

A World of Possibilities

By

Alasdair Sinclair

In the depths of winter, a bedraggled and sodden Boston begins to emerge after the worst storm in US history. For three days, sheet lightning and rain seemed to be heralds of the world's end. At least it was too wild for all but the most essential looting - furniture stores rendered into life-saving firewood. By the time people emerged blinking into the daylight, the National Guard was on the streets keeping order.

But Crime never sleeps for long - Crime of all kinds has surged in the absence of technological assistance for Boston's finest. To make matters worse, with the city's eyes and ears crippled by lightning damage, anti-American forces are on the move. The city's main nuclear reactor is ominously off-line, causing rolling power outages, and the persistent sabotage of electronic switching stations means that all calls are on a land-line, and most are through an operator.

If Martial Law is to be lifted, and life return to normal, the terrorists have got to be found and stopped. As the anti-Terrorism task-force, that task falls on your shoulders.

(Note: This game is not too procedural. There is a nominal level of investigation, but the main focus is experiential.)

Number of Players:	4
System Knowledge:	Not Needed
Genre:	Cinematic Thriller/Horror
Genre Knowledge:	Not Needed
Role-playing Knowledge:	Required
Classification:	R

Preliminaries

I originally intended this adventure for Fright Night III as *Butterfly Wings*, after the quote in the TORG core book. It was intended to be a horror game set inside a military base, with a relatively helpless set of Military Policemen trapped inside the subverted organization that crushes the life out of the citizens they're supposed to defend from enemies "foreign and domestic". It was unworkable - the structural problems were overwhelming.

The next convention in the circuit was KapCon, and when the call for GMs rolled around I signed up without a clear scenario in mind. Without the constraint of horror I started to think there was a better chance of getting a working scenario from the basic idea of *Butterfly Wings*. I began again, virtually *tabula rasa*, and you're about to read the result. I think the single biggest break-through was changing the PCs from soldiers who have a strict chain of command to policemen, who have a support network but also considerable autonomy.

Once I'd written the blurb and an absolutely skeletal plot, I submitted the game to KapCon's organizers. About the middle of November, it became apparent that all of the SDC entrants that had been talking about the game earlier in the year had pulled out for one or other reason - including me. I decided to write up this scenario rather than persist with my hard-boiled/noir scratchings. It took one solid weekend to produce the first draft, which was reviewed by Ivan. Incorporating his feedback took another week, and doubled the length of the manuscript. Without his feedback, this game would realistically have been stillborn.

I submitted the game on the deadline, but subsequently received good critical feedback from Liz, and a number of small grammatical and formatting errors from Katrina. Their input was incorporated for KapCon, but not for the SDC - it was too late. The version you're reading has had a third round of additions and alterations based on how the play-tests and KapCon runs went.

I play-tested the game a week before KapCon, just to get the kinks out. It a weird experience, as virtually all the feedback from the play-testers was clearly foreseen by the text: I had failed to adhere to my own scenario sufficiently well.

This scenario came 2nd in the SDC, being beaten by a really first-rate LARP. It made up for that slight shortcoming by winning best individual session, and putting me in the top 3 for the overall GM stakes.

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I would be delighted to hear of your thoughts on the scenario. I can be contacted at alasdair.sinclair@gmail.com for the foreseeable future. My RPG thoughts can be found at livejournal.com/community/gametime

Introduction

This is a game designed to be run in three hours with a group of players unfamiliar with either the game setting (Boston) or the game mechanics (Savage Worlds). It is a game primarily about characters exploring a world where the rules of their lives are unaccountably turned on their heads, and trying to make decisions about how to cope with the new world around them.

There are investigative components to the game, but they are intended to be easily-accessed stepping-off points for characters to make decisions and engage in the action of the story.

The game borrows a large number of concepts from West End Games' *TORG: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. I've tried to cover all the essentials, but there is a lot of useful information in those books.

Little time has been spent detailing Boston or its environs. My experience has been that aside from a very few minor details, a short convention game gives almost no time to offer a holistic feel for the game environment unless it is very small. Most groups will comfortably fall into treating Boston as any other generic city environment. Refer to the bibliography for sources on Boston that could be used to enhance the game, but are not necessary for the purposes of this story.

The write-up is broken down into sections:

- Introduction - A brief overview of the other elements to place them in context on a first read-through.

- World Concepts - A discussion of the underlying cause and significance of the events portrayed.

- Story Elements - An outline of the principal actors in the story, their motivations, their resources and how they can be best used.

- Characters - Who the characters are, what they do.

- Scenes - Set-piece scenes that may be useful.

- Running the Game - A discussion on how to run the game and use all the elements discussed above.

Story Abstract

A group of police characters (PCs) are sent to investigate a series of "sabotages" where critical city infrastructure is kept offline after a major disaster has occurred in the city of Boston.

Early in the investigation the PCs observe troubling behaviour of military personnel which leads them to believe that the military are behind the damage.

Further investigation uncovers part of the truth: that there has been a large-scale invasion of the Eastern Seaboard, spear-headed at Boston. The invaders have peculiar anti-technology devices, which could be disabled to allow an effective resistance using conventional army troops to be mounted.

One of the devices is disabled, sending a shock-wave throughout the city, where the true extent of the invasion is revealed: a new reality has been imposed on the city by invaders from outside of time and space as understood by us.

World Concepts

While most of the physical world of Boston c. 2009 has remained intact, the rules governing how it works have been largely replaced by a new set of rules. These rules change every aspect of the world that the characters see, feel, touch in a fundamental way.

These changes are consistent, but are not rational per se. They do not obey a Cartesian sense of cause and effect in the same way as we are used to in real life.

The main two changes are summarized below:

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|---------------|---|
| Technological | - Technology more advanced than WWII is prone to breaking down very readily, and can only be repaired with great difficulty. |
| Social | - Like technology, the ability of people to interact en masse changes to a much more conservative mode, with a much greater streak of patriotic jingoism. |

In a TORG campaign, these changes directly affect PCs, who can “disconnect” from their native reality and other sundry effects. However, this adds unnecessary complications to a convention game, and so the PCs are assumed to be immune to these changes while observing them in others.

Story Elements

This game is not a particularly linear adventure. A number of options are presented to player characters at each stage. These options rapidly converge on a couple of key encounters. The GM will need to manage the different story elements to guide the players through the story, so its important to bear in mind what the objects of interest really are, and how they can be used to propel the story forward.

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| “Sabotage sites“ | - These yield universally poor evidence, as the malfunctions are caused by alterations in the rules which govern the universe. |
| Stelae | - The means by which the invaders impose their reality are monolithic structures being erected by the regular army. |
| Gospog/Graveyards | - A chief source of troops for the further invasion of the world are organic soldiers “planted” in graveyards. The resulting creatures (Gospog) are, for the purposes of this game, the walking dead. |

- National Guard - The National Guard are ordinary soldiers from Earth.
- Regular Army - The regular army are all invading soldiers, who demonstrate a poor understanding of Earth if questioned in detail.

Characters

Player Characters

There are four player characters, presented in broad outline. Aside from the character sheet and “vital statistics” the characters consist of a short questionnaire for the players to complete.

- Dt Kurt Jenkins - Veteran with a secure pension and three ex-wives.
- Dt Rachel Graves - Competent detective
- Dt Jeremy Conrad - Ex-Army, Ex-SWAT
- Dt Carl Greene - Fresh out of officer training, after a couple of years as a beat cop.

Non-Player Characters

- Invading Army Troops - All of the army troops are invaders from another reality, led by Colonel Chris Spencer.
- Native Army Troops - Troops native to this reality are confined to barracks, but could be accessible as a resource. The upper echelons of the army have been executed.
- National Guard - Originally deployed when the President declared Martial Law. The invaders bring “orders” successively limiting their role, with a view to having all National Guard troops stood down within a few more days. The commander of the troops in the city is Major Rex Shepherd.
- Boston Police - The PCs immediate commander is Captain Sarah Morton; the PCs will have substantial access to police resources.
- Municipal Officials - The main people that PCs will be dealing with are the city maintenance officials: city repairmen and the like. Their supervisor is Guy Carey.
- Civilians - How much interaction the PCs have with the ordinary citizen body will vary depending on the interest and focus of the players. The main reason to show civilians will be to demonstrate the application of the axiom changes discussed under “World Concepts”.

World Concepts

The Big Picture

A different reality has been overlaid over the city of Boston. Invaders from this reality have travelled through a trans-dimensional portal to assume control over the metropolitan area and plan a further invasion. The invading reality is maintained by a series of "Stelae". Disabling any one of these restores the native reality to an area.

The point of the invasion is to steal "possibilities". The leader of the invading forces stores possibilities with a view to using their energy to becoming a god who can shape all worlds to his whim - at the moment he can only make limited changes over significant lengths of time. The leader of the invaders does not appear directly in this adventure, but is the ruler of an entire planet in his native reality.

The Invasion

The invaders send highly trained operatives into different realities. Those operatives scout to see how advanced the society is and what resources it possesses. From this they decide which realities are worth invading.

Those advance operatives install a beacon that locates the reality through the veil of time and space. A device on the attacking world then creates a passage between the two. The touching of the two realities causes a massive and devastating storm. Under the cover of this storm troops cross between the realities.

Once across, the invaders install Stelae, which have the dual function of imposing their reality on the surrounding area, and syphoning possibility energy back to the portal between the worlds. After securing the initial site of the portal, the invaders mass-produce bio-mechanical soldiers locally to fight any military resistance while sending expeditionary forces to place Stelae outside the controlled area.

Once a large enough area has been captured, the ability of the defenders to mass produce troops combined with the effects of the Stelae on native technologies usually allows the invaders to slowly conquer whole worlds.

The Stelae represent both the cutting edge of the invasion, and the weakness. If the Stelae are disabled, the native reality snaps back into force. If all the Stelae near the inter-world portal is destroyed, the shockwave causes the portal to close, disabling the rest of the Stelae and effectively repelling the invasion.

In this adventure, this process is still at its very earliest stage - the minimum number of Stelae have been installed (3), and removing any one of them will repel the invasion.

Conversion

The basic concept is that the invaders are stealing the latent possibilities that exist in people's lives. A rough measure of this would be their life-potential, so a straight-A student excelling at a grab-bag of extracurricular activities has more "possibilities" than a glassy-eyed store clerk who goes home to stare at the TV and eat frozen dinners every night. Similarly, the young have more possibilities than the old: the old have made their choices, and increasingly lose their ability to change themselves, to change their course in the world.

Simply put, the invaders steal these possibilities. This happens on an unconscious level: people one day just accept that the world has changed and carry on living with the new laws of reality. They dismiss and rationalize things which are incompatible with the laws of that reality. They effectively lose their memory of things which contradict the new reality. This does not usually change anything not in conflict with the new reality - a freedom loving reporter who has been converted will still rail against the tyranny of martial law, they'll just do it on a typewriter instead of a PDA.

The process is impersonal - it is a side effect of the contention of the reality space.

The most difficult people to convert are those who are most different from the invading realm. For example, the newspaper reporter will be easier to convert than a Linux software developer - the fundamentals of the reporter's life are not different under the two realities, whereas the whole of the Linux developer's professional life is impossible in the new reality.

Official Response

The change in technology has meant that television and radio are not reliable at all, and the Internet is basically not present. Therefore the newspapers provide the news, and newspapers are much more readily subject to editorial "oversight" from the Army.

This same technological problem is making it difficult for State and Federal authorities to know in detail what's going on in the city. Sooner or later the bureaucratic lag will catch up and a serious investigation will be made, but the invaders' plan is to have an army of Gospog by then.

Special Cases

Some people have such an ability to affect the world that they can weather the change in reality fairly well - they retain their original reality despite everything. These are "Storm Knights". They are the only people who are capable of becoming consciously aware that different realities are in operation for different people.

In the original game system, *TORG*, these characters are mechanically distinguished by the terms "Ord" and "Possibility Rated". Savage Worlds has a similar distinction between "Characters" and "Wild Cards". Wild Cards roll an additional D6 and have a limited pool allowing re-rolls (Bennies). If using other cinematic systems, like Unisystem or D6, "Storm Knights" should have a pool of Drama Points/Action Points/equivalent. Characters who are not "Storm Knights" should not.

Everyone else is unable to really comprehend what's going on. For example, the invading soldiers are aware that they are on a different world, but are not able to articulate or understand a lot of what they see in the world around them - it is a baffling and confusing experience for them.

Axioms and World Laws

The invading world is essentially a construction of its ruler. It obeys different laws and has different levels of social complexity, technology and magic. In addition, the world has certain "World Laws", which influence the tone of the world.

The world which has invaded Earth is one where democracy has been "suspended" while it deals with a perpetual series of crises. The military

have assumed control and have created a propaganda machine for inspiring fear in the public to help prevent a populist uprising.

It has become an Orwellian dystopia, where the government brutally suppresses any opposition or criticism. The invading world is kept in a constant state of fear through largely artificial state boundaries and manufactured conflict.

Of course, there is a freedom movement, whose periodic attacks ultimately become subsumed into the official narrative of terrorism and war.

The “regular army” which is currently running the city will be building towards this narrative. (See “Running the Game”)

When the natives of earth begin to convert, they will accept as normal as normal this state of affairs. They will live in a day-to-day fear of terrorism and war, taking every practical precaution to protect themselves and their family, and they won't question the necessity of suspending of the Bill of Rights and curtailing other civil freedoms. They will simultaneously become less sceptical about any official government claims; or rather, will believe that there is no point in questioning those in authority. This is a post 9/11 world where there is no real critical voice offering an alternative narrative.

The Citizen Body

The world law is that the preservation of the citizen body is more important than the fate of any individual. And hence, individuals have no inherent rights.

As the invaders become more entrenched, and as the National Guard and Boston Police officers convert to the new reality, violations of the Bill of Rights will become more and more flagrant.

Sexism & Racism & Sexual Norms

A key feature of c. 1950s society is this triumvirate of intolerance. How much of any of these elements you introduce when running the game will depend on the tolerances of the group. Unless you are confident that the group is interested in exploring these issues, they are best not raised: stick with a generic authoritarian regime without an interest in these matters.

Technology

The invading reality has dramatically less advanced technology. They have developed only technology roughly analogous to the early 1950s. Thus they have nothing analogous to microchips, and are really only beginning to discover the power and use of Transistors. In terms of arbitrating what works and what doesn't, the presence of a transistor is probably the simplest criterion available. If a device has a transistor, it probably doesn't work very well in the new reality.

Transistors have been around in some form since 1925, but it wasn't until after WWII that the ability to mass-produce them catapulted their use into almost every bit of modern electronics. Transistors are fairly ubiquitous in modern technology, appearing not only in obviously electrical devices (radios, microwaves, TVs, computers) but frequently becoming integral to the operation of a surprising array of “mechanical” devices, from food blenders to elevators to cars.

As a guide, consider the following:

2000s - Totally unreliable. Break at the slightest provocation and possible to repair only by expending Bennies.

- 1990s - Transistors and computers are much less likely to appear in cars and so on. Most 90s technology will be fairly unreliable, and nearly impossible to fix.
- 1980s - Items like CRT monitors and televisions will be more likely to work than their modern LCD counterparts. Computers from this era will still be almost totally inoperable.
- 1970s - Most TVs and other electronic devices from this era will be subject to intermittent failures, but can possibly be repaired with effort.
- 1960s - Most 1960s technology will operate without problems, except for the most cutting-edge technology of that era. Late-era vacuum-tube computers will function perfectly, and early transistor based computers will be fairly reliable. (Transistors were introduced to computing in 1958)
- 1950s - Any technology from the 1950s should be almost perfectly operational. This would include most cars that don't rely on electronics for the fuel injection system, most guns, any purely optical technology & plastic explosives.

Player Characters and the Technology Change

Technology that is familiar and essential to player characters will generally work better than technology they don't know about or don't think about. Things like electronic start-up systems in cars aren't usually something that the character will know much about or think much about, and so will be more prone to breaking down than their personal radios which they use all the time and understand very well.

The first thing to break down will be the start-up sequence in their cars. Cars will need to either be hastily re-wired, or older cars hauled out of mothballs.

The National Guard is worse off than the Police because their equipment is generally newer.

At the start of the game, all the technology that the PCs have should be working, though items like Cellphones will not effectively be useful due to damage to cell-phone towers. Other technology will break down in approximately the following order:

Car navigation system and secondary elements like aircon

Car start motor (computerized)

Cellphones

Car Radios

Personal Radios

Story Elements

Gospog

Gospog are crucial to the plans of the invaders. They are made by “planting” a field of graves. The seedlings infiltrate the corpses and bring them to a semblance of life. Their origin as effectively a re-animated corpse make it easy to mass produce them, and after every battle the corpses left behind become combatants once again.

The invaders are expecting skirmishes with US army troops around the borders sooner or later. The official news story will write off the initial volleys in this war as terrorist attacks. The invasion will be advanced by armies of Gospog, and producing Gospog will be a major objective of the army in this early stage. The advance is assisted by the conversion of people from the real world to the invading world - those who change over will, because of the world laws, buy into the official narrative very easily. As a majority of Boston natives are converted, the official line will change to a civil war.

It is not essential that Gospog make an appearance in the adventure, but should the group appear to be resisting the idea that something is terribly wrong, the walking dead should convince them.

Gospog have the following game statistics:

Guts	d10
Fighting	d8
Shooting	d8

And have double the number of wounds of a regular character.

Occupied Territory

Boston is now effectively a territory occupied by a foreign army. During the day business is allowed to operate as “normal”, though almost every business is affected to some extent by the technology dampening. There is a curfew at dusk; in the immediate abatement of the storm the National Guard were not particularly strict on this - almost everyone got warned but no real action was taken. The Army however are not so lenient, handing out savage beatings and locking up offenders over night. As the occupation wears on, the curfew will become absolute.

Under “Martial Law” all civil authorities have been officially taken offline, but there are not enough National Guard and Army troops to administer every aspect of the system - yet. In real terms, emergency services (Police, Fire, Hospitals) are fully functional, and the civil administration has more than a skeleton staff at work trying to fix all the problems created by the technology dampening.

Most crimes committed in the aftermath of the disaster are crimes of necessity - people stealing food and heating materials. Boston is cold in Winter - an average daily temperature of 2 degrees celsius. However, that does still require attention from the Police - particularly patrolmen.

The PCs would almost certainly be caught up in assisting with civil order if not for the sabotage which is contributing to the hardship of the city's residents.

The summary is that there are still people on the streets during the day, but only really going through the motions, and at night the city is eerily quiet.

The rest of the continental USA is still partially separated from Boston by periodic storms at the borders of the Stelae and the poor communications. Communicating with the outside world is not possible through the Fibre-optic network, but could be managed if an old copper exchange can be found and brought back into temporary service. A personal satellite phone could also work for a short period. At this stage the authorities outside of the city are beginning to become aware that something is amiss, but won't interfere in the timeframe of this adventure unless prompted by PC action.

The invading army will be moving with all possible haste to secure the borders, and is actively preparing for skirmishes at the border. They are allowing cargo in and out, but checkpoints are in place that will prevent any National Guard, Police or native army personnel from leaving the city.

Characters

Questionnaires

The main intent of the questionnaires is to enable easy buy-in from the players, but the questions may provide useful items that can be brought into the game.

The questions are all fairly leading, and intended to assist the players in creating pro-active characters who will be prepared to overstep their nominal authority in the cause of justice and patriotism.

A lot of players find these questionnaires difficult and time consuming, however there isn't time in a 3-hour game to allow players to chew over and mull the questions over. A limited amount of space has been allocated on the character sheet to encourage shorter and hence quicker answers.

If the player hasn't finished their questionnaire after 10 minutes you should interact with them, and "suggest" answers and move on. It is generally preferable for players to have written *something* by the end of the allotted 20 minute briefing period, but it is not necessary.

Possible answers to the questions are discussed below.

Lt Kurt Jenkins - Veteran with a secure pension and three ex-wives.

Dt Rachel Graves - Profiler

Dt Jeremy Conrad - Ex-Army, Ex-SWAT

Dt Carl Greene - Fresh out of officer training, after a couple of years as a beat cop.

Kurt Jenkins

As the senior officer, there is a chance that Kurt can be cast into the role of "party leader" - particularly with respect to Carl, his junior officer who's also new to the role. Even if not actively pursuing that idea, Karl is the character with the mostchutzpah, and the greatest willingness to challenge authority.

Therefore, it is important to select a proactive player for this role if possible. Confrontations between Kurt and Spencer are very likely, and should be played for maximum impact.

1. For what heroic act were you awarded the key to Detroit when you were a policeman there in the late 1970s?

This question is intended simply to establish the character as a heroic type in the player's mind. A character unafraid to take risks and putting others above himself.

Example: *I kept two witnesses safe in transit from a small town north of Detroit while under attack from the Machine Devils, a regional motorcycle gang with drug &*

arms distributions that their witnesses broke the back of (for a while).

2. What order did you disobey that forced you out of Detroit PD?
Example: *I refused to give up on a surveillance against a corrupt politician, tying up a lot of resources in a fruitless (but just) case.*
3. Which of the three is your favourite ex-wife?
Example: *Sarah, the school teacher who always knew how to calm me down when I was wound tight and ready to blow.*
4. What do you think about having regular army troops on Boston's streets in peace time?
Example: *We absolutely need them - but if they step out of line I will be in their face.*
5. Does it bother you that you're passed over time and again for promotion because you won't play the political game?
Example: *Ha! The truth is that while I'd love the promotion, I won't tolerate the kind of behaviour that seems to emerge as a privilege of rank from anyone who makes it upwards.*
6. Do you miss your laptop, that was fried by the electrical storm?
This question foregrounds technology as an item of interest, and makes the point that it really is becoming unreliable.

This gives the player the chance to either lament that technology is gone, and so buy in to that storyline, or they can opt for the "old curmudgeon" model - what good has come of technology really?

Example: *I do. I am addicted to Facebook and Wikipedia.*

Rachel Graves

1. What matter of principle prevented you from accepting the valedictory honours for your high school?
Rachel is intended to be a character that is more interested in the moral right than in power or authority. A quality that should reinforce Kurt's tendency to follow internal rather than external drives.

Example: *Cindy Collins had better grades, but was accused of cheating. Nothing was proven, but the scandal convinced the school board to pass her over for the honour - I believed she was innocent, so refused to profit from the false accusations.*
2. Do you find other cops treating you different because you're a woman, smarter than them, or one of the Chief's favourites?
This is really intended to give Rachel a powerful ally - the chief; who can potentially offer greater resources than Morton.

Example: *I don't pay attention to what the others think. I'm here to do a job, and whatever their beef, it's their problem, not mine.*

3. What rumour has made you unsettled about the army troops patrolling the streets?

This question is intended to fabricate a legitimate complaint that the character has with the army, to ease the character into the later stages of the adventure where directly opposing the army is a major feature of the action.

Example: *I've been hearing about unlawful search and seizures outside of the curfew.*

4. What happened when you were shot?

Example: *My kid brother and I found my dad's gun, and it went off while we were playing. I passed out, and nearly died.*

5. Why hadn't you officially accepted the promotion to Captain and head of Administrative Vice when the storm broke?

Example: *My husband has been transferred to a big promotion... in Silicon Valley. I can always be a cop in California, but if he turns down this promotion it may be the end of his career.*

6. How do you maintain your faith in these trying times?

Example: *If anything, I think that the recent storm is a display of the majesty and unknowability of his will.*

Jeremy Conrad

1. What did you give up to follow your father, Colonel Prentice Conrad, three-time winner of the medal of valour, into the army?

This is about showing that the character is more than the grunt that's obvious from his stat block.

Example: *My high school sweetheart, Jacqui, left me when she couldn't talk me out of joining the army - but I felt that I had to uphold the family tradition, and that it was the patriotic thing to do.*

2. Why would you trust your old army buddy Pete with your life?

This foreshadows the encounter with Peter where the strange un-American activities on the base are revealed, helping propel the characters into action in the later phases of the adventure.

It also ensures that in that encounter, his claims will be treated as fact without any supporting evidence.

Example: *Pete didn't need to ask, and didn't tell, even at the courts martial, where it would have gotten him out of major trouble.*

3. What don't you miss about the army?

Example: *Guard duty. I mean, hanging around outside some warehouse in the freezing cold or blistering heat for whole weeks at a time - give me a break!*

4. How many people have you killed in the line of duty? How do you feel about it?

Example: *I try not to think about it. As a soldier, I killed a lot of people. I hope they all deserved it. I mean, it was war? I left the army because I couldn't believe that anymore. As a cop... I haven't killed anyone, and I want it to stay that way.*

5. Why can't you shake your feeling that there's something wrong with the army troops now stationed around the city?

Like the other characters, whatever misgivings are expressed here should wind their way into the narrative.

Example: *I saw an Lt wearing a long-service medal for 25 years, but he couldn't have been more than 30. I plan to look closer - those uniforms are just not exactly right.*

6. What have you been doing on your own time to help with the disaster relief?

This is really intended to give him some low-key informants out on the hard edge of the disaster. People who are packing sand-bags and delivering food, who may see something that an official would miss.

Example: *I've been helping out with the reconstruction of my kids' elementary school.*

Carl Green

1. Why does everyone think that you owe your job to nepotism?

This is intended to provide the character with some substantial asset, either a wealthy family or a powerful patron - something of that sort, who can be used to gather assistance later in the adventure.

Example: *Because I'm married to Chief Monroe's daughter.*

2. What officially covered up action catapulted you from patrolman to Detective?

Similarly to Kurt, this gives Carl an opportunity to be figured as a hero and as someone prepared to take risks.

Example: *I heard cries for help from a basement window - I went in and gunned down a pair of rapists and took the third in alive.*

3. Why do you worry that Kurt's recklessness has already rubbed off on you?

Example: *I find myself getting very tough on suspects of violent or sexual crimes - I've had to be pulled off a suspect.*

4. How are you coping without your laptop, iPhone and the Internet?
Similarly to Kurt really.

Example: *I've started reading classic novels.*

5. What happened to your first love?

Example: *She died of cancer shortly after we were married. I spent the next six months working all hours of the day and night, before I came to terms with it.*

6. Why do you think that the street preachers' warning of the impending apocalypse have affected you so strongly?

Example: *A part of me thinks that humanity deserves to be destroyed - we're pretty evil.*

NPC Roster

A list of useful NPCs follows, though it is not exhaustive. The GM should have on hand something like *The Storybook of Names* to assist in rapidly inventing any NPCs unforeseen by the adventure.

Characters marked with an (*) are Storm Knights/Wild Cars. They have 2 Bennies to spend, and get an extra D6 for skill checks, the same as a PC. These character will remain true to their reality throughout the adventure.

Characters who aren't Storm Knights are subject to conversion based on the dramatic needs of the story. Morton in particular can be a very effective character to have switch over - a converted Morton may radically downgrade the importance of sabotage of things which she no longer has any comprehension of. She may re-assign the PCs entirely, though hopefully by that point they are too far down the real plotline for this to affect them.

Conversion of named NPCs must be carefully managed though. The most effective thing is to only convert NPCs that have already been encountered, to highlight the change.

Regular Army

Col Chris Spencer* - Boston Police liaison, in reality an invader. Refer to "Scenes" for guidance on interactions with Spencer.

Spencer is tall and gaunt. His uniform will sport a hefty array of medals for a colonel.

Driving d4, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d4,
Intimidation d8, Investigation d4, Notice d6, Persuasion
d8, Piloting d4, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

Miscellaneous Army (names to be used as needed): Ian M. Williams, Gerard J. Carmona, Stephen A. Smith, Daniel E. Hensley, Gary P. McClary, David E. Feathers, Anthony C. Davis, Wesley L. Green.

Note that there are no female Army officers from the invading realm. If the group is interested, this can be a point of tension, where the invaders refuse to deal with Rachel, despite her comparative seniority in rank.

The general grunts and sergeants that are encountered by PCs will generally try to keep conversations short and on topic so that they don't risk revealing the extent of their ignorance. If pressed, army troops will be unable to name the President, and will be ignorant of even such universally revered days as the 4th of July and Halloween. They have been briefed in

a very cursory way, and while most have been provided crib sheets covering the basics, they're not terribly interested in them and haven't committed that information to memory.

Boston Police Department

Cpt Sarah Morton - PCs superior officer. Competent, able and absolutely snowed under with the situation in the city. Refer to "Scenes" for guidance on interactions with Morton.

Morton is a somewhat harried women in her mid 50s. She has the typical restrained hair-cut and tailored dark suit.

Driving d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Healing d4, Intimidation d4, Investigation d8, Knowledge d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

National Guard

Mj Rex Shepherd* - Commander of the National Guard forces keeping order on the streets and liaising with the PCs on their progress. Refer to "Scenes" for guidance on interactions with Shepherd.

Rugged outdoorsman with a ready smile.

Driving d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Healing d4, Intimidation d4, Knowledge d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4

"Civilians"

Guy Carey - Infrastructure manager for the municipality.

Lt Peter Debreceny - One of the soldiers on leave in Boston when the storm happened. Peter was on base when it was quietly and efficiently taken over by the invading forces. He and other unconverted soldiers are on menial duties around the base or confined to barracks.

Driving d6, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Healing d4, Intimidation d6, Knowledge d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Cerise L'Angelier* - Resistance fighter from the invading reality. Cerise has snuck across the portal. How much she knows will depend on at what stage she appears in the adventure. She should know everything the PCs know, plus one or two little details; unless she is being deployed in the very final stages of the railroaded adventure, when she should know everything that needs to be known, and can therefore drive PC action. Crucially, Cerise is aware that she has travelled from a different world, though she is unaware of the full meaning of this. She could not articulate or explain the contest for the reality space.

Driving d4, Fighting d6, Guts d10, Healing d6,
Intimidation d4, Investigation d10, Knowledge d6, Notice
d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Franziska Gerste - Reporter with the Boston Herald. Franziska may not appear in the adventure at all. It is likely that the PCs will want to fact-check with an independent authority, and Franziska will be someone known to them.

Really savvy groups can also use her as a shield once they decide to take action - the army will be much less likely to engage in violence with the news media present.

Scenes

Like any story, this game has five key phases. To an extent, scenes can be shuffled around between these phases, and you might alternate between scenes of a different sort:

Exposition - The characters learn of the basically sinister character of the army, and the steps that are being taken to cement military control.

Unreality - The characters learn that the world, particularly technology, has undergone some kind of suppression or alteration.

Strategic - The characters attempt to gather allies and formulate a plan.

Resolution - Action is taken either to attack the threat or to escape its area of effect.

Denouement - The catastrophic damage from the invasion is revealed.

Opening Scene

Purpose - To establish in the minds of the players that there is no real sabotage threat and redirect them to observe the army's activities.

Location - A downtown substation

NPC Roster - Guy Carey (maintenance manager), misc civilian technicians, Army technician.

The Action - PCs arrive shortly after the substation has gone offline. Guy Carey will already be onsite investigating, but will wait for PC authorization before attempting repair. PCs will find no signs of tampering, booby traps or anything else suspicious.

The substation relatively new (10 years), and power can be rerouted to the station it replaced, or a repair can be attempted.

If a repair is begun, an army technician with a work-order from Col Spencer will arrive. Allowing the Army technician to assist guarantees that the repair fails. Otherwise the repair will be successful (GC will spend his only Bennie), but will have failed again later in the adventure if the PCs ever follow up on it.

If a PC assists in the repairs and spends a Bennie, the repair is successful, and remains successful.

Main Exits - PCs may wish to talk to Col Spencer, or they may touch base with Cpt Morton about why the army is interfering in a patently civilian matter.

Railway - If the PCs stall, have a call come through their personal radios about a civilian complaint about army manoeuvres at a nearby cemetery.

Interviews with Army (Col Spencer)

This is not a single scene - rather it is guidance on how these scenes may play out.

Purpose - Spencer is the face of the invading force. Interactions with him should never reassure the players that things are on an even keel, they should create discomfort at his brutality and a desire to do something about him.

Location - Spencer will never come to the PCs, but insist they come to him. This is a blatant power-play on his part, something he revels in.

NPC Roster - Spencer will usually have a handful of guards close enough to intervene in any scene within a few seconds. Spencer likes to take direct and personal charge of the operations, and so won't have any senior aides or assistants present.

The Action - There are two main ways that encounters will be play out:

1. Spencer can summon the PCs in order to warn them off interfering with army matters. He is not yet secure enough in his position to have them killed - the Mayor and most civil authorities are unconverted, and there are still significant numbers of National Guard soldiers on the streets. So he will threaten and cajole, but the main extent of the direct action he feels able to take is to keep tabs on them, and if troubles persist, to give them a military "escort."

2. The PCs can be approaching Spencer demanding to know what his troops are doing. Spencer will be difficult and uncooperative and firmly believes that he has the upper hand and merely needs to keep the PCs out of his hair for a couple of days while the Gospog are prepared.

Questions about

Maintenance - will be unconvincingly explained as the military offering every possible assistance.

Graveyards - will be unconvincingly explained as a health measure, attempting to stop the spread of cholera.

Stelae - initial inquiries about any of the Stelae will be answered in terms of military equivalents of civilian cell phone towers, being installed in order to get the main infrastructure online. As noted, this should not be convincing.

Main Exits - Interviews with Spencer will almost certainly be peremptorily ended by him once he's delivered his official line.

Liaising with National Guard (Mj Shepherd)

Like the scenes with Spencer, this is not a specific occasion. It's likely that the players will talk to Shepherd several times over the course of the adventure.

Purpose - The PCs should come to trust Shepherd and his motives, and should come to see him as an important ally.

Location - Shepherd is happy to travel to meet the PCs where they are. He has a roving command post from WWII taken out of mothballs when his hi-tech command post ceased functioning.

NPC Roster - Shepherd will always be accompanied by a handful of senior aides who he can dispatch on errands and tasks easily. He is not too concerned with his personal safety, not perceiving any real threat, and so lacks the obvious bodyguard contingent that Spencer cultivates.

Main Action - There are several topics that the PCs will want to discuss:

Martial Law - Shepherd is just as frustrated over the prolonging of martial law as the PCs. In the second or subsequent encounters they should learn that he has grave doubts about the army

Graveyards - Shepherd does not believe Spencer's lies either. He has men detailed to keep an eye on the city's graveyards. He will alert the PCs to the emergence of the Gospog.

Main Exits - Shepherd has a very good grasp of the army's movements and odd incidents, and if the PCs ask, can direct them to any of the oddities discussed elsewhere.

Checking in with HQ (Cpt Morton)

As with the other scenes about liaising, this encounter will happen several times.

Purpose - To isolate the PCs from their official resources. Morton is an able and competent administrator, who believes that she has allocated all the resources available to the problem of the sabotage. Her department is stretched thin by assisting in clean-up of storm damage,

- Location - The main form of communication is likely to be via radio, though the PCs will obviously feel free to stop by police HQ and personally check in.
- NPC Roster - Meetings with Morton will almost always involve brief interruptions while she directs subordinates and fields queries.
- Main Action
 Asking for help - the PCs will be allocated any resources they claim to need for catching or preventing sabotage, within reason. This is a high priority. However, Morton will not be willing to offer any resources for checking up on the army or National Guard. Investigating esoteric things like graveyards will merit a severe telling off for Kurt.
- Army - Morton is not comfortable with the Army or Martial Law, but from the coal-face where she is in terms of organizing repairs and assistance, Army help is a lot better than no Army help.
- National Guard - Morton has struck up a rapport with Shepherd and will be more willing to listen to crazy theories if he's chipping in too. (And vice versa! Without PC support, Shepherd will get no air time for his concerns about the army either.)
- Main Exits - As with the other leaders, Morton is *busy*, and won't be able to spare large amounts of time to talk to her department head unless he's got something pressing and concrete. She's likely to be even more cursory with his subordinates.
- Graveyard Desecration**
- Purpose - To demonstrate that there is bone fide *weird shit* going on at graveyards around the city.
- Location - There are 9 cemeteries inside the Boston Metropolitan area. Gospog planters will be at work at all of them over the course of the adventure.
- Main Action - A group of soldiers purposefully move through the graveyard. At graves of less than a few months they insert a hollow spike into the ground and fire a special canister from the tube directly into the corpse (in later stages of the invasion, mass graves will be seeded with planting machines.)
- PCs can be expected to question the officer in charge of the planting operation, who will have a work order signed by Spencer and who will direct all inquiries to Spencer.
- Main Exits - Absurdly gung-ho PCs may attempt to eject the army from the graveyard, initially by force of will and

subsequently by physical means. The Gospog planting is a crucial activity for the army, but it is also important for them to phase out rather than confront the legitimate authorities. The officer on site will call in Spencer, and if the PCs make the mistake of attacking him, he'll respond with deadly force. Because they're Wild Cards in a fairly pulpy system, they should be able to beat a retreat without fatality, but they'll be on the run from then on.

More sensible groups will back down and return to investigate later.

Railway - Groups that dwell too long at the scene without advancing it should be called by HQ to observe a small protest in progress nearby.

Morgues & Hospitals

Purpose - Heighten awareness of the graveyards, and create fear about the army's intentions there.

Location - Any hospital + the city morgue

Main Action - Having been fed a line about disease control at the Graveyards, it is only natural to enquire about new corpses - the victims of the storm and subsequent accidents.

Medical examiners and morticians will report that the army has been collecting all corpses "for containment" and taking them someplace unknown.

The real reason for this is so the corpses can be used to create Gospog. The bodies are buried in a requisitioned piece of park close to the outskirts of Boston, but technically within the city jurisdiction, and within range of the Stelae.

Main Exit - The PCs can attempt to find out where the bodies are going. This shouldn't be too hard, and leads them to an impromptu graveyard.

Railway - Their musings should be interrupted by a call from HQ about civil disorder in the central city.

Civil Disorder

Purpose - To demonstrate the disregard for the rule of law of the military.

Location - Downtown Boston

Main Action - A small group of protesters has been organized on one of the main shopping roads in downtown Boston. The group is basically a dozen people with placards handing

out pamphlets. It must be stressed that it does not look threatening in any way.

Morton probably directs the PCs to investigate, reasoning that any saboteur or terrorist might plausibly look for allies and sympathizers here. As discussed, since there is no saboteur, this "lead" dead-ends pretty fast.

Shortly after the PCs arrive, an Army truck will arrive with riot control type gear. The Army won't attempt to really engage with the protesters, using suppressive gas and rubber bullets as their first response. If a PC alerts them very early on that the Boston Police Department are present, they'll hold back but make it clear that the PCs have a limited timeframe for breaking up the gathering or the army will use force.

Main Exits

- Allowing the army to disperse the crowd leaves the PCs more or less standing around looking dumb, but free to pursue whatever investigations they like afterwards.

If there has been a confrontation between the PCs and the army, Morton will contact them and require a debrief - she is neutral on the issue, and can be either swayed by a clear explanation or angered by a clumsy one.

Railway

- This scene can play out without PC intervention. The next stop is for Pete Debreceny to make an appearance.

MIT/Harvard

Purpose

- To make explicit the technological axiom change. I recommend placing this scene relatively late in the adventure, preferably immediately before meeting Pete.

Location

- Boston is home to several first-class research institutions. They will be operating on skeleton staffs - only the most ferocious researcher will be interested in working after the storm; and only the most old-fashioned will be able to, due to the electrical damage.

These institutions represent a concentration of post-1950s technology. This location has the most extreme difference from the new reality.

Main Action

- Which staff are present will depend on what kinds of questions the PCs wish ask - which department they visit. Generally there should be a real skeletal administration staff - someone to answer the phones and check the mail. Wherever they go, there should be academics present, who are only too happy to speculate on the widespread failure of technology.

If they visit a high-tech department, such as computer science, engineering, mechatronics etc, the academics they meet will be deeply invested in their scientific gadgetry. These academics should be totally unaffected by the failures that the PCs have observed in electronics and computers. The academics provide the possibility energy/belief to power their devices. Critically, if the PCs provide any non-functioning technology for inspection, the academic will realize that there is nothing *physically wrong*, and this will cause a cascading failure of their entire world. This is a chance to show the PCs a conversion to the new reality directly.

If they visit a low-tech department, such as geology, physics, chemistry or similar, then the academics they find will already be converted to the low-tech axiom. While these departments have access to high-tech lasers (etc), the specific academics that are met are older, and more interested in theoretical concepts not reliant on technology. These academics should be enchanted by the idea of technology failures, and will offer to run some simulations about the wattage required for the scope of failures observed, especially after the storm was finished. They will proudly take the PCs to look at their new computer - a punch-card machine that in reality was a display piece, suddenly made current again by the invasion.

Either way, if the PCs are going to universities to make these kinds of enquiries, then they are close to figuring out what's really going on, and you should bear that in mind when they meet Pete and/or Cerise.

Main Exits - These scenes fairly naturally run to a conclusion. They ask their questions, get an answer, and then are available for carrying on with the main parts of the investigation.

Railway - If the PCs begin to endlessly loiter, they can be interrupted by Peter, who has come to ask the academics about the changes he's observed too. Peter can then get them back onto the main storyline.

Meeting Pete

This scene is really important. It provides critical information about the importance of the Stelae that the PCs will have difficulty getting from another source. So this scene must be run at some stage. It, and the opening scene, are the only absolutely essential scenes.

Purpose - To inform the PCs that the Army are very interested in three new "radio transmission towers" that they have built around the outskirts of the city and are about to install a fourth well outside of Boston proper, where it cannot possibly be doing its official job.

Almost as important, is to confirm what they should already suspect: that the Army troops are not locals,

and furthermore that the local army base personnel are all confined to barracks indefinitely.

At the end of this scene, the PCs should be in no doubt that the Army are the enemy, not in any way friends or allies.

Location - Pete has gone AWOL from the Barracks specifically to find his old army buddy and inform him of the situation. Therefore, Pete will find the PCs wherever they happen to be at a convenient moment in the narrative. Because this scene dumps a huge amount of information that will cause the main PC action/resolution, it should happen before 2 hours has passed.

Main Action - At its simplest, this scene can be a conversation held anywhere reasonably private.

If your players are getting through the adventure material especially quickly, this scene can help slow the pace by having a small skirmish with a couple of military policemen hot on Pete's trail.

Main Exits - How the scene ends will depend on whether you are comfortable with running a full-time NPC or not. Pete can be disposed of via the realization that as a fugitive he'll hurt the PCs ability to work effectively.

Railway - Pete has made contact with a resistance operative from the invading reality. At this stage Pete just has a meet location and a name: Cerise L'Angelier.

I recommend avoiding getting to that encounter in this way unless you are very pressed for time and have a group of slack-jawed idiots, as this is too blatant a railway and deprotagnises the characters.

Meet the Resistance

Purpose - This scene can be used to get the adventure back on track if it has strayed too far from the desired story routes. This is the best chance for ensuring that the PCs realize the importance of the Stelae.

Location - This should take place anywhere either very discreet or very public.

Main Action - The resistance has been hastily formed around Cerise L'Angelier, and their target is the Stelae. While she does not know fully what the Stelae do, she has gleaned that it is very important to the occupation forces.

She will attempt to convince the PCs to join her band in disabling one of the Stelae already established here.

She probably doesn't realize that this will strand her here.

Main Exits - If she has successfully convinced them to join her in attacking the Stelae, then that will follow swiftly. If not, PCs may undertake their own investigations into the nature of these "telecommunication towers".

Railway - Have the meeting broken up by Army troops, somehow fully aware of the basic content of the meeting. This will force the PCs to immediately join with Cerise and attack the Stelae, or jump into the other main outcome: flight.

Investigating Stelae

Purpose - To provide the PCs with a realistic appraisal of the Stelae's physical condition and environment.

Location - The three Stelae are each at the farthest reaches of the city, and have been erected in relative isolation. While they're important to the invaders, the invaders have a lot of other things to worry about and believe that nobody will figure out what the Stelae are before the Gospog are ready.

Each of the towers has a dozen-strong squad of soldiers on guard. There are no power cables to or from the towers, and no equipment that you would usually associate with a radio or telecommunications array.

Their true function will be hinted by the instant breakdown of any remaining post-transistor technology that the PCs possess.

Main Action - The PCs will scout the towers and without much effort will conclude that they cannot possibly be the communications arrays claimed.

Main Exits - Sensible PCs will leave to gather their forces and come up with a plan. Foolhardy PCs will charge in and potentially get killed.

Railway - The scene can be terminated usefully either by the news at the Stelae of a nearby skirmish, which will cause the troops to partially withdraw, or by a nearby graveyard hatching its Gospog.

Gospog Hatching

Purpose - This scene is the main horror component, and should raise both the tension and the stakes. Up until this point, there's a lot of weird stuff, and sinister soldiers that could be from anywhere. But the subservient dead hauling themselves from the ground is a whole different ball game.

Main Action - Aside from the spectacle, the Gospog should be instantly threatening towards anyone who isn't an invader. Try and convey a weakly controlled destructive urge.

Depending on the circumstances, the PCs may be countering the Gospog in combat. Taking a Gospog out requires quite a bit of doing: they have no vital parts to hit with a lucky shot!

Skirmish at the border of the invaded area

Purpose - To alert the PCs to possible external aid, and potentially to bring a speedy resolution to the adventure if time is short. This scene should be very near the end of the scenario, if it is even run at all.

At the end of this scene, the PCs should have no doubt whatever that the army troops are hostile invaders.

Location - This scene can take place anywhere around the outskirts of the area bounded by the three Stelae.

Main Action - This scene happens somewhat obliquely to the PCs. Unless this scene is being used as the final scene in the game, it is not a good idea to have them engaged in military-scale action.

Therefore the main action should be the mopping up of the real US troops by the invaders, and the PCs observing the aftermath and drawing their own conclusions.

The battle has been somewhat one-sided, largely due to technical problems with army equipment once crossing into the contested reality space.

In the aftermath the invaders will sweep the area and execute any wounded - this is a clear breach of every humanitarian standard and should appear obviously wrong to the players. The bodies will be taken to a park at the outskirts of the city and implanted with Gospog seeds and buried.

Main Exits - PCs would be very foolish to engage the army in combat. The conflict with natives marks a watershed where secrecy is no longer an option and the army troops on hand will simply try and kill the PCs.

Disabling Stelae

Purpose - Disabling any of the three Stelae that are already built will immediately end the invasion.

Main Action - Disabling the Stelae should not be too easy. However, there is no real opportunity to plausibly deliver design schematics or weak spots to the characters. You should allow any plan that utilizes a lot of explosives to work

- and any lesser plan where someone spends a Bennie in close execution.

Main Exits

- The aftermath of destroying a Stelae will be devastating. Everyone who has converted once has been burned out essentially, and when reality reasserts itself those people will all die - this is the second horrific moment.

On the Run

Purpose

- The PCs have decided that the challenges are too much, and are fleeing. The purpose of these short scene sequence is to make this exciting.

Main Action

- If they flee, they will bring themselves to the attention of the army, who will deploy themselves and Gospog to stop them. Their flight, knowing what they know, represents a grave threat to the invaders, and so they will take extreme pains to stop them.

Finishing the Scenario

There are three major endings for the scenario:

1. A stelae is destroyed, causing the reversion of the world to its natural state.
2. The PCs successfully escape the city bounds and meet up with the regular army
3. The PCs are killed or captured in the attempt of either #1 or #2.

Disabling Stelae

The Stelae can be disabled by any suitably large application of force. Generally pitch the number of guards around the towers as 2 per PC, though reduce this if they make any sensible plan to outflank the guards by disraction or tactical finesse. Generally a truck packed with dynamite, or a kilogram of C4 should do the job.

At the fall of the Stelae, the storm front at the extent of their control will collapse back into the centre of the area. You should describe lightning and strong winds. The devastation of the return should be greater than the initial storm. As the storm front reaches the PCs, anyone without Bennies, and any converted allies should instantly die.

Escaping the City

All roads should be thoroughly blocked, so the main way of escaping is cross-country. Helicopters are a possibility, but inclement weather should make this an unattractive option, and the ferocity of the storms at the boundary of the cosm will certainly destroy anything airborne.

They should be met beyond the storm by the might of the US army, preparing to enter the storm to investigate. Paramedics will take the characters for observation by a doctor. As they come into contact with any technology, anyone without any Bennies and any converted allies should instantly die.

Running the Game

Narrative Structure

The structure of this game can most easily be imagined as a braided channel: there is an initial starting point from which a number of paths apparently diverge. In reality most of these paths recombine at critical junctions before offering another set of branches. The result is a small handful of likely adventure outcomes which move through series of story nexuses.

It is important that the players be kept active - there should be plenty to see and do within the confines of the setting, but it is a lamentable habit for some groups to over-think the issues. A forced exit has been provided for each of the set-piece scenes above, and these should be used when the action begins to flag.

Changing World Laws

The lightning storms which result from the initial invasion, and which are still frequent around the perimeter of the invaded area, did substantial damage to most electrical systems. All major internet hubs, cell-phone towers, and the like, are already disabled. As these larger items are further from the level of technology allowed by the world laws, they are more subject to "correction" by those changes. A large number of small-scale electrical devices were damaged due to being plugged in, and again, items like laptops are in great contravention of the technology axiom and so subject more readily to correction. A larger number of devices would have been either turned off or are less advanced.

Over the course of the adventure, any modern technology should fail on the most flimsy pretext. Initially players may grumble about how unrealistic this is - they're right of course, but that unrealism is a key part of the adventure.

Investigation

Players will find it very easy to settle into a pattern of detailed investigation, however this will result in the adventure taking far too long for a 3-hour convention slot. There are three basic approaches to circumventing this habit:

1. The "Gumshoe" approach of providing any necessary clue after any level of investigation.
2. Circumvent the investigations by passing the necessary information early in the scene, while it is still being established in the players' minds.
3. Keep the non-investigative elements at the forefront of the scene, so that the players don't have the time to investigate due to more pressing concerns.

Most games will require a mix of these three techniques, and generally I would expect that #3 will become a more prominent technique as time in the adventure ticks along.

Whatever you do, do not allow players to engage in meticulous player-driven detailed searching or exploration. Players, in general, can manage to

grasp the big picture, but if allowed to, will fixate on details that are difficult to keep straight and intricate to assemble. Keep your players focused on the big picture, don't let them get too bogged down in details.

Players should be satisfied with their characters' appraisal of the situation, for example:

Wrong.

Kurt: "I check the bathroom cupboard" GM: "There's nothing there" Kurt: "I check the upholstery" GM: "There's nothing under the cushions" Kurt: "How about under the couch". GM: "There's a revolver" Kurt: "Great! Time to start on the kitchen..."

Right.

Kurt: "I check the bathroom cupboard" GM: "You toss the place and find a revolver under couch, but nothing else of interest."

Action

Savage Worlds is a relatively quick system for combat, but even so, the number of conflicts that can be fully staged is quite small - 2 or 3 at most. You should allow a minimum of one significant action scene as the players either try to take out one of the Stelae or try to escape the city proper (the two most likely endings). An "incidental" conflict with Gospog is also fairly likely, and useful. That means of the several other scenes which indicate violence as a likely outcome you should allow one to proceed down those lines. The others should be defused by Morton or Shepherd unless that would be obviously *deus ex machina*.

Savage Worlds

The system is in the line of "pulp" games - typically characters are fairly competent and can take a fair pounding before going down. It's also a relatively simple system.

All PCs are "Wild Cards" in the system, meaning they get bennies and an extra D6 when making skill checks.

Only some NPCs are "Wild Cards", broadly, only those named in the summary, and who have specific characters sheets.

Bennies

Bennies represent a character's "possibilities". When they are exhausted, you should consider that character to have been converted to the new reality. This nominally means they obey all the World Laws and changed axioms, but in practical terms, you can't re-brief the players on how to play their characters and so only the technology axiom can be really enforced. Characters without bennies not only cannot operate any post-1950s technology, but any attempt they make to interact with it automatically breaks such technology permanently.

Bibliography

TORG

The original core TORG books are out of print, but a free starter pack is available from DriveThruRPG:

http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product_info.php?products_id=28828&it=1

Note that I have simplified the metaphysics considerably, and made sundry small changes to the official situation to suit the constraints of a limited adventure.

Savage Worlds

There should be enough information in the quick start for a reasonably experienced GM to run this game without purchasing the book:

<http://www.peginc.com/Downloads/SWEX/TDO6.pdf>

I recommend printing off one copy of the summary document for each player too:

<http://www.peginc.com/Downloads/SWEX/explorersgmscreen.pdf>

Boston

The wikipedia page on Boston is semi-useful, but for cutting right to the stuff of interest to gamers, I suggest White Wolf's *Boston Unveiled*.

I also recommend their *Tales from the 13th Precinct* for a gamer-oriented discussion of US police operations, though I have ignored a lot of that book for this adventure simply because of time constraints.

Player Character

Vitals

Name: Kurt Alexander Jenkins
 Rank: Detective First Grade
 Assignment: Lead Detective, Major Crimes Unit
 Partner: Carl Greene
 Sex: Male
 Age: 57
 Height: 6'4"
 Weight: 215 lb
 Mini-bio: Career cop, originally from Detroit. Outstanding arrest record, but a correspondingly large number of disciplinary actions and a reckless streak have prevented promotion off case work.

Mechanics

Agility	d4	Driving	d4
		Fighting	d6
		Shooting	d6
		Stealth	d6
Smarts	d8	Healing	d6
		Investigation	d8
		Knowledge	d8
		Notice	d10
		Streetwise	d10
Spirit	d6	Guts	d8
		Intimidation	d6
		Persuasion	d6
Strength	d4		
Vigor	d6		
Bennies	1		

Questions

1. For what heroic act were you awarded the key to Detroit when you were a policeman there in the late 1970s?
2. What order did you disobey that forced you out of Detroit PD?
3. Which of the three is your favourite ex-wife?
4. What do you think about having regular army troops on Boston's streets in peace time?
5. Does it bother you that you're passed over time and again for promotion because you won't play the political game?
6. Do you miss your laptop, that was fried by the electrical storm?

Player Character

Vitals

Name: Rachel Graves
 Rank: Detective First Grade
 Assignment: Senior investigating officer, Major Crimes Unit
 Partner: Jeremy Conrad
 Sex: Female
 Age: 31
 Height: 5'10"
 Weight: 125 lb
 Mini-Bio: Outstanding student, graduating at or near the top of her class at every stage of her education. Long history of charitable work.

Mechanics

Agility	d6	Climbing	d4
		Driving	d6
		Fighting	d4
		Shooting	d6
		Stealth	d4
Smarts	d10	Healing	d4
		Investigation	d8
		Knowledge	d8
		Notice	d10
		Streetwise	d6
Spirit	d4	Guts	d6
		Intimidation	d6
		Persuasion	d8
Strength	d4		
Vigor	d6		
Bennies	3		

1. What matter of principle prevented you from accepting the valedictory honours for your high school?
2. Do you find other cops treating you different because you're a woman, smarter than them, or one of the Chief's favourites?
3. What rumour has made you unsettled about the army troops patrolling the streets?
4. What happened when you were shot?
5. Why hadn't you officially accepted the promotion to Captain and head of Administrative Vice when the storm broke?
6. How do you maintain your faith in these trying times?

Player Character

Vitals

Name: Jeremy Conrad
 Rank: Detective
 Assignment: Case Officer, Major Crimes Unit
 Partner: Rachel Graves
 Sex: Male
 Age: 40
 Height: 6'0"
 Weight: 200 lb
 Mini-Bio: Joined the regular army straight out of high-school and served in Gulf War I. Left the army in June '95, studied Criminology at Portland State University. Joined Boston PD '99, served in SWAT until requesting transfer in '05.

Mechanics

Agility	d8	Fighting	d8
		Shooting	d8
		Stealth	d8
Smarts	d6	Investigation	d6
		Knowledge	d6
		Notice	d6
		Streetwise	d4
Spirit	d8	Guts	d8
		Intimidation	d8
		Persuasion	d4
Strength	d8		
Vigor	d6		
Bennies	2		

1. What did you give up to follow your father, Colonel Prentice Conrad, three-time winner of the medal of valour, into the army?
2. Why would you trust your old army buddy Pete with your life?
3. What don't you miss about the army?
4. How many people have you killed in the line of duty? How do you feel about it?
5. Why can't you shake your feeling that there's something wrong with the army troops now stationed around the city?
6. What have you been doing on your own time to help with the disaster relief?

Player Character

Vitals

Name: Carl Greene
 Rank: Detective
 Assignment: Case Officer, Major Crimes Unit
 Partner: Kurt Jenkins
 Sex: Male
 Age: 27
 Height: 5'11"
 Weight: 180 lb
 Mini-Bio: Wealthy family, graduated from Northwestern, joined BPD in '06.

Mechanics

Agility	d6	Fighting	d4
		Shooting	d6
		Stealth	d4
Smarts	d8	Healing	d4
		Investigation	d8
		Knowledge	d8
		Notice	d6
		Streetwise	d6
Spirit	d8	Guts	d8
		Intimidation	d6
		Persuasion	d8
Strength	d6		
Vigor	d6		
Bennies	4		

1. Why does everyone think that you owe your job to nepotism?
2. What officially covered up action catapulted you from patrolman to Detective?
3. Why do you worry that Kurt's recklessness has already rubbed off on you?
4. How are you coping without your laptop, iPhone and the Internet?
5. What happened to your first love?
6. Why do you think that the street preachers' warning of the impending apocalypse have affected you so strongly?