

I remember when I was a kid, my mom would sometimes drag me to the museum. I spent so much time playing with computers, you see, that she was worried that I wasn't keeping a firm grip on reality or seeing enough of the world outside my room. The museum had some pretty good displays, but my favorite was always the giant dinosaur skeletons. It was a morbid fascination—they were dead, and yet eternal at the same time. I made a game out of finding new ways to sneak up and touch the bones without alerting security.

These days you can still go to the museum, but most folks don't bother. They can have it brought to them and experience it virtually. The people who do bother usually get to see the augmented reality display because the bones are so fragile now they might crumble to dust. I'm still trying to decide whether that's good or bad. You can't touch the bones, but they won't disappear, either.

So what is a legend supposed to do when the world changes around him? Most of my colleagues are dead—hell, Captain Chaos should've been writing this, but he went down with his ship during the second Crash. Someone's got to look out for the next generation, and it might as well be me because I'm the last dinosaur of my kind, and I'm better than some AR display.

The following is a history lesson for the reality impaired, because as I've learned over the years, my mom was right: there's more to life and the world than what you filter through your computer or commlink. Call this a last shout-out to Cap, the neo-@'s, and everyone else who's willing to learn something for the sake of knowledge, not just survival.

—FastJack

kicked off city, state, and federal charges of criminal negligence aimed at Seretech.

Thank the Supreme Court for their decision. Seretech claimed that defending the truck from the mob ensured that its cargo didn't get out and create worse scenarios, and the Supreme Court agreed. They upheld the corp's right to maintain an armed force for protection of its personnel and property. Corps 1, World 0.

In late '00, things heated up when the radical eco-group TerraFirst! allegedly attacked a Shiawase Inc. nuclear power plant. Shiawase security forces repelled the attack, but used the incident as an excuse to advance their position that public law enforcement was insufficient to provide the kinds of protection it and other large corporations required. In the end, the Supreme Court in its supreme wisdom granted multinational corporations the same rights and privileges as foreign governments, establishing corporate extraterritoriality in what came to be known as "The Shiawase Decision." Later on, TerraFirst! got its hands on evidence proving that Shiawase and a few other corps had conspired to stage the attack, but this evidence was destroyed when a bomb wrecked the group's California office and killed several key members. Suspicions are strong that the bomb was planted by a shadowrunner—welcome to the Sixth World.

What does this mean for you? It means that you now know why getting caught stealing Ares R&D while on Ares property is one of the worst career moves you could ever make, but being able to skip off onto another corp's property while hanging onto Ares goods may mean living to steal another day.

## A HISTORY LESSON FOR THE REALITY IMPAIRED

### THE RISE OF THE MEGACORPS

So how did we get in this mess, anyway? While many people experience life as an augmented-reality-enhanced shopping spree or as a neverending stream of hypnotizing entertainment experiences, the rest of us see things quite a bit differently—and they're not a cheery shade of rose. When your daily concern is scoring enough nuyen to eat and watching your back against your fellow shadow denizens, you know there's significant room for improvement with the world.

### SERETECH & SHIAWASE

Imagine this: it's the late 1990s, and corporate entities are growing more powerful with each passing year. Increasingly unwilling to entrust the safety and security of their assets and personnel to public law-enforcement organizations, these entities gradually begin supplementing them with their own private security forces—forces that, far from stereotypical doughnut-eating "rent-a-cops," grow more and more to resemble paramilitary groups armed with the best equipment available.

1999 was the worst year ever. (It was also the year I was born. Mom joked for a few years that I was the herald of the End of Days. After that, better candidates came along.) Thanks to a three-month-long truckers' strike, no fresh food was coming into New York City. Food riots broke out, and the whole city was engulfed in violence. Unfortunately for us, it also engulfed a Seretech Med-Research truck hauling infectious waste. A running battle erupted between Seretech security personnel and the mobs—who were convinced the truck was carrying food—and ended up at one of the firm's medical research facilities. To make a long story short, it resulted in a bloodbath and

### RESOURCE RUSH

Meanwhile, the corps suddenly realized what sort of power lay in their hands and acted quickly to exploit the hell out of it. Not even a year after the Shiawase Decision, the United States government invoked "eminent domain" to bring property under its control, and then licensed its exploitation to corporate sponsors. Corporations were snapping up these opportunities left and right, and they didn't care whose toes they stepped on in the bargain. This usually meant looting Native American reservation lands of resources—a practice that the Amerindians, understandably, were less than pleased about.

### LONE EAGLE INCIDENT

The more radical among the Native Americans formed the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM) to fight the corporate takeovers. They didn't do much but talk until 2009, when United Oil Industries acquired the rights to the petrochemical resources in one-tenth of the remaining reservations. Having had enough, SAIM responded by capturing a missile silo at the U.S. Air Force's Shiloh Launch Facility in northwest Montana, then threatened to launch the missiles unless the U.S. government and the corps returned all the land taken from them.

Predictably, the government pretended to initiate talks, and then sent in the Delta Team anti-terrorist squad. The Deltas recaptured the silo, but not before someone "accidentally" launched a Lone Eagle ICBM toward the Russian Republic. Everyone thought for sure this was the beginning of the end, but amazingly the warheads never hit. To this day no one knows how that happened, though a million and one theories have been advanced and everyone (including me) has tried in vain to find out.



When the public got wind of what happened, the “Lone Eagle incident” (as it was being called) became a propaganda tool against SAIM and all Native Americans. Adding insult to injury, the U.S. Congress passed the Re-Education and Relocation Act just months after it was introduced in late 2009. The act called for the confinement of anyone connected in any way to SAIM. At the same time, Canada’s Parliament passed the Nepean Act, which legitimized internment camps for Native Americans. Both acts were thoroughly abused, with thousands of innocent Native Americans sent to “re-education centers” throughout 2010. Many of them never returned. It would be over a year before the survivors were freed.

### UNITED OIL

Meanwhile, the original culprits were facing troubles in Texas. It seems that a gang of homeless, unemployed workers stormed the United Oil Industries headquarters, demanding that the “fascist corporations” be held accountable for the city of Dallas’s financial and criminal problems. To meet this obviously formidable threat, the governor of Texas called in the Texas Ranger Assault Teams. After the smoke cleared, the state legislature passed laws giving corporate security forces carte blanche in dealing with armed intruders.

But Texas was not alone; other places around the world were passing similar laws. They created urban militia units armed with military weaponry and gave residents the right to contract private security firms to protect their communities with lethal force. Sound familiar? That’s because this was the basis upon which Lone Star, the rent-a-cops we all love to hate, was formed. You can thank the Texans for that.

### JAPANESE IMPERIAL STATE

But let’s go back to 2005 and 2006 for a moment. Japan had just emerged from a recession as a major power. In 2005, South Korea (backed by Japanese corporate interests) declared war on North Korea. So what did North Korea do? In 2006, they launched missiles at Japan in a fruitless effort to get the Japanese to abandon their support. The missiles didn’t detonate (funny how that happens), and North Korea

was overrun by the end of the year. Feeling rather buff at this point, Japan renamed itself the Japanese Imperial State—clearly evoking pre-WWII glory days.

That’s not all. The JIS followed this by deploying the first of a fleet of solar-powered collection satellites to beam microwave energy to receptors on the Earth’s surface. This relatively cheap method of distributing power to isolated regions allowed Japan to instigate a virtual economic takeover of the Third World. After that, Japan re-emerged as a military power, and it would exercise that power later on the people of the Philippines and San Francisco. Hold that thought.

### DEATH AND CHAOS

Things really got cooking in 2010–2018. We had a virtual alphabet soup going on: VITAS, UGE, NAN, and so forth. Between the epidemics and the resurgence of magic in the world, there were many who thought that the Apocalypse was on its way and that we ought to be kissing our collective backsides goodbye. It wasn’t the end, but it sure was a whole lot of change—and it wasn’t quiet.

### VITAS

Virally Induced Toxic Allergy Syndrome (VITAS) first appeared in New Delhi, India, in 2010. It spread terrifyingly fast, striking down approximately 25 percent of the world’s population. Among the areas worst hit were China, India, many African nations, some Third World cities, and outlying areas due to inadequate or nonexistent medical care and vaccines.

Still, no one was safe, and a lot of fear and paranoia followed in the epidemic’s wake. In Mexico City, for example, the locals called it “Terror Time,” and as the dead piled up in the streets, Citizens’ Action Committees (otherwise known as organized mobs) burned whole sections of the city. It should come as no surprise, then, that in January 2011 the Mexican government dissolved, sending thousands of refugees across the border into Texas. This would have significant repercussions later on.

## THE AWAKENING

As a prelude of things to come, all around the world a percentage of children were suddenly born “deformed.” Many people called these babies mutants; others called them elves and dwarfs, for that was exactly what they resembled. The scientists, however, called the phenomenon Unexplained Genetic Expression (UGE). Though we have better ideas these days about what may have triggered it (magic, of course), we’re not much closer to an in-depth explanation than we were before. Now all you elves and dwarfs out there know where you came from. We’re just as mystified as you are.

The real kicker happened December 24, 2011. What was previously known as the Year of Chaos became the Awakening as simultaneous events spectacularly ushered in the Mayans’ Sixth World: the appearance of the great dragon Ryumyo over Mount Fuji, witnessed by hundreds of Japanese passengers on a bullet train, and the Native American prophet Daniel Howling Coyote leading his followers out of the Abilene Re-Education Center. Camp guards swore that no shot fired at Howling Coyote touched him; some sort of “glow” stopped them. Ignoring their captors, the Native Americans walked through the gates and out into the storm surrounding the camp, with no trace found the next morning to mark their passage.

Elsewhere, weather patterns were changing, as were geographic features—some to catastrophic effect. Australia experienced the first of many violent “mana storms,” which swept through the Outback, killing hundreds. Western forests in Ireland began growing rapidly, and the long-forgotten slighe roads returned along with peat bogs and cairn lines. Stone circles and standing stones erupted along known ley lines in Britain. The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Denmark experienced a flood that left toxic sludge in its wake when the poisoned North Sea pushed into the mouth of the Elbe River, destroying many dikes and dams. Floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and more (un)natural disasters followed all over the world.

### DUNKELZAHN EXPLAINS IT ALL

While many were preparing for a religious Apocalypse and others were simply learning how to deal with the enormous chaos and uncertainty, a certain dragon decided to take matters into his own talons. On January 27, 2012, the great dragon Dunkelzahn made his first appearance at Cherry Creek Lake in Denver. It was a media frenzy. Reporters fought for exclusives while the military tried to seal the area off. In the end, however, Dunkelzahn granted one Holly Brighton the exclusive interview that made history: twelve hours and sixteen minutes of questions about Dunkelzahn and the turmoil happening to us that was dubbed the Awakening. For whatever reason (some say to help us out), the great dragon explained it all in that marathon interview.

In simple terms, magic had returned to the world with a vengeance. You can imagine how simultaneously scary, exhilarating, and disappointing that was for many people; it certainly blew my twelve-year-old mind. Scientists had a really difficult time coming to grips with magic, not knowing how to classify it (if they were even to accept its existence at all). Out of the blue, some people were now able to incinerate others with a thought (even if it knocked them on their keisters afterward). That could be scary for someone who didn’t want the ability, scary for those who couldn’t and didn’t want to understand how it could happen, exhilarating for those who did want the ability, and disappointing for every loon who’d pretended to be a great magician and who was now revealed as a complete fraud.

## NATION BUILDING

The death of the USA, and the birth of the North American crazy quilt we all know and love, began in 2014.

The Native American Nations formed in 2018 with the Treaty of Denver—a conciliatory gesture by the United States and Canadian governments following a protracted guerrilla war with Native American forces led by Daniel Howling Coyote (remember him?). The U.S.-Canadian forces tried to carry out the Resolution Act that would have exterminated all the Amerindian tribes for good, but needless to say the Natives were having none of that. The war culminated in the Great Ghost Dance, a massive magical ritual that Howling Coyote and his followers used to shake up the North American landscape by blowing the tops off several volcanoes (Redondo Peak in New Mexico, along with Mount Adams, Mount Hood, Mount Rainier, and Mount St. Helens in the Pacific Northwest), not to mention causing freaky weather and other disturbances at military bases and supply dumps connected with the Resolution Act.

The Treaty of Denver, among other things, recognized the sovereignty of the Native American Nations and ceded most of the western portion of North America to them, while allowing the United States to retain most of California and maintain Seattle as an extraterritorial extension. (Now you know why the Seattle metropolplex is more or less a screwed-up frontier town.) The NAN, governed by a Sovereign Tribal Council, included: the Salish-Shidhe Council, the Sioux Nation, the Pueblo Corporate Council, the Ute Nation, the Algonkian-Manitou Council, the Athabaskan Council, the Trans-Polar Aleut Nation, and the Tsimshian Nation.

The Treaty of Denver also divided up that city between its original signatory members: Aztlan (more on them later), neighbor members of the new NAN (Sioux, Pueblo, and Ute), and the United States. Since no militaries were allowed for fear of annulling the treaty and bringing about a repeat of the Great Ghost Dance, Denver became a smuggler’s dream.

Remember that part about the dissolution of the Mexican government? 2015 saw the birth of Aztlan, after Mexico’s new president (and the lackey of ORO, the company that grew out of the South American drug cartels and that later reinvented itself as Aztechnology) renamed his country. He also exhorted all Hispanic peoples to “join in reclaiming our glorious cultural heritage.” I think if anyone had told them that this reclamation would include a forceful return to the bloodiest days of Aztec history, many people would’ve laughed ... but they wouldn’t be laughing now.

## OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS AND ECOCATASTROPHES

<b>2004</b> Dungeness meltdown :: <i>UK</i>	<b>2028</b> First of so-called Big One quakes hits Los Angeles :: <i>UCAS</i>
<b>2005</b> New York leveled by quake :: <i>US/UCAS</i>	<b>2039</b> Teeside chemical spill in London :: <i>UK</i>
<b>2009</b> Cattenom meltdown :: <i>France</i>	<b>2042</b> Zeta-ImpChem Polydopa neurotoxin scandal :: <i>Africa</i>
<b>2011</b> Auvergne volcano erupts :: <i>France</i>	<b>2051</b> Massive earthquake hits San Francisco :: <i>CalFree</i>
<b>2011</b> Black Tide swamps most of Holland, Norway, Britain and parts of Germany :: <i>North Sea</i>	<b>2053</b> Massive United Oil tanker spill in Boston Harbor :: <i>UCAS</i>
<b>2017</b> Quake hits Tai-Hei mountains destroying Chinese nuclear stockpile :: <i>China</i>	<b>2061</b> Ring of Fire erupts devastating PacRim :: <i>Asia and North America</i>

## METAMORPHOSES

Yet more changes came down the pike between 2018 and 2029: simsense, Goblinization, cyberlimbs, Lone Star, and the first cyberterminals, to name a few. We had an explosion of tech, more metahumanity to contend with, and a policlub that couldn't (contend, that is). It sure was a bumpy ride, but for me it literally opened up new worlds.

### TECHSPLOSION

While others were hashing out the Treaty of Denver, Dr. Hosato Hikita was working for ESP Systems, Inc., in Chicago. And what was the good doctor doing? Why, creating the first generation of Artificial Sensory Induction System Technology (ASIST)—otherwise known as simsense—of course. This is the stuff that later got everyone's minds hooked in to the consensual reality of the Matrix and addicted to Neil the Ork Barbarian simflicks. (Worse stuff like BTLs are out there, I know. But those simflicks are some of the most cheeseball things to ever hit the Sixth World, especially now that they've incorporated Or'zet curses. Don't get me started.) Simsense units, which could play rudimentary sense impressions, would first hit the market in the twenties.

Then in 1919, British braintrust corporation Transys Neuronet successfully attached the first completely cybernetic replacement limb to a human being. The human in question happened to be the virtuosa violinist Leonora Bartoli, who'd lost her left hand in a freak accident while disembarking from a bullet train. Coincidentally, Transys was experimenting with a prosthetic that could link directly into the user's nervous system, allowing for far greater sensitivity and control. This was a win-win situation for both parties, and a cybernetic revolution for us.

### GOBLINIZATION

For a while, we thought we'd have a breather from all the turmoil we'd witnessed. Turns out it was the calm before yet another storm. April 30, 2021, saw one in ten adults metamorphose into huge and terrifying shapes that we now call orks and trolls. You can imagine what that was like: if UGE was scary, only producing those cute dwarf and elf babies, then Goblinization was like something out of everyone's nightmares. Many governments overreacted, either thinking that it was a contagion or simply acting from fear and hate: metahumans and their families were sometimes rounded up into the camps that had once held Native Americans, or (in the case of the Japanese) sent off to a hellish island in the Philippines called Yomi. As you might expect based on similar imprisonments in the past, humane treatment of inmates was not a priority.

This brouhaha didn't really calm down until the next wave of VITAS struck in 2022. When it hit human and metahuman alike, most authorities finally realized that this Goblinization was likely not a real contagion but something more akin to UGE. Still, VITAS killed another 10 percent of the world's population before it was all over—no one was safe. In 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court granted metahumans equal protection under the law. Not that it made a difference to the scum who founded the Humanis Policlub—an organization that's still going strong—the same year ...

### LONE STAR

Remember that mess in Texas with United Oil, and its ties to the founding of Lone Star? In the late teens, Lone Star Security Services appeared in Corpus Christi as a private law enforcement agency. Corpus Christi, Texas, became the first city to contract full-service,

citywide law enforcement to a private agency. That same year, the Seattle Metroplex was officially founded; the governor was then-Mayor Charles C. Lindstrom.

Where this comes together for you Seattleites is: the Seattle Police Department went on strike in 2025. Bad move for them, because the governor declared the strike illegal, fired them all, and then hired Lone Star to do the policing. They've spread like cockroaches across North America ever since.

### TECH, REDUX

The remote-vote system went into effect for the 2024 Presidential election. Though then-President Jarman won a landslide re-election, his opponents called "fraud." No one paid attention; everybody just wanted a bit of peace and quiet, thank you—yours truly counted among them.

The biggest technological leap, however, came between 2026 and 2029. Sony Cybersystems, Fuchi Industrial Electronics, and RCA-Unisys all came up with prototype cyberterminals, meant to interface with the worldwide data network via the central nervous system. That's right, kiddies—first generation neuron hook-up to the information grids. These things were huge, needing isolation tanks, multi-contact-point jacks, multiple hook-ups for the operator, and so on. Only the military and corporate intelligence super-hackers got to play with these, and the first ones to use them went crazy; their brains couldn't handle it. But millions of dollars, lots of training, and a few years of refinement eventually made it safe enough that the CIA, NSA, and IRS decided to pool their resources and create a "cybercommando" hacker team codenamed Echo Mirage. Anyone with brains could see what sort of uses this team would be put to. Thankfully, they never got a chance ... but the trade-off wasn't a bargain by any means.

### THE CRASH OF '29

On February 8, 2029, the nastiest computer virus ever hit computer systems around the world. They toppled and crashed, the virus wiping out data and sometimes even burning out the hardware. Since many governments, services, and corporations depended heavily on the worldwide network grids for data access, storage, connectivity, and more, the vast majority of them were on the verge of collapse—a veritable infopocalypse.

### ECHO MIRAGE

Given a presidential order to combat the Crash Virus, Echo Mirage swung into action. Unfortunately, most of the team members were unsuited to combat the virus, being too linear-thinking and inflexible to fight back effectively, and it showed in psychological casualties. The powers that be had to recruit new blood.

The new team, spearheaded by Major David Gavilan (USAF), was composed of thirty-two men and women from various backgrounds who shared at least one trait in common: an ability to think outside of the box. Mavericks, data-miners, hackers, they were each brilliant in one way or another, and they were some of the best we had to offer. In August of 2029, they waded in, ready to carve up some code. Still, eighteen minutes after they engaged the virus in cybercombat, four of them were dead from lethal biofeedback. Though Echo Mirage easily handled everything else they encountered, the virus proved difficult to eradicate, continuing to kill many team members.

On the other side of the virtual wall, the logs were continually analyzed to see how to improve the programs and hardware used in the fight. In the course of this study, we all got to see how the virus generat-



ed the deadly biofeedback as well as how the members of Echo Mirage were able to slip in and out of any targeted system (which alarmed many who'd previously thought their systems safe from intrusion). I can't tell you how much of that knowledge was used after the Crash Virus was wiped out—you've seen some of it yourselves in the form of Black IC. But I can tell you that, thanks to that knowledge, much of the hardware was reduced to desk size and no longer required sensory deprivation tanks. By late 2031, Echo Mirage managed to wipe out the last of the known vestiges of the virus.

Most of the surviving members of Echo Mirage disappeared afterward into the private sector, taking their knowledge and experience with them. Only a few known team members ever resurfaced; nobody knows where the rest are today. I know that some think I might have been a part of all that—I only wish I had been, because they were among the finest people I have ever known.

## OTHER GEOPOLITICAL EVENTS

- 2004–05** Israeli-Libyan conflict.
- 2005** Second Korean War and Unification.
- 2018** China falls to civil war.
- 2018** Sovereign Tribal Council formed following Denver Treaty.
- 2021** Central African nations disintegrate in tribal warfare.
- 2022** Caribbean League forms.
- 2027** Final fragmentation of the People's Republic of China. :: *China*
- 2030** Indian/Pakistani nuclear exchange devastates Kashmir. :: *India*
- 2030** Yakut declares independence from Russia. :: *Russia*
- 2033** Alliance for Allah forms following failed Damascus Conference.
- 2034** Aztlan resigns from Sovereign Tribal Council. :: *North America*
- 2036** System Identification Number standard established. :: *UCAS*
- 2037** Sixth Republic declared in France following military coup d'état.
- 2030** Yucatan insurgency against Aztlan begins.
- 2040** Southern Africa unites into Azanian Alliance.
- 2045** German Alliance founded.
- 2062** New European Economic Community formed by states and megacorporations.
- 2055** Arabian Peninsula unified under new Caliphate of Arabia. :: *Middle East*
- 2062** Child Emperor Yasuhito crowned. :: *Japan*
- 2064** Yucatan truce signed, Yucatan becomes autonomous. :: *Aztlan*

## DIVIDED WE STAND, UNITED WE FALL

Many governments had destabilized thanks to the Crash, and they put themselves to rights in its wake with varying degrees of complexity and violence. Among those most affected were the Americas, Russia, and Europe.

### NORTH AMERICA

Already divided by the Treaty of Denver, North America wasn't through balkanizing yet.

#### UCAS

On October 15, 2030, the remnants of the United States and Canada decided to merge into one country: the United Canadian and American States. Both countries had been kicked around hard enough economically that the notion simply made sense; we could each bolster the other while cutting down on the usual red tape and diplomacy snafus.

#### CALIFORNIA

California, one of a few opponents of this measure, was the only place that held hearing after hearing on the matter, going so far as to hold a referendum on seceding from the UCAS. Check that: many referenda. As it turned out, the new UCAS government was getting a bit tired of the whole mess and didn't want to have to deal with those crazy Californians anyway, so it simply gave the state the boot in 2036.

#### CAS

California's secession fever caught on in the South, particularly with those who, even after all these years, were still smarting from the Civil War. In 2033, while the UCAS merger was still young and ongoing, legislators from the southern states staged a walkout. They met later to discuss secession among themselves, a discussion that ended up as a no-go. It evidently remained an option to them, because that's exactly what happened the following year when they broke away as a protest against what they saw as preferential treatment for northern sprawls. Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia seceded from the UCAS, forming the Confederation of American States (CAS). Though Florida had been part of the original secession talks, the state instead decided to join the new Caribbean League.

## EURO WARS

Russia experienced more than a few disruptions, beginning in 2030. In the Siberian wilderness, Awakened forces rose up and seized control, dominating the Western Siberian Lowland and several other areas west. Seemingly inspired by this turn of events, Belarus and the Ukraine attempted to secede the next year, taking advantage of Russia's lack of communications and surveillance capabilities due to the Crash.

By this time, Russia was desperate for resources. They needed to retain control somewhere, and so they rolled in the troops to take care of the rebellious Belarusians and Ukrainians. Unfortunately, this mired them deep into a war that lasted for twelve years.

## NIGHTWRAITH INCIDENT

Something happened January 23, 2033, that nipped the worst of the Euro Wars in the bud. That night, Swedish airspace monitors picked up several flights of what appeared to be British Aerospace Nightwraith fighter-bombers moving rapidly across northern Europe. Before anyone could move, they took out key communications and command centers on all sides of the conflict. In addition, unknown assassins killed over a dozen key commanders.

The next day, all combatants announced a cease-fire. Despite the circumstances, the Brits denied any responsibility for the attack. Additionally, every government that plausibly could have done it has publicly denied it. We have theories a-plenty, but no proof, so the real perms remain a mystery still.

## THE SECOND OTTOMAN JIHAD

The fighting of the first Euro War had yet to die down when Europe was set upon by a new threat. A call for Jihad against the "Western oppressors" galvanized several Islamic nations under the banner of the fundamentalist Alliance for Allah. They marched on those they blamed for fomenting instability and sucking the oil-rich region dry during the Resource Rush.

Turned back by Israeli nuclear and magical defenses, the Alliance's Jihad set its sights on Russia and Europe. After three years of brutal fighting where the Jihad's vast numbers almost overran Europe and Russia's technological advantage, the war peaked with the assassination of the Alliance's leader during a visit to Istanbul. The internal bickering that followed gave the Euro forces the upper hand and led to the liberation of Jihad-occupied territories. The bitter bloodshed, ethnic and religious culling, and the vengeful retaliations that followed would scar Eastern Europe and Central Asia for decades to come.

## AWAKENED NATIONS

While many nations were falling apart, a few new ones were coming together. The nation of Yakut that formed in Siberia (helping to kick off the Euro Wars) was just the beginning.

## AMAZONIA

The Awakened had their day yet again in 2034, when three great dragons led other Awakened beings and metahumans into the Amazon basin. There they clashed with Brazilian forces in a short and brutal conflict. Brazil ceded most of the basin to the Awakened forces, which then proclaimed the new land Amazonia. Two days later, Amazonia turned around and claimed most of Brazil. They've been relatively quiet for self-proclaimed eco-saviors, but apparently there've been some policy changes in recent years.

## ELVEN NATIONS

Back in 2029, a bunch of elves from the Salish-Shidhe territory decided to move to the Mount Rainier area, where they then declared themselves a separate tribe called the Sinsearach. Most people just shrugged at this; no one really cared except for a few who perhaps gratefully washed their hands of the elf tribe.

On the other side of the world, on Christmas Day in 2034, Seamus O'Kennedy proudly announced the transformation of Ireland into Tír na nÓg with all the gosh and blarney he could muster.

With such a wondrous example to follow, in 2035 the Sinsearach elves seceded from the NAN and announced the formation of the Land of Promise: Tír Tairngire. The Salish-Shidhe did not like this, and expressed their displeasure with troops sent to invade.

After Tír Tairngire forces sent the Salish-Shidhe packing, the leaders sat down to create their quasi-feudalistic society. They started with a Council of Princes, naming Lugh Surehand as High Prince and reluctantly including the great dragon Lofwyr (whom we'll talk about further a little later in this file). Once all was to their liking, they all but closed their borders (being highly biased toward elves and against the rest of us dirty metahumans) and called it good.

## THE LAST WAVE

With so many defections and secessions happening, it's a wonder that the North American region didn't become a collection of house-sized kingdoms. Among the last to secede were the Tsimshian nation and California.

Tsimshian's defection from the NAN was the last straw for Howling Coyote. After spending years attempting to guide the NAN through the Sovereign Tribal Council, he resigned in disgust at what it had become and hasn't been heard from since.

California levied the last of its secession threats in 2036, because then-President McAlister forced them to make good on them by kicking California out of the UCAS. As soon as all UCAS forces left, Tír Tairngire rolled in. They mounted a surprise attack in Northern California with infantry and air support supplemented with paranimals, combat mages, and allegedly two dragons, advancing as far as south of Redding. There they stopped, set up camp, and demanded that all non-elves leave the area in thirty days.

The response was, predictably, "To hell with you." Guerilla resistors banded together and managed to push the Tír forces back to Yreka. The area between Yreka and Redding became a DMZ. But at the same time as the Tír's assault, Aztlan rose up and took another bite out of the newly independent state, striking north and capturing San Diego. Foreseeing a future that included more of this, California's governor made the worst possible move and appealed to Japan for help.

Help arrived in the form of Imperial Japanese Marines, who took the kind invitation and grabbed up San Francisco in the name of "protecting Japanese lives and corporate assets." This would have worse repercussions later. Meanwhile, California was now CalFree, baby, and a little bewildered at its state.

## HATE AND BROTHERHOOD

Humanity being the readily accepting race it is, it should come as no surprise that it would eventually clash with metahumanity in its backward way of welcoming elves, orks, dwarfs, and trolls to this corner of the universe. Meanwhile, anyone caught in the middle, having an existential crisis, or just looking for somewhere to belong found a creepy helping hand from an organization calling itself the Universal

Brotherhood. I say “creepy” because really, do you expect a warm embrace from bug spirits? Possession, sure, but no one knew exactly what was going on with the UB until it was nearly too late, and Chicago paid the price.

## META-HATE

While not every member of the Humanis Policlub is a raving lunatic, in the larger scheme of hatred against other members of metahumanity they are still near the top of the charts. However, the biggest boys on the hate block are still Alamos 20,000. They made their debut in 2036, napalm-firebombing a town in Ohio and killing twenty people in the process.

The same year saw the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment to the UCAS Constitution, which established the System Identification Number (SIN) and required the registration of every UCAS citizen. Anyone without a SIN was designated a “probationary citizen” and given very limited rights—yep, that means every SINless runner falls into this category. It also sometimes meant that intelligent beings fell through the cracks of society, as species other than homo sapiens were eligible for probationary citizenship, but could only get full citizenship through an act of Congress. Thank goodness for Dunkelzahn, who got the nod when he ran for UCAS President. Who says no to a dragon? That opened the floodgates for others.

## ACTS OF RAGE

Not surprisingly, hate crimes against metahumans escalated for several years. It all came to a head on February 7, 2039, otherwise known as the Night of Rage. As if there had been some worldwide conspiracy (and there may have been), riots sprang up around the world and targeted metahumans, along with their friends, families, and wannabes. Hundreds to thousands died; many were rounded up for their own “safety” and detained under armed guard.

In Seattle, Hand of Five terrorists attacked the warehouses and docks to which the metahumans had been led. Many places were set on fire, people panicked, and the Metroplex Guard did nothing. From the tragedy of that night the Ork Underground was born. Those who clearly remember that night at best harbor a bitter resentment against anyone displaying an ounce of bigotry, and at worst simply hate all humans.

Three days later, Alamos 20,000 reared its ugly head again, this time blowing the supports of the Sears Tower in Chicago. The resulting destruction took out or significantly damaged many buildings around several city blocks. No one wanted to rebuild there, so it became known as Shattergraves, an underground haven plagued by ghosts and hungry ghouls.

Boston had Bloody Thursday during the St. Patrick’s Day March. Knights of the Red Branch, bigots disgruntled at being ousted from their former homes in Tír na nÓg, set off a bomb in a well-populated elven restaurant along the parade route. It killed twenty-four people, injured dozens more, and set off race riots all over Boston that killed and injured hundreds more. There’s still a lot of anger and resentment there about it.

## UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

What appeared to be a humanitarian organization that preached acceptance and love first opened up shop in California in 2042, followed by a branch in Seattle in 2045. Other branches opened elsewhere, such as Denver and Chicago, though mysteriously (at the time) they were barred from Awakened nations like Tír na nÓg. Most of these branches offered counseling, and some included soup kitchens and free medical clinics, which were seemingly godsend for those who couldn’t afford proper care.

Nearly a decade later, however, we all found out just what the UB was harboring: insect spirits. In 2055, the UCAS FBI found out that the bugs were using the Seattle UB as a front to recruit hosts and summon more bug spirits. Quicker than you could say “Queen Euphoria,” they started shutting down every UB branch across North America. Other organizations may have been alerted, because it was closed down worldwide by 2056. All cited financial corruption, unmotivated terrorist violence, and other related offenses to conceal the truth from the public. Sad to say that we found out regardless, thanks to the debacle in Chicago.

## CERMAK BLAST

Ares investigative teams had discovered that Chicago held one of the largest hives in North America. A small army of Knight Errant Security personnel was sent in to deal with it, but they botched it up badly, sending bug spirits flooding throughout the city. Adding insult to injury, the city was walled off, trapping citizens inside. An Ares force also trapped inside put the final nail in Chicago’s coffin: whether deliberately or accidentally, they set off a subtactical nuke, which, by luck or providence, was mysteriously contained. While the Cermak Blast may have killed some of the insect spirits, others still swarmed the city and terrorized everyone—self-proclaimed warlords and civilians alike—remaining within the doomed metroplex. Even though Ares and the UCAS government later cleaned the city out (well, mostly ...), the astral space there is still contaminated.

## THE CORPORATE SHUFFLE

While the corporate landscape always has been and likely always will be in some state of flux, the megacorporations as we know them in 2070 have all been fairly recognizable since at least the forties. It was during this time that they began solidifying their respective corporate identities into some of the monolithic giants under whose shadows we’ve lived since 2033. Each of these following “AAA-rated” corps is part of the corporate cabal that runs the whole show, otherwise known as the Corporate Court.

## OTHER ECONOMIC EVENTS

<b>2005</b> East Coast Stock Exchange moves to Boston.	<b>2042</b> CC introduces Business Recognition Accords.
<b>2012</b> Inter-Corporate Council formed.	<b>2058–59</b> Corporate War.
<b>2020</b> The World Bank is replaced by Global Financial Services.	<b>2060</b> Fuchi Industrial Electronics implodes.
<b>2033</b> Global Financial Services becomes the Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank.	<b>2060</b> Corporate Court expands to 10 members with Wuxing and CatCo.
<b>2036</b> Fuchi Industrial Electronics markets the CDT-1000 desktop cyberdeck.	<b>2065</b> Collapse of Cross Applied Technologies.
<b>2037</b> Lofwyr acquires majority stake in Saeder-Krupp.	<b>2065</b> Horizon Group joins the Corporate Court
<b>2042</b> Corporate Court expands to 8 members with the inclusion of Yamatetsu.	<b>2070</b> AI Pulsar announces his existence to the world with the aid of Horizon.

## ARES

It starts with Damien Knight. No one had heard of him before, but they sure did after the Nanosecond Buyout in 2033. With this programming feat masterminded from Stockholm, Sweden, he managed to buy 22 percent of Ares Industries and make himself CEO Leonard Aurelius's rival for control of the corp. Some say that he did it with the great dragon Dunkelzahn's help, and some say that Knight used to be Echo Mirage's ex-team leader David Gavilan, gone underground and reborn. Whatever the truth of the matter, no one can say that Damien Knight is not a savvy corporate shark, because he's been swimming ever since.

## FUCHI

The next year, Matrix Systems of Boston came out with the first gray-market cyberterminal (Portal). The founders, Ken Roper and Michael Eld, were among the Echo Mirage survivors who had put their knowledge to use developing a portable version of the equipment they'd used to fight the Crash Virus. They didn't live long enough to enjoy the rewards of their labors, however; both died in mysterious accidents. This left a corporate raider named Richard Villiers, who had bought 49 percent of their company, with total ownership. He brought all relevant information on the Portals as well as several models to a company named Fuchi Industrial Electronics and demanded one-third ownership in exchange for this new technology. Korin Yamana and Shikei Nakatomi, the other owners, reluctantly acquiesced and thus began Fuchi's meteoric rise in the cyberdeck market. Thing is, it also kicked off years of infighting within the corp, so the seeds of its own destruction were also sown.

## SAEDER-KRUPP

Once upon a time, there was a company named BMW that was the backbone of the Saeder-Krupp empire. A very smart lady named Wilhelmina Graff-Beloit owned it, having wrested it from the man who created it: her own husband. In 2037, in a move that may have coined the phrase "Never deal with a dragon," the great dragon Lofwyr announced that, through various avenues, he owned a 63-percent share of the company's stock and was thus taking over as president. He gave Mina the boot (after which she went up the well to the Zurich-Orbital Habitat in 2050 and spent her time stewing over it until she died), got rid of the current board, and completely overhauled the management. Through some very astute maneuvering, Lofwyr made Saeder-Krupp an even larger corporate empire, shooting it straight up into the AAA league. The dragon has lived quite happily ever after.

## YAMATETSU

Ever the upstart and revolutionary (probably another reason they eventually renamed themselves "Evo"), Yamatetsu Corporation sprang on the scene in 2041 to everyone's dismay. These punks were determined to get themselves a seat on the Corporate Court and weren't taking any negative answers—how dare they? At least that's what other corps kept saying until Yamatetsu managed it in 2042, hauling themselves up to AAA status and thumbing their noses at the naysayers. They've continually had to oust the deadwood, those who would hold the company back, but otherwise have consistently attempted to remain at the forefront of technology, recently delving into many transhumanist endeavors as Evo.

## RENRAKU

Originally Keruba International, Renraku changed its name after the Crash of '29 when a corporate hotshot named Inazo Aneki bought it and completely restructured it. The company became a key player in rebuilding the information network after the Crash, and made wagonloads of money. But it overreached when it began dabbling in the creation of semi-autonomous knowbots (SKs) in 2049. Although this research launched Renraku further ahead of the tech curve and increased its market share, it also laid the groundwork for the insane AI, Deus, and its part in the second Crash.

## AZTECHNOLOGY

Aztechnology made an extremely poor judgement call when it ordered Aztlan to nationalize all foreign-owned businesses in 2044. This act of economic war prompted the Corporate Court to mandate the very first "Omega Order"—essentially a green light for every other corp to go after the offender with extreme prejudice. It took a few years for the megacorps to respond to this, but they did so in style: in 2048, backed by the Corporate Court, the joint Operation Reciprocity struck Aztechnology's Ensenada facilities. AZT couldn't run to the bargaining table fast enough, and the resulting Veracruz Settlement forced the megacorp to pay direct compensation to all affected companies. Somehow in the negotiation process, the megacorp managed to arrange things so that other megas could only establish local subsidiaries in Aztlan, and the major shareholders of those subsidiaries had to be Aztlan citizens or majority-owned Aztlan corps. Devious, no? It simply goes to show just how bloodthirsty they really are ... pun intended.

## WILL TO POWER

The period between 2050 and 2060 shook up the status quo for everyone, and that can all be laid at the very large talons of the great dragon Dunkelzahn. In life and in death, the dragon constantly questioned, instigated, and proved to be a very talkative lizard; maybe too much so, because he certainly made very powerful people pretty nervous. He was the primary motivating force behind many political, economic, and social movements for at least a decade, and maybe beyond.

## PRESIDENT DUNKELZAHN

Before 2057, if you'd asked your typical SINless sprawl resident what he thought of dragons, much less Dunkelzahn, you'd have been greeted with blank stares or shrugs. No one really cared because the wizworms didn't touch their lives in any way, shape, or form. But then it came to light that the 2056 UCAS election had been rigged, and President Steele and Vice President Booth were impeached. President pro tem Betty Jo Pritchard (incidentally our first female President) called for a new election, and Dunkelzahn announced his intention to run. All of a sudden, the question of eligibility came to light, meaning that he'd need a SIN in order to run—and the act of granting the dragon his SIN injected a bit more light and hope into some people's lives.

Eight months later, the great dragon Dunkelzahn became the first non-human President of the UCAS. Before he could do anything more than celebrate, however, the wyrm was assassinated outside his inaugural ball at the Watergate Hotel, leaving a large and visible astral rift. Though there were many with plenty of motives to eliminate him, even the Scott Commission could not find a satisfying scapegoat on whom to pin the blame. The dragon's running mate, Kyle Haeffner, became President; his interpreter, Nadja Daviar, was nominated and became Vice President.

## OTHER MYSTICAL EVENTS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>2011</b> Power sites and mana lines Awaken.<br>:: <i>global</i>                           | <b>2042</b> Dunkelzahn begins semi-annual<br>"Wyrn Talk." :: <i>UCAS</i>  |
| <b>2011</b> Maya Cloud seals off Tibet.<br>:: <i>China/Tibet</i>                             | <b>2058</b> The Chicago quarantine is officially<br>lifted. :: <i>UCAS</i>  |
| <b>2011</b> Mana storms begin to wrack Australia.<br>:: <i>Australia</i>                     | <b>2061</b> Sudden Unexplained Recessive<br>Genetic Expression heralds<br>appearance of changelings. :: <i>global</i> |
| <b>2015</b> Haparanda Anomaly Zone forms.<br>:: <i>Scandinavian Union</i>                    | <b>2061</b> First Shedim sightings. :: <i>UCAS</i>  |
| <b>2020</b> Great dragon Aden demolishes<br>Tehran. :: <i>Iran</i>                           | <b>2061</b> Lyoness emerges. :: <i>UK</i>   |
| <b>2023</b> Brittany shrouded by mystic<br>phenomenon known as the Mist.<br>:: <i>France</i> | <b>2063</b> Ganges manaline flares leading to<br>new SURGE incidents. :: <i>Indian Union</i>                          |
|  | <b>2069</b> The Deep Laguna manifests under LA.<br>:: <i>Pueblo Corporate Council</i>                                 |

### DUNKELZAHN'S WILL

The biggest shocker, however, came when the new Vice President not only also became the Chairman of the new Draco Foundation, but also had a will from President Dunkelzahn to read. This will seemingly contained the vast majority of the dragon's hoard, which ranged from money paid out to lowly accountants, orichalcum in sock drawers, and stocks in various (mega)corps, to advice, warnings, and calls for help to various and sundry persons known and unknown. It created organizations, asked for rescues, and put monetary support behind a myriad of projects and ventures for which we have yet to understand the reasons. Artifacts and other objects were also given, both to metahuman acquaintances and fellow dragons. In other words, this will created a largesse of business opportunities for shadowrunner and law-abiding citizen alike.

### MEGA SHUFFLE

No one except perhaps Dunkelzahn and a few others realized the repercussions this would have in the corporate world over the next four years or so. In between all of the bequests of music or money were entries entitling people such as Miles Lanier (the right-hand man of Fuchi co-owner Richard Villiers) or Nadja Daviar (the dragon's spokesperson) to all or a portion of the dragon's stock in this or that company.

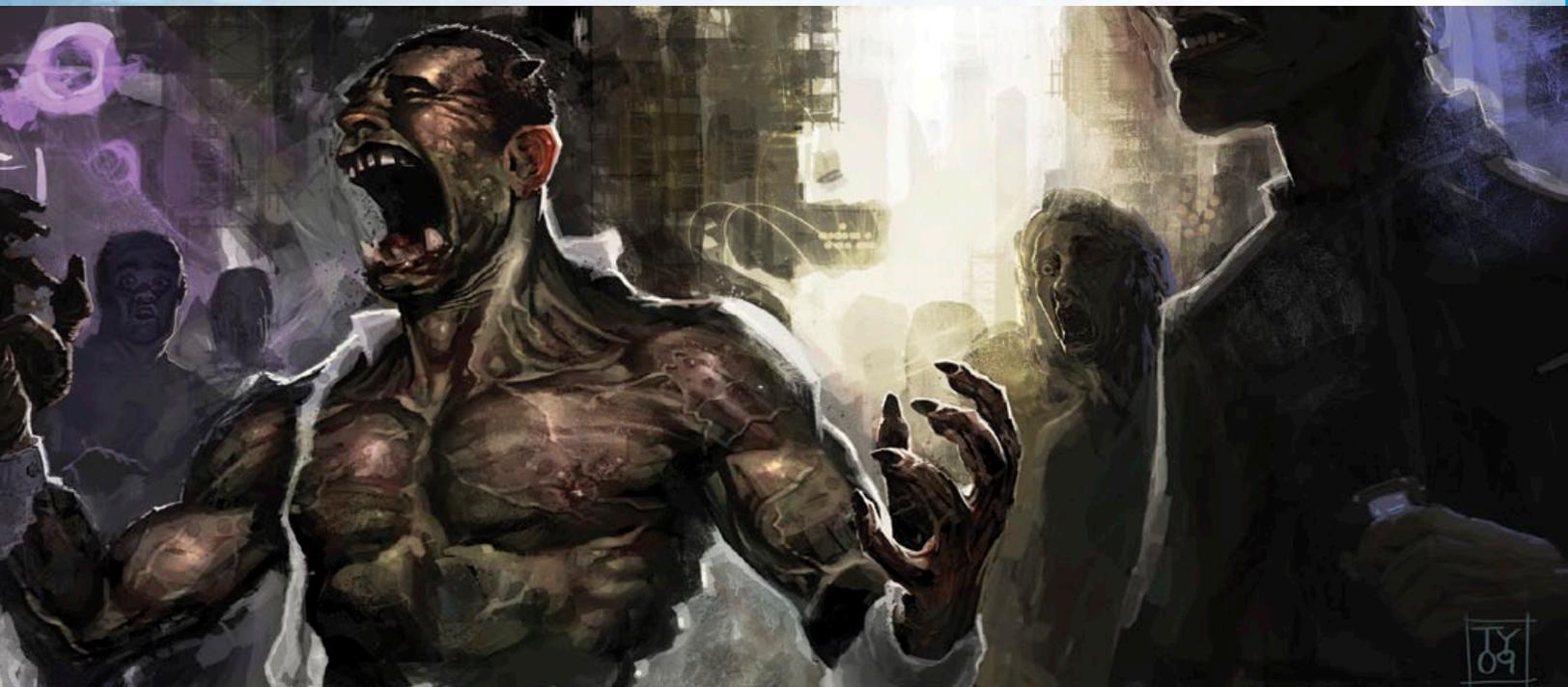
This sparked quite a bit of corporate maneuvering, which in the end led to the end of Fuchi and the creation of Novatech. Renraku took a severe hit when their pet creative genius (an eccentric elf who claimed to be Leonardo Da Vinci) vanished mysteriously along with all of his work—the untimely disappearance made it difficult for Renraku to justify their recent market advantage when Fuchi accused their former chief of security, Miles Lanier, of sharing proprietary data after Dunkelzahn bequeathed him a seat on Renraku's board of directors. Damien Knight got taken down a peg or two when Nadja Daviar was given Gavilan Ventures, which controlled a large enough percentage of Ares stocks to ensure that he needed her help to maintain his level of power. Damien Knight's long-time rival Leonard Aurelius sold his shares of Ares stock to prominent eco-lawyer Arthur Vogel—an attempt to implant a corporate conscience into Ares that has largely failed. Aurelius moved on to join forces with Lucien Cross—another of Knight's bitter enemies, reportedly also involved in the Nanosecond Buyout—joining Cross Applied Technologies' board of directors and thereby continuing to polarize the conflict between Ares and CATco (which had become a AAA megacorp in 2053). Newcomer AAA Wuxing received several bequests of artifacts—including a statue and a coin—that pointed to quite an investment of magical power which has steadily manifested and grown from then on.

### YEAR OF THE COMET

Though Halley's Comet was only around for approximately a year, it too brought forth a raft of changes to our world. Some called it a second Awakening due to the mainly magical upheavals that followed in its wake. Between SURGE, comet cults, natural orichalcum, and other strangeness, it certainly seems to be ... but none of it really stuck around. What did, however, were the political and economic changes, as well as a new great dragon to contend with. Even the probe race, designed to see who could land an effective probe on the comet and bring back samples and other data, eventually got swallowed up in the fever.

### STORMS

Beginning in August of 2061, places all over the world experienced natural and magical storms of varying strength. First, typhoons battered the Philippines, the first storms in a long string of disasters that



helped prepare the way for the island nation's eventual liberation from Imperial Japan. Mana storms swept a few nations around the world. Then, in October of the same year, the Ring of Fire erupted, afflicting Japan with volcanic eruptions and tidal waves. The Bay Area suffered earthquakes, the Philippines were hit with volcanic eruptions and an earthquake, and many other locations around the Pacific Rim were beset by smaller disasters that nevertheless disturbed or destroyed lives. In December, another earthquake hit—this time in Los Angeles, demolishing the carefully built walls that kept the rabble out and setting people free to riot and loot in the previously shielded city.

### SHAKEUP IN JAPAN

Once the Ring of Fire's fury was spent in Imperial Japan, its people began the task of cleaning up. One problem: the Emperor and all of his family had been killed, except for one young man. This meant a new Emperor and a new era for Japan.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Diet ordered the withdrawal of troops from foreign soil in order to help rebuild Japan. One general refused to comply—with San Francisco and the Central Valley under his control, General Saito quickly became not only a worrisome irritant to the Diet and the Emperor, but a royal pain to the people of CalFree. No one expected this; especially not the metahumans, whom Saito wasted no time in oppressing. Ares Macrotechnology, feeling Silicon Valley was threatened, moved in troops to defend it and ended up being instrumental (along with Mothers of Metahumans and various pirates and shadowrunners) in eventually liberating the area in the late 2060s.

Once the new Emperor rescinded the Yomi Island decree in February of 2062, rebel forces (called the Huk) in the Philippines made their move to liberate their nation from Japanese control. After decades of foreign occupation, many Filipinos felt that it was beyond time to take back control of their own destiny, and did so with the backing of the great dragon Masaru.

### GHOSTWALKER

We should have known something was going to happen as early as September of 2061, because that's when Dunkelzahn's Rift began fluctuating and acting more strangely than anyone was used to seeing. We think that's also when powerful shedim ("the dead," various ancestor spirits called them) had begun breaking through the Rift to plague us. One of these may in fact have reanimated Ibn Eisa, leader of the Islamic Unity Movement and one of the most influential men in the Middle East and Muslim world, shortly after his assassination (the imposter wasn't unmasked until 2064, but by then the damage to the Islamic world had been done).

It wasn't until Christmas Eve (December 24) of 2061 that the astral form of a previously unknown great dragon—dubbed Ghostwalker by the media—broke through the Rift. It's been said that he flew directly to Denver, picked up his physical body somewhere along the way, and then began a rampage that ended up with Aztlan kicked out and the CAS inheriting that sector.

It was a tense couple of days, with people thinking that the Treaty of Denver might be nullified, and we'd have war between the NAN, the UCAS, and the CAS. Ghostwalker sorted things out in a meeting, reshuffling Denver's organization, making himself the prime authority of the region, and giving essential daily management powers to the Council that had previously handled everything with varying degrees of competency. The new Treaty of Denver also called for the creation of the Zone Defense Force (or Zonies, as the t-bird jammers and smugglers

call them) from military personnel from all sectors. This granted Denver the ability to defend itself in case of attack without requiring any sector to raise its own armies (a violation of the treaty).

### DRACONIAN MANEUVERS

Though the public at large wasn't terribly aware that this was going on, anyone clued in to the power behind the scenes of the world knew that something was not quite right between the great dragons. Many of them had appeared in the skies over Dunkelzahn's Rift in the FDC as some sort of tribute, but that didn't mean that they were entirely happy with the late President's decision to distribute his wealth via a metahuman invention rather than according to dragon convention. (That much some of us picked up. Chatty bunch, dragons, when they choose to be.) This meant a reckoning on their terms, of course, and Ghostwalker's appearance on the scene meant it was about to arrive.

### A NEW DRAGON IN TOWN

Something many had noted about Ghostwalker was his almost uncanny resemblance, at least in draconic form, to the late Dunkelzahn. The resemblance was strong enough that some theorized that he was Dunkelzahn returned, or perhaps a sibling. Either way, Ghostwalker hadn't seemed to like what had been done with Dunkelzahn's will, the items within, and what it boded for dragons. He clearly wanted a reckoning. What that really means for the rest of us is anyone's guess, but I can tell you a few things: the dust has settled, and the world is still here; Hestaby is now a Prince in T'ir Tairngire instead of Lofwyr; the other wyrms now seem as satisfied as they're ever going to be; Lofwyr retained as much power if not more than he previously had; and many shadowrunners were employed in very lucrative endeavors.

### SLASH AND BURN

Smarting from being kicked out of Denver, Aztlan wasted no time in attempting to prove itself elsewhere. Ever since the 2050s or so, when the Campeche district of Aztlan rose up in rebellion, the bloody-minded country had been aching to retake control of the Yucatan and assert its authority. With plenty of recalled troops at hand, the government sent them into the Yucatan to slash and burn everything they encountered, which they did until the environment began fighting back. March 15, 2062, saw an earthquake, tidal waves, and storms hitting the Yucatan, pushing the Aztlan offensive back and touching off warfare between nature and toxic spirits. The Azzies have been squatting and waiting for things to die down until they can go back in, but I have a feeling it's never going to stop until one side or the other is defeated ... and I hope for everyone's sake that it'll be the toxics.

### MATRIX CRASH 2.0

Let's go back for a moment to 2055. Back then, and for quite a few years, it was never clear how or why the otaku appeared, but they did and adamantly believed in the existence of something they called the Deep Resonance (a Matrix-dwelling quasi-deity or demiurge, in their eyes). These prodigy children were our future (we call them technomancers now), and they had a key role to play. In addition to this, unknown to all but a few of us, we had several AIs on our hands: Mirage, birthed from the ashes of Echo Mirage; Morgan, a rogue AI created within Renraku who escaped as soon as she could with a decker named Dodger; and Deus, another AI created within Renraku in an attempt to have a pet intelligence to heel, and built using code ripped from Morgan (who thenceforth became Megaera, poor broken thing).

Now, to most people none of this meant a thing. Like dragons, none of them (otaku, AIs) had really ever touched our lives. They would, however, in a very real and brutal way—not once, but several times—between 2059 and 2064.

## DEUS' AGENDA

In December of 2059, the Renraku Arcology in Seattle went offline for no apparent reason, shut down and otherwise cut off from the rest of the sprawl and the Matrix. Renraku sealed off the area, offering inadequate explanations of malfunctions. As time went by, more and more people (Matrix denizens and regular folks alike) realized that something quite serious was going on in there. It wasn't revealed until later, after General Colloton and UCAS troops were called in to take over and begin liberating the arcology, that the AI Deus had taken control and was busily experimenting upon its captive audience for its own purposes.

It was a long series of ugly, gory, and heartbreaking skirmishes, as well as many a Matrix battle, that eventually saw the end of Deus's stranglehold. Those who wanted to capture him afterward were disappointed, however, to find that he'd slipped their carefully prepared trap. As it turns out, he'd downloaded himself into the heads of many of his victims, released into the world after they had all been freed. These became part of the Network, which also contained Megaera thanks to the last fight between her and Deus. This would be very important later.

## PERFECT STORM

A confluence of actors and events that contributed to the second Crash came together right at the point of Novatech's Initial Public Offering. The corporation, deep in debt and hoping to score big enough to dig out of it, had made all the necessary arrangements for its stock to go public. The Boston Exchange, which had hosted the East Coast Stock Exchange since New York's earthquake in 2005, upgraded itself in order to handle the projected high amounts of traffic on its grids from the IPO.

Deus wanted to take advantage of what promised to be the highest-Matrix-traffic-event ever (how often does a megacorp take its stock public?) in order to upgrade himself and become a god in the Matrix, purging himself of the remainder of Megaera's code at the same time.

Meanwhile, Pax—one of Deus's former devoted otaku servants—had become twisted through listening to something she'd called the Dissonance, an anti-Deep Resonance phenomenon. She was also undergoing Fading, meaning she was losing her otaku abilities, but she wasn't going to let them go without a fight. Pax would sacrifice anyone and anything in order to maintain them.

As it happened, Pax partnered up with the radical Norse cult Winternight, which was happy to help destabilize the Matrix, viewed as the primary tool of their enemy Loki. Not only did they plant a home-grown mega-worm, but also they stole nanotech weaponry from an AA-rated Eurocorp named Zeta-ImpChem as part of their plan to bring down Deus and the Matrix. The stolen nanovirus was accidentally released during the infiltration of a Swiss extraterritorial corp zone, killing everyone present but allowing Z-IC to identify the weapon. Z-IC also discovered a worm code egg in the nearby mainframe, thus getting the word out regarding Winternight and its potential plans—too late.

Pax and Winternight succeeded. The Dissonance worm triggered on schedule, wreaking havoc as it plowed through the Matrix.

The worm's viral tidal wave struck the Boston ECSE shortly after the launch of the IPO—and right after Deus had erupted into the middle of the virtual trading floor and began his aggressive upgrading. Add in a few key EMP strikes on major Matrix nodes to this massive upheaval, and you can see why the whole thing melted down spectacularly and brought everyone and everything along with it. Even the Shadow Matrix was not completely immune, though it was able to sever itself from the rest of the Matrix before too much damage had been done. But it was too late for the rest of us, especially in North America.

As you kids say today, it was completely glitched.

## IT'S A WIRELESS WORLD

So, that brings us up to 2065 through present-day 2072. Most of you know what happened, having already lived it, but for completeness's sake, I'll lay it out for you so you've got the whole picture. You can't appreciate the puzzle's image until all the pieces are in place, after all.

## NEONET AND THE WMI

The first priority was having a system to replace the old Matrix; we'd become so dependent on it to run everything that society, for a while, simply fell apart in some places. Here's where two companies, Transys Neuronet and Erika, come on the scene: they'd been developing wireless technology for the Wireless Matrix Initiative since 2058, and had been planning on getting it online in the fall of 2064 anyway. With the second Matrix Crash happening in that same timeframe, it was a foregone conclusion to many that this was the answer to our prayers. After Transys Neuronet and Erika merged, Novatech immediately entered negotiations for a merger as well, wanting to take advantage of the additional influx of money it would bring and having the advantage of being a corporation used to dealing with Matrix-related technology. The only problem was that in the minds of many who were aware of what happened the day of the second Crash, Novatech's name was mud. The new combined corp christened itself NeoNET and proceeded to set up the Matrix in its virtual and augmented form as we know it today.

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

The years following the Crash saw some significant changes on the Corporate Court landscape, as the megas jockeyed for position and took advantage of each other's weaknesses. The two biggest changes occurred as one mega lost its seat on the Court and another one rose to claim it.

Cross Applied Technologies' troubles began when its CEO, Lucien Cross, died in a plane crash on the day of Crash 2.0. Damien Knight of Ares had always had his eye on CATco, but Cross's death brought him out to declare open warfare, snapping up Cross assets left and right as Cross's son tried desperately to hold the corp together. This, coupled with various other financial difficulties and irregularities, placed CATco's Corporate Court seat in extreme jeopardy.

In the same period, another corporation was making its move, this time in the other direction. Horizon Group, a corp specializing in public relations, entertainment, and marketing, leveraged its close relationships with several key nations (including Tir Tairngire and Pueblo, among others) and its exclusive contracts for rebuilding California into a successful bid to claim CATco's vacated Corp Court seat. They're a new face on the AAA scene and we have yet to see what they'll do with their newfound power, but it should be interesting to say the least.

## GENERAL COLLOTON FOR PRESIDENT

The second Matrix Crash also completely screwed up the November 2064 elections, as far as electronic or remote-voting was concerned. In addition, a group calling itself the New Revolution, with the aim of forcefully reuniting the old United States of America, attempted to stage a coup and failed. Still, they succeeded in killing quite a few leaders (President Kyle Haeffner among them) before loyal UCAS troops were able to wrest control back. Under orders from the President pro tem Nadja Daviar, General Angela Colloton (famed for her work with the Renraku Arcology situation in 2059) declared martial law until the country was brought back under control.

When elections were held again, we had little choice but to elect a President who ended up being nothing but a tool of the corps during his entire term. We'd been through enough at this point that controversy wasn't at all welcome in a candidate. We learned from our mistakes, though, and in 2068 elected General Colloton as President.

## NATION (RE)BUILDING

Everyone slowly began picking up the pieces of their lives as soon as they could after the second Crash. In Boston, for example, a memorial was erected to mourn the loss of so many lives, and the ECSE was moved back to New York. The latter city had long since rebuilt from its 2005 earthquake, and had previously hosted the Stock Exchange, so it only made sense.

Meanwhile, the Ute Nation in the NAN, having already been in a slow downward spiral since the early sixties, finally cracked in the aftermath of the Crash. More in need of resources than pride, they grudgingly but gratefully accepted assistance from the newly wireless Pueblo Corporate Council and were absorbed in 2067. Their sector in Denver followed suit with Ghostwalker's blessing. The withdrawal of the megacorporation Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies from Tsimshian after it was finished plundering left the territory rather empty; the Salish-Shidhe lost no time in making it a Salish protectorate. This started some interesting rumbling in the Sovereign Tribal Council, so I'd keep an ear out for more if I were you.

CalFree finally saw the last of Saito, but not the last of its woes. In early 2069, a pair of major earthquakes coming from the San Andreas Fault line and the San Pedro Shelf caused widespread flooding and destruction, killing tens of thousands. Much of Southern California and the Central Valley dropped below sea level and were inundated with tidal waves. While San Francisco and the Bay Area were mostly spared, waters flooded most of the Central Valley and Los Angeles (which, if nothing else, had at least fortified their sea walls in the more affluent corporate areas decades ago). They say that the floodwaters may recede after a year or two, but we'll see. Meanwhile if you want to visit, you'll either have to fly or learn to swim.

## TIMES OF EMERGENCE

Unbeknown to the masses of metahumanity, the Crash of 2064 laid seeds that would take years to bear fruit in the fertile digital fields of the new Matrix. It is now widely believed that the Crash, intentionally or not, resulted in a singularity event. While thousands of online users were killed, others found themselves subtly changed, becoming true children of the Matrix. A select few survivors discovered they were able to interface with the new wireless Matrix using only the power of their minds and the elusive force known as the Resonance. Though their numbers remain small, they seem to have grown in the years since the Crash.

Identifying rare individuals with this strange gift, the megacorps initiated secret pogroms to ruthlessly capture and examine these "technomancers," in a bid to contain, control, and harness their power for profit and security. In June 2070, the disastrous and bloody breakout of a handful of such test subjects from a research facility in Hong Kong shoved technomancers into the public eye in the worst possible way. Faced with justifying their actions or scapegoating these potentially dangerous individuals, several megacorps fed the media hysteria and public paranoia. Technomancers were linked to the Crash of '64 and the virus and blamed for everything from illegal Matrix access to brainhacking. The media-fed frenzy quickly spiraled into worldwide persecution and violence, forcing many technomancers further underground and into the shadows.

## A SECOND REVELATION

During the height of the technomancer persecutions, metahumanity stumbled upon an equally unexpected and frightening surprise. Matrix security trawls for virtuakinetic activity revealed an increasing number of anomalies, strange oddities and sightings in the Matrix started to add up, and soon we were faced with the undeniable truth that technomancers were not the only children of the Crash. Forced from hiding by stringent new Matrix security measures, a new generation of Artificial Intelligences emerged from the depths of the Matrix.

Significantly less powerful than the first generation of self-aware Matrix programs, these new AIs emerged from existing software and programs. They soon found themselves not only facing metahuman prejudice, but also locked in a battle to see their rights as autonomous, sentient beings recognized by the corporations that laid claim to their original programs.

While debate blazed for months, with some megacorps siding with the Emerged factions—whether for strategic convenience or enlightened self-interest—it was only the revelation of the horrors of unsanctioned experimentation on technomancers and the compromises struck by an AI faction led by the digital intelligence Pulsar that settled things down. Though this was not before stringent security and Matrix regulation legislation was passed in several nations.

## UNDERWORLD AT WAR

The echoes of the technomancer witch-hunts and the AI emergence had barely settled down when a very different sort of social problem took hold of numerous sprawls in early 2071. A mysterious new Bioengineered Awakened Drug named "tempo" took inner cities and youth culture by storm. Granting limited astral sight as well as an empathy-heightening buzz, tempo soon became the drug *du jour*, insinuating itself into all walks of life by exploiting legal loopholes regarding Awakened drugs. The damage the tempo craze wrought on traditional syndicate gold mines like BTL and regular drug trade, as well as the impressive profits it pumped into its distributors, soon set the global criminal underworld at each other's throats. Syndicates clashed locally and internationally. Drug-related crime and violence soared to unprecedented levels in many sprawls. Syndicate wetwork hit all-time highs and some big names were removed from play. Gangland battles have shaken the underworld status quo so badly the dust has yet to fully settle.

It's been a busy few years, but like the old shadow adage goes, "Trouble is good for business." And business has definitely been good.

So what now? Well, you've had your history lesson. Time to go out there and make your own.