



THE DAY AFTER

RAGNAROK

AOP2006 * \$19.95 * AN ATOMIC OVERMIND BOOK



POWERED BY
FATETM

A SETTING FOR FATE CORE
BY KENNETH HITE WITH LEONARD BALSERA

Know, O Prince, that between the years when the Serpent fell and the oceans drank America and the gleaming cities, and the rise of the Sons of Space, there was an Age undreamed of, when nations guttered low and flared brilliant across the poisoned world like dying stars—California and Texas each claiming the flag of the West, France torn asunder and facing the desert, harsh Mexico, slumbering Brazil, Argentina where the seeds of Thule lay waiting, ancient lands of Persia and Arabia and Iraq between two empires, the coldly clutching Soviet Union whispering behind its Wall of Serpent, Japan whose warriors wore steel and silk and khaki. But the proudest kingdom of the world was Australia, the last green and pleasant land, ringed around by its dominions and bulwarked by the sea...



Welcome to the world at the end of the world. The skies are shrouded with burning, oily smoke, the Earth groans under a poisoned corpse, and the only way out may be deeper into the belly of the beast. It's a world nearly killed by the death of wonder, although far from all the wonders are dead. Put the "grim" back in "grime" and see the world outside the smeared Perspex windscreen.

See it smolder. See it burn. See if you can save it.



**Dedicated to Jess Nevins,
Two-Fisted Scholar.**

THE DAY AFTER RAGNAROK

Fate Core Edition

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Serpentfall

"The Nazi myth which is important ... [to] men like Hitler requires a Götterdämmerung..."

— U.S. WAR DEPARTMENT COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT, FEB. 12, 1945

Patton's death in September didn't do it, although the wilder-eyed addicts in the Wewelsburg basement claimed that Skorzeny's "Operation Walküre" had changed things, that the American general was "the rope of the Norns," somehow tied to past and future in a way that others weren't. His breaking, they swore, signaled the new Twilight. But the Bulge ground to a halt in sight of the Moselle, and Montgomery slowly pushed the Wehrmacht back across the Ardennes. Not to worry, swore the Ahnenerbe men, sweating out the amphetamines and stinking of extinct herbs pulled from Finnish bogs. The Norns' rope was broken. Things would be different.

Montgomery swept into Lübeck, and Bradley's armor growled closer to Nuremberg, and Zhukov smashed across the Oder, and the sun of July rose over a prostrate Reich. Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* played on Berlin Radio night and day, and the smoke blotted out the stars. And then it happened; the whole world heard the howl of Garm, and the moon was eclipsed in blood. The head of Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, 350 miles across, breached the surface of the Arabian Sea

and rose up into the troposphere. Its first lunge destroyed three troop convoys and their escort carriers, swallowed in one bite 100 miles south of the Azores. A coil of the Serpent now stretched across Africa from Mogadishu to Morocco.

When the head reared up again off Vigo Bay, it gulped down the U.S.S. Essex and TF 24, and paused to splinter a few hundred thousand tons of shipping. President Truman gave the go-ahead, and a lone B-29 took off from Iceland. Its original target had been Berlin, but Captain Joseph Westover had new orders. He, and the crew of the

Das Ahnenerbe

Waischenfeld-Boppreuth am 22. September 1944.

Der Kritischmanager

Leute leben glücklich am Gestern und in der Zukunft, solange sie ihren Schwanzgriff und den Griff ihrer Überführer bewusst sind

HIGHLY SECRET

TO: Heinrich Himmler
Reichsführer-SS
RE: FALL RAGNAROK

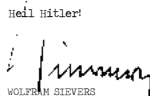
1. At last, Weisthor has spoken! Sturmabführer Skorzeny's success in UNTERNEHMEN WALKÜRE has, as promised, "severed the rope of the Norns." With the death of the American General Patton, Weisthor says, "a world-branch is broken, and our Midgard now swings loose, fruit falling through the World-Tree for us to catch." I report his exact words as you requested. The full transcript of his trance-prophecy is attached to this report.
2. FALL RAGNAROK can now go forward on a basis of potential success, as the prerequisites are complete:

- a. The tests at Dachau have produced the correct formulation of amphetamines for the Sleepless Rite.
- b. Reich botanists have successfully cultivated the necessary Pleistocene bog-herbs from the samples harvested in Finland.
- c. The deciphered texts from Gothland-Ukraine offer the correct poetic structure for the Seers to work within. All Ahnenerbe resources will now be dedicated to translating the Edda into this new structure.

Dosed with the correct herbal mixture, Sleepless Seers will continuously incant in parallel, each working from a separate translation to ensure redundancy of effect.

3. If the Reich can hold out until Midsommer 1945, I as Reichsmanager Ahnenerbe promise to you the awakening of Garm, Jörmungandr, and Fenrir, and consequently the unstoppable beginning of Ragnarok. The Jotunn will destroy the Bolshevists from the North, and the Svartalfar will emerge from Nidhavelir to bedevil the Americans in the South. The Aryan race will rule the new-made world forever, as the restored Vanir.

Heil Hitler!


WOLFRAM SIEVERS
Standartenführer-SS
Reichsmanager Ahnenerbe



Forschungs- und Lehramtsinstitut des Ahnenerbe e. V.

Strange Cargo, were to seek out and engage the Midgard Serpent with the Trinity Device. On July 21, 1945, spotter planes for "Operation John Henry" zeroed the *Strange Cargo* in on the Serpent, its head 20,000 feet above Oslo and moving southeast at 80 knots. Captain Westover was an ace pilot, capable of flying a plane through something much smaller than a snake's pupil 500 yards across. The Device detonated, tearing a piece of the Sun down from heaven and destroying the Serpent's brain in a torrent of atomic fire. Westover and his crew died instantly. Jörmungandr took a little bit longer than that.

THE SERPENT DIES

The polar vortex drove strong high easterlies that day, and a plume of radioactive venom hit the upper atmosphere and headed west. It slowly fell out of the sky into clouds and storms, twisters and waterspouts, all headed west. Dark crimson rain fell from Dublin to Denver. Where it struck, the seas boiled and the earth drank poison. And things engendered, mutated horrors born of dragon's blood and broken strontium atoms. Some coiled down to the sea's depths; others clumped together and pulled apart ships. Some climbed or flopped or skittered or slunk from swamps and sewers and gutters and ponds and everywhere else rain ran in eastern North America. And some people and beasts drank from those pools and reservoirs before they knew, and some people's blood changed and they knew it not. Or at least not yet.

But it hardly mattered, not at first, because the fall of the Serpent's body back into the Atlantic sent up a wall of water a hundred miles high that smashed into the coast from Halifax to Havana. New York, Washington, Boston, Charleston, Philadelphia, Miami (and poor low-sunk New Orleans) all drowned. Montreal and Cleveland and Chicago, and Veracruz and Houston and Caracas, were merely battered. Salt water, flecked with venomous foam, lapped against the Appalachians.

The Serpent's head, its skull cored out by nuclear flame, kept moving toward Nuremberg where


WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C.

20 July 1945

TO: General Carl Spaatz
Commanding General
United States Army Strategic Air Forces

RE: OPERATION JOHN HENRY

1. The 509 Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as reliable visual intelligence is available on its target: the so-called "Midgard Serpent." To carry military and civilian scientific personnel from the War Department to observe and record the effects of the explosion of the bomb, additional aircraft will accompany the airplane carrying the bomb. The observing planes will stay several miles distant from the point of delivery of the bomb.
2. Additional bombs will be held in readiness pending analysis of OPERATION JOHN HENRY as soon as made ready by the Project staff. Further instructions will be issued concerning targets other than the one listed above.
3. Discussion of any and all information concerning the use of the weapon is reserved to the Secretary of War and the President of the United States. No communications on the subject or releases of information will be issued by Commanders in the field without specific prior authority. Any news stories will be sent to the War Department for specific clearance.
4. The foregoing directive is issued to you by direction and with the approval of the Secretary of War and of the Chief of Staff, US Army. It is desired that you personally deliver one copy of this directive to General Eisenhower and one copy to Admiral King for their information.


THOS. T. HANDY
General, G.S.C.
Acting Chief of Staff

cc: General Leslie Groves

it had been Called, but its dead muscles overshot their mark. The head finally crashed to earth in Egypt—or rather, *on* Egypt. Its body followed it down, thunderously settling across Europe in a 300-mile wide swath from Scotland to Sicily, and setting off earthquakes 100 miles on both sides of its fallen body. England, the Low Countries, western Germany and Austria, the boot of Italy, coastal Yugoslavia, southern Greece all vaporized beneath the monster's coil. Wales was not obliterated, a stretch of western France and Savoy could see the sun, Spain survived. (The other side of the tsunami battered Portugal.) Most of the armies of the Western Allies, and millions of those they had come to liberate, died, smashed beneath the scales. The coil across Africa had also come down hard, mostly in the Sahara, although Ethiopia had little chance to enjoy its hard-won independence. Reptilian flesh blocked the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. The earth trembled, cities around the world toppled and burned. Smoke filled the air. Snow fell in August.

THE GIANTS REVIVE

The shock resounded around the world, but nowhere more than in the icy depths of the Caucasus Mountains. These peaks that Hitler tried to reach in 1942 (on what advice, learned from what unknown insects' mead?) held the bound giant who had betrayed the gods. Hitler would call him Loge or Loki, the Eton-and-Oxford lads would have known he was Prometheus, but to the Ossetians of the valleys he was Nasren, greatest of the Narts, the giants at the dawn of the world. The thunder of the Serpent's fall shook him loose from his icy chains and he slid down the mountains, walking north toward Moscow, where he knew another god-hater ruled.

East of the Serpent's fall, the Red Army was mostly intact, and Eastern Europe likewise, safe in the Red Army's embrace. Russia had lost little, and the few hundred thousand dead in Hungary were nothing next to the thirty million that Stalin had killed or left to die in the last two decades. Moreover, the deadly venom fallout never touched Mother Russia; her monsters would be solely of human making. And of the giants': Molotov and Suslov declared Nasren a bogatyr, a glorious Russian giant born of Soviet Man from the scientifically nurtured soil of Soviet Georgia. Stalin's scientists (and those who had been oh-so-recently Hitler's scientists, at distant camps in Poland) pulled venom from the fallen beast and injected it into "volunteers," or collected Nasren's wisdom about the dawn time. Mysterious fires burned all across Siberia. Frozen mammoths struggled back to their feet, and resumed chewing their buttercup breakfasts. Other giants clambered out of the permafrost, or sailed south on the ice: Soslan of the steel body, Batyrez the invincible swordsman, Satanya the beautiful. It is a shame, Stalin told each of them, looking at them with his wise brown eyes, it is a shame that your sons the Ossetians and the Ingush were killed to the last child by the fascists and the imperialists. It is a shame, they agreed, and their own icy eyes narrowed.

THE EAGLE BROKEN

It is 1948, the third year without a summer since the Fall of the Serpent. America's Pacific fleets sailed home, to shore up the Western remnant of a shattered nation. The Evacuation of '46 ended in death and horror; only General MacArthur's troops kept order even on the West Coast. With Washington gone, a controversial election made California Governor Earl Warren the President of the United States, or of six of them, anyway. The war in the Pacific is over—holding on to Hawaii is challenging enough—and the Russians are welcome to the wreck of Europe. It took two years, but the last of the great monsters have been driven back down east of the Rocky Mountains. The Americans—and Texans—have their own continent to win back, from the things that wash up now with every Atlantic tide. But left alone across the Rockies for years of famine and fear, the survivors may be building their own future without waiting for permission from Los Angeles or Austin.

Chicago, Detroit, Toronto, Buffalo, Birmingham, Pittsburgh, Memphis: Such city-states survived the Serpentfall by being more willing, and more able, to push other folks to the wall. They had to feed their people when the grain was poisoned and the water was full of vileness.

They had to act fast, and cut up rough, when the crisis hit. And for these cities, the crisis isn't over yet. All across the Poisoned Lands, from Houston to Hudson Bay, life is still brutal, short, and all too interesting.

THE LION WAITING

What's left of Wales and Cornwall still swear to King Henry IX in Sydney, as does Australia, and a third of India, and what's left of Canada, and South Africa in its own accent. The battered British Empire made an armistice with Japan through gritted teeth, and looks at independent "Congress India" with bitter regret. But the Empire survives.

It is British Petroleum who came up with drilling the Serpent for oil, and Royal Dutch-Shell who set up the great cracking plants in Wales and Kenya to refine it. The Russian advisers in Arabia and Persia don't like it, but there's nothing they can do, yet. It is the Royal Navy that dives deep to salvage things from the rift where Jörmungandr rose. It is the Royal Society who have cut into the Serpent at Hereford, and (at hellish cost) brought back living samples of the things, the cultures, swarming in its cavernous belly. It is Rhodes University men in South Africa who took those writhing creatures and strapped them down and drew out the sera and built the equipment that allowed Sir Edmund Hillary and his team to climb to the top of the Spine and look down at the curving world. It is Vickers who brought Jean-Jacques Barre from France (and salvaged Goddard's

plans from the wreckage of Roswell) to build the rocket planes to get the Royal Rocketry Air Force (RRAF) there faster. It is Prime Minister Menzies and his government who alone seem worried about what Stalin means when he promises a "final titanic struggle." Spies, and rocketeers, and oilmen, and speleo-herpetologists gather in Sydney and Capetown and Plymouth and Nairobi, and wonder if the sun has set on the British Empire at last, or if somewhere in this smoke-stained, poisoned world there is still room for a green and pleasant land.

MOST SECRET

12 May 1948

TO: Sir Reginald V. Jones
Senior Scientific Advisor
Office of the Prime Minister

RE: PROJECT JAMBRES



Er Serpentis,
Scientia

Sir Reginald:

Per your office's request to Project HQ, we can provide the following executive summary of the Project's ongoing research and analysis of the Serpent.

1. According to Project estimates, the Serpent is slightly over 6,000 miles long, and 250 miles in body diameter. The head is rather wider; at its highest point (an eyebrow ridge roughly on the former site of Cairo) it stretches 272 miles into the atmosphere. The Serpent masses approximately 1,500 trillion metric tonnes (1,500 quintillion US/Short Scale). It most closely resembles *Echydрина schistosa*, a particularly venomous sea snake native to the Arabian Sea area.
2. Only a portion of this mass is currently present on the Earth's surface. For example, the Serpent is discontinuous between Morocco and the George Bligh Banks, disappearing in the western canyons of the Horseshoe Seamount and reappearing several hundred miles north on the Rockall Plateau beneath the North Atlantic. (If it were continuous, it would naturally breach the ocean's surface all along its length, the ocean being no more than four miles deep.) Also, roughly half of the Serpent's total length (its tail section) similarly disappears in the Indian Ocean southeast of Mogadishu. RN submarines have been unable to reach sufficient depth to survey the Serpent's points of emergence and disappearance. (See attached Reports for OPERATION ALISANDER.)
3. The American "Operation John Henry" atomic strike took place while the Serpent's current mass and geometry were still in flux. This would explain why the available records indicate that the *Strange Cargo* encountered and fatally engaged a Serpent "merely" 60,000 feet long. (See the attached Minority Report Summary for arguments that the USAAF bomber instead somehow expanded into "the God Realm" at the moment of coming to grips with the Serpent.) If the Norse sagas are correct, and the Serpent at one point encircled the world, then its final rest state is only a third of its potential mass. In short, the Americans killed the Serpent before it grew to full size.
4. It is the current consensus of the Project that the Serpent's "missing mass" is folded into a bubble or pocket of space-time perhaps tangent to our own, and that the act of summoning the Serpent somehow focuses and directs the zero-point energy of its space-time pocket into our own universe. The energy of the two universes being incompatible, gross physical and biological anomalies result throughout our local space-time as the Serpent's energy "grounds itself" in local matter. (This "grounding" may explain why the Serpent so closely resembles a sea-snake native to the ocean where it first manifested itself.) It is the current consensus of the Project that the time component of the two universes is also incompatible, which provides a hypothetical cause for the biological anomalies' greatly enhanced rates of growth and geographic spread.

Should you require a briefing on the directions in which these data have driven Project scientific and technical research, or a redacted copy of the current Ophiuroid Progress Report from the EOG, please see the Group's liaison in your office, Wing Commander Lethbridge-Stuart.

Edward A. Challenger

Edward A. Challenger

Project Co-ordinator
Experimental Ophiuroid Group

HEROES' SECTION



*“Now death is the portion of doomed men,
Red with blood the buildings of gods,
The sun turns black in the summer after,
Winds whine. Well, would you know more?”*

— VÖLUSPÁ, STANZA 41



Choose Your Poison: Your Game After the Serpentfall

As with all Fate Core games, you should meet with your group to determine the best way to use the setting material presented in this book, and to set up the current and impending issues for your game. If you want, you can skip forward to **The World After Ragnarok** starting on p. 55, but we've also got some suggestions here about how to get started.

The central question you need to answer for your **Day After Ragnarok** campaign is:

The world as you know it has ended. What do you do?

Rather than limit your adventuring to one sort of campaign in one part of the world, this section lays out four different campaign types, any of which can be played most anywhere in the heroic world of **The Day After Ragnarok**. For each type, we've provided example issues, as well as a few pointers to sample heroes, locations, stage dressing, and such. (But go ahead and surprise us!) The world got a whole lot bigger, somehow, after the Serpent fell...

WOLVES BEYOND THE BORDER

This campaign answers the central question with: *“Doing whatever we can.”*

This is the “freelance heroes” saga, the most traditional sort of campaign. Your heroes are outlaws or barbarians, or just footloose types who just don't fit in anywhere. They wander the Poisoned Lands, Africa, the Pacific, or a multitude of other places throughout the post-Serpentfall globe, killing horrors and living by their own code. They might be roving bounty hunters taking down monsters for money in the Mayoralties; a crew of master thieves ready to liberate museums of their masterpieces or generals of their loot; a driven squad of crusaders fighting spectral evil across the globe; an occult cabal seeking lost tomes and sorcerous wisdom; or prospectors looking for unique specimens to sell to Rhodes University or for antique lamps from submerged mansions on what used to be Long Island.

The key to this campaign is flexibility, or freedom: the heroes can take on or turn down anything they want. If they make things too hot for themselves in Algeria, they can hop a convenient steamer to Colombia, or barter a favor for a plane trip to Macao. If they hear a rumor, they can chase it; if they find someone in great need, they can help them.

The GM's job is to throw tempting loot, dangerous monsters, and fascinating strangers into their path as often as you can. Expect to create a lot of custom locations for this campaign, with their own issues, as the PCs travel around. A sample adventure sequence for this type of campaign can be found in the GM section on p. 104.

- **CURRENT ISSUE: THINGS FALL APART.** The world is a place of decay and scarcity, where chaos reigns and there are always problems that need solving. The Serpentfall has not just nearly destroyed civilization as it was known, but also the survivors' faith in the notion that it might ever return. Use this aspect to justify bringing chaos into the mix, whether that's the decay of equipment on a long voyage or the sudden intervention of savagery in an otherwise peaceful situation.
- **IMPENDING ISSUE: YOU MUST CHOOSE A SIDE.** The world is a collection of the remnants of nations, various factions, and insular tribes, all of whom are competing for the scarce resources that remain. Neutral parties who pass through—the PCs—are given the hairy eyeball because they are seen as yet another competitor with an unknown agenda. Use this aspect when different communities and groups put pressure on the PCs to commit to a particular agenda. Can they remain free of entanglements?

- **TYPICAL HEROES:** Barbarians, mercenaries, bounty hunters, bush pilots, prospectors, jacks-of-all-trades, thieves, hunters, bards, archaeologists, cowboys, missionaries, outlaws, pirates, explorers, investigators, martial artists, sorcerers, deserters, Rhodes Scholar stringers.
- **WELL-SUITED LOCATIONS:** The Poisoned Lands, French Africa or the Congo, Ras al-Thuban, China, the South China Sea, the Andes, the Caribbean, general globe-trotting.
- **LIKELY SETTINGS:** Ruined cities, haunted jungles, windswept battlefields, someone else's mansion or vault, the high seas, seedy dives, archives with indifferent security, caravan routes, gambling dens, just past a bribed guard, prisons and dungeons, remote airfields, the docks.
- **PROBABLE OPPONENTS:** People just like the heroes (but worse), the long arm of the law, monsters, Serpent cults, rivals for love or money, femmes (et hommes) fatale, tinpot would-be dictators, the other side's Red Army advisers, racket bosses, various targets of opportunity.
- **WELCOME REWARDS:** Fabulous gems, Krugerrands and double-eagles, loose pieces of ophitech (see p. 38), the dirt on someone, gold bars, a cargo of rifles, a plane of your own, much-needed repairs, true love's kiss (or the best substitute money can buy), pre-Fall whiskey, a good fight against bad people, a ticket outta Dodge on the next fast boat.

SERVANTS OF THE CROWN

This campaign answers the central question with: *“Go back to the War.”*

If the heroes start (or start out) consistently taking one side or helping one employer—MI5, Free China, or the great State of Texas—then the campaign is a “mission-driven” campaign. Someone gives the heroes orders, suggestions, or a good hard shove in the back; they then go in the indicated direction and do damage to the enemies of their patrons. It's most likely that the “someone” is, at one or another remove, an agency of the British Empire: the SIS, the Royal Navy, MI5, Rhodes University, and so forth. The heroes might be contract employees of a deniable sort, or fully enlisted fighting men; they might be SAS, RRAF, or even Easy Company or the Fightin' Roughnecks.

This sort of structure also works if the heroes are Texas Rangers, Foreign Legionnaires, U.S. Marine Raiders, a mercenary company in the Midwest or South America, or members of any other military/paramilitary outfit. Similarly, the SIS version of the campaign applies (with a few fillips) to the American ONI or OSS, some other mostly-secret service, or even to geological prospectors and troubleshooters for Royal Dutch-Shell Oil! The heroes' employer might be on the up-and-up, or the campaign might be a long story arc of betrayal... and revenge!

With a slightly broader remit, this campaign structure can blend with the “Wolves Beyond the Border” type. The heroes might be wandering stringers for Rhodes University, freelance “eyes on the ground” for the Colonial Office, or a bunch of crooks given a pardon by the FBI on the condition that they always answer a telegram from “Mr. Able.” Such a connection can provide plenty of mission-driven adventures alongside the “explore-kill-and-loot” stories that a pure “freelance heroes” (or “freelance outlaws”) campaign supplies.

What you need to bring to a “Servants of the Crown” campaign is a good variety of missions, an interesting cast of “headquarters types” (think M, Money Penny, and Q from the Bond movies), and a few nice recurring villains. The headquarters should be an important location in the game: feel free to give it its own issues and change them over time as the PCs advance (or fail to) the goals of their patron. The keys to this sort of campaign are structure and predictability; make those its strengths, not its weaknesses. A sample adventure sequence for this type of campaign can be found in the GM section on p. 107.

- **CURRENT ISSUE:** THE WAR CONTINUES. The Serpentfall may have changed most everything, but it did not change the pull of patriotism on the human heart. The War has not ended, but merely changed shape. Use this aspect to push antagonism between factions in the world, and to justify the demands of the PCs' patron on their time and resources.

- **IMPENDING ISSUE:** A SIEGE UNENDING. The PCs' patron is under attack. Its adversaries come from before and after Serpentfall. Use this aspect to represent whatever threat is most worthy of the patron's attention, and bring their influence in at dramatically appropriate times. Can the PCs protect their patron from the ravages of this new world?
- **TYPICAL HEROES:** Soldiers, secret agents, sailors, aviators, grease monkeys, scientists, rocketeers, detectives, holy warriors, assassins, oilmen, chaplains, mercenaries, diplomats, lawmen, speleo-herpetologists, Texas Rangers, Mounties, Rhodes Scholars, archaeologists, mentalists, professors.
- **WELL-SUITED LOCATIONS:** The borders of the British Empire, Kansas and Arkansas, the Philippines, the Congo, the Mayoralities, the Oil States, behind the Serpent Curtain, enemy territory however defined.
- **LIKELY SETTINGS:** Enemy airbases, hidden fortresses, illicit laboratories, the edge of space, a good spot for an ambush, island battle-stations, the belly of the beast, storm-wracked battlefields, huge gun emplacements, radar stations, bandit camps, Serpent cult compounds.
- **PROBABLE OPPONENTS:** The NKVD and Commies in general, the Kempeitai and the Japanese military in general, the Grand Kounty of Birmingham, goons and cannon fodder, strategic geniuses, "the player on the other side," Serpent cults, a bald man with a scar and a monocle, bandit chiefs, warlords, rogue ophiurgists, rebels, fugitive Nazis, jerks and traitors on your own side, mad scientists, man-apes, demons, Djehuti-Yamun.
- **WELCOME REWARDS:** Promotion, access to cutting-edge black ophi-tech, battlefield honors, saving lives (your comrades or innocent civilians), "all found," hazard pay, not getting shipped back to Robben Island, another dose of the experimental drug you need to keep your powers under control, bigger guns.

PHOENIX AND THE SWORD

This campaign answers the central question with: *"We shall rebuild."*

The "rebirth and rebuilding" campaign differs somewhat from the "Servants of the Crown." The heroes are still consistently on one side, but it's the side of recovery. They aren't romantic barbarians striding past the gleaming battlements of Dayton, or pirates swooping down on a freighter full of looted temple furnishings. They may be U.S. Army Rangers defending Dayton from hordes of bandits, or crusaders avenging the looting of a temple whose gardens fed hungry refugees. They may be a pocket of heroes determined to take a stand somewhere that needs them, and take on all comers for it. They may be deputized by the Crown or the President or the Baptist Convention, or mercenaries carving out their own pocket empire on the fringes of a crumbling world. They may be one band of brave rebels throwing off the dead hand of Japan or Russia or Britain, or they may be true only to some personal vision of a better future.

Heroes like these can still rove around the world, doing good and moving on in the morning, finding points of light in a dark world and brightening them. But it's more likely—and often more satisfying—for the heroes to stay where they know they make a difference, and maybe even end up calling the shots.

This doesn't have to be a campaign about hope. You can model a "Phoenix and the Sword" campaign on the classic Western—gunfighters building a civilization—and get plenty of pathos out of it as the new peace and safety makes the heroes unnecessary. After all, the greatest "rebuilding" story in the world ends in tragedy and destruction: Arthur brings a new era of peace and unity to Britain... until Camelot collapses in the new Dark Age.

The key to this campaign type is pacing. While the setting is important, so much of it will be built or co-created by the players over time that you can focus on the challenges they face. Some challenges might be internal—political or social opposition from the people they help, or rival

adventurers with their own goals for the future—but mostly the challenges are external. Keep the problems coming, from all directions, but mix in a sprinkling of reward moments: easy fights against a villain or rival who was pretty tough when encountered before, connections with the people the heroes help, or unexpected allies building their own town up in the next county. By such contrast, bring out the danger and sweat of the next crisis.

Consider letting PCs add aspects to various locations in their home with their milestones, as per **Fate Core's** *World Advancement* (**Fate Core**, p. 263), except player-driven. A sample adventure sequence for this type of campaign can be found in the GM section on p. 109.

- **CURRENT ISSUE:** A COMMUNITY IN NEED. The PCs' chosen territory is fraught with the challenges of long-term settlement. People need resources, food, water, and other necessities to build and make a home. Use this aspect to bring those needs to the forefront and highlight the PCs' role as the people whom everyone expects to help solve these problems.
- **IMPENDING ISSUE:** YOU CAN NEVER GO HOME AGAIN. For all the effort that the PCs expend to make their chosen territory into a home, there's someone who wants to mess it all up. Use this aspect to represent all the people who want to disrupt the PCs' attempt to rebuild for their own selfish gains. Can they overcome the odds and establish a new bastion of civilization?
- **ALTERNATE IMPENDING ISSUE:** THE PRICE OF THE GUN. For Western aficionados, use this aspect to represent how the community alienates itself from the PCs in response to their violent exploits on the community's behalf. Can they avoid becoming the dark mirror of those they fight?
- **TYPICAL HEROES:** Engineers, rebels, cowboys, merchants, lawmen, scientists, gadgeteers, preachers, soldiers, holy warriors, professors, frontiersmen, doctors, grease monkeys, Mounties, bards.
- **WELL-SUITED LOCATIONS:** The Mayoralties, the Caribbean, Mexico, Canada, France, British Africa, India, Palestine, Pacific islands, the East Indies.
- **LIKELY SETTINGS:** Frontier stockades, river crossings and bridges, abandoned university libraries, burned-over city neighborhoods, the new mill, potentially idyllic islands, monster dens inconveniently nearby, meeting halls, caravan routes and caravan series, rough-hewn saloons, railheads, the wilderness around any of the above.
- **PROBABLE OPPONENTS:** Bandits, ghouls, the weather, rival mercenaries, troublemaking know-it-alls, Serpent cultists, panicky demagogues, plague, famine, barbarians, bandits, the all-too-local monsters, the hated British and other oppressors, shortages, hoarders, failing technology, migrating monsters, river-pirates, interfering officials from elsewhere, extortionists, and did I say bandits?
- **WELCOME REWARDS:** Survival, a decent harvest, a successful caravan, twenty dollars in gold, technical progress, a melting look from the schoolmarm, political power, getting to design your own flag, the next generation of humanity, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness.

CITY OF THE EMERALD NIGHT

This campaign answers the central question with: *"We keep on keeping on, along with our city."*

A campaign in which the heroes work for the LAPD is strikingly similar to a campaign in which the heroes work for L.A. crime boss Mickey Cohen. Both have strong similarities to a campaign in which the heroes just walk the mean streets of L.A., helping the wounded while trying to keep the sun coming up each morning. Whether outlaws or lawmen, barbarians or builders, the city remains the same—which is why city-based campaigns are their own special thing. It hardly matters if the heroes are Special Branch anti-terrorist cops in British Calcutta, or Việt Minh rebels in Japanese-held Saigon, or freelance hellraisers in the Motor City (*aka* Detroit). The heroes might

be protectors of a neighborhood, troubleshooters for a political boss, the best grifters in the whole damn town, or adrenaline junkies who hunt Things through sewers and subways. It's all urban adventures, all the time.

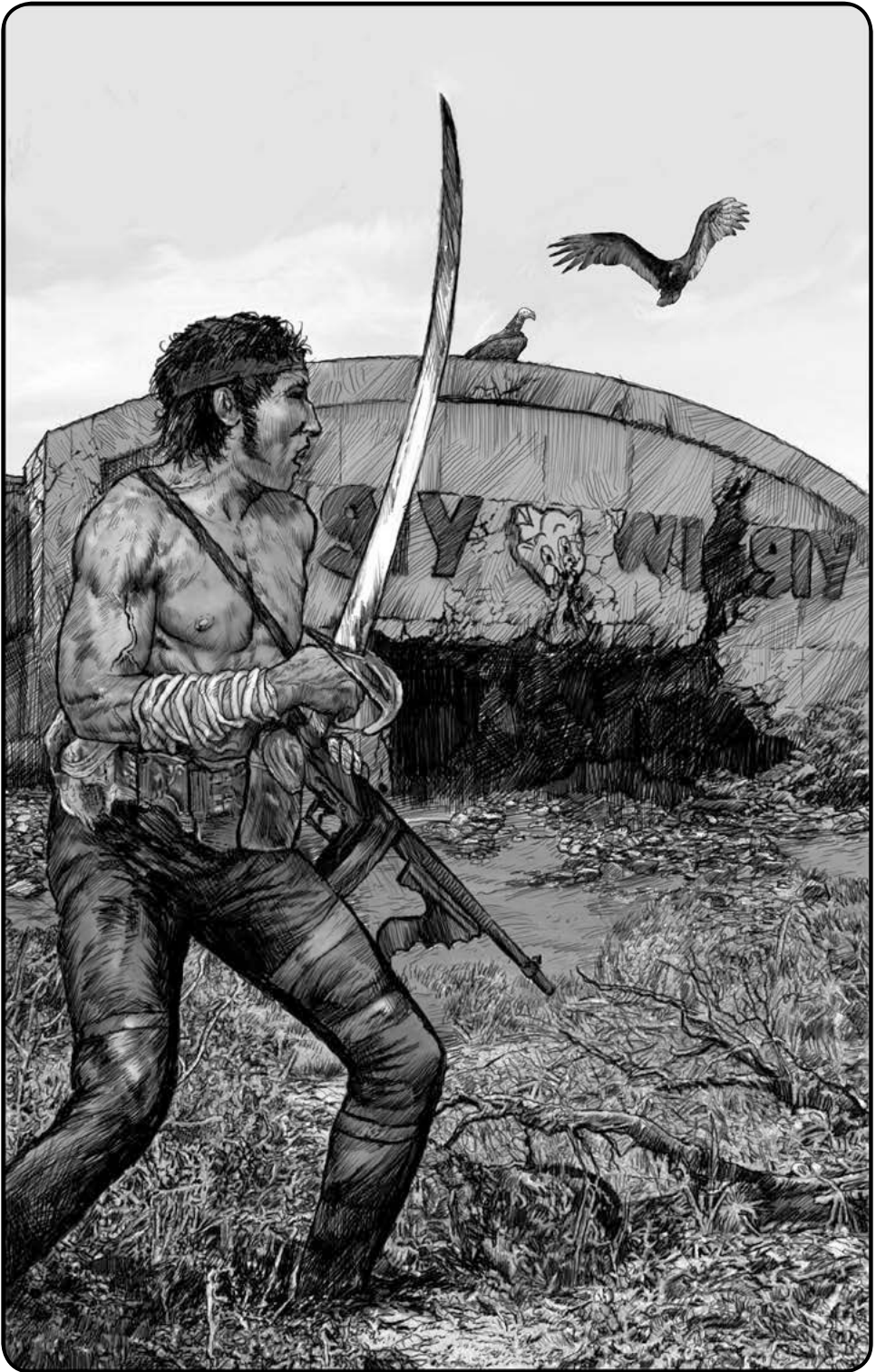
The key to this campaign type is, unsurprisingly, its setting: you need to make the city feel real, breathe riotous life, challenge, mystery, and familiarity into every neighborhood and building. Give the *players* a sense of belonging and comfort, although you can keep the heroes feeling like outsiders on their last shilling. Anything can happen anywhere, and somehow it couldn't have happened anywhere else. This "Arabian Nights" sense of wonder will keep your heroes on their toes, while they grow to feel like your city is their own, their home to defend or to judiciously loot... or both.

Consider doing a little bit more drilling down for this campaign frame, identifying several key locations that make up your city and giving them their own issues and faces. That'll ensure that your PCs have a lot of material to interact with throughout the course of the campaign. Don't be afraid to give your city enough material for several "mini-campaigns." A sample adventure sequence for this type of campaign can be found in the GM section on p. 112.

- **CURRENT ISSUE:** THE DREAM OF THE CITY. The city in your campaign has survived the apocalypse and retained its essential character. Use this aspect to remind the PCs of touchstones from the world before the Serpentfall, and to create moments of nostalgia for the world that used to be.
- **IMPENDING ISSUE:** NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY. Outside the city limits, the world is a new place, full of danger and terror. It's only a matter of time before outside forces impose their weight on the place you call home, forcing the realities of Serpentfall onto your doorstep. Can you stand against the turning of the world?
- **TYPICAL HEROES:** Rebels, cops, priests, private eyes, con men, boxers, merchants, musicians, reporters, spies, thieves, monster slayers, wheelmen, gangsters, secret police, artists, occult detectives, exterminators, diplomats, holy warriors, acrobats, professors, sorcerers.
- **WELL-SUITED LOCATIONS:** Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, mostly-cleared Houston, Chicago, another city in the Mayoralties, Rio de Janeiro, Marseilles, Leopoldville, Nairobi, Capetown, Sydney, Calcutta, Bombay, Shanghai, Macao, Manila.
- **LIKELY SETTINGS:** The docks, a neighborhood bar, jail, the university campus, the city gates, the sewers, fleabag hotels, City Hall, that weird old bookshop, opium dens, the stadium, the parish church, the bank, the red-light district, the casino, subway stations, Chinatown, the heroes' office, parks, cemeteries, penthouses, pawnshops, the rather less welcoming bar, diners, conspirators' basements, the cathedral, crime scenes, the plaza, Old Town.
- **PROBABLE OPPONENTS:** Thugs, mobsters, rivals, the police, Serpent cults, the Mayor, aldermen, the occupation authority, creepy foreigners, high society, monsters in the sewers, demagogues, blackmailers, thieves, Aunt Jennies, ghouls, loudmouths at the next table in the bar, the town watch, torch-bearing vigilantes, bureaucrats, spies, serial killers, rich and powerful scumbags.
- **WELCOME REWARDS:** Cash, a round on the house, clout, a blind eye to those weapons charges, the true set of books, Madame Dumont's emeralds, the friendship of the rich and powerful, the enmity of the rich and powerful, new windows, getting the street light fixed.

MIXING, MATCHING, AND MAKING YOUR OWN

If none of these suggestions do it for you and your group, you can always make your own. Feel free to combine these aspects in whatever combination seems fitting. THINGS FALL APART and YOU CAN NEVER GO HOME AGAIN will give you a powerful story about tragic, wandering souls. A COMMUNITY IN NEED paired with YOU MUST CHOOSE A SIDE will give you a great backdrop to play through a heavily conflicted local rebuilding effort.



Welcome to the End of the World: Character Creation

What would you do if you knew the world would end yesterday? Light out for the territories with all the ammunition you can carry? Rage against the dying of the light? Sign up to do your duty for King and Country? Dive into moldy legends and try to find a counter-spell? In **The Day After Ragnarok**, you can do any or all of those things. With a tommy-gun. And you're just the hero the world needs. Or if not, you can create him.

MAKING A HERO

Make your **Day After Ragnarok** character according to the rules in **Fate Core**, with a few exceptions. After picking a High Concept and Trouble, the remaining phases are as follows:

Glory Days

Tell us a story from before the Serpentfall. You were extraordinary even then. What did you do? What kind of life did you live? Did you leave behind any regrets? Use this phase to explore your character's past and figure out what touchstones might resonate in their present life.

The Day After Ragnarok

Your world ended along with everyone else's. How did Ragnarok affect your life? Were you part of the action, or on the sidelines? How did you distinguish yourself? What did you lose? Use this phase to explore how the Serpentfall changed your character and paved the way for the person they are in the present day.

Just A Few Days Ago

What's on your plate right now? How has the aftermath of the world's end gone for you? What just went wrong? Use this to give yourself some immediate problems to deal with as the game starts and help the GM come up with scenario prompts.

You also have new skills to choose from: Pilot, Ride, Sail, Science, Scrounge, and Survival. Also, the Lore skill has changed a little bit. You'll find all these new write-ups on p. 27-30. Because there are more skills, we're giving you a bigger skill pyramid: peak it at Superb (+5), so you get 1 Superb, 2 Great, 3 Good, 4 Fair, and 5 Average skills.

Finally, we have a few unique extras available in this game: magic, psionics, miracles, and ophi-tech. Their write-ups start on p. 38. All of our extras are stunt-based.

Each PC gets *three* extra free stunt slots to buy extras with, in addition to the three free stunts you get in **Fate Core** by default. If you don't want to buy into any of those extras, you can use those free stunt slots for our "default" extras option, which is gear (see p. 34).

A Default Character

By the time you're done creating your character for your **The Day After Ragnarok** campaign, you should have the following:

- Five aspects: a high concept, a trouble, and three others.
- A skill pyramid peaking at Superb (+5).
- Three to five stunts.
- One to three refresh, depending on how many stunts you take.
- Three extras or slots for gear

SOME ADVICE ON ASPECTS

Certain themes are very appropriate for aspects in *The Day After Ragnarok*. Keep these in mind if you need some help figuring out what to pick.

King, Country, Agency, Gang

When the Serpent appeared, the world was already divided into factions, gripped by the politics of World War II. Nations fought nations, espionage agencies engaged in elaborate games of cat-and-mouse, and freedom fighters railed against oppressive authority. Law enforcement and criminal fraternities continued their timeless struggle, with the war providing new arenas for their conflict. Though many of those groups changed after Ragnarok, they remain in one form or another, adopting new causes or continuing with business as usual.

An aspect reflecting this theme should describe your character's relationship with one of these factions. You might be an RAF pilot, a sailor for the Royal Navy, a Texas Ranger, a member of a prominent Mafia family, or an NKVD agent on the run. If you're currently still with the organization, the aspect reflects the demands they place on you and the support they give. If you're on the outs, they represent the benefits of training, but also the weight of past obligations or a bias that will make dealing with them difficult.

Higher Learning

The Serpentfall did not entirely doom us back into a new dark age. On the contrary, it opened up ophi-tech, a new field of science (see p. 34). The seeking of knowledge and the spirit of innovation remain alive and well, with Rhodes University (see p. 56) leading the pack.

An aspect reflecting this theme should describe your character's relationship with one of these institutions. Again, a favorable aspect reflects their demands and resources, and an unfavorable aspect reflects their influence on you and complications in the present if you have to deal with them.

Faith, Mysteries, and Legend

The Serpentfall also proved that arcane and miraculous forces were real. Clandestine organizations across the world have been studying magic, psionics, and divine power for some time, but now they've clearly emerged from the shadows and are now nearly a part of everyday life.

Thus, your character may have a relationship with supernatural powers or unexplained phenomenon. You might reflect this as faith in a deity (just not the Serpent—that's for NPCs only!), the practice of an ancient occult tradition or tribal folkways, the power inherent to your bloodline, the effect of exposure to strange radiation (meteorites are always good), the result of arcane experimentation, or pretty much anything else you can think of.

Guest Appearances

You'll notice that we don't deliberately call out guest appearances in the new phases. They're optional in *The Day After Ragnarok*—if you want to make your character a lone wolf, go ahead. But keep in mind that being involved with the other PCs is an indicator that you can't remain the lone wolf, and that you should devote the early part of the game to find ways to connect with them.

If you want to do guest appearances in this game, you should weave them into the story of one or more of the phases. In other words, pick one phase where two players invent a combined story, and assign each of their characters an aspect based on how that turns out. That way, you can have PCs influence each other at different parts of their lives. Maybe they were buddies before the Serpentfall who are just now reuniting, or maybe they're new (and reluctant) comrades-in-arms. You decide!

A good aspect reflecting this theme should be double-edged—it's the reason why you have some unique abilities, but it also makes demands of you or complicates your behavior. Religions require codes of behavior and the sacrifice of material resources for the faith. Certain actions must be done to retain the favor of the gods. Everyone knows there's something not quite right about you.

Debts, Desperation, and Scarcity

The world's a much harsher place than it once was. There's not enough of anything to go around except pain. Supplies of pretty much anything you can think of are low, from potable water to toys. In such an environment, people will do harsh things to survive. They make terrible decisions regarding their fellow man, or make desperate deals with those who have more (fuel, food, power, whatever) than they do.

Perhaps your character is such a person.

An aspect following this theme might reflect persistent emotional or mental trauma, personal realizations made in the struggle to survive, the enemies that your previous choices have brought you, the people to whom you're indebted, or even just something you have a chronic need for that you can't get.

Things Left Behind

It hasn't been very long since the world ended. The wounds are still fresh. Everyone has a story to tell about someone or something they lost—a loved one, a pet, cherished possessions, a seat of power. Some lucky few hold on to what they have even more tightly, protecting it fanatically.

An aspect following this theme might reflect the influence of something you lost, a relationship or connection you value more dearly now than before, a relationship or connection irrevocably changed, or a reunion you seek.

Superstition and Fear

Some people respond to the apocalypse by retreating into psychological conservatism, clutching to some remnant of the past to save what remains of their sanity. Religious fundamentalism is stronger than it ever has been, maybe even more so, as whole communities of people try to translate their experiences through the lens of their preferred holy text, using Ragnarok as a justification for their fervor. Certain communities, especially those isolated from civilization, have given up on modern technology and the notion of progress, preferring the "good old days" before the rise of industry.

An aspect following this theme reflects the belief system or code that your character uses to cope with the reality of the new world. It gives you something to hold onto and can help you focus your convictions to your goals, but it will also make it hard for you to interact with anything outside your comfort zone.

Triumph and Hope

The world is battered, but not destroyed. You're still here, and you intend to be around for a while yet. Things aren't going to get better unless someone gets out there and does something about it, and you're just the kind of person to do exactly that.

An aspect following this theme should suggest very noble or heroic qualities for your character, whether that's inherent to them or suggested by reputation. Of course, this can also create complications—nobility and naïveté go hand in hand, and having a reputation as a hero is always liable to attract unwanted attention from the people who need saving or the people who don't want you to save them.

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Here are some ideas for typical characters in *The Day After Ragnarok*: a broad archetype with some high concept pitches, suggested peak and key skills, and likely extras. Use these as ideas to fuel your creativity. Don't feel obligated to stick with these or use them in isolation—mix and match to your heart's content.

- THE ACROBAT

HIGH CONCEPTS: An Indian temple dancer, fleeing an arranged marriage back home; a Mohawk “high steel” worker brought West in the Evacuation of '46; a “grease man” for a criminal ring in France seeking new opportunities where the cops don't speak French.

PEAK SKILL: Athletics

KEY SKILLS: Burglary, Deceive, Stealth

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE AVIATOR

HIGH CONCEPTS: A former RAF pilot during the War, now flying bush in the Outback; a stringer for the ONI, flying tramp cargo anywhere from Mosul to Macao; an ophi-tech test pilot for Hughes Aircraft, eager to beat the British into space.

PEAK SKILL: Pilot

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Crafts, Scrounge

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear, ophi-tech

Options: The Wheelman and The Sailor

By changing Pilot out for Drive or Sail, you can make a character suited for those vehicles. Try these for high concepts:

- **WHEELMAN:** An Amarillo stock-car racer who runs cargoes (and salvaged cars) out of the Poisoned Lands for the thrill of it; a Calcutta cabbie who knows every street by night; a hard-bitten trucker who runs dynamite (or anything else) across the Andes for hard silver.
- **SAILOR:** A Zambezi river pilot used to dodging crocodiles and shooting whitewater (and the occasional bandit); a Tanka “junk person” smuggler working the South China Sea between Japan, the Nationalists, and Manila; a fishing boat captain out of Long Beach who keeps running into bigger and bigger fish.

- THE BARBARIAN

HIGH CONCEPTS: A Sioux brave, exiled from the reservation for killing an enemy; a Massongwe “Lord of the Jungle” deep in the Congo, fighting a one-man war against the Belgian (and British) occupiers; a Pennsylvania state cop who escaped with a sword and nothing else when his town got blitzed by Pittsburgh raiders.

PEAK SKILL: Fight

KEY SKILLS: Athletics, Physique, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE COWBOY

HIGH CONCEPTS: A ranch hand in Texas, driving off starving rustlers and electric death-worms alike; an Aboriginal beef-drover in the Outback with connections to both the Royal Army and his tribal magicians; a gaucho on the high pampas of Argentina with little love for the new German owners of the neighboring estancia.

PEAK SKILL: Shoot

KEY SKILLS: Provoke, Ride, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE DETECTIVE

HIGH CONCEPTS: A tough-as-nails P.I. on the mean streets of Los Angeles; an intuitive “pattern analyst” employed by the Buenos Aires police; a cagy inspector from the Brisbane office of the Commonwealth Investigations Branch.

PEAK SKILL: Investigate

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Empathy, Notice

LIKELY EXTRAS: psi, gear

Option: Occult Detective

Putting Lore somewhere in the Detective’s mix, either as the peak skill or one of the key skills, will get you a specialist in uncovering all matters arcane. You’ll probably also command either magic or miracles to help you in your cases. Try these high concepts:

- **OCULT DETECTIVE:** A Seattle bookseller whose twin sister disappeared in a haunted house; a witch-smeller in the Gold Coast; one of “Sir Maxwell’s boys” in MI5, tracking the Daughters of Dionin.

- THE DIPLOMAT

HIGH CONCEPTS: The senior bureaucrat in Chicago’s Federal Building, “showing the flag” in the Poisoned Lands; the Royal Navy’s aviation attach. in Algiers, keeping an eye on the Action Française; Venezuela’s consul in Japanese-occupied Shanghai, cut off from his home government and acting on his own recognizance.

PEAK SKILL: Rapport

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Empathy, Will

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE ENGINEER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A wildcat oilman, slant-drilling the Serpent in Morocco; an “improvisational engineer” who works as a railroad company troubleshooter; a “book-learned” expert in medieval sieges hired to fortify Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

PEAK SKILL: Crafts

KEY SKILLS: Science, Scrounge, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear, ophi-tech

- THE EXPLORER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A Rhodes University stringer, re-mapping the interior of Africa after the Serpentfall shifted rivers and filled lakes; an Apache scout for the Arizona National Guard, following Dero tunnels wherever they lead; an OSS captain “on detached duty” in Burma encountering lost tribes and hidden cities in Japanese-held Southeast Asia.

Oilman?

Pretty much everyone is still dependent on oil to get things done. This has given rise to a breed of Engineer whose job is to find that oil, get it away from their competitors, and sell it for hard gold. Considering that a significant source of oil requires you to drill holes in the Serpent’s flank, this can be a dangerous proposition. But someone has to do it, right?

PEAK SKILL: Notice

KEY SKILLS: Investigate, Scrounge, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

Option: The Archaeologist

For a more *Weird Tales*-style angle on the Explorer, add Lore to the skills and pick up some magic, psi, or ophi-tech. Try these high concepts:

- **ARCHAEOLOGIST:** A University of Chicago scholar, piecing together ancient Mound Builder magic in the Poisoned Lands; an unorthodox archaeologist attached to Rhodes University, looking for pre-human artifacts in the Congo; a freelance tomb raider in chaotic China.

- THE GADGETEER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A black-market scrounger on the docks in Capetown, tossed out of Rhodes University for... um... personal reasons; a garage inventor in Dallas with a lifelong dream of going to Mars; a visionary technical genius who defected to Australia from Bulgaria just ahead of the Red Army.

PEAK SKILL: Crafts

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Lore or Science, Scrounge

LIKELY EXTRAS: ophi-tech, gear

- THE GANGSTER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A would-be warlord squeezed out by his former partners in St. Paul, Minnesota; a Triad underboss in Manila selling guns (and more) to all sides; a racketeer and longshoreman in Belize, dealing with pirates and the Royal Navy.

PEAK SKILL: Contacts

KEY SKILLS: Deceive, Provoke, Resources

LIKELY EXTRAS: ophi-tech, gear

- THE GREASE MONKEY

HIGH CONCEPTS: A U.S. Navy carrier air mechanic during the War, now on the beach on half-pay; a born jury-rigger keeping things running (just barely) somewhere in Newfoundland; a Scots engineer on a Pacific tramp steamer; a village mechanic from Zululand who's never had the right tools.

PEAK SKILL: Crafts

KEY SKILLS: Physique, Scrounge, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE HOLY WARRIOR

HIGH CONCEPTS: A Turkish ghazi who battles Communism in the name of Allah; a Mormon Son of Dan who kills monsters to help decent folk survive on the frontiers of Utah; a Navajo medicine man who works for the U.S. military because his father was treated well in the Army.

PEAK SKILL: Lore

KEY SKILLS: Fight, Physique, Will

LIKELY EXTRAS: magic, miracles

- THE HUNTER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A Filipino scout and resistance fighter; a "lone wolf" Wyoming monster-hunter; a trained Masai askari.

I Am The Law

A highly appropriate option for The Lawman is to serve a famous law enforcement organization, such as the Texas Rangers or the Mounties. The reputation you'll have because of your organization should be reflected in one of your aspects.

PEAK SKILL: Shoot

KEY SKILLS: Notice, Survival, Stealth

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE LAWMAN

HIGH CONCEPTS: An Alderman's Guardsman working "Little Hell" in Chicago; an Indian Police constable riding circuit in Rajasthan; a French police inspector in Spanish Casablanca shocked—*shocked!*—to find Gaullist cells operating there.

PEAK SKILL: Rapport or Provoke (good cop, bad cop...)

KEY SKILLS: Drive or Ride, Investigate, Shoot

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE MENTALIST

HIGH CONCEPTS: A defector from the Soviet psi program, working for SIS now under deep cover; a pilot and playboy trained in a remote Himalayan lamasery; a Hungarian émigré who worked at Los Alamos with a lot of strange radioactive elements.

PEAK SKILL: Will

KEY SKILLS: Deceive, Empathy, Rapport

LIKELY EXTRAS: psi

- THE MIRACLE MAN/WOMAN

HIGH CONCEPTS: A mambo of the Rada rite of Voodoo, fighting zombies in nearly-drowned Haiti; a Presbyterian missionary in the Chinese interior, working with the Nationalist resistance and banishing demons he's never heard of; a Jewish kabbalist rabbi who got out of Lisbon just ahead of Franco's troops with his notes on ghosts.

PEAK SKILL: Lore

KEY SKILLS: Investigate, Survival, Will

LIKELY EXTRAS: miracles

- THE MUSICIAN

HIGH CONCEPTS: A big band clarinetist in Rio de Janeiro, rubbing shoulders with swells and spies; a Mississippi bluesman with a hellhound on his trail; a Bollywood playback singer in hock to the Bombay mob.

PEAK SKILL: Rapport

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Empathy, Scrounge

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear; psi would be interesting, too

Option: The Skald

Add Fight and Lore in the Musician's mix, and maybe some magic, and you've got a decent post-apocalyptic spin on the classic fantasy bard. Try these for high concepts:

- **SKALD:** A former Ahnenerbe poet cursed to roam the world forever; a wandering Appalachian folk singer with a Pow-Wow Book and the Old Songs; a griot in French Senegal acting as a courier for a rebel alliance.

- THE PROFESSOR

HIGH CONCEPTS: A historian at Oberlin College, trying to keep culture alive after the Serpentfall; a professor's daughter from Bombay, spoiled with books and by scholars since infancy; a civilian instructor at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, who wants some real-world experience.

PEAK SKILL: Lore or Science

KEY SKILLS: Investigate, Notice, Resources

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

Option: The Arcane Scholar

Swap in Lore for Science for an occult take, as well as Scrounge for Resources if they spend more time in the field than in the comforts of their institution. Try these high concepts:

- **ARCANE SCHOLAR:** An obsessed "ghost-breaker" working in the ruins of Paris; a Caltech physicist interested in black magic; a Bengali mathematician attempting to derive the Kabbalah from first principles.

- THE REPORTER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A gossip writer in Los Angeles with a nose for scandal; a war correspondent beached in the Pacific looking for the big story that'll be her ticket home; a crime-scene photographer in Capetown who's taken more pictures than he tells his boss or the SAP.

PEAK SKILL: Investigate

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Rapport, Stealth

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

- THE SCIENTIST

HIGH CONCEPTS: An émigré Dutch Rhodes University biochemist; a fanatical dreamer building robots beneath a plaza in Mexico City; an astronomer in Australia tracking odd anomalies on the Moon.

PEAK SKILL: Science

KEY SKILLS: Crafts, Investigate, Notice

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear, but maybe ophi-tech

- THE SECRET AGENT

HIGH CONCEPTS: A former SOE-trained Maquis saboteur, politically purged in Algeria and looking for a new outlet for her skills; the ONI's man in Macao; a former SIS agent with a lot of contacts in the Middle East.

PEAK SKILL: Deceive

KEY SKILLS: Contacts, Shoot, Stealth

LIKELY EXTRAS: psi, ophi-tech

- THE SOLDIER

HIGH CONCEPTS: A Royal Indian Army rissaldar patrolling the Afghan border for Soviet infiltrators; a U.S. Marine turned mercenary captain in Memphis; a Foreign Legionnaire who goes on "independent patrols" looking for ancient Egyptian treasure in Africa.

PEAK SKILL: Fight or Shoot

KEY SKILLS: Notice, Physique, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

Speleo-what?

The belly of the dead Serpent is home to a number of strange, writhing creatures. They hold biological—and perhaps magical—secrets on which depend the survival of the free world. Someone has to get them out of the caves and caverns in which they dwell. The speleo-herpetologist, or “snake-caver” specializes in that exploration and extraction. Most people think they’re insane. The snake-cavers don’t argue.

Option: The Mercenary

You can use your aspects to reflect an estrangement between your Soldier character and their former outfit, thus creating a good foundation for a gun-for-hire.

• THE SORCERER

HIGH CONCEPTS: The Romany seventh son of a seventh son from all over, but mostly from Sydney; a taciturn Finnish sorceress who somehow walked out of the Gulag and into Alaska; a fakir from Calcutta with family enemies in the Congress Party.

PEAK SKILL: Lore

KEY SKILLS: Provoke, Survival, Will

LIKELY EXTRAS: magic

• THE SPELEO-HERPETOLOGIST

HIGH CONCEPTS: A hardcore “belly man” on call in Hereford; a pensioner consulting for Rhodes University and hunting monsters to relax; a security specialist at the ophiurgical labs in Nairobi, secretly glad to be away from the Belly.

PEAK SKILL: Lore or Science

KEY SKILLS: Fight, Shoot, Survival

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear, ophi-tech

• THE THRILL-SEEKING CRIMINAL

HIGH CONCEPTS: A gorgeous cat burglar in glamorous Rio de Janeiro; a “box man” recruited by the SOE during the War, given a pardon, and gone mostly straight as a locksmith; a security expert (former ONI) in San Francisco playing both sides against the middle on the docks.

PEAK SKILL: Burglary

KEY SKILLS: Deceive, Scrounge, Stealth

LIKELY EXTRAS: gear

New Skills and Updated Skills

For a game of **Fate Core** set in the world after the Serpentfall, there are a few skills that need some updating or tweaking, and a few all new ones to choose from.

LORE

The actions associated with the Lore skill remain unchanged from **Fate Core**, but the context of its use is different in this game. The Lore skill now represents your knowledge of culture, history, folklore, legendry, magic, and the occult. It is meant as a direct counterpart to the Science skill.

If you’re playing an academic character, the subject matter your character studies will determine whether you want to prioritize Lore or Science. Use Lore for “softer” disciplines like philosophy

and the liberal arts, and use Science for the “hard” disciplines such as mathematics, psychology, and engineering. It’s a bit of a simplification, we know, but tropes are part of the joy of pulp.

PILOT

Pilot is identical to Drive, but it applies to planes and other machines that fly (like blimps and jetpacks). Use this skill only if it’s important to differentiate between the “ace pilot” and the “awesome wheelman” characters, or if different modes of travel have an impact on your particular campaign.

RESOURCES

Material wealth is a very different creature in the world after Ragnarok. Characters with the Resources skill (see **Fate Core**, p. 122) would have a wide variety of goods they can use as the equivalent of tender—cold, hard cash still works in more civilized parts of the world, and silver and gold still carry a wide appeal even on the frontier. When you get out into more dangerous territory like the Poisoned Lands, bullets, food, potable water, and other survival gear become way more valuable than any currency.

The upshot of this is that your character really shouldn’t have the Resources skill at all unless the campaign is set somewhere where people still use money or you have a stable proximity to whatever the source of your wealth is. Trade goods need to be stockpiled somewhere, whether that’s on a traveling caravan or in a secure vault. It’s hard to get your patrons at Rhodes to send goods to barter with when you’re deep in a cavern talking to the tribe that lives there.

Also, in this setting Resources is a fragile skill, which creates problems if you draw on it repeatedly in a short amount of time. The 1940s was not an age of instant credit and ATM cards, and things are even worse after Serpentfall. Therefore, the use of Resources has some special rules.

Any time you roll Resources and get anything other than a success with style (see **Fate Core**, p. 132), you earn an aspect reflecting your diminished access to immediate wealth, like THIN WALLET or SHORT ON INVENTORY. Treat this like a situation aspect that affects you for every scene until the end of the session—you may get compelled because of it, and characters may invoke it to your detriment. You get this aspect even if you choose to accept another major or minor cost as the consequence of a roll.

If you use your Resources again that session without getting a success with style, the aspect gets renamed to something worse, like JUST A FEW PENCE LEFT or NEARLY BROKE.

If it happens a third time in the same session, you take the aspect TAPPED OUT. The only way you can use Resources again this session is by volunteering to do something to gain temporary wealth, like taking out a loan, making a deal on credit, agreeing to do a favor, or sacrificing something of great value. Rename the aspect to reflect the nature of your debt or sacrifice, like I OWE BOSS HENRY A FAVOR or I HAVE NO AMMUNITION.

As long as you don’t go passed the TAPPED OUT stage, the aspect goes away at the end of the session. If you do, it sticks to you until an appropriate point in the story for that debt to be discharged or for you to recover your losses. This is widely dependent on situation: if your aspect is I HAVE NO AMMUNITION, the next opportunity to restock and resupply will get rid of it. Boss Henry might hold that favor over your head for a while, though...

RIDE

Ride is identical to Drive and Pilot, but it applies to live mounts. (That means motorcycles still fall under Drive.) As with Pilot, you should only use this skill if it matters that the PCs need to use this form of transportation as opposed to others.

There is a social element to the Ride skill that distinguishes it from the others. If you choose to use it, add these to the default actions for Drive:

- **OVERCOME:** Use Ride to soothe a mount that has been spooked or angered, to train an obstinate mount, or otherwise change the behavior of a mount to whatever is favorable to you.
- **CREATE AN ADVANTAGE:** Use Ride to discern the nature of anything unusual going on with your mount, such as a change in mood or disposition, or to evaluate an animal's personality and properties as a potential mount.

SAIL

Sail is in the same family of transportation-based skills as Drive, Pilot, and Ride, covering anything that goes on the water. "Sail" is a bit of an imprecise name here—you also use it for motorboats. Again, only demand this skill if there's something significant about people using boats instead of other forms of transportation.

SCROUNGE

Scrounge involves finding what you need to find under dire circumstances or to fit a particular need, to acquire things of general or specific utility. It's the skill most people have in this game *instead of* Resources, because most people don't have routine access to excesses of material wealth or are able to just buy what they need.

Major and minor costs associated with a Scrounge roll should reflect the price paid to find what you need, or finding something that's not *quite* right for the situation but will do in a pinch (famous last words) and potentially create complication.

- **OVERCOME:** Use Scrounge whenever you're in need of supplies or goods to get past an obstacle, or you're interested in acquiring an item that the GM deems is difficult to get for whatever dramatically appropriate reason. You can also use this skill to remove a situation aspect related to scarcity or a lack of proper equipment, to bribe people or conduct deals by acquiring something the other party is seeking.
- **CREATE AN ADVANTAGE:** If a particular tool, item, or material good can help you complete a certain objective, use Scrounge to find it and apply it as a situation aspect. Also, use Scrounge to identify the utility of a particular item, especially if it falls outside the item's "intended" use. For example, the mercury in a thermometer might be scrounged to repair an electrical switch.
- **ATTACK:** Scrounge isn't used for attacks.
- **DEFEND:** Scrounge isn't used to defend.

SCIENCE

Science is identical to Lore, but it covers knowledge of the "hard" sciences—basically, any scientific discipline that relies on experimentation and data. The actions work the same.

SURVIVAL

Survival involves getting by in the wild and coming back home to tell the tale of it. In certain parts of the world post-Serpentfall, nature itself can be an enemy, and the long trip across the wastes can kill you just as dead as an angry cultist or radioactive beast.

Major and minor costs associated with Survival should reflect the privations of wilderness travel: starvation, disease, and injury. GMs, don't be afraid to demand that the PC take consequences to represent these costs, especially if it's major. It's a jungle out there, after all...

- **OVERCOME:** Use Survival to conduct a lengthy journey in the wilderness or between pockets of civilization without incident and keep yourself fed, hydrated, and sheltered throughout. This is a good way to make the effects of travel tangible without getting too overburdened by minutiae; make it a contest if you want things to be especially grueling, or incorporate this skill into a challenge if you want several PCs to influence how the trip goes. You also use this skill to weather the obstacles presented by a particularly hostile environment, or to hunt and track prey.
- **CREATE AN ADVANTAGE:** Use Survival to use the features of a wilderness area to your advantage, and to identify or create idealized circumstances in which to act, such as finding an ideal campsite or hunting ground.
- **ATTACK:** Survival is not used to attack. (Hunting isn't combat, unless you're hunting a bear or giant radioactive lizard. And if you are, use Survival to find it, and your combat skills to take it down.)
- **DEFEND:** Survival is not used to defend. (Unless the GM is running Mother Nature as a character and attacking you with a blizzard or something. Then, by all means, use it to defend.)

Extras

All of the extras in this game use a stunt-based approach. As stated previously, you get three additional stunt slots to invest in extras. You can also use your normal stunts for this, but you don't have to.

The two major types of extras are **powers** and **ophi-tech**. If you don't see your character as the supernatural type, don't worry—you can use those extra stunt slots to invest in **gear** (see p. 34).

POWERS

PERMISSION: One aspect that explains the source of your power **COSTS:** stunt slots and/or refresh

The world of the arcane is dark, twisted, and dangerous in this world, poisoned by the Serpent and by the sorceries of Thule.

Powers come in three different flavors: *magic*, *miracles*, or *psionics*. You'll have to decide which are appropriate for PCs to have as a group—we included some notes on narrative flavor below.

Mechanically speaking, they all work the same way—build them as stunts according to the advice for *Superpowers* in **Fate Core** (see p. 279), depending on what kind of powers you want.

As in **Fate Core**, you can stack multiple stunts into one power to give it enhanced effect. We recommend that magic uses the Lore skill, and that miracles and psi use Will. As always, prioritize getting the feel right over precise balance in terms of cost/benefit; we've provided some examples of each flavor to show you what we mean.

In addition to the few tricks you'll always call on as stunts, the aspect you choose to represent your power has an impact on the setting and narrative, depending on which flavor you choose. Here are some guidelines.

• MAGIC

Magic is inherently tricky and dangerous, and it imposes a cost on its practitioners over and above any danger to their souls. Their body energies flare and flux and interfere with precision equipment and electrical gear, or simply dwindle and drain slowly into Niflheim. Although all the major nations deny any official magical efforts, there may well be secretive government programs ongoing at Mount Shasta or Ayers Rock, not to mention whatever Stalin has bubbling away behind the Wall of Serpents.

Dealing with Rituals

This model of magic is really specialized compared to a lot of other settings. Your character knows a couple of nifty tricks and whatnot, but he or she is not going to have game-breaking, plot-altering power.

For the most part, we presume that any big magic that's intended to cause large-scale change or last for lifetimes (like a generational curse or causing a rain of meteors) is beyond the scope of most normal practitioners on a day-to-day basis. That kind of stuff is something you devote years of time, energy, preparation, sweat, and blood to accomplish, and usually with the help of a cabal or coven.

Consequently, that makes big rituals a great scenario hook for the villains, or a good background element to bring up over time if your PC has a home base and spends their off-hours doing magic for the benefit of the community.

A magical hero might follow any sort of tradition, if the GM thinks it belongs in her game: an Aleister Crowley wannabe, a Pennsylvania hex magician, a Kenyan witch-smeller... whatever. The player and GM should work together to establish the proper "feel" for any given magical tradition, which should always involve some sort of ritual components and/or activities.

This technological interference and need to adhere to the traditions of your magical upbringing are good fodder for compels. Likewise, any major or minor costs you accrue, or simply failing a magic-related roll, should result in the taking of stress and consequences as your power feeds back into you in unfortunate ways.

Example Spell: Puppet

Cost: 3 Stunts

The puppet spell requires you to have some sort of physical representation of your target, such as a voodoo doll, which incorporates some tangible link to the target—blood, hair, an object of personal importance, and so on. You can create a puppet in the middle of a fight by smearing your opponent's blood onto a "blank" doll after any successful Fighting hit of at least one shift, or creating an advantage like BLOODIED.

Once that's established, you can use your Lore skill to make physical attacks or create pain-related advantages against your target, and they can only defend with the *lowest* of Physique or Will as long as you possess the doll or the effect is not dispelled.

Distance is irrelevant for this, and you have an instinctive sense of your target's state of being through your connection to the puppet. However, to maintain a puppet over time you need to renew those tangible links—if you no longer have access to your target next session, presume the link you have has gone stale.

Example Spell: Obscure

Cost: 1 stunt

The obscure spell allows you to blunt any one sense from detecting you. Sight is always a popular choice, but smell and sound are sometimes more important. Don't burden yourself with setting up a casting roll beforehand or whatever—just presume that having this spell allows you to replace Stealth with Lore when necessary to actively oppose Notice or Survival rolls, or in some cases, obviate the need for a roll entirely (like with nameless NPC guards).

GMs, you're well within your rights to suggest that the player needs to succeed with style to block all the senses that someone or something might use to detect them. This is especially notable in the wilderness, where predators use multiple acute senses to track.

Example Spell: *Dispel*

Cost: 1 stunt

The dispel spell adds an action to Lore, allowing you to use it to dispel other people's magical workings (you can always dispel your own). This is an overcome action, which the other caster can actively oppose with Lore (even if they're not directly there, you're still contesting their will).

For really complicated enchantments or big rituals that are the plot device for a scenario, run this as a contest instead of a single overcome roll.

• MIRACLES

Triggering Ragnarok and awakening the Midgard Serpent definitely demonstrated that miraculous powers exist in the world. The GM may determine that harnessing the forces of the gods (Nordic or otherwise) requires lengthy ritual preparation, priestly investment and vows, hallucinogenic trance states, and/or other restrictions that leave it in NPC hands and largely in the realm of plot devices.

If, however, miracle-wielding PCs are an option, your aspect should reflect the devout faith that allows you to call on miraculous powers. You are an active adherent of your religion and should act as such. Judeo-Christian "faith healers" or "prayer workers" have a mandate to witness for their faith. Buddhist and Hindu miracle-workers often devote themselves to a life of pacifism and poverty.

These behavioral restrictions and how others respond to them are good sources for compels, and major and minor costs for miracle-working should take the form of additional obligations imposed by the patron deity, or perhaps a purely internal crisis of faith when your chosen divinity does not answer your call as you expected.

Example Miracle: *Faith Healing*

Cost: 2 stunts

Faith healing adds an action to Will, allowing you to use it to diminish or remove physical consequences as per the recovery rules. There's an additional benefit—if you succeed with style, you reduce the severity of the consequence by one level. This can eliminate mild consequences directly, and it can bring someone from the brink of an otherwise life-altering extreme consequence (see **Fate Core**, p. 164).

Be careful, though: the default opposition to deal with an extreme consequence is a Legendary (+8), so you would need to roll +11 or higher to make this happen. Just getting a success at this roll might allow the subject to rename the aspect without having to wait for a major milestone, at the GM's discretion, or it might not. The gods *are* fickle, after all...

Example Miracle: *Divine Wisdom*

Cost: 2 stunts

The divine wisdom miracle allows you to open yourself up to the gods to seek answers on the best course of action in a particular situation. You need time to pray and meditate on the course of action, so this isn't something you can do in the middle of a conflict or contest, but otherwise the only requirement is time and specificity—you have to ask a specific question like, "What is the best way to get into Warlord Karnak's base unharmed?" or "Who is the best person to side with in the territory negotiations between the clans?"

This benefit is available to you twice per session. Make a Will roll to ensure that you can achieve the proper state of communion with your deity. (GMs, oppose this at Fair for most circumstances, modified by situation if the PC is under duress or otherwise distracted.) Choose one of the following two ways to manifest it, if you succeed:

- Take a situation aspect of DIVINE GUIDANCE with a free invocation forward, into the scene where you need to make your decision or its outcome is most relevant to you. If you want to burn both uses this session, take two free invocations.
- Lock in a particular cause-effect chain with the GM, so that a certain effect will *automatically* happen as a result of your choice. “If we go in by the underground river, we will be completely safe until we get to the inner defense ring,” or “if I side with the Radiospitters clan, I will uncover who betrayed us to the bandits.” Basically, you’re using your divine guidance to skip a roll or uncover a juicy bit of plot.

• PSIONICS

Virtually all the psionics-users in the world are products of the Leningrad Brain Institute or the Makarenko Commune outside Kharkov in the Soviet Union, and thus probably not best suited to heroic characters. Indeed, the heroes will be more likely to battle Stalin’s psionic spies than welcome mindbenders into their own ranks. That said, there’s always a Himalayan lamasery or mysterious glowing meteorite available if players want their hero to harness the powers of the mind.

Unlike the other two flavors, your aspect for psionics should reflect internal weirdness, not obligation to a tradition or culture. Maybe you’re oversensitive to emotion and can’t deal with the death of sentient beings if you can feel them. Maybe you have trouble controlling your psychic energy at times. Maybe a particular frame of mind blocks your powers.

Major and minor costs associated with psi should take the form of unexpected physiological problems like hallucinations and psychotic breaks, or unintended consequences from the use of your power.

Example Psi Power: Telekinesis

Cost: 3 Stunts

Telekinesis allows you to move objects with your mind. This power lets you replace Physique with Will for feats of “strength.” You may also make physical attacks and create advantages using Will by telekinetically throwing or bashing your opponents with objects, or manipulating the environment around you. Any attempts to lift a living target gives them the chance to oppose with Will or Physique.

Example Power: Mind Reading

Cost: 1 Stunt

Mind Reading allows you to enter the mind of another and read their thoughts. Use Will in place of Empathy to create an advantage by learning your target’s aspects or deciphering some other secret they wish to keep hidden. The target defends with Will. If you succeed with style, the target is unaware of your mental invasion.

Example Power: Biofeedback

Cost: 1 Stunt

You are capable of using your psionic powers to enhance your physical capabilities for a short time. You must make an overcome roll to enter the proper trance state for this power, and anyone who can reasonably disrupt your concentration may oppose you. (Alternately, you may take a mild consequence to automatically succeed.)

If you succeed, you may raise Athletics or Physique by +2 for the remainder of the scene, with all the benefits of doing so (which could mean more stress boxes and whatnot). If you succeed with style, you may raise *both*.

OPHI-TECH

PERMISSION: One aspect explaining your access to ophi-tech **COST:** Stunt slots and/or refresh

Rhodes University engineers and scientists are at the forefront of biotechnology, energy, and advanced airframe research based on their studies of the Midgard Serpent. Although some Rhodes-developed devices have been around long enough for gray-market knockoffs to emerge, virtually all the cutting-edge experimental “ophi-tech” or “ophiurgy” is still in the hands of Rhodes researchers and/or His Majesty’s Government. Not that there’s much difference. Of course, there are also ophi-tech programs at Caltech, Los Alamos, and the Nouvelle-Sorbonne, to say nothing of the Pingfan Institute in Japanese Manchukuo or Science City 14 outside Tomsrk. But Rhodes still does it most and best.

Weird-science heroes who don’t work for a government or Rhodes U. need to come up with a reason they have such ophiurgical access, reflected in an aspect. Once you’ve figured that out, you can invest stunt slots in items of ophi-tech gear.

Unsurprisingly, these pieces of gear work a lot like arcane powers, allowing characters with non-supernatural backgrounds to play in some of the same arenas as their mystical counterparts. There are some nuances, though, and we’ve given them a longer treatment in the **Gear** section, starting on below.

Gear

Fate Core treats gear pretty loosely, and for the most part we continue that tradition here.

Assume that your character generally has the tools necessary to perform basic tasks with whatever skills you have. If you have Shooting, then you own a gun. If you have Crafts, then you have a toolkit.

The question of scarcity should only come up when you’re dealing with an environment or situation that’s especially problematic, or the stuff you need is hyper-specialized. GMs, usually you’ll indicate this by including some kind of situation aspect on the scene, but it might also just make sense that a sudden change of circumstance leaves the PCs unprepared. (“You mean we have to journey into the heart of a volcano? We can’t contact the campus and get heat gear. Anyone got any ideas?”)

In those moments, use Scrounge and Resources to get what you need.

GEAR AS AN EXTRA

In some cases, gear is going to play a role in the game other than as a justification for being able to use your skills normally. It’s the post-apocalypse, so stockpiling the best stuff is a popular genre trope, and certain items (like advanced weaponry) that you’d take for granted in a normal military setting are a precious, precious find in the blasted, poisoned, radioactive wastes.

Because of that, the “default” option for extras in *The Day After Ragnarok* is to invest your stunts in gear. You can do this in one of two ways: **expendable gear** or **personalized gear**.

In addition to that, all specialized forms of equipment follow the Story-Based Gear rules presented in **Fate Core** (see p. 281). See p. 37 for some examples of how this works.

EXPENDABLE GEAR

PERMISSION: none

COST: Stunt slot

When you devote a stunt to expendable gear, you can use it to name nearly any kind of item you can think of and stat it up as a stunt. Seriously, anything, so long as it’s reasonable for the time period and circumstances.

There's only one condition—you only get to use the item *one time*, and then you exhaust it until you have the opportunity to restock. It gets its moment in the sun, then it's gone. Restocking happens whenever you have some downtime, like between sessions, but if you need to restock in the middle of a session, you might be able to make an overcome roll with Scrounge or Resources at the GM's discretion.

To offset the one-use limitation, expendable gear can be pretty powerful, more than a single stunt slot would usually indicate. Also, you're not locked into picking the same item over and over again once you use up your gear—think of these stunt slots as a flexible, rotating bank of cool stuff you can pile onto your character. You can swap any or all of them out between sessions as much as you want, or configure them to prepare for a particular kind of challenge or obstacle.

(And yes, if you want, you can devote multiple stunt slots so that you get multiple uses of a single cool item.)

Example Expendable Gear: Amphetamines

A dose of amphetamines will buy you automatic success at any skill roll you might need to make to deal with exhaustion and fatigue, mental or physical. Alternately, you may give yourself a situation aspect of AMPHETAMINE HIGH with two free invocations to take into any scene.

When your amphetamines wear off, you'll take a mild consequence of INTENSE FATIGUE until you have the opportunity to rest. You can counteract that with another dose of amphetamines, but after that wears off, the consequence moves up to moderate and is called STRUNG OUT. A third dose makes it a severe consequence, called MILD PSYCHOSIS. A fourth dose is an extreme consequence, called AMPHETAMINE OVERDOSE, and is characterized by a complete psychotic break and paranoid delusions.

But we know you'll stop at one. Right?

Example Expendable Gear: Bear Trap

Setting the bear trap allows you to make an attack with the *highest* of your Crafts, Survival, or Deceive skills against a target passing through that zone. The target defends with the *lowest* of Notice, Athletics, or Survival. In addition, any successful hit places a situation aspect called CLAMPED on the target.

Before the target can move anywhere else, they must make an overcome roll with Crafts or Survival to unlock the trap, but any failure on that roll gets treated like a failed defense, forcing them to take stress and/or consequences.

Example Expendable Gear: Primacord

Primacord is an explosive substance most commonly used to detonate other explosive substances. Use it to make an attack with Crafts if you've had the chance to set it up beforehand, or create an advantage by setting up a shaped charge or other surgical explosive device. Primacord also lets you use Crafts instead of Burglary to blow up locks, get into safes, or other forms of breaking and entering.

Example Expendable Gear: Thermite

An aluminum-based pyrotechnic that, once activated, burns incredibly hot (over 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit) for a very brief period.

Thermite is a very flexible substance, in terms of use. Apply it to a surface to burn through it (Crafts), use it as part of a thrown or launched incendiary device (Athletics), or pretty much any such context you can think of (a very risky Fighting roll to smear it on an opponent?). We encourage you to apply your imagination broadly to come up with irresponsible uses for thermite.

In mechanics terms, thermite will burn through nearly any structure and eliminates the need for a roll to bypass any kind of barrier as long as you don't have to worry about the consequences (by contrast, if you're using it to melt your way into a strongbox, that'll require Crafts to make sure you don't destroy whatever's inside).

A thermite attack is considered to be at vehicle scale, even if you're not. Naturally, it tends to create the ON FIRE aspect. (See **Scale** on p. 48 for why this is cool.)

PERSONALIZED GEAR

PERMISSIONS: none

COST: Stunt slot

Another option for your gear-related extras is to single out a certain piece of equipment you have as special or unique, and attach a stunt to it to explain this uniqueness. Unlike expendable gear, these stunts should upgrade something you're carrying on your person or have with you at almost all times, like a repair kit, a pup tent, a sidearm, or your Jeep.

Because you get the benefits of this stunt at any time you have the appropriate gear with you, these stunts should be more in line with regular stunts, and changing them should require some sort of justification such as access to a workshop or lab between sessions. You *can* pile multiple slots into a single stunt for enhanced effect, though, like any of your other extras.

Personalized Gear Example: Oil Slick

Cost: 1 stunt

Your vehicle is capable of producing oil slicks to throw off pursuers or generally make other drivers slip up. You take a persistent +2 to Drive in any contest where you're in a chase or race, to make your contest roll and create advantages.

Personalized Gear Example: Nasty Reputation

Cost: 1 stunt

There is something famous about your gun, sword, plane, or whatever else it is you have. Perhaps it killed a famous figure or was at the site of (or caused) a terrible massacre. Perhaps it used to belong to someone more nefarious than you. Regardless, you may substitute the usual skill you use with the item (like Shoot for a gun) in place of Provoke, to do anything Provoke does. This requires you to make some sort of threatening display with the item, so consider that this could backfire on you.

Personalized Gear Example: Incendiary

Cost: 1 stunt

You have a weapon that includes an incendiary function in addition to its normal attack capabilities. Once per conflict, you may designate a single attack as incendiary—if it hits, it will either add 2 to the shift value of your hit *or* automatically inflict the ON FIRE aspect with a free invocation on your opponent in addition to the normal outcome, your choice as to which.

Personalized Gear Example: Extra Storage

Cost: 2 stunts

You have a piece of gear that comes with hidden compartments for stowing things. Any attempt to search this piece of gear for your hidden stuff is automatically opposed by Great (+4) passive

opposition. If you're able to actively oppose the search attempt, you take the +4 bonus to your relevant skill. At the GM's discretion, you can also use these compartments to justify being able to carry more stuff than you normally would because of efficient packing, which might allow you to avoid the need for an inconvenient Scrounge roll.

STORY-BASED GEAR BENEFITS

PERMISSION: justified by the circumstances of the scene

COST: none

Finally, in addition to all these stunt bonuses, your gear might confer a number of situation aspects for your use in a contest or conflict, depending on how your gear compares to the gear your opponents are using.

It works like this: whoever has the most advantageous gear in a particular situation gets to bring a situation aspect describing that advantage into the scene, with a free invocation on it. If the gear is *absolutely ideal for or designed specifically for* the situation in question, you have the option of sticking two free invocations on it. These advantages can be pretty much anything you think would be fun to spotlight in the scene—allow your sense of verisimilitude and aesthetics to guide you.

For example, if two people are having a gunfight in a narrow alley and they're closed in, the character with the shotgun has a more ideal weapon than the character with the pistol, giving the former a CLOSE QUARTERS ADVANTAGE aspect with a free invoke for that fight. Likewise, if a fighter jet is taking on a bomber, the fighter jet would get SPEED AND MANEUVERABILITY for that scene, but the bomber might get DURABLE HULL PLATING.

These work like normal situation aspects in that it's possible for you or your opponent to change the circumstances of the fight by creating advantages, or taking some action that would make the other person's advantage moot.

The most important thing to remember is that *you only do this when there's a significant disparity between what you and your opponent are each bringing into the scene*. Two people blasting away with assault rifles at each other don't get any aspects, even if one's got an AK-47 and the other's got an M2 Carbine.

(Unless, of course, you're a gun nut and happen to know that the M2 Carbine suffers at extreme ranges compared to the AK-47, and thus set up the fight to take advantage of that. We're using this approach to give you the best of both worlds: you get to use or ignore everything you know about WWII-era tech as you please, and we avoid burdening you with charts and tables trying to stat out the minutiae of different models of motorboat. Everyone wins.)

We provide descriptions of some of the most popular tech in use during this period in history below, for flavor purposes.

Story-Based Gear and Multiple Combatants

If you have a conflict with multiple PCs and NPCs comparing gear, take the resources of each side as a whole and figure out where the comparative advantages are. Assign those aspects as per the guidelines in the main text, then add an additional free invocation for each person whose gear contributes to that advantage. Anyone on the appropriate side gets to use those free invocations.

So, for example, if you and two of your friends arm yourselves with K-Bar knives and jump an unarmed gang in an alley, your side would get a BETTER-ARMED advantage with three free invocations on it (one for each of you), and any of you could use those invokes.

OPHI-TECH

The Serpentfall not only reshaped the geopolitics, and even the geography, of the Earth: it also reshaped the sciences. Quite simply, the Serpent should be impossible: nothing that large should exist, or even be able to move. And it certainly shouldn't breed monsters when it's dead, or while alive, have responded to magical rituals cast by deranged Nazi scholars in amphetamine-and-herb induced fugue states. Understanding the "how" of the Serpent is the goal of ophiurgists from Grahamstown to Gorkiy—but they're not even sure about the "what" yet.

But the pinpricks of knowledge the ophiurgists have drained from the Serpent's corpse have created an flow of "ophi-tech," which some people (and governments) are willing to use without knowing anything else.

As stated above, the PCs need an aspect to justify their access to ophi-tech. However, the GM might also decree that independent heroes can begin with "gray-market" knockoff versions, post-military issue equipment, or (hopefully) untraceable black-market stolen ophi-tech. It might even be available later in the game, to people who know just who to ask, i.e., an overcome roll with Contacts. At no point should ophi-tech be available with a simple Scrounge or Resources roll; the price is always considerably higher than the heroes can (or should be willing to) pay, at least not without doing something horribly risky and adventurous to earn it...

In such a version of the setting, the GM might also decide that such street versions of ophi-tech are less reliable than the officially issued gear, with a WOEFULLY UNRELIABLE situation aspect that's active at all times, or a harder roll to activate (see below), or both.

In no version of the setting should heroes be able to invent new ophi-tech devices, unless they have access to a major research laboratory like Bell Labs or the Woomera Proving Grounds. Ophi-tech research is like atomic research: even the unclassified stuff takes million-dollar pieces of equipment and a team of the brightest scientific (and probably other academic) minds available. Getting new equipment should be justified by story developments, like taking a jet pack off the fallen body of a villainous Argentine fascist, or getting a Marconi gun as a reward for services rendered to His Majesty's Government.

OPHI-TECH DEVICES

Ophi-tech devices require an overcome roll to activate and use. This is usually Science against passive opposition of Fair (+2), but there are exceptions, noted below. The result of a failure is equipment malfunction; suggestions are included with each entry. You can modify these for "success at a cost" if you want—for example, a failed activation of the neural stimulator immediately incapacitates you, but you might negotiate for success, with a cost of being incapacitated at the end of the scene until you can get medical attention.

You may also decide that someone gets Snakebit (see sidebar) as a result of any mishaps with ophi-tech.

In addition, ophi-tech devices can be both personalized and expendable, which we'll indicate in the entries below.

These All Sound Cool, But...

So when you're dealing with ophi-tech, or any gear, the same advice applies as with all other stunts: if the circumstances in your game don't afford a frequent opportunity to use it, don't take it. GMs, if a player invests in an ablative-metabolic suit and a hypox apparatus, it's really a request to you, saying, "Please let this character explore weird environments and discover awesome things." They're just as revealing as aspects in that regard. Make sure you're paying attention, or guiding the conversation about gear in such a way that no one ends up with something they're never going to use.

Sometimes The Snake Bites Back

With Serpent oil powering an increasing percentage of the Western world, and Serpent sera driving new research and development, more and more people have ingested or inhaled enough Serpent venom to get “Snakebit.”

Being snakebit gives you a situation aspect of the same name and renders you more vulnerable to the predations of anything spawned from or influenced by the Midgard Serpent. If you enter a scene where you face such beings, they get a free invocation (or more if they outnumber you, see the sidebar on p. 37 for guidelines on dealing with multiple combatants) on this aspect.

You may also take the SNAKEBIT aspect as a consequence, which indicates a more lasting affliction, and may open you up to compels in order to succumb to the Serpent’s malevolent will. Recovering from such a consequence requires the intervention of someone skilled in working with miracle healing or appropriate magic—even ophi-tech is not advanced enough yet to remove the Serpent’s corruption.

Finally, you could use this aspect to describe the general effects of Serpent corruption across wide swaths of countryside, or a village, or any other location. Imagine a campaign issue of SUFFUSED WITH THE SERPENT, which any Serpent-related creature could invoke. Scary. In fact, scary enough that we’ve provided rules for it on p. 82.

Ablative-Metabolic Suit

Cost: 2 stunts

Activation: Science vs. Fair [+2]

Resembling a flight suit made of snakeskin and stuffed with particularly lively eels, the ablative-metabolic suit protects the wearer from any extreme of temperature or pressure known on the Earth’s surface (though not magma) or in near space. It is a full body suit including gloves, boots, cowl, and visor; the wearer looks out through polarized obsidian goggles. Given its bizarre appearance, it is usually carried in a pack until needed. Once unfolded and stepped into, it crawls over the wearer’s body rapidly; donning the suit takes 1 minute.

The ablative-metabolic suit is a quasi-living pouch or sandwich of harvested Serpent-skin on the outside and germ plasm made of Serpent stem cells (mined on the Spine) inside. The stem cells endlessly multiply, dying in response to whatever environmental condition exists, breeding themselves to withstand the new stimulus and keep the Serpentskin (and thus the wearer inside it) alive. This process is not instantaneous: the skin cannot survive a sudden major breach or drastic changes in stimuli, so it does not protect against flamethrowers, lightning, or other similar hazards. It is not bulletproof. To function in vacuum, unbreathable gas, or thin atmosphere (or underwater), the suit’s wearer must also use the hypox apparatus (below).

The main game effect of this suit is to render certain types of Survival or Physique rolls unnecessary—it auto-succeeds against any hostile environments that might otherwise require an overcome or defend action to deal with, provided the suit’s been activated correctly. If this environmental protection is advantageous in a conflict or contest, this gear always gets two free invocations on a SUPERIOR PROTECTION aspect for that scene.

Malfunction

On a failed activation, the suit’s internal metabolic system goes haywire, overreacting to the stimuli and breeding metastatic cells that attack each other. The suit begins to flail and jerk around, with the wearer still inside it, and begins compensating for nonexistent environmental problems: increasing the air pressure in a desert, or heating up underwater. It immediately starts to make physical attacks on the wearer at Fair (+2), once per exchange. The wearer must succeed at an overcome roll with Athletics to escape, and the suit actively opposes at Fair.

It must be repaired in a biological laboratory before it can be worn again; restoring the suit’s metabolic equilibrium requires a successful overcome roll with Science against Great (+4) passive opposition, and 6 hours.

Crotaline Drops (Expendable)

Cost: 1 stunt per use

Activation: Science vs. Fair (+2)

Many of the beings living inside the Serpent can see in the dark. A serum derived from their aqueous humor and from the nerve fibers of the pit viper (family *Crotalinae*) can stimulate thermoreception through the human optic nerve. Mixed with ethyl alcohol, this serum is administered as eye drops that give the user infrared vision. Rhodes University herpetologists have engineered photosynthetic glands to secrete this serum; crotaline drops come in a glass bottle with a gland in a compartment, or well, at the bottom. The gland can manufacture more with sugar or sunlight and time. The user still needs to refill the alcohol, or the drops badly burn the eyes.

Activating crotaline drops cannot be done in the middle of a contest or conflict; you must make your activation roll completely undistracted.

In game terms, the drops obviate any concerns about darkness for any skill roll in a scene, confers a NIGHT VISION aspect with two invocations when your opponent can't see like you can in a scene, and prevents your opponent from gaining a similar advantage from having night vision gear.

Malfunction

On a failed activation, the drops overfunction, and the user is blinded by a wave of unfamiliar sensations as his brain ceases processing information from the optic nerve. This immediately confers the BLINDED AND DAZED situation aspect for the rest of the scene, with a free invoke on it for whoever gets to it first. Restoring the drops' balance requires 6 hours in a chemical or biochemical laboratory and a successful Science roll vs. Great (+4).

Fiber Bombs (Expendable)

Cost: 1 stunt per use

Activation: Athletics vs. target's defense

Among other things, the Serpent has been a cornucopia of bizarre long-chain organic molecules. One polymer found mostly in its parasite species is such an enormous molecule that it is actually visible (barely) to the naked eye, nicknamed "pythine" by the researchers who isolated it. It shows a marked tendency to attract other organic matter. Loading a compressed-air capsule with pythine and mineral oil creates a "fiber bomb": when the capsule breaks, the air propels the pythine out in a blast to cling to whatever organic material (skin, clothing, leather, hydrocarbons, rubber, wood, plastic, etc.) it touches. In the field, agents travel with a "starter" of pythine and decant it (very carefully) into capsules; the mineral oil makes sure it doesn't start clamping onto them. Small capsules just affect a single man-sized target; larger ones (aka, if you have two uses and burn them both) could go up to vehicle scale (see p. 48). Even a man in full plate armor will soon discover just how much of plate mail consists of tiny crevices with leather straps behind them; at the GM's discretion, all-metal targets like robots or totally sealed bathyspheres shed pythine without effect. Eventually, pythine breaks down in the air, but cleaning it off even then is slow going.

When using fiber bombs, you roll the activation with your create advantage attempt. In game terms, this creates a TRAPPED advantage on your target with all the usual benefits. Because the strands are so sticky, the pythine has a Fair (+2) "skill" that it can use to actively oppose the target's movement related actions for the remainder of the scene, even after you've burned all the invocations.

Malfunction

On a failure, the fiber bomb has either gone off without effect (the pythine became inert for some reason) or goes off prematurely and affects the thrower; GM's choice.

Gill Array

Cost: 1 stunt

Activation: Science vs. Fair (+2)

This is actually a modified version of the hypox apparatus immediately below, although it resembles a bizarre cross between a tank-less SCUBA rebreather and a pair of snorkels (actually exhausts for

waste hydrogen). A small ophiline-fueled compressor electrolyzes the water as the wearer inhales it through a Serpent-lung membrane, creating a flow of oxygen laced with neurotransmitters to speed reaction time and control oxygen narcosis. The result is the same speed and mobility underwater as above it, or even better. The gill array does not protect the wearer from icy cold or high pressure below the thermocline; for that, he should have an ablative-metabolic suit or other protection.

In game terms, this provides a UNHINDERED MOBILITY aspect with two free invocations on it in any underwater scene where your opponent does not have similar gear (which is likely, considering this is ophi-tech and it's 1951). It may also render some Athletics or Physique rolls unnecessary, if the reason you're making the roll is due to being underwater.

Malfunction

On a failure, the wearer begins to drown at the least convenient time. Repairing a malfunctioning gill array usually requires nothing but 6 hours, a decent workshop, a spare part or two, and an Fair (+2) overcome action with Crafts.

Hypox Apparatus

Cost: 1 stunt

Activation: Science vs. Fair [+2]

The Hyper-Oxygenation Apparatus, to use its formal name, resembles nothing so much as a large mechanical spider clinging to the wearer's face over the mouth and nose, its "legs" reaching across the jaws and throat. The "legs" are actually a metal framework to keep the wearer's throat and jaws from collapsing (or exploding) in variable breathing pressures; the "body of the spider" is a biomechanical compressor built around a slice of Serpent lung (an alveolus, actually) that draws in all available oxygen in the environment—mountaintop, underwater, poison cloud—compresses it, and respirates into the wearer's trachea through the mouth. If there is no oxygen whatsoever in the environment, such as a hard vacuum, it draws on stored oxygen in the alveolus.

In game terms, this allows you to breathe when you normally would not be able to. This is worth an advantage with two invocations if you're in a contest or conflict with someone who has no breathing gear, or one invocation if they have normal breathing gear.

Malfunction

On a failure, the hypox apparatus ceases to feed oxygen to the wearer. If the wearer happens to be in a breathable atmosphere, nothing too terrible happens; in other atmospheres, suffocation likely ensues. Repairing a malfunctioning hypox apparatus requires either the same process as repairing a gill array, or the same process as repairing an ablative-metabolic suit (see above for both), depending on whether the GM rules that the compressor failed, or the alveolus "caught cold."

Jet Pack

Cost: 3 stunts

Activation: Science vs. Fair [+2], then Pilot for all things afterward

This is just what it sounds like: a jet pack! Powered by an ophiline engine, it is controlled with a handle like a helicopter yoke; a shark-like fin on the back provides stabilization and looks cool.

In game terms, you can fly! This is pretty much always useful, in that nearly all physical impediments in a ground conflict are meaningless to you, and being able to take to the air puts you in situations where you can solve problems in ways other people just can't. Really, the benefits are almost too numerous to mention. That's why it costs three stunts. This doesn't change your scale, though, so watch out for jet fighters in aerial conflict.

Malfunction

On a failure, the jet pack "flames out" and fails to start, which is bad enough if the user is in midair at the time. Enough of these within a session, and it's possible the jet pack may explode—



treat this as a Fantastic (+6) physical attack on the pilot. If any pieces can be recovered from the crash, repairing it requires 6 hours and a really good workshop, plus a Crafts roll.

Marconi Gun**Cost: 2 stunts****Activation: none [of course, you use it with Shoot]**

This pistol-grip weapon, the size of a large submachine pistol, is the most commonly available piece of ophi-tech in the world, with the exception of ophiline itself (see below). The South African Police (South Africa's internal security agents) carry them as sidearms, as do the RRAF and some specialist units of various Commonwealth militaries. Possession of an unlicensed Marconi gun is a hanging offense in

South Africa, and a very serious charge elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Despite this, they are eagerly sought after on the black market. Manufactured by Marconi SAF in Pretoria, the Marconi gun transforms power generated by a microbial fuel cell (utilizing fever microbes found within the Serpent's intestine) into excited microwave radiation ionized by passage through a tuned chromium barrel. In short, it fires a bright-colored burst of deadly microwaves that boil and explode flesh, disrupt electronics, and create brief explosive arcs of electrical discharge in metal.

The gun has a "Standard" setting, although the firer can set the gun to a hi-power setting that uses up the charges more rapidly—add 2 to the value of a successful hit, but two missed attacks burns out the gun for the rest of the scene.

Alternately, the firer can set the gun to "Pain," which heats flesh to 130 degrees Fahrenheit, triggering the target's pain receptors but not causing actual burning damage—in other words, you take this as mental damage rather than physical. A "Pain" burst has no effect on electronics or metal. All Marconi gun shots largely ignore armor; they boil the victim from the inside.

These should be extremely difficult to acquire in play if you don't have a Rhodes sponsor or the equivalent—anyone who has one tends to guard it with jealousy and prejudice.

Neural Stimulator (Expendable)**Cost: 1 stunt per use****Activation: Science vs. Fair [+2]**

A fairly complex nerve agent distilled from the Serpent's venom. The Japanese bio-weapons laboratory in Manchukuo has a vast variety of venom varieties, conveying various powers to Kempeitai and other elite Japanese agents. The neural stimulator is the only such serum known (publicly, at any rate) to come out of Rhodes University's labs. It must be injected into a vein. Continued use increases the effect.

In game terms, this is good for a two-invoke BOOSTED SPEED advantage for that scene, and you automatically go first in the exchange order, regardless of your Notice skill, unless someone else is using this stuff as well—in which case, both of you compare Notice to see who beats whom.

Malfunction

On a failure, the user is immediately incapacitated, though not otherwise damaged. Though, repeated failures or the use of "knock-off" serum (see above) might also add the requirement of taking physical consequences for heart problems or nervous system issues.

Ophiline**Cost: 1 stunt****Activation: none**

Ophiline is refined Serpent oil, pumped from the Serpent's body by slant-drilling derricks in East Africa and England. Royal Dutch-Shell has developed a "stepped-down" version suitable for standard internal combustion engines (herpetrol, called "O-gas" in America), but the pure stuff is available for research purposes... and for other purposes as well. Wildcat drillers have made ophiline potentially available almost anywhere motor vehicles might get fueled, although it costs

nearly \$3 a gallon! (For context, that's about \$30 a gallon in USD in 2012.) For full effect, it requires a specially built alloy engine, such as those in the jet pack (see above) or RRAF rocket-planes, but even in conventional vehicles it has a remarkable effect on performance.

When you take this stunt, it doesn't mean you have a supply of raw ophiline. Instead, it means that a vehicle or piece of motorized equipment you have takes ophiline instead of its normal fuel source. Specify some category of advantage, such as speed or fuel efficiency or power or whatever, and you'll take an appropriate aspect into any relevant scenes with two free invokes on it.

Sinew-weave Vest **Cost: 2 stunts or 1 stunt per use (expendable version)** **Activation: none**

Woven from collagen fascicles from the Serpent's tendons, the sinew-weave vest is still too heavy, bulky, and expensive for general issue even to Commonwealth forces.

As a persistent piece of gear, the armor almost always provides a WELL-ARMORED advantage with two free invokes in personal scale (see p. 48) conflicts, but gives a LESS ENCUMBERED advantage with one invoke to your opponent.

As an expendable piece of gear, sinew-weave fascicles can be woven into a garment, allowing the substitution of Crafts for any other skill used for physical defense.

Avro Blackhawk (Vehicle) **Permission: One aspect detailing RRAF involvement** **Cost: 2 stunts**

The RRAF deploys this delta-winged rocket-plane for missions onto the Spine, as well as the occasional Most Secret "over-the-Wall" shot into Soviet territory. It has a ramjet for high-atmospheric flight, a rocket for launch flight, and two maneuvering jets; as much as possible of its flight time is ballistic. Needless to say, it is fueled by ophiline. The Blackhawk is too rare to use for mere conventional globe-hopping, although successor craft may well take on that role for missions or cargoes requiring stealth and speed. The Soviets are rumored to have a similar craft, the Keldysh N-1.

The Avro Blackhawk provides a OPHI-TECH ENHANCED advantage in conflicts. Against other jets, this gets one free invoke, and against any other type of aircraft it gets two. It is armed with six 12.7mm machine guns and eight rockets which can attack massive scale targets(see p. 48).

NORMAL-TECH

Most of the technology available in *The Day After Ragnarok* is either WWII surplus or 1930's vintage, as the Serpentfall knocked out most of the world's industrial plants. We recommend some Internet research to get a handle on the kinds of things your characters could find and buy with Scrounge or Resources rolls, but here are some lists to get you started.

OLD-FASHIONED: These things are considered outdated or *de rigueur*, but in certain areas of the world, they may be all you get.

- **WEAPONS AND ARMOR:** Hand to hand weaponry, flintlocks and caplocks, cartridge revolvers, repeating rifles, shotguns, rifled artillery, crank-operated machine guns, primitive rocketry, steel plating
- **COMMUNICATIONS, SENSORY, & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** Newspapers, photography, telegraph
- **SURVIVAL GEAR:** Canvas tents and tarps, cork-block life jackets, parachutes, oil lanterns, axes, hammers, shovels, and other simple tools, tin canteens, binoculars, spyglass
- **MEDICINE AND HEALTH:** Amputation, bone-setting, trepanning, wound cauterization, chloroform and ether, ammonia, castor oil, morphine and other opiates, quinine

- **POWER SOURCES:** Battery (though they were extremely bulky), coal engines, steam engines
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Bicycle, hot-air balloon, railroad, propeller planes, steamship, submarine

NEWER BUT COMMON: Up until the Serpentfall, these things were commonly available.

- **WEAPONS AND ARMOR:** Automatic and semiautomatic firearms, chemical weaponry, grenade/rocket launchers, mortars, TNT and dynamite, tanks, battleships, military airplanes, resin-reinforced clothing, rubber padding, metal bulletproof shields
- **COMMUNICATIONS, SENSORY, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** Air-dropped mail, telephone, radio, typewriters, phonograph, magnetic tape recorder, wax cylinders, movie camera and SLR camera, sonar
- **SURVIVAL GEAR:** Electric lanterns and flashlights, nylon and rayon fabrics, the zipper, gasoline camp stoves, cigarette lighters, water filters and purification tablets, flotation belts, dive masks, snorkels, air-dropped containers, heated bodysuits
- **MEDICINE AND HEALTH:** Medical oxygen, antibiotics, aspirin and other analgesics, blood transfusion, iron lungs, X-rays, sodium pentothal
- **POWER SOURCES:** Electric motor, hydroelectric power, internal combustion engine, steam turbine, portable batteries
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Airplane, automobile, helicopter, zeppelin

STATE OF THE ART: These things are new, emerging, or prototype-only technologies.

- **WEAPONS AND ARMOR:** Assault rifles, military jets, nuclear weaponry, flak and fragmentation vests, PVC helmets
- **COMMUNICATIONS, SENSORY, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:** Very primitive computers, B&W television, radar, thermal imaging
- **SURVIVAL GEAR:** Night-vision optics, SCUBA, flammable fuel tablets, rebreathers
- **POWER SOURCES:** Gas turbines, nuclear power plants
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Jet aircraft

WEAPONS AFTER RAGNAROK

This section lists just a smattering of the more characteristic weapons available to post-Serpentfall heroes, and some discussion about them to help you figure out relative advantages. Feel free to expand on these with your own research, or come up with improvised and kitbashed stuff. City militias, especially, arm themselves with a wild variety of guns, and rebels and bandits have to use whatever they can steal.

MELEE WEAPONS

Given that bullets aren't being manufactured in pre-Serpentfall quantities, melee weapons of all kinds are seeing more common use. Especially relevant for the WWII theme are bayonets and short blades of all kinds: the venerable K-Bar and kukri are military standards, machetes and Bowie knives make handy tools for wilderness exploration, and highly concealable switchblades are the weapon of choice for the urban jungle.

The saber is still a fairly common sight on the battlefield, along with its counterpart, the much-romanticized Japanese katana, but neither one really carries a practical advantage over the other.

Finally, fans of pulp would do well to consider the bullwhip, which can entangle weapons at a decent distance if you're a well-trained user. Its effectiveness diminishes considerably if you don't have a lot of space to use it in.

• BOWS

It's also more likely that you'll encounter bows and crossbows out there, especially where there's a scarcity in the supplies you need to keep firearms maintained. At the GMs discretion, characters who don't have an explicit reason to be familiar with bows take a -2 penalty to Shoot to use a bow.

Bows compare pretty favorably with all guns except rifles in terms of range, but are slower to fire and don't pack quite the same punch.

• PISTOLS

Pistols are excellent at short range and relatively easy to conceal, but suffer against SMGs and any kind of rifle at longer ranges and in terms of overall firepower.

- **COLT M1911 (.45 ACP):** The Colt is a real mankiller at close range; consider two invocations for that advantage if you get it, or leveling the playing field against someone with a shotgun. Also, it compares well to SMGs for range.
- **NAMBU 14 SHIKI (8MM):** A cheap imitation of the Luger, this is the primary Japanese sidearm. It's notoriously unreliable and prone to jamming—you're likely to give your *opponent* an advantage if you go into a fight with one of these. That's also true of any cheaply made handgun or "Saturday Night Special." But hey, it's better than having no gun at all, right?

OTHER NOTABLE EXAMPLES: S&W .357 Magnum, Tokarev TT33, Webley Mark IV

• SUBMACHINE GUNS (SMGS)

Submachine guns have full-auto fire, most excellent for when you want to put a lot of rounds in the air. They aren't very precise, aren't very quiet, and aren't effective at long range.

If you want, you can "spray" a zone, forcing everyone (and that means *everyone*—your friends in that zone don't get selective protection) in it to defend against your Shoot attack. This comes as the cost of emptying your clip: if you don't have another gun handy, you'll need to make an overcome roll with Shoot to use it again, and you can bet that anyone who is capable of peppering you with rounds at that moment will choose to do so.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES: Kokura 100 Shiki (8mm), M3 "Grease Gun" (.45), Owen Mk I (9mm), Thompson M1A1 (.45)

• SHOTGUNS

Shotguns are ideally designed for point-blank work; consider a two-invoke advantage in that situation vs. any other ranged weapon. In extremely small zones (like the size of a single room), you can attack the whole zone, but like SMGs above, you can't screen your friends from that effect. Shotguns suffer in range even compared to pistols.

If you load slugs instead of shot (your choice always, but you can't change your mind in the middle of a conflict), you don't suffer the range problem, but you also can't blast whole rooms. Choose wisely.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES: Browning Automatic (12g), Winchester 1897 Pump (12g)

• RIFLES

Rifles are most excellent for precision shooting at long range, and less optimal in any other conditions. Also, most rifles of this period are bolt-action, so they're slow to fire compared to any semi-auto or auto firearm.

- **M1 GARAND:** The first semi-automatic rifle ever issued as a standard infantry combat weapon, the American-made Garand dominated the battlefields of the War with its high rate of fire. As long as you're not moving around, you benefit from this—ignore any advantage

Weapons of the Post-Serpentfall World



your opponent would get for having a semi-auto weapon, but give yourself a situation aspect of ROOTED IN PLACE with a free invoke for your opponent.

OTHER NOTABLE EXAMPLES: Arisaka 99 Shiki (7.7mm), Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk I (.303), M1 Garand (.30-06), Springfield M1903 (.30-06)

• ASSAULT RIFLES

Assault rifles can do full-auto like SMGs and have range comparable to rifles, making them the general king of the battlefield. Not very subtle or good for close-in work, though.

- **M2 CARBINE:** Some U.S. forces are equipped with this selective-fire version of the M1 Carbine developed in 1945 just before the Serpentfall. Its carbine round suffers trajectory drop at longer ranges, so pretty much any other assault rifle or rifle has a range advantage on it.

OTHER NOTABLE EXAMPLE: AK-47

• MACHINE GUNS

Machine guns are normally mounted on a tripod or otherwise are bulky and difficult to move. They are unmatched among ballistic weapons for pure firepower and have extremely high rates of fire. Again, they are preferable in battlefield situations and not in close quarters.

- **NAMBU TYPE 99:** The Japanese light machine gun. It fires Japanese rifle ammunition, but is prone to jamming and breaking down like the Type 14 above. It is not available outside the Japanese Empire, China, or the Philippines.
- **SG-43:** The primary Soviet medium machine gun uses a thick barrel rather than a water jacket (which could freeze). Its mount is not a tripod but a two-wheeled cart. It is not available outside the Soviet sphere.

OTHER NOTABLE EXAMPLES: Bren Mk II (.303), M-1918A2 BAR (.30-06), M-2HB (.50)

▪ FLAMETHROWERS

Flamethrowers are bulky and heavy, and only work effectively at very short ranges, but they are intensely dangerous and damaging. No protective gear is really effective against them, and they can create a lot of collateral damage in a room where things are flammable. They can “full-auto” in that you can empty the tank to attack a whole zone, but you can’t change out the tank until after the conflict is over.

▪ ROCKET LAUNCHERS

Rocket launchers are vehicle-scale weapons (see below), but you only get one shot with them. After that, you have to succeed at an overcome roll with Shoot to reload them, and anyone who can get at you or shoot you can actively oppose your attempt.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES: M-1 Bazooka, RPG-2

▪ GRENADES

Grenades are best modeled as an expendable gear stunt, allowing you to attack a whole zone with Athletics per use.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES: Mills Bomb, MkII “Pineapple”, Molotov Cocktail

VEHICLES

Vehicles work like any other kind of gear. If you have Drive or Pilot, presume you have something to drive or fly, or note the lack of a vehicle with an aspect so you can get story mileage out of it.

Really, all that a vehicle does for you is change the context of the scene you’re in and how you’re using your skills. If you’re in an aerial conflict, it’s the same as a normal one, except you’re defending with Pilot instead of Athletics and when you use Shoot, you’re using the airplane’s machine guns.

Your vehicle can take personalized stunts like any other kind of gear and has its own stress track and set of consequences, so you might end up having to track it on a separate index card at times. Assume any purely civilian vehicles have a stress track of two boxes, any military or reinforced vehicles have a track of three boxes, and vehicles specifically designed for the battlefield have a track of four boxes.

▪ SCALE

In most of these scenes, everyone’s going to be using the same type of vehicle, so you don’t have to worry about differences in scale. Sometimes, though, vehicles will be involved in ground combat, and different sizes of vehicle will be involved in a particular battle.

For this game, assume there are three scales of importance: *personal*, *vehicle*, and *massive*. Each of these represents a broad, significant jump, enough to render the impact of the scale below it almost meaningless. In other words, plinking a Jeep or tank with your pistol isn’t really going to affect it much other than to put holes in it. Likewise, firing tank shells at a battleship is loud and annoying, but not really effective.

In other words, vehicle scale is anything you could operate, and massive scale is anything that you could reliably have a whole scene inside of.

When you’re trying to affect something a scale bigger than you, you must set up an advantage first, justifying how you’re able to affect it. This might be as simple as having a certain piece of gear. But it might mean that you need to carefully line up the fuel tank in your sights, or crawl up under its belly in the dead of darkness, or something else adventurous. And after your first attack, the target will likely try to nullify your advantage somehow.

Two scales bigger than you, and you pretty much can't even justify calling for a conflict. You might be able to set a scene *on* that vehicle where you accomplish other goals or sabotage it from within, but there's no way you're going to justify affecting it directly.

If you're attacking something a scale down from you, you automatically inflict consequences instead of stress (**Fate Core**, p. 162)—the recipient gets no choice in the matter. Two scales down from you, and again, it's not a conflict: you're going to automatically succeed at your goals unless your target deliberately reframes the conflict.

▪ EXAMPLE VEHICLES

All these are considered vehicle scale, the size most PC groups will use on a regular basis.

Examples of massive scale vehicles are rare: aircraft carriers like the *Yorktown*-class USS *Enterprise* would apply, as well as heavy planes like the Messerschmitt Me-323 Gigant and the Convaair B-36.

We've also included an aspect or two with each vehicle, to give them each a little **Fate** personality.

▪ GROUND VEHICLES

Humber Armored Car

Primary armored car of the British Commonwealth forces; civilian versions are available to Rhodes Scholars and other loyal servants of the Crown. The military version of this armored car includes one 15mm heavy machine gun, and twin 7.92mm coaxially mounted machine guns.

VEHICLE ASPECT: RELIABLE MOBILE GUN PLATFORM

Willys MB Jeep

With 600,000 built by Willys-Overland alone during the War, the four wheel drive Jeep can be found on every continent in all states of repair and customization.

VEHICLE ASPECTS: NO ROAD TOO ROUGH, JURY-RIGGER'S DREAM

Motorcycle

Increasingly common as gasoline, rubber, and other commodities become decreasingly common.

VEHICLE ASPECT: ON A STEEL HORSE I RIDE

2-1/2 ton Truck

Built by Kaiser Motors from old GMC specifications, or one of the hundreds of thousands built during the War. Most of them have a canvas cab top and canvas truck bed cover.

VEHICLE ASPECT: NOISY DIESEL WORKHORSE

AIRCRAFT

Beechcraft Model 18

The most common utility aircraft in North America; as the C-45 Expeditor it saw service with all the Allied militaries including China. It can carry a payload of 1200 lbs. (six passengers, or half a ton of gear) up to 1200 miles without refueling. (The Australian DeHaviland



Humber Armored Car



Jeep



2-1/2 ton Truck

Rank, Promotions, & Military Pay

Military and police rank in *The Day After Ragnarok* almost always falls under one of a character's aspects: U.S. NAVY COMMANDER, CHICAGO POLICE DETECTIVE, TEXAS RANGER, ROYAL ROCKETRY AIR FORCE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT, etc. Handle promotions by allowing the character to replace their old aspect with a new one representing the new rank. For instance, going from USMC CORPORAL to USMC SERGEANT, or RCMP SERGEANT-MAJOR to RCMP INSPECTOR. (See below for some example rank structures.) Higher rank comes with increased authority, but also can saddle a character with many new responsibilities. Thus, it's bound to have an effect on both how the rank aspect can be invoked, and how it can be compelled.

Players should always feel free to "buck for promotion" with the GM when they feel they've accomplished something that their military service branch would reasonably recognize as worthy. Promotions should usually happen in between adventures, but it's possible that an "in-the-field" rank bump might be appropriate in some adventures—or might even be a key plot element of an adventure, or a catalyst for a new story. By and large, promotion is slower for privates (or the equivalent) and for Army captains (Navy Lt., RAF Flt. Lt., Mountie Supt., Texas Ranger or other police lieutenant) or higher. Promotion from NCO (sergeant, petty officer) onto the officer track is rarer still. That said, conspicuous bravery on a successful, dangerous mission carries rewards and weight with promotion boards. Final say on whether the promotion actually happens is, like most such things, in the hands of the GM.

In most games, if heroes are all part of a military unit, they won't be spending a lot of money on gear. Their guns and ammo are provided, as are uniforms and other equipment, room and board (or tents and C-rations), and the other necessities of life. If the intelligence officer needs to flash a few bills around the squatter camp to get answers, he can just be assumed to have them. Even in police units like the RCMP and the Texas Rangers, without room and board allowances, the focus of their adventures isn't the pay, it's the job.

But some game groups like tracking their finances, so with that in mind, here are the *Day After Ragnarok* monthly pay scales for American and Commonwealth militaries.

Military Pay by Rank

| ARMY RANK (US) | NAVY RANK (RN) | AIR RANK (RAF) | US PAY | COMMONWEALTH PAY |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------|------------------|
| Private | Jnr Seaman | Aircraftman | \$50 | £8 |
| PFC | Able Seaman | Leading Aircraftman | \$54 | £9 |
| NCOs | | | | |
| Corporal | Ordinary Seaman | Corporal | \$66 | £10 |
| Sergeant | Leading Seaman | Sergeant | \$78 | £16 |
| Staff Sergeant | Petty Officer 2nd Class | Chief Technician | \$96 | £20 |
| Technical Sergeant | Petty Officer 1st Class | Flight Sergeant | \$114 | £23 |
| Master Sergeant | Chief Petty Officer | Master Aircrew | \$138 | £28 |
| OFFICERS | | | | |
| 2nd Lt | Midshipman | Pilot Officer | \$80 | £20 |
| 1st Lt | Sub-Lt. | Flying Officer | \$95 | £40 |
| Captain | Lieutenant | Flight Lt. | \$150 | £50 |
| Major | Lt. Cmdr. | Sqdn. Leader | \$250 | £65 |
| Lt. Colonel | Commander | Wing Commander | \$300 | £75 |
| Colonel | Captain | Flight Cpt. | \$330 | £100 |
| MOUNTIE RANK | | TEXAS RANGER RANK | | PAY |
| Constable | £10 | Ranger | \$70 | |
| Corporal | £12 | Sergeant | \$90 | |
| Sergeant | £20 | Lieutenant | \$100 | |
| Staff Sergeant | £22 | Captain | \$200 | |
| Staff Sgt.-Major | £24 | | | |
| Sergeant-Major | £28 | | | |
| Inspector | £30 | | | |
| Superintendent | £35 | | | |
| Chief Superintendent | £40 | | | |



Beechcraft Model 18

Dragon II biplane has a range about half that, but the other stats are the same.)

This description can apply to any small twin-engine, propeller-driven transport; for a somewhat larger plane, see the DC-3 Dakota.

VEHICLE ASPECT: FLEXIBLE FLYER, EASY TO FIX

Bell 47



Bell 47

The first, and so far only, helicopter in the world produced for the civilian market, the Bell 47 is manufactured in Fort Worth, Texas. Notwithstanding, the Texas Rangers buy plenty of them. It can carry a pilot and 1000 lbs. of gear 245 miles without refueling.

VEHICLE ASPECT: AGILE WHIRLYBIRD

DC-3 Dakota



DC-3 Dakota

The legendary "Gooney Bird" transport plane was repurposed as the C-47 Skytrain during the War. DC-3s can be found almost anywhere in the world; even the Soviets produced their own version. It can carry a payload of 3 tons up to 1000 miles without refueling.

VEHICLE ASPECT: RELIABLE RUST-BUCKET

Noorduyn Norseman



Noorduyn Norseman

A single-wing STOL bush plane built in Canada; it can be fitted with floats, wheels, or skis. It is of wood and steel construction. It can fly 900 miles without refueling. Similar single-engine bush planes are built in Australia, California, and Texas; DeHavilland Canada (reconstructed in Vancouver) is working on a superior all-metal bush plane, the Beaver.

VEHICLE ASPECT: LANDS ON A (CANADIAN) DIME

Lockheed Constellation



Lockheed Constellation

The C-69 high-speed, long-distance (range: 4,500 miles) transport became the Constellation airliner after the War. Of course, at too high speeds and too long a range, you run the risk of burning out one of the four supercharged radial engines. Fortunately, three out of four propellers is still usually enough.

VEHICLE ASPECT: WORLD'S FINEST TRIMOTOR

PBY Catalina Flying Boat

This seaplane can land on water or land, and take off from water with a suitable headwind. It can carry a payload of 2 tons, and stay aloft for 24 hours, traveling 2,520 miles without refueling or maintenance. Military models mount up to five guns.

VEHICLE ASPECT: LUMBERING LEVIATHAN

P-80 Shooting Star

This is the top of the line jet fighter in the USAAF. Similar statistics apply to the RAF Gloster Meteor, the Red Air Force MiG-9, or the IJAF Nakajima Ki-201.

The plane is armed with six 6 12.7mm machine guns, eight 5-inch rockets and two 1,000 lb. bombs. The bombs and rockets can attack massive scale targets (see p. 48).

VEHICLE ASPECT: FAST-ATTACK INTERCEPTOR

Piper J-3 Cub

A single-engine light plane produced in prodigious numbers (20,000 units) during the War as a trainer, now most common as an airmail plane. It can fly 220 miles without refueling. Taylorcraft in Texas produces a similar plane, the L-2. The British equivalent is the Auster V; the Australians produce a biplane with similar stats, the DeHaviland Tiger Moth.

VEHICLE ASPECT: AS SIMPLE AS IT GETS

WATERCRAFT

Fairmile Motor Launch

The somewhat larger Royal Navy version of the USN PT Boat. Similar patrol boats operate off the coasts of Japanese-occupied China, the Mediterranean coasts of France, and Argentina.

Military versions are armed with two 7.62mm coaxially mounted machine guns, a 40mm Vickers Quick-Fire Tank Gun, and 12 depth charges. The depth charges can attack massive scale targets. Similar civilian craft are unarmed.

VEHICLE ASPECT: COASTAL DEFENSE CRUISER

Speedboat

This standard type of watercraft has a wooden hull, and an outboard motor. It can be fitted with a wooden top.

VEHICLE ASPECT: GREEN-WATER STALWART

Triton Class Submarine

The main attack submarine of the Royal Navy. It has a crush depth of 600 feet. It's armed with a 102mm cannon with high explosive rounds, three 7.62mm coaxially mounted machine guns, and 10 torpedo tubes, with a payload of 26 total torpedoes. The torpedoes and 102mm cannon can attack massive scale targets.

VEHICLE ASPECT: RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP



PBY Catalina



P-80 Shooting Star



Piper J-3 Cub



Fairmile Motor Launch



Triton Class Submarine

game master's section



“The will that wanted to shape an entire world according to its wish can finally attain nothing more satisfactory than... annihilation.”

— RICHARD WAGNER,
PROGRAM NOTE TO *Götterdämmerung*



The World After Ragnarok

Adventures can happen anywhere and everywhere on **The Day After Ragnarok**. This guide gives you the lowdown on the world situation, with enough information to get you started running scenarios in any corner of the globe. Don't worry about history: It went off the rails in a big way a few years back.

Inventions might get made early or not at all, plenty of folks died in this world that didn't in others, and the geopolitics can go any which way in the wake of the Serpentfall.

*“Brothers shall fight and fell each other,
And sisters’ sons shall kinship stain;
Harsh times on Earth, a wanton age;
An Axe Age, a Sword Age, when shields are sundered,
A Wind Age, a Wolf Age, before the world falls;
No man to another shall show mercy.”*

— VÖLUSPÁ, STANZA 45

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The falling Serpent smashed the British Isles, but the Empire was bigger than that. The Duke of Gloucester, Prince Henry, serving as Australia's Governor-General in 1945, transferred the Imperial capital to Sydney and took the throne as King Henry IX. He and Prime Minister Menzies have taken controversial steps since then: negotiating an armistice with the Japanese, holding on to as much of India as they could, pushing ahead with ophiurgic research, and drawing a “thin red line” across the path of Soviet expansion. However, most Australians see no better plan on offer, and the rest of the Empire is if anything even more monarchist and supportive. So far, Henry has managed to govern an Empire of four parliaments (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa) with one (mostly Australian) Cabinet; constitutional reform is one more question that opponents accuse Menzies and the King of ducking. They, on the other hand, see other problems as bigger and more immediate: the Soviets, the Serpent, and the need to hold onto Empire by the skin of their teeth or see barbarism roll over the world unresisted. His Majesty's Government has decided who and what its enemies are, and what it needs to do and build to fight them in this new world.

Australia

With a population of 10 million, Australia is the country on Earth least affected by the Serpentfall physically. Even the “years without a summer” were milder in Australia, on the other side of the world from the Serpentfall's plume of dirt and mist. But it is one of the most affected politically: it has suddenly become the heart and fulcrum of the British Empire.

Australia has no bandits worth mentioning, although some Aboriginal tribes in the interior worship the Serpent. The desolate Outback allows the government to isolate major experimental facilities such as the Woomera Proving Grounds for ophiurgic and rocketry research.

South Africa

The Union of South Africa is the other major pole of the British Empire. Its white population of less than 3 million maintains near-total control over the economy and political structure of the country, although it is split between the monarchist South African Party and the National Party of mostly Boer stock. The National Party believes first in controlling the 10 million Xhosa, Zulu, and other blacks in South Africa, and secondarily in pursuing South African independence. (There are also about 3 million Indians, mostly laborers and small businessmen, in British Africa.) King Henry and his government must walk a fine line in South Africa. Trying to bring it completely into the Imperial mainstream will offend the Boers and possibly splinter the Empire; leaving the Boers to their own devices will encourage white nationalism and stir up native unrest

Fimbulwinter

According to the sagas, the “Great Winter” comes before Ragnarok: three years without a summer before Garm howls. And indeed, 1941-1944 were exceptionally cold and wet, another doom for Operation Barbarossa. But in 1945, the Serpentfall truly brought on the great cold.

The Serpent’s coil fell into the sea, splashing not just the mega-tsunami across the Atlantic but a plume of water up into the atmosphere. There, it froze out and fell again as snow in August. And September. And for nine months after that. Burning cities tossed their share of soot and smoke into the darkening skies, as people starved and rioted all across the Northern Hemisphere. (Except in Russia, where the Narts’ “Red Spring” held winter at bay, and the NKVD liquidated any rioters.) The icy atmosphere reflected more of the sun’s light back into space. The Gulf Stream, blocked by the Serpent’s corpse, slackened. The globe began to cool.

In Africa, rain fell in the Sahara, as the wet air hit the miles-high wall of the Serpent’s coil. Even more rain fell in Algeria and Libya, on Spain and France, as the wet air from the Atlantic poured between the Serpent’s coils in a storm channel from Ireland to Aden. None of that moisture crosses the Serpent’s European coil—without the Narts, the Soviet empire would be in the first stages of a millennia-long drought.

While running games, make sure to mention the terrible weather: snow, rain, sleet, freezing rain, hail, blizzard, ice storm, drizzle, fog. The skies are gray, and cloudy, and overcast, and threatening, and roiling, and murky, and thunderous. Roads are slick, and treacherous; passes are snow-choked and impassable. Good weather should feel like a reward; like a dramatic sunbeam at the end of the movie. Or it should be a contrast: Australia is still sunny, while the rest of the world grays out.

throughout Africa. The presence in South Africa of Rhodes University, the Empire’s premier (and indispensable) research facility, only complicates matters. Rhodes U. is itself split: institutionally, Rhodes very much favors a “strong hand” in Africa, but many of its scholars are socialists, internationalists, liberals, and otherwise suspicious of Boer policy. South Africa also produces strategic minerals necessary for British industrial and weapons development.

With the British Isles destroyed, there is an urgent shortage of colonial administrators for King Henry’s Empire. South African and Rhodesian whites increasingly flow into African colonial posts, including Tanganyika, the “protectorates” of formerly Portuguese Angola and Mozambique, and the former Belgian Congo. (British East Africa has its own native British aristocracy.) Hence, South Africa and Australia find themselves competing for influence in Africa under the common British Imperial crown.

With its vital strategic location, mineral deposits, colonial presence, and Rhodes University, South Africa has a good deal of scope for independent action. For example, the South African Police (SAP) maintains their own network of spies and mercenaries to keep rebel groups and “subversives” down. The SAP does not accept MI5 control or oversight, although it cooperates with British Intelligence on a case-by-case basis.

British India

After the Serpentfall, the British government altered its policy of treating India as an indivisible dominion on a single track to independence. The elections of 1947 included an option to remain under British control: the Muslim and Sikh sections of India, along with a number of the “princely states,” voted to remain British rather than join the rest of India in independence under the Congress Party of Nehru and Gandhi. “Congress India” denounced the results, claiming that the British and their native client rulers had manipulated their subjects to once more “divide and conquer” India. This was almost certainly the case, although neither side’s hands were clean in that election. British India and Congress India both remain tense, with political rioting and the occasional massacre common events in both jurisdictions. In both Indias, angry majorities pressure or coerce people who voted “wrong” to emigrate to the other side of the border.

Sir Maxwell Knight

During the War, Sir Maxwell (b. 1900) ran the counter-extremist section of MI5, recruiting and turning agents in the British fascist underground. He worked with Aleister Crowley and Ian Fleming, among others. His occult training and intense anti-Communism qualified him for the post of Director General of MI5 after the Serpentfall. So, too, did the fact that he was almost the only high-ranking MI5 officer to survive the catastrophe. Sir Maxwell does not discuss how he managed that particular feat.

He has piercing eyes and magnetic charm. He keeps a private menagerie, including a baboon and two peacocks. In conversation, he rasps out a few incisive orders or sits silently listening. His enemies in the Service and in the Cabinet have accused him of having had lovers in the Daughters of Dionin.



ASPECTS: DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MI5; ENEMIES IN THE CABINET; STUDENT OF THE OCCULT; MAGNETIC PERSONALITY; STAUNCH ANTI-COMMUNIST; PRIVATE MENAGERIE

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Provoke; Superb (+5) Empathy, Notice, and Will; Great (+4) Contacts, Lore, and Rapport; Good (+3) Resources, Deceive, Investigate, and Shoot; Fair (+2) Fight, Physique, Science, and Stealth

STUNTS: *Well Connected* (+2 to Contacts rolls anywhere in the British Empire.); *Charismatic Leader* (+2 to Rapport rolls to create advantages to inspire his people.); *Beastmaster* (+2 to Rapport rolls to deal with animals.); *Occult Training* (+2 to Lore when researching the occult.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence) **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□

NOTES: If you decide that Sir Maxwell is an actual occult practitioner, rather than merely a student of the Art, add magic stunts with suitable divination, scrying, and astral travel spells.

Professor Bernard Childermass

Professor Childermass (b. 1896) is the head of the Experimental Royal Rocketry Group, based in Woomera, Australia and Nairobi, Kenya. Born in Kenya, Professor Childermass originally wanted to be an African explorer, but after meeting Wernher von Braun during a trip to Germany in 1936 he turned his attention to rockets and space research. After the Serpentfall, he convinced Vickers to recruit Jean-Jacques Barre and his team from France to serve as the core of a British rocket group. He also led an RRAF team that salvaged Robert Goddard's Roswell laboratory—and a number of odd artifacts found in the desert nearby—in 1947. He often goes on such field missions when some scientific puzzle attracts his attention.

Lean, acerbic, and completely dedicated to scientific knowledge (especially knowledge of outer space) at all costs, Childermass runs the ERRG through sheer strength of will. He has an estranged daughter, Paula, but otherwise has little interest in mere human contact. Despite such apparent misanthropy, he has a powerfully humanist moral code.



ASPECTS: THE ERRG'S TOP ROCKET MAN; HUMANISTIC MISANTHROPE; SCIENTIFIC EXPLORER; STALWART MAN OF SCIENCE; SEEKER OF UNKNOWN TRUTH; ESTRANGED DAUGHTER PAULA

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Science; Superb (+5) Crafts and Will; Great (+4) Investigate and Notice; Good (+3) Lore and Pilot; Fair (+2) Physique and Provoke; Average (+1) Athletics, Contacts, and Drive

STUNTS: *Rocket Man* (+2 to Crafts rolls dealing with advanced propulsion systems including jets, rocketry, and ophiurgy.); *Top Scientist* (+2 to Science rolls dealing with knowledge of rocketry, and Astronomy.); *Supreme Force of Will* (+2 to Will to defend against mental attacks.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence) **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□

The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also called MI6) is the foreign espionage arm of the British Empire. The SIS director, currently Major-General Sir Richard Hannay (though always known as “C”), reports to the Foreign Minister. His agents are coolly competent, well equipped with ophi-tech and other gadgets, and almost always deeply familiar with the cultures and countries in which they work. However, no spy service is flawless. Two organizations, especially, seek to infiltrate and subvert the SIS. Just how far either has gotten is up to you.

DAUGHTERS OF DIONIN

This secret society of Serpent-worshippers goes back at least to Victorian times, if not earlier. (The Daughters claim a lineage going back to before the Roman invasion of Britain; “Dionin” was a Serpent-god worshipped in Derbyshire.) As the name implies, priestesses of the Serpent, almost all of aristocratic lineage, run the cult. Their connections in British society provide access to the highest ranks of the military, government, and the SIS; magic or other techniques then complete the subversion. Most of the Daughters died in the Serpentfall; a few scattered covens (run by less-favored priestesses) in the colonies are recreating their network.

NKVD

The Soviet intelligence service had penetrated SIS deeply during the War, but most of its key double agents (Kim Philby and his associates) died in the Serpentfall. The Russians have been attempting to rebuild their network within SIS, opposed by the suspicious Sir Maxwell Knight, head of MI5, the British counter-intelligence Special Service. The other main Soviet targets are the ophiurgical and rocketry research facilities in Australia and Africa; on this front, many top scientists’ Communist sympathies smooth the road for the NKVD.

The main areas of India remaining under British control include: Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal, Rajasthan, the Punjab, Nepal, Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Mysore, along with the “associated colonies” of Ceylon and Burma. A Viceroy administers British India from Calcutta.

Canada

Thanks to the Japan Current, Pacific Canada remains habitable even in these “years without summer.” Vancouver is an increasingly important manufacturing and shipbuilding center. The Mounties explore and patrol the Canadian area of the Poisoned Lands, although the primary government priority is restoring civilization in, links to, and oil production from Alberta on the other side of the Rockies.

British Isles

Most of Great Britain was crushed under the Serpent, and Ireland drowned in the mega-tsunami. (It also absorbed a vast quantity of Serpent blood; Ireland is, for all intents and purposes, a Poisoned Land of bogs and fens now.) Although Bristol and Portsmouth both (barely) lie to the west of the Serpent’s coil, earthquakes smashed both cities to flinders.

At present, Plymouth is the largest city remaining in the British Isles. Although it, too, was hit hard by quakes and flooding, it has survived and serves as the center of the island’s military government; Britain remains under Royal Navy jurisdiction. A program of subsidies and incentives slowly depopulates the islands, resettling the surviving Britons in Australia or New Zealand and removing what remains of British culture, art, and science to the new Imperial center.

But England has one new attraction: the Hereford Cut, a hole cut into the belly of the dead Serpent by the Royal Society (and the Royal Engineers). A major ophiurgical research institution flourishes at Cardiff, the base of the Imperial Speleo-Herpetological Corps. To a lesser degree, the Royal Dutch-Shell ophiline-cracking refineries in Wales also engage in ophi-tech research.

Commander Ivan Sanderson

A British Naval Intelligence officer stationed in Belize, British Honduras, Sanderson (b. 1911) has a sensitive, intelligent face fringed with sleek brown hair and beard. During his global travels before the War, Sanderson became fascinated by rumors of sea-serpents, living dinosaurs, and other cryptozoological oddities. Since the Serpentfall, he has had plenty of chances to study them close up.

Despite this specialized knowledge, Sanderson is not in good odor with his Naval superiors at the moment. Too many of his reports deal with the supposed threat from “an intelligent, and hostile, underwater race” who Sanderson holds responsible for ship disappearances from Belize to Bermuda, and beyond. Only the desperate shortage of personnel, and the nagging feeling of some in the Admiralty that he just *might* be right, keeps Sanderson in his posting. With little official cooperation, Sanderson is eager to recruit passing adventurers for monster hunts or expeditions to scout out the “invisible residents” underwater.



ASPECTS: BRITISH NAVAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER; OUT OF FAVOR WITH THE HIGHER UPS; GLOBAL TRAVELLER; TRAINED BIOLOGIST, CURIOUS CRYPTOZOOLOGIST; THE THREAT IS REAL!

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Science; Great (+4) Athletics and Survival; Good (+3) Contacts, Lore, and Physique; Fair (+2) Notice, Rapport, Sail, and Will; Average (+1) Empathy, Fight, Investigate, Pilot, and Shoot

STUNTS: *Scholar* (+2 to Science rolls involving Botany, Geology, or Zoology.); *The Proof is Out There* (+2 to Investigate to find information on strange occurrences by studying records.); *Field Cryptozoologist* (+2 to Notice rolls to create advantage when observing a Monster or Chimera for weaknesses.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

NOTES: It’s up to you whether Sanderson is DELUSIONAL on the topic of undersea aliens.

William Samson, Jr.

The “Wolf of Kabul” (b. 1902) has been working for the Intelligence Department of the Indian Army for 25 years. He has contacts throughout Central Asia, from Tehran to Tibet, and knows every native language and custom. He keeps abreast of anything strange or inimical to British interests on the northwestern frontier, paying special attention to Soviet machinations in the region. He often wears native garb, with only his glinting blue eyes to give him away.



ASPECTS: THE WOLF OF KABUL; REVEALING BLUE EYES; UNDERCOVER BRITISH INTELLIGENCE OFFICER; CONTACTS FROM TEHRAN TO TIBET; THE FANGS OF THE WOLF

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Fight and Survival; Superb (+5), Contacts and Deceive; Great (+4) Notice and Will; Good (+3) Investigate and Physique; Fair (+2) Provoke, Shoot, and Stealth; Average (+1) Athletics, Lore, Ride, and Scrounge

STUNTS: *Ear for Languages* (+2 to Lore for speaking foreign languages.); *Network of Informants* (+2 to Contacts rolls to find out information anywhere in Central Asia.); *Gone Native* (+2 to Deceive rolls to disguise himself as a Central Asian tribal member.); *Knife Fighter* (+2 to Fight attacks when outnumbered and wielding knives.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

GEAR: .303 Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk I

GEAR STUNTS: *The Fangs of the Wolf*, two Kukri knives that grant the story-based advantage DEADLY BLADES whenever the Wolf of Kabul is in a fight that only includes melee weapons.

Disguise Kit can add a +2 to Deceive rolls to create a IN DISGUISE. *Climbing Gear* can add a +2 to Athletics rolls to climbing.

The Caribbean

Cuba shielded Jamaica, the British “crown jewel of the Caribbean,” from the worst effects of the Serpentfall. The tropical warmth, and the opportunities to loot the drowned American coast (or to loot the looters thereof) make the loosely-held islands of the Caribbean once more a destination for pirates and soldiers of fortune. Although keeping the Panama Canal operational, and the sea lanes to and from it clear, remains a major British priority, the Naval assets actually on hand are inadequate in the extreme. Sinarquist Mexico threatens British Honduras, and Venezuela likewise eyes British Guiana (expanded to include Dutch Surinam after Holland died under the Serpent).

THE UNITED STATES

East of the Rockies, the United States essentially ceased to exist following the Serpentfall.

The mega-tsunami killed tens of millions of Americans and drowned the entire East Coast from Galveston to Maine; the rain of venom rapidly poisoned lakes and rivers, and awakened monsters, as far west as Albuquerque and Denver.

With the federal government drowned, and virtually the entire U.S. Army in Europe crushed under the fallen Serpent, it was every state for itself. Almost the entire remaining industrial and political might of the country went into the Evacuation of '46, an attempt to keep people from starving once it became apparent that most of the crops east of the Rockies were Serpent-tainted. Of course, the Evacuation was a colossal failure: blizzards closed the passes, giant snakes attacked the trains, and chaos swept over the land.

West of the Rockies, although there was plenty of rioting and chaos, things stayed functional. Edible food could be harvested in California despite the summerless cold. California oil, hydroelectric dams, and Washington coal kept the lights on, many places. Hollywood made propaganda pictures and morale boosters: Ronald Reagan fought giant snakes and evil magicians in a movie version of Robert E. Howard's *Conan of Cimmeria*. The U.S. forces in the Pacific returned (mostly) intact, and drove off the monsters that slithered over the Rockies or swarmed up from underground. The West Coast survived under General Douglas MacArthur and martial law, and then under a Coordinating Committee of six state governors: California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. In August of 1946, California Governor Earl Warren won a controversial special election to become the President of the United States, with the strong support of MacArthur. As 1948 continues, controversy swirls around new elections: Should Warren have to win a “normal” quadrennial election in November 1948 to continue as President? Is MacArthur planning to run himself? Make himself dictator?

The United States “recognizes” the British-Japanese armistice, and has mostly redirected its efforts to reclaiming the East. But not everybody wants to be reclaimed.

Alaska

Lt. General Delos C. Emmons, USAAF, runs Alaska under martial law. He gives lip service to President Warren, but keeps his own options open; he feels that Warren is weak and cannot be trusted. Warren, for his part, depends too much on Army support to risk a showdown. Alaska has been badly battered by the cooling weather, and reports of yet more snow monsters worry Alaskans clinging to survival.

Hawaii

Hawaii has been under martial law since the War, and is currently commanded by U.S. Army Lt. General Robert Richardson. The Army and the Navy pursue a slow-motion institutional tug-of-war over control of Hawaii: Nobody in the Navy wants to actually run it, but the Army

“Thor shall put to death the Midgard Serpent, and shall stride away nine paces from that spot; then shall he fall dead to the earth, because of the venom which the Snake has blown at him.”

— SNORRI STURLUSSON, PROSE EDDA

cannot supply the islands without Naval convoys from California. Those Naval convoys prove distressingly intermittent, and not just because of Naval political brinksmanship. Freelance Japanese submarine pirates kill increasing numbers of ships, as do (as on other oceans) krakens, sea serpents, and monsters rising up from the deeps.

Utah

Under Governor Herbert Maw (and, perhaps as importantly, Mormon Church President George Albert Smith), Utah declined to participate in the 1946 elections, citing “graver concerns.” Utah, with its Mormon emphasis on community and preparation against disaster, weathered the initial shock of the Serpentfall better than any other Rocky Mountain state. The Sons of Dan, a volunteer vigilante organization, has essentially coopted the Utah National Guard while aiding it in battling monsters throughout the Great Basin. The upcoming gubernatorial elections pit Governor Maw against J. Bracken Lee, who has called for continuing “fraternal separation” from the federal government to preserve Utah’s “freedom of action.” Governor

Howard Hughes

Film mogul, aircraft designer, engineer, industrialist, and eccentric, Howard Hughes (b. 1905) may be the richest man in what’s left of the world. Hughes Aircraft and Hughes Tool Co. lead the aircraft and oilfield equipment sectors, both among the few bright spots on the economic horizon. Hughes owns the movie studio RKO and the airline TWA; his Howard Hughes Herpetetic Institute is the largest private-sector ophi-tech research company in the world. Hughes mostly lives in Los Angeles, but often flies one of his private planes to his offices in Houston; his political connections in Texas are almost as good as the ones he has in L.A.



ASPECTS: ECCENTRIC BILLIONAIRE; OBSESSIVE TENDENCIES; HARD OF HEARING; RECLUSIVE AND SECRETIVE; AVIATION PIONEER; VAST CORPORATE ASSETS; CONNECTED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

SKILLS: Legendary (+8) Resources; Epic (+7) Contacts; Fantastic (+6) Crafts and Pilot; Superb (+5) Science and Rapport; Great (+4) Notice and Deceive; Good (+3) Provoke and Will; Fair (+2) Physique and Drive; Average (+1) Empathy, and Sail

STUNTS: *The Richest Man in the World* (When rolling his Resources, Hughes does not have to worry about earning an aspect about diminished access to immediate wealth if he doesn’t succeed with style. His wealth simply doesn’t diminish.); *She’ll Go Faster* (He can coax more speed out of a plane than seems possible. Whenever he’s engaged in any contest where speed is the primary factor, such as a chase or race of some kind, and he ties with his Pilot roll, it’s considered a success.); *Politically Connected* (+2 to Contacts to create advantage with political types anywhere in the United States or Texas.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□










NOTES: Howard Hughes can make a terrific patron, ally, enemy, rival, guest star, or victim, depending on the campaign flavor. It’s up to you to determine exactly which Howard Hughes is on display here:

- The visionary inventor and potential patron for ophi-tech wielding heroes? Add the aspect CUTTING EDGE OPHI-TECH INVENTOR.
- The vindictive zillionaire, crushing his enemies with a private army? Add aspects like VENGEFUL TYCOON and HIS OWN PRIVATE ARMY.
- The heroic anti-Communist crusader, willing to fund any plan that will hurt the Reds, no matter how wild? Add ANTI-COMMUNIST CRUSADER.
- The corrupt political fixer, trying to build a megacorporation on government funding? Add GREEDY CORPORATE PROFITEER.
- The raving drug-addled lunatic, fixated on germs and Freemasons? Add aspects like GERM OBSESSED, DRUG ADDICT, and PARANOID DELUSIONS.

The World After Ragnarok





| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | BRITISH EMPIRE |  | USA TERRITORY |  | UNALIGNED |
|  | JAPANESE EMPIRE |  | SPANISH TERRITORY |  | NAZI INFLUENCE |
|  | FRENCH TERRITORY |  | USSR |  | SERPENT TAIN |

THE DAY AFTER RAGNAROK

THE POST-SERPENTFALL WORLD SUMMER 1948

Maw has responded to the pressure by imposing tolls on all roads in and out of the state: since almost all passable roads from California to the East go through Utah (along the old Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad lines), President Warren has denounced the tolls as “strangulation.” Newspapers in California, meanwhile, print wild accusations of secret polygamist revolutionaries seeking to “destroy America,” and “land pirates looting vital reconstruction materials.” This, of course, only stokes the fires of Utah separatism.

Texas

In the wake of the Serpentfall, Texas was one of the few states east of the Rockies to remain essentially intact. The mega-tsunami destroyed Galveston, but merely battered Houston. The Red, Pecos, and Brazos rivers were less poisoned than others, and Texas’ long tradition of self-sufficiency (and its immense oil supplies) helped keep order intact. The Texas Rangers rapidly grew to enforce and expand that order throughout the state, and every so often as far away as Kansas. The Texas National Guard eventually wiped out the giant toad colony near Houston, but perforce redeployed along the Rio Grande to control floods of Mexican refugees from the new Sinarquista government south of the border, and then to keep an eye on the Sinarquist forces themselves.

Battered but unbowed, Texas stood on its own two feet. Texas Governor Coke Stevenson refused to accept the 1946 election as legitimate, and does not cooperate with U.S. forces from California, but has not *quite* declared Texas an independent republic. His ambitious Lieutenant-Governor, Lyndon Johnson, may well do so if elected Governor in 1948. The third force in Texas politics is former Vice-President “Cactus Jack” Garner, who supports federalism in principle but despises Earl Warren in person.

THE POISONED LANDS

Wherever the Serpent’s radioactive venom fell, monsters bred and growing things twisted, accelerated, changed. Beings boiled out of the groundwater, or lurked in the bloodstreams and brain stems of the unlucky. Grain died, or grew fat with secret venom. Animals bloated, altered, became vicious and vile. The people mostly died, in famine and freezing cold and fights against monsters and then against each other for food and coal. Canada east of the Rockies, the American Great Plains east of the Rockies and north of Oklahoma, the entire Mississippi Valley and everything to the east of it—these are the Poisoned Lands.

*“Men wade there through rivers wild,
Murderous men, and men forsworn
And artful seducers of other men’s wives;
There the Worm sucks the blood of the slain
And the wolf tears them.”*

— VÖLUSPÁ, STANZA 39

For adventuring ideas in the Poisoned Lands, see the **Poisoned Lands Encounters** tables, in the **Appendix** on pp. 125-136!

The High Plains

Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas all froze in the first year without a summer, and froze harder in 1947. Denver fell to the monsters in the blizzard summer of 1946; the Rockies’ eastern watershed became a hunting ground for untold numbers of things. For two years, these things tried to smash south into New Mexico (where the Texas Rangers barely held them off) and west over the passes (where the blizzards did as much as the Army to keep them back). When they failed, they devoured the small cities and large towns that had kept the lights burning behind them.

Now, the High Plains is once more the Great American Desert, a windswept taiga of giant beasts and desperate drifters. A tenuous link stretches across the north, from Lewiston, Idaho to Minneapolis, the Empire Builder’s Road. Towns hunker down and hold out, a thin line of fire and life. The old Northern Pacific Railroad is broken in a hundred places, but during the high summer, caravans can get through over the railbeds. A few caravans, anyway. If they’re well defended.

Fuel

In the Poisoned Lands, virtually all motor vehicles have been modified to run on ethanol alcohol. Gasoline is virtually impossible to obtain outside guarded mayoral reserves, and Pennsylvania's petroleum production goes entirely for lubricants. Alcohol engines have the same game statistics as regular ones; they get about 2/3 the mileage, but driving distances in the Poisoned Lands are usually short. Another advantage to ethanol is that inedible Serpent-tainted grain can be distilled into alcohol; some refineries in Kentucky are attempting to produce an ophiline equivalent, "ophethanol," from extremely tainted grain. So far, those refineries have produced only grim death and monsters.

The Iowa Soviet

Most places, they pray over the crops and hope for the best. Some places, they plant the fields with moly and mistletoe and laurel and all the plants the hex-book or the "herbal almanac" advises. A few places, they have enough food and men and time to cull the obviously tainted plants, tear them out and burn them. In Iowa, they have strains of grain that grow true and taste sweet, brought back from Inner Asia in the 1930s by the mystical painter-guru Nicholas Roerich, and given to then-Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, who believed in mysticism, and Inner Asia, and scientific agronomy. Henry Wallace became Vice-President in 1940. Perhaps another world almost seeded and flowered.

But by 1945, Wallace was on his way out. A sincere socialist and a definite fellow traveler, he got dropped from the ticket in 1944, and sent to the make-work job of Secretary of Commerce. Disgusted and ignored, he wasn't even in Washington when the Serpentfall happened. But something happened to him then: mystical awakening or "Serpent shock" or simply madness. He turned up in Ames, Iowa with his seeds and strains, and with his soft pink sympathies turned to fiery Red. If you wanted his grain, you joined him in the "Iowa Soviet." If not, you starved like the counter-revolutionary kulaks in the Ukraine did a decade before. The people who ate Wallace's grain agreed with him, on more and more, and they didn't die or turn into monsters—at least, not where anyone could see. Now, in the Iowa Soviet, if you're a stranger, a "capitalist," or a "reactionary," you eat the "People's Bread" or you feed the people's crops.

The Iowa Soviet centers on the Iowa State College A&M campus at Ames, and extends over seven or ten counties. The ruins of Des Moines mark its southern border; the Kiwanis, Elks, and Lions hold out with stiff guerrilla resistance. You can tell when you've entered the Soviet: although the skies are still gray, the grain is golden and straight and thick. The people are stoic, even blank-faced—until they decide you're an enemy of the Revolution. Then the fun begins.

Red Iowa

A few final adventure seeds on the subject of the Iowa Soviet:

- Did Roerich's mystical teaching, or perhaps some telepathic wave from Leningrad, give Wallace his insights?
- Are the people of the Iowa Soviet brainwashed? Devoted Communists? Desperately going along to survive? Part of a psionic hive mind spread by the grain?
- Can Roerich's Serpent-immune wheat strains work anywhere? Do they have other side effects? How much would the government of Texas pay for the chance to find out?
- In addition to intriguing agriculture research, Iowa State A&M is also the home of the Atanasoff-Berry Computer, the world's first electronic digital brain. Did the Serpentfall, or some putative Grain Field, wake it up as well? If it's awake, what does it want?
- Iowa State A&M also processed high-purity uranium for the Manhattan Project—nearly 2 million pounds of it. It takes a little over 140 lbs. of uranium-235 to make an atomic bomb. Just mentioning, is all.
- Henry Wallace is insane, Communist, mind-controlled, mystically awakened, or all of the above. He is also the highest-ranking surviving Cabinet member, and so according to the Presidential Succession Act of 1886, he is actually the Acting President of the United States of America. What is he worth, dead or alive, to "President" Earl Warren? To LBJ? To their enemies?

The Drowned Coast

On July 22-23, 1945, a 200-foot tall tidal wave smashed into every coastal city and town in North America from Hopedale, Labrador, to Galveston, Texas, and washed inland past Jackson, Mississippi and Manchester, New Hampshire. Whales choked in the new lake where the Potomac once flowed; fishing boats grounded in the Appalachian foothills. Florida's coastline disappeared; the Mississippi removed itself from the drowned bowl of New Orleans and flowed through another bayou inland. All along the coast, inlets became bays, bogs became lakes, meadows became marshes, and everything became mosquitoes and swamp and muck and snakes.

Most towns in the mega-tsunami's path simply disappeared, buried under stinking, salty mud. Buildings in some cities survived, like teeth sticking out of diseased mouths. Some places, the cities sat on cliffs, or pieces of the town could again support life after a fashion: squatters crawled back into Charleston and Providence and Mobile and Paterson, New Jersey. But most places, nothing was left but the wreckage and the corpses and the things that came in with the sea.

Urban Demographics

For any given city in the Mayoralties, its current population is only between 5% and 30% of its pre-Serpentfall population. Larger cities, like Chicago (1940 pop.: 3.4 million) and Detroit (1940 pop.: 1.6 million) more likely fall toward the low end of that ratio. Smaller cities, like Little Rock (1940 pop.: 88,000) and Utica, N.Y. (1940 pop.: 100,000) more likely cluster at the higher end. Even in the successful Mayoralties, in other words, city populations have fallen to levels reminiscent of 14th-century Italian city-states. In those few cities or towns that survived in the Drowned Coast and the High Plains, the ratios lie in the 1% to 4% of pre-Serpentfall population range. In all cases, a good chunk of the current population is new, people who retreated to the safety of the city walls from destroyed suburbs and too-isolated small towns.

The average city in the Mayoralties maintains order with a police force of about 3 men per 1,000 population. This may be supplemented (or supplanted) by a paramilitary "Mayoral Guard" in cities with repressive governments, and by factional forces in oligarchies. A city in the Mayoralties usually controls a rural population (almost all farmers) between five and nine times its urban population. For example, Chicago, the largest city in the Mayoralties, has a population of just over 200,000, and controls a rural population (including several smaller towns like Gary, Indiana and Aurora, Illinois) of almost 1.8 million. The Chicago Police Force is 600 men, bolstered (or hampered) by 150 Mayoral Guardsmen and several different aldermanic guards ("Ward Police") of 50-100 men each.

The cities' other forces vary widely in size. Some cities still join in multi-city leagues protected by a single "State Guard," while others have fielded "County Guards" or "Civic Defense Forces" that function, to all intents and purposes, as city armies. As a rule of thumb, a prosperous city in the Mayoralties can field a standing army of 0.5% of its combined (urban and rural) population. A particularly rich, aggressive city like the Grand County of Birmingham can get as much as 2% of its population into a standing army, though not without some economic strain. Chicago's army is 12,000 strong; like most ambitious cities, it usually adds as many mercenary units as it can afford on campaigns. City militias are only levied in emergency; they theoretically include every able man between 16 and 45, or about 15% of the total population. In case of invasion by a coalition of Milwaukee, Springfield, Indianapolis, and Detroit, Chicago could raise a militia of 300,000 (not very effective) troops. It couldn't arm or feed them for any length of time, of course.

For the number of businesses of varying types to be found in a given city, use the nearby table as a baseline. Some cities are different: a university city like Athens, Ohio will have a larger number of scientific laboratories than normal, for example.

| ESTABLISHMENT | NO. PER 50,000 POP. |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Churches | 140 |
| Taverns | 125 |
| Distillers | 60 |
| Gunsmiths | 50 |
| Vehicle repair shops | 30 |
| Doctors | 30 |
| Hotels | 25 |
| Engineers | 25 |
| Cemeteries | 10 |
| Pilots | 3 |
| Laboratories | 2 |
| Newspapers | 1 |

Currently, the Drowned Coast draws treasure-hunters, salvagers, adventurers, and people looking for new lives. Their old lives have to be fairly unpleasant to make a life on the Drowned Coast look good by comparison, but in the wreck of America, that describes a lot of people. The Drowned Coast also breeds monsters of the sea and the land and in between: giant alligators and toads, fish that walk and people that flop, everything that creeps and crawls in slime and muck, and snakes. Ghouls feed and breed in the corpse-cities; swamp devils float through the steaming morasses that once were Pensacola and Wilmington and Bangor. After nearly three years of constant combat, the Texas National Guard has almost cleared Houston of monstrous taint. Just four thousand more miles left to go.

The Mayoralties

Between the Drowned Coast and the High Plains, some of the lights stayed on. The United States was gone; even the individual states couldn't hold things together. But some of the cities survived. They didn't have a lot of food—after the first week or so, they didn't have *any* food—but they had a lot of people, and National Guard Armories, and they had mayors used to breaking heads to get law and order. Not every city starved to death like Akron or burned down like Omaha. Some survived those first months, and went looking for food. Monsters had overrun the isolated farms; the land lay open. Even small towns didn't have the weight of men and metal to fight for their lives, not against the horrors that bloomed from the Serpent's blood—and not against the cities that had to eat or die in flames. The towns that wanted to live joined the burgeoning city-states around them, what travelers call “the Mayoralties.”

“Colonel” Zeke DaCova

Sergeant Zeke DaCova (b. 1918) got a foot blown off at the Bulge, after fighting into Africa and up Italy and across France. He came home to Dayton, Ohio in February, and didn't die with the rest of the U.S. Army in July. After the Fall, he guarded a food warehouse. Then he ran it. Then he guarded a convoy. Then he fought off bandits. Then he fought off Cincinnati. Then Cincinnati offered him more money. Now, “DaCova's Eagles” are the premier mercenary outfit in southern Ohio. And Zeke is looking across the river at Kentucky. Tobacco prices keep going up, and those fields could pay someone really well.



“Colonel” DaCova is a wiry brunet with a small frame and keen gray eyes. He favors an M3 “Grease-gun,” the closest thing to the “Schmeisser” he brought back from the War. (He lost his trophy during a disastrous raid on Muncie.) He's used to his artificial foot, and doesn't limp much any more, even in cold weather. His men (three over-strength companies and a heavy-weapons battery) are truck- and Jeep-mounted; DaCova served under George Patton and reads about Nathan Bedford Forrest.

ASPECTS: OPPORTUNISTIC MERCENARY WARLORD; MISSING FOOT; DACOVA'S EAGLES; INSPIRATIONAL LEADER; ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT; CODE OF HONOR

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Contacts, Shoot, and Will; Superb (+5) Fight, Provoke, and Rapport; Great (+4) Athletics, Physique, and Resources; Good (+3) Deceive, Drive, and Notice; Fair (+2) Lore, Ride, and Survival; Average (+1) Empathy, Investigation, and Scrounge

STUNTS: **Military Historian** (+2 to use Lore rolls related to Military History and applying Historical Tactics.); **Eye for Terrain** (+2 to Notice to create advantages by spotting advantageous terrain features prior to a battle.); **Rapid Fire** (+2 to Shoot when armed with a submachine gun and making a spray attack against a zone.); **Leader of Men** (+2 to Rapport when inspiring a group of soldiers to battle.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence) **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

GEAR: M3 “Grease-Gun”

NOTES: Use Soldiers and Elite Soldiers to represent the troops of “Colonel” DaCova's Eagles.

Cities in the Poisoned Lands

Even after the Serpentfall and the famines and the fires and the monster attacks, there are still quite a few cities in the eastern two-thirds of the United States. Way more than we can describe in this sourcebook, anyhow. So if the heroes are heading for Rolla, Missouri, or Spartanburg, South Carolina, or Allentown, Pennsylvania, or Grand Rapids, Michigan, or any other place we haven't described yet, here's some quick possibilities—and aspects—for those storied cities of legend and fable.

In each section, aspects are listed from “most likely” to “least likely,” but feel free to move up and down the lists as you see fit. In general, cities in the Mayoralties are more likely to be complex places with complex problems—but some of them might just be monster-haunted ruins like most of the Poisoned Lands around them.

• GOVERNMENT OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The most basic thing to know about a city is the structure of the authority or government (if any) that controls it.

- **RUIN:** The city is in ruins and has no government or population. Human population, that is: about a third of ruined cities sport thriving ghoulish colonies in their basements, sewers, and larger collapsed buildings.
- **SQUATTERS:** The city has no effective unified rule, being little more than a hobo jungle or collection of prospectors' tents. This might also apply to a boomtown like Burningtown, North Carolina, where a major sapphire find in 1947 attracts thousands of desperate characters.
- **STRONGMAN:** The city's mayor holds power undemocratically, or after a single election, but does not have completely free reign. Either other local notables, other institutions (the churches, factory owners, etc.), or the will of the people constrain him.
- **DESPOTISM:** The city's mayor rules by force and fear. He may have rivals, but they have only the power he allows; he may have the genuine support of his people, but they cannot dissent even if they wished to.
- **MACHINE:** An alliance of political factions controls the city. The mayor may be its head, or the figurehead of a boss or group of bosses. Elections have been open, perhaps, but not fairly administered or counted. Dissent is marginalized, but usually not overtly persecuted.
- **DEMOCRATIC:** The city has more than a semblance of democracy. Elections since the Serpentfall have been fair and open. Dissent can be freely voiced.

• ISSUE

These are current issues, not impending ones. They're not issues for the whole game or campaign; just for this city. Cities may have many problems, of course—in the Poisoned Lands, it's downright likely. But this is the one that seems the biggest, soonest. If this issue isn't beaten now, the city won't likely survive to meet its impending doom. More specifically, this is the problem the civic leaders will quite often be willing to pay wandering heroes to resolve...

- **FACTIONS:** The city has several powerful factions interested in seizing more power for themselves. These factions may paralyze city government, cause rumbles in the streets, agitate for strikes, or incite outright rioting.
- **GANGS:** Criminal elements, whether Outfit or bandits, are interested in suborning the city's power structure or even in destroying it. The gangs may be unified in a single mob, or rivals locked in a gang war. If the mayor is mobbed up, it may be the mayor's rivals who ask the heroes for help...
- **HOSTILE CITY:** Another city is attacking, or plotting an attack, or paying off enemies, or hoarding coal or food, or raiding the city's supply lines.
- **UNREST:** The city's population (or some large fraction thereof) is restive and riotous. In many cities, this is likely to involve a racial component.

Cities in the Poisoned Lands

- **SERPENT CULT:** Accusing political enemies of secret Serpent Cultism often pays off. Sometimes, it's even true.
- **FUEL OR FOOD SHORTAGE:** A perennial problem, even in coal belt cities (which can still get hit with spot famines). This usually sparks higher prices at the very least.
- **MONSTERS:** A monster or batch of monsters is specifically threatening something the city values. Few cities in the Mayoralties might actually be destroyed by a single monster, although some settlements in the Drowned Coast are vulnerable to sudden waves of kraken or other activity.

Combine any or all of these issues to flesh out a city's aspect and add story depth beyond just RIVEN WITH PARANOIA. Fearful of an attack, Macon, Georgia might secretly be funding a bootlegger gang in Birmingham run by a Serpent cultist who plans to summon monsters to attack the city's ghetto and spark black unrest. And why isn't the High Kleagle's police chief (and Klan rival) trying harder to find the bootleggers?

-HEROIC OPPORTUNITY-

It's important to know what opportunity the city might offer to wandering heroes, either officially or unofficially. These are rumors the heroes pick up, the city's reputation; these aspects don't so much color what the city is like, so much as who's likely to be here. For example, the city likely doesn't have the aspect ARCANA (although ARCANE HUB could work, of course). Instead, try a more prescriptive (and descriptive) aspect such as MAGNET FOR WOULD-BE MAGI or CHOKED WITH PILGRIMS. A heroic opportunity doesn't have to be an aspect, of course—it might just be a story hook.

- **MERCENARY WORK:** A city is always looking for a few good men to go kill a few good men from elsewhere for it. This might be for a specific campaign, or more in the nature of a retainer. There's always bandits to hang, after all.
- **PERSONAL:** Someone from one of the heroes' past is in this city: friend or foe, family or lover. They need a favor, or they need a thrashing. Give that hero a "free" aspect reflecting their personal tie to the city—and then compel the heck out of it.
- **TRADE GOODS:** The city produces something the heroes can escort to its destination for a handsome reward, or sell themselves for an even handsomer reward. Or, perhaps, it's where the heroes can sell something they got in the last city.
- **ARCANA:** According to rumor, the city has a mad scientist's laboratory, a crashed RRAF ophi-tech rocketplane, a miraculous pilgrimage site, or a haunted magical library.
- **BOUNTY:** Someone in the city wants something (or someone) killed or captured, and they're willing to offer good money (or really good favors) for it.
- **TECHNOLOGY:** The city has the facilities to repair the heroes' treasured Duesenberg, or it's the nearest place to buy a specific technical device the heroes need for some other adventure.
- **LEGENDARY TREASURE:** Something in this city is very worth stealing, so much so that word has gotten out to other cities. Is it the Hope Diamond, looted from the Smithsonian just before the waves hit? Is it the Fort Knox gold stash, missing since 1946? Is it the bat that Mel Ott hit home run number 500 with?

-CHARACTER, OR URBAN HIGH CONCEPT-

Finally, come up with a line to get a sense of the city's character. It might be a well-known slogan like THE CITY THAT WORKS, THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS, or THE CITY OF BROKEN DREAMS. Or you can write your own civic ticket. What's the town like? How would a pulp writer describe it? What buildings pop out of the coal-smoke, and who's on top? One approach: mix and match descriptors: CORRUPT AND RELIGIOUS, like Renaissance Naples? DYING AND FREE-WHEELING, like 1980s Atlantic City?

The crazy-quilt of city-states runs as far west as Minneapolis (fighting a low-level war against St. Paul), east to Concord, New Hampshire (trying to knit together a League of Towns against the horrors infesting coastal Massachusetts), and south to Montgomery, Alabama (a cringing vassal state of the industrial Grand Kounty of Birmingham). Every city has its own problems and its own politics, over and above the problems of food and fuel and fighting monsters. Food comes from local farms, bought with trade goods or “taxed” at bayonet-point. Fuel comes from coal mines, dug by convicts or prisoners of war (from Germany, or from other cities) or nosy strangers. Fighting monsters comes second, sometimes, to fighting amongst themselves for food and fuel. Distrust and deception wrecks trade, which increases the pinch on the cities, which leads to more distrust and deception. This drives up prices for trade goods, encouraging dangerous types to take up trade, or banditry, or both. Cities hire mercenaries to guard trade routes to rivers and coal mines. Roving bands of mercenaries turn bandit, or vice versa.

Independent warlords are hatching; three lean years and fifty million unburied dead unravel the fabric of the nation. Free Colored Armies battle the Night Riders of the “New Konfederacy”—the KKK has made another comeback in the wake of the Serpent. The telephone and telegraph lines have been torn down for the copper; the rails are being torn up for the steel. Wild-eyed preachers and shifty demagogues—and decent men pushed beyond their limits—call for witch-burning, or Serpent-worship, or Communism, or all three.

Things fall apart. The center cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the Midwest.

FRANCE

The Serpentfall did not crush Paris, but the earthquakes and Seine floods destroyed it nonetheless. The Serpentfall did kill General de Gaulle, along with much of the Free French Army. The French government now meets in Marseilles, where it remains deadlocked between three factions: the “Gaullists,” the pro-fascist Action Francaise, and the Communist Party. President Giraud is a Gaullist, but has little support even within his own party. Generally speaking, the remains of European France are Communist-dominated, French North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) is AF territory, and French West and Equatorial Africa (the belt of French territory south of the Serpent’s African coil, governed from Dakar and Brazzaville) are mostly Gaullist. But individual provincial

The Phantom Ace

The most feared air pirate of all, *l’As Fantôme* is not a cold-blooded murderer. No, “the Phantom Ace” *delights* in murder, and pursues it with artistry and style. No one knows what he looks like, or even his true identity: speculation ranges from the son of an exiled Russian archduke to an English crime boss. He is a master of disguise, with agents throughout France; those who attempt to arrest or thwart him meet grisly death in impossible circumstances. His daughter, Héléne, is the only person he trusts.



ASPECTS: DREAD AIR PIRATE ACE; SECRET IDENTITY; MASTER OF DISGUISE; DELIGHTS IN MURDER; I ONLY TRUST HÉLÈNE; ARROGANT AND VENGEFUL

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Pilot and Deceive; Superb (+5) Provoke and Stealth; Great (+4) Burglary, Contacts, Shoot and Will; Good (+3) Athletics, Fight, Notice, Physique, and Resources; Fair (+2) Crafts, Drive, Empathy, Investigate, Rapport, and Scrounge

STUNTS: *Master of Disguise* (+2 to Deceive when in disguise, but loses this bonus immediately as soon as he’s noticed.); *I Have You Now* (+2 to Pilot whenever pursuing another plane in a chase scene.); *Agents Throughout France* (+2 to Contacts roll to having minions on hand anywhere in French territory; treat as Thugs—see p. 88.) *Deadly Ace* (+2 to Shoot attacks when using a plane’s weapons.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

governors, bureau directors, and mayors in all three regions have their own allegiances, often working against their nominal superiors for others' ends or their own power, or both. Every French general and admiral remembers the examples of Petain, Darlan, and de Gaulle...and of Napoleon.

Such powerful men provide secret patronage for the bands of air pirates in the Sahara. From oasis bases concealed in the Serpent's shadow, the pirates' planes intercept trucks, planes, and boats traveling across West Africa and Algeria. The pirates (some holding "*lettres deputed*") purporting to grant them law-enforcement or quasi-military authority) swoop down, loot or hijack the shipments, and sell the spoils in Leopoldville, Oran, Abidjan, or other cities controlled by their allies.

SPAIN

Franco's fascist Spain survived the Serpentfall in remarkably good order. The mega-tsunamis barely scratched Bilbao and Seville (compared to other cities), and with no forces at war, Spain lost no military power in the aftermath. Instead, Franco was able to force wave-battered Portugal into "close association" and absorb the remainder of French Morocco into his African

Top Five Places To Get Mercenary Work

Now as always, the premier employer of mercenaries is the French Foreign Legion, currently occupied with garrison and anti-piracy duty in North and West Africa. But you can't leave the Legion for a better contract, and you have to eat a lot more sand than you want. Here are five better places to get mercenary work.

BURMA

The British are hiring mercenaries to put down Japanese-sponsored rebel insurrections in Burma, and to support anti-Japanese rebels in Malaya, Siam, and Indochina. Most of the mercenaries hired here are from British India and the dregs of Europe.

CHINA

A good mercenary can pick and choose his boss in China, fighting for the Nationalists, for individual warlords, or for the British or the Americans (at a discreet remove). The Japanese don't often hire mercenaries, but they do bribe them to switch sides, which keeps things interesting. Most mercenary commanders touch base in Macao, where they can get Western arms (at a markup) and replacement mercenaries (at less of a markup).

LEOPOLDVILLE, CONGO PROTECTORATE

This city serves as a hiring hall for dirty wars all across Africa. Belgian officials (surly and recalcitrant under the Union Jack) hire soldiers for Congolese counter-insurgency, various French factions seek potential praetorians for potential coups d'etat and punishing raids into Ras al-Thuban, the South Africans are looking for a lot of good white men to staff their internal security forces and hunt rebels in Rhodesia and fascists in Angola.

THE MAYORALTIES

Like the Italian city-states they increasingly resemble, the Mayoralty cities would rather pay experts to fight their mini-wars than risk their own populations' hides (and loyalties). Even cities with strong armies like to stiffen them with better fighters, or hire cadre to train their own troops. Currently, Pittsburgh is a good place to get hired, as it offers "open city" hospitality to mercenaries merely on the pledge of civic defense cooperation. It's also very convenient to war zones in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky.

MEXICO

If you don't mind working for the Sinarquists, they pay pretty well to hunt rebels in Oaxaca and Yucatan. If you don't mind rotten pay from the rebels, shooting Sinarquists just feels so right. Cuba is another good place to hire on with one of the rival gangs warring for the country, as is Colombia, ditto. Colombia has the bonus of emerald mines, but the added danger of deros.

mini-empire. As a bonus, he captured the new Holy See, which had relocated to Lisbon in the wake of the destruction of Rome. Franco has since forged a close alliance with Pope Pius XIII, the former Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. A siege of Gibraltar ended in 1947 with the British enclave still holding out; Franco has attempted to make common anti-Communist cause with the British since.

THE SOVIET UNION

Under the absolute rule of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union recovers from the War, digests its conquests, and plots global dominion. Between famines, purges, and the War, the Soviet population (even including the new annexed territories) is only 170 million, many of whom are members of “suspect minorities” such as Jews, Germans, Chechens, Tatars, Poles, Finns, etc. In his most recent atrocity, Stalin exterminated all the Ossetians and Ingushetians. Many of them died in the special Science Cities the dictator ordered built to experiment with ophi-tech and venomous sera, to catch up to the British lead in ophiurgy. All of them died to avoid any counterclaim to Stalin’s command of the Narts—Stalin is himself part Ossetian, on his mother’s side.

The Narts, gigantic primordial figures of Ossetian myth, emerged from the Caucasus glacier and the Arctic ice pack during Ragnarok. It is their ancient lore that allows the *Krasnaya Vesna*, the “Red Spring,” to protect Russia from the cooling effects of the Serpentfall. They have revealed

*“A third I see, that no sunlight reaches,
On Dead Man’s Shore: the doors face northward,
Through its smoke vent venom drips,
Serpent skins enskein that hall.”*

— VÖLUSPÁ, STANZA 38

Col. Maxim Maximovich Isayev

A top NKVD agent, Maxim Isayev (b. 1900) spent the Great Patriotic War under deep cover as an SS officer. Now assigned to SMERSH, his ongoing mission is to find enemy agents and provocateurs, infiltrate their operations, and neutralize them once he has obtained enough information. He operates out of Bombay, but his remit is global; before the War he worked out of Paris and Shanghai, and knows both well. NKVD chief Lavrenti Beria trusts him, knowing that despite his bourgeois tastes for cognac and Silk Cut cigarettes, Isayev’s loyalty is absolute. Isayev is calm, stoic, and always plausible. He is handsome in an intellectual way, in excellent shape for his age, but not particularly youthful.



Isayev might infiltrate the heroes’ operations as a potential ally, or hire them (using another identity) to snarl up some British or Japanese agent’s plans. He might, if they seem to be devoted anti-Communists, try recruiting the heroes under a false flag, posing as “Oscar Stirling” of the SIS. (His Oxbridge accent is perfect, and the late unlamented Kim Philby provided him with a bulletproof SIS cover.) In the final extremity, he might have to kill them, but he’d rather not: he prefers to out-think and out-manuever his opponents, leaving them happy and ignorant while Soviet aims silently advance.

ASPECTS: TOP SMERSH AGENT; BOURGEOIS TASTES; WORLD WIDE OPERATOR; MASTER OF HIDDEN PLANS; EXCELLENT COVER IDENTITIES

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Deceive and Rapport; Superb (+5) Burglary, Empathy, and Will; Great (+4) Empathy, Investigate, Notice, and Provoke; Good (+3) Drive, Lore, Physique, and Stealth; Fair (+2) Fight, Pilot, Rapport, Resources, and Shoot

STUNTS: *Ear for Languages* (+2 to Lore for speaking foreign languages.); *Eye for Details* (+2 to Notice rolls to spot ambushes or clues.); *Expert Tradecraft* (+2 to any Burglary roll to cover his tracks while engaging in espionage.); *Perfect Cover* (+2 to Deceive rolls to establish and keep an undercover identity.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence) **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

other arts to Stalin and his circle, revelations less publicized in the pages of *Pravda*, but still potent. Some Narts walk alongside Soviet forces in occupied Europe or the Middle East, seeking their own revelations and keeping their own counsel. But if they do plan for another time, for now they seem more than willing to aid Soviet plans.

Having essentially conquered, plundered, and neutralized everything east of the Serpent in Europe, Stalin finds his options for expansion less than ideal. Even if his Communist agents can turn France into a People's Republic (and the French Communists, on the other side of the Serpent, don't always toe the Moscow line), virtually all the useful heavy industry in Europe is either smashed or evacuated to Algeria or Australia. The Middle East holds oil, but British command of the sea keeps the sheiks' and shah's options open. (The Soviets are also nervous about inciting unrest in their own Moslem population with too much aggressive action toward the Holy Places.) Crushing and occupying Japan is possible, but without the Americans and British to help, it would cost millions of men and (more importantly) vast quantities of irreplaceable materiel. For now, Stalin merely spreads Communist subversion across the globe, encouraging rebels in both Empires and Reds in Latin America and France. He waits for Nart sorcery, Soviet ophiurgy or psionics, or the further crumbling of the West to give him an open road to victory in a final titanic struggle.

Top Five Secret Bases

Rather than list five locations, here are five types of secret bases and some examples of each.

COVERT OUTPOST

The Samiran RAF radar-monitoring station in the Elburz Mountains in Persia tracks Soviet air traffic; icebreakers supply "Camp Bering," the Red Army Spetsnaz base in northern Alaska; the Yamashita underground tunnel complex holds a "hidden division" of Japanese soldiers in eastern New Guinea for operations against Australia.

GUERRILLA TRAINING CAMP

The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) prepares to ambush Soviet troop and supply trains from compounds in the Carpathians and the Pripet Marshes; Kikuyu guerrillas (the "Mau Mau Society") build camouflaged arboreal hideouts in the Aberdare Forest in Kenya as bases for defoliation missions against white planters; Vietminh cadres plan urban insurrection against the Japanese from warrens disguised as temple complexes in Hanoi and Haiphong.

IMMENSE ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION

In an isolated German mountain, the Soviets (using slave labor including captured German scientists) are building a "supergun," based on scaled-up Nazi V-3 plans, that can fire an artillery shell (or a man-carrying capsule) over the Serpent; with the aid of kidnapped and reanimated human geniuses, the dero have constructed a death-ray cannon on the Iguaje Mesa deep in the Colombian jungle; the Japanese atomic bomb program "F-go" is well underway at Konan, Korea.

ISOLATED AIRSTRIP

"Point Pushkin" in the Nubian desert allows Soviet aircraft access to northeastern Africa, as OGPU (Soviet military intelligence) has paid off the Bedouin tribe along the Wadi 'Amur; "Omaha Field" is a USAAF forward operating base deep in the Poisoned Lands under near-constant siege from monsters and bandits; "La Cicatrice" is a primordial scar miles deep in the flank of the Serpent, somewhere above Africa where a bold air-pirate—perhaps the Phantom Ace himself—maintains an impregnable hideout.

SUBMARINE PEN

Norse and Finnish partisans keep the Laksefjord open for Royal Navy submarines mounting covert operations into the Soviet sphere; mutated amphibian-people in Galway Bay do the same for Soviet Navy subs on Atlantic patrol; the remaining Nazi U-Boat fleet musters in a warm-water cavern beneath Neuschwabenland in Antarctica, the Final Refuge of the Reich.

The Soviet Sphere

Following the Serpentfall, Soviet forces easily smashed into Berlin and mopped up the few surviving Axis units in Europe. Stalin swallowed Finland and the Baltic States outright, and annexed a swathe of territory from East Prussia to Azerbaijan.

Soviet forces installed “People’s Governments” in Poland, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and the surviving portions of Greece, Austria, and Germany, as well as formerly Vichy Syria and formerly British Palestine. All these nations have substantial Red Army and Air Force garrisons and NKVD supervision of the internal police. Local Communist governments in Sweden and Yugoslavia joined the Soviet alliance on slightly more equal terms. Mongolia and East Turkestan already had Soviet-backed governments; both received substantial Red Army and Air Force reinforcements to keep the Japanese from trying anything.

Teams of Soviet experts comb through former Axis bases and arsenals, looking for prototypes and plans to ship East to Soviet labs. (There they can join captured Nazi rocket and atomic scientists.) Soviet “recovery specialists” who uncover magical tomes or items have tougher decisions to make: official Soviet dogma dismisses all magic as “reactionary superstition,” but enough high-level officials believe otherwise that careers can be made or lost with a single grimoire or pentacle.

Top Five Places To Be Attacked By Pirates

In addition to the five places listed here, ships on the high seas increasingly suffer from submarine piracy: “ronin” Japanese sub captains and “wolshead” German U-Boat skippers bribe port officials for sailing manifests and course plots, then hijack cargoes in the empty Pacific or Atlantic. Some steal small valuables, others whole ships: they sell the loot in Peru or Argentina.

THE ARABIAN SEA

To shore up local support, their British governors give fractious warlords based in Somaliland or Aden free rein to harass Russian (or Russian-friendly) shipping; Russia (and increasingly Congress India) have begun to fight back by arming and supporting Gujarati and Tamil pirates.

FRENCH AFRICA

Air pirates fly out of camps in the increasing “rain shadow” of the Serpent’s coil across the Sahara, attacking cargoes traveling on the few roads and rivers in French Africa. Rumor has it that at least one pirate mastermind (“Le Robur”) has run an elevator cable over the Serpent in a remote location.

THE GREAT LAKES

From Duluth to Toronto, every lake city sponsors armed vessels to protect its trade; these privateers become pirates in times of peace, or whenever they see a good opportunity come along.

THE GULF COAST

Raiders based in the Bahamas and other islands swoop down on salvage operations, trading posts, and anything else that looks profitable or interesting from New Orleans to North Carolina. They can always sell their takings in Mexico, Nicaragua, or Venezuela, or to another salvage operation.

THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Chinese and Filipino families run large-scale shipping operations that easily turn into pirate enterprises, or back again, depending on local conditions. “Freedom fighters” from Celebes to Haiphong to Hong Kong prey on (mostly) Japanese ships to pay the costs of resistance, often with a handsome profit to themselves. American authorities in the Philippines turn a blind eye to stolen Japanese goods; Japanese governors in China, likewise for other loot.

THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

The Serpentfall saved Japan. The Americans left Okinawa and Iwo Jima, pulling back to Saipan and the Philippines; the British pulled out of Borneo and stopped at the Burma border. For a wonder, the Imperial Council and Army High Command recognized this opportunity to survive the War with much of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere intact. The Japanese concentrated on rebuilding their bombed-out industries along more modern lines (including as much ophiurgical research as they can manage), looting Southeast Asia more effectively, and redoubling their efforts to conquer China.

As the armistice has continued, however, the military has once more grown overconfident and cocky. American and British aid to Chinese Nationalists and to other forces fighting Japan in Indochina, Malaya, and the Indies provokes Japanese anger. Generals and admirals on the far front lines turn blind eyes to attacks on Allied ships and planes, and retaliate when the British or Yanks target their own. So far, no Japanese commander has yet taken it upon himself to push the Americans off of Tarawa, or cut the Burma Road, but repeated clashes and incidents have a way of building tension that nobody is much interested in peacefully resolving.

CHINA

Japan invaded China in 1937, and has been fighting to stay on the tiger's back ever since. With American and British aid cut by the Serpentfall, the Nationalist Chinese have had to fall back into the west and southwest of the country. The Communists hold Shansi Province bordering Mongolia, where they can get a trickle of Soviet supplies, and put most of their effort into building underground revolutionary movements in both Japanese- and Nationalist-held territories. The Japanese control almost the entire coast, the main cities, and Manchuria, but cannot hold the Chinese countryside without massive occupation forces.

Lung Choi San

The “Dragon Queen of the Pirates” (b. 1916) has been fighting the Japanese since their invasion, and anyone else who impeded her since childhood. Ruthless, but with an occasional sentimental streak, the Dragon Queen will seduce an enemy, challenge him to a duel, or simply have him killed by her men, depending on whim. She is a crack shot and expert fighter. She may wear traditional Chinese garb (male or female), Western dress (likewise), or a military uniform of her own devising. As “Madame Roulette,” she runs an exclusive casino in Macao that doubles as a listening post and fence for her stolen loot. Her ships moor in the hundreds of inlets and islands along the southern coast of China; her agents are everywhere in the East.



ASPECTS: DRAGON QUEEN OF THE PIRATES; SENTIMENTAL STREAK; DUAL IDENTITIES; WOMAN OF MANY PARTS; BEAUTIFUL, RUTHLESS, AND MERCURIAL; HIGHLY DEVOTED CREW

SKILLS: Epic (+7) Contacts, Deceive, and Fight; Fantastic (+6) Notice, Provoke, and Rapport; Superb (+5) Empathy, Resources, and Will; Great (+4) Athletics, Physique, and Shoot; Good (+3) Investigate, Sail, and Stealth; Fair (+2) Burglary, Lore, and Survival; Average (+1) Drive, Pilot, and Scrounge

STUNTS: **Crack Shot** (+2 to Shoot rolls when making aimed shots.); **Martial Artist** (+2 to Fight to create advantage in a hand-to-hand fight); **Expert Fencer** (+2 to Fight when outnumbered and using a sword.); **Agents Everywhere** (+2 to Contacts anywhere in the China Seas.); **Pirate Fleet** (Contact roll to have access to a pirate ship and crew, or gang of thugs anywhere in the China Seas.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence) **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

GEAR: Pian Dao (Chinese Cutlass), 9mm Luger

Top Five Cities For Spies

In another timeline, this list might include Berlin or Tangier. In the world of *The Day After Ragnarok*, here (in alphabetical order) are the top five cities in which spies congregate.

BOMBAY, CONGRESS INDIA

Russian and Japanese spies use Congress India to keep tabs on Royal Navy deployments in the Indian Ocean. All three powers (Japan, the USSR, and the British Empire) attempt to subvert and sway Congress India into alliance both here and at the Congressional capital city, New Delhi.

LEOPOLDVILLE, CONGO PROTECTORATE

Many banned French political parties base themselves in Leopoldville, a Francophone city just over the border from French Africa. It's also a major entry point into the African interior, with easily bribed or suborned Belgian officials.

MACAO, CHINA

Where the Kempeitai, the SIS, the NKVD, and the OSS compete for leverage in Asia. The only neutral port in Asia, Macao is nominally under Portuguese control. Macao police authority is mostly European fascists hired by Spain, although the Japanese Navy maintains a battle cruiser here. Spies of all kinds run agents and guerrilla wars from Malaya to Manila to Manchuria from here.

MAZATLAN, MEXICO

A major Pacific port and listening station for agents spying on the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Sinarquist Mexico is drifting toward a Japanese alliance; American agents here attempt to bribe local officials to prevent it.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

As the new center of the British Empire, Sydney is the new center for all intelligence agencies trying to influence, discover, or subvert British policy. Sydney also holds embassies from every nation on Earth; all of them, of course, have their own spies here on staff.

Fukien province (on the southern coast) and Hunan province (west of Fukien) are no-man's land. No side can control either territory for long without local warlords switching sides for gold or pique. Outside Manchuria, all of China roils with bandits, guerrillas, rebels, cult leaders, and wandering kung-fu bravos. An ancient empire's wealth is open to anyone with a map, a lot of guns, and more than his share of luck.

THE PHILIPPINES

Although the Allies abandoned the aggressive war against Japan after the Serpentfall, the just-liberated Philippines stayed free, after a fashion. Influential planters jockey for power, Hukbalahap Communist guerrillas control the waist of the country, and the Japanese run "stay-behind" networks throughout the islands. The American military is divided: some want to return to America and leave the Philippines to disintegrate, and others believe that building the Philippines up can only help America in the long run (and themselves in the short run). Until things settle out, the Philippines remain a stew of intrigue and borderline chaos, useful mainly as a base from which the British and Yanks "unofficially" supply arms and advisers to anti-Japanese resistance forces in the Indies, Indochina, and China.

CONGRESS INDIA

With most of the populated and industrialized part of the country (except Bengal) under its control, the Congress Party should be moving the independent Republic of India from strength to strength. Unfortunately, Gandhi's assassination (by either a Serpent cultist or a fanatical Moslem, depending on which story you believe) has left the Party confused and leaderless. Nehru does not have Gandhi's influence or vision; the sole policy his Congress Party can agree

Top Five Places To Find A Remote Castle Ruled By A Madman

Whether it's a black tower in the wasteland, or a near-ruin piled over the dungeon burrow of a crawling Thing, remote castles are where adventure lives. And, as might be expected, such structures draw (or create) a certain kind of personality as their lord. Here's where to find those castles, and such madmen:

ABYSSINIA

This isolated mountain kingdom (also called Ethiopia) suffered a devastating Italian invasion in 1935, reducing it to brigandage and misery. The Serpent's first coil smashed the southwestern third of the country, completing Abyssinia's collapse into chaos. The castles range from primeval Aksumite ruins to medieval forts to Portuguese watch-towers to Italian bunker complexes. (Second prize, in the "war-torn medieval backwater" category, is Afghanistan.)

THE ANDES MOUNTAINS

Colombia, at the mountains' northern extremity, is collapsing into civil war; both Argentina and Chile at the southern end have long been refuges for European criminals and dictators. Coastal Peru falls under Japanese sway, leaving the interior to revived Inca worship, the deros, and who knows what else? The castles are likely Inca or Spanish conquistador, but you can't rule out eccentric copper barons.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Sicily, Sardinia, and the various surrounding islets were swamped by the Serpentfall into the Med, but plenty of fine castles survived. In the Balearic Islands or the Pyrenees Mountains, the castle's mad ruler might also be a high-ranking Spanish fascist, for double points.

THE POISONED LANDS

Did you know there are more than 70 castles in New England, and that many again in New York alone? That there are 30 castles in each of Pennsylvania and Ohio, and 25 in Illinois? Eccentric millionaires, reactionary prison architects, and occasionally genuine European aristocrats built castles throughout the United States down to the 1930s. Without any nearby artillery—or government—their potential truly blossoms.

THE PRINCELY STATES OF INDIA

Part of the devil's bargain the British made with the Indian princes was freedom from local control in exchange for allegiance to King Henry. King Henry is far away, and knows not what every rajah and rani gets up to on some crag in the Himalayan foothills or the remote Deccan.

on is opposition to the British. The Indian Communist Party agitates for open war with Britain and total alliance with the Soviets; the other parties wrangle for spoils. Meanwhile, Tamil, Gujarati, Gondi, Tulu, and other separatists threaten to declare independence if their own provinces are not granted more power.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkey

After the Serpentfall, the Soviets turned European Turkey over to Communist Greece, and annexed the Turkish portion of Armenia outright. The rump Turkish state was left intact under a forced "treaty of friendship" that legalized the Turkish Communist Party and stripped Turkey of its air force and navy.

The Turks, of course, responded by becoming even more ferociously anti-Communist. Mirroring interwar developments in Weimar Germany, the Turkish Army pursues a covert remilitarization project with as much support as the British can provide. Agents of the Turkish National Security Service (MAH) operate throughout the Turkic-speaking parts of the Soviet empire, spreading dissension and Islamic "anti-atheist" militancy.

The Levant

British authority in Syria and Palestine disintegrated with the Serpentfall. The Serpent's head smashed into Egypt, obliterating Cairo, demolishing the local British command structure, and triggering massive earthquakes all up and down the coast. Damascus, Jerusalem, Beirut, and other major cities lay in ruins. Local Communist parties were among the first to organize, and loudly requested Soviet aid. By the time anyone could react in Sydney, the Red Air Force had airlifted millions of Jews liberated from Nazi camps (and Soviet gulags) into Palestine as cadre for a Jewish People's Republic. Syria (including Lebanon) became its own Arab People's Republic, which Stalin intends to be the core of a Communist Arab state from Algeria to Afghanistan.

Djehuti-Yamun

None can say when Djehuti-Yamun was born. British police records indicate he was active in the Egyptian fascist military underground during the War. Aleister Crowley's diaries mention him as a "visionary scholar" in Cairo in 1904. An Ottoman internal report describes a very similar figure as the deadliest thief in Alexandria—in 1822! Now, he makes his home somewhere in the Stygian darkness of the Ras al-Thuban swamps. From there, he directs the Children of Set, a Serpent cult of great influence and malignity. The Children of Set are active from Mombasa to Mandalay, with unknown ties to the Daughters of Dionin. Djehuti-Yamun is not averse to slaying other Serpent cultists, especially if they question his pre-eminence or otherwise interfere with his plans.



Djehuti-Yamun is mighty of stature and somber of mien. His leathery, wrinkled skin is the color of stained teak. His eyes burn with inhuman emerald fire. He seldom takes the field himself, preferring to work through sorcerous cut-outs, summoned monsters, or hordes of local cultists.

ASPECTS: PRE-EMINENT SERPENT CULT LEADER; MUCH OLDER THAN HE APPEARS; VISIONARY SCHOLAR; DEADLIEST THIEF; MIGHTY OF STATURE; SOMBER OF MIEN; COMMANDS THE CHILDREN OF SET; NONE SHALL ESCAPE MY WRATH!

Skills: Epic(+7) Lore; Fantastic (+6) Provoke and Will; Superb (+5) Contacts and Empathy; Great (+4) Deceive, Physique, Resources, and Stealth; Good (+3) Fight, Investigate, Notice, Rapport, and Ride

STUNTS: **Scholar** (+2 to Lore rolls for knowledge of History, the Occult, and Poisons.); **Ancient Wizard** (Has access to Magic and almost any Spell imaginable.); **Blood Sorcery** (By creating an advantage by killing a sacrificial victim, Djehuti-Yamun may invoke the advantage for +3 to Lore rolls for Magic spells.); **Eye of the Serpent** (Djehuti-Yamun may use Lore to try to control the minds of others, even effecting an entire zone.); **Animate Object** (Djehuti-Yamun may use Lore roll to create a servant out of inanimate objects.); **Summoning Rite** (Djehuti-Yamun can summon any monster or demon using Lore with an involved ritual and hours of chanting, the demon acts as his agent and he can see through it's eyes and hear what it hears. He can summon the demon to attack anywhere in the world that he has a sample of the local earth, create advantage to have the correct earth with a Resources roll. He also has several such demons bound to glass jars that he has easy access to should he need to summon them in a hurry.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

PHYSICAL STRESS: □□□□

GEAR STUNTS: The Ring of Set: this is a legend-haunted relic of the prehuman Serpent Empire that provides a +2 to Lore rolls for casting Magic Spells and to defend against any arcane powers or spells.

Name Inscribed On the Scroll of Maat: Djehuti-Yamun can sense when anyone in the world speaks his name. He need not be distracted by it, but he can hear the whole conversation (or recall it) at will with an Investigate roll. That roll also reveals the speaker's identity and location.

The Oil States

The Red Army lines their northern frontier. The Royal Navy prowls their southern seacoast. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Persia are all monarchies sitting between two empires, and atop a sea of oil. Persia (with a strong local Communist Party) is probably the most pro-Soviet, Saudi Arabia (established by British diplomacy and guarded by British Aden) the most pro-British. But the Shah is willing to host RAF spy planes, and King Saud is happy to allow the Red Navy port access at Jiddah. All three monarchs have advisers from both powers, some of whom are working for their own ends rather than their imperial (or royal) masters.

Ras al-Thuban

The Nile is blocked. Cairo is buried. British power is eradicated. The Nile Valley slowly becomes a swamp, lit by fanaticism and marsh gas. This is the land the Serpentfall made of southern Egypt and the Sudan, the land of Ras al-Thuban, the "Head of the Serpent." Barely governed by the authorities at Khartoum in the best of circumstances, Ras al-Thuban is very far from the best of circumstances.

Perhaps it is the dead, staring atomic wound where the Serpent's Eye once was. Perhaps it is the curdling psychoactive venom pooling from the Serpent's dead jaw. Perhaps it is truly, as the Sons of Apep call it, the New Aeon. But Ras al-Thuban is a land of utter chaos and madness; every man for himself, where Hell lets out for breakfast from Darfur to the Ethiopian highlands. Cults of all kinds flourish here, from fundamentalist Islamic sects who search for the Next Mahdi to vile Serpent Cults who search for a way to reopen the Serpent's wounded Eye, and to bring about the New Aeon indeed.

LATIN AMERICA

In most of Latin America, life moves on much as before. Cuba was shattered by the mega-tsunami, and brutal Communist rebels battle refugee American gangsters to establish a dictatorship over the wave-battered island. Perhaps Guatemala would like to move into the Soviet sphere, but neither America nor Mexico wants that to happen. The U.S. military runs Panama as a private fief, taxing it to keep the Canal open, but otherwise leaving matters to the locals. Colombia topples into civil war; Bolivia and Paraguay square off for border wars every dry season. Venezuela grows (relatively) rich on oil and piracy; for Nicaragua, there is just piracy.

Mexico

Shortly after the Serpentfall, General Juan Andreu Almazán launched a successful coup that put the Sinarquist Party into power in Mexico. Many Mexicans believe that Texas or California oil interests instigated the Sinarquist coup; if so, it has backfired fairly spectacularly. Among the Sinarquists' main aims (including restoring the Catholic Church to primacy, and returning the peasants to serfdom) is the Reconquista of the American Southwest. Both Texas and California have fought armed clashes with the Sinarquistas' Mexican forces.

Fortunately for the Yanquis, the Sinarquistas are busy putting down revolutionary rebellions (and a major Kulkulkan cult army in the Yucatan) throughout the south of Mexico. Less fortunately for America, the Sinarquistas increasingly turn to Japan for arms and aid.

Brazil

The populist dictator Getulio Vargas keeps the lid on Brazilian politics as best he can, alternately favoring the Integralist Right or the Communist Left. Brazil's upper crust ignores the whole problem, partying the long night away in the exquisite mansions and luxurious casinos of Rio de Janeiro, the world's last, best city of sin and pleasure. By contrast, the Serpentfall tsunami hit northeastern Brazil fairly hard, driving the peasants into the hills as *cangaçeiro* bandits. A bigger potential problem exploded at the same time in the interior, when a

Top Five Places To Stomp Nazis

The main bad guys in the **Day After Ragnarok** setting are the Soviets, the Russkies, the godless Commies, the Red Menace, the guys who put the “cold” into Cold War. That said, there’s nothing quite like kicking Nazi butt. Here are the top five places to do it.

ANTARCTIC REFUGE

Due south of Germany, behind the icy coast of Queen Maud Land, Kriegsmarine architects and slave laborers have blasted out a strange network of warm-water caverns and tunnels. The Ritscher Antarctic Expedition discovered and claimed this territory as Neuschwabenland; here, Admiral Dönitz built “an impregnable fortress” and a place of refuge. MI5 is very concerned about increasing contacts (and even trade) between the Refuge and Boer extremists in South Africa.

ARGENTINA

As mentioned on p. 74, President Perón builds Argentina’s future on a skeleton of Nazi expatriates. Paraguay, Chile, and Bolivia do the same to the extent that they can. In a secret Pampas airfield, Nazi aerospace genius Reimar Horten works on rocket planes, flying saucers, and anything else that will allow the Argentines to climb to the top of the Serpent.

IRAQ

The Ba’ath Party is technically illegal, and definitely fascist, but King Faisal II of Iraq increasingly warms to the notion of a disciplined cadre of fighters who hate Russia and Britain equally. Former Waffen-SS men who escaped the Balkans wind up here, building the nucleus of a mighty Arab army.

MEXICO

Before their coup, the Sinarquistas depended heavily on German and Spanish subsidies and support. Now that they control (most of) Mexico, they are happy to provide jobs for dedicated specialists. Former Gestapo interrogators are particularly welcome; Ahnenerbe mystics interested in studying Aztec necromancy need to keep a somewhat lower profile in this increasingly theocratic Catholic country.

SPAIN

Franco keeps his former Nazi allies at arm’s length, moving everyone without the price of Spanish citizenship along to Macao, Morocco, or Mexico. He makes an exception for intelligence officers, especially those with extensive files on Soviet activity. There are so many Abwehr and SD veterans in SECED (the Spanish intelligence agency) that German is as common as Spanish in the meeting rooms.

chain of geologically unprecedented (not to say impossible) volcanoes burst forth all around the Mato Grosso plateau.

Most scientific opinion considers the eruptions an aftershock of the Serpentfall; that the crash of the Serpent’s head into Egypt “knocked loose” a current of magma that came out in Brazil. By contrast, the popular mystic Zelio de Moraes believes that the door to Muspellheim (the land of the fire-giants in Nordic myth) has cracked open in Brazil. By his reckoning, the death of the Serpent prevented the “door” from opening all the way. Lumberjacks and cowboys in the area have reported monsters, including glowing red-hot dinosaurs (called “lavasaurs” in the sensational press), giving strange credence to Moraes’ theory.

Argentina

Under President Juan Perón, Argentina stayed scrupulously neutral during the War. With America wrecked and Britain distracted, Perón has thrown off his cloak of neutrality, and thrown open his country to any and all veterans of the Nazi regime. Although most of the Reich’s commanders died under the Serpent’s coils or in front of Soviet firing squads, and the Reich’s experts vanished into gulags and Science Cities, some few remained on the loose or escaped the Russian net. Some of the Ahnenerbe’s mystics had precognitive warning; some of them found

Brigadeführer-SS Otto Skorzeny

Known as “Hitler’s commando,” Otto Skorzeny (b. 1908) stands 6’4” in his jackboots. He has dark blond hair, a thin mustache, and a dashing saber scar; he looks like a meatier version of Errol Flynn. He led the rescue of Mussolini, the kidnap of the Hungarian Admiral Horthy, and the assassination of Patton. His “Operation Greif” disinformation campaign slowed Montgomery down to a crawl after the Bulge. After the Serpentfall, he escaped the Soviet ring around Berlin by piloting an experimental rocketplane to a secret U-Boat haven in Norway.



Skorzeny currently holds Spanish citizenship (and a colonel’s rank in the Spanish Army), and splits his time between a villa in Spain and a training camp in Argentina. He is an excellent shot, and a champion fencer and racing car driver. The once and future “most dangerous man in Europe” has his finger in everything from ophiurgical research to freelance espionage to training up the seeds of the next Reich wherever he can find them.

ASPECTS: FREELANCE FASCIST OPERATIVE: THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN EUROPE; IMPRESSIVE PHYSICAL SPECIMEN: THE REICH SHALL RISE AGAIN; SNAKEBIT; DOZENS OF SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS; TOP SS COMMANDO

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Fight and Shoot; Superb (+5) Physique and Will; Great (+4) Athletics, Contacts, Drive, Stealth; Good (+3) Notice, Pilot, Provoke, Resources, Science; Fair (+2) Deceive, Empathy, Lore, Rapport, Sail and Survival

STUNTS: *Arcane Resistance* (+2 to Will to resist the effects of Magic Spells and Psionic Powers.); *Unconventional Commando Warfare* (When accompanied by his soldiers, he may reroll any defense, attack, or create advantage action twice per conflict and take the better result.); *Expert Duelist* (+2 to Fight rolls when engaging in single combat while using a sword.); *Ophi-tech Expert* (+2 to use ophi-tech devices.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

PHYSICAL STRESS: □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

GEAR: Sturmgewehr 44 assault rifle, 9mm Luger, Saber, Fighting Knife

OPHI-TECH GEAR: Jet Pack, Marconi Gun

NOTES: Skorzeny is almost always accompanied by 8-10 elite soldiers. If on a mission, he commands a company (80-100) of such soldiers.

their sorceries suddenly more efficacious in the new world of the Serpent. Mystics, soldiers, or technicians; whoever they were and however they came to Buenos Aires, they are welcome to help build Perón’s Argentina into the new master nation of the world.

Peru

A week after the Serpentfall, General Eloy Ureta was elected President of Peru. Peru was a staunch American ally, but General Ureta was an ambitious man—and the Yankees were busy in their own continent for a change. Peru had 30,000 Japanese settlers before WWII, most of them interned after 1942. Ureta used them as bargaining chips, teasing out Japan’s willingness to supply his military. Now, the IJN makes port calls at Callao, and the Peruvian Air Force flies Zeros over disputed borders with Ecuador and Chile. Ureta has apparently decided to leave the Andes to the deros, who have emerged in some force from Salapunco, Chavin de Hauntar, and other primordial gorges and tunnels. Perhaps he seeks to win them away from their Soviet allies, hoping to combine dero and Japanese weapons to conquer a new Inca Empire. Ureta’s only opponents are the banned leftist party APRA and the network of American agents run by the tennis star, anthropologist, and FBI agent William Clothier II from the National Museum in Lima.

Optional Darkness: Serpent Taint

The rising of Jörmungandr tore a great wound in the Earth's magical immune system, injecting evil venom into the air, water, and soil. The biological echoes of this spiritual horror are the monsters, the birth defects, the poisoned grain, the tainted wells all over the world. But some places are worse than others; where the Serpent's venom fell like rain or washed up in the sea, where its head lies on the world pooling its poison beneath it. The question, as ophiline fumes pour into the air and Serpent cults plot subversion, is this: Are things getting worse, as the venom festers? Or is the planet slowly healing itself? If you want to make the world of *The Day After Ragnarok* still more deadly and poisonous, use these optional rules for Serpent Taint.

ST LEVELS

Every region of the world has a given Serpent Taint Level (ST Level) based on the "background count" of Serpent venom, cult activity, etc. This is represented by the situation aspect **SUFFUSED WITH THE SERPENT**. For each point of ST Level in a given place, any creatures of the Serpent (monsters, giant snakes, cultists, Aunt Jennies, etc.) get one free invoke of the aspect per scene, to aid them in their sinister endeavors. (This is a pool of free invokes for the GM, not per creature.)

If you want, this could get even worse. Get a handful of tokens that are somehow different from the ones you usually use for fate points. These are Tainted fate points (TFP). Whenever you're in a Tainted region, GM can compel the **SUFFUSED WITH THE SERPENT** aspect against the PCs as usual, when the Serpent's corruption complicates their lives somehow, and they get a fate point. But instead of a normal fate point, they get a TFP. GMs get one TFP to give away for each level of Serpent Taint.

Players can only use a TFP to invoke the **SUFFUSED WITH THE SERPENT** aspect—somehow, you draw on the Serpent's influence to help you. The PC of the player who does so immediately becomes **SNAKEBIT** (see p. 39). If the PC is already **SNAKEBIT**, the player must temporarily rewrite one of the character's aspects to represent how the Serpent's influence has changed them, and can now invoke that aspect with TFPs as well. Another invocation will corrupt another aspect, and so on.

Corrupted aspects return to normal at the rate of one per session after you've left the region.

Here's how you can present the various "background" ST Levels in terms of look and feel, and a guide to which regions of the world they might apply. As always, change them at your whim.

ST LEVEL ZERO

Normal. The skies are blue, the water clear and delicious, people move with confidence and meet your eyes gladly. Night is a time for crickets and fireflies, for moonlit walks and comforting silences. (The Australian Outback, the South American Pampas. Possibly the regions of the "Red Spring" in Russia. Antarctica. The high seas of the Pacific and Antarctic.)

ST LEVEL 1

Okay. There's no doubt that something was out there, once upon a time, but it's mostly gone now. The skies are clear, the water fine. People are a little brash, and a little relieved. Night is good for adventure, even romantic adventure. Probably. Most places. (Pacific seacoasts, most of the Southern Hemisphere. The rest of the Soviet Union. The Japanese Empire, China. California, Oregon, Washington, surviving Canada, the Iowa Soviet. Greenland and the Arctic icecap. High seas in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean.)

ST LEVEL 2

Tolerable. The shadows are a little too long, the light a little too green at sunset. The water is well filtered. People start a bit, if they hear something like rustling leaves. Don't go near a sewer entrance if you can't help it, don't look at strange snakes. Going out at night is not safe, per se, but it can still be a lot of fun. (Texas, Idaho, Utah, Arizona. Mexico. Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts. India, Persia, Iraq, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Spain, southern France. Much of Algeria and West Africa. Iceland. Cities with a lot of ophiline pollution: Sydney, Captetown, Buenos Aires.)

ST LEVEL 3

Problematic. Things are a little weird here. The sky is cloudy or strangely colored, and so is the water. People are skittish and don't meet your eyes. Sometimes folks just disappear, and it's maybe best not to

Optional Darkness: Serpent Taint

ask a lot of fool questions about it. There's something leaving tracks on the riverside, or living in the abandoned chemical works. Don't go out alone at night, unless you're lucky or armed or both. (The Mayoralties, New Mexico, Oklahoma, coastal Texas, Arkansas, Alaska. Most of the rest of Canada. Arabia, Abyssinia, Kenya, the Levant, the Red Sea coast, the shatterzone in Europe and Africa, the Congo. Yucatan, Jamaica, the southern Caribbean, and the Northern coast of Brazil.)

ST LEVEL 4

Not Good. The sky never looks good, even when it's clear. The water clings oddly, and always has an oily cast even if you boil it. The vegetation mats itself, or grows in strange shapes. It rustles when there's no wind, and when there is wind, it moves the wrong direction, like it was out of practice. People are clannish and tribal; they have to stay together or they reappear in pieces. Go out at night well-armed, with friends, unless you want people arguing whether that can possibly be your arm. (The Drowned Coast and High Plains, Ireland, Cuba, the Bahamas)

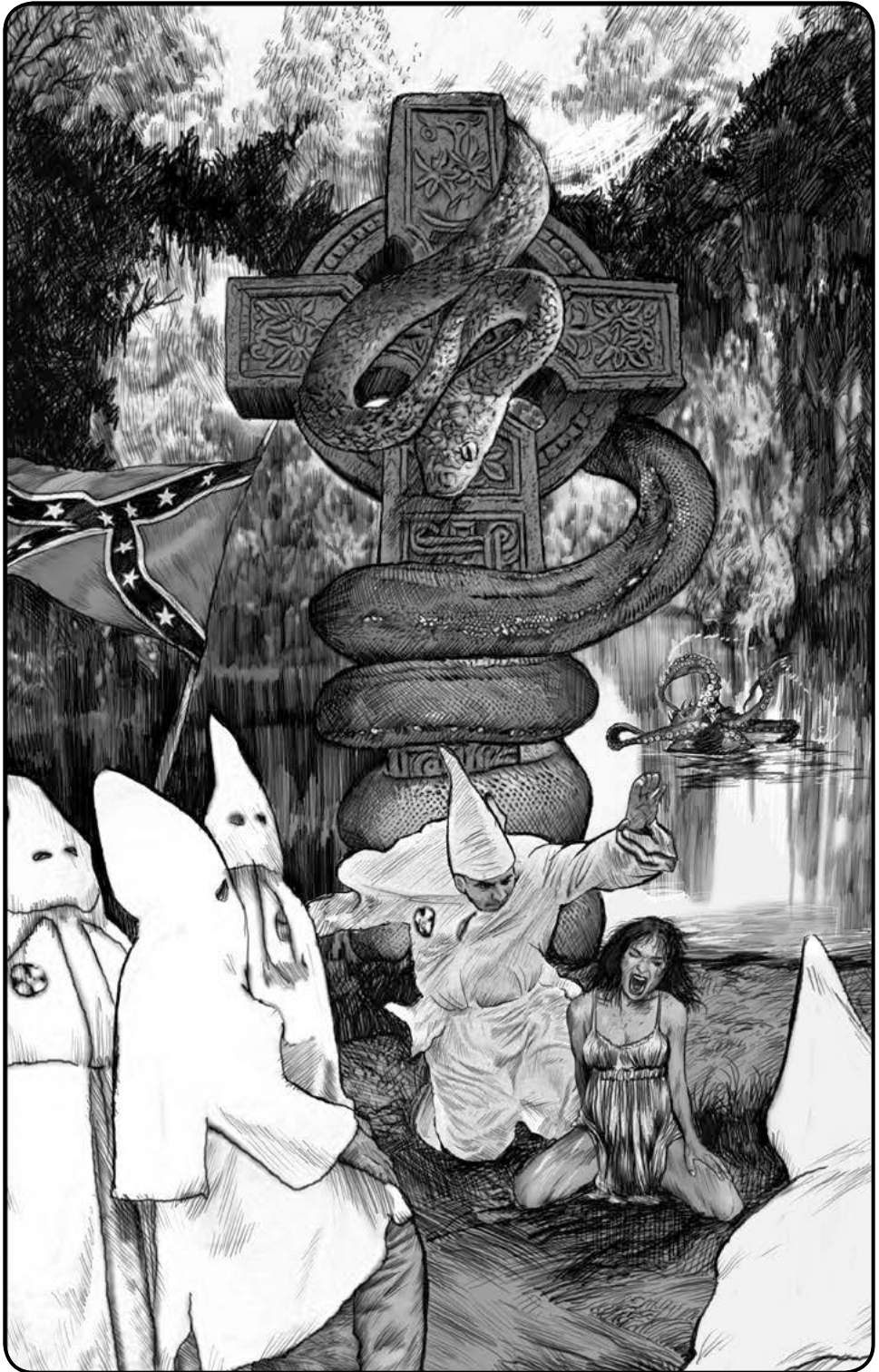
ST LEVEL 5

Bad. The sky and the water are the same color, and neither is the color they ought to be. Both of them flow toward you when you're not looking. The fetid air is always too close, and you can smell yourself getting gangrene. You don't recognize half the plants, and wish you didn't know the rest. Even the land is leering at you now. People are hunted animals here, or they are predators. Night is for hunkering down and hoping. (Ras al-Thuban, Haiti). By comparison, conditions inside the Serpent's body are ST Level 8.

• CHANGING ST LEVELS

Some specific areas might be higher or lower: A purified Mormon temple garden in Wisconsin might have an ST Level 2, one lower than the surrounding countryside, or a Wisconsin lake with an Orm in it might have an ST Level 4, one higher. Nagas lower ST Levels, lots and lots of burning ophiline plants raise them. A Serpent cult might work great magics to raise the ST Level in their city, or in some neighborhood of it; a Hong Kong feng-shui architect might design buildings to divert Serpentine chi away and thus lower the ST Level there. In the short term, heroes can lower ST Levels locally (or at least stop them from raising) by killing Serpent-spawned monsters, busting up Serpent cults, and that sort of thing. In the longer term, other possibilities might work.

- **MAGIC:** What magic has caused, magic might be able to undo. Certainly the primordial lore of the Narts, and the mystic revelations of Henry Wallace's guru, have had some success at holding the taint at bay. Planting moly and mistletoe among the crops hasn't done any harm, either. Perhaps some solar magic, or cleansing ritual, holds the key.
- **MIRACLES:** Jörmungandr came from a religious ritual, herald of a literal apocalypse. Getting right with the Lord will restore the Lord's Creation to its wonted state. Mormon temple gardens clear out the worst of the poison; the Sufis in Turkey use prayer and dance to heal Snakebite; churches in Tennessee can take up vipers without harm. Moses and Jesus both promise victory over the Serpent; it shall come to those who believe truly.
- **TECHNOLOGY:** What killed the Serpent was an atomic device, invented by a team of geniuses and built in gritty laboratories in Tennessee and New Mexico and Washington state. Science killed it; science can cure it. Better chemistry, new understandings of biology and heredity, will lead to not just an end to the Serpent's poison but a better world for the survivors.
- **RETURN TO BARBARISM:** The problem is not the taint but the broken, foolish responses to it: Cluster together! Tamper with what caused it! Pray for a miracle! Burn its fuel and drink its parasites! Human beings survived two Ice Ages and untold horrors—they can survive this, and evolve to flourish again, if they return to what they're good at. Killing, and living. If cities invite in cults and poison, all the better—they should burn.
- **COMPLETING RAGNAROK:** According to the sagas, Ragnarok ends with the rebirth of the human race, living in a new earth. Perhaps finishing the cycle is the key. Or perhaps it continues even now; Thor has killed the Serpent, and died in turn. Now, we await the howling of Fenrir, and the death of Tyr.



Born Of Venom and Ice

In the world after the Serpentfall, the laws are suspended—both the laws of man, and the laws of nature. Chaos flows into both voids. Bandits, pirates, and thugs prey on the weak; those who would stop them must enforce order first, and justice a distant second. Worse things wait in the darkness, and some men would bring them out, or bring the darkness down on all the world. Some men drink the darkness into themselves, and cease to be men at all. Serpents and crawling things grow to monstrous size, and the earth and water give forth horrors.

BAD GUYS

Even without supernatural poison or Stalinist experimentation, the damaged world would be a dangerous place. Some of these people are as vile and awful as the slimiest serpent; others are just in the heroes' way.

Bandit

Rebuilding the world is hard. It's much easier to take stuff from people who are doing all the hard work. Bandits roam the Poisoned Lands, and hide out in hills and forests from Mexico to Matabeleland. In Afghanistan, Central Africa, and other places, whole tribes of bandits survive by raiding their neighbors. Others practice banditry part-time, as it were.

ASPECTS: OUTLAW RAIDER **SKILLS:** Average (+1) Fight and Shoot

STRESS: □ **GEAR:** Discarded or cast-off weapons.

Veteran Bandit

ASPECTS: HARDENED CRIMINAL, OUTLAW RAIDER

SKILLS: Fair (+2) Fight or Shoot; Average (+1) Fight or Shoot, and Scrounge

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □□ **GEAR:** Discarded or cast-off weapons

Bandit Chief

He has to stay one step ahead of the law—and of his own men, sometimes.

ASPECTS: MOSTLY LOYAL GANG OF CUTTHROATS, HARDENED CRIMINAL, OUTLAW RAIDER

SKILLS: Good (+3) Fight; Fair (+2) Provoke and Scrounge; Average (+1) Shoot and Will

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □□□ **GEAR:** Better than his bandit gang

Veteran Bandit Chief

ASPECTS: MOSTLY LOYAL GANG OF CUTTHROATS; HARDENED CRIMINAL; OUTLAW RAIDER

SKILLS: Great (+4) Fight; Good (+3) Provoke; Fair (+2) Scrounge and Shoot; Average (+1) Physique and Will

STUNTS: *Rules With an Iron Fist* (Can use Provoke to create advantage when commanding his gang.)

STRESS: Mental □□□, Physical □□□ **GEAR:** Much better than his bandit gang

Cultist

Throughout the world, the coming of the Serpent caught up the weak and evil in its coils. Secret cults sprang up or were revitalized, from the aristocratic Daughters of Dionin in the British Empire to the tent-city Church of the Brazen Serpent in the Poisoned Lands. In some places, the cults operate overtly; in others, they control through fear and secret killing; in still others, they lurk behind a façade of decency and respectability...until their hour comes around again.

Serpent Cults

Not surprisingly, the most active and dangerous mystical cults around the world worship some aspect of the Serpent. Its awakening was, after all, an overwhelming event, setting off as big a tsunami in the astral-magical realm when it rose as it did in the Atlantic when it fell.

Most Serpent Cults hate and despise Americans—the Serpent-Killers—but, as blasphemous and evil sorts, also oppose any agent of order or decency. Although the official Soviet propaganda line is that all religions (including mad cults) are counter-revolutionary and false, some Soviet agents provide aid and comfort to particularly venomous Cults working against the British Empire and its allies. Of course, some Serpent Cults hate the godless Soviets, too, and at least one Aranda cult in Australia worships Harry S Truman on the grounds that anyone powerful enough to kill the Serpent must be worthy of fearful reverence.

Here's a quick run-down of the various names under which various cults and traditions worship the Serpent:

- **ALGONKIN (EASTERN AMERIND):** Gitchee Knebic, Misikinipik
- **PUEBLO (SW AMERIND):** Kolowisi
- **SALISH, KWAKIUTL (NW AMERIND):** Sisiutl
- **MEXICO:** Quetzalcoatl
- **YUCATAN, GUATEMALA:** Kulkulkan
- **HAITI:** Damballah, Dan Petro
- **WEST AFRICA:** Aida Wedo
- **FINLAND, BALTICS:** Aiatar
- **ALBANIA:** Kulshedër
- **PERSIA:** Zahhak, Azi Dahaka
- **INDIA:** Ananta Shesha, Aparajita, Kadru, Varuna, Vasuki
- **CHINA:** Chu-Lung, Chu-Yin
- **JAPAN:** Kuraokami, Okami, Orochi, Ryujin
- **PHILIPPINES:** Bakunawa
- **BORNEO:** Djata
- **MELANESIA:** Agunua, Degei, Hatuibwari, Make
- **AUSTRALIA (ABORIGINES):** Aranda, Borlung, Bulaing, Ngalyod, Rainbow Serpent, Yurlungur
- **ISLAMIC:** Falaq
- **HERMETIC MAGIC:** Aion, Apophis, Azazel, Glycon, Ophion, Ouroboros, Tiamat, Typhon
- **BRITISH EMPIRE:** Dionin
- **GLOBALLY:** Jörmungandr, Leviathan, Lucifer, Rahab, the Serpent, Yig

Anthropologists note that some of these gods are traditionally “good” gods who favor mankind. Has the Serpent corrupted those religions, or were they always mistakenly worshiping Jörmungandr?

ASPECTS: MEMBER OF A HIDDEN RITE; FANATICAL DEVOTION

SKILLS: Fair (+2) Fight; Average (+1) Stealth and Shoot

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □

GEAR: Sacrificial daggers or garrotes for rituals; any for other occasions.

Cult Leader

Cults not led by a naga or a were-serpent will likely have human sorcerers at their apex. Some of these devotees of dark gods pose as respectable members—even leaders, sheriffs, or bankers—of their community, or as priests of more acceptable religions. A clever cult leader might rise to power in a small town simply by dint of the fact that since he's been in charge, the giant snakes don't come into town any more! He just has to sacrifice you passing strangers to keep his job...

ASPECTS: LEADER OF A HIDDEN RITE; SERVES A DARK MASTER; A POWER IN THE COMMUNITY

SKILLS: Great (+4) Lore; Good (+3) Provoke and Empathy; Fair (+2) Notice and Will; Average (+1) Fight, Shoot and Stealth

STUNTS: one or two *magic stunts*

STRESS: Mental □□□, Physical □□

GEAR: Magical, Cursed, or Unholy Weapons (+2 to Fight when wielded by the Cult Leader in the Serpent's name)

NOTES: Some Cult Leader's powers are more based on faith than magic, swap Lore with Will and change Magic to Miracles.

Loner

The collapse of society leaves a lot of broken bits out at the edges. If you live alone in this world, you've got to be tough, and mean, and suspicious. Loneliness, unpleasant habits, or other things can turn someone from a mere creepy recluse into a creepy, *dangerous* recluse.

ASPECTS: BACKWOODS SURVIVOR; TOO MUCH TIME ALONE; UNSETTLING HABIT

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Fight; Great (+4) Survival and Physique; Good (+3) Notice and Will; Fair (+2) Athletics and Stealth; Average (+1) Provoke and Scrounge

STUNTS: *Axe-Wielding Maniac* (+2 to Fight when outnumbered and using an edged weapon.)

STRESS: Mental , Physical **GEAR:** Hunting Knife, Cleaver, Axe, etc.

NOTES: Adding the aspects CANNIBAL PATRIARCH and MY FAMILY HAS TO EAT, and giving them some Bandit minions makes the Loner into the leader of a clan of cannibals. Personalize the Loner's UNSETTLING HABIT; a creepy giggle, licking of the lips, constant sharpening of axes, whatever.

Police

Even the best of heroes may find themselves on the wrong side of the law now and then. And in some cities, the police might be on the wrong side of the law themselves.

ASPECTS: POLICE PATROLMAN; MOVE ALONG

SKILLS: Fair (+2) Fight; Average (+1) Notice and Provoke

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** **GEAR:** Truncheon, revolver.

Elite or Secret Police

ASPECTS: ELITE POLICE OFFICER; SPECIAL UNIT TRAINING

SKILLS: Good (+3) Shoot; Fair (+2) Fight; Average (+1) Notice and Provoke

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** **GEAR:** SMG, shotgun, or pistol

Police Detective

ASPECTS: POLICE DETECTIVE; ON THE CASE; JUST THE FACTS

SKILLS: Great (+4) Investigate; Good (+3) Empathy and Provoke; Fair (+2) Fight and Will; Average (+1) Contacts, Notice, and Shoot

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** **GEAR:** Pistol

NOTES: Beat police in most Commonwealth countries will not have Shoot, although detectives and special units might.

Secret Agent

Whether wearing a trenchcoat or a tuxedo, a secret agent does things his country doesn't tell anyone. And sometimes, things his country doesn't even know about. Although most heroes will face the feared agents of the NKVD or the Kempeitai, it's not impossible to imagine that they find themselves at cross-purposes to the SIS or the OSS, either.

ASPECTS: AGENT OF [INSERT ORGANIZATION HERE]; A PAWN IN THE GREAT GAME; HIGHLY TRAINED OPERATIVE; LICENSED TO KILL

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Burglary and Investigate; Great (+4) Contacts and Stealth; Good (+3) Notice, Fight, and Shoot; Fair (+2) Deceive, Provoke, and Will; Average (+1) Athletics, Empathy, Physique, and Rapport

STUNTS: *A Face In The Crowd* (+2 to any Stealth roll to blend into a crowd.); *Skilled Tradecraft* (+2 to any Burglary roll to cover your tracks while engaging in espionage.)

STRESS: Mental , Physical

GEAR: Top of the line, British agents may have ophi-tech

NOTES: This template can be used for internal and secret police officials (FBI, MI5, SAP).

Soldier

Red Army or Royal Army, theirs is but to do and die.

ASPECTS: PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER; FOLLOWS ORDERS

SKILLS: Fair (+2) Fight and Shoot; Average (+1) Notice and Will

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □□

GEAR: Rifle, bayonet, entrenching tool, standard soldiering equipment.

Elite Soldier

Red Guard Shock Army, Black Watch, Foreign Legion, Teishin Shudan, Marine Corps; they're the best units for the job, and the job is combat.

ASPECTS: ELITE PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER; HIGHLY TRAINED; HIGHLY DISCIPLINED

SKILLS: Good (+3) Fight and Shoot; Fair (+2) Athletics and Physique; Average (+1) Notice, Stealth, Survival, and Will

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □□□□ **GEAR:** Assault rifle or SMG, bayonet, etc.

NOTES: Really elite troops—SAS, Spetsnaz, U.S. Rangers—have even higher skills, and potentially some stunts.

Militia Soldier

National Guardsmen, the Home Guard, the town militia in the Poisoned Lands, or the “professional” army of a corrupt (or enfeebled) country like Iraq or Peru.

ASPECTS: PART TIME SOLDIER; FOLLOWS ORDERS

SKILLS: Fair (+2) Shoot; Average (+1) Fight and Notice

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □ **GEAR:** Rifle, bayonet, etc.; not as good as regular soldiery.

Officer

Their job is to lead men into battle, and ideally to lead them back out of it again.

ASPECTS: PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER; IN COMMAND; HEAD FOR TACTICS

SKILLS: Good (+3) Provoke and Rapport; Fair (+2) Fight and Shoot; Average (+1) Notice, Physique, and Will

STUNTS: *You Have Your Orders* (Can use Rapport to create a Coordinated advantage when commanding his troops and add an extra free invoke to it.)

STRESS: □□□□

GEAR: Automatic pistol, etc.

NOTES: Officers in the Japanese Army have katanas. Elite Soldier Officers have even higher skills, and potentially some more stunts.

Thug

Urban bullies of some sort, usually part of a criminal gang.

ASPECTS: URBAN CRIMINAL; STREETWISE GANGSTER

SKILLS: Good (+3) Fight; Fair (+2) Provoke and Physique; Average (+1) Shoot and Drive

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** □□□

GEAR: Knives, clubs, cheap pistols if lucky. A powerful boss can equip his thugs with tommy guns.

Thug Boss

Anyone from a single gang leader to a racket boss.

ASPECTS: MOB BOSS; VETERAN GANGSTER; UNDERWORLD TIES

SKILLS: Great (+4) Contacts and Provoke; Good (+3) Notice and Will; Fair (+2) Fight and Shoot; Average (+1) Deceive and Rapport

STUNTS: None **STRESS:** Mental □□□, Physical □□ **GEAR:** Automatic pistol

ANIMALS AND NATURAL-THREATS

The Serpentfall killed a lot of animals as well as people, but there fauna of the Earth is resilient, and the normal creatures persevere. Presented here are statistics for a variety of ordinary animals that populate the world after Ragnarok.

Even without Serpent taint, Nature has her angry side in this new world. Feel free to add stunts or skills to animals as you see fit, to adjust the threat narratively. For example, the hippo might have Death Roll, or the Bison might have Charge! Killer lions of Tsavo could have Great (+4) Will, and so on.

Bear

From black to grizzly, brown to spectacled, species of bears roam throughout North America and Eurasia. When aroused, they can easily maim or kill a human.

ASPECTS: MARAUDING BEAR, HUGE AND POWERFUL, FOREST DWELLER, SLASHING CLAWS

SKILLS: Great (+4) Physique, Good (+3) Fight, Fair (+2) Athletics and Notice

STRESS: □□□□

NOTES: For Grizzly bears, raise the skill column to Superb. For a polar bear, replace FOREST DWELLER with ARCTIC ICE HUNTER and COLD WATER SWIMMER.

Bison

After the Serpentfall, herds of bison once more roam the Great Plains. It's an unlucky hunter who ends up in the path of a stampeding tide of these creatures.

ASPECTS: BELLIGERENT BISON, THICK HIDE, THUNDERING HOOVES, SHARP HORNS

SKILLS: Great (+4) Physique, Good (+3) Athletics, Fair (+2) Fight

STRESS: □□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: *Trample* (May use Physique to attack when first charging into a fight.)

Dog

Dogs have been man's companion animals for millennia. In the wake of the Serpentfall many have gone feral, and packs of these canines pose yet another threat for anyone scavenging in the ruins of humanity's cities and towns.

These statistics are for large, actually dangerous dogs; use them for other dog-related animals like dingoes, hyenas, or jackals.

ASPECTS: LARGE STRAY DOG, MAN'S BEST FRIEND, KEEN NOSE

SKILLS: Great (+4) Notice, Good (+3) Athletics, Fair (+2) Fight, Average (+1) Stealth

STRESS: □

OPTIONAL STUNT: *Worrying Bite* (+2 to Fight rolls made to create an advantage by holding prey)

NOTES: For trained guard dogs, add one stress box, and replace LARGE STRAY DOG with TRAINED GUARD DOG, and MAN'S BEST FRIEND with NO ONE GETS PAST ME. For groups of wild dogs, dingoes, etc. replace MAN'S BEST FRIEND with FERAL PACK HUNTER, and use the mob rules on p. 216 of *Fate Core*.

Elephant

These giant mammals lumber through the African savannah and the jungles of the Indian sub-continent. Escaped circus or zoo elephants might also turn up anywhere in the ruins of

Quick Beasts

If you want to simplify things even more, just give every animal one stat, for example: Cat +3. That's its skill at doing anything animal-like: hunting prey, avoiding predators, moving through its normal habitat, fighting, or soaking damage. If it can't really do that (scare horses, swim) it's Mediocre (+0) at it, or just can't roll (defusing a bomb). If it's doing something really catlike, it's an aspect: spend the fate point and invoke CAT for +2 to move silently or help witches. Or compel CAT to make it run from your dog. Its stress boxes equal its score: this cat has three stress boxes. A less awesome or important cat might be Cat +2, or you might just decide that cats should lose a stress box for being small.

And that's it. If it's a magical gate-walking ninja cat, or even just an important cat for the story line, you can always build it out more.

That's a Big 'Un!

The normal flora and fauna of the Earth didn't escape the haze of blood, venom, and radiation that blew all around the world in the wake of Jörmungandr's death. This toxic influence twisted the basic DNA of some animals and plants, with the result that some critters get BIG. Not "crush a building" big (see later in this chapter for those sorts of monstrosities), but definitely bigger than the normal course of evolution would have led to. To simulate these "big but not giant" creatures, we suggest the following:

- Give the creature the aspect A "_____" OF UNUSUAL SIZE. Obviously the effects of A DOG OF UNUSUAL SIZE are going to be a bit different than the aspect AN ELEPHANT OF UNUSUAL SIZE. Use your judgment for invokes or compels using it.
- Boost the creature's Physique to either Superb (+5) or Fantastic (+6), which gives it a 3-point and 4-point stress box, and an additional mild consequence.
- Give the creature the **Take the Blow** stunt (**Fate Core**, p. 119), which allows them to use Physique to defend against attacks made with fists or blunt weapons. You might also consider giving them something like **Massive Size**, and have the animal considered to be at vehicle scale. This second option is probably best for animals that are already initially large, such as elephants, rhinoceri, etc.

America or Europe, domesticated for labor or slowly going mad from starvation.

ASPECTS: DEFENSIVE ELEPHANT, SAVANNAH GIANT, PREHENSILE TRUNK, STABBING TUSKS

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Physique, Great (+4) Athletics, Good (+3) Fight

STRESS: □□□□ (extra mild consequence)

OPTIONAL STUNTS: **Stomp!** (may use Physique to attack when it can trample an enemy.) **Giant Sized** (Elephants can be considered vehicle scale)

Hippopotamus

The most dangerous (normal) animal in Africa, the hippo's massive jaws can crush a man to pulp with very little effort. They jealously protect the section of river they consider their territory, and even crocodiles leave them in peace.

ASPECTS: VOLATILE HIPPOPOTAMUS, TERRITORIAL RIVER DWELLER, MASSIVE JAWS, STRONG SWIMMER

SKILLS: Great (+4) Physique, Good (+3) Fight, Fair (+2) Athletics

STRESS: □□□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: **Crushing Bite** (With a successful attack with style, a hippo can slam its massive jaws onto a victim, trapping and crushing them. The hippo attacks with its Physique at +2 until the target frees herself with an opposed Physique roll, or the hippo takes stress from another attacker.)

Lion

Lions are the apex predators of the African savannah. Woe betide the humans that a pride decides to hunt.

ASPECTS: STALKING LION, SAVAGE CLAWS, INTIMIDATING ROAR, LORD OF THE SAVANNAH, PRIDE HUNTER

SKILLS: Great (+4) Fight, Good (+3) Physique and Stealth, Fair (+2) Athletics and Notice

STRESS: □□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: **Claw Rake** (If a lion succeeds with style on claw attack, it does 2 extra boxes of stress.) **Worrying Bite** (as per Dog.)

NOTES: For a Tiger, replace the aspects with STALKING TIGER, SHADOW OF THE FOREST and STRIKE FROM THE SHADOWS, and boost Stealth to Superb (+5).

Rhinoceros

The rhino's surly temper, enormous stamina, and sharp horn make it a bad idea to provoke them, but their horn is worth a fortune to superstitious (or sorcerous) pharmacists in China and the East.

ASPECTS: CHARGING RHINOCEROS, BULKY, GORING HORN, THICK ARMORED HIDE

SKILLS: Great (+4) Physique, Good (+3) Athletics and Fight

STRESS: □□□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: **Charge!** (may use Physique to attack when it charges and slams its massive bulk and horn into things.)

Swarms

Swarms of tiny creatures in Fate are nameless NPCs with a quality of Fair (+2), Good (+3), or Great (+4). This quality is used in place of all of their skills, and also determines how many stress boxes are on their stress track (see p. 216 of **Fate Core** for more details).

Swarms have a special rule: if an attack wouldn't be able to logically destroy a large portion of the swarm, it has no effect. This means that a sword does nothing to a swarm of ants, but dropping a wall on them might. Burning them certainly would.

Swarms also have an aspect representing their primary mode of attack. Here are some example swarms specific to **The Day After Ragnarok**.

ANTS

Whether it's the army ants of the South American jungles, or the *siafu* of Africa and tropical Asia, large swarms of these creatures pose a grave threat to anything in their way. And *everything* is in their way.

ASPECT: MILLIONS OF STINGING BITES
QUALITY: Great (+3)

INSECTS

The swamps of the eastern Poisoned Lands and the stinking morass of the Ras al-Thuban often belch forth clouds of buzzing death, but insect swarms can reasonably be encountered almost anywhere temperate enough for their survival. These statistics can model a wide variety of insect swarms, such as locusts, biting flies, mosquitoes, wasps, etc.

ASPECT: A CLOUD OF STINGING/BITING DEATH
QUALITY: Good (+4)

BATS

And what thrives in the presence of swarms of insects? Huge bat colonies, of course. While most commonly encountered in or near their home

caves, either magic or madness could bring them to unexpected locales.

ASPECT: CHITTERING VORTEX OF CLAWS & FANGS
QUALITY: Good (+3)

SNAKES

It's a rather positive environment for snakes in the world after Serpentfall. Heroes aren't likely to encounter a swarm of snakes roaming around out in the open, but a nest of serpents is another matter entirely. Serpent cults have also been known to fill pits with their revered reptiles, and meddling heroes make excellent sacrifices...

ASPECT: ROILING COILS AND VENOMOUS FANGS
QUALITY: Great (+4)

RATS

Rats have been mankind's urban companion for millennia, and the collapse of large parts of civilization certainly haven't reduced their numbers. These furred hordes offer a special threat in the stinking sewers of the urban Poisoned Lands.

ASPECT: SHARP-TOOTHED, PESTILENT VERMIN
QUALITY: Good (+3)

Shark

Sharks thrive after the Serpentfall, with every temperate coast and much of the deep sea haunted by these perfect killing machines.

ASPECTS: RAVENOUS SHARK, AQUATIC KILLER, RAZOR-SHARP TEETH, BLOOD FRENZY

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Fight, Great (+4) Athletics, Good (+3) Notice and Physique

STRESS: □□□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: Slash & Bleed (On a successful attack with style sharks can inflict a situational aspect of BLEEDING WOUND or BLOOD IN THE WATER with a free invoke.)

NOTES: The statistics presented above are for a standard sized example such as a tiger, hammerhead, or sand shark. For larger examples, or even for something like a killer whale, see the **That's a Big 'Un!** sidebar.

Wolf

Wolves have haunted the edges of civilization since prehistoric times, and as humanity's light dims, that the shadowy packs once again prowl and howl.

ASPECTS: ROAMING WOLF, PACK HUNTER, DISCONCERTING HOWL, POWERFUL JAWS, RUN PREY DOWN

SKILLS: Great (+4) Fight, Good (+3) Athletics and Notice, Fair (+2) Physique and Stealth

STRESS: □□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: Worrying Bite (As Dog)

NOTES: When facing an entire pack of wolves, use the mob rules on p. 216 of **Fate Core**.

Wolverine

This tenacious and belligerent carnivore is native to the colder areas of North America and Europe, and Fimbulwinter's onset has expanded its range greatly. The wolverine is

well known for its ability to take down prey much larger than itself—which makes it almost a natural candidate for having the rules in the **That's a Big 'Un!** sidebar applied to it, doesn't it?

ASPECTS: Savage Wolverine, Ferocious Hunter, Tenacious Scavenger, Fearless, Never Say Die

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Fight, Great (+4) Notice and Physique, Good (+3) Athletics and Stealth

STRESS: □□□□

OPTIONAL STUNT: **Worrying Bite** (As for Dog, (p. 93))

CHIMERAS

Some of the monsters infesting the world used to be human, or have some connection with humanity. Not everyone treats these "chimeras" as simple monsters to be killed—their inner humanity deserves better. Of course, some people think chimeras are even worse than regular monsters—and chimeras are certainly more creatively evil when they do go bad. Which is usually.

Aunt Jenny

The name comes from the Navajo *'ant'ihni*, or "witch," and is slightly more common (much more so in the Southwest) than "were-snakes" or "reptoids." They are people who can turn into serpents, or serpents who can turn into people—nobody quite knows which. Some Aunt Jennies turn into snakes of human mass (see **Giant Snake**, p. 97-98); others turn into a single normal-sized venomous snake or a swarm of snakes; still others have some sort of interim form between snake and man (stats remain the same). In practical terms, all this means is that you might phrase attacks and advantages differently—the swarm-type might have a WHICH ONE DO I HIT? aspect with a free invoke to reflect the effects of fighting a swarm, for example. Priestesses of the Daughters of Dionin cult, which began during pre-Roman times in Britain and has spread throughout the Commonwealth since, are were-snakes of this latter sort.

ASPECTS: WERE-SNAKE REPTOID; MUSIC TAMES THE BEAST; SHAPE-CHANGER; ANCIENT SORCERY; COLD BLOODED; SCALY TRUE SKIN

SKILLS: Epic (+7) Lore; Fantastic (+6) Notice; Superb (+5) Physique; Great (+4) Will; Good (+3) Fight and Provoke; Fair (+2) Deceive and Stealth

STUNTS: One or two additional **magic stunts**; **Mind Control** (Aunt Jennies may use Lore to try to control the minds of others.); **Devour Likeness** (Aunt Jennies get +2 to Deceive to impersonate a person who's brain they have devoured.); **Poisonous** (Anyone bitten by an Aunt Jenny gets the situational aspect POISONED in addition to damage; the opponent may try to get rid of it with a Physique roll vs. Fair.); **Transformation** (Aunt Jennies can transform themselves into snakes: either a single normal snake, a swarm of snakes, a giant snake, or a form in between snake and man; use the Giant Snake description as a base.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

Ghoul

After the Serpentfall came the famines: two years without summer, the land covered with salt water. Some people turned to cannibalism, eating the dead and then the living. Corpses picked up venom from the water, and the brains of corpses bred new monstrosities in those who ate them. Cannibals became ghouls, gray of skin and coyote-like in feature.

ASPECTS: TRANSFORMED CANNIBAL MONSTER; HIDEOUS VISAGE; INFECTIOUS TAIN; MAD WITH THE SCENT OF BLOOD; RED OF TOOTH AND CLAW

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Notice; Great (+4) Stealth; Good (+3) Physique; Fair (+2) Fight; Average (+1) Athletics

STUNTS: *Ghoul's Nose* (+2 to Notice rolls involving smell, and may even smell their prey in the dark.); *Fearsome* (+2 to Provoke rolls to cause terror.); *Blood Frenzy* (When the Ghoul smells fresh blood, they gain +2 to Fight, but will only attack and not try to create advantage.); *Infectious Taint* (Any consequence taken from the claws or teeth of a Ghoul is called Infected; recovery is possible only if treated with magic or miracles. For every week that goes by without such treatment, the consequence worsens one level. If it goes beyond severe, the character begins to transform into a ghoul, and will fully turn after another week.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

Man-Ape

Even before the Narts revealed the lore of the giants to him, Stalin dreamed of building supersoldiers. One such project was the human-ape hybrid project, begun by Ilya Ivanov in Soviet Georgia in 1927, using apes taken from expeditions to French Guinea. Ivanov's research bore strange fruit; the Narts' lore has multiplied the ranks of Soviet man-ape warriors still further. Most Soviet man-apes are used as infiltration and commando forces in British Africa, but they might turn up anywhere else the Reds do. It's up to you whether Robert Yerkes' similar research in Cuba and Florida produced man-apes to haunt the Drowned Coast of the Poisoned Lands.

ASPECTS: HYBRID SIMIAN SUPERSOLDIER; ANIMAL INSTINCTS; SOVIET INDOCTRINATION; MILITARY TRAINING; STRONG AND BRUTAL

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Athletics; Great (+4) Physique and Shoot; Good (+3) Fight and Notice; Fair (+2) Stealth and Survival; Average (+1) Provoke and Will

STUNTS: Depending on what type of Man-Ape, one of the following: *Chumanzee* (+2 Athletics while swinging from branches.); *Maboon* (+2 Fight when attacking with bite or blades.); *Man-rilla* (may use Athletics to shoot guns.); *Orang-human* (May use Physique instead of Fight as long as the action involves wrestling or grappling.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ Additional mild consequence.

GEAR: Chumanzees and Orang-humans, AK-47; Maboons, Bladed Weapons; Man-rillas, SG-43 Machine Gun

Note: The ANIMAL INSTINCTS aspect represents the Man-Ape's greatest weakness—if frightened, confused, or intimidated, instinct will take over and they'll lose focus or flee. Clever PCs might be able to come up with ways to use this to their advantage.

Swamp Devil

These human-plant hybrids likely germinated in the stomachs or wombs of survivors who ate venom-tainted fruit or roots. They lurk in ruins and bayous all along the Gulf Coast and as far north as the Chepachet Swamp in Rhode Island. They occasionally become shamans or chieftains of bandit clans or gangs. Some may lurk in the Sudd, the swamp in the Nile Valley now increasingly tainted with venom from the Serpent's fallen head.

ASPECTS: HUMAN-PLANT HYBRID; SWAMP DWELLER; THICK BARK-LIKE INTEGUMENT; GLOWING FUNGI; PSYCHOTROPIC POLLEN & SPORES

SKILLS: Epic (+6) Physique; Superb (+5) Fight and Provoke; Great (+4) Stealth and Will; Good (+3) Athletics, Notice, and Survival

STUNTS: *Foxfire* (Bioluminescent fungi surrounding the Swamp Devil blinds and confuses enemies, giving it +2 to Notice in the dark and a +2 to Athletics to defend against Shoot.);

Illusion Pollen (+2 to Deceive rolls to create psychotropic hallucinations as advantages.); **Creature of the Swamp** (+2 to Stealth when sneaking around in a swamp.); **Bark Armor** (considered superior gear against anything not specifically designed for armor-piercing, grants a free invoke on the Thick Bark-like Integument aspect.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ Additional mild consequence.

NOTES: Some Swamp Devils are magically gifted and have a Superb (+5) Lore skill, and access to Magic Powers.

MONSTERS

Though none of them are technically monsters, running into a bear, a pack of wolves or feral dogs, or a mountain lion that has lost its man-fear is still not good news for travelers in the Poisoned Lands. But there's much worse, there and elsewhere...

Death-Worm

Apparently native to the Western desert, this seismically sensitive species was awakened after long dormancy by the Serpentfall. Death-worms nearly destroyed Los Alamos in August of 1945, but were driven off by the scientists there, aided by a relief force of Texas Rangers. Unconfirmed rumors out of Japan say there are colonies of death-worms in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia as well.

ASPECTS: GIGANTIC UNDERGROUND MONSTER WORM; ATTRACTED TO VIBRATION; DEATH FROM BELOW; GREAT TOOTHY MAW; SEGMENTED HIDE

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Physique; Superb (+5) Fight and Stealth; Great (+4) Athletics and Notice

STUNTS: **Electrical Burst** (when first emerging from the ground, it may make an electrical attack to a zone using Fight; can also be used to short out electrical equipment.); **Burrowing** (can use Athletics to move underground through dirt and soil); **Giant Sized** (Death-Worms are considered vehicle scale.); **Seismically Sensitive** (+2 to Notice rolls to overcome to detect movement and vibrations.); **Slam** (may use Physique to attack when it rears up and slams its massive body down on things.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

Dero

More technically, "dwegar," but the name "dero" stuck with American fans of *Amazing Stories*. Since both the scientific dero and the Nordic mythical dwergar are vile, cruel, swarthy, twisted, dwarfish troglodytes, it's a natural mix-up. Dero apparently dwell in both natural cave formations and vast underground cities below Latin America, North Africa, and Central Asia. Disturbingly, some dero have been seen using AK-47s, implying some connection (or worse, an alliance) with the Soviets.

ASPECTS: DEFORMED DWARFISH TROGLODYTE; EERIE GLOWING EYES; DIMINUTIVE STATURE; PREDICTABLE STRATEGY

SKILLS: Great (+4) Stealth and Shoot; Good (+3) Fight and Notice; Fair (+2) Provoke and Athletics

STUNTS: **Fearsome** (+2 to Provoke to cause fear and terror.); **Lamp-Like Eyes** (+2 to Notice and see in the dark.)

STRESS: □□

GEAR: Pain Whip, Fear Rays, AK-47

NOTES: For a Dero Boss, increase the skill columns to Superb.

Devil-Flower

The Poisoned Lands have sprouted lots of different kinds of man-eating carnivorous plants since the Serpentfall, from vampiric ivy to strangling willows. These stats are for the devil-flower, or

mantrap orchid, a Venus flytrap about 10' around capable of ingesting a large man. They grow inside other brush or vegetation, along trails or near tempting springs or waterholes.

Rhodes University teams have also spotted similar plants in the Sudan and in Central Africa growing near the fallen Serpent.

ASPECTS: MASSIVE MAN-EATING PLANT; SNAPPING JAWS; VIBRATION-SENSING CILIA; DIGESTIVE JUICES; CAMOUFLAGED FOLIAGE; ROOTED IN PLACE

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Fight; Great (+4) Physique and Stealth

STUNTS: *Snap Shut* (when a human makes contact with a Devil-Flower, the orchid's jaws snap shut on the victim, an opposed Stealth vs. Notice roll to avoid in dense vegetation. Roll the Devil Flower's Fight against the target's Athletics to create the advantage CAUGHT: on a success with style, the advantage is SWALLOWED WHOLE. Once caught or swallowed the target can attempt to break free using an opposed Physique roll, as the Devil-Flower attempt to digest its prey by making an attack roll using Physique.); *Huge Size* (a Devil-Flower is considered vehicle scale, except for the SOFT PALATE of its mouth; the prey may only exploit this if they are "lucky" enough to be attacking from inside the mouth of the orchid.)

PHYSICAL STRESS: □□□□

Enormous Scorpion

Not quite "giant," but eighteen inches is still pretty big for a scorpion. They travel in swarms of 3-8 arthropods, ranging in color from rust to brazen to deep black. They roam the Southwest, but sea scorpions of similar size crawl through the ruined coastal cities. Scientists speculate that the latter are evolved versions of eurypterids, prehistoric scorpions that lived in the Permian Era.

ASPECTS: ENORMOUS SCORPION; TRAVELS IN SWARMS; VENOMOUS STING; NOT THAT BIG

SKILLS: Good (+3) Stealth; Fair (+2) Fight; Average (+1) Athletics

STUNTS: *Claw/Claw/Sting* (May choose to sting twice per conflict. If the sting succeeds, the opponent takes a POISONED situation aspect in addition to damage. The poison makes an attack at Fair vs. the character's Physique every exchange thereafter until the poison is removed by someone with Crafts or Science.)

PHYSICAL STRESS: □□

NOTES: Sea Scorpions have the High Concept ENORMOUS AQUATIC SCORPIONS and the Aquatic stunt (+2 to Athletics to swim and can breath underwater).

Giant Sea Scorpions

ASPECTS: GIGANTIC AQUATIC SCORPION; PALEOZOIC MONSTROSITY; HUGE CLAWS; VENOMOUS STING; THICK CHITINOUS SHELL

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Physique; Great (+4) Stealth; Good (+3) Fight and Athletics

STUNTS: *Aquatic* (+2 to Athletics to swim, and can breath underwater.); *Claw/Claw/Sting* (see **Enormous Scorpion**, above.)

Fly-By-Night

These winged terrors have appeared all over the world since the Serpentfall. A man-sized cross between bat, great ape, and toad in appearance, they swoop out of the sky and snatch human prey, taking them to isolated mountain caves or ruined skyscrapers. Some unconfirmed reports claim they drink blood—ranchers have discovered cattle, horses, and water buffalo dead and exsanguinated from mysterious slashing wounds. Or the blood-drinking Thing may be different from what the Americans call the "fly-by-night." British authorities have sardonically nicknamed it the "valkyrie," after the legendary "choosers of the slain" in Nordic myth.

Elsewhere it has other names: the camazotz in Mexico, the kinyan tiwicakte among the Sioux, the guiafairo in Senegal, the sasabonsam in the Gold Coast, the kikiyaon in Upper Volta, the olitiau in Central Africa, the kongamato in Rhodesia, the ahul in Java, the orang-bati in the Moluccas, and the wakwak in the Philippines.

ASPECTS: FLYING HYBRID MONSTER; FANG-FILLED TOAD-LIKE JAWS; GREAT LEATHERY WINGS; LONG GRASPING ARMS; THICK FUR AND THICKER HIDE; DEATH FROM ABOVE

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Stealth; Superb (+5) Athletics; Great (+4) Fight; Good (+3) Physique; Fair (+2) Notice; Average (+1) Provoke

STUNTS: *Flying* (fly using their Athletics skill.); *Swooping Attack* (+2 to Physique rolls to create advantage on an opponent by grappling them. If they succeed with style they have carried the target up into the air with them. They may then make additional Fight attacks at +2, or Physique rolls to create an Altitude advantage. If they drop the target, she or he must make a Athletics roll vs. Fair or check off their next open consequence. Any invokes on the Altitude advantage can be spent to make this check harder.); *Blood Drinker* (A success with style Fight attack allows the Fly-by-Night to bite the target and give them the situational aspect DRAINED in addition to damage.); *Infravision* (+2 to Notice rolls against warm or cold targets in the dark.); *Fearsome* (+2 to Provoke rolls to cause terror.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□

NOTES: Some Theosophists believe that the fly-by-night is actually a Lemurian survivor reawakened by the cataclysm; some African and Asian tribes consider it a transformed witch. If they're right, add ANCIENT LEMURIAN or TRANSFORMED WITCH, Great (+4) Lore skill, and access to Magic and Spells.

Giant Alligator

Giant alligators roam the entire American southeast outside the Appalachian mountain chains. Giant crocodiles infest the Nile valley, and reports are coming in to Rhodes University of giant crocodiles seen in the Congo, Zambezi, and Limpopo Rivers as well.

ASPECTS: Gigantic Alligator (or Gigantic Crocodile); Snapping Jaws; Thrashing Tail; Scaly Hide; Ambush Predator

SKILLS: Epic (+7) Physique; Fantastic (+6) Fight; Superb (+5) Athletics; Great (+4) Notice; Good (+3) Stealth

STUNTS: *At Home In The Water* (+2 to Athletics rolls made to swim, can also hold its breath underwater for a very long time.); *Powerful Bite* (+2 to Physique rolls made to create an advantage by holding onto their prey.); *Lunging Bite* (+2 to Fight on their first attack in a scene.) *Death Roll* (can use Physique to attack any target that it's holding with its bite) *Huge Size* (considered vehicle scale)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (2 additional mild consequences)

Giant Gila Monster

So far, the closest thing anyone in America has seen to a dragon. But nobody knows what else might crawl down out of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains...

ASPECTS: GINORMOUS GILA MONSTER; SLOW AND SLUGGISH MOVEMENTS; THICK BEADED SCALES; GRIPPING JAWS; HUNTS BY SMELL

SKILLS: Epic (+7) Physique; Fantastic (+6) Fight; Superb (+5) Notice; Great (+4) Provoke; Good (+3) Survival; Fair (+2) Athletics

STUNTS: *Keen Sense of Smell* (+2 to Notice rolls involving smell, and may use Notice to track its prey.); *Huge Size* (Giant Gila Monsters are considered vehicle scale.); *Gripping Jaws* (+2 to Physique rolls made to create an advantage by holding onto their prey. It also takes +2 to Fight

Random Demons

Need a threat on the fly? Just make a roll on the **Random Demon** table and see what kind of threat is nearby to menace your players. While most common in the Poisoned Lands, it should be noted that this table is good for random demons anywhere in the world.

- **DEMON PACKAGE:** Add one extra stress box and the aspects AURA OF FEAR and DEMONIC ENTITY.
- **PRIMORDIAL SERPENT-MAN:** Use statistics for the Aunt Jenny (p. 92); add the **Demon Package** and select three *magic stunts*.
- **FLY-BY-NIGHT:** See p. 96; add the **Demon Package**.
- **CARNIVOROUS APE:** Use statistics for the Manrilla (p. 93); replace ANIMAL INSTINCTS with BLOOD HUNGER; add the **Demon Package** and the *Slash & Bleed* stunt from the wolverine (p. 92).
- **GIANT SNAKE:** See pp. 97-98 and roll 3dF (-3--2: 20', -1-0: 30', +1--2: 50', +3: 80'); add the **Demon Package**, ACIDIC VENOM, and CORROSIVE BLOOD to all.
- **ENORMOUS SCORPION:** See p. 87; add the **Demon Package**, A SCORPION OF UNUSUAL SIZE (p. 90), and power it up to a Superb (+5) Physique (see p. 90)
- **SENTIENT SWARM:** Use statistics for the Swarm (select an appropriate type from the statistics on p. 91), but add the aspects HIVE MIND and A FIENDISH INTELLECT.
- **GIANT GHOST SNAKE:** See p. 90 and roll 3dF as for Giant Snake; add the aspects SPIRIT CREATURE, and AURA OF FEAR. Ghost Snakes are still affected by fire and electricity. Magnetized or red-hot weapons do half damage.

| Random Demons | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 3dF | DEMON |
| -3 | Primordial Serpent-Man |
| -2 | Fly-by-Night |
| -1 | Carnivorous Ape |
| 0 | Giant Snake |
| +1 | Enormous Scorpion |
| +2 | Sentient Swarm |
| +3 | Giant Ghost Snake |

against any character it's currently holding onto.); **Poisonous** (Anyone bitten by a Giant Gila Monster gets the situational aspect POISONED in addition to damage. In every scene afterward, make an attack on the character at Superb (+5). Removing the aspect requires a recovery attempt using appropriate medical tools, also at Superb, but succeeding removes the aspect entirely—it won't stick around like a consequence does.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (2 additional mild consequences)

NOTES: The Apache believe that the Gila monster breathes a poison cloud; if the giant Gila monster has this power, it may make a Fight roll to attack an entire zone, targets in the zone defend with Athletics. If the opponents fail to defend they gain the situational aspect POISONED as above.

Really Giant Gila Monster

A 70' long Gila monster has been reported in northern Mexico. Such a creature would have the High Concept changed to REALLY GNORMOUS GILA MONSTER, plus the aspect MIGHT AS WELL BE A DRAGON; also raise all its skills by one, giving it a Legendary (+8) Physique. It might also be massive scale, if you want to be truly terrifying.

Giant Snake

By far the most common monster appearing after the Serpentfall, giant snakes infest all continents (except Antarctica) and all but icy polar seas. Giant snakes come in all varieties, including venomous constrictors, a combination not found in pre-Serpentfall nature. Giant snakes range from 20' to 80' or even longer. These statistics are for a 20' long venomous constrictor weighing 200-300 lbs.

ASPECTS: GIGANTIC SNAKE; COLD BLOODED; VENOMOUS CONSTRICTOR; DRIPPING FANGS; CRUSHING COILS; SCALY HIDE

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Physique; Great (+4) Fight; Good (+3) Athletics and Stealth; Fair (+2) Notice and Provoke

STUNTS: **Fearsome** (+2 to Provoke to create advantages involving fear and terror.); **Crushing Coils** (On a Fight attack that succeeds with style, giant snakes may attempt an opposed Physique roll to envelope its target in its coils. Failure grants the opponent the situational aspect ENCOILED. Every round after the Giant Snake may attack using Physique instead of Fight. An opponent may try to break free using an opposed Physique roll.); **Poisonous** (Anyone bitten by a Giant Snake gets the situational aspect POISONED in addition to other damage; the opponent may try to overcome this with a Physique roll.); **Striking Lunge** (+2 to Fight attacks on the first attack in a scene.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

NOTES: This is just the 20' version of a Giant Snake—there are even larger snakes that abound. For 30' snakes, bump their skill column up one level to Fantastic. For 50' snakes raise the skill column to Epic, and add **Huge Size** (The snake is now considered vehicle scale). For 80' and bigger raise the skill column to Legendary, and add **Huge Size**. Stress increases as normal.

Sea Snakes

River, lake, or ocean giant snakes change the High Concept to GIGANTIC SEA SNAKE, and add **At Home In The Water** (+2 to Athletics rolls made to swim, and can also hold its breath underwater for a very long time).

Snow Snakes

Living in glaciers and mountains, snow snakes have white scales and are warm-blooded. Change the high concept to GIGANTIC SNOW SNAKE, replace the COLD-BLOODED aspect to WARM-BLOODED, and add **Stealthy** (+2 to Stealth roll when hiding in snow and ice).

Giant Spider

Increasingly common in the Poisoned Lands and Africa, where witch-doctors and shamans have trained them as guard beasts, hunting coursers, and pets. Giant spider legs are reinforced with some sort of resinous chitin that keeps them from collapsing under their own weight; some bandit clans in the Poisoned Lands make scale armor out of them. This could be a good potential gear stunt.

ASPECTS: GIANT SPIDER; RESINOUS CHITIN EXOSKELETON; DRIPPING FANGS; POWERFUL LEAPERS; PACK HUNTERS

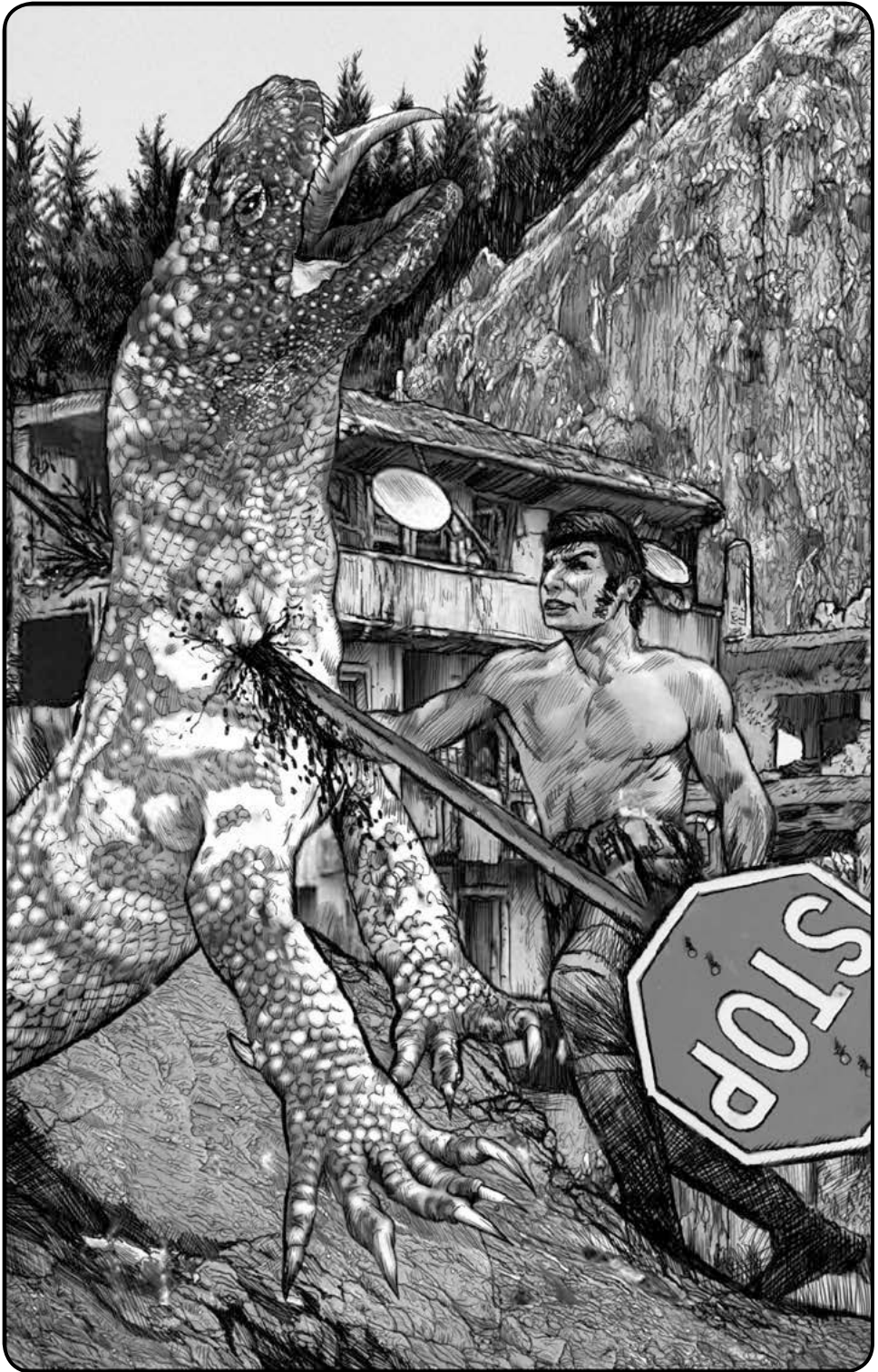
SKILLS: Superb (+5) Athletics and Physique Great (+4) Provoke and Stealth Good (+3) Fight and Notice

STUNTS: **Spiderwalk** (+2 to Athletics rolls for climbing, and may even climb on ceilings.); **Poisonous Bite** (If a Fight attack succeeds with style, opponents must tie a Physique roll against the attack's value or gain the situational aspect PARALYZED. Once afflicted, the character must succeed at a Fair overcome with Will to take any action until the poison is removed by someone with Crafts or Science.); **Webslingers** (Can spin giant webs with Physique rolls, which can be used to create advantage with aspects like CAUGHT IN A WEB or STICKY STRANDS OF WEBBING.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

Hydra

Giant snakes aren't bad enough—the lakes and fens of the Poisoned Lands (and of the Sudan) host giant snakes with multiple heads! The body of a hydra more resembles an alligator's than a snake's, being many times thicker.



Hydras can have any number of heads but the nine-headed hydra is the most common. Fighting a hydra involves fighting one or more of its heads. Every head counts as an individual Extra opponent. Thus, a hydra provides its own teamwork bonus and can break into multiple groups to fight PCs.

ASPECTS: MANY-HEADED SERPENT MONSTROSITY; THICK SCALY BODY; COORDINATED ATTACKS; NIGH IMMORTAL; FLICKING SMELLING TONGUES; POISONOUS FANGS

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Physique; Superb (+5) Fight; Great (+4) Notice; Good (+3) Athletics

STUNTS: *Cut Off One Head, Two More Shall Rise* (Hydra heads act as individual NPCs with a team up bonus. Each head has a Superb (+5) Fight; Great (+4) Physique, and Physical Stress: □□□□.); *Aquatic* (+2 to Athletics rolls made to swim, and breath underwater.); *Poisonous* (anyone bitten by a Hydra gets the situational aspect POISONED, the opponent may try to overcome this with a Physique roll.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

Jotun

At the beginning of Ragnarok, the jotun, or frost giants, emerged from the ice. The sagas describe the jotun as fierce, inhuman killers of monstrous size, but possessed of the ancient wisdom of Mimir. Stalin's giantish allies are known to have provided him with much antediluvian lore; those who have faced them can confirm the rest of the description. The best-known of the jotun are the Stalin-allied Narts of the Caucasus Mountain glaciers, but USAAF personnel in Greenland have reported sighting jotun while on patrol. Rumors persist of giants hidden in caves in the Rockies, but Canadian and American officials eager to get their own hands on primordial lore have found (or at least reported) none.

ASPECTS: FROST GIANTS OF LEGEND; NEW SOVIET MEN; KEEPERS OF ANCIENT LORE; BORN OF COLD AND ICE; INNATE GIFT

SKILLS: Epic (+7) Lore; Fantastic (+6) Physique; Superb (+5) Fight and Provoke; Great (+4) Athletics, Notice, and Will

STUNTS: *Innate Gift* (All Narts, and possibly all jotun, have some innate gift: Soslan has steel skin, Batyrez cannot be defeated with the blade, Satanya is impossibly beautiful, Nasren can see the future. Personalize this gift for any Nart or jotun in your game.); one *magic stunt*; *Huge Size* (Jotun are considered vehicle scale.); *Massive Strength* (Jotun can use Physique to make whole-zone attacks by throwing or smashing large boulders, trees, halftracks, or anything else handy at their foes.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

GEAR: Ice-Coated Hauberk, Great Axe

Kraken

The Norse kraken was supposedly the size of an island, but the term is now applied to any tentacled monstrosity in the ocean. Krakens infest the coasts of the Poisoned Lands, the Mediterranean, and the waters around the Serpent's body, but have been spotted globally.

ASPECTS: GIANT TENTACLED MONSTROSITY; LONG POWERFUL TENTACLES; GAPING MAW; SLIME-COVERED SUCKERS; HIGHLY MUTABLE FORM; HORROR FROM THE DEPTHS

SKILLS: Fantastic (+6) Physique; Superb (+5) Athletics; Great (+4) Fight and Notice

STUNTS: *So Many Tentacles* (Kraken may make four different Fight attacks with their many arms, if they decide to attack to gang up on one target they may take a +1 gang up bonus per attack they give up.); *Envelope and Crush* (may make Physique attacks against any opponents they have grappled.); *Huge Size* (Kraken are considered vehicle scale.); *Aquatic* (+2 to Athletics rolls made to swim, and breath underwater.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)

NOTES: Some Krakens are more like jellyfish than squids or octopuses, give them VISCIOUS COMPOSITION and the stunt **Jelly Body** (halving stress from bullets).

Naga

Human-headed snakes have appeared in the rivers of the Poisoned Lands since the Serpentfall. The British and Congress Indian governments both deny rumors of these “nagas” emerging in South Asian rivers. Debates rage on their nature: are they chimeras—mutated or twisted humans—or an entirely separate sort of monster? They reportedly have the power to cleanse water of Serpent venom, but demand human worship and the rejection of all technology in return. So far, only a few towns in Vermont have taken them up on the offer.

ASPECTS: HALF-SERPENT, HALF-MAN; WORSHIP ME AND BE SPARED; GAZE INTO MY EYES; IMMUNE TO POISON; CREATURE OF WATER; REJECT YOUR TECHNOLOGY

SKILLS: Superb (+5) Lore; Great (+4) Notice and Rapport; Good (+3) Empathy and Fight; Fair (+2) Athletics, Provoke, Physique; and Will

STUNTS: **Aquatic** (+2 to Athletics rolls made to swim and breathe underwater.); **Elemental Power Over Water** (Naga can create and purify water using Lore.); **Mind Control** (Naga may use Lore to try to control the minds of others, which you may treat as a mental attack against the target’s Will, and speak telepathically to their minds.); **Crush and Constrict** (+2 to attack any opponent they have grappled.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□

Thunderbird

Scientists call these creatures pteranodons, but cannot explain their strange effect on luck except to mutter about *folies a deux* and “mass hysterical self-hypnosis.” Thunderbirds raid ranches and farms, carrying away sheep and goats and the occasional small child.

ASPECTS: TERRIBLE PTERANADON; MEMBRANOUS WINGS; SNAPPING BEAK; HORRIBLE JINX; SHARP EYES

SKILLS: Great (+4) Notice; Good (+3) Fight and Stealth; Fair (+2) Athletics and Physique

STUNTS: **Silent Swooper** (Thunderbirds can fly using Athletics, and while flying they have a +2 to Stealth rolls.); **Hard To Hit** (+2 to Athletics to defend against Shoot attacks.); **Death Curse** (Anyone who kills a Thunderbird gains the situation aspect of BAD LUCK which can only be removed by magic or miracles.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□

Wendigo

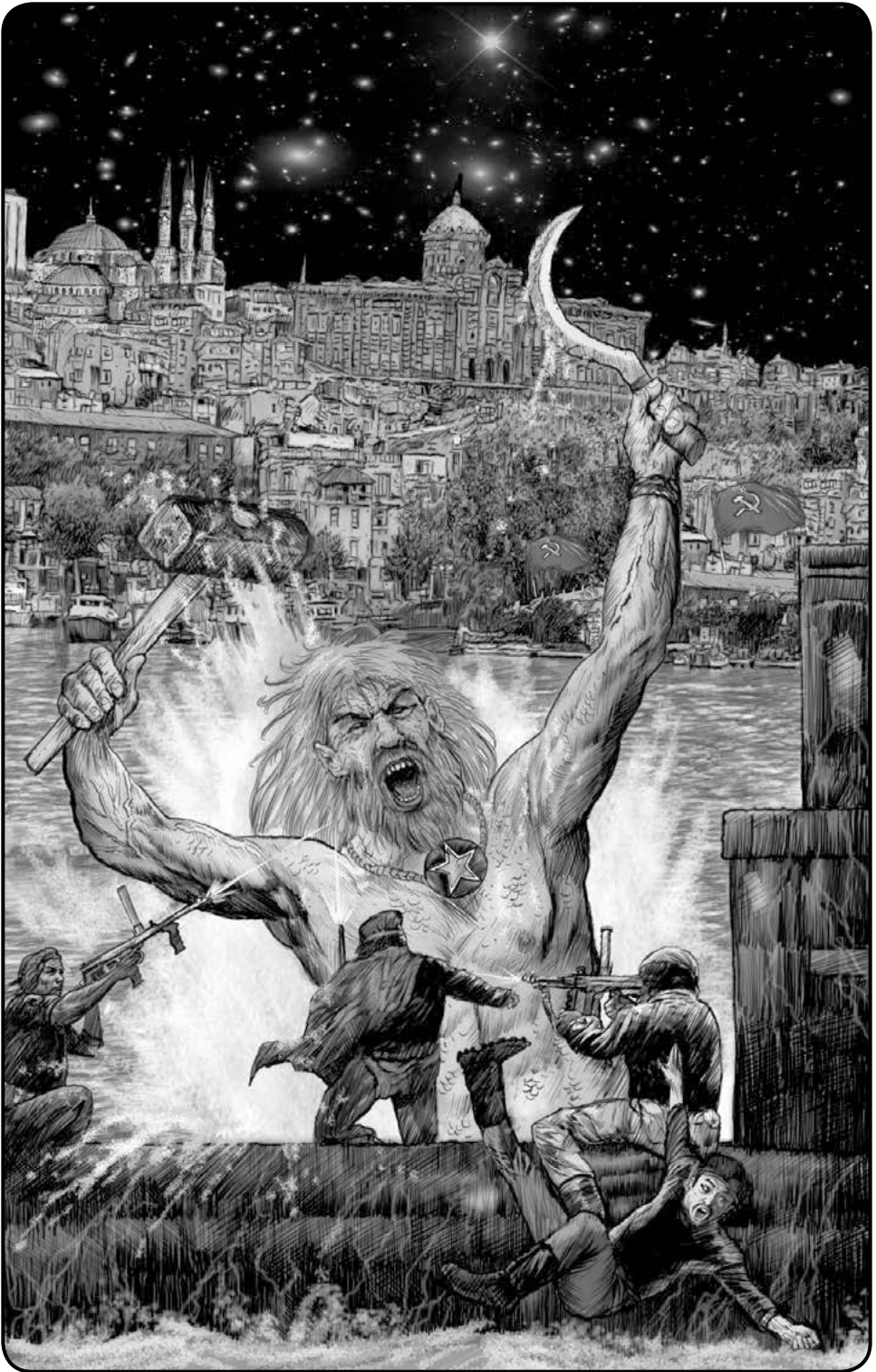
Wendigowak (the plural of wendigo) may be chimeras like ghouls, or they may be creatures similar to yeti or sasquatch that have gained a taste for human flesh. Their reputed powers over cold might be the result of a dark bargain with some icy god, or just superstitious panic spread by survivors of wendigo attacks. These survivors’ stories describe a hairy creature with webbed or deformed feet; it can leap great distances or fly. Its eyes are red and glowing.

ASPECTS: TERRIFYING HUMANOID CANNIBAL; A TASTE FOR MAN FLESH; SAVAGE HAIRY GIANT; GLOWING RED EYES; IMMUNE TO THE COLD; WEBBED FEET; GREAT LEAPS

SKILLS: Epic (+6) Fight and Physique; Superb (+5) Notice, Provoke, and Stealth; Great (+4) Athletics, Survival, and Will

STUNTS: **Fearsome Howl** (+2 to Provoke to inspire fear and terror, +2 Will rolls to defend against fear.); **Icy Touch** (Make Will rolls to freeze opponents.); **Leaping** (+2 to Athletics rolls to cover distance by leaping.); **Infravision** (+2 to Notice to see body heat.)

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□ (additional mild consequence)



— Adventures in the Serpent's Shadow —

You've got your heroes, their killing (and surviving) gear, and a whole world of monsters and Commies to kill and survive. What's next? Adventuring!

ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The following lists exist to help you, the GM, come up with thrilling adventures for the heroes of a *The Day After Ragnarok* campaign. They are intentionally generic and wide-ranging—after all, adventures might occur anywhere in this world, with heroes ranging from French air-pirates to Chinese rebels to Texas Rangers to British secret agents! You can pick what appeals to you, or (if you have a stray 12-sider about the place) choose randomly. However you get there, if something doesn't fit your present campaign, feel free to change it, or select a result from one or another list.

For example, in a "Servants of the Crown" campaign in which all the heroes are Royal Marine Commandos, the Hook is almost always going to be "Patron"—the Marines order the heroes to go somewhere and do something! Likewise, a campaign centered on the mean streets of occupied Shanghai is always going to have a "City" Location. In short, use these lists to inspire your campaign, not to drastically change or strait-jacket it.

— THE HOOK

The Hook is the reason the heroes get involved, the story element that draws them into the adventure. Some hooks might overlap—an Old Enemy becomes a Patron by hiring the heroes—or combine—the heroes attend an Innocent Beginning function and receive a MacGuffin (or a Dying Message) there. Select one of the hooks listed below.

1. **CAUGHT UP IN EVENTS:** The heroes just happen to be passing through or hanging around when a crisis hits, and their course of action is obvious or compelled. Alternately, a previous adventure might have fallout that triggers this adventure.
2. **DUTY/HONOR:** One of the heroes (or all of them) have made a promise, or sworn an oath, or somehow feel their duty calls them to right some wrong. Or perhaps someone calls the heroes cowards for neglecting the problem, or otherwise impugns their honor over it. Tailor the nature of the adventure to a hero's pre-existing duty.
3. **DYING MESSAGE:** The "dead man falls through the door" introduction always works, but this might be a diary that turns up, or a treasure map, or a hero's name scrawled in blood on the wall at a murder scene.
4. **INNOCENT BEGINNING:** The heroes are invited to something innocent and seemingly un-adventurous: a unit reunion, a lecture, a social function at the Palace, a bar brawl. Something or someone here sets them on the course of adventure—maybe the host tells them a story, or a girl runs away in intriguing fashion, or a different fight breaks out.
5. **LEGEND/RUMOR:** The heroes hear about the Lost Dutchman Mine, or the Lemurian city in the Grand Canyon, or the City of the White Apes in the Congo. Or they hear a rumor of something unpleasant or profitable going on where they can get involved. Perhaps they find an old book in the ruins of Toledo, or they receive a most-secret briefing from the SIS.
6. **MACGUFFIN:** The heroes get ahold of something that somebody else wants badly enough to harass, burglarize, and perhaps kill them for. What is it? And who wants it? And what can they do with it?

Fateful Framework: Pirate's Grand Tour

Here's how a sample "Wolves Beyond the Border" campaign arc might run. The heroes are pirates in the Caribbean...to start with.

- **ADVENTURE ONE:** The heroes spot a fine wallowing yacht off the coast of Alabama. Best of all, it belongs to a Klansman looking to set up a slave entrepot in the ruins of Biloxi!
 - **ADVENTURE TWO:** Whoever the Klansman was buying the slaves from must have lots of cash! The heroes go to Haiti to rob those slavers blind! Oh, yeah, and free all those slaves, too.
 - **ADVENTURE THREE:** Turns out Haiti is full of zombie-monsters. Who knew? Fortunately, there's a French daredevil on the island, and she'll fly the heroes to Dakar if they do her a little favor when we get there.
 - **ADVENTURE FOUR:** Her "little favor" turns out to be "act as muscle for a raid on the Foreign Legion payroll." The Legion, a scorned daredevil, and an ambitious French politician chase the heroes across the Sahara in any vehicle that will carry them!
 - **ADVENTURE FIVE:** The mad sky-pirate "Le Robur" knows how the heroes can get over the Serpent and away, but they have to beat his five champions in a series of awesome smackdowns.
 - **ADVENTURE SIX:** The heroes' plane is caught in an impossible jet stream; they have to kill the sky-kraken responsible for it before they get sucked into its horrific maw.
 - **ADVENTURE SEVEN:** Coming down from the sky-kraken, the heroes crash into Japanese-held Sumatra. Fight or connive their way through the Japanese on the coast, or follow the rumor of the Jade Temple in the interior?
 - **ADVENTURE EIGHT:** Either way, the heroes run into Lung Choi San and her flotilla of pirates. She falls hard for one of the heroes, and the romantic challenge of keeping her interest becomes increasingly adventurous. ("If you really loved me, you'd kill that warlord.")
 - **ADVENTURE NINE:** The heroes need to steal a fast boat and get out of Chinese waters before the Dragon Queen loses interest...fatally. It's a caper, a chase, and maybe a fight against a sea serpent! Where to next?
7. **MOTIVATION:** Something triggers a pre-existing motive for one or more heroes. It could be something or someone from their past, or something more generic like "I never like to see a kid get hurt" or "I should know better than to listen to redheads, but..." Tailor this to a specific hero's past or personality, ideally something revealed or developed in play.
 8. **MYSTERY:** Something strange is going on, and it piques the heroes' curiosity. Maybe it seems like the kind of thing the heroes might want to know, or it's just the sort of weirdness that anyone with a Tommy gun would want to look into. It might be a formal murder mystery, or just the enigma of why nobody has robbed the payroll for the Scranton Mining Co. yet when it *seems* so undefended.
 9. **OLD ENEMY:** An enemy from a previous adventure shows up in town, or in a rumor, or in a field report. What's he up to? How did he survive that explosion? Wouldn't you like to know...
 10. **OLD FRIEND:** An old friend gets the heroes involved somehow, either by asking for their help directly or by getting into trouble they hear about later. Essentially, this is usually a modified version of the Patron/Client hook or the Legend/Rumor hook.
 11. **PATRON/CLIENT:** Someone orders, hires, or begs the heroes to do something, This "someone" can be an official, a senior officer, a mysterious blonde, or a bandit chief.
 12. **SQUEEZE PLAY:** The heroes are forced into action by coercion, threats, or danger to themselves. The mayor promises to let the heroes leave Cleveland in one piece if they do him one favor, a Japanese colonel threatens to kill a hero's loved one in a POW camp somewhere if she doesn't steal a British weapon prototype, a giant snake chases the heroes into a ghoulishly ruined arsenal.

• LOCATION

This is where the main action of the adventure will occur. “Globe-trotting” adventures, or serial adventures with a series of goals and clues, might involve several locations—choose just one, or as many as seem necessary.

1. **CITY:** The adventure happens in a city, possibly the heroes’ home base, or another city they encounter on their travels. If lots of city adventures are on the agenda, check the **City Locations** sidebar for ideas on how to spread the fun around town.
2. **DARK LAND:** The heroes must enter a land controlled by tyranny: the Soviet sphere, the Japanese Empire, the Grand Kounty of Birmingham. This adventure will likely require covert entry, and possibly a hasty exit. Even if they’re not the main villains, the tyrant’s forces will be omnipresent obstacles and threats.
3. **EXOTIC LAND:** The adventure happens somewhere far away and different from the heroes’ usual stomping grounds. Getting there could be an adventure or three in its own right, or as simple as a red line moving across a map in a montage scene. The adventure should play up some characteristic feature of the foreign setting: a unique monster, villain, dilemma, or larcenous opportunity.
4. **FORT/MILITARY BASE/PRISON:** All harder than normal to get into and out of; all guarded better than most places, by people with better weapons and lots of justification for using them. Most such places are isolated, but some might be right in the middle of a bustling city. This can be a caper scenario or a prison-break adventure, or begin as one and become the other!
5. **MANSION:** An adventure in a mansion might be a haunted house story, a daring art theft, a tale of “social combat,” or a fight with a rich villain or criminal boss. Layout and décor take pride of place when designing such tales; lots of places to hide and things to steal or break.
6. **ON THE ROAD:** The journey, as the Chinese saying has it, is the destination. The “real” purpose of the adventure—bandit attack, fortuitous plane crash, damsel in distress—happens on the way to somewhere else. That “somewhere else” may be a sequel, a red herring, or a jumping-off point to another adventure entirely.
7. **RUINED CITY:** The world has plenty of ruins, from archaeological sites to drowned Eastern Seaboard towns to quake-ravaged Paris and Hereford. Something in those ruins attracts the heroes’ attention: treasure, a monster, an enemy hideout, or all of the above. Maybe it wasn’t ruined yet last year...or yesterday! The **City Locations** sidebar can provide some ideas for more detail about your ruined metropolis.
8. **SETTLEMENT/OUTPOST:** A remote site on the fringes of civilization, be it Poisoned Kansas or the Upper Congo. It might be a fort, a struggling town, or a caravanseraï. The threat might come from farther out in the wilds, or from corruption or chicanery where authority is thin on the ground.
9. **SUBTERRANEAN:** Underground adventures can range from dero warrens to the medieval sewers of Agra to a network of bomb shelters in Brisbane. As for what might be lurking in a maze of tunnels and confined rooms: surely we don’t need to spell it out?
10. **VILLAIN’S LAIR:** Best as the climax of a series of adventures (although an adventure where the—horribly outgunned—heroes just stumble over it is great) this one is all about bagging the bad guy. Who is likely to be surrounded by henchmen, traps, tame monsters, and escape

City Locations

Cities are hardly homogenous, and there are plenty of types of places to consider setting adventures in either thriving or ruined urban areas in the world after Serpentfall. Here are a few suggestions:

Gate, Checkpoint, Jail, Laboratory, Factory, Church, Rich Neighborhood, Bank, Slum, Criminal Dive, Dock, Airport, Railway Station, Sewers, Subway, City Hall, Government Building, University, Barrio, Ghetto, Ethnic Enclave, Hospital, Power Station, Bridge, Park, Junkyard, Airfield, Theater, Museum.

hatches. Bring lots of ammo! You may want to select from the list again to see just where the villain's lair happens to be.

- 11. WAR ZONE:** Whether it's as big as China or as small as a bandit-ridden county in Pennsylvania, a war zone means lots of jumpy strangers with heavy weapons in the heroes' way. The heroes may have a military mission ("Get the convoy through!") or they may be trying to hunt down treasure (or a lost friend) and avoid both sides.
- 12. WILDERNESS:** Jungle, desert, poisoned plains, mountains—this adventure takes place where Nature (and super-Nature) are red in tooth and claw. No buildings, no roads, no reinforcements. Foes are less likely to be human...or mostly human.

• HEROES' GOAL

This tells you what the heroes' actual purpose will turn out to be after all the introductory hooks have been swallowed and straightened. While one goal is plenty for a team, you can select two and combine them ("Solve Mystery" may lead to "Destroy," for example). For complex adventures, select once for each hero, and build those motives into the setup!

- 1. ASSIST/GRATITUDE:** The heroes want to help someone, be it a lost scholar or a town besieged by ghouls. They fundamentally seek gratitude, which might take on romantic, political, or other dimensions. This is a good choice for knight-errant heroes, or heroes who always want to help out the underdog.
- 2. DESTROY/HUNT:** The heroes want to destroy someone or something: a wizard, a siege gun, a dragon. They may have to hunt it across the countryside, or merely beard it in its den. Maybe they just need to collect a new type of Serpent-spawn for Rhodes University, or have to chase a fugitive. This goal requires a good, red-meat hook, but players are usually willing to unleash their bloodthirst.
- 3. DISCOVER/SOLVE MYSTERY:** Find the dingus, clear up the crime, figure out how the Reds know all about the new rocket plans—the mystery-solving adventure is an old favorite. The heroes might have to clear their own names, and stay one jump ahead of the rightful authorities while they hunt down the true villain. Or the mystery might be intellectual: who built these ruins? What destroyed them? Is it coming back?
- 4. ESCAPE/RESCUE:** The heroes have to get out of somewhere bad, or they have to go into somewhere bad and get someone out. This adventure might begin with the heroes in prison, or with a plane crash that traps them in trouble. Figuring out who to trust on the inside is a key part of this adventure.
- 5. EXPLORE:** This can be a dungeon crawl through a ruined Manhattan, a scouting mission through once-thriving Ontario, or a journey into the belly of the Serpent itself. This goal almost always requires a Patron or Client unless the heroes are unusually curious about blank spots on the map.
- 6. LIBERATE:** As opposed to the rescue, in this adventure the heroes have to go into somewhere bad and turn it less-bad. The heroes might mount a coup d'état, kill an evil warlock, suborn a bandit chief, or open the road for the Marines to come in.
- 7. MONEY/REWARD:** "Do this and I'll pay you handsomely." It may be an old standard, but it's reliable. The heroes might have a Patron who hires them, or simply hear about a treasure too rich to ignore. This goal also encompasses specific promises, from "I'll tear up that warrant" to "There's a promotion in it for you."
- 8. PREVENT/PROTECT:** A fundamentally reactive goal; the heroes have to guard a bridge, bodyguard the mayor's daughter, keep a secret from getting out, hide an arms cache, escort a ship through Japanese-patrolled waters, keep bandits away from a village.

Fateful Framework: Yesterday Was Quite Enough

Here's how a sample "Servants of the Crown" campaign arc might run. The heroes work for the SIS, on His Majesty's secret service.

- **ADVENTURE ONE:** The SIS sends the heroes to an experimental Rhodes University psi laboratory in Uganda to see why it was destroyed, and find out if Soviet man-apes in the area did it.
- **ADVENTURE TWO:** Rescuing the sole survivor of the lab, the heroes have to get her back to Nairobi while dodging Mau-Mau assassins.
- **ADVENTURE THREE:** Otto Skorzeny was spotted in the ruins of Boston, looking for something. The heroes have to find him, find what he's looking for, and keep it politely out of the hands of the American ONI team who arrive halfway through.
- **ADVENTURE FOUR:** He was looking for a rare grimoire from a small university library wrecked in the tsunami—and everyone in the Empire who can translate it is dying mysteriously!
- **ADVENTURE FIVE:** The heroes have to infiltrate a fashionable Brazilian casino frequented by royalty—and run by the Daughters of Dionin, who (it turns out) were the ones killing off those scholars. But Skorzeny shows up there, too, in a gambling mood.
- **ADVENTURE SIX:** Word from "C"—the girl from the psi lab has left Nairobi, on a plane heading for Buenos Aires. On her own, or kidnapped? Is Skorzeny involved here, too?
- **ADVENTURE SEVEN:** The heroes track the girl to a secret Argentine black magic lodge, run by a fugitive Ahnenerbe scholar. Bust in and kill everyone, or infiltrate and find out what's going on?
- **ADVENTURE EIGHT:** Skorzeny plans to restart Ragnarok with an incantation from that grimoire, amplified by the girl's psionic powers! The heroes must battle South American Nazis on the threshold of Muspellheim!
- **ADVENTURE NINE:** And then the Soviet Strategic Rocket Troops show up—the girl was an NKVD esper all along. Is Stalin working with the Nazis? After all, opening Muspellheim would mostly wreck the British and Americans, not Russia. Or can the heroes trust the Reds?

9. **RETRIEVE/STEAL/ACQUIRE:** There is a thing the heroes want to get for themselves, or for the rightful owners. Perhaps they have to keep the theft secret, even from the victim. Perhaps the target has moved. Perhaps the thing does more than sparkle in the moonlight.
10. **REVENGE/THWART VILLAIN:** This goal is personality-driven, and works best if the heroes have crossed paths with the villain before. The villain might be a mastermind safe back in Moscow or Tokyo, or a neighboring politician they can't just kill outright. Or maybe this is the "47 Ronin" adventure, where they kill the unkillable bad guy or die trying.
11. **SURVIVE:** Their only goal is to stay alive and get out of this. "This" might be a monster attack, a Japanese raid, a zombie plague, a gang war in Kansas City, or anything else seemingly too big to actually stop. This might be a "gauntlet" the heroes have to run or just a Really Bad Night.
12. **WIN BATTLE/CONTEST:** The heroes have to win a battle, a race, a martial arts tournament, a living chess game, a dragon hunt. Their foes will undoubtedly cheat.

• VILLAIN

Who is the villain, the prime mover of the bad things in the adventure? Most adventures only have one, but a "team-up" story can be interesting, especially if both villains have appeared before.

1. **AGENT:** The villain works for someone else. He might be a SMERSH operative or a Kempeitai asset...or he might work for ONI, SIS, or the Texas Rangers! Maybe he's gone rogue, or maybe he just doesn't think the heroes ought to be running around loose. Maybe everyone's at cross-purposes.

2. **BANDIT/REBEL:** This might be the stereotypical “irregular” out in Arkansas somewhere, or a Mau-Mau warrior who lives to give the British fits, a sky-pirate in the Sahara, or a racketeer on the Los Angeles docks. These villains have a “home turf” where they’re comfortable and dangerous, and a crew of desperate sorts at their beck and call.
3. **CHIMERA/MONSTER:** The villain might be a fiendish skinwalker or simply a Really Big Serpent that needs killing. A monstrous villain can be cunning and proactive or lumbering and reactive.
4. **CONSPIRATOR:** This villain lurks in the shadows, furthering a secret agenda. Maybe he’s a Red, or part of a cabal of influential fascist bankers, or just planning to overthrow the mayor of Wheeling for his own aggrandizement. Depending on how wild you want to get, he might be a Freemason mystic, a dero fifth-columnist, or a psionic agent of the hidden city of Shangri-La in Tibet.
5. **CORRUPTOR:** This villain wants to undermine an existing institution and turn it to his own purposes. Maybe he’s a South African general who wants to start a race war, or a mayor who wants to declare Boise independent, or a Navy man who wants to turn pirate.
6. **CULTIST:** A servitor of the Serpent. He might be a high-ranking Dionin worshiper in the Admiralty or a tabernacle preacher gone ‘round the bend in the ruins of Lavonia, Georgia. Cultists might be secretive conspirator-types or foaming maniacs or subtly twisted scholars.
7. **DESPOT:** The ruler of somewhere: a mad sharif in the ruins of Morocco, the raja of Bundelkund, the mayor of St. Paul, the Imperial Kleagle of Yazoo City, the Soviet commissar in Nablus.
8. **FANATIC:** This villain is devoted to some monomaniac goal, be it Soviet Communism, the greater glory of the Serpent, inventing anti-gravity, or Alaskan independence. More than most, this villain might overlap with another sort on this list.
9. **MASTERMIND:** While a conspirator is part of a larger organization, the mastermind is the spider in the center of his own web. He might be a “Napoleon of Crime,” or the devil-doctor of Buenos Aires, or the NKVD station chief for a whole country.
10. **ROGUE:** The sort of villain who gets played by Errol Flynn...or Veronica Lake. Charming, possessed of a unique sense of honor, this villain’s story depends more on her style than her agenda, which may simply be “beat the heroes to the Ruby of Rajnapur.” This sort of villain makes an excellent romantic interest for a hero, either before or after his villainy is clear.
11. **WARLOCK:** This villain uses magic to further his foul ends. He might serve the Serpent, but he does so with open eyes (or so he thinks). This die result might also indicate a “mad scientist” ophiurgist wholly contaminated by the Serpent, or some other unwholesome blend of science and sorcery.
12. **WARLORD:** This villain has a military command, and uses it to increase his power and wealth. He might be a militia captain in Kentucky, a Soviet general in Persia, a Japanese commandant in Java, or a Belgian colonel deep in the Congo.

• VILLAIN'S GOAL

Villains don't just sit around the burned-out skyscraper waiting for heroes to drop by. They have plans and dreams and schemes of their own, driving plots that unfold whether the heroes show up or not. To see what the villain is up to, select one of the goals that follow.

1. **CONQUER:** The villain wants to conquer something, by military force, by threats, or by political machinations. This might be the town the heroes are passing through, a stretch of ground they have friends in, or something unrelated to the main plot. Everything the villain does is intended to increase his strength or weaken his foes.

Fateful Framework: Our Own Private Iowa

Here's how a sample "Phoenix and the Sword" campaign arc might run. The heroes have decided to protect, preserve, defend, and rebuild Davenport, Iowa.

- **ADVENTURE ONE:** Welcome to Davenport—introducing the ongoing NPCs and their immediate crisis, a river serpent that devours the local children.
 - **ADVENTURE TWO:** A Serpent cult in Rock Island, across the Mississippi, was behind the monster; rooting them out and making enemies in Rock Island.
 - **ADVENTURE THREE:** Tension builds when Cedar Rapids demands exclusive access to the ruins of Iowa City. Negotiate or fight?
 - **ADVENTURE FOUR:** Exploring the area for salvageable resources; wandering monsters and more NPCs.
 - **ADVENTURE FIVE:** Davenport is divided: war with Rock Island or not? Whichever side the heroes are on—and maybe some are on each side—they have to convince their opponents or see the town dissolve.
 - **ADVENTURE SIX:** A huge dust storm wrecks vital machinery in town; do we trade with Cedar Rapids for replacements, steal the parts we need, or find a better solution?
 - **ADVENTURE SEVEN:** A flotilla of pirates sails down the Mississippi from Dubuque, looting everything they can. They must be stopped, with allies from a suspicious (or occupied!) Rock Island.
 - **ADVENTURE EIGHT:** Building a bridge across the Mississippi, with lots of monsters to keep the engineering exciting. Someone in town is working for the Iowa Soviet, and doesn't want the bridge built.
 - **ADVENTURE NINE:** A big caravan arrives from Chicago, with an ultimatum from its Mayor. Or maybe it's an offer of alliance. Or both...
2. **DESTROY:** The villain wants to destroy something; this is the same goal as the heroes' Destroy/Hunt. The villain may want to destroy it before the heroes can steal it, or to destroy it because the heroes value it, or because it lies in the way of his larger agenda, whatever that may be.
 3. **DISCOVER:** The villain wants to find something out, from mad-scientific curiosity or in order to further his vile plans. He may want to find the heroes, or uncover the SIS presence in his city, or locate the map to King Solomon's Mines. Villains seldom want to solve a mystery, unless there's another villain crossing them up somewhere.
 4. **GREED:** The villain wants something that's worth a lot of money. The money may be its own reward, or it may be needed to build an experimental rocket to Mars, or it may be for the coffers of the Party. Perhaps the villain is running a racket or a smuggling ring, or plotting a brilliant series of jewel thefts, or blackmailing rich worshipers of Dionin.
 5. **KIDNAP:** The villain wants somebody, alive. The heroes may be protecting the victim, or one of them may be the kidnap target! This may just be about the ransom, or it may tie into another goal, or the villain may just be in love with Princess Manisha.
 6. **REVENGE:** The villain wants somebody to suffer. Again, the heroes may be connected with this person, or they may be the villain's *bête noir*. Perhaps the revenge is aimed at a city, or an organization, or a military unit. Perhaps the villain's revenge is justified!
 7. **RIVALRY:** The villain is driven by a rivalry; he wants something (possibly another select from this list) because his rival wants it. The villain may be an NKVD agent trying to one-up the SIS station chief, or a mad scientist trying to prove something to a competitor, or a jewel thief trying to beat his mentor. Again, the heroes may be the rivals in question, or connected somehow to the rivalry, or simply drawn into the action.

- 8. STEAL:** The villain wants the dingus, or the treasure, or the prototype. This is the same as the heroes' Retrieve/Steal/Acquire goal. The heroes might be racing the villain to steal it for themselves, or assigned to protect it, or have it dropped in their lap by a dead man on the wharf.
- 9. SUBVERT/RECRUIT:** The villain wants to subvert or recruit some target, bringing them over to the villainous way of thinking. This might involve psionics, blackmail, bribery, persuasion, or simply the right offer at the right time.
- 10. SURVIVE:** The villain wants to keep alive and free, and believes the heroes to be an obstacle to that goal. The heroes may not know that they threaten the villain, or the villain may be mistaken! This goal also works for monsters, vampires, or any other predator.
- 11. TWISTED HONOR:** The villain is driven (or constrained) by an oath: magical, military, or something else. This might be a variant on Revenge, if the heroes killed the villain's brother, or it might be just a quirk of villainous behavior in pursuit of some other goal.
- 12. WORSHIP:** The villain worships the Serpent, and does what he does for its greater glory and power. If this comes up, add a Cultist flavor to whatever else got was selected from the **Villain** list.

• HENCHMEN

Villains seldom work alone, if only because the heroes need more than one person to beat on. Select an appropriate number of henchmen and see who's helping the villain this time around.

- 1. ASSASSIN:** This henchman has a specialized job: killing people, usually from a distance or in secret. An assassin might be a trained Russian sniper, a knife-wielding brute, or a Serpent death cultist. Tune the assassin's m.o. to the villain's style unless the contrast is intentional—assassin henchmen often come from faraway, exotic lands.
- 2. CHIMERA/MONSTER:** The villain has a "tame" monster, perhaps penned up in a death-pit underneath her base. Alternately, the villain works with a chimera: a Soviet agent might have a man-ape on staff, or a corrupt politician might employ an Aunt Jenny for unsavory but deniable deeds.
- 3. CORRUPTED HERO:** The villain has turned a former hero into a henchman, with money or extortion, or perhaps the hero was always a bad apple. This is the sort of henchman that turns out to be the Old Friend who vanished way up in the Hook section.
- 4. CULTISTS:** The villain has a whole nest of Serpent cultists to do his bidding. He might be a cult leader, or he might have suborned them to his purposes with trickery or promises, or he might control them with a jade serpent crown he found in the ruins of the Louvre.
- 5. FEMME FATALE:** This henchwoman often poses as an innocent (or not-so-innocent) victim to lure the heroes into a trap, or simply to keep tabs on their plans. She might be the villain's inamorata, or she might be a consummate professional. Her skills might be murderous, magical, or anything, really. This henchman might, of course, be *un homme fatale* if the scenario calls for it.
- 6. IGOR:** Deformed, devoted, and fearful in equal measures, Igor does his master's bidding with the occasional over-enthusiastic screwup. Most common with mad scientist type villains, Igor might be a spy, a preternaturally strong snatch-and-grab artist, or just someone to beat when times get frustrating.
- 7. MOB:** The villain has an angry mob at his beck and call; perhaps he is a demagogue, or has one in his pay. Perhaps he is (or can pass as) prominent in a restive neighborhood. Either way, he can arouse the populace in his defense, whether they know it or not.
- 8. OPERATIVE:** The villain has a "secret agent" sort of henchman, expert at infiltration and acquisition. The operative may work under cover, or simply be a master of disguise. Operatives can kill, but aren't assassins per se.

9. **RIGHT-HAND MAN:** The villain has a trusted assistant with much the same skills (command, tactics, etc.) as the villain, ready to step in should anything happen. The right-hand man might pose as the main villain, or be sent off to manage things in the other part of the adventure.
10. **SOLDIERS:** The villain commands soldiers, whether uniformed military, tough bandits, or a secret nest of Red Army troops disguised as longshoremen. With enough soldiers, he may be able to get a sniper, an engineer, or any number of specialists.
11. **THUGS:** The villain has a criminal following, from common leg-breakers to a crew of thieves to a “beggar’s guild.” The villain isn’t necessarily a gangster: spies, cult leaders, and shady politicians (for example) can all use thug followers.
12. **WARLOCK:** The villain has a magical specialist in his retinue. Whether the villain fears, trusts, or even believes his henchman is a separate question. He may consider the warlock just another expert, or he may constantly seek the warlock’s advice on omens and fate.

• VICTIM

This is the person the villain is aiming at, or that the heroes are protecting, or both. The “victim” might not necessarily die, or even know the adventure is going on around him. Select one (or two for a cross-purposes sort of adventure).

1. **COP/SOLDIER:** The victim is a uniformed servant of a government. The villain may attack a specific cop, or just strike at the Sydney Police in general; the motive may or may not have anything to do with the victim’s uniform. Perhaps the victim has betrayed that uniform in some fashion.
2. **DAMSEL IN DISTRESS:** A classic potential romantic interest as victim, the “damsel in distress” may be coincidentally present at the scene, or the specific target of the villain for reasons of lust, revenge, or genetics. The “damsel” may, of course, be highly competent in her own right, or male, or both.
3. **DECENT FOLK:** The villain is targeting decent but essentially powerless folk: shopkeepers, farmers, teachers, preachers, etc. They may be in his way, he may want to corrupt them, or he may just hate decency.
4. **DESERVING:** This sort of victim deserves whatever happens to him; maybe he’s a criminal, a traitor, a coward, or just a repellent human being. (You can select another type from this list to see what sort of deserving victim they are.) However, the heroes can’t let the villain win... no matter how much they’d like to.
5. **HERO’S ASSOCIATE:** The villain is targeting a hero’s friend, family member, lover, mentor, or sidekick. Does the villain know of the connection? Is this just a ploy to entrap the hero?
6. **INANIMATE/INFRASTRUCTURE:** The villain is aiming at a thing, not a person: a crucial railroad bridge, the prison, the bank.
7. **INNOCENT:** The victim is fundamentally not involved in whatever is going on. (Except, of course, as a victim.) An “innocent victim” may be guilty of a whole different set of things, from embezzlement to black magic; this sort of red herring tangles the story nicely.
8. **INVESTIGATOR/JOURNALIST:** The victim is someone who looks into mysteries or shines light on dark places. Has she uncovered the villain’s tracks? Is his investigation connected with the villain’s larger plan, or is it just bad luck? Is the villain competing with the investigator, or hiding from her?
9. **MARGINAL TYPES:** The victim or victims are those on the margins of society: prostitutes, petty criminals, junkies, vagrants, etc. Aunt Jennies love to prey on those that society has abandoned, as do other monsters, some of them human.

- 10. POLITICIAN:** The victim is politically or financially connected to the local (or global!) power structure. As with the Cop/Soldier, the villain may have targeted them because of these connections, or because of their personal activities or attitudes.
- 11. PROFESSOR:** The victim is a scholar, inventor, or other egghead type. Villains love to kidnap, blackmail, or suborn Professors to make them use their research for villainy, or kill them if they won't cooperate. Professors surprisingly often have beautiful daughters, for a bonus Damsel in Distress victim.
- 12. RELATIVE:** The victim is a relative of someone else in the story: a hero, the villain, or a long-running NPC. The blood tie may be the key to the adventure, or just a convenient hook to get things going.

• GUEST STAR

Many adventures have a “guest star” who is neither (primary) villain nor (primary) victim, but just shows up to help, to snarl things up, or to die informatively. (Or all three.) Sometimes the guest star provides the Hook; other times, the guest star provides a subplot or a red herring. This list of suggestions can also work for “random guests at a party,” or (with some adjustment) for random encounters generally.

- 1. CRIMINAL:** Someone on the other side of the law, though perhaps on the same side as the heroes. This might be a bandit, a racketeer, a rival thief, a smuggler, or anyone else with an

Fateful Framework: Istanbul Not Constantinople

Here's how a sample “City of the Emerald Night” campaign arc might run. The heroes, a loose collection of troublemakers, live in Istanbul, a city taken from the Turks and given to the People's Republic of Greece. The heroes, broadly, object to this.

- ADVENTURE ONE:** The heroes get into a turf war with a neighboring gang of Albanians. This adventure establishes the neighborhood boundaries and NPCs.
- ADVENTURE TWO:** The Albanians bring in the sorcerous artillery, a Serpent cultist of Kulshedër. This adventure introduces a colony of ghouls in the sewers, and not in a pleasant way.
- ADVENTURE THREE:** The city officials want to know what caused the huge fire in the sewers, and start rounding up usual suspects. The heroes have to find a better sap to hang the frame on before they get juggled.
- ADVENTURE FOUR:** Recai, a cunning Turkish detective, sees through their frame. (Or, if it didn't work, he springs them from jail.) He needs a grotesque monster killed in order to open the water gate in the Golden Horn to a smuggler.
- ADVENTURE FIVE:** To raise a little quiet cash, the Greek government removes a jeweled sword from the Topkapi Museum. If the heroes can liberate it in transit, the Greek government can never admit it was ever stolen. Free Turkey! Or free jewels!
- ADVENTURE SIX:** There's a new Soviet commissar in charge of the Russian navy base. He's honest, and smart. He has to be embarrassed, broken, or otherwise removed without anyone catching on.
- ADVENTURE SEVEN:** The Albanians have kidnapped some girls from the heroes' turf, to sell—or to sacrifice to Kulshedër? Or are they just bait for a hero-trap?
- ADVENTURE EIGHT:** Recai is back! His smuggler friend knows where the heroes can get a Marconi gun, but he needs radio antennas put up on five separate rooftops. Each house is its own challenge: One is a convent in Albanian turf, one has a pterosaur nest in its attic, one is full of tempting illegal goods, and so forth.
- ADVENTURE NINE:** Someone has sicced a fly-by-night on one of the heroes—and it gets stronger every night. Which makes putting up those last two antennas darn inconvenient. Who have they made an enemy of? Moonlit rooftop chases, and fistfight-punctuated investigations, ensue.

interest in the main chance. Criminals make excellent sources of heroic gear, either bought on the black market or picked up from cooling bodies.

2. **DETECTIVE:** Cooperative or competitive, someone else is looking into the heroes' mystery, and perhaps into the heroes. The detective might be a relentless pursuer, a convenient way to get clues, or just another Marconi pistol at the show-down.
3. **EXPERT/SCHOLAR:** Someone knows more than anyone about what's going on. That someone may have their own agenda, or be blithely ignorant of the bigger picture. Experts are great for delivering key exposition right before dying even more informatively.
4. **EXPLORER/SCOUT:** Back from the frontier, or met out in the wilds, an explorer is a breath of wilderness in civilization or a breath of civilization in the wilderness. The scout might guide the heroes to the adventure...or into a trap. Did they know?
5. **FRIEND/RELATIVE:** Ideally, this should be someone who's been on screen in another adventure, or at least mentioned awhile back. It's not a bad idea to toss a friend into every couple of scenarios just so you have a backlog to kill, or endanger, or otherwise involve when you need one.
6. **LOVE INTEREST:** Not necessarily a full-time girlfriend or spouse, the "love interest" can be a cute blonde or that helpful young lieutenant. They're on screen to intrigue at least one hero. If the love interest intrigues *two* heroes, there's your subplot right there.
7. **MADMAN:** Ranting preacher, mad genius in a deserted warehouse, a soldier who's seen too much, a fanatic obsessed with the heroes...madmen don't have to be wrong to be interesting. Quite the reverse.
8. **MERCENARY:** Someone combat-ready and combat-capable, tossed in to tangle up the chess game. The heroes have one more factor to keep their eye on...or perhaps one more gun in their posse.
9. **MERCHANT:** Not necessarily an open and above-board shopkeeper or trader, a merchant might be a fence, a drug kingpin, an arms dealer, or something else convenient. Merchants also provide ready supplies for heroes and villains alike, and often have the most interesting stories about what's going on just over the horizon.
10. **OFFICIAL/BUREAUCRAT:** Almost always shows up to irritate, delay, harass, or even imprison the heroes, even in a campaign where the heroes work for the same bureaucracy. Every so often, throw in a helpful one as a change-up...which should make the heroes suspicious.
11. **PRIEST/PREACHER:** As a guest star, the preacher is probably a good guy, if almost always out of his depth. (As a villain, the sky's the limit.) He can provide introductions, medical care, and maybe a miracle or two.
12. **RICH AND POWERFUL MAN:** If he's not the Patron, he wants to be...unless he actually wants to be the villain. Rich and powerful men seldom involve themselves in adventures without a motive, or without lackeys and goons to make their motive known.

Guest Star's Goal

To figure out what the guest star wants, should it come up, select once from the **Heroes' Goal** or **Villain's Goal** lists, whichever one you like better. Or which one makes more sense. Many guest stars just sort of want to know what's going on, and then they just want to survive it. That's often enough.

• OBSTACLES

An adventure is the story of things going wrong in exciting fashion. Hence, there will likely be obstacles twisting the heroes' path and opening pits for the unwary. Select from the list below make some trouble.

1. **ACCUSED:** The heroes are accused of something and have to clear their name or flee the jurisdiction. This might be the Hook, or it might happen midway through the action to goose things along, or it might happen at the end to get them moving on to the next adventure.
2. **BANDITS/CRIMINALS:** Someone violent or unseemly or both tries to muscle in on the heroes' racket, or has been hired by the villain to delay them, or just shows up on (or across) the same trail.
3. **CHIMERA:** A chimera is active in the area, or is guarding the treasure, or otherwise adds a nasty complication. Chimeras can drive the story in other directions: an Aunt Jenny might be a rival villain, while man-apes imply Soviet involvement.
4. **DISASTER/WEATHER:** A great way to get rid of inconvenient excess gear, slow the heroes down, or keep them focused. This might be a blizzard, an avalanche, a hurricane, a shipwreck or plane crash, a monsoon, or anything else that can't be evaded but has to be dealt with.
5. **MONSTER:** What's life without a wandering monster or three? This can just be a simple combat to get everyone's blood flowing, or it can be tied in with the main story line by plot or theme. Killing a giant snake while hunting Dionin cultists, or battling the wendigo and a Spetsnaz team in the Canadian wilds, can juice the scenario all kinds of ways.
6. **MYSTERY:** Something in the adventure isn't what it looks like, and the heroes have to figure it out before they can go forward. A mystery can drop into any scenario; that said, most mystery scenarios are already mysterious enough without it.
7. **OFFICIAL OPPOSITION:** Whoever's in charge doesn't want the heroes to succeed. This is par for the course in adventures of infiltration or theft, of course; it's more interesting when the powers that be shouldn't care—or should support—the heroes' actions.
8. **RIVAL:** The heroes have a rival who wants the same thing they do, or wants to make sure that they don't get it. He can be the Hook at the beginning, show up in mid-story, or be the hidden villain behind it all along. He might be a "good guy" or a friendly rival, or he might be the "player on the other side" working for the Reds.
9. **SECRECY:** The heroes have to complete their mission in secret: No explosions, no calling in the cavalry, no big holes left in the treasury or the landscape. Maybe they have to hide from surveillance the whole time, or mount a distraction, or frame someone else.
10. **SOCIAL OPPOSITION:** The powers that be might be okay with it, but the locals don't like it. Maybe they're afraid, or deluded, or they worship the thing in the lake. Maybe they've got a secret of their own that they don't want the heroes to uncover while solving mysteries around them.
11. **TRAP:** The heroes stumble into a trap in the course of things: a monster lair, a bandit ambush, a band of slavers "recruiting" for the mines, a quicksand bog, or just a horribly dangerous ruin. Perhaps the trap is set by the villain, perhaps it just happens to be in the way.
12. **WAR:** War doesn't necessarily make robbing a bank any harder, but it sure doesn't make it easier. The same is true for most things heroes want to do. The war might be a Japanese attack, a gang war, a bandit raid, a rebel uprising, or a full-blown mercenary throw-down between St. Paul and Duluth.

• TWIST

And then, suddenly, came the twist in Act Three! Not all adventures need twists, and if they all have them anyway then the campaign is either a cynical spy game or desperately unrealistic. That said, throwing a curve every few pitches keeps everyone honest. Spit on the ball and select a fiendish twist from the list below.

1. **ALLY IN TROUBLE:** Either as a consequence of the heroes' actions, or as an unwelcome coincidence, a valued ally needs their help. Can they abandon the case to save their friend, or abandon their friend to save their plan? This can also be the "innocents in peril" twist, in which the heroes' action potentially endangers innocent bystanders. Do they risk it?
2. **COOPERATE WITH VILLAIN:** Something bigger than either—a runaway doomsday robot, a dragon attack, a dero invasion—forces the heroes and the villain to cooperate. Who backstabs whom first?
3. **DISCOVERY:** Resolving this adventure casts new light on something else. This discovery may change the heroes' relationship with an NPC, kick-start a new adventure, or force them into flight.
4. **DOUBLE CROSS:** Somebody (likely whoever set the Hook) double-crossed the heroes and left them to take the fall. This often sets up an immediate sequel scenario with Revenge as the Heroes' Goal.
5. **ESCALATION:** Settling one problem just opens the door to an even bigger problem. The monster has a mother off in the reservoir, the bandits were the only thing keeping the fascist Federales out of the valley, killing the Japanese general brings in reinforcements under a more competent admiral.
6. **FALSE FLAG:** The heroes were recruited under false pretenses. Their Patron didn't work for Rhodes University, but the South African Police; the girl wasn't actually the professor's daughter but his lover; the dragon (and its treasure) doesn't exist, but there was plenty of awfulness in the ruin just the same. This isn't quite the same as a Double Cross, but the heroes were lied to, and might well resent it.
7. **NATURAL HAZARD:** It was at just that moment that the volcano erupted! Something the heroes didn't count on and can't control shows up and wrecks things. This has a lot of similarities to the Disaster/Weather obstacle, but happens at the climax, not in the beginning or middle of the adventure.
8. **SHOCKING REVELATION:** "He's not dead after all!" "So *you* were the Yellow Mask all along!" "You mean the ONI is in contact with undersea monsters?" "The doom-wolf Garm still lurks in the upper atmosphere?" The answer to the mystery turns something important on its head; it's the Discovery twist on steroids.
9. **TICKING CLOCK:** Suddenly the adventure has a time limit. If the heroes don't steal the ruby tonight, it will be removed to the mayor's palace; if they don't stop the villain by sundown, he can escape on a Soviet sub; if they don't break up the cult before the new moon, the girl is snake-bait.
10. **TRAP:** The whole thing was a trap! Were they double-crossed, or was the villain expecting them, or both? A macro-trap like this often involves a lesser trap, like fighting giant scorpions in the arena, or escaping a flooding bank vault.
11. **UNEXPECTED ALLY:** The heroes have help from somewhere they didn't expect: the villain's beautiful mistress, the local tribes, an RRAF air strike. Sometimes this help comes with strings attached, or at least with the expectation of protection or paycheck.
12. **UNEXPECTED FOE:** The heroes have trouble from somewhere they didn't expect: their native guide, a hidden Serpent cult, an IJAF air strike. The villain might not have expected it, either, of course.

FATEFUL FOLLOWTHROUGHS

These example adventures come from the Adventure Generator lists, and they illustrate a lovely compromise between randomness and selection that I rather like as a method of recapturing proper pulp energy. To set up this shakedown for the Adventure Generator, I rolled a whole bunch of d12s ... well, I had the computer do it, which was easier and made less noise. Let's use the raw results to bake some adventures; one for each of the **Fateful Frameworks** in the previous section.

The Shadows Over Ponape

The first illustrative adventure fits into the "Pirate's Grand Tour" story arc (p. 104), a "Wolves Beyond the Border" style (p. 13) campaign. I rolled: 2, 6, 10, 8, 5, 4, 8, 1, 11, 2. The first Hook I get with the 2 is "Duty/Honor," which seems unlikely for a bunch of pirates. So I toss that and go with the 6, for a "MacGuffin." What's a better pirate MacGuffin than a treasure map? The Location is 10, "Villain's Lair," so we have a map to a Japanese admiral's cache of loot.

The Heroes' Goal would seem obvious (get treasure), so we skip ahead to Villain, which is also obvious (a Japanese admiral), but the 8 means he's a "Fanatic," and that's always fun. His Villain Goal is 5, "Kidnap," which might mean he planted the map to lure the heroes to his island lair. I rolled a 4 for his Henchmen, "Cultists" (I'm liking this Pacific island better and better...) and an 8 for his Victim, "Investigator." Sounds like the admiral meant to plant the map for someone else, and the heroes got in the way; this implies an opening scene with the investigator and the heroes fighting over the treasure map.

It doesn't sound like we need a Guest Star, so we'll skip that and look for Obstacles. We get a 1, "Accused." Does the investigator accuse the heroes of stealing his map? That sounds like it would slow down the story; the next one is an 11, "Trap," which sounds more like it. Of course a Pacific island controlled by a fanatical Japanese admiral, stocked with Ryujin cultists, would be full of death traps. If we need a Twist, we have 2, "Cooperate With Villain," so maybe some horrible tentacled monstrosity rises up at the climax, and the heroes need to convince the Japanese Navy to bombard it, hopefully while they escape with the treasure and the investigator on their own fast boat to somewhere else.

You Can Always Tell Blood

Now, let's do a sample adventure for the "Yesterday Was Quite Enough" story arc (p. 107), a "Servants of the Crown" style (p. 14) campaign. I rolled: 4, 8, 3, 8, 6, 7, 10, 7, 12, 3, 7, 3, 12. The Hook is 4, "Innocent Beginning," which we can fill in once we get some sense of the rest of the adventure. The Location is an 8, a "Settlement/Outpost," let's say somewhere on the Afghan frontier.

The Heroes' Goal is a 3, "Discover/Solve Mystery," which seems straightforward enough. The Villain is, let's see ... we got an 8, and then a 6, which gives us a "Fanatic" or a "Cultist," but we just used those in the last example. So the next one is a 7, or a "Despot." What does he want? The Villain's Goal is 10, "Survive." This is interesting: how does a British fort threaten the life of a despot? Is the despot under the gun, maybe from the Russians? Maybe the despot is a vampire, and the fort sits on his ancestral burying ground. The first idea sounds more like a spy story, so we'll go with it. The villain's Henchman is a 7, a "Mob." The populace of his benighted principality, most likely, who turn their delightful local folkways (and sharp Afghan knives) against the heroes. The Victim is a 12, a "Relative." It might be more interesting if the commander of the fort was (unbeknownst to him?) related to the despot; maybe he'd even make a claimant to the throne, if the relationship were discovered. The Russians have turned up proof of the relationship, and are urging the despot to act.

Cue the Guest Star, 3, an "Expert/Scholar," doubtless of the local genealogy. Does the despot's attempted assassination of the genealogist – perhaps at an innocent royal reception in Kashmir – trigger the heroes' involvement? (What does the genealogist want, what's her Guest Star's Goal? Comparing the 7 "Reward" from the Heroes' Goal list with the 3 "Discover" from the Villain's Goal

options gives us a genealogist who either wants to find the truth ... or wants to blackmail the despot with it. Hmmm.) The Obstacle is a 3, "Chimera," which sounds like there's a fight with a troop of Soviet man-apes in the works, probably once the heroes get onto the track of the despot. And the 12 on the Twist, "Unexpected Foe," sounds like the genealogist turning on the heroes once they blow her blackmail scheme. Excelsior!

Snakes and Leaders

Our third sample scenario is for "Our Own Private Iowa" (p. 109), a "Phoenix and the Sword" type (p. 15) campaign. I rolled: 9, 1, 4, 6, 5, 3, 3, 6, 10, 7. The Hook is 9, an "Old Enemy." Let's say it's one of the political bosses of Cedar Rapids, just to start with. The Location is 1, "City," so maybe the adventure happens in Cedar Rapids. (Picking my city location at random from the box on p. 105, I got "Church.") A 4 on the Heroes' Goal is "Escape/Rescue." Are they trapped in Cedar Rapids? Or does their old enemy the boss want the heroes to rescue someone? Or did the boss kidnap someone the heroes have to rescue? All good story possibilities; let's see.

Our Villain is 6, a "Cultist," and since we've got a Church location, we'll let it ride. The Villain's Goal is 5, "Kidnap," which works well enough with the Escape/Rescue heroes' goal to keep around. For Henchmen we get a doozy, 3, a "Corrupted Hero." This sounds like a former ally in Davenport who has fallen for the Serpent cult. The Victims are 3, "Decent Folk," which fits well enough, too. For Guest Star, we get a 6, a "Love Interest." Did she get kidnapped? Let's leave her goal out of it, as it's probably to rescue the heroes or get rescued by them. The Obstacle is "10," Social Opposition – the boss (or the Cult, or both) have grass-roots support in Cedar Rapids. The Twist is 7, a "Natural Hazard," which is probably a fire given the setting.

Putting it all together: The heroes track the disappearance of their ally and girlfriend to Cedar Rapids, where their old enemy the boss seems tied up in things. But (after suitable persuasion, which alienates the townsfolk) he claims he's as confused as they are. Do they trust him? They have to find the girl, and root out the Serpent Cultist, and suffer the shock of finding their old friend on the Serpent's side. It can only end in fire...

The Corpses Have Begun To Sprout

Our final example adventure is for the "Istanbul Not Constantinople" series (p. 112), a "City of the Emerald Night" type (p. 16) campaign. I rolled: 1, 11, 9, 10, 5, 7, 3, 9, 7, 11. The Hook is 1, "Caught Up in Events," which sounds promising. We know the main location is the city, so we'll pick something good from the City Location box—how about Sewers or maybe Subways? A quick consult with Wikipedia tells us that Istanbul didn't have a subway in 1945, so it must be an old Byzantine-era sewer tunnel, lost centuries ago during some long-forgotten spate of urban renewal.

The Heroes' Goal is 11, "Survive," which sounds about right if they're merely caught up in events. Who's down in that forgotten sewer? A 9, a "Mastermind." This is great stuff! His rolled goal is 10, "Survive," which definitely makes him a vampire. Perhaps he's Dracula himself, killed by the Turks in 1476 and buried down here where the waters of the Bosphorus would keep him at bay forever – until the Serpentfall shifted the sea levels. With the help of his Henchman, a 5 or "Femme Fatale," he is rebuilding his army of the night ... just when the heroes stumbled into things. His key Victim is, unsurprisingly, an "Innocent" (from the 7), and there's a Guest Star who is another 3, an "Expert/Scholar," but what's Dracula without a Van Helcinglu?

To make it interesting, let's apply that 9 to the Villain's Goal list and decide that Helcinglu's goal is not to destroy Dracula but to "Subvert/Recruit" Dracula to the side of the Turkish resistance to the Communists! Quite a tall order, you might think. Do the heroes help Helcinglu, or do their best to kill Dracula and his bride? If they oppose Helcinglu, they may meet 7, "Official Opposition" from the Turkish resistance commanders; if they need one, they might find an 11, an "Unexpected Ally," even deeper in the sewer: a reanimated Byzantine knight, perhaps?



Serpentfall Revisited

It had been such a near thing. Their plan was perfect. They had the best plane in the world, the best pilot, and the Trinity Device, the most fearsome weapon science could conceive. Mack Silver could fly circles around anything—this mission was a waste of his considerable talents, in fact. All they had to do was find the Serpent’s head, slam Lucy into its face, eject, and hit the detonator as Jet rocketed them all to safety with his jet pack. Simple.

Lightning struck the plane just as the Serpent’s head came into view over the Arctic Ocean, then struck twice more. Lightning. Not some crazy monster from myth or deranged Nazi cultist. Just a random, freak occurrence, as though Nature herself were on the monster’s side.

They fell. Jet could have saved them all, but Mack knew their only chance was to protect the device. As Jet and Sally evacuated, Mack brought Lucy down belly up to keep Trinity from detonating, joining his beloved plane in the embrace of death, that defiant grin locked on his face all the way down.

Sally took it better than Jet thought she would, just surveyed the crash in deep silence, and then, as she always did when things got tough, went straight to work.

Some hours later, everything was ready. Jet Black tested the makeshift harness latching him to Trinity. Sally’s work was as raw-looking as it was sturdy, and he knew that it would hold as long as he could keep his jet pack at maximum thrust. He looked over the ridge at the remains of Lucy, now a twisted pile of beams and scrap coughing up black smoke to join the darkness in the sky, like a shrouded angel on its way home.

This was going to hurt him, and he tried to prepare himself for the pain. The human frame just isn’t built to carry the weight of a nuclear explosive, and while the harness would help some, any sudden maneuvers would subject his body to bone-shattering stress, probably put him in a wheelchair for life even if he survived.

It was all right, though. The remote detonator had also gone down with Lucy, so they had no illusions that he’d be coming back.

Sally approached him, a radio in hand. “HQ says the snake’s over Oslo now, moving southeast at 80 knots, about 20,000 feet up.” She broke eye contact, fiddled absently with the radio dials. “It’s now or never.”

He stared, trying to think of the right thing to say. Neither of them had ever been good at this, despite decades of close friendship and shared adventures too numerous to mention. But then it came to him, simple and pure, something he’d been longing to say for most of his life, and the only thing that really mattered.

“I love you, Sally Slick. I always have.”

She looked back at him again, eyes bright with the onset of tears. “I know. I’ve always known.”

Jet Black hit the ignition and took to the air, to save the world one last time.

The Shadows Ascendant

In this timeline, Jet's final sacrifice lays the Serpent low, but with the same consequences: the world is forever changed and scarred, and the conflict between the spirits and shadows of the century are changed with it.

The initial fallout from Serpentfall taxed the Century Club like nothing in its history. A majority of the club's chapterhouses were drowned, crushed, or irradiated out of existence, along with the Centurions and other personnel who inhabited them. Their main headquarters in Washington D.C. is gone, swallowed in the tidal wave that created the Drowned Coast. The chapterhouses that remain operate with a skeletal staff, focused more on self-preservation than heroism, many without even a single Centurion.

As mutated monsters crawled out of the depths of the earth and societies fell apart, the bulk of the remaining Centurions found themselves spread too thin to contain the entropy that seemed destined to overtake the world. Even worse, the coming of the Serpent seemed to herald another danger—the diminishing of the Centurions' spirits, as though they had all been cursed by some terrible fate. Reports of things going wrong plagued every mission, every encounter. Ammo would run out at the worst time. Gadgets would go on the fritz. Monsters would find them in their sleep. Their strength would simply fail them. As a result, most of this century's Centurions are either dead or have given up the fight, turtling up in obscure corners of the earth and praying for dawn.

The Shadows, on the other hand, were handed the world on a plate. Though they also suffered losses in the wake of the Serpent's death, they took to the chaos and discord with much more ease, carving new empires out for themselves and continuing their schemes unabated. The only thing that slows them down is a lack of a common enemy—now, they fight among themselves more than ever, heedless of whatever innocents get caught in their wake.

NOTABLE REMNANTS

Here's a snapshot of movers and shakers in this update to the **SotC** universe.

• SALLY SLICK AND THE MONKEYWRENCH BRIGADE

Sally Slick survived Ragnarok, but lost everything and everyone she held dear. She made her way to the Chicago chapterhouse, did what she could to restore it to full function and rally the remaining forces behind her, but it was ultimately to no avail. There just weren't enough Centurions left to mobilize, and the other members who remained were busy hoarding up all the technology and secrets they could gather, waiting for a brighter day.

Sally Slick, Spirit of Survival

Aspects: INVENTOR WITHOUT PEER; SURVIVOR'S GUILT; SEEN TOO MUCH; I WILL NEVER LOVE AGAIN; THE SHORTEST PATH TO VICTORY; MONKEYWRENCH; FEARLESS TO A FAULT

Notable Skills: Fantastic (+6) Crafts; Superb (+5) Fight and Scrounge; Great (+4) Athletics, Physique, and Drive; Good (+3) Science, Will, Survival, and Investigate; Fair (+2) Contacts, Notice, Pilot, Provoke, and Shoot

Notable Stunts: *Monkeywrench* (+2 to Fight when outnumbered and using the wrench); *Superscience Prodigy* (Can use Crafts in place of Science for any ophi-tech or "weird science" applications, like understanding mutant biologies); **4 slots of expendable gear**

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□

PHYSICAL STRESS: □□□□



For a while, she surrendered to that impulse as well, but the nightmares remained with her. Mack's body crushed beneath the weight of his plane. That final glance at Jet before the Trinity detonation melted his flesh and turned his bones to dust. The world burning and drowning.

Then she decided she would have no more of this, packed her wrench and toolkit, and wandered into the Poisoned Lands alone, to do whatever good she could before meeting a glorious and welcome end.

But she has survived, time and again. She has become a legend among those stubborn enough to live in the Poisoned Lands, appearing out of the mist just when people seem to need her the most, beating back mutated terrors, bandits, and the ravages of the wilderness. They fear her as much as they admire her, and describe her as equal parts savage and savior. She kills without hesitation, speaks to no one, does what is needed, and moves along.

Some people have taken up her example and formed into squads who patrol the wastes and help out whoever they find, calling themselves the Monkeywrench Brigade. Sally doesn't endorse or acknowledge them, and sometimes tries to discourage them, but she inspires them regardless.

• DOCTOR METHUSELAH, SECRET MASTER OF OPHI-TECH

Of all the Shadows, Doctor Methuselah was the most prepared for what was to come. His mastery of magic allowed him to chart the path of several possible futures, and in this one, he saw the potential to advance his technological might beyond anything the world had yet seen and open one of the final barriers to the Eternity Equation. He just needed one piece to fall into place: the awakening of the Serpent itself.

He did not know that the rituals he leaked to the Nazis would trigger the apocalypse, instead hoping that he would be able to make contact with Jörmungandr and enter into a pact with it, but all in all, things could have gone worse. As the world went to hell, the Centurions watched for Methuselah's big play, certain he would use the chaos to assert world dominance once and for all.

He did no such thing. Instead, he waited. When the Century Club was no longer a threat, he set out on the next phase of his plan.

He applied to teach at Rhodes University as a professor, under the alias of Ian Merrick. Within six months, he was the head of ophiurgical research, and he has remained there ever since, quietly pushing the forefront of ophi-tech research further and further. He now leaks new examples of ophi-tech at his own pace, pushing his "colleagues" to new discoveries at a pace that suits his master schedule, quietly gathering a repository of terrible weapons, mutations, and plagues to unleash upon the world.

The Crown considers him a hero and a national treasure, the next best hope for civilization.

They could not be more wrong.

Doctor Methuselah

Doctor Methuselah is more of a plot device than an actual character, someone to get around rather than to confront directly. He has access to every skill in the game, anywhere between Superb (+5) and Legendary (+8).

He is the master of the Ten Equations, mathematical constructs that express the fundamentals of reality. As a result, he can pretty much cheat his way out of any conflict—instant teleportation, psychic powers, "disproving" objects out of existence, and so on... basically, anything you can think of. GMs, if desired, can look at this as a METHUSELAH CHEATS situation aspect that's present every time he shows up, which you can use to compel the PCs and let him get away with all kinds of unfair stuff.

At best, you should treat attempts to deal with Methuselah as overcome actions, challenges, or contests, because he's pretty much impossible to harm directly. Success means you manage to stop whatever he's trying to accomplish at the moment, forcing him to concede the field until the next confrontation.



Rocket Red, Spirit of Redemption

Aspects: ACE ROCKETEER; THE COUNTRY I LOVE HATES ME; SEX APPEAL; ALIASES TO SPARE; IT TAKES A THIEF; THE TRUTH HURTS; EVEN MY REGRETS HAVE REGRETS

Notable Skills: Fantastic (+6) Pilot; Superb (+5) Deceive and Stealth; Great (+4) Athletics, Burglary, and Will; Good (+3) Fight, Shoot, Notice, and Physique; Fair (+2) Contacts, Crafts, Empathy, Provoke, and Science

Notable Stunts: The Red Rocket (3 stunts; see Jet Pack, p. 41); Fusilier (+2 to Shoot when using vehicle scale weaponry); Bump and Grab (+2 to Burglary when pickpocketing); Resistance Allies (+2 to Contacts when in Eastern Europe); 1 slot of expendable gear

MENTAL STRESS: □□□□ **PHYSICAL STRESS:** □□□□



• ROCKET RED, RUSSIAN VANGUARD

During the Great War and then the Great Patriotic War, Rocket Red had been a constant in Soviet military efforts, clashing over and over again with her longtime archenemy, Jet Black. As she learned more of Stalin's excesses and mismanagement, saw disease and starvation wither away the Ukraine, her confidence in his leadership started to wane. The German betrayal of 1941 offered her little time to ponder her growing doubts, and she returned to the front to help beat back the Nazis, hoping that their expulsion would allow Russia to turn its energies inward and rebuild.

Then the Serpent came and fell, and she watched as the Premier sank deeper and deeper into madness. The purges. The Science Cities, where people touched by the Serpent's blood lived as rats in a cage and were left to eat each other. Whole races of people simply wiped off the earth.

Finally, while on assignment to oversee an NKVD operation in Estonia, she made her choice. The squad was supposed to re-establish contact with a manufacturing plant they feared had been overrun by mutated monsters, but instead found only a small village of survivors who had banded together and taken shelter within.

As the Soviet agents raised their guns, she struck, wiping them out to the last man.

Since then, she has become Public Enemy #1 across all Soviet territories, now spending most of her time either in disguise or on the run, building a growing resistance against Stalin's rule. To further her efforts, she secretly courts the favor of the British and other Allied remnants. The jet pack (now modified to run on ophiline) doesn't come out much these days, but she looks forward to the day when she can fly again, in the name of a Mother Russia she can once again be proud of.

EXAMPLE CAMPAIGNS

Here are a few suggestions for how to adapt your *Spirit of the Century* game to this setting.

Twilight of the Centurions

If you've been playing *Spirit of the Century* a while, you have your own Spirit Centurions that are as iconic to your game as Sally Slick, Jet Black, and Mack Silver were to the original book.

The events of Serpentfall irrevocably changed the lives of these icons, and if you want to explore a new direction with your beloved characters, we enthusiastically encourage you to do so. What happened to your Centurions during Ragnarok and after? Did they witness the death of loved ones? Did they finally resolve an issue they'd been struggling with, like Jet did in our story above?

Convert or Start Over?

We recommend that you go through the character creation process again when you bring your old Centurions into the game, with your old sheet handy so you can reference it when you do the phases describing what happened during and after Ragnarok. Use this as an opportunity to remake whatever you want about your character, rearrange their skills, choose new aspects, and so on.

Of course, if there are pieces/parts of your character you want to save, you should be able to do that with little trouble. Here's the basic stuff you need to know.

ASPECTS

The list goes down to seven aspects now, and two of them are your high concept and trouble (see **Fate Core**, p. 32 and 34). If you can't settle on which of the other three you want to get rid of, consider using your extra aspects as "swappable" character aspects, switching them out when the scenarios focus on a different part of your character's persona.

SKILLS

There are some changes to the skill list. Academics and Mysteries are now condensed into Lore, Fists and Weapons are now condensed into Fight, Sleight of Hand is now condensed into Burglary, Engineering is now Crafts, Might and Endurance are now Physique, Intimidation is now Provoke and has a wider scope, Leadership is split across all the social skills, and Resolve is now Will.

Generally speaking, it doesn't matter which skill list you use, but you might have to reframe some of the skills to fit **Fate Core's** four actions (see **Fate Core**, p. 134).

STRESS TRACKS

Start them with three boxes per track. The upgrades from skills otherwise work as in **Fate Core**.

STUNTS AND REFRESH

Centurions get five refresh, three slots for extras, and three free stunt slots. Between the extras and the free stunts, all your SotC stunts should fit with no problem.

A STRANGE ALCHEMY

The conversion part is more art than science. Most of your stunts should transfer over with little issue, but you may have to remake some of them using **Fate Core's** stunt guidelines (see **Fate Core**, p. 88). We recommend you rebuild your stunts from scratch, so you have the chance to add ophi-tech or other options from the Extras list.

This gives Centurion characters a little bit of an edge compared to standard DAR characters. GMs, take that into account when you're throwing monsters at them.

Did they lose faith in the Century Club or change sides? Are they Shadows now or teetering on the edge? Has the world forgotten them or are they still heroes of note?

- **Current Issue:** THE CENTURY CLUB IN DECLINE. Of course, one of the central themes of this campaign is that the organization your characters have relied on for years is no more. The evidence of this decline should manifest everywhere, in the form of petty and not-so-petty evils that are able to thrive because few, if any, Centurions have been around to stop them. The NPC Centurions of this age should also reflect a general conservatism and lethargy, the poster children for lost hope.
- **Impending Issue:** THE SHADOW RISES. In some ways, the Serpentfall was just the beginning of the world's problems. Something big is going to happen soon, whether it's Methuselah finally showing his hand, or the conquest of Gorilla Khan and his Serpent-blooded ape men, or Der Blitzmann rising from the corpse of sunken Germany with an army of ophi-droids. The world needs the Centurions more than ever, but the Club is in tatters. Can your heroes become the leaders of a new, revived Century Club before the world burns once more?

In Name Alone

Sometimes, an idea is more powerful than a fact. The Centurions are gone or in hiding, but that doesn't mean their name has to die. Another option is to play the people trying to fight the good fight in the Century Club's name, new characters who are trying to keep their tradition of service alive. They may not be as great as the Centurions of old, or even Centurions at all, but in this new age, they may be humanity's best hope.

You might even decide that these new characters decide to take on the identities of dead or retired Centurions. This happens in comic books all the time—who's to say that there can't be a new Grey Ghost or Mack Silver?

To emphasize the difference between these new characters and the old Centurions, you may want to consider allowing only the default character build in **Fate Core** (Great (+4) skill pyramid and three stunts/refresh with no extras), and allow them to grow into their roles as Centurions over time.

- **CURRENT ISSUE: EVIL HAS WON.** This campaign should really emphasize how dire things are and how much work there is to do. Set up the Shadows or other villainous characters in positions of incredible power and prestige. Have your average NPC just take it as a given that the world is going to be messed up from here on out, and act on their baser natures. Any time the PCs rest, it's an invitation for evil to flourish.
- **IMPENDING ISSUE: BIG SHOES TO FILL.** The Century Club was an international organization able to nimbly manage crisis and conflict across the globe. As the PCs' exploits bring them more and more renown, the attention of the world will be on them. If they fail, it will sully the Club's reputation, not just their own. What will the world demand of them? Do they even want the Century Club back? How will the Shadows respond to this new set of heroes?

Rise of the Millennials

In Russia, the Jotun have emerged from the ice.

Perhaps they are not alone.

Some evidence suggests the Century Club is older than anyone realizes, or at least that the battle between Shadow and Spirit Centurions has been going on longer than anyone remembers. Doctor Methuselah is the only prominent example of a Millennial we have, but there may be others: figures of legend and myth that come from an earlier time, who have been sleeping away the long years, now suddenly awakened and thrust into the world by the great catastrophe of Ragnarok.

Your characters could be those figures, newly introduced to a world that has all but forgotten them, teetering on the brink of destruction.

You should consider allowing supernatural powers without restriction in this kind of game, perhaps importing one of the options in the **Fate System Toolkit**, coming in late 2013.

- **CURRENT ISSUE: EVERYTHING IS STRANGE.** The world is very different from the world you knew. Whole cultures have risen and fallen, languages have changed, technology is alien, and even your most basic assumptions could be wrong. Mortals no longer revere and fear you. You should get as much mileage as you can from "fish out of water" antics—what does Thor do in the middle of Chicago on a Saturday night?
- **IMPENDING ISSUE: ANCIENT EVIL RETURNS.** Along with the PCs, some other nightmarish creatures are returning from the past to spread their long-delayed havoc. This could be the Jotun as described in this book, but it could also be other mythic entities that parallel whoever the PCs are. If they are all playing Greek gods, bring the Titans back. If they're all Arthurian knights, bring back Mordred and Morgana, and the terrible sorcerous armies they can bring to bear. Can you prepare the world for a confrontation of mythic proportions? Do people accept this conflict, or work to banish all of you back to wherever you came from?

- Appendix: Poisoned Lands Encounters -

Yes, yes, we know. **Fate** doesn't do random encounters. Every encounter is a beautifully polished gem, part of a carefully crafted story. Unless the GM is in a hurry, or had a bad day. Then, it's ... well, kind of random. In the Poisoned Lands, everybody has had a bad day for the last three years. Giant snakes boil out of the well; the postman declares himself king; the Kiwanis Club becomes a militia. Everybody's story is ... well, kind of random.

If you are the bold, daring sort willing to spin the wheel or (dare we say) roll the dice on adventure, here's some random encounters for your Poisoned Land adventures. You can make them as random or as deliberate as you'd like, of course: the players don't need to know all your secrets.

Each day the heroes spend traveling in the Poisoned Lands (as opposed to adventuring inside a city), roll 3dF (3 **Fate** dice). If you rolled a +2 or a -2 *exactly*, roll on the **Main Encounter** table and then on the indicated secondary table or tables, to see just what trouble the heroes wander into. If you roll a +3, it's a really exciting day: roll twice on the **Main Encounter** table and combine the results.

These tables can also inform encounters in the west slope of the Rockies, or in the wilder stretches of Texas jurisdiction: New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana, etc.

| Main Encounter | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 4DF | ENCOUNTER TYPE |
| -5 to -3 | Hazard |
| -2 or -1 | Monster |
| 0 | Animal |
| +1 or +2 | People |
| +3 or +4 | Event |

Modify the roll on the **Main Encounter** table by -1 for the Drowned Coast or the High Plains. Roll on the corresponding table for the specifics of a given adventure.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The number in parentheses is the maximum number of animals likely to be randomly encountered. Roll 2dF; the higher the result, the larger the number of animals encountered. Animals with an asterisk are social creatures; they are unlikely to be alone. Animals with no number listed are solitary; they are unlikely to be encountered in groups.

If you would like, roll 2dF again. On a +2 result, the encounter is with an animal with the OF UNUSUAL SIZE aspect (see **That's a Big 'Un!**, p. 90).

Modify the roll on the **Animal Encounter** table by -1 for the Drowned Coast and +1 for the High Plains.

- BISON:** When rolling for bison numbers, on a +2 (+2 or +1 in the High Plains), the result is a large herd of bison, more akin to a hazard than an animal encounter. That said, assuming the heroes' jeep doesn't get trampled, a herd of bison means 400 lbs. of fresh meat is as close as the nearest .30-06.

| Animal Encounter | |
|------------------|---|
| 2DF | ANIMAL ENCOUNTERED |
| -3 | Sharks (4) |
| -2 | Alligators (6) |
| -1 | Dogs, Feral* (24) |
| 0 | Wolves* (18) |
| +1 | Bison* (24 or hundreds) |
| +2 | Bear (4) or Lion (2) (GM's choice or roll 1dF; on 3+, Lion) |
| +3 | Wolverine |

- **LION:** Might be escaped circus or zoo lions or mountain lions, depending on the exact location of the encounter.
- **WOLVERINE:** Once a dweller in subarctic forests and high mountain slopes, after the Serpentfall, the range of this ferocious creature has extended considerably southward.
- **WOLVES:** Have a higher chance of being WOLVES OF UNUSUAL SIZE (or “dire wolves,” to use the fantastic vernacular); on a 2dF roll, a result of +1 or +2 indicates up to 8 dire wolves.

EVENT ENCOUNTERS

Roll 4dF on the main **Events** table and then continue to the relevant sub-table below. Modify the roll by -1 for the Mayoralties, and +1 for the Drowned Coast. Re-roll a result of “Battle” in the High Plains; if it comes up twice, it must be a battle!

Events

| 4dF | EVENT ENCOUNTERED |
|----------|-------------------|
| -5 to -3 | Crash Site |
| -2 | Battle |
| -1 or 0 | Ambush |
| +1 or +2 | Ruin |
| +3 to +5 | Cave |

• AMBUSH

First, make a 2dF roll for the timing of the ambush. If the ambush is not of the heroes, roll on the **People** table to find the ambush target/victim. Then roll 3dF for the ambushers. The ambushers will outnumber or outgun (or both) their targets, unless the ambush is actually a disguised assassination, or is driven by desperation or religious mania. In the first case, there may well be an “inside man” in the target’s guardsmen or caravan.

- **BANDITS:** For any result of “Bandits” in these tables, roll 1dF. On a **+**, use the Veteran Bandit statistics. On the Drowned Coast, bandits are likely (0 or better on 2dF) to be pirates.
- **CULTISTS:** A Cult Leader accompanies the cultists on a result of **+** on 1dF.
- **SLAVERS:** Slave traders, either admitted (usually part of the New Konfederacy) or sub rosa (“indenture-dealers,” “vagrant-takers,” “POW handlers”). Slaves are usually destined for field work or coal mining. Use Bandit statistics, and add one or two dozen slaves in a coffle. You can roll on the **People** table to see if anyone interesting is chained up and anonymous.

Ambush Timing

| 2dF | AMBUSH TIMING |
|----------|------------------|
| -2 or -1 | In progress |
| 0 | Grisly aftermath |
| +1 or +2 | Of the heroes! |

Ambushers

| 3dF | AMBUSHERS |
|---------|-----------|
| -3 | Cultists |
| -2 | Ghouls |
| -1 or 0 | Bandits |
| +1 | Militia |
| +2 | Slavers |
| +3 | Soldiers |

• BATTLE

Roll twice on the **Random Allegiance** table to decide who's fighting, unless the geographical location of the encounter or some ingredient of the campaign already provides that information.

Make three 3dF rolls, one for the timing of the battle, and one "force roll" for each of the two sides. For the timing, roll on the **Battle Timing** table.

The higher of the two force rolls will win the battle—unless the heroes can intervene decisively, of course! If you care to, you can explain, interpolate, or "reverse-engineer" the force roll based on any number of criteria: position, unit quality, numerical size, equipment, and special factors. Any of these can become situation aspects, if you'd like. If you have a really good idea of the two forces ahead of time, you can even calculate, in a rough guesstimated way, the force roll values of the two sides without rolling!

- **POSITION:** As a general rule of thumb, unless the defending troops are green or their commander is inept, the defending side gets a +1 modifier. Add another +1 (or more!) for fortifications, hilltops, and other salient features. These also make great situation aspects during the battle.
- **UNIT QUALITY:** You can simply translate the result on the 3dF roll directly to unit quality if you wish. From high to low: Elite Soldiers, Soldiers, Militia, Veteran Bandits, and Bandits (see pp. 85-88 for their stats).

| Battle Timing | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| 3dF | HOW GOES THE BATTLE? |
| -3 or -2 | Readying of forces |
| -1 | Opening clash |
| 0 | Hangs in the balance |
| +1 | One more and they run, boys! |
| +2 or +3 | Grisly aftermath |

| Unit Quality | |
|----------------|--|
| FORCE MODIFIER | UNIT QUALITY |
| +3 | Elite Soldiers |
| +2 | Soldiers |
| +1 | Militia defending their homes |
| 0 | Veteran bandits, or militia raiding someone else's homes |
| -1 | Bandits |

Forces might be mixed: a small cadre of elite soldiers as mercenaries stiffening a town militia against a gang of predatory veteran bandits, for example. (If militia have an average quality of 0, adding a cadre of elites might kick the force up to +1 or +2, for example.)

- **NUMERICAL SIZE:** Remember, quantity has a quality all its own, as the Red Army likes to say. By and large, each three times the larger side outnumbered the smaller adds +1 to the force total. If there are 100 bandits versus 10 elite soldiers, that's ten times as many, for a +3 modifier. A huge army of bandits might be able to swamp a small squad of elite soldiers! Even a "huge army" after the Serpentfall isn't so huge: all but the most epic battles and sieges in the Poisoned Lands are fought on a medieval scale of hundreds (or scores) of warriors on each side. Mercenary "companies" are most likely understrength (complement of 100-150 soldiers), or even platoons of 30-60 men. DaCova's Eagles (p. 67) boasts 1,000 fighters—enough to change the balance of power almost anywhere in the Poisoned Lands. Remember, Chicago's entire army is only 12,000 men!
- **EQUIPMENT:** Heavy equipment can help win battles, but it depends on transport. Transport quality and quantity break down as follows:

Equipment

| FORCE MODIFIER | EQUIPMENT |
|----------------|--|
| +2 | Sufficient heavy weapons; sufficient motor vehicles |
| +1 | One battery of heavy weapons; one squadron of motor vehicles; sufficient horses, mules, wagons |
| +0 | One or two heavy weapons; barely sufficient horses, mules, wagons |
| -1 | No heavy weapons; insufficient transport |
| -2 | No transport or heavy gear to speak of at all |

A “heavy weapon” is a machine gun, a mortar, a rocket launcher, a light artillery piece, or (rarely) an AFV. Officers and bandit chiefs may be mounted even in all-foot units.

This breakdown refers to ground or (in, say, Great Lakes gunboat battles) water transport and military equipment. No combatant in the Poisoned Lands has a heavier-than-air combat arm; or if they do, the battle is over before it begins. If combatants who both have air forces (Chicago and Toronto, say) go to war, their air forces cancel each other out—unless the heroes can turn the tide, of course!

- **SPECIAL FACTORS:** A really low result on the force roll likely means that one side labors under some serious disadvantage in the battle. The most likely answer is treason: a mercenary captain or ambitious alderman has taken a bribe or just decided against committing his valuable assets to the fight. Other possible explanations for a walkover include typhus, forced-march fatigue, starvation, supernatural influence, or Serpent-taint ergotism. Any or all of these factors make terrific aspects, and some of them may be susceptible to alteration by the heroes.

• CAVE

Depending on the location, this might be a genuine stalactite-and-stalagmite cavern, a box canyon or creek bed with a rocky overhang, an abandoned mine or quarry, or a derelict sewer or subway tunnel. Roll 2dF to see what lurks therein.

- **WEIRDNESS:** This might be anything: a mad scientist’s laboratory, a sleeping Jotun, a Serpent cult fane, a hidden Army payroll, a Dero patrol. Think about what your game has been missing. That’s what’s in the cave.

What’s in the Cave?

| 2dF | WHAT’S IN THE CAVE? |
|-----|---|
| -2 | Bandit hideout including a cleverly hidden guard force of bandits |
| -1 | Wolves* (12) |
| 0 | Monster |
| +1 | Bear or Lion (choose based on geography) |
| +2 | Weirdness |

• CRASH SITE

For a crash site, roll 2dF to see what crashed, and 3dF to see what’s left. For details about the driver or passengers, roll on the People table or the **Random Allegiance** table.

Some of these results can stand a little more resolution:

- **-2:** Roll 2dF to determine who’s looting the vehicle: -2, Militia; -1 or 0, Bandits; +1, Soldiers; +2, roll on People table.

What Crashed?

| 2dF | WHAT CRASHED? |
|-----|--|
| -2 | Aircraft or motorized watercraft (if on shore) |
| -1 | Truck or sailcraft (if on shore) |
| 0 | Automobile |
| +1 | Jeep |
| +2 | Train or AFV (depending on terrain, etc.) |

- 0 OR HIGHER:** roll 2dF again if you'd like. On a +1, there's a nest of snakes, or a giant snake, or just a RATTLER OF UNUSUAL SIZE in the crashed vehicle. On a +2 there's another monster, as determined by the **Monster** table for the region.

| What's Left? | |
|--------------|---|
| 3dF | WHAT'S LEFT? |
| -3 | Crash recent; non-fatal to vehicle or driver or passengers or all three |
| -2 | Being looted, er, salvaged right now (see text) |
| -1 | Vehicle wrecked but survivors remain, possibly badly injured |
| 0 | Mere wreckage |
| +1 | Documents or maps, ideally leading to the next adventure |
| +2 | Treasure or valuable gear |
| +3 | Vehicle salvageable with a Crafts roll that succeeds with style |

• RUIIN

After rolling twice to determine the ruin's nature and age, roll on the **Monster** or **People** table to populate the ruin. Or roll 2dF on the **Crash** section's **What's Left** sub-table to find out what's inside.

| When Was It Ruined? | |
|---------------------|--|
| 2dF | WHEN WAS IT RUINED? |
| -2 | This year (1948) |
| -1 | Last year (1947) |
| 0 to +1 | Serpentfall or immediately after (1945-1946) |
| +2 | Pre-Serpentfall |

| What Was it Before? | |
|---------------------|---|
| 3dF | WHAT WAS IT BEFORE? |
| -3 | Cemetery |
| -2 | Church |
| -1 | Large Building (factory, prison, refinery, skyscraper, lighthouse, hotel, etc.) |
| 0 | Farmhouse |
| +1 | Small Building (bungalow, cabin, apartment building, shop, gas station, etc.) |
| +2 | Large House or Mansion |
| +3 | Small Town |

HAZARD ENCOUNTERS

If a Hazard encounter by itself seems less dramatic to you, roll on the **People** table for someone for the heroes to help or fight in the middle of it!

Modify the roll on the **Hazards** table by -1 for the High Plains and +1 for the Drowned Coast. Apply the same modifiers to the 2dF roll under the Storm result.

| Hazards | |
|----------|---|
| 3dF | HAZARD ENCOUNTERED |
| -4 or -3 | Avalanche/Landslide |
| -2 | Tornado |
| -1 | Fire |
| 0 | Storm. Roll 2dF for type: -3 or -2 Dust, -1 Blizzard, 0 Sleet/Ice/Hail, +1 or more Downpour |
| +1 | Flood |
| +2 | Fog |
| +3 | Bog/Swamp (mud in the High Plains) |
| +4 | Hurricane |

MONSTER ENCOUNTERS

The Poisoned Lands have too many monsters for just one table to contain! Roll on the sub-table corresponding to the geographical location of the encounter. Some results similarly depend on the geographic location of the encounter. As always, apply them with your dramatic and logical judgment engaged. The number in parentheses is the maximum number of monsters likely to be randomly encountered. Roll 2dF; the higher the result, the larger the number encountered. Monsters with an asterisk are social creatures; they are unlikely to be alone. Those with no number listed are solitary; they are unlikely to be encountered in groups.

• DROWNED COAST

If you'd like, you can also use this table as a very broad shorthand for Ras al-Thuban, Ireland, the Caribbean coasts, and coastal marshes and flood zones the world over. Make changes as needed: Giant Alligators become Giant Crocodiles in Ras-al-Thuban, for example.

Drowned Coast Monster Encounters

| 4dF | MONSTERS ENCOUNTERED |
|-----|--|
| -4 | Devil-Flower |
| -3 | Kraken or Nagas (4) (shore/estuary or inland) |
| -2 | Swamp Devil |
| -1 | Giant Snake |
| 0 | Ghouls* (18) |
| +1 | Giant Sea Scorpions (6) or Giant Alligators (4) (shore or swamp/river) |
| +2 | Aunt Jenny or Giant Spiders (8) (settlement or wilderness) |
| +3 | Fly-by-Night |
| +4 | Demon |

• HIGH PLAINS

This table might also apply roughly to the Peruvian altiplano (with more Deros), the Gobi (with revenant dinosaurs instead of giant gila monsters), or similar high, cold, monster-haunted deserts. If, on a result of Enormous Scorpions, you feel your heart call you to swap out Giant Tarantulas (or some other desert-dwelling spider), it's entirely understandable.

High Plains Monster Encounters

| 4dF | MONSTERS ENCOUNTERED |
|-----|---|
| -4 | Thunderbird |
| -3 | Nagas (4) or Hydra (major lake/river or not) |
| -2 | Giant Gila Monsters (2) or Wendigo (4) (Southwest or North) |
| -1 | Ghouls* (12) |
| 0 | Giant Snake |
| +1 | Aunt Jenny or Enormous Scorpions (8) (settlement or wilderness) |
| +2 | Fly-by-Night |
| +3 | Giant Death-Worms (2) |
| +4 | Demon |

MAYORALTIES

This table can also generally apply to uncivilized or remote temperate areas: China, earthquake-ruined Paris, etc.

Mayoralties Monster Encounters

| 4dF | MONSTERS ENCOUNTERED |
|-----|--|
| -4 | Swamp Devil or Enormous Scorpions (8) (swamp or dry) |
| -3 | Thunderbird |
| -2 | Nagas (4) or Hydra (major lake/river or not) |
| -1 | Giant Snake |
| 0 | Ghouls* (8) |
| +1 | Aunt Jenny or Giant Spiders (8) (settlement or wilderness) |
| +2 | Fly-by-Night |
| +3 | Demon |
| +4 | Wendigo (4) or Giant Alligators (2) (North or South) |

- **DEMON:** Roll on the **Random Demons** table on p. 97 for the specific demon type. Make sure there's a Serpent cult leader, sorcerer, or black magician nearby who summoned the horror. If not, replace the demon with a free-range fly-by-night.
- **GIANT SNAKE:** Roll 2dF for the snake's size (see pp. 97-98), from 20' (-2 or -1) to 80' (+2).
- **SWAMP DEVIL:** Roll 1dF; on a **+**, add a squad or two of Bandit servitors.

PEOPLE ENCOUNTERS

Roll on the main **People** table, then on the relevant sub-table if any. The terms are, for the most part, convenient shorthand: obviously, one can encounter (for example) a well-armed, travelling important stranger who is decent folk. Consider these labels aspects, but not *exclusive* aspects. In all cases, feel free to raise or change suggested skills or add aspects and stunts to create the encounter or challenge you wish to run.

Roll 2dF to determine the number of people encountered: -2 indicates two or three people (except loners, almost nobody travels alone in the Poisoned Lands if they can help it); 0 is roughly as many as the heroes; +2 is significantly larger numbers (at least twice as many) than the heroes. Some results in the table and sub-tables have modifiers in brackets to this roll.

Determine the encounter time of day, and roll 1dF. By night, a result of **+** means the people encountered are on the move, anything else means they are encamped. Reverse these results for daytime, for fugitives or refugees, and for Serpent cultists. To flesh out people encountered in the Poisoned Lands, roll on the **Random Transport** table (see p. 135) and **Random Allegiance** table (see p. 135) if you wish.

Modify all rolls on the **People** table and sub-tables by -2 for the High Plains and +1 for the Drowned Coast.

| People | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| 4dF | PEOPLE ENCOUNTERED |
| -6 | Loner [-3] |
| -5 | Bandits [-1] |
| -4 | Violent Strangers |
| -3 | Loner [-3] |
| -2 | Travellers |
| -1 | Bandits [+1] |
| 0 | Decent Folk |
| +1 | Well-Armed Strangers |
| +2 | Violent Strangers |
| +3 | Important Stranger [-2] |
| +4 | Travellers |
| +5 | Loner [-2] |

- **BANDITS:** For any result of “Bandits” in these tables, roll 1dF. On a **+**, use the Veteran Bandit statistics (p. 85). On the Drowned Coast, bandits are likely (0 or better on 2dF) to be pirates.
- **LONER:** See p. 86 for Loner statistics.

• DECENT FOLK

These are people who, by the standards of pre-Serpentfall America, would be “respectable,” or at least given the benefit of the doubt. They likely still expect such treatment from those they meet; they usually have homes or influential friends (perhaps nearby) to avenge them if they don’t get it. They will usually not be immediately hostile to the heroes, accepting and offering help if possible. They may, like all people, have ulterior motives for both.

- **ENGINEERING PARTY:** After destruction, reconstruction. An engineering party might be clearing the railway, repairing a bridge, drilling an oil well, or surveying the area for a new dam. There will be an engineer (Aspects: DETERMINED REBUILDER, FIELD EXPEDIENT; **Skills:** Good (+3) Crafts, Fair (+2) Science, Average (+1) Scrounge and Survival), a less-capable assistant or two, and assorted roughnecks/guards (based on Militia Soldier with one extra stress box).
- **INDIANS:** With the collapse of the U.S. government in the north and east, members of some Indian nations have left their reservations to hunt for food and defend themselves against monster attacks. Roll 1dF; on a **+**, they’re fleeing white attackers. Aspects: STOUX BRAVE or similar appropriate tag, HARDY HUNTER; **Skills:** Fair (+2) Notice; Average (+1) Ride and Survival. It’s up to you whether the Indians are accompanied by a medicine man, and whether (or which) of such a shaman’s claimed powers actually work. If this result comes up somewhere unlikely, the “Indians” are actually whites “going Indian” in response to cultural collapse and shock. They may be clueless idiots, dangerous psychotics, or self-reliant, flexible folks who paid attention in Boy Scouts.
- **MERCHANTS:** Aspects: BORN SALESMAN, TRAVELING MERCHANT; **Skills:** Good (+3) Resources, Fair (+2) Rapport, Average (+1) Deceive and Contacts. All but the smallest merchant parties have well-paid guards along. Use Soldier stats for these guards.
- **PREACHERS:** Itinerant preachers, Mormon, Catholic, Baptist, etc. Large parties likely indicate a preacher and his most devoted congregation, or perhaps a camp meeting in progress! Aspects: ITINERANT PREACHER, DEVOTED TO THE LORD; **Skills:** Fair (+2) Lore, Average (+1) Empathy and Will. A preacher may be capable of miracles (see p. 32), either alone or in prayer with his congregation.
- **PROSPECTORS:** Transients looking for salvageable gear, stores, or raw materials. Aspect: POST-APOCALYPTIC PROSPECTOR; **Skills:** Average (+1) Scrounge and Survival.
- **SETTLERS:** Normal folks seeking a better life, attempting to homestead some abandoned or devastated land. Aspects and skills will vary, but are unlikely to be above Fair.

| Decent Folk | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 2dF | DECENT FOLK |
| -4 | Indians |
| -3 | Prospectors [-2] |
| -2 | Preachers |
| -1 | Engineering Party |
| 0 | Merchants |
| +1 | Settlers |
| +2 to +3 | Prospectors [-1] |

• IMPORTANT STRANGER

This is someone who, if your game were a TV show, would be this episode’s special guest star. They are usually exciting NPCs (possibly with a few followers, bodyguards, or sidekicks) in pursuit of (or fleeing) some adventure hook. Obviously, an Important Stranger can also be a preacher, mercenary captain, Indian, or any other sort of person encountered on the other tables. In

general, such encounters also work better for a flavorful NPC or two, even if their guest stardom is less special. Consult the **Guest Star** or **Villain** section in the **Adventure Generator** (pp. 103-115) for the Important Stranger's goal or nature and apply a pre-existing archetype (pp. 22-27) for high concepts and skills, or generate additional statistics ad hoc. Important Strangers should be comparable to the heroes as far as number of aspects, skills, etc.

- **ARCANIST:** Might be a scientist or inventor, an ophi-technician, or a would-be magus. Either way, her dangerous experiments or antisocial attitudes have placed her temporarily outside the city's watchful eyes and breakable buildings.
- **BOUNTY HUNTER:** Almost always armed with a rifle, and mounted on horseback. Roll 2dF for his target: -2 to 0, escapee or fugitive; +1, Monster; +2, wanted criminal.
- **FRIEND:** Someone previously known to the heroes, ideally someone on good terms with them who they owe a favor.
- **FUGITIVE:** Running away from another Important Stranger, most likely. Roll on the **Random Allegiance** table, if need be, to refine the cause for which (or from which) the fugitive has fled.
- **POLITICIAN:** Possibly travelling as part of an official embassy or mission, possibly on a tour of inspection, possibly leaving town ahead of an indictment or a noose. In the previous two cases, bodyguards and aides are likely companions.
- **SECRET AGENT:** Roll twice on the **Random Allegiance** table: first for his real allegiance, then for what he claims to serve. His statistics begin with the Secret Agent on p. 87.
- **TEXAS RANGER:** At least this good. Roll as Bounty Hunter, above, for his target, with a +1 modifier. Aspects: ONE RIOT ONE RANGER, KEEPS ON COMIN', LAW WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI; Skills: Great (+4) Investigate; Good (+3) Ride and Shoot; Fair (+2) Fight and Will; Average (+1) Notice, Stealth, and Survival.

| Important Stranger | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 2dF | IMPORTANT STRANGER |
| -4 | Texas Ranger |
| -3 | Fugitive |
| -2 | Friend |
| -1 | Arcanist or Bounty Hunter |
| 0 | Fugitive |
| +1 | Politician |
| +2 | Secret Agent |
| +3 | Bounty Hunter |

- TRAVELLERS

These are people whose "home ground" is, to one or another extent, on the road. They usually don't have any local contacts, although preachers and merchants may have contacts in surprisingly far-flung towns and even over the Rockies. They will usually not be immediately hostile to the heroes, accepting and offering help if possible. They may, like all people, have ulterior motives for both.

- **FUGITIVES:** See Important Stranger sub-table, although larger groups may roll as Refugees (below) to determine their impetus in flight.
- **INDIANS, MERCHANTS, PREACHERS, PROSPECTORS:** See **Decent Folk** sub-table.
- **REFUGEES:** Almost always a gaggle of nearly helpless civilians. Roll 2dF to see what they're fleeing: -2, Monster; -1, Hazard; 0, People; +1 or higher, the nearest city.

| Travellers | |
|------------|--------------------|
| 3dF | IMPORTANT STRANGER |
| -5 | Indians |
| -4 | Fugitives [-2] |
| -3 | Indians |
| -2 | Preachers |
| -1 | Prospectors [-2] |
| 0 | Merchants |
| +1 | Refugees [+2] |
| +2 | Fugitives |
| +3 | Prospectors [-1] |
| +4 | Indians [-1] |

• VIOLENT STRANGERS

These are people who are, in general, looking for trouble. They may, or may not, have bosses, fences, or other contacts in nearby towns or trading posts. If they think they can take the heroes, they will attack them. This may or may not come after a seemingly friendly meeting or parley—much depends on the individual predator’s style and their assessment of the party. Assess ‘or’ entries below based on the local geography; Night-Riders are more likely in the South and Midwest, while Thugs only appear very near cities.

- **CANNIBALS:** Use the cannibal clan statistics under Loner (p. 87).
- **CHAIN GANG:** Either building a road, doing agricultural labor, or being marched to or from a coal mine. In this sub-table, this result implies either a gang of prisoners escaped from a chain gang (use Thug or Bandit stats), a chain gang about to revolt against their overseers, or brutal overseers (Police and Militia stats) who deserve a revolt as comeuppance.
- **GERMAN P.O.W.S:** By 1945, the U.S. held over 425,000 Axis prisoners of war (mostly Germans) in 125 camps spread over 45 states. Roll 2dF to determine their former branch: -2 or -1, Wehrmacht (Soldier stats); 0, Kriegsmarine U-boat crew (Soldier stats with Average (+1) Crafts and Sail); +1, Luftwaffe (Soldier stats with Fair (+2) Pilot); Waffen-SS (Elite Soldier stats). You can also mix the types. Roll 2dF to see what they’re doing now: 0 or below, Chain Gang; +1, Mercenaries; +2, Bandits.
- **MILITIA:** Roll 2dF for their mission: below 0, tax collecting from area farmers; 0, coal convoy guards; +1, patrol; +2, hot pursuit of someone (possibly a Fugitive). See p. 88 for Militia statistics; they will likely be accompanied by one officer.
- **NIGHT-RIDERS:** Bandits, thugs, enforcers, or hell-raisers affiliated with the Klan. They are most likely riding counter-patrol against the Free Colored Army or harassing black farmers or refugees, but they might be hunting ungodly monsters! Use any other appropriate template (Bandit, Militia Soldier, Police, Thug) but add the aspect **KLANSMAN** and Average (+1) Ride.
- **SERPENT CULTISTS:** See pp. 85-86 for Serpent Cultist statistics. Roll 1dF; on a **+**, they have a Cult Leader (p. 86) with them. Roll 2dF for their current vile activity: below 0, kidnapping someone; 0 or +1, fell and horrid rituals (always with a Cult Leader); +2, hunting the heroes!
- **THUGS:** See p. 88 for Thug statistics. Only encountered very near cities, except as smuggling runners or as escorts for major crime figures traveling to (rare) meetings. If the encounter is too far from a city to be believable on its own merits, and if you can’t come up with an entertaining justification, replace thugs with bandits or reroll.

| Violent Strangers | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2dF | VIOLENT STRANGERS |
| -4 | Cannibals [-1] |
| -3 | Bandits [-1] |
| -2 | Chain Gang |
| -1 | Militia or Night-Riders |
| 0 | Thugs or Bandits |
| +1 | Serpent Cultists |
| +2 | German P.O.W.s |
| +3 | Cannibals [-1] |

• WELL-ARMED STRANGERS

These are people who are ready for trouble but not actively interested in dealing it out to the heroes—or not just yet, at any rate. They almost always have superiors, and often reinforcements, somewhere else. They will be cautious, but willing to parley or meet. Assistance with specific problems usually requires a quid pro quo.

- **BOUNTY HUNTERS:** See Important Stranger sub-table. In larger, less important groups, use the following statistics. Aspects: BOUNTY HUNTER, HARD RIDER; Skills: Good (+3) Fight; Fair (+2) Shoot and Contacts; Average (+1) Ride and Survival.

- **CHAIN GANG:** See Violent Strangers sub-table for details. Encountered on this sub-table, the chain gang is well under control—unless the heroes interfere, of course!
- **MILITIA:** See **Violent Strangers** sub-table.
- **POSSE:** A group of lawmen and deputized civilians out on a specific purpose: hunting a monster or wanted criminal. (Roll 1dF if you like, on a **+**, it's a monster hunt!) Combine Police, Soldier, and Militia statistics as you see fit, possibly commanded by an Officer (p. 88) or Police Detective (p. 87). Nearer Texas (say, south and west of Memphis, Tennessee) the Posse may be led by a Texas Ranger.
- **SOLDIERS:** All parties of soldiers are commanded by at least one Officer (p. 88). Roll 2dF for their T.O.: below 0, normal Soldiers (p. 88) with no heavy weapons; 0, normal Soldiers with some heavy weapons; +1, Elite Soldiers (p. 88) with no heavy weapons; +2, Elite Soldiers with heavy weapons. A “heavy weapon” is a machine gun, a mortar, a rocket launcher, a light artillery piece, or (rarely) an AFV.

| Well-Armed Strangers | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2dF | WELL-ARMED STRANGERS |
| -4 | Posse [-1] |
| -3 | Bounty Hunters [-2] |
| -2 | Posse |
| -1 | Bounty Hunters [-1] |
| 0 | Soldiers |
| +1 | Militia |
| +2 | Chain Gang |
| +3 | Bounty Hunters [-2] |

• RANDOM TRANSPORT

Roll 3dF for random travelers in the Poisoned Lands. Slaves in a coffle, prisoners on a chain gang, refugees, and young children will not have horses or (probably) vehicles. In the Drowned Coast, replace “horse and wagon” with rowboat or skiff.

Modify the roll by -2 for Indians, +1 for soldiers, +2 for elite soldiers or merchants, and +3 for politicians, Texas Rangers, or caravans.

| Random Transport | |
|------------------|--|
| 3dF | TRANSPORT |
| -5 to -2 | On foot |
| -1 | Pack mules |
| 0 | Pack mules if needed; horses for leaders only |
| +1 | Horse and wagon |
| +2 | Horses for everyone, wagon if needed |
| +3 | Horses for everyone, motor vehicle for leaders |
| +4 and up | Motor vehicles for everyone |

• RANDOM ALLEGIANCE

Roll for randomly encountered people in the Poisoned Lands. At your discretion, such random allegiances may be temporary, rented, lightly held, or fanatical. For holders of covert loyalties, roll again for the allegiance they pretend to hold, or just choose City or America (the two most uncontroversial allegiances). If the heroes uncover a hidden loyalty, that makes a superb compel!

Modify the roll by -1 for the Drowned Coast and -3 for the High Plains.

| Random Allegiance | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 3dF | ALLEGIANCE |
| -6 to -3 | The Serpent |
| -2 | National |
| -1 | None |
| 0 | Almighty Dollar |
| +1 | Local |
| +2 | Elks, Kiwanis, Lions |
| +3 | Ideological |

- **ALMIGHTY DOLLAR:** This result might indicate thieves, bandits, prospectors, or mercenaries. Interpret it based on the situation.
- **ELKS, KIWANIS, LIONS:** The fraternal orders attempt to remain true to their larger ideals: decency, patriotism, respect, mutual assistance, and “small-town values.” Some of them have

begun recruiting their own mercenaries; perhaps in a century, they will be the equivalent of the Templars and Hospitallers.

- **NONE:** This result indicates loners, barbarians, and others who reject society. Interpret it based on the situation.
- **THE SERPENT:** In the case of soldiers, politicians, or others who should have a different overt allegiance, it indicates secret Serpent cultism. Roll again for the allegiance they pretend to hold.

Ideological

This indicates allegiance to one of the ideologically driven militant groups in the Poisoned Lands. Re-roll a result of "Iowa Soviet" that occurs comically far away from Iowa.

- **FREE COLORED ARMY:** Allegiance to the FCA is not exclusive to blacks, but among friendly whites, alliance is far more common.
- **KKK:** Support for the "New Konfederacy" is not merely a Southern phenomenon in the wake of the Serpentfall, although only in the Grand Kounty of Birmingham in Alabama has the Klan been able to take open control of the government.

Ideological Allegiance

| 3DF | ALLEGIANCE |
|----------|-------------------|
| -3 to -1 | Free Colored Army |
| 0 to +1 | KKK |
| +2 to +3 | Iowa Soviet |

Local

Gang, City, and City Faction sub-results indicate the attitude toward the heroes (enemy, neutral, or allied) of the distant leaders of the gang, city, or faction. The specific encountered people might still react differently, depending on the heroes' actions or attitudes. (As a rule of thumb, the leaders' opinion is a situation aspect the heroes may need to take into account.)

- **CITY:** Allegiance to a city in the Mayoralties, usually but not always either the closest one or the one the next adventure is set in. Roll 2dF: -2 or -1, enemy; 0, neutral; +1 or +2, allied.
- **CITY FACTION:** Indicates allegiance to a faction within a city, not to the city per se. Roll 2dF: -2 or -1, enemy; 0 or +1, neutral; +2, allied.
- **GANG:** This result indicates bandits, thugs, or other crooks with allegiance to a larger group of their own, or to a specific bandit chief or thug boss. Roll 2dF: 0 or less, enemy; +1, neutral; +2, allied.

Local Allegiance

| 2DF | ALLEGIANCE |
|----------|--------------|
| -2 | Gang |
| -1 to 0 | City |
| +1 to +2 | City Faction |

National

This indicates allegiance to a national government, not necessarily your own. In the High Plains, re-roll any result except America. In the Drowned Coast, this might indicate Royal Navy anti-piracy patrols, or their informers. In the Mayoralties, this might indicate advisers, spies, or couriers, or escaped German P.O.W.s loyal to the Reich.

- **AMERICA:** Decide whether this indicates loyalty to President Warren, to Texas, to Utah, or to some other aspect of the United States.
- **SOVIET UNION:** Includes members (covert and open) of the Communist Party USA; may or may not include servants of the Iowa Soviet.

National Allegiance

| 3DF | ALLEGIANCE |
|----------|----------------|
| -3 | Other Outside |
| -2 | British Empire |
| -1 | Soviet Union |
| +0 to +2 | America |
| +3 | British Empire |

Inspirations

Some of this book is based on actual fact. Stalin's ape experiments really happened, though they didn't bear fruit. Former Vice-President Henry Wallace really was a Communist fellow-traveler with a mystical hookup for Inner Asian grain. The Nazis really did have a sub-division of the SS dedicated to, among other things, poetry research.

My immediate inspiration for ***The Day After Ragnarok*** was reading the quote that starts off the "Serpentfall" chapter:

"The Nazi myth which is important...[to] men like Hitler requires a Götterdämmerung..."

— U.S. WAR DEPARTMENT COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT, FEB. 12, 1945

If you take that literally, what does it mean? It means that the end of the world was a Nazi war aim. And one end specifically: Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, the Twilight of the Gods, or in the Norse, Ragnarok. For Ragnarok, and Norse myth in general, H.R. Ellis Davidson's *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* remains my go-to source. It's probably a trifle academically outmoded by now, but it's matchlessly clear and honest, two qualities not often found in mythography. I prefer W.H. Auden's translation of the *Völuspá* ("The Song of the Sibyl") in sheerly poetic terms, but I kludged together a bunch of different versions for the header quotes in this book, with a strong bias toward dramatic language. The poem shaped the way I shaped the world. I discovered the Narts in C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor's extraordinarily strange book *From Scythia to Camelot*; the specific connection between Prometheus, Loki, and Nasren I owe to John Colarusso's essay "Prometheus Among the Circassians."

Every scenario involving Nazi invocation of Norse deities probably owes its seed-pearl to David Brin's short story "Thor Versus Captain America." I just took Brin's message ("The Nazis were schmucks!") to its logical extreme. Most of the mega-tsunami came from just scaling up the various disaster scenarios for the Canary Islands mega-tsunami that's supposedly in store once La Palma drops into the sea. The rest came from *Lucifer's Hammer*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. This 1977 post-apocalyptic novel is about a cometary impact, but it's the same sort of thing.

There's a lot of the Seventies in this setting, or rather, a lot of fiction I devoured in the Seventies in order to avoid paying too much attention to the Seventies. That was the decade that I discovered the biggest single influence on this book: Robert E. Howard's Conan stories. I don't honestly know if I read the Marvel comic first or the Lancer Books paperbacks hacked together by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter. While I can't in good conscience recommend those Lancer editions (though they did a great job of hooking my ten-year-old self), Roy Thomas' Marvel Comics *Conan the Barbarian* still holds up today. Dark Horse Comics has collected Thomas' entire run on the series in sixteen or so trade paperbacks, featuring glorious art by (among others) Gil Kane, Howard Chaykin, John Buscema, and of course Barry Windsor-Smith. I took further inspiration from Ian Sturrock's ***Conan RPG*** (from Mongoose), Michael Surbrook's lovingly detailed "Creature Adaptations" Web page for the ***Hero System*** (which includes several Howardian monsters), and Curtis M. Scott's ***GURPS Conan***, but I single out for praise Steve Rennick's wonderfully old-school ***Savage Worlds*** Netbook, ***Savage Sword of Conan***. His encounter tables, especially, inspired and propelled my Poisoned Lands random tables to new heights. All that said, the first and last resort must now be to Howard's original material, published in three fine volumes by Del Rey: *The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian*, *The Bloody Crown of Conan*, and *The Conquering Sword of Conan*. (In Britain, they're published by Wandering Star, under the immensely dull title *Conan of Cimmeria*.)

The other major influence on this setting is a sort of cloud of stuff, having something of its last hurrah in the Seventies: a bunch of SF, spy fiction, and adventure stories in which Britain was

still the center of the world. This cloud swirls around such icons as Ian Fleming's James Bond, Nigel Kneale's wonderful Professor Quatermass, Terrance Dicks' UNIT (from *Dr. Who*), and Frank Hampson's *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future*. All of this wonderfulness came surging into my forebrain once I figured out that some of the British Empire survived the Serpentfall, and I wrote accordingly. This is probably where I should mention S.M. Stirling's alternate history novel, *The Peshawar Lancers*, in which a comet strike (again!) wipes out Europe and America in 1878, leaving the British Empire to rebuild in India. (Stirling even tied that universe to Conan, in his short story "Shikari in Galveston," a stalker-ish homage to Robert E. Howard's Conan story "Beyond the Black River.") While I have my nits to pick with Stirling, this novel is better than his average, and is an undeniable inspiration for ***The Day After Ragnarok***.

I packed in all manner of other war, adventure, and spy shows and comics around the edges; much of it I no doubt absorbed back then, and some of it I've discovered (or rediscovered) since. Of that material, Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* and *Steve Canyon* comics should be obvious influences. Jess Nevins continues to serve as my un-indicted navigator on these adventures, this time primarily through his *Encyclopedia of Pulp Heroes*, coming soon from Monkeybrain Books. It's about time I dedicated one of these to him.

About Kenneth Hite

Kenneth Hite is the multiple Origins and Ennie Award-winning author, co-author, or designer of over 70 roleplaying game books and supplements, including ***GURPS WWII: Weird War II***, ***Back East: the South*** for ***Deadlands***, ***Targets of Opportunity*** for ***Delta Green***, ***Trail of Cthulhu*** and ***Night's Black Agents*** for the ***GUMSHOE*** system from Pelgrane Press, and ***The Nazi Occult*** for Osprey Books. For ten years, he was the Higher Strangeness columnist for *Pyramid* magazine, producing over 300 "Suppressed Transmissions." Other recent works include a work of Lovecraftian criticism, *Tour de Lovecraft: the Tales*, the Mythos introduction *Cthulhu 101*, and three children's books: *Where the Deep Ones Are*, *The Antarctic Express*, and *Cliffourd the Big Red God*. His ***Hero System*** supplement ***Adventures Into Darkness*** combined H.P. Lovecraft with Golden Age comics; he has not yet tackled Clark Ashton Smith. He lives in Chicago with his wife Sheila, the mandatory writer's cats, seven thousand or so books, and a well-tempered blade. You can find Ken on Twitter at @KennethHite, and listen to him weekly with fellow game designer and writer Robin D. Laws on their *Ken & Robin Talk About Stuff* podcast (www.kenandrobintalkaboutstuff.com).

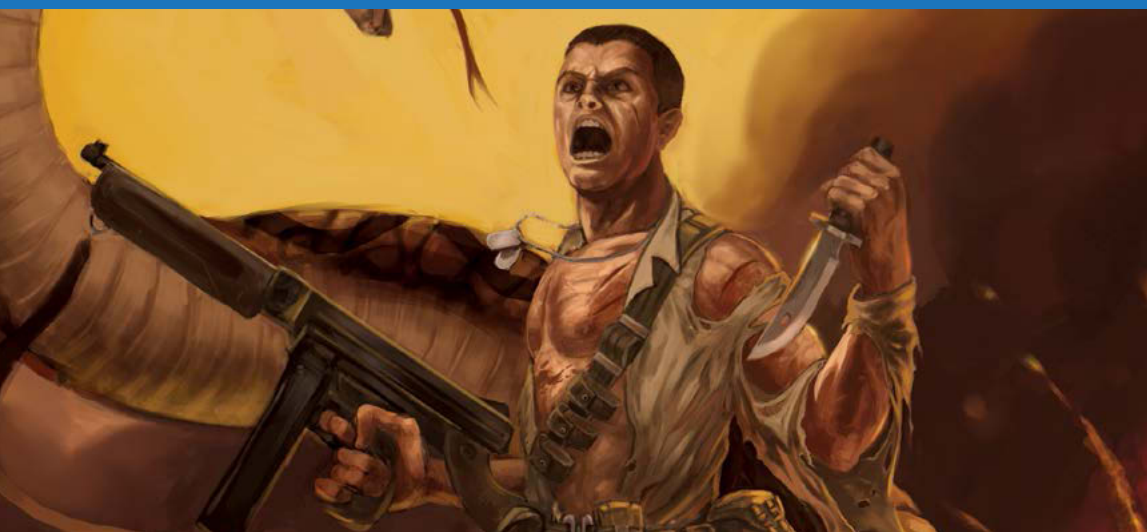


About Leonard Balsera

Leonard Balsera is an award-winning writer, designer, and developer. He was an assistant developer on Evil Hat Productions' Spirit of the Century, as well as the lead designer of The Dresden Files Roleplaying Game and Fate Core. He's also worked on projects for various well-regarded RPG publishers, such as Pelgrane Press, Margaret Weis Productions, and Onyx Path Publishing. He also works as the marketing director for Steve Jackson Games, publishers of ***GURPS*** and the dungeon-crawl card game ***Munchkin***, which was inducted in the Origins Awards Hall of Fame in 2013. In his copious free time, he designs games for fun, because he is a madman. You can find Leonard at @leonardbalsera on Twitter.



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