquity. Within a decade, he became their chief curator charged with acquiring difficult to obtain items. For his efforts, King George V awarded Lyle with the Order of the British Empire. He also maintains a repository for the Æon Society located in the museum's bowels.

## USSR

In 1917, a 'March revolution' (which the Russians call the 'February revolution' due to their differing calendar) began with food riots in the capital. Disobedience and mutiny of the soldiers who should have suppressed them followed. The appearance of a new provisional government then led to the abdication of Tzar Nicholas II, but even this measure did not last.

The Bolsheviks, the largest and most influential socialist party in Russia, took matters into their own hands. In November (or October by the Russian calendar) of 1917 they ousted the provisional government. Civil war followed with the Communist Red Army fighting the so-called anti-Communist White Army. Three years later, the Bolshevik Red Army finally won the day. Russia has become the first country in the world with a Marxist government dedicated formally to advancing the world's workers, at least as the Bolsheviks saw it. The winter of 1922 gave birth to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Vladimir Lenin dominated the Bolsheviks during their revolution. But from 1921 onwards, he was often ill. Rivalries and personal grudges swelled among his colleagues. When he died in 1924, a complicated struggle inside the Party followed from which emerged a new leader whose power has become far greater than Lenin's had ever been: Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Today, Stalin rules with an iron grip. He has eliminated private enterprise, murdered and incarcerated his rivals, and industrialized the Soviet Union.

As the Soviet Union stands as the doorway between Europe and Asia, most of the Allegiances have some presence in the country. The Contedorri operate out of St. Petersburg, the Air Circus fly out of Arkhangelsk, and Branch 9 has agents throughout the nation. But no other Allegiance has a stake in the proverbial fight like the Ponatowski Foundation. Fiercely opposed to Stalin and Communism, the Foundation is engaged against the Soviets on multiple fronts. Even as the Soviets arrest members and incarcerate them in Siberian gulags, the Foundation conducts operations from Minks to Vladivostok. The Foundation has also nearly eradicated Æon Society within their sphere of influence, pushing them all the way back to Kiev. In the shadow conflict between the two, the Society is losing.

## People of Interest

- **Marko Burakov:** The Soviet patriot grew up in the isolated Ural Mountains, a simple teenage peasant at the time of the October Revolution. Burakov joined the Red Army, and after the subsequent civil war, served as a secretary for various regional Communist Party communities. During this time, he earned the confidence of Genrikh Yagoda, the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs. As Yagoda's right hand, Burakov spearheaded the Soviet Union's security and intelligence agency. He conducted counterintelligence, political suppression, forced penal labor, and the arrest, deportation, and execution of millions of Soviet and Ukrainian peasants. In addition to this, Yagoda has ordered Burakov to hunt down and eliminate all elements of the Ponatowski Foundation.
- **Ivan Staynskaya:** Ivan Staynskaya was a noble who saw his whole life ripped away in the blink of an eye. Ever the pragmatist, he knew the moment of the February Revolution was not a blip in history. He immediately evacuated his family and pushed other nobles to do the same. His quick thinking is what won him leadership in the Ponatowski Foundation during the civil war, and his ruthless desire for power are what keep him there now. Ivan is the driving force behind the Ponatowski Foundation, and the reason what would normally be a simple expeditionary force acts with military precision. Ivan hopes to harness telluric energy to take back Russia, but his aspirations won't stop there.

## Eastern Europe

A major result of the Great War was the breakup of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Validated by the Versailles Treaty of 1919, Austria and Hungary emerged as separate, smaller territories. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia became entirely new nations. Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan all attempted to follow suit, but the Bolsheviks reconstituted them back into Soviet Russia. The League of Nations did their best to hold things together, but without the backing of the United States, and with various cross-purpose agendas, their efforts proved fruitless. Caught between a Fascist West and a Communist East, Eastern Europe is a patchwork of competing ideologies with democracies, socialists, and dictators all vying for control.

Poland, freed from domination, established a democratic government in 1922 lasting a mere four years before social and economic distress forced the country into dictatorship under Prime Minister Józef Piłsudski. Today, the Order of Murder operates a major safe house in Warsaw where they give European clients new identities and then transport them elsewhere. Many of those clients are political prisoners exfiltrated from Bereza Kartuska prison.

Austria fares no better. Postwar Austria consists of various political camps, socialist and conservative alike, both of whom control far-ranging power structures and their own parliamentary forces. Violent clashes result in little headway. These forces are embattled at the highest level as fascist leader Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss tries to prevent the Austrian Nazi Party from gaining headway. The same holds true for the local Inspired. The Rational Experiment Group vies with Branch 9 for control over Graz which is situated near a telluric hotspot. The Æon Society is invested in keeping the Contedorri out of Vienna, with little luck,



and is as interested in the Graz telluric site as the other Allegiances. The result is a tightly controlled war of intrigue between all four Allegiances.

Meanwhile, after the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire, Hungary declared itself independent, and the government came under the control of the liberal National Council. Communist forces quickly overthrew the Council, leading to a series of elections and conflicts over the next decade. Finally, Gyula Gömbös was appointed as Prime Minister in 1932. He is not strong enough to run a truly fascist state, but is quite powerful, as well as openly anti-Semitic. The Æon Society is cautious when they travel to Budapest. While avoiding agents of the government, they hunt for telluric deposits in the caves of Northern Hungary.

Czechoslovakia proves to be the only nation in Eastern Europe able to function reasonably well as a democracy. Despite growing tensions, most notably among the nation's three million ethnic Germans, the Czech government demonstrates marked unity, and continues in relative stability. Few Allegiances have made headway in Czechoslovakia due to Petra Ahrám, an independent mesmerist of enormous power and influence. From her fortress in Prague, she keeps tabs on all Inspired in the nation and seems to always know whenever any allegiance member arrives in her nation.

Although Ukraine is technically part of the Soviet Union, its citizens have a different cultural background. During the Soviet occupation they have attempted, on more than one occasion, to gain independence. Soviet soldiers and secret police have enforced the industrialization of Ukraine, resulting in a man-made famine known colloquially as the Holodomor. Millions have died. Today, the Air Circus flies humanitarian supply missions into the country, coordinating their efforts with Æon Society agents operating out of Kiev.

Finally, under the newly born Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Alexander ruled an uneasy nation of newly unified Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The monarch attempted to hold the kingdom together, but ethnic clashes culminated in mass protests and violent unrest. Recently, Alexander was assassinated by an unknown assailant in Marseille, and the crown now rests with Alexander's eleven-year-old son, Peter II. Under a tenuous Regency, outside pressures threaten to pull the entire nation apart. The Æon Society is working in the area to provide support for the weary populace and keep an eye on the new king and his regent.

## People of Interest

- **Elena Huber:** Elena Huber has lived in Graz all her life. She attended the University of Graz and earned her post-secondary degree in chemistry. She applied to a doctorate program but was denied due to questions about her capabilities. Not one to be thwarted, she took up an independent study with Hephaestia Geary until Geary moved to the United States to study engineering at Cornell University in New York. Huber continued the work Geary and she had started in biomechanics and was cataloguing local wildlife when she stumbled upon a telluric hotspot. Fascinated by the strange flora and fauna growing there, she started intense studies on the area. It was only luck that Branch 9 found her before the Rational Experiment Group did.
- **Tamás Juhasz:** A private in the Royal Hungarian Honvéd, Juhasz barely survived the horrors of the Great War. Despite his natural talents with a rifle, Russia defeated his regiment first at Galicia and then at Warsaw. The Honvéd then moved to the Romanian front for the war's

duration. With the Central Powers defeated, Juhasz returned to the Slanec Mountains. There he lived a simple life, hunting and fishing in the forests and streams of his home. Years later, after encountering Sanger Rainsford in 1930, Juhasz joined the Æon Society. He now spends his time in northern Hungary, seeking out telluric hotspots and helping smuggle Jews out of the nation.

## North America

North Americas during 1934 are a hotbed of conflict and strife, of innovation and discovery, and of people trying to resist the injustice around them to make their world a better place. Coming out of the throes of the Great Depression, the nations here are looking towards brighter futures, but are not out of trouble yet. Recent droughts across Canada and the United States are halting economic recovery, and unemployment is still high. At the same time, North American nations are experiencing rapid industrialization, technological advances, and scientific inquiry all spurred by the vast telluric energy deposits found throughout the continent.

## Canada

For the past few years, Canada has been rocked by the Great Depression which was shortly followed by droughts in Saskatchewan that destroyed the heavily export dependent economy. Unemployment, poverty, and homelessness is at an all-time high. As the economic distress impacted the nation, Canada was not immune to the kind of xenophobia and hate that affected other countries on the continent. The downturn followed a factually unrelated wave of foreign newcomers who were blamed for the sudden lack of available work. Many, majorly from Asia, decided it would be better to just return home, while others were deported against their will, often kicking and screaming.

Despite its economic troubles, Canada is looking towards a bright future. In 1931, the Statute of Westminster granted legal autonomy to the nation, though at Canada's request the British Empire retained the right to edit the British North America Act. The Hyperborean Research Institute was founded in 1932 nearly twenty-one kilometers outside of Whitehouse in the Yukon. Due to the region's long and cold winters, Hyperborean and the Canadian Innovation Board (CIB) work together on unlocking the secrets to supercooling. They hope to use the concept to protect soldiers for winter campaigns, or else weaponize it to freeze over aircrafts or troops. The lead on this project, Priya Lakshmi, from Montreal, fielded the idea using purified water chilled far below its normal freezing point. Due to lack of particulates the water remains liquid, but when it touches ice, it freezes instantly. Not unlike the water droplets found in some clouds, freezing to the wings of poorly de-iced airplanes.

In September of 1934, two reporters toured the so called 'burnt out' areas of Saskatchewan, finding that the previous half dozen years of drought and the current financial collapse had lowered the value of life "to the lowest common denominator." Due to the destitution, only a few Canadian farmers remained hopeful, believing that the land was still recoverable, and that it only needed some rain. Many couldn't afford to stay, instead packing up their homes into their cars sans engines and hitched up to draft horses. They traveled north, settling wherever they could to eke out whatever life the land could provide.

The Æon Society has chapterhouses in Toronto and Vancouver, but do not venture into the interior. The Ponatowski Foundation is the only one interested in venturing into Canada's wildernesses, though several Rational Experimentation Centers have sprung up in the Northwest Territories.

## People of Interest

- **Mr. Cain:** To many in Canada, Mr. Cain is a helping hand and a lifeline. He offers money to get through the hard years, labor for rebuilding, kind words and advice to help folks get started somewhere else. For those who watch him buy up land on the cheap, and see through the network of favors he curries, however, Mr. Cain seems well positioned to turn Canadian land and resources into private armories and weapon development labs that would make the REG jealous. If not stopped, weaponized supercooling will be only one of the horrors that issues from Cain's facilities.
- **Priya Lakshmi:** A team leader in the Hyperborean Research Institute, Lakshmi is uncertain of her organization's connections with the American counterpart to her own Canadian Innovation Board, worried about how they would use her discoveries. She doesn't want her technology weaponized, instead she would have them used to protect people in the rough winters of the Canadian north, and further exploration of the world. She's watchful of every interaction between her and her GIST colleagues, and while working together towards the same goal, for now, she isn't adverse to throwing a wrench into everything should it look like it's going the wrong way. To that end, in a recent visit to Geneva, she recently got the contact information for Belladonna Montague, of the fabled Branch 9.

**[THIS NEWS ARTICLE SHOULD LOOK LIKE IT COMES FROM THE  
[TORONTO DAILY STAR IN THE 1930S.](#)]**

## The Graf Zeppelin Arrives in Toronto!

Toronto, Sunday, August 24, 1930

Carrying the hopes and dreams of future generations, onlookers spotted the Graf Zeppelin's graceful outline in Harlan's Point Beach after her swift crossing over the continental United States. Traveling like a light cloud, she arrived safely at her anchorage in Toronto.

The Graf Zeppelin, of German design, is a hydrogen filled rigid airship. At 775-feet long and with a cruising speed of 75 miles per hour, a crew of thirty-six operate the vessel, and along with the lovely Grace Marguerite, Lady Drummond-Hay, includes nineteen very lucky passengers.

Thousands were on hand to welcome the adventurous Englishwoman as she guided her great liner into port. With masterly airmanship, she anchored the vessel during the fourth stop on her valiant attempt to circumnavigate the entire globe. Her safe arrival indicates a new era of progress, one in which time and distance are all but defeated as we leap forward toward the future.

[END NEWS ARTICLE.]

## The Caribbean

While the Great Depression ravaged the entire world, many Caribbean and Central American colonies were already in dire straits. After the Great War, The United Kingdom and other colonial powers began to subsidize their own fruit and vegetable production over importing it from their colonies, supporting European sugar beet production over island sugar cane. Soon colonial farms had a lot more product than demand, driving prices into the ground. Soon after, labor forces in British Honduras, Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana took to the streets.

Facing unfair wages and increased work in an unstable economy, workers rose up, first striking and then rioting. Amid the violence and chaos, the Invictus Umbra guild house, Pirate's Bounty, out of Tortuga Island in Haiti has been using the riots to rob rich farm owners, both in the French and British controlled islands. It's difficult to know if the thieves are merely taking advantage of the unrest or fueling it, however, as this is exactly the sort of thing they enjoy doing. Either way, ships secretly sailing under the Invictus flag have helped block European ships from coming to aid their island bound allies.

## People of Interest

- **Ruby Rodriguez:** Colonial cargo ships, island-hopping mail carriers, rich fools in yachts; none are safe from the new scourge of aerial piracy that Ruby Rodriguez has unleashed. From the single rickety biplane she first stole as a teenager, to the veritable private air force the ruthless raider has assembled since, her Flying Corsairs make an already unstable Caribbean that much more dangerous. An air pilot and decisive leader, it's unclear from where she plots and launches her raids; is there some hidden island airfield, or has she done the unthinkable and stolen one of Dr. Zorbo's flying carriers?
- **Tamsen Singh:** Founding member of the Family Caribbean, Singh helps the farm workers from all over the British Caribbean, turning rioting into political might, and hoping to eventually take their demands to Parliament in London. Tamsen has the luck of a daredevil, and as long as it holds out, he might even get what he wants, which is the same respect as the white farmers and everyone to have a decent and fair wage. He'll need it, as he seems to constantly find trouble, even when not looking for it. From accidentally uncovering an Order of Murder safehouse to accidentally blowing up a Flying Corsair landing strip with fertilizer, Tamsen hasn't been making friends of the more unsavory elements in the Caribbean.

## Central America

Many of the leaders in Central America find themselves wrapped up in the coils of United Fruit, while fighting against a rising socialist tide. Drawing aid from their Euro-American corporate allies, they each try to apply their boots to the necks of their people, who in turn being to resist against their oppression, sometimes for the first time.

Until 1929, much of Honduras' fruit farms were owned by Samuel Zemurray, out of New Orleans, and his company Cuyamel Fruit. United Fruit Company of Boston bought them out for five times what their farms were originally worth. Where Zemurray was a hands-on owner, well-liked by the local growers and helpful in the community, United Fruit backed the eventual dictator, General

Carías Andino. Not unlike Mussolini's paramilitary squads, the General tried to squash dissent in the nation, but only succeeded in pushing it further and further underground. Leaders in the Liberal party and social activists, who escaped such oppression, went to hassle his regime and the actions of his National party. On its face, Honduras seems an agricultural paradise with the firm hand of United Fruit keeping farms at work.

The financial tidal wave that was the Great Depression hit Guatemala in 1930. In the election a year later, General Jorge Ubico, a wealthy landowner, ran unopposed for the presidency. While focusing on strengthening his country's economy, he garnered aid from the United States to fund public works projects and changed racist laws that unfairly regulated where the nation's indigenous people, who were more than half of the Guatemalan population, could live and work. At the same time, however, he cozied up to United Fruit, eventually earning it the moniker El Pulpo, or The Octopus, for its tentacles seemed to reach everywhere. Ubico allowed the foreign company to control its port on the Atlantic Coast, Puerto Barrios, and gave it sweetheart tax exemptions.

Unlike many other parts of the region, Costa Rica was a bastion of democracy and fair elections. Struck hard by the Depression, however, right wing extremists attempted a coup, but failed utterly, as Costa Ricans overall believed more in their traditional government than in the violent upheaval the extremists promised.

This stands in contrast to El Salvador, which had been wracked with unrest for generations. In January of 1931, El Salvador had its first free elections in twenty years, only to have that government overthrown by a General Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez in December of the same year. He believed in strange science told to him by fringe professors and occultists, even believing that painting streetlights blue would help stop the spread of an epidemic. Martínez, too, feared communists, crushing a rebellion of farm workers who he dubbed communists in 1932.

Like El Pulpo, the resistance to United Fruit is everywhere, working to free farms from their corporate yoke. Several Allegiances have interests in the Central American nations as the Rational Experiment Group seeks to infiltrate United Fruit and gain a controlling interest in its biodiversity division and Branch 9 seeks to tamp down any dangerous technology they might generate.

## People of Interest

- **Edwina Orellana:** Torn between trying to heal the scars of the last decade's wars and ongoing Depression and opposing the tightening of Andino's dictatorial grip on the country, Edwina Orellana is a constantly exhausted mesmerist. Her far reaching powers enable her to visit, dreamlike, with those in need or to spy on the halls of power, but she cannot sustain being everywhere. Her confederates worry that Edwina will either be found out and eliminated by the Honduran security service, or simply succumb to exhaustion as she tries to fix her country barring allies able to bear some of her burden.
- **Jorge's Razor:** It is said that in Urbico's Guatemala, a pin does not drop without him hearing it. While his regular secret police are no small part of it, the powerful mesmerist known only as his "Razor" plays no small part in maintaining that impression. Happy to exert power over others' lives, the Razor spies on political enemies, labor organizers, and potential rivals,

occasionally delving into manipulation or outright assassination at Jorge's command. Occasionally loaned out to friendly dictators in the region, Jorge's Razor is a blight upon Guatemala and a burden upon its people.

## Mexico

Elected president in late 1934, former general in the Mexican Revolution, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río made his first action to cut his own salary in half and turned the former presidential residence, Chapultepec Castle, turned into a history museum. In defiance of the interests of party leaders who helped him gain office, he closed the casinos and brothels they owned. Never using an armored car, he gathered much respect from Mexicans of all stripes, moving them to do what they could to help others. All the while, the wealthy political cronies from the previous government were not going to take Mexico's new stance against largesse and corruption laying down. Whispers have reached his ears that these rich oligarchs are putting out feelers to get in contact with the Contedorra. The President plans to take a ship to Lima soon to discuss their developing interest in telluric energy. At the same time, however, *Cachalot's Hunger* has been sighted in the Southern Pacific.

Built on private land purchased by the odd tobacco heiress Josephina de la Cruz, private residences were built for the victims of America's deportation of hundreds of people of Mexican lineage, regardless of their actual connection to anyone in the country. These *colonias* were looked upon as a fine solution to the problem. Many say, "*Que se quedan allá*" about these poor people, "let them stay over there." Many of them had left Mexico when the United States took over the land at the end of the Mexican-American War half a century earlier. Those who remained imagined they lived a better life than them. Now that they are back, the general sentiment is that they can make do with whatever, as their forebearers once left the Mexicans to do.

Cárdenas' government felt the same as many of their citizens, the repatriates were not his problem, and so de la Cruz's *colonias* were largely ungoverned, eventually having their basic services like water, electricity, and trash pickup also provided by de la Cruz's management company. Away from the only home many of them knew, in a place that was not only a strange environment but whose natives were hostile for things largely out of their control, the repatriates only had themselves and their mysterious benefactor to count on.

Elsewhere, fueled by mysterious crystal skulls carrying great power purportedly found in the Selva Lacandona — all of which were hoaxes — explorers from all over the Euro-American world search for Aztec and Mayan secrets. Some believe these ruins hold strange secrets or a key to understanding telluric energy. While it is true that many of the places are steeped in telluric energy wells, the nature of such is up for much debate. Ancient Mayans were exceptionally intelligent and skilled in both mathematics and astronomy, and several scholars from Mexico City wonder if they had not discovered telluric particles well before the Hammersmith Incident made the energies more prominent in the world.

Explorers from all over travel to Mexico to view and "discover" the Aztec ruins that dot the country. Ponatowski expeditions travel out from Mexico City regularly, but also Air Circus and

Æon Society explorers have their fair share of interests in the various telluric energy deposits around the nation.

## People of Interest

- **Josefina de la Cruz:** Born of tobacco millionaires Jesus and Yolanda de la Cruz, Josefina was born in Nayarit, but went to boarding schools in Spain and France, where she met with others who may be called ‘gentlemen thieves’, were the writers of such fiction more open minded. Learning everything she knows from them and giving herself the new name of El Zorro Escarlata, The Scarlet Fox, she spent the twenties robbing banks and grifting the mega-rich out of their millions. She only began to build her *colonias* as a way to lander her ill-gotten fortunes, but once she saw the plight of the repatriates she was housing, her heart was moved. Acting as their makeshift governor, The Scarlett Fox does what all of the governments in their repatriate’s lives refuse to do.
- **Sir Alister Zane II:** A British fop and member of the Ponatowski Foundation, this explorer is obsessed with Mayan step pyramids. After native Lacandon people showed him one and his telluric detector went wild, he posited that the Mayans used telluric energy to create their pyramids. He now wastes Cambridge funds and a great deal of his time trying to prove his theory correct, often subjecting the natives to barbarous interrogations all in the name of seeking the truth.

## The United States

The United States sits at the cusp of a horrific storm of nigh apocalyptic proportions as it struggles to recover from plummeted global financial markets. The Roaring Twenties whimpered into the Great Depression, and conflicts in Europe leave Americans worried for another globe spanning war, making many in the States want to close ranks. President Hoover’s refusal to successfully address economic losses in the face of the downturn, lost him the 1932 election to the upstart Governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt began revitalizing the American economy by implementing the New Deal, creating and funding multiple government programs, including The Grand Investment in Science and Technology (GIST) which supports the best and brightest that America can produce. The president appointed Nikola Tesla as Commissioner of GIST, aged but no less sharp at seventy-seven years old.

The GIST program leads to the invention of frequency modulation (or FM) radio by New Yorker, Edwin Howard Armstrong, and the differential analyzer, a computation machine, by MIT’s Vannevar Bush. Later, Tesla himself would unveil his newest invention using GIST backing, an electromagnetic pulse grenade, harmless to people but simply devastating to technology.

Largely using GIST funding, this year’s world’s fair in Chicago, called A Century of Progress International Exposition, celebrated both the city’s centennial and gave fairgoers a hopeful look at a not-too-distant future. Little do they know that the future is closer than they think, as the exposition is an academic arms race between GIST, the Canadian Innovation Board, Branch 9, and other similar organizations to try and recruit the best and brightest minds of the day.

Meanwhile, economic pressures fan the flames of hate all over the country. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, led a successful campaign of social justice, preventing John J. Parker, a white supremacist, from elevating to the Supreme Court in 1930. Alphonse Blanchard, one of the NAACP leaders out of Baton Rouge, now spearheads a nationwide route of many of the senators who voted to confirm Parker. All the while, he turns the tide, convincing Congress and Roosevelt to try to pass federal anti-lynching laws.

**[BEGIN FORMATTING AS A HAND-WRITTEN JOURNAL ENTRY]**

From the personal diary of GIST Commissioner Nikola Tesla, Translated from Serbian:

Friday, 13th September, 1933

Visited with a young woman from Ann Arbor today about her proposal, a Winifred Cooper. Her idea to create a train propulsion system using magnetism and super conduction is truly interesting, but I wonder about its other implications. I can see, through their usual clandestine budgetary flim-flam, that Saoirse Green and her Branch 9 are also interested in this idea.

Green believes herself to be in the shadows, but I'm wise to her wiles. Their hawkish scientists drafted plans to incorporate superconductors into tank armor, allowing them to conduct possible energy weaponry away from the personnel within, and maybe even divert shells and bullets using diamagnetism.

The specter of the Great War weighs heavy on my mind, and I would rather not have this young woman's discovery used for war making. Once Secretary Woodring gets debriefed on Green's plot and takes it to Mr. President, I won't have any choice in the matter. I can only hope that my suggestion that Ms. Cooper patent her diagrams allows her to work on trains despite whatever the bloodthirsty hawks may want from her technology.

**[END FORMATTING]**

Elsewhere in what was America's breadbasket, the farms of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico, have been afflicted by the worst drought in American history. Windswept dust and arid conditions forced thousands of Oakies, named as many of them come from Oklahoma, to flee west. They hoped to find somewhere new to farm and reestablish their lives in states like California, Washington, and Arizona, but these regions aren't as welcoming as they hoped, causing them to continue to struggle to find work.

Gordon Washington, the son of black farmers in Oklahoma, has been hard at work trying to find a way to combat the dust clouds, and bring rain back to the afflicted areas. Having just received the much-needed GIST funding for his rocket-based cloud seeding invention, he hopes spraying the clouds of dust with supercooled water will cause rain. Currently he awaits shipment of his prototype from German fabricators, delivered aboard the airship Hindenburg.

The United States plays home to both the Æon Society and the Air Circus, and many members of Branch 9 consider the United States their true nation of origin. All three Allegiances have several chapterhouses across the nation. Seven Brothers operate heavily on the west coast, while the



Contedorri attempts to make inroads on the east coast. The Archivists work throughout the nation to reclaim indigenous artifacts currently housed in museums across various states.

## People of Interest

- **Alphonse Blanchard:** An NAACP leader out of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Blanchard lived under the thumb of Jim Crow and put his own life and limb at risk to end the lynching scourge that plagues America. He gained fame for leading a nationwide fight against installing pro-segregation Supreme Court nominee John J. Parker. Alphonse is an outspoken activist who devotes his time and energy to giving legal aid to those in need. The Æon Society has courted him on numerous occasions, but he reserves all his aid and support for the few Order of the Stars members who have reached out to him.
- **Maxwell Mercer:** Millionaire philanthropist, explorer, sometimes academic, and always meddling Max Mercer is the founder and leader of the Æon Society. While he grew up in Chicago, Mercer now lives in New York and travels the world in service to the Society. Often seen heading up major operations, he isn't afraid to get his hands dirty when it comes to ensuring the Æon Society's vision of helping all of humanity reach its fullest potential. Max is also the most powerful daredevil alive, and is deeply aware of his own probability bending abilities, which allows him to manipulate time itself.

## South America

The countries of South America had found their stride before the crashing wave of the Great Depression. A decade earlier, only Brazil took a side in the global conflict of the Great War. Argentina saw America as a bully and their economic rival in the region, and became a leader for neutrality in a war in Europe about European problems.

## Argentina

Under the corrupt rule of President Agustín Pedro Justo Rolón, Argentina allowed much of the country's economy to fall into foreign hands, namely the British, all under siege from attempted coups and assassination attempts. In 1933, coups broke out in Buenos Aires, Corrientes, Entre Rios, and Misiones, leading to a thousand arrests. By the start of 1934, a joint uprising of loyalist military and politicians take to the streets, this time in Santa Fe, Rosario, and Paso de los Libres. Many leaders were arrested, and some exiled, but the fight against injustice continues.

A key to the uprising was the use of Captains Flavia and Lola Sosa and their Air Circus team. Known among the group as the Wind Wives, the two flew supply runs between the three major sites of the uprising. Food, supplies, weapons, all critically needed and with the army blockading the major roads, the rebellion took to the skies.

## People of Interest

- **Simone Aguirre:** Seizing the opportunity provided by Argentina's recent strife, Simone Aguirre and several coconspirators have been quietly stealing and auctioning off Argentinian resources and treasures to the highest bidder. Much of it involves wholesale theft and sale of natural resources to the Contedorri, Seven Brothers, or corrupt foreign governments. A recent rise in strange creatures and telluric artifacts from remotest Patagonia has turned Aguirre into a

broker for the REG, Doktor Zorbo, and stranger buyers abroad. Willing to kill to preserve her operation, Aguirre will continue to plunder Argentina for her own gain unless someone stops her.

- **Benjamin Ledesma:** Benjamin is a minor official who has survived the 1930 coup and flourished as his mesmerist powers have grown. As foreign companies attempt to make inroads into Argentina's rapidly changing economy taking advantage of corruption and graft which grease the wheels for British beef barons, American auto companies, and friends to the regime, Ledesma tries to turn back the tide. He is building his own network of illicit favors and seized wealth. Benjamin could easily turn into an arch-criminal or a pillar of society, depending who aids and guides his continuing efforts.

## Brazil

After four years of an interim government, in July of 1934, Brazil established their first constitution written from scratch by leaders the populace of Brazil elected themselves. These leaders also voted in their acting president, Getúlio Vargas, under this constitution. The same year the University of São Paulo and the National Institute of Statistics were both established, marking the year in the eyes of many as one of a fresh step into a brighter tomorrow.

Knowing that many of the slaves kidnapped from Africa ended up in Brazil, the Order of the Stars, far from their Moroccan roots, have begun to look for new members here. Returning home after his training in South Africa, Marcelino de Silva becomes a professor with the University of São Paulo, opening his home to whatever Inspired people he can find.

## People of Interest

- **Otávio Azevedo:** The University of São Paulo brought together many branches of academia, combining multiple institutions into an academic powerhouse. Professor Otávio Azevedo uses the University's broad scope and knowledge base to study and harness telluric energies, both natively occurring within the Amazon rainforest and beyond. Sponsoring practical experimentation and investigative expeditions, Azevedo's initiatives hint at advancements in understanding and utilization of telluric powers in the future. Control over Azevedo's discoveries in a country still struggling with internal challengers to its populist leadership is unclear, leading some in the Æon Society to fear Azevedo's work even as they collaborate with him.
- **Antônia Rossi:** Brazil has recently undergone one successful military coup in 1930 and an attempted revolution in 1932; Antônia Rossi's may be the next to erupt. A stalwart whose supernatural powers of perception have left her unsatisfied with both the Vargas-ruled government and his putative opposition, Antônia has begun to rally dissatisfied citizens and new Inspired to her side. While her personal dynamism and steadfast belief in Brazil embracing a tellurically active future rallies many to her cause, Antônia leaves nothing to chance, and has begun assembling an arsenal of Inspired and super science to challenge Brazil's military directly.

## Columbia

Having concluded a short war with Peru the year before, the League of Nations upheld previous treaties that awarded Columbia a disputed area in the Amazon. Few outside the region understood the truth of why the area was wanted, believing it to be about heavy sugar tariffs and a bad previous treaty. In fact, Peruvian researchers from Universidad Nacional de San Antonia

Abad del Cusco found a hitherto unknown Incan settlement site in the rainforest there, with evidence relevant to the school's telluric studies on the Inspired.

Belladonna Montague, Branch 9's envoy to the League, helped broker a deal with the two nations. She reserved Columbian sovereignty over the area, including whatever was found there, but allowed Peruvian access. With the unrest there at the time, the new government had little interest in holding the area and continuing conflict. Furthermore, it allowed Montague to get Branch 9 agents into the exploration team as well.

## People of Interest

- **Javier Medina:** Entranced with the beauty of the rainforest and intrigued by its hidden secrets, Javier has spent his life studying its pathways and preparing for expeditions into its heart. However, as explorers seeking unseen treasures or telluric mysteries and surveyors looking for national resources and secure transport routes demand his services, Javier has become concerned that he may end up destroying what he loves. Budding stalwart powers give Javier the opportunity to complete ever more bold expeditions — or to end others' attempts at exploration.
- **Mattias Ramírez:** Many wealthy landowners and corporate interests are unhappy with the changes inside Colombia. Mattias Ramírez, scion of wealth and influence, not only dislikes the economic changes, but the potential attention they could bring to his secret facilities. A powerful mesmerist, Mattias engages in unscrupulous experiments on unfortunate animals and kidnappees, seeking to harness the powers of artifacts recovered from deep in the rainforest that respond to his powers. So far, Mattias has only managed to mutate and scar his victims with them, but he's sure that he'll soon perfect Mesmeric powers over flesh itself.

## Peru

In Peru, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Miguel Sánchez Cerro put an end to the decades' long dictatorship of Augusto B. Leguía. Fueled by economic hardship that everyone was facing, and the political decisions made by Leguía, the revolt quickly spread among the military. Leguía fled Lima to a naval cruiser, escaping the grasp of justice. Cerro's new government is both trying to put Peru back together while looking for their fugitive former dictator.

In opposition to Cerro's military rule sits the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) founded years before as a progressive democratic political party intent on anti-imperialist rule. Led by Haya de la Torre, and proposed to be representative of the masses, the party opposes military rule and oligarchical suppression in Peru. This has led to several violent and brutal clashes between the two over the years.

Branch 9 has several chapterhouses throughout South America, and Peru is no different. They are deeply involved with the political atmosphere in the area, despite their a-political seeming nature. They are not the only Allegiance with chapterhouses in the area, but they are the most numerous. The Rational Experimentation Group has set up a laboratory just outside Cusco in the foothills of the Andes, though what their goals are is anyone's guess.

## People of Interest

- **Isobel Parades:** An early experimenter in cinema in the town of Iquitos, Isobel Parades uses her mesmerist powers to imbue her short films with mind altering effects. Interested only in furthering her unique brand of art, her abilities would prove dangerously powerful if turned to supernaturally strong propaganda or even mass hypnosis. A failed Branch 9 attempt to shut down her studio has made her wary of any outside interference, and she now produces new works at a dizzying pace, attracting the attention of the Rational Experimentation Group and others who would misuse her powers.
- **Diego Perez:** Member of banned political party, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, and disenfranchised from normal Peruvian politics, Diego seeks to build ties with anti-Imperialists and anti-authoritarians across the region. Often hiring Air Circus pilots or similarly danger inured adventurers to help pass messages and supplies across country borders and throughout Peru's rugged landscape, Diego hopes to spread seeds of liberty throughout the land that will outlive both the present Peruvian administration and himself.

[BEGIN NEWSPAPER STYLE]

## Sky-Soaring Stuntwoman Survives Sinister Strike

Friday, 1 May 1934

HOUSTON, Black and Indian Aviatrix "Queen Bess" Coleman, famous for her "loop-the-loop" stunts, stunned the Houston Aerodrome audience when a bomb detonated aboard her aeroplane. Immediately after the explosion, her plane flipped upside-down, leaving her dangling outside of the cockpit, as thick black smoke poured from the engine and mechanical pieces rained from the sky. Instead of falling to her doom, "Brave Bessie" clung to her craft's fuselage. Although her strength saved her from immediate death, her Curtiss JN-4 still perilously plunged towards the ground.

Coleman climbed back into the inverted cockpit and regained control of her wounded craft, righting it. Despite flying blind due to the smoke flowing from the engine, Coleman executed a tight horizontal turn that brought her back over the aerodrome. In under a minute, Bessie Coleman had gone from facing certain death to performing a perfect 3-point landing. Once her aeroplane was safely on the ground, she leapt from the cockpit to the ground, leaving her still smoking the plane to scour the grandstands for her would-be assassin. This is not Bessie's first problem with her aeroplane, having narrowly avoided a fatal crash shortly after a performance in Jacksonville in 1926.

Texas Rangers have already begun searching for the culprit. Early reports suggest that the bomber may have been infuriated by Coleman's insistence that the Houston Aerodrome crowd be racially integrated. Although the audience was still mostly segregated, they all walked through a single gate, regardless of whether they were White, Black, Indian, or Mexican.

Mrs. Coleman has been a professional aviatrix for 13 years, 2 years longer than her fellow FAI graduate Amelia Earhart. Her fame and skill with aeroplanes entertain crowds of all colors and

give Black children, particularly girls, hope and ambition for the future. It can be assumed that whoever planted the bomb in Queen Bess' aeroplane sought to snatch that hope away.

Anyone with any information about the sabotage should contact the Texas Rangers or Mrs. Coleman directly.

**[END NEWSPAPER STYLE]**

**[BEGIN NEWSPAPER STYLE]**

## Flying Fugitive Physician Family Foils Fuzz, Filches from Flatfoots

Wednesday, 18 July 1934

WASHINGTON, Marie Equi, outlaw doctor, has evaded the BOI once again. The Bureau tracked her to an airfield just outside of Baltimore. Although they seized her aeroplane and all the materials within it, Equi, her roommate, and her child proved too slippery to capture. Additionally, an anonymous source at the BOI states that the Bureau is currently missing an aeroplane and that Equi may be responsible.

Infamous for flouting the law and helping the less fortunate, Dr. Equi has been a wanted fugitive for over a decade. Despite long-standing warrants for her arrest, she flies across the nation, dispensing medical aid and labor advice. Experts estimate that she's responsible for over 100 labor strikes, nearly \$15 million in increased wages to workers, and countless abortions and other procedures.

Dr. Equi first rose to fame for flying up and down the West Coast, dispensing medical aid to all in need, earning federal commendations for her aid during the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake. Sadly for the doctor, her efforts to promote labor relations were not nearly as well received and she was arrested for punching out three police officers after one of them clubbed a pregnant woman during a labor protest. Equi served a year in jail for her fight.

After her release, she began protesting the Great War, claiming that the war effort exploited laborers. This placed her squarely in the BOI's crosshairs, who tried and convicted her for sedition. Although sentenced to 3 years, she escaped after organizing two simultaneous riots in San Quentin State Prison on May 1, 1921: one for the prisoners' living conditions and one for the guards' lack of pay.

Since then, the FBI has been on the search for Dr. Equi, as well as her wife Harriet F. Spekart. Although there are no warrants for the arrest of their 19-year-old daughter Mary, she is wanted for questioning.

[END NEWSPAPER STYLE]

## Strange Places

### Arctic Circle

Whilst on route toward New York City from London on her victory tour after circumnavigating the world in 1930, Lady Drummond-Hay's LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin was blown off course by strong northern winds and soon found itself adrift near the Aurora Borealis during a geomagnetic storm. This up-close run-in with the Aurora Borealis was not only breathtaking, it was also history-making in that during this storm, images of another world with tall white spires floating in the sky were clearly visible through the rifts and eddies of the aurora. It appeared that these floating cities were populated by highly intelligent, winged humanoids who subsequently took note of Lady Drummond-Hay and her magnificent zeppelin and initiated first contact.

These beings, colloquially known as "Seraphim", were just as curious as their Earth-born counterparts but otherwise kept a polite distance. Excited by the prospects this new discovery entailed, Lady Drummond-Hay took extensive notes and photographs of the phenomena, reporting back to Maxwell Mercer of the Æon Society with the strong suggestion that a northerly outpost be next on the Society's agenda. A more formalized expedition through the aurora is currently in early planning stages, but there is some urgency — for it would not take long for other, more exploitative explorers to realize that what they saw was not just mere coincidence, but proof of theories only whispered about in secret parlors.

Since the discovery of the Seraphim and their floating cities through the aurora, it has been posited that compared to other strange places which appear to be telluric hotspots or lost civilizations, that there is a dimensional rift between worlds which requires aeronautics to traverse through. Those who have studied it are uncertain if those on the other side have in turn recognized that there is a rift, and whether the Seraphim are studying them as much as they are studying the Seraphim.

### Bermuda Triangle

Mysterious disappearances of ships in the Caribbean have held a place in the collective consciousness of individuals who believe that there is no such thing as coincidence, and it is not hard to see why. In 1918, naval vessel USS Cyclops disappeared without a trace soon after departing Barbados on its way back to port in Norfolk, Virginia. There was no trace of the ship, and while it was believed that perhaps enemy combatants had sunk it, most of that was dismissed as by that point the war was largely over.

In 1930, a ship sailed into port in Miami. It was, after twelve years of being considered lost at sea, the USS Cyclops with its entire crew complement on board and in good health. While none of the sailors could attest to what caused their absence with certainty, they spoke of an entirely new world, unbound from the laws of science and physics as they knew them. As the USS Cyclops sailed upon a brackish sea, encountering semi-intelligent tendrils that would reach out and 'touch' the ship before retreating. It was determined that they were not 'sailing' in the traditional sense, but rather gliding across what they discovered to be a sea of obsidian glass.

Despite their documentation of these phenomena, these experiences were chalked up to being cabin fever and severe effects of isolation on the psyche — with only a select few knowing that these reports were true. Long the subject of speculation and superstition, the Bermuda Triangle, its vertices being Miami, San Juan, and the titular Bermuda, has since been discovered to be a Strange Place. Though the exact location of where the crossing point is still subject to conjecture, it is believed that every ship that has ever crossed through can indeed return through.

**[BEGIN TELEGRAM DISPATCH.**

**ART NOTE: THIS SHOULD BE ON WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM HEADER, SEE [LINKED IMAGE](#) FOR WHAT THAT SHOULD LOOK LIKE.]**

**Received at:** SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

**Date:** 1932 MAY 26 PM 2 23

PRA89 43 WASHINGTON DC

MS. BESS COLEMAN=

THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE REMARKABLE=

EVIDENCE OF WHAT WE ONLY THEORIZED RE: TELLURIC ENERGY  
STRENGTHENS OUR MISSION=

IF YOU DISCOVER MORE, WRITE SO THAT THE SOCIETY CAN MOBILIZE TO THESE  
AREAS=

MM.

**[END TELEGRAM DISPATCH.**

**NOTE: SOME ART ASSETS SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO THIS DISPATCH, SHOWING THE VARIOUS “STRANGE PLACES” OF THE WORLD]**

## The Cradle

Sometimes called the Cradle of Life, the Cradle of Civilization, or the Cradle of Humankind, the entrance to this strange dimension roams across Africa, chiming in time with the currents of telluric energy across the planet.

Within the Cradle is a beautiful world, untouched by the modern world’s pollution or environmental exploitation. Functioning like a living record of species which once walked the Earth, and plenty which still do, explorers have encountered dinosaurs, dodos, woolly mammoths, Tasmanian tigers, and more. After an encounter with talking gorillas, some even believe that this dimension is where the first humans existed and evolved, living eternally before their descendants walked the Earth for the first time and met the fate of death in turn.

Unfortunately, this sanctuary is now threatened by nefarious forces from all over the world. The Ponatowski Foundation believes that the secret to immortality lies here, and that telluric energy is the key to bringing it to Earth. Members of the Æon Society have no consensus on the matter, but they worry that harvesting such a secret could spell doom for the Cradle itself, and drive millions of species to extinction. The recent disappearance of Cyrille Dubois has only increased the urgency of this matter.

Thankfully, the entrance is difficult to locate; it never stays in one place for more than a day, and while it can be found anywhere in the Congo, it only reveals itself to those who are at death's door.

## The Lost Cities of Africa

Africa is a continent of lost histories and civilizations. To the north, archeology thrives in the Sahara, as the ruins of Egyptian, Roman, and indigenous peoples are uncovered every month. In the south, explorers pursue ancient ruins of local legends, seeking riches and fame for these discoveries. In every case though, the true owners of this history — the descendants of African countries — are pushed aside, and their heritage is loaded onto ships bound for distant museums, never to be seen again.

Infinitely more dangerous are artifacts from lost cities. Archivists speculate that thousands of years ago, before the first river valley civilizations, cities of incredible technology rose up in the deserts, savannahs, and jungles of Africa, before they were sealed away into the crust of the planet. But with the influx of telluric energy in the world, the machinations that once hid such cities are now revealing them to the people of Africa again. Some guard the secret of their existence; others enlist the aid of explorers. Either way, the technology within is so dangerous that Branch 9 is taking a personal interest in securing such artifacts from the lost cities.

Unfortunately, this has led to tension with the Archivists, who are attempting to catalog these cultures before they are lost to history. This led some of their members to inform the Invictus Umbra of their existence, and as a result, a shadowy conflict has begun between Invictus and Branch 9 operatives over the fate of these mysterious underground cities.