

INFINIVERSE™

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CONTENTS

Rumors and News	2
Essence of Faith	3
Dispatches	7
Your Letters	11
Herald Messages	12

Contributors This Issue:

Stephen "I've got this story here"
Crane, Greg "Where's Smitty?"
Farshtey, Bill "Are you sure you
want to stand there?" Slaviscek, Ed
Stark, and a hot prospect from the
minor leagues



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More upcoming product news from the House of *Torg*:

This month means double-barreled excitement from West End, with the releases of the *Tharkold* sourcebook and Shane Hensley's devastating *Temple of Rec Stalek*. Between the two of them, the Possibility Wars will never be the same.

March leads Storm Knights straight into Los Angeles, the *City of Demons*, where Nippon and Tharkold go toe-to-talon. It's a city where, sometimes, you have to "walk with the silver demon," like it or not.

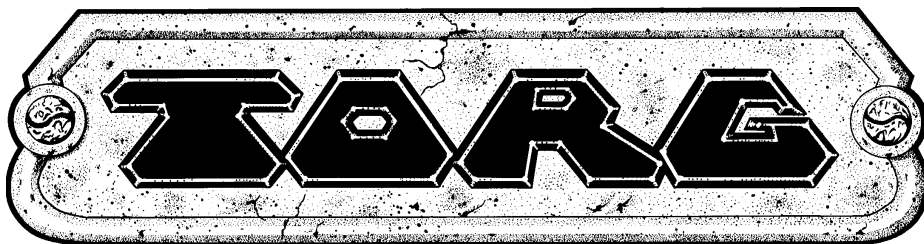
April, as we've been proclaiming for some time, is the month of *Infiniverse Update*. Here's a chance to catch up on all that's been happening in the Possibility Wars, including many never-before-announced events! This is also a good chance to show your friends all they've been missing by not subscribing.

In May, we return to LA with Dan Greenberg's *Los Angeles Citybook*. Learn all the secrets of that war-torn city,

including how to get from here to there without getting gutted by gangslaves or gored by ghuls.

June brings the *Delphi Council Worldbook*, by Bill Smith and Robert Maxwell. Along with updates on what's been going on in the Core Earth nations since the war began, this volume will include new world laws, new templates, two (count 'em, two) new types of magic, and diagrams of major Core Earth cities where adventure awaits.

In the meantime, plotlines are flying fast and furious around the WEG editorial offices. In the months to come, the Possibility Wars will be shifting into high gear. The unsettled situation in Orrorsh is communicating itself throughout the world, and all the High Lords will be looking to grab whatever they can before (dum da dum dumm) the Gaunt Man returns (yep, ol' Sunken Eyes will be back sometime in '92. Makes you feel all warm and gooey inside, doesn't it?).



Rumors and News



First Indication reports on the newest batch of rumors to which you have responded. *Continuing Report* updates the rumors as more responses come in. *The Wrap Up* gives you the tally after the rumor has reverberated throughout the Infiniverse for about three months. The wrap up will be the last report for that rumor in *Infiniverse*.

Rumor Report

The results are given a true or false, followed by a parenthetical number. That number represents the strength of the truth or falsehood throughout the Infiniverse. For example a statement which is False (15) is false unless the gamemaster decides to test the statement; on a roll of 15 or better, the statement is actually true. Roll again on 10 and 20 when testing the truth or falsity of a reported rumor.

First Indication: Issue #18

1. Brazilian workers of Japanese descent have been recruited for the workforce of Nippon Tech, but have encountered a great deal of prejudice and some are carriers of the Comaghaz virus. Starts at True (15).

2. Elves in Finland and Sweden have voted to split off from the Dark forces and establish their own territories. Happy Independence Day — it's True (16).

3. Jakatts develop new and more powerful miracles. True (16).

Continuing Report: Issue #17

1. "Anglach Dornorin," Aysle's "Day of Night and Night of Day," may see the honorable become corrupt, if Uthorion has his way. Jumps to True (17).

2. VX images of Knights Templar making life in the GodNet difficult for the Inquisition. Gosh, guess so — it's True (20).

3. Grumbling in Magna Verita about Malraux's absence as social discontentment and rumors of revolution begin to surface. Leaps to True (19).

4. Tharkoldu occulttech device unearthed in the Soviet Union, and radiation levels indicative of a second invasion. Yipes — True (50).

5. Nippon Tech ninjas believed to have transported the Comaghaz virus back to Japan, possibly leading to even more intrigue and mistrust. Dead heat, but True (11).

6. Madame K., an Orrorshan spiritualist, claiming to have contacted the spirit of Lord Byron Salisbury. We

know she's lying, but whether the people of Orrorsh are falling for it is another matter. Flips to False (11).

The Wrap-Up: Issue #16

1. Pharaoh Mobius — stag movie star? Don't forget the popcorn — it's True (16).

2. Orrorshan occultist in Aysle trying to make monstrous versions of magical creatures (*necrolepus vampirum?*) One vote put it over the top — True (13).

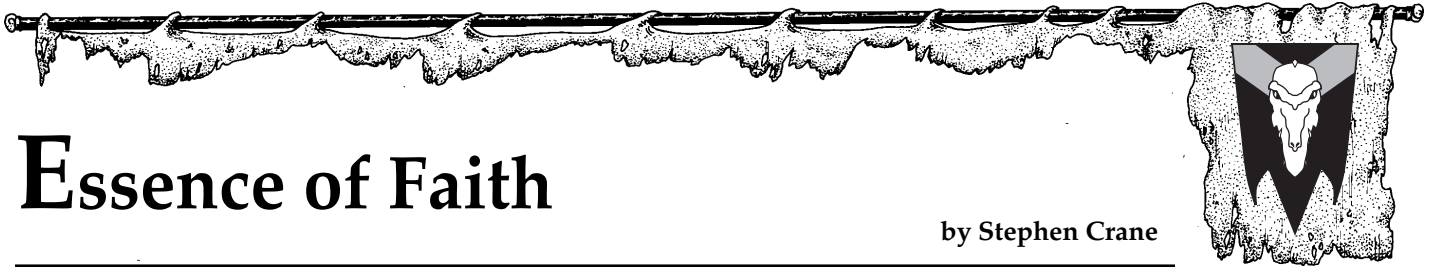
3. Baruk Kaah's support dwindling in the Living Land, and the edeinso tribes appear ready to embrace a new leader. Finishes at a whopping True (60).

4. Jean Malraux scrambling to keep public support on his side at home, but his international policy in Quebec has been remarkably successful. Holds at True (35).

5. Hachiman Arms making spectacular profits, but backlash has recently started because Hachiman will sell to anyone. Sabotage and outright attacks have occurred. Jumps to True (45).

6. Gang warfare and refugees make life difficult in Los Angeles. A spree of serial killings in the city is worrying the local authorities. Doesn't move much — finishes at True (16). ☒





Essence of Faith

by Stephen Crane

IR

reee-e-e-gaarkh!

The unearthly shriek echoed off the sheer walls of the narrow defile as the young ravagon ducked under the swipe of viciously curved talons. With the rustling of vast wings, the elder ravagon regained his balance, shrieked again and drove forward with another devastating slash, attempting to shred the face from his opponent.

Dodging to his left to avoid the terrible claws, the young one stumbled. He fluttered his wings to regain his balance, then felt a searing pain in his side as the elder's follow-up slash struck home. He staggered back, attempting to clear away the haze that sought to claim his vision. His exposed ribs glistened white, contrasting sharply with the red-hued skin surrounding the wound. The elder creature flapped his huge wings forward and tore at the younger's legs with the cruel hooks that lined the edge of the scaled pinion. Dark rivulets of blood streamed down to the ground, hissing as they seeped into the dry soil.

Folding his wings down in front of himself for protection from the hooks and claws of his antagonist, the younger ravagon scrambled back toward the wall of the deep, rocky gorge. He needed time to think, or he would not come through this clash alive.

He was an average specimen of ravagonhood, tall, barrel-chested, his long thin neck holding his bony skull seven feet above the ground. His long, scaled wings were still wrapped around his body. He unfurled them to give himself more freedom of action, and the sharp, hooked spurs along their edges scribed shallow grooves into the rough ground.

The young ravagon looked around and saw he had stumbled into a narrow and cramped portion of the gorge. He sprinted toward a wider area of the

arena, seeking room to maneuver, and suddenly found his adversary approaching him.

The elder, a large, palely colored ravagon, swung his long wings to the fore. Instead of striking again at the smaller creature, he continued to flap his wings and hurled himself forward and above the young ravagon. He swiped at the younger's face with his clawed feet, just missing the eyes as his talons were deflected by bony ridges.

The elder descended quickly, and turned to face his foe. He struck next for the younger's throat, but only succeeded in slicing through the outer layer of roughly textured skin as his feet lost their purchase in the coarse soil. He immediately righted himself and turned to face his opponent.

The young ravagon lurched back a number of paces, trying to put some space between himself and the older antagonist. The elder circled his adversary slowly, savoring the pain he had inflicted. He preferred to prolong the agony. A deep clicking rasp came rumbling out of his throat — a ravagon's equivalent of an evil grin.

The bleeding ravagon fought to regain his equilibrium. He knew he must concentrate on his efforts if he were to survive this encounter; his innate savagery could carry him only so far. His foe was a fierce warrior, a veteran of many raids, while he was merely a fledgling. As he struggled to focus his energies, he became aware of the throbbing of his wounds and the sound of the blood rushing in his ears ...

* * *

... the sound of the wind rushed by his ears as he approached the cliff face that was the village of Verakor. His glistening eyes picked out the ledge as he banked in his approach for landing. He was ecstatic. Even the lowering

sky could not dim his spirits. The hunt had gone exceedingly well. A large herd of wilvit had been sighted and a good many of them taken. He could still hear the squealing of the beasts and smell the hot lifeblood gushing forth; feel their flesh tear and separate around his talons ... but more intoxicating even than that was the news he brought to his mentor.

The hunter caught a final updraft in his huge wings, slowing his descent, then touched down securely on the rough sill of rock. He folded down his great wings, cloaking himself, then bounded around an outcropping of craggy stone toward an opening in the cliffside. As he approached he saw a crowd of ravagons around the portal and heard a commotion from within. A large, lightly colored ravagon — it was Karuzok! — stormed out of the dwelling as the flock of creatures dispersed before him. He turned to continue his angry speech, ranting at someone the young ravagon could not yet see, but suspected he knew too well.

"You are *tzufak*, not *tzullat*! You will answer for this outrage; that I will see to. This blasphemy will not go unpunished!"

The angry ravagon turned again and, noticing the young one approaching, fixed him with a disdainful glare. Then he turned and leaped off the edge of the rock shelf, and with a mighty flapping of his expansive wings, soared up into the cheerless grey sky.

The young one approached the entrance to the cliff dwelling. The other ravagons, hesitating to get too near to that which drew Karuzok's anger, still moved out of his way only grudgingly. He paused at the doorway, his claws resting upon the rough-textured wall, then entered the cool, dark lair, which had been carved from the interior of the sand-colored cliffs.

The sight which met his eyes caused him dismay. The cavern was in disarray. Many of the furnishings were upended and scattered about. In the midst of the chaos, a battered figure was rising to its feet, blood trickling from a crisscross of slashes across its chest. It was Skorit, his mentor and the village's tzullat. Karuzok had dared do this to a priest of Ravok!

The young ravagon felt a cold anger build in him. Skorit had obviously been hurled about the room, causing much of the damage in the process. The young one hurried to his side to steady him and spoke angrily, "Karuzok dares much; you are tzullat. He must be brought before the council!"

Skorit winced, as much from his memory of Karuzok's last comment as from the pain. The pale ravagon had named him tzufak — a passive prey creature — a reference doubly insulting to a ravagon. Skorit had earned his position by demonstrating his strength and viciousness, as did any ravagon with a name. He hissed in anger and bitterness, "Karuzok wields much power in the council. They will do nothing against him."

"They must listen to this. He has assaulted a speaker of Ravok."

"No, my friend, I am afraid they have no respect for me. The Denyers hold sway on council."

Skorit staggered a bit, then regained his balance. He stood half a head taller than his supporter. The smaller ravagon bent down and righted a stool made from the dark, rubbery flesh of the kornaf tree. He helped Skorit to sit, then spoke again.

"How can they be so blind? Sallsboratza is clearly one of Ravok's true prophets. He *is* the sixth Irishantza. He has demonstrated the power of Ravok many times."

"That is true, young hunter, he has indeed performed feats worthy of Ravok the Scourge. But the Denyers hold that he cannot be a true Irishantza because he does not come to us wearing the form of the Chosen of the Scourge. If he does not look like a ravagon, he cannot lead us, they say."

"But looks do not determine fitness to live, it is the spirit that grants us life. There are the tales of other creatures chosen by Ravok and graced with his essence."

"Yes, *szilvaravok* — the essence of Ravok — runs strong in us. It is the life force of our world. It is what raises us above animals and makes us masters of our world. Szilvaravok gives us the power to carve our own destiny from the many possibilities that lie before us. The essence of Ravok gives us the power, and we control that power with the spirit of Ravok.

"That spirit is our intelligence — the ability to understand our nature. While many other creatures are savage in nature, we ravagons are the Chosen of the Scourge because we have the capacity to appreciate our savagery. It is only we Chosen who can revel in the shredding of flesh, the

The infirm did not provide much sport as they were dispatched.

snapping of bones and the shedding of blood. It is what sets us apart from the beasts.

"Together, the essence and spirit of Ravok grant us power. That is why we can sense the essence of Ravok in others, and when the strong eliminate the weak, Ravok gifts them with the *szilvaravok* of the vanquished."

Skorit paused to ease his battered body into a more comfortable posture, then continued, "The tales are told of other creatures with the essence of the Scourge, but until now they have only been tales. The arrival of such a being causes dread in the hearts of some; this threatens their status as the Chosen. They have not the vision to see a grander design. Ravok tests us. It is our duty to recognize the Irishantza when he comes. Those who deny a true prophet are not fit to exist and must be cast down. Our faith in Ravok and his Irishanti makes us stronger than our foes.

"Five Irishanti have come to lead us. Those who could not accept them were destroyed by the faith of the Believers. Two more Irishanti are to come before we are finally allowed to join with Ravok in his holy Scourge. This Sallsboratza is the sixth Irishantza,

come to lead us to greater glories in Ravok's name. His power and viciousness mark him as such. He is ravagon in all but appearance."

The younger nodded his agreement as he spoke. "*Vaza!* He is indeed Irishantza. And that is why I have come here directly from the hunt. While seeking prey in the Dark Hollows we encountered a scouting party from the town of Uskorab. Word has reached them from further down the Long Gorge that Parok and his Flock fly this way! He seeks followers to join the Flock in a holy war to purge the weak and seize fresh *szilvaravok*. Rumor has it that Sallsboratza himself will lead this hunt, even flying to new worlds!"

The awe in the young ravagon's voice was apparent. His mentor could not help but add, "And you wish to fly with them."

"Yes," came the eager reply, "I long for the chance to honor Ravok, and this hunt will bring much honor on him. But ... I have no name. Parok seeks warriors, not striplings."

With a touch of tenderness uncharacteristic of a ravagon, Skorit said, "You will earn your name, hunter; opportunities fill this world. Ravok knows when it is right that you should. As for Parok's Flock ... there will be other hunts, other wars."

"If it must be, then *vaza*, so be it." The hunter vented his disappointment on the remnants of a shattered table. He shredded it with his gleaming talons until nothing remained of the table except a forlorn pile of twisted shavings — much like his hopes and dreams.

"Perhaps, at least, when the council beholds the might assembled under the banner of Sallsboratza, they will see the error of their ways and accept him. Then Karuzok can be made to pay."

Skorit's mood lightened at that. "Yes, with the power of Parok and his Believers behind us we can enforce the will of Ravok and pledge our village to Sallsboratza. Then shall Karuzok see who is the more mighty."

The hunter's dark eyes gleamed at the thought. He uttered a low hissing rasp of pleasure, the spoke. "I must go now, and see to the disposition of the hunt. I will return tonight, to help you

with this mess, and to plan for Parok's arrival."

Skorit flexed his wings and attempted to rise, but the pain of his wounds made him think better of it. He remained seated, his clawed pinions scraping against the debris on the floor. "Yes, go. Some rest will help me heal. We shall talk again this evening."

The Unnamed ravagon strode out of the dwelling and onto the rock ledge. Without breaking stride, he continued out over the brink, and his enormous wings lifted him into the air. He glided silently down to the holding pens in the lower levels. Skorit's residence was high on a rocky outcropping of the canyon wall. From this height he could see the expanse of the village. It was an extensive cluster of dwellings ranged across the walls of the canyon, looking like a series of fungal growths clinging to the decaying bark of a tree.

Some of the dwellings were built out from the rock face, while others were carved into the living stone itself. Terraced ledges and sills connected many of the dwellings on the same level. There were no stairs or ledges connecting the various levels — what need of such contrivances when every resident of the village could fly?

Those who could not — they were too weak to continue their existence. One of the ravagons' sacred duties was to preserve the strength of their race by weeding out the weak and passive. A ravagon who displayed weakness, physically or in spirit, could be challenged by others; indeed, must be. Any ravagon would be eager to perform its duty; it could enjoy the thrill of battle and the taste of slaughter, as well as serve its faith. Sometimes, however, it was solely duty; the infirm did not provide much sport as they were dispatched.

The sun was beginning to sink below the lip of the canyon. Long shadows crawled across the dwellings and outcroppings of the canyon, like evil fingers clawing their way down to the depths of the village.

The Unnamed one barely noticed the panorama he passed over. His thoughts were in a turmoil. He yearned desperately to fly with the Warlord. Parok's Flock would be a quest that would be spoken of down the ages. Yet he had not yet faced the Test that

would earn him his name, and could not be a part of that quest.

In these troubled times it seemed Ravok the Scourge was too occupied to dispense Tests. One could not create a Test; that could only be provided by Ravok. A Challenge could be issued, but Challenges were just a ritualized method of eradicating the weak. There was no honor gained in disposing of the unfit. If the challenged ravagon were to prevail, however, that would demonstrate his strength and spirit in the face of certain doom, and be a feat worthy of a name. But rarely did one survive a Challenge.

True Tests were scarce. With the coming of Sallsboratza, they were even more scarce, as local altercations were

It is only we ravagons who can revel in the shredding of flesh, the snapping of bones and the shedding of blood.

forgotten, subsumed in the more general religious dispute concerning the authenticity of the Irishantza. The number of raids among the towns and villages of the Long Gorge had decreased dramatically as each ravagon's attention was turned increasingly inward to consider its faith.

Local struggles were now centered in each community, as Denyers and Believers both attempted to impose their beliefs on the other. Any religious dispute was a critical issue, for those found to be on the wrong side of the controversy were then considered weak in their faith, and always it was the duty of the strong to eliminate the weak.

Perhaps his faith was weak; maybe that was why Ravok chose not to test his prowess. He was certain that Sallsboratza was the Irishantza — but occasionally he caught himself wondering about the Denyers' arguments. Did he truly believe, or was — no, that way led to confusion and weakness. He refused to let himself pursue that line of questioning.

As if to put an end to the chaos in his mind, the crenellated walls of the

slaughtering pens loomed before him, stretching up to the blackening sky like dark menacing claws. He halted his descent with a flurry of massive wings and touched down heavily, his taloned feet tearing furrows into the soft granular surface of the canyon floor.

The young ravagon proceeded to the gate giving entrance to the complex of pens, and passed through the shadowy claws encompassing the area. As the huntleader it was his duty to supervise the slaughter and disposition of the prey. He found his hunting companions, located the pens which held their catch and gave the hunters their instructions. They began their work with pleasure, gutting and dismembering the wilvit with their strong, clawed hands. The young one gained some respite from his inner turmoil as he bent to his task, losing himself in the rending and shredding of the animals' flesh and relishing the scent of the fresh blood as it coursed from their severed arteries and spilled over his hands.

The moons had begun to rise by the time the hunters' work was concluded. The young leader sent the hunters on their way to distribute the kill, then cleansed himself. His work tonight was done, and he had promised Skorit he would return to help him. He launched himself upward, and the twin moons hung above him as if the gloomy sky stared down at him with baleful eyes.

His flight back to Skorit's lair was more direct than the descent, as his mind was clearer. His concerns had been pushed to the back of his mind while he concentrated on his work. The taloned feet of the huntleader scabbled on the ledge before Skorit's dwelling, seeking purchase in the rough stone. Folding his wings behind him, he approached the entryway, but halted suddenly. His senses told him that something was amiss. No sounds came from within the cave. No light shone from within.

He entered cautiously, pausing just inside the portal to allow his eyes to adjust to the murky blackness. He was about to call Skorit's name when he detected something — something that filled him with dread. He could sense szilvaravok in the dwelling. A ravagon

had very recently released its life essence. Turning his head to track the scent, he found gory confirmation of what his senses told him. There was a body lying crumpled in a corner amid freshly shattered furniture. Its wings were twisted and splayed at odd angles. It was very clearly dead.

The hunter approached the mangled remains. Turning the cadaver over, his worst fears were realized. It was Skorit. Blackish blood trickled from the tzullat's jaws and seeped from the four deep cuts which had almost severed his head from his body. The blood gathered in sticky pools around the priest's corpse. As the hunter raised his mentor for a better look, the head lolled back loosely.

The young one let out a long, sepulchral shriek, then cried, "He shall pay for this! I swear it on my essence!"

"What is there to pay for?" a deep, malignant voice hissed from the darkness behind him. "Merely a weakness purged from this world. A minor altercation; of no import at all," the voice continued, rasping in the grating way that showed a ravagon was amused.

The young hunter turned swiftly, but rose slowly, trembling in his anger. "You!"

There stood Karuzok, framed in the opening of the cave. His shadowy wings were folded down in front of him, wrapping him like a dark scaly cloak. He stood jauntily, his imposing figure limned by the light of the moons. Karuzok was the most powerful warrior in Verakor, and he was arrogant in his strength.

The young one was too angry to be afraid. "You cannot get away with this. You will be made to pay."

"Again I ask, what is there to pay for? No one will miss a speaker of heresy. I am sure you will find that the council agrees. Now be on your way, little hunter, and mind what you say."

"There are greater forces than the council. Parok will see to it that Sallsboratza has his vengeance on *all* Denyers."

"What do you know of Parok?" Karuzok seemed unsure of himself for the merest moment, then recovered his brash demeanor. "You speak of matters that are beyond your concern, little one. Tend to your little hunts and your petty concerns and you may yet

live to attain a name. As for Parok, he will never know that a faithless priest sought his aid."

"No! I cannot remain silent. Skorit will be avenged by the champion of Sallsboratza."

"Impudent stripling!" Karuzok snapped, his voice turning black and angry. "You are determined to fly a course to your own destruction."

The huntleader became angrier himself. He no longer cared that he faced the mightiest warrior in Verakor. His voice became deeper and carried a hissing undertone of threat. "Then, *vaza*. It is a path I must fly. Ravok wills it."

"I tire of you, pup. You let your mind be weakened by the specious teachings of a foolish old priest. Do

A trio of the shadowy creatures descended silently, then soared into the sky bearing their mangled and dripping burden.

you not now see the error of your ways? The tzullat was weak, else why is he not here now to spout further sacrilege?

"Renounce your unfaith. Renounce this false prophet, or pay with your life when the truth is revealed!"

The hunter could stand it no longer. He hurled himself at the larger creature with a screech of bitterest anger. He slashed at the warrior, but his hand was suddenly halted by the crushing grip of a clawed hand on his forearm, a grip which threatened to snap his arm like a dried *qesta* twig.

"*Vaza*, so your choice is made," Karuzok hissed. He twisted the arm back and released it, causing the young creature to stumble back.

"The mighty hunter strikes ... and is bested by his prey. It seems you are no longer fit for this world, Unnamed beast! I shall inform the council tonight of my Challenge. You I shall see tomorrow in the Vale of Essence, if you are ravagon enough to face me."

* * *

Karuzok's smirking rasp changed to a full-throated roar, startling the young one out of his reverie. Jarred back to the present, he sought to regain his bearings as the elder creature charged.

With no time to clear his head further, the young hunter reacted on instinct. He leaped skyward, with a flick of his wings to gain added height. His leap carried him over Karuzok, but almost as soon as his claws touched the ground, Karuzok pivoted to his right and whipped his wing around. The force of the swipe sent the hunter tumbling. A searing pain tore through his side as his tattered flesh and exposed ribs slid along the sandy ground. His tumbling ended abruptly when he slammed into the wall of the gorge.

With a sharp intake of breath he heaved himself to his feet. Karuzok was once more circling him, more quickly this time, and each step brought him closer to the huntleader. The Unnamed ravagon cast his eyes about frantically, but no immediate course of action came to him. The Vale of Essence had been chosen for its configuration. It was a deep narrow gorge which made full flight difficult, if not impossible. It was chosen to make the duel more challenging, rather than to limit escape, since escape was something no ravagon would consider. Even if a ravagon could make it up to the canyon's edge, the spectators who stood along the rim would cast it back down, or hunt it down and rip it to shreds themselves.

The hunter despaired. His doubts about surviving this encounter seemed destined to become a certitude. His faith must without doubt be weak for Ravok to desert him this way. He was on the verge of submitting to his opponent when a cluster of passing shadows attracted his attention. He risked a glance upward and saw a great host of ravagons alighting on the rim of the Vale. The throng parted and a tall, powerfully built ravagon, resplendent in an ornate harness, strode to the edge to look down on the combatants.

It must be Parok! thought the hunter. Before the next thought could come, he heard a rustle of wings and threw himself to the side. Karuzok's talons tore along his left arm, but his last-

minute evasion had prevented the elder from ripping his arm to the bone. New pain surged through his arm. But instead of increasing his anguish, it strengthened his resolve. Parok was here. Judging from the Flock that accompanied him, the followers of Sallsboratza were a mighty force. His despair lifted, and his faith was affirmed.

And in that instant, he felt renewed. The blessing of Ravok had been delivered onto him. He ignored the throbbing in his side and in his arm. A lightness filled him, and he felt as if he could fly anywhere, unfettered and unencumbered. He turned to face Karuzok, a seething hiss coming from deep in his throat.

Karuzok, too, had noticed the newcomers, and sought to dispatch his opponent quickly. He pushed himself from the canyon wall and approached the younger creature.

"Now, we shall put an end to this."

The elder beast launched himself into the air, seeking to leap over the hunter. The moment before he passed over the younger ravagon, Karuzok braked himself with his wings and dropped directly in front him. While the huntleader looked up vainly to find his adversary, the elder creature thrust his right hand forward to tear out the younger's throat.

Not even lowering his head, the hunter reacted. With a snake-like twisting of his long neck, the young ravagon dodged his head to the left and swung a long wing around the thrusting arm to rip at the elder's head with the razor-sharp spurs along the edge of the wing. He immediately followed up by spinning his head and clamping down with his bony jaws on the elder's forearm, ripping it open to the bone.

Karuzok instinctively tore his arm away, ripping more flesh and muscle as the smaller creature bit down even harder. "Infidel!" the pale one rasped through his pain. "You shall die for this affront!"

The young one remained silent, his small black eyes glistening in their bony sockets like fine black pearls. He studied his foe closely, the bitter taste of the elder's blood still on his tongue—a toast to the victory he knew would be his.

He fought an inner struggle to restrain his ecstasy. This battle was not yet over. He knew, though, that he must be right. The strength of faith was his. In accepting Sallsboratza fully, he had received the blessing of Ravok. His reflexes were now as good as if he bore no wounds.

Those who choose not to accept the Irishantza are consigned to oblivion, he thought. Karuzok was no different. He would not change his ways, could not accept the wider view of a new world. His narrow-mindedness marked him as weak. The hunter would be glad to expunge him from the world. He feinted right, then staggered back as if had lost his footing. His abdomen was fully exposed.

Karuzok lunged forward, diving low to deliver a series of eviscerating slashes. To the elder's surprise, those slashes never struck home, as his young opponent unfurled the scaly web of his wings and launched himself forward and upward to meet Karuzok's lunge. The young one's taloned feet fastened tightly on the sides of the elder's head, the sharp claws easily penetrating the bony surface. In one continuous motion, the smaller ravagon swung his body down over Karuzok's back, at the root of the elder's wings, where they could not be brought to bear. He bit deeply into the small of the pale ravagon's back, his strong jaws easily tearing into the tough flesh to rip out the spine. At the same time the young one also reached around the elder's body to claw at his abdomen, delivering the eviscerating attack Karuzok had hoped to use.

The large ravagon collapsed in a shredded heap. The young victor disentangled himself from the gory pile that had been his opponent, and rose to his full height. The hunter sensed Karuzok's essence as it wafted free of the corpse, and drew it into himself. He shook out his wings to their full width, then folded them back down in front, shrouding himself in their dark embrace.

He glanced around the rim of the defile at the grim figures of his fellow ravagons lining the edge in silence. Then he strode out of the arena, under the cold stares of some of the observers and the hot glares of others. He did not

look back as a trio of the shadowy creatures descended silently, then soared into the indifferent sky bearing their mangled and dripping burden.

* * * * *

He stood before Parok on the large circular dais and his very being swelled with pride. The ravagon Warlord approached him. Parok held up a finely wrought harness, crafted from the wings of Karuzok, his defeated adversary. From the bottom of the harness depended a sturdily worked fringe of interlocking rings. The harness bore a delicately curved yet wickedly sharp blade, which was chased with the sigils and symbols of Ravok and the Irishanti. Parok displayed the harness for the gathered throng to see, then turned to him and spoke.


"Young one, you have come far this day. In your adversity, you demonstrated the strength of Ravok. Performing your sacred duty, you have cleansed this world of the weak; for in his unfaith, Karuzok was indeed weak.

Parok handed him the harness. As he donned the symbol of his newly-earned respect, the Warlord continued.

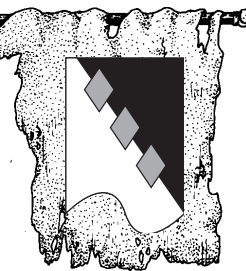
"Your strength and triumph have proven you are now ready for the next stage in your life. You are now a warrior of Ravok, and can no longer go unnamed.

"So do we acclaim your name and honor, Ujeratza, he who prevails in the face of oblivion.

"Come now and join us in our holy crusade for he who leads us in the name of Ravok, he who is named Sallsboratza, the Gaunt One."

Ujeratza raised his arms and spread his wings out to their full length, then let forth a mighty roar, challenging the heavens themselves to confront him. With a powerful flexing of wings he arose into the sky, followed by the gathered Flock who welcomed him to their ranks. As he flew off to the celebratory hunt, he thought once more of Karuzok's torn and twisted remains now decaying in some forgotten chasm. And that was the last thought he ever had for his brother. 

Dispatches and Rumors



Dispatches

1

Field Major Achmed Tunakakan, leader of the Nile shocktrooper force in the Land Below, has transcended. Tunakakan has been trying in recent weeks to cement an alliance between the Nile and a rogue faction of Darooni Wasp Riders. To accomplish this, Tunakakan ordered the massacre of Leopard tribe children, a strong choice for evil which resulted in his achieving a possibility rating.

Beastro rules a European kingdom made up of vampyres and ghouls.

The bloodshed also convinced the leader of the Darooni group, Elnes Kek, that the outworlders were savage enough to be her allies. She has amassed a small army of 25 Wasp Riders and, backed by shocktrooper guns, intends to slay Kihiti Dok, leader of the Darooni army, and seize control.

Kek dreams of an empire spreading far beyond the Misty Gorge, with the other Merretikan tribes no more than slaves. Tunakakan hopes to see Dok eliminated and a civil war break out among the Darooni. The Nile forces, backed up by reinforcements from above, will then move in and seize control of the gorge. Once the Wasp Riders are under his command, Tunakakan believes nothing will be able to stop him.

Storm Knights in the Nile have been

alerted to this plan by overhearing shocktroopers in their cups. The soldiers were due to be shipped out to the Land Below as part of the reinforcements.

The Knights would be well advised to intervene in this situation — a Darooni-dominated Land Below would be a very bad thing, as would Wasp Riders serving in the army of Dr. Mobius.

Critical Event: The Knights must find a way to shatter the alliance between the Nile shocktroopers and the Darooni, as well as eliminating Elnes Kek as a threat to the Land Below's peace. Accomplishing both objectives is a *Good* result (6 or above); failure is a *Bad* result (2 or below).

Field Major Achmed Tunakakan

DEXTERITY 11

Dodge 14, fire combat 13, heavy weapons 12, maneuver 12, melee weapons 15, stealth 12, unarmed combat 13

STRENGTH 12

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

Find 12, hieroglyphics 11, scholar (small unit tactics) 14, trick 11

MIND 12

Survival 14, test 13, willpower 14

CHARISMA 9

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Egyptian religion) 13, intimidation 14, reality 14

Inclination: Evil

Possibilities: 15

Equipment: .45 Colt Auto, damage value 16, ammo 7, range 3–10/15/40; spear, damage value STR+4/16; sword, damage value STR+6/18; Nile headdress; backpack radio; diary

Elnes Kek

DEXTERITY 14

Beast riding 17, melee weapons 17, missile weapons 17, unarmed combat

15

STRENGTH 11

TOUGHNESS 11

PERCEPTION 10

Find 12, tracking 13, trick 13

MIND 9

Survival 11, test 11

CHARISMA 10

Charm 12, persuasion 13, taunt 11

SPIRIT 10

Faith (Olakaa) 13, intimidation 13, reality 13

Possibilities: 20

Equipment: Lance, damage value STR+5/16; javelin, damage value STR+4/15; javelin venom, damage value 15, but only causes "K" or "O" results

Pulp Power: Animal friend

Kek's Wasp Riders (25)

See page 45 of *The Land Below* supplement

2

The Storm Knights have received an urgent message from the Sign of Six, the militant anti-horror society of Orrorsh. Members of their organization had traveled to Gaea to find a legendary chest of hellegren root, a rare and powerful herb which is an essential part of the true death of Prince Beastro, leader of Rumostria.

Beastro is one of the most feared rulers on Gaea, being an undead who rules a European kingdom made up of vampyres, ghouls, and humans bred as livestock. It's widely believed that the assassination of so prominent a Horror might spark a rebellion among the enslaved humans that could spread throughout Gaea.

Unfortunately, the bold monster-hunters disappeared shortly after crossing the Rumostrian border. It is believed that the vampyric authorities had no inkling of their true identities or mission, so they may have been

placed in the pens with the rest of the "food supply."

The only chance to find the cask and eliminate Beastro lies with these adventurers, which means someone must go to Rumostria and save them. Although the Sign of Six members are willing to go along, they feel only Storm Knights have the expertise necessary to get in, save the captives, and escape alive.

Critical Event: The Storm Knights must rescue the three Sign of Six members from the Rumostrian livestock pens. They will then lead the Knights to the cask, and together, they can destroy Prince Beastro. Accomplishing this is a *Good* result (6 or above). Failing to do so is a *Bad* result (2 or less).

Prince Beastro

DEXTERITY 14

Beast riding 15, dodge 17, maneuver 15, melee weapons 16, stealth 16, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 14

TOUGHNESS 16

PERCEPTION 9

Find 11, trick 12

MIND 8

Survival 11, test 13

CHARISMA 8

Charm (25), persuasion 15, taunt 14

SPIRIT 8

Faith (Orrorsh) 12, intimidation 15, reality 14

Possibilities: 16

Natural Tools: Claws, damage value STR+2/16; teeth, damage value STR+3/17

Powers: *Cold aura, regeneration*

Corruption Value: 30

Fear Rating: 3

Perserverance DN: 22

Description: Prince Beastro is a ghoulish who prefers the flesh of the living. He won his supremacy over Rumostria by besting all rivals in combat. He views humans as food

3

Taking advantage of apparent disarray among the Dark forces, Ayslish Corsairs have been striking up and down the Gulf of Bothnia and the Baltic Sea, and even as far east as the Gulf of Finland. The risks have been great

(a number of Viking ships ply those waters), but the rewards in terms of plunder have been enormous. Dark settlements along the east coast of Sweden and the west coast of Finland have been particularly hard-hit by the pirates.

But not all of those flying the "Jolly Roger" are opposed to the Dark. Captain Terrence Kescivals and his galleon, the *Winter Wind*, have been alternately sinking Corsair ships and firing upon Light villages. Kescivals is blamed for the burning of the villages of Solvesborg, Simrishamm, and Borgholm along Sweden's southeastern coast.

Kescivals is said to be a most unusual pirate, seeming to care little for loot, allowing his crew to divvy the spoils among themselves. Rather, he seems to revel in the terror the presence of his ship sparks in others. His predations have caused him to be hunted not only by Ayslish and Core Earth navies, but by the Corsairs as well.

Pella Ardinay recently issued a queenswath for Kescivals, with a 200,000 trade reward offered for him, dead or alive. An additional 100,000 has been offered for capture of the *Winter Wind*. The edict also contained a warning — dark sorcery is believed to be connected to the success of the *Winter Wind*, and Storm Knights are warned to beware.

Critical Event: Capturing or killing Captain Kescivals and taking his ship, the *Winter Wind*, is a *Good* result (6 or above). Failing to stop his raids is a *Bad* result (2 or less).

Captain Terrence Kescivals

DEXTERITY 14

Acrobatics 15, dodge 19, fire combat 15, maneuver 16, melee weapons 18, running 15, swimming 17, unarmed combat 17

STRENGTH 12

Climbing 13

TOUGHNESS 12

PERCEPTION 14

Alteration magic 17, divination magic 15, find 16, trick 19, water vehicles 18

MIND 10

Apportation 14, conjuration magic 14, test 13

CHARISMA 11

Charm 14, persuasion 14, taunt 13

SPIRIT 9

Intimidation 15, reality 18

Possibilities: 20

Arcane Knowledges: *air 6, fire 6, water 6, aquatic 4, avian 2*

Spells: *fog, lightning, fish eyes, conjured fireball, Aeluin's water valley, summon kraken, create giant avian servant, weather control*

Equipment: Wheelock dag, damage value 13, ammo 1, range 3-5/10/25; cutlass, damage value STR+6/18 (*conjured fireball* spell focused within)

Kescival's Crew (75)

DEXTERITY 8

Dodge 9, long jumping 10, maneuver 9, melee weapons 11, running 9, swimming 9, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 8

Climbing 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 9

Find 10, trick 10, water vehicles 11

MIND 7

Test 8

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9, taunt 10

SPIRIT 7

Intimidation 9

Possibility Potential: some (30)

Equipment: cutlass, damage value STR+6/14; pike, damage value STR+5/13

The Winter Wind

Tech 15, speed value 20/12/9, pass. 220, TOU 25; cannon (100), Tech 15, damage value 27, ammo 1, range 25-150/1k/2.5k

Note: The *Winter Wind* has a *fog* spell focused into it, which allows Kescivals to shroud it in mist whenever he so chooses. One quarter of the cannon have *lightning* spells focused into them.

4

The intelligence arm of Dr. Mobius' government has overseen the construction of an underground complex codenamed "Tomorrow the World." Here are areas designed to resemble each of the other realms, including Tharkold and the Land Below, as well as Core Earth. (No efforts have been made to duplicate the axioms, however, due to the disastrous Berofski

experiment last year).

Here Nile agents are trained in how to assimilate themselves into other realms before being sent out into the field. Those effects which cannot occur under Nile axioms are duplicated as closely as possible using “weird science.”

Agents are recruited from all walks of Nile life, and trainers are often defectors from other realms. While it would be possible for Storm Knights to attack and destroy the complex, they would be better served by infiltrating it and gathering information.

The dragons of Aysle are gathering for their Bi-Century Concordance!

Critical Event: If the Knights successfully infiltrate “Tomorrow the World,” they get a *Good* result and will learn that Mobius plans a major operation in Algeria, possibly connected to the unsettled situation in that country’s government. Failure to penetrate the installation is a *Bad* result.

Rumors

1

With Baruk Kaah’s popularity at an all-time low, it is not surprising that the edeinos are considering finding new leadership. While Kaah continues to use Rec Pakken to monitor his people and quell insurgency, things may be getting out of hand.

Rumor states that a substantial expedition composed of Jakatts, benthe,

stalengers, and other Living Land creatures made a desperate trek south, through Mexico and Central America, into the Akashan realm. Truly an incredible feat, even if the contingent contained an unusual number of stormers.

While this “March for Life” appears to have been successful, only one in a hundred of the group made it through Core Earth and Living Land resistance into the Space Gods’ realm. It is believed that these survivors intend to appeal to Rotan Ulka in the hopes that he and the other Akashans will help the Living Land denizens free themselves of both Kaah and Pakken.

2

Tharkold is in Los Angeles. The City of Angels is now a battlefield and a war victim. Frightened residents are either digging in or fleeing. Untold atrocities occur regularly, and few arise to fight back.

But, even so, certain factions are trying to gain entrance to the city. Rumor has it that Dr. Mobius has sent some of his most powerful Nile villains into the fray. Their orders are unclear, but, apparently, the “weird scientist” High Lord wants to capture Tharkold technology for further examination.

The Nile villains, however, are more interested in surviving than anything else. It is possible that a few have joined with the Tharkoldu against Kanawa and the Race, while rumors also suggest that a few have undergone the transformation and domination processes.

3


Fire and fury sweep over the hills of Scotland! Is it truth or a carefully-crafted fiction? The dragons of Aysle are gathering for their Bi-Century Concordance!

Rumor states that, in the old days on the disk-world, before the Giant Wars, all the dragons of Aysle — Teutonica, Aysle, Terra, Aquatica, Metallica, and Crotalaria — would get together once every two hundred years to discuss ... who knows?

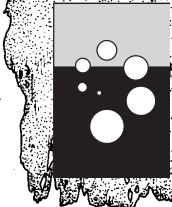
Regardless of alliances with Dark or Light, these dragons gathered at peace with each other — but, by no means, the countryside. Dragons require great space and sustenance, and their meeting-places quickly turned into legendary wastelands. The Isle of Flame. The Plains of Sucking Sand. The Mournful Hills. Is a section of Scotland soon to be added to the dread list? Is there any way the legendary meeting can be stopped?

4

With the virtual collapse of the American auto industry (due to the presence of the Living Land in Michigan), Japanese auto imports to this country have increased sharply. The Mitusyana Motors Corp., a Kanawa subsidiary, has made millions selling cars in the US, despite the shaky condition of the country’s economy.

Major cities like Houston have seen Japanese autos offered at major discounts, and many high government officials, while condemning the trade imbalance, continue to drive them. What they do not know is that the newer cars are equipped with bugs that beam conversations taking place within back to the Japanese embassy. In addition, the autos have self-destruct devices which can be triggered if the driver becomes *too* vociferous in his opposition to increased Japanese imports. 

Your Letters



1. In reality storms such as those around the Cyberpapacy, is a character transformed if he loses all of his possibilities, or does he have to be stripped of his reality adds, as in an invoked storm, before he is transformed?

2. When an Ord disconnects in a foreign reality, does he transform?

3. Regarding the map of the Space Gods' realm — I thought the reality trees were at the center of the mixed zones they create. Shouldn't all the circular mixed zones have reality trees at their center?

4. Can clothing be worn under biotech suits that depend on symbiotic links, or must the suit be worn under all clothing?

5. How does ammo work for biotech firearms? The info you give in the body of the text is that the weapon must be fed after every so often. Does it actually need to be fed after every so many shots fired or after the stated time period, whichever comes first?

— Michael Levay
Roscommon, MI

1. Reality storms occurring around the borders of realms work the same way as invoked storms. All Possibilities and reality adds must be stripped before a character transforms.

2. When an Ord disconnects in a realm other than his own, he will eventually transform due to the natural process of living in that area.

3. Yes, Mike, the map of the realm in *Space Gods* was in error. All of those mixed zones should have reality trees in their centers.

4. Symbiotic suits must be worn next to the skin. That's why you generally can't wear more than one.

5. Yes, if you tax your weapon by using up its ammo supply, you may have to feed it earlier than expected. Under normal use, the feeding schedule in the text applies.

Can a reality storm be invoked in the GodNet?

How close is the Gaunt Man to breaking free from the maelstrom?

— Sam Thornton
Essex, England

1. Yes. But remember that a Cyberpapal character will enjoy the home cosm advantage while in the Net.

2. Closer than you think ...

In the letters column of Infiniverse #16, you state that Storm Knights may not spend a Possibility to gain a roll-again and thereby avoid disconnection. Will a Second Chance card work?

— Randy Wilde
Long Beach, CA

Sorry, Randy, but no. Disconnection is a fact of life when you have realities clashing, and cannot be so easily avoided.

For mental wounds, do you use Mind or Spirit instead of Toughness? Also, what happens when you mentally "fall unconscious" or mentally "die?"

— Mark Siegal,
Schenectady, NY

Mental wounds primarily come into play when discussing spell backlash. Mental damage is measured against the *Mind* attribute rather than *Toughness*.

If you are KO'd by mental damage, you are unconscious — and if it was an actual KO result, and not just accumulated shock damage, you lose the arcane knowledge used to cast the spell for 24 hours or until a miracle of refreshment is done.

If you die from mental damage, you're dead, plain and simple.

If the great ape Ungrosh from the Land Below needs that realm's Magic axiom to support its great weight, could a lone Storm Knight from a realm with lower Magic axioms (such as Core Earth or Nippon) literally crush him to death by successfully invoking a reality storm?

— Greg Detwiler,
Williamsburg, PA

No. If Ungrosh were to be on the losing end of a reality storm, he would transform into an equivalent creature of the winner's reality who would not be dependent upon magic to sustain itself.

1. Is it possible to have an Akashan pure zone or dominant zone?

2. How about more info on the Star Sphere (other races, maps, what really happened to the Mohani?)

3. Is Sarila evil? The text seemed to describe someone who just got in over her head.

— Joe Farrell
No. Merrick, NY

1. No, it's not possible to have an Akashan pure or dominant zone. Pures and dominants, by their very nature, are invasive and transformational, two things which Akashan reality is not.

If an Akashan were to become a High Lord, he could impose a twisted version of his reality in such zones, but it would not truly be the reality of the Space Gods in that case.

2. We have played around with the idea of a Star Sphere supplement, but have no plans for one as yet. Of course, if there's enough demand (go ahead, twist my arm) we could be talked into it.

3. Very insightful, Joe. Whether or not Sarila is evil depends on how you define "evil." Sarila is an egotist who

believes that the ends justify the means, no matter who gets hurt. By assuming control of the Comaghaz group mind and using it as she has, she is running counter to the Akite philosophy she professes to follow. Sarila is self-deluded and very good at justifying her behavior. Keep in mind that the Comaghaz was not created to help the Akashans, but to advance her own career.

If a character uses his world laws in a foreign realm, he is creating a one-case contradiction. What if a character is in a foreign realm and uses that realm's world laws — is he creating a contradiction? Isn't this the same situation as using a tool that the foreign realm supports, but his personal reality doesn't?

— Jim Ogle,
Socorro, NM

It's exactly the same, Jim. Using another realm's world laws is a one-case contradiction.

Who the heck is "Kryptos" and why are edeinos worshipping him?

— Christopher Scott,
Windsor, MO

"Kryptos" is an actual object, an enigmatic obelisk that stands outside

Herald Messages

"Burger Rex" is really a front for a Nippon Tech operation. The lizboys enter Living Land areas for meat, but they also gun down any of Baruk Kaah's edeinos that they come across.

— Scott Darley,
Caryville, FL

My Storm Knights have triggered a serious diplomatic incident between Spain, England and the Middle Eastern countries. They recovered the True Cross, to barter it for the Nocturna with Gildao, a spiritual debunker who is in fact a reincarnation of Mantooth. With the Nocturna, they hope to prevent Angloch Dornonin from occurring.

— Antivackis Christian,
Bezons, France

"Behold the miracle of toxic waste. The Lady of the Lake is dead."

— An unnamed Core Earth wizard

Sagato: "Master, I don't understand why you didn't kill the Gray Ghost when you had the chance?"

Kanawa: "Because he is nothing, and because Mobius hates him. Why crush a worm when I can use it to bait my hook?"

— Conversation overheard in
Kanawa Corporation HQ,
Tokyo

Har, mateys! Gemini agents Rampage, Pentacle and "the Kid" hijacked a cybertrain out of Paris and blew Cyberpapal base "Point Versailles" into a grease spot, crippling the Cyberpapacy's supply lines to the gangs and HOGs in Paris. (Massive glory result still failed to kill the living cyber-weapon "Destroyer.") The Paris streets are now messier than ever before (if that's possible.)

— Dan Swensen,
East Helena, MT

You never know ... Gospog Shuffle could become a craze ...

— Joe Farrell
No. Merrick, NY

of CIA headquarters in Langley, VA. As yet, no one has been able to decode the encrypted message on the sculpture, and the artist refuses to reveal

what (if anything) it means.

As for why the edeinos are worshipping it, Lanala only knows ... ☒

