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## EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS TO

The fans, for sticking with us.

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# SHADOWRUNNING

Anyone who's been in the business for more than a decade is either very skilled or very meek. Those last ones often don't make it far into the second decade. They survived the first ten years by avoiding trouble, avoiding danger, and staying away from any situation that might eventually involve live fire. It isn't easy for them to get jobs, because when you have a rep of being meek, most Johnsons haven't heard of you, and those who have don't want to hire you. The meek ones don't make a great living in their first decade, and the second decade can be worse. In that second decade, they either become meeker and meeker until they pretty much fade away like ash at the end of a cigarette, or they get sick of the desperate, fearful life and decide to change everything and go on a big, risk-taking score that is entirely unlike anything they've ever done, and then they go and get themselves killed because their first ten years never prepared them for what they just got themselves into.

So it's the runners who've been at it for twenty years who are the really good ones. The wise ones. You talk to them, and they come up with ideas and plans that seem new and brilliant and revolutionary, but they're not new, they're just standard techniques from fifteen years ago that today's young turks have never heard of.

That's what gave Derbyshire his great idea. Maybe, he thought, he could make a living just by sharing his knowledge. He could stay in the action, but get off the streets. He could become a consultant.

He started putting out word that he could help a whole lot of runners become better, faster, more efficient. He called himself a kind of plumber—when your works get jammed up, call Derbyshire and he'll unclog 'em for you. Sure, he'll take a percent of your cut, but it was well worth it if it helped you finish your job well, on time, and alive.

He started working with a few clients in mind, and his first five weeks was a crush of hard work and optimism, but then those first jobs were over and no new ones had popped up, it was time to figure out what to do next. But he'd looked for work before. He knew how to do it. He spent more times at bars than normal, but drank less. He talked to people he didn't know, he offered ideas to people who didn't ask for them, and he acted bright and lively in that annoying, salespersony way.

That was how he met Warthog. Warthog was so sincerely impressed by every little bit of wisdom that Derbyshire had to offer that Derbyshire knew it had to be an act. That was one of his personal rules—if someone's trying hard to appear as one particular thing, that's the thing they're least likely to be. So the ork, with his round face and crooked tusks, was not likely to be as green and easily impressed as he acted.

"So you think this Johnson could be screwing me?" Warthog said as they sat in a bar plopped in the middle of a cool basement in an unused warehouse. The joint was





# A TO Z

JASON HARDY

only open sporadically and the drinks were merely adequate, but there was no cheaper way to beat the summer heat.

"You always go into a job figuring you might be screwed," Derbyshire. "SOP?" Thankfully, Warthog didn't ask what "SOP" stood for.

"So when does it go from being a possibility to being a problem?" Warthog asked. "When do you have to take actions instead of precautions?"

"If you're asking, it's because you've seen something. What have you seen?"

So Warthog told his story. He'd been hired on a simple bump and thump—"accidentally" bumping into a football player while said player was out hitting the clubs, aggravating the his security entourage a little, and then, when the security boys got chippy, roughing them up. Once this was done, Warthog was to gently encourage the football player that it would probably be best for everyone if his team did not play well that coming weekend. The basic pitch had sounded fine to Warthog, but at the end the Johnson got squirrely.

"Last thing," the Johnson had said. "Don't think about getting a little extra for yourself. Don't you put any money down on this game. You just stay out of it."

Warthog, who had in fact planned on making a side bet, frowned. "Why?" he asked.

And the Johnson had lost control, leaping to his feet, pounding the table so hard that everything on it jumped and one drink spilled. "Because I said so!" he screamed. "If that's not enough, get the hell out of here!"

Warthog said that he didn't feel like making a big deal about this. It wasn't worth it—if he made a side bet, there was little chance the Johnson would know about it, unless he was somehow monitoring every bookie in the Seattle metroplex. If he wanted to do it, he could still do it. So he nodded and said he'd do what the Johnson wanted. All in all, the whole thing wasn't a big deal, but it was enough to raise a small flag in Warthog's mind.

Then there was the fact that the Johnson had control issues. There are hands-on Johnsons and hands-off Johnsons, but this one seemed to be a hands- and feet-on Johnson, checking in on Warthog and his crew more often than a first-time mother checks in on a newborn. Like the whole betting thing, it might not be that big of a deal, but two little warning flags combined into one medium flag, and that was why Warthog humbly requested Derbyshire's input on the matter.

Derbyshire leaned back, his chair shifting, metal legs screeching on concrete. "There's something hinky going on," he said, "but with Johnsons there almost always is. The question is whether it's hinky in a way you can work with."





Warthog furrowed his brow, an impressive feat given how bumpy and wrinkled his forehead already was. He was trying to look deeply interested and thoughtful, and Derbyshire both appreciated and was suspicious of the effort. "Interesting," Warthog said. "So how do I play it?"

"You ever play golf?" Derbyshire asked.

Warthog snorted. "Does it look like I play golf?"

"Fair enough. There's a simple rule for playing a hole with a big hazard—you move your ass toward the trouble, then let it fly."

Warthog lowered his chin and frowned, possibly wondering whether Derbyshire was being wise or borderline insane. It was the first unforced expression Derbyshire had seen on his face.

×

The golf analogy wasn't perfect. You may move your ass in the direction of the hazard, but you shoot away from it. Derbyshire, by contrast, had told Warthog that he essentially should fire his ball right into the drink. It was another one of his rules—don't wait around for trouble to come looking for you.

Three days later, Warthog placed a bet on the football game in question, and he did it in as public a manner as possible, walking up to a window in the Gates Casino and talking loudly. The Gates Casino always swore that it never gathered personal information about individual gamblers, that the omnipresent cameras were there for security and not information gathering, and that any information the casino happened to gather in the course of business would be kept strictly private. Of course, the Gates Casino also swore up and down that they had no connection whatsoever to any of Seattle's organized crime outfits, so their guarantees were only worth so much.

Once the bet was placed, Derbyshire spent a lot of time with Warthog, and found out that when the ork wasn't trying too hard he was pleasant company—honest, blunt, and with an appealing bawdy streak. Derbyshire's decades of work had taught him several volumes' worth of dirty jokes, and they proved a fine conversational lubricant during his time with Warthog.

"... and the old man says, 'I didn't have the heart to tell her that it wasn't my cane,'" Derbyshire said one night, and Warthog chortled. It was a natural laugh—Warthog had dropped most of his wide-eyed naïf act and was acting more like a colleague, which relieved Derbyshire to no end. They were at a place called Three Biscuits, Derbyshire leaning back in a battered recliner he'd been using on and off for more than a decade. He had a long list of places that were not home but were almost as comfortable (or, during times when he didn't have a lot of money to spend on housing, more comfortable), and Three Biscuits was at the top of the list. You could stay there for most of the day for the price of a cup of coffee—well, not coffee, not really, but something that looked kind of like it and tasted vaguely like it if you added enough cream and sugar. Warthog and Derbyshire had been there for a while,

because most of what they needed to do at the moment involved waiting.

But right after Derbyshire delivered his punch line, Warthog's eyes lost focus and he pressed a button near his waist, responding to some signal only he could see. He subvocalized the whole conversation, so Derbyshire had to wait to find out what was happening.

Finally, Warthog's eyes focused on him again, and he smiled.

"So?" Derbyshire said.

"That was Mr. Johnson," Warthog said. "He wants to talk. He's not happy about something."

×

Mr. Johnson already had his gun out when Derbyshire and Warthog walked into the back room of a rent-a-desk center, and Derbyshire didn't feel threatened at all. Pulling a gun before a conversation even starts, his rules told him, isn't a threat at all. It's a cry for help. It's standing on a rooftop ledge, begging to be talked down.

Derbyshire had been coaching Warthog about this conversation on the trip over, so the ork was well prepped. He raised his hands, but he kept his movements light and casual. His voice stayed mild, which is not easy since what sounds mild to an ork's ears is very similar to a crazed-with-anger tone from a human.

"Hey, hey, all right," Warthog said. "All right, so it's going to be one of those conversations. That's fine. It's cool."

"You're a disloyal smartass," Mr. Johnson said. "And you're an idiot, too. You think I wouldn't find out? Did you think you could do that without me knowing about it?"

"No," Warthog said. "You were supposed to find out."

It was a small moment before the Johnson spoke, but Derbyshire noticed it. The Johnson was a little off balance. Perfect.

"So I was supposed to find out?" the Johnson said, working hard to bring his voice under control. "You're playing games now?"

"I'm placing a bet," Warthog said. "That's all." He was staying nice and calm, just as Derbyshire had coached him. The calm one almost always comes out better in a dispute, Derbyshire had found. Acting psychotic usually only impresses posers and teenagers.

"Well, you just blew it, pal, you just totally blew it," the Johnson said. "You think you're the only team in town? I could fire a shotgun on any street in the Barrens and hit a half-dozen runners just as good as you. I gave you the first shot at this, you screwed it up, so you're done. You're fired."

"That's too bad," Warthog said.

"Yeah, well, learn to listen to orders, and maybe someday you'll see a job through to the end."

"That's the thing," Warthog said. "I already did it. It's done."

Then there was the delicious silence that comes when someone is hit



with information they knew nothing about. Derbyshire had to work to keep from smirking—Warthog seemed to have an easier time keeping his thick, rough face impassive.

"What are you talking about?" the Johnson said. "When did this happen?"

"Last night," Warthog said. "Didn't you get my message? I sent you all the details."

"What message? I didn't get any ... hold on." The Johnson's eyes glazed over as he engaged in some AR activities. Then his eyes refocused, and the gun in his hand twitched. "You two, both of you, stay right where you are. I'm going to sort this out, and you two aren't going anywhere."

"Okay," said Warthog, and he and Derbyshire sat back and waited.

The Johnson would find that everything was on the level. Well, most everything. The job had been done, just as he had requested, and it had gone rather smoothly, if a few days early. There was video footage from two different sources—the nightclub's security cameras and a Knight Errant camera perched on the street nearby—and none of it was faked. The Johnson could test the data all he wanted, and the only thing he'd find was that it was pure and unaltered.

The only tampering had occurred on the message that had been sent to the Johnson. Its timestamp said it had been sent last night, when in fact it had not been sent until just before Warthog and Derbyshire arrived at the rendezvous. It was a simple bit of tinkering, and even if the Johnson decided to look at it, he probably wouldn't find a trace of funny business.

They sat for a good half-hour, saying nothing. Then the Johnson finally exhaled.

"You're a son of a bitch, but you got the job done." He flicked a credstick across the table. "Take it and get the hell out of here."

Warthog smiled, stood, and grabbed the credstick. "Thank you," he said, and to his credit he resisted the urge to leave with a smart remark. Derbyshire casually followed him to the door.

The Johnson, though, wasn't done talking.

"I'm going to make sure you never work in this city again."

Warthog smiled. Derbyshire had told him that he shouldn't bait the Johnson, but that he could respond to a threat if he felt like it. And it seemed that Warthog felt like it.

"You can try to keep me from working," Warthog said, "but you couldn't even stop me from making a bet."

Then they left.

So far, so good. But a humiliated Johnson was a Johnson who'd be looking to even the score. Their work wasn't quite done yet.

×

Derbyshire was disappointed, but not necessarily surprised by the Johnson's next move. Word trickled down through various networks that this particular Johnson had hired a small team for a bit of wetwork—namely, eliminating an ork named Warthog. Derbyshire gave him credit for following through on his threat, but a hit was so unimaginative and crude. And Derbyshire was further disappointed that he was not included in the hit, but then he hadn't done much to give the Johnson anything to dislike about him. At least, he hadn't done much that was above board.

There are times when the very best response to having a hit put out on you is to have the hitters bring it on and then to wipe the floor with them. It makes Johnsons think twice about spending more money to wipe you out, and it makes hitters think twice about taking any future offers on you. A good move, but risky. And it wasn't a risk Derbyshire thought Warthog should take right now. There were other ways.

It didn't take much. Derbyshire knew Warthog had a good hacker at his disposal, so he provided a few extra hints on how to use her. While Warthog laid low, the hacker dug around and managed to uncover the Johnson's real name—or at least an alias more personal than "Mr. Johnson"—and his employer. Then the hacker made certain that the employer understood that this particular Mr. Johnson was not only doing a little freelancing with corporate money, but was doing the type of pissant wetwork that tends to give corporations black eyes.

And just like that, Mr. Johnson was out of a job. That put an end to the hit—since most wetwork jobs are set up to have half the payment delivered after the job is done, and Mr. Johnson no longer had the resources to make that payment, the team decided not to bother finishing the work. That might change someday. It could be that Mr. Johnson would find another job before too long. Maybe he'd be lining up jobs for someone else soon, and maybe he'd resurrect that hit as one of his first matters of business. But Derbyshire didn't think so. Something about scrambling around for a while looking out for your own well-being made you forget about the kind of petty grudges like the one the Johnson had for Warthog. Warthog would be well advised to stay on his toes, just in case the Johnson was the type with a long memory, but that should be SOP anyway—a runner who is not on his toes most of the time is a runner who will soon be dead.

That was pretty much that for that job, and while Derbyshire was not paid as well as he would have been if he was an actual runner, he was paid pretty well for a job where he didn't stick his neck out much. It felt a little like a scam, really. Sure, he had little individual rules and guidelines that could fill the drives of a hundred servers, but all of them, pretty much every single one of them, boiled down to a single rule, the rule that had kept this particular Mr. Johnson off-balance and eventually put him out of a job.

Rule number one: Always know more than the other guy.



- History is a damn fine teacher—take it from a guy who lived through a lot of it. And I'm not just talking about the obvious lessons like "Never get involved in a land war in Asia." I'm talking about the subtle stuff.

If you want to understand how something works you don't just look at it from the outside. You tear it open and see how it ticks. History is the source code behind the user interface of the modern world. Tear it open, master that code, and you hold all the cards.

Since I'm sure half of you are rolling your eyes right about now, let me give you a concrete example. If a Johnson from S-K hires you to go to Iran, it's not enough to know that Islamic hardliners run the show. You've got to know that the catalyst for the current state of affairs was the attack on Tehran by the great dragon Aden. Aden represented a literal assault on the hardliners' core beliefs—a threat both physical and spiritual. Know that, and you'll know it won't matter how closely you adhere to Islamic law or how much nuyen you throw around, it won't be enough if anyone finds out you're working for a dragon.

I pulled most of this from Aetherpedia so it comes with all the usual warnings, although some of it came from a publication called, Dumpshock: A Brief History of the Awakened World. If you haven't read it, read it! Pay for a copy of it even, since Professor Maniha, the guy who compiled the thing, is working on an educator's salary. You'll be a better person for it. I also included some of Aetherpedia's recommended media—articles that give another perspective on the events of that year.

And if you ignore all of this, that's real independent of you, but don't say I didn't warn you.

- FastJack

## 1999—A WHIFF OF CORPORATE INDEPENDENCE

### Excerpts from Justice Sessenbrunner's Dissent, *The United States vs. Seretech Corporation*

In deciding this case through the lens of the now and focusing only on Seretech's right to conduct its own business, we gravely risk missing the larger picture and overlooking the powerful, most likely negative effects this decision could have in years to come ...

Democracies are based upon the idea that force should be an option of last resort and should only be applied in an even-handed,

impartial manner. Corporations, by their very nature, cannot be impartial. They are designed to monitor and enforce their own good, not the common good. By granting them the right to use deadly force, we are taking the first step toward the feudal idea of might making right.

Some will complain that this position is alarmist, believing that, as in the case currently before the Court, corporations will only desire to use this power to defend their right to conduct business. This view, however, ignores the rider often attached to this phrase, and that is that corporations will use this power to defend their right to conduct business *as they see fit*. In the current case, Seretech saw the need to have their trucks move into and out of New York City without being hindered by angry mobs, and in this their cause is fairly sympathetic. But by granting corporations the right to maintain an army without setting well-defined rules for the use of that force, we have opened a Pandora's Box that will give rise to corporate armies being deployed in any way imaginable. For if history has taught us anything, it is that as soon as a particular right or freedom is endowed on a people, there are inevitably and immediately those who push that right or freedom to its furthestmost extent ...

When we grant corporations the same rights as nations, we can only expect them to behave as nations have. No nation has been perfect in its decisions of when to use force; how much more imperfect will corporations be?

- Justice Sessenbrunner probably didn't think putting his finger in the dyke would do any good, since he was no doubt aware of the dozens of other holes springing up around him, but he did it anyway. His dissent would seem eerily prophetic if it wasn't for the fact that the end result was pretty easy to see—corporations had been covertly angling for extraterritoriality for years, and just before the turn of the millennium they became much more open about it. You didn't need any special psychic gift to see where it would all end up.
- Kay St. Irregular
- I don't think the Seretech decision is that big of a deal. Does anyone really believe if the decision went the other way, the corps would have disbanded the armies they were already starting to build? No, they would have just refused to recognize the Supreme Court's authority over them and proceed to do whatever the hell they wanted anyway.
- Snopes

1999

**January 8**—USA: Members of the Teamsters Union reject a final government contract offer and go on strike. The resulting work stoppage leads to a severe food shortage in New York City.

**February 2**—CANADA: After years of simmering conflict and well after the completion of a profitable natural gas pipeline, the Dene tribe in Northwestern Canada is pushed off its land. They had submitted a land claim that had been sitting in Canadian government halls for a considerable amount of time, which the Dene took as tacit approval of their presence. The government removed that approval and the Dene were forced to leave their land, clearing the area for further business development. Though not an earth-shaking incident, the event is a good indicator of the general direction of world events in the years to come.

**April 12**—USA: During the strike-caused food shortage in New York City, a Seretech medical research truck is mistaken for a food shipping vehicle and is attacked. In the ensuing combat and riots, twenty Seretech employees and two hundred rioters are killed.

**May 6**—USA: In the aftermath of the New York City riots, state and federal governments sue Seretech for criminal negligence tied to the actions of its security forces.

**October 26**—USA: The United States Supreme Court issues the landmark *The United States vs. Seretech Corporation* decision, finding that corporations have the right to maintain a private army. Governments do not immediately cede power, but the writing is on the wall.





2000—

## THE FIRST SHIAWASE DECISION

Excerpt from Victory Speech of President-elect  
Martin Hunt

NOVEMBER 7, 2000

The greatness and glory of the American people and the American nation has always been its openness to the benefits of freedom. We know that when our people are left to their own devices, when they are allowed to invent and build and grow on their own, they inevitably come up with the great ideas and the marvelous innovations that define us as a people. While it is true that government has acted as a force for good at times, when it has brought benefits to a wide swath of the American people, it is perhaps even more true that government has most blessed our nation when it stands aside and allows the innovators, the builders, and the inventors to use their God-given talents to improve us as a nation.

We are blessed to have the most industrious, most ingenious people on the planet. Throughout our history, the inventions and innovations our people have developed have benefited not just us, but the entire world. We have invented not only new products, but also new ways to do business, new standards of treatment for workers, and new ways to build a national infrastructure that supports the business of doing business. In all this, we have led the globe and made our national economy the strongest the world has ever seen.

I promise you, the American people, that my administration will be one of freedom. We will once again have a nation that has as its first and foremost ideal the concept of opportunity, the idea that you can go as far as your ingenuity, your ideas, and your hard work will take you. We will not limit you. We will, when we can, aid your rise upward, and then we will stand out of your way because it is you, the builder, who truly spurs American progress.

I started this campaign because of my faith in you, the American people. Not just a faith that you would vote for me—though I certainly hoped that would be the case [laughter]—but the faith that you, not Washington, know what is best for your nation. You know what your nation and its citizens need, and you know how to deliver it. I look forward, in the next four years to seeing your ingenuity, your energy, and your perseverance in action. I look forward to watching you continue to make America great!

**May 26**—AUSTRIA: Blame for the rapidly deteriorating Austrian economy falls on the government due to several central banking decisions. The Austrian president dissolves Parliament, handing its power over to the Stahlmänner, a small council led by Austria's foremost corporate figures.

**July 10**—USA: The United States Supreme Court allows the Shiawase Corporation to build their own nuclear power reactor with limited Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight.

**November 7**—USA: Martin Hunt is elected President of the United States after campaigning heavily on a theme of "Smaller Government, More Freedom."

**November 8**—USA: Shiawase's nuclear plant goes online, freeing the corporation from the public utility power grid.

**December 14**—USA: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, undeterred by their previous courtroom defeat, initiates a new lawsuit against Shiawase after an assault by a TerraFirst! team penetrates the exterior security of Shiawase's new nuclear power plant. The NRC insists that the attack demonstrates that Shiawase cannot adequately protect its plant. Shiawase responds that their defense was hindered by federal laws placing limits on what private security forces can and cannot do.

2000



- What a tool. "Watch" was about all he did during his administration while just about everyone ran roughshod over the United States. So the big guys were free, but the actual people Hunt always talked about never had a chance. His speech makes him sound like he was all about power to the people, but in fact it was the same-old, same-old—more power to those who've already got it.
- Aufheben
- Don't be too hard on Hunt. The seeds of most of what happened during his administration were already planted before he took office. He didn't appoint any of the Supreme Court justices that made the Shiawase decisions, and while he might have been a little slow to react to the rampant corruption in D.C.'s city government, it's not like he had anything to do with setting up that government. I wouldn't argue that he was a great president, but he wasn't terrible, either. He just happened to be in office at a time when current events were much bigger than he was, and he was incapable of rising to meet them.
- Mr. Bonds

## 2001—THE INTRODUCTION OF EXTRATERRITORIALITY

### Statement from the Shiawase Board of Directors FEBRUARY 14, 2001

Today the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Shiawase Corporation and granted it extraterritoriality. We are grateful for their decision and humbled by the responsibility and trust the Court has placed in us.

At Shiawase, we recognize that the quest for profit goes far beyond mere finances. It has always been true that a rising tide lifts all boats, and we are acutely aware that business always fares better when conducted in a climate of peace and prosperity. War, economic strife, poverty, and other social ills are bad for business—and bad for humanity. It is a simple fact that what benefits Shiawase the most are the same things that benefit humankind the most, a fact that the Court recognized in its ruling.

There has been much speculation that, should a corporation such as Shiawase gain extraterritorial status, it would use it aggressively, waging war, whether through traditional corporate means or through armed combat, to expand its empire and grow its profits. Nothing could be further from our intent. If we are to take one

lesson from the twentieth century, it is that business fares the best in stable, open democracies. If we engage in the sort of behavior that our critics fear will become commonplace, we will only be harming ourselves. We do not seek to institute unfounded aggression or to introduce more chaos into the world. We simply seek what any nation wants—the ability to conduct our affairs, and work with our people, in peace.

Shiawase has always put the customer first, and that philosophy will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. That policy



Chief Justice Terence Ordell

2001

**January 4-18**—MEXICO: Tensions in the southern states of Mexico increase, and in a two-week period governors of three states (Chiapas, Campeche, and Quintana Roo) are assassinated. Two of the three assassins are eventually caught and judged to have been working alone.

**February 14**—USA: Using the Seretech decision as precedent, the second Shiawase decision once again goes in favor of Shiawase. As far as United States law is concerned, corporations become equivalent to governments—a rationale that other nations soon adopt.

**February 20**—FRANCE: The French government refuses to recognize Shiawase's extraterritoriality. While they hope to be at the forefront of the backlash against growing corporate power, they instead find themselves alone, fighting a hopelessly quixotic battle. This begins nine long years of corporate sanctions against France.

**March-May**—EASTERN EUROPE: Severe environmental contamination hits Europe. Germany's eastern Länder are evacuated due to groundwater contamination, and the ecology of the Baltic Sea collapses due to chemical sludge. Hundreds of thousands of people are relocated as governments try to address these troubled areas.

**July 20**—ITALY: During the G8 summit in Genoa, private security forces open fire on anti-corporate protestors, killing twelve. The pro-corp Italian media describes the shootings as a "defense against an act of terrorism," and protestors are forced to change their tactics in the light of the corporate crackdown.

**August 15**—USA: The FDA approves P4M0, a synthetic blood replacement, for general use.



makes us more responsive than any government, for we are constantly held accountable by our customers. We only prosper when we provide what is best for them. That is our goal, and as we look to the future, that is undoubtedly how we will use our new status—to build peace and prosperity for our employees, our customers, and the entire world.

- Okay, so all that's clearly bullshit, but the question is, did they know it was bullshit when they wrote it, or did they really have high ideals at first, only to watch them go up in flames as time went on?
- Turbo Bunny
- The former. Show me a corporation that's really aimed at high ideals and benefits for all humanity, and I'll show you a "closed for business" sign. While it's true that stability and democracy and so on is better for business in general, chaos and tumult can be better for individual businesses as long as they're the ones who come out on top. Shiawase knew this, and they never intended to use their extraterritoriality to play nice with others. They wanted to move quickly to make sure they were one of the winners in the upcoming fights. They knew there was no chance of the peace and prosperity they were talking about actually happening, because they planned against it from the start. Other corps would be gunning for them right away, and Shiawase was going to fight back with everything they had and come out on top.
- Sunshine

## 2002— RESOURCE RUSHES, FLOOD FLASHES

Excerpt from "The Gorilla in Our Backyard: How Ares Industries Dwarfs Everything Else in the Corporate World"  
*DETROIT BUSINESS WEEKLY*—06/20/02

Nicholas Aurelius says that his formation of Ares Industries was a simple decision. The fact that it might be a decision that changes the world was secondary to the idea that it was good business, plain and simple.

"There's not a businessman today who isn't looking for ways to be more efficient," Aurelius said in an exclusive interview. "I reviewed what I had, saw plenty of redundancies, and knew it made sense to combine a lot of operations."

Ares Industries might bring more to its founder than simple business efficiencies. President Hunt has put Ares on the fast track for extraterritoriality, the status that has made Shiawase the envy of the corporate world.

Aurelius himself is frank about extraterritorial status. "Why wouldn't I want it?" he said. "We have thousands of pages of business textbooks telling you how to manage risk when it comes to things that are out of your control. I've always thought the best way to manage risk is having as few things as possible that are not in your control, and extraterritoriality is quite helpful in that regard."

While he recognizes the benefits extraterritoriality will bring, Aurelius is quick to point out some of the problems that come with it as well.

"It's no secret that once Shiawase got extraterritoriality, plenty of other CEOs started thinking about how they could get it for themselves. Everyone thinks that it's such a great thing, that you get to be like a king, and there are good things about it. But I think a lot of people out there are forgetting the work involved. The more control you have over things, the more work you need to put in to make sure things stay in control. This isn't something I'm doing for fun, because I won't be having that much fun, believe me. It's something I'm doing because it's best for my business," Aurelius said.

- Plenty of people, including myself, have second-guessed Aurelius and some of the chances he took, but in the end I can't help liking the guy because of the results he got. He didn't walk into anything in life—Ares achieved its success because Aurelius made it happen. He never seemed to have much of an expectation of privilege, and he didn't get caught up in some of the etiquette games that some of today's corporate ruling class spend way too much time on. He had two questions in his head all the time—"What opportunities are out there?" and "How can I take advantage of them?" and he spent pretty much every waking hour finding answers to them. He played a lot of games, but he won most of them. You have to admire that.
- Mr. Bonds
- No I don't. He lucked his way through a lot of choices that could have brought disaster, and in the end he made the world better for himself and worse for a whole lot of other people. Not sure just what it is I'm supposed to admire.
- Ecotope
- Spoken like someone who's never tried to build something.
- Mr. Bonds

**January 21**—USA: The "Resource Rush" begins when the United States government seizes millions of acres of land from various Native American reservations and turns it over to a handful of corporations intent on squeezing every last bit of oil, natural gas, coal, iron, and anything else they can find out of the ground. The Rush continues for years, as President Hunt is willing to give corporations just about any piece of land they ask for.

**April 5**—USA: No strangers to mistreatment from the United States government, the more radical elements of several Native American nations band together in Denver to form the Sovereign American Indian Movement (SAIM), with the goal of ridding themselves of foreign intrusion once and for all so that they can be free to rule themselves.

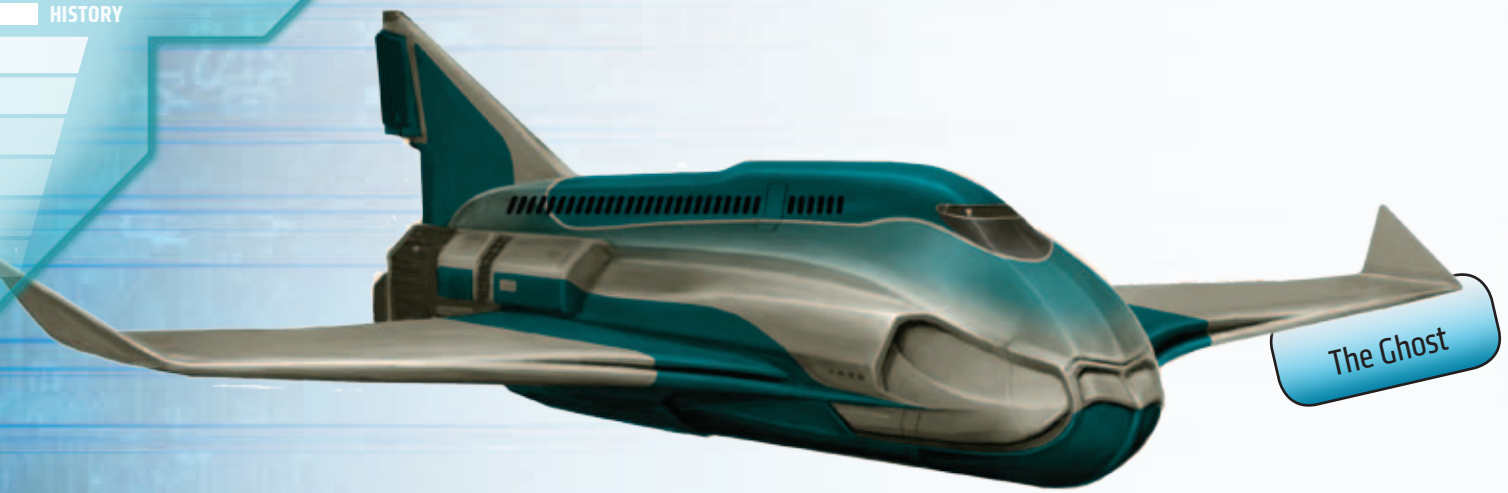
**June 14**—USA: Nicholas Aurelius takes almost every single business asset he owns and condenses it into a single corporation, which he bases in Detroit and names Ares Industries. President Hunt quickly grants the corporation extraterritoriality, and Ares becomes one of the largest corporations on earth.

**July 8**—GERMANY: Ecologies in both the Baltic and North Seas collapse due to chemical sludge. Hundreds of thousands of people are relocated as governments try to address these troubled areas.

**September 23**—GERMANY: After the horrible ecological disasters that have hit Europe, the Bündnis 2000 party sweeps to power in Germany's federal elections. The party promises ecological restoration, a reduction in pollution, and other measures aimed at preventing more disasters. Naturally, corporations are not overly enthusiastic about this turn of events.

2002





## 2003—A SHRINKING WORLD AND A DISAPPEARING GOVERNMENT

### “A Call to Arms”

ANONYMOUS BROCHURE, WIDELY DISTRIBUTED IN WASHINGTON, D.C., 2003

So the government's taken more land. Your land this time. Are you surprised? We hope not. Because if you are, where have you been? Were you blind and deaf for the last year, as the government grabbed every bit of land it could from the Natives out west? What made you think they wouldn't do it to you?

Sure, they aren't kicking us out of our homes yet, like they did to so many people out west. But that's only because we aren't sitting on barrels of oil or tons of metal. If we had something they wanted, you better believe we'd be out on our asses. But they never given much to our city anyways, so there's not much for them to take right now. But they still want it anyway.

So what you going to do, Washington? You got told you can't take care of yourself, your government is no good, and the Big Daddy federal government is going to take care of you now. You believe that shit? You believe that there is anyone out there who really cares what happens to you? Didn't think so. So what you going to do about it?

People out west, they got together. They look out for themselves now, tell Uncle Sam that he can go his own way and that he don't need to concern himself with them anymore. Now, Uncle Sam won't like that, because he don't let anything go easily. But they're working on that. They know they haven't been strong enough in the past to convince him to go away, but they'll do it this time.

Will you? Will you tell your Uncle, your racist, child-molesting, shithead Uncle to get the hell out of here and leave you alone? That's what we're going to do. So join us. Pick up a gun, a knife, whatever you got. Don't think you can do it with just words. Uncle Sam never listened to us much anyway, so he's not going to start now. But we'll convince him. He'll know he can't push us around anymore. We'll beat that point into his brain until he gets it.

Join us, and join us now, because we're not waiting.

- Not a bad example of rabble-rousing literature, but it's got one glaring flaw—it didn't do anything. Any of you remember hearing about the people of D.C. rising up in open revolution? Me neither. Once again, all they did was use words, and once again the words didn't do the job.
- Aufheben
- Screw them. Let's talk about the Ghost. There's people who think the Ghost wasn't that big of a deal, because everything was starting to become virtual anyway, and people could teleconference and share information easily over the Matrix and so on. Those people are idiots. I know the “Great Man” theory of history isn't always popular, but don't tell that to the people who make history wherever they go. All the Ghost does is help them go more places, get their face in front of as many people as possible. Even once VR was perfected—and it wasn't even close to that in 2003—there are some things that need to be done face-to-face. It's a lot easier to charm or intimidate someone in person, and you can never underestimate how important charm and intimidation are to doing business.
- Clockwork
- Strong words from a guy who has never charmed or intimidated anyone.
- Netcat

2003

**March 24**—UK: An already-shrinking world gets smaller with the introduction of the Ghost, a suborbital plane jointly developed by BAE Systems and the Japanese Aerospace Corporation. The Ghost can go from London to Boston in 76 minutes and from London to Tokyo in a few hours. Within weeks of its introduction, corporations have placed enough orders for the aircraft to make a several year waitlist.

**May 13**—NORTH AMERICA: Biotech comes to the pet store in the form of the GloFish. Originally bred to detect water pollutants, the fish glows red under blacklight, and it becomes a common sight in aquariums across the continent.

**July 8**—USA: The United States government dissolves the municipal government of Washington, D.C., replacing it with federal control. Widespread

corruption had left the city with escalating debts, crumbling infrastructure, and a climate where no one believed the government was watching out for the common good. While the citizens were disgusted with the municipal government, they are not inclined to see the federal government in any better light, especially since they have lacked meaningful federal representation for so long. Most residents see the move as nothing more than a naked federal power grab.

**November 19**—GERMANY: A flash flood in the North Sea regions of the country gives the new government its first real test. All nuclear plants in the nation are shut down after some on the coast approach meltdown.



## 2004—GOOD NUKES GONE BAD

### Excerpts from Eyewitness Accounts of the Dungeness Meltdown

**Elizabeth Franks, 57:** God forgive me for saying so, but it was beautiful. I've seen many colors of flames before, but never that deep, rich red. I wanted to stare, but the light and the heat were so intense I had to turn away. I slowly started to comprehend what was happening, what I had seen. First, I realized that something terrible had happened at the nuclear plant. Second, I understood that what I had seen had just killed me.

**Thomas Michaels, 19:** We were annoyed at first, if you can believe it. The ground shook, the whole convention room bucked upward, and pieces scattered. If you know gamers, you know they don't like having their pieces scattered. So there were curses and mutterings, as if the earth had conspired on purpose to disrupt their games. Then the wave of heat arrived, and we started to understand that we were in for more than just a little annoyance.

**Matthew Chadwick, 45:** I've been to metal foundries, where you walk by all that liquid metal, and you inhale and you catch the heat of it and the heavy scent. It's very indistinct, but it's there. When you smell it, you can imagine these small particles of steel entering your nose and settling into your lungs, and you feel heavier. Breathing becomes more difficult, and I don't know if that's because of the heat or just the mind playing tricks on you. But that's what it was like. The smell, the heat, and all. It was like that.

**Meredith Adams, 39:** How can you explain the decisions you make after something like that? It's new, so you can't base your decisions on any previous experiences. So you do something, and you may not know why, and it's very possible that it won't take you long to understand that what you're doing is incredibly stupid, but you don't understand that at first because you don't understand *anything* about the situation at first. I know I should have left, I should have gotten far away, and instead I went to the middle of town.

It was so quiet, like an invisible blanket of snow had fallen over everything. There were no birds singing, no cars, no people talking, nothing. It was like walking on a movie set once the filming has been completed. It was completely eerie but oddly soothing. I felt calm and

unhurried. There was nowhere to go, nothing I had to do, because nothing was happening anywhere.

- I suppose this would be a good place for a haughty lecture about the damage humanity inflicts on the environment, but the Dungeness testimonies suck the energy right out of me. The more detailed the account, of course, the more likely it is that the teller died soon after they shared their experience. They made sure someone heard them; most of them were desperate for someone to listen to their description of what killed them before they died. I think about these people, then I hope that, whatever it is that finally gets me, I don't see it coming.
- Ecotope
- Some say that the rise in magic has somehow affected the stability and reliability of nuclear reactions. Certainly, many more meltdowns and "incidents" have been reported since the Awakening began, even as some nuclear weapons failed to detonate ... in total, some 18 meltdowns have occurred since 2001, and the only recorded successful detonations of nuclear weapons were in Libya and the big Cermak Blast in Chicago.
- Beaker
- Nice try, but magic should not be a scapegoat for human incompetence and aggression. The leak at Biblis was due to criminal negligence on the part of the plant's owners, and the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict for only the second time in the history can be laid square at the feet of the Israeli prime minister and his chief of staff.
- Aufheben
- So what about the meltdown at Dungeness? A perfectly normal plant suddenly experiences an unaccountable criticality accident. Anyone want to explain that?
- Baka Dabora
- In the astral, where all those people died, there are twisted, blackened caricatures of men and women, shadow things that are always burning, mouthing silent screams. I do not believe they caused the accident, but rather that they were attracted there. Like called to like.
- Man-of-Many-Names.

**April 26**—USA: News outlets across the country report the revelation that United States President Martin Hunt has been making regular payments to Mexican President Miguel Ávila in exchange for letting certain corporations continue the Resource Rush south of the border. Hunt's laissez-faire governing style had left him with a middling approval rating at best, and the ongoing stories about the payments, while never confirmed (and dismissed as agitprop in some quarters) push his approval ratings lower.

**June**—GERMANY, UK: Germany's rush to shut down all its nuclear plants creates a problem when an accident at Biblis releases radioactive gas into the air. Corporations point to this as evidence that the shutdown program either be slowed or canceled, but they are forced to mute their complaints somewhat when a disaster in Dungeness, England, shows what happens if nuclear power goes bad. A partial

meltdown irradiates a section of Kent and kills 6,000 people, and for a time thereafter Europeans are somewhat more tolerant of pro-environmental restrictions.

**September 10**—ISRAEL, LIBYA: The 10 Minute War. After Libya attacks Israel with chemical weapons, Israel responds with enough three nuclear bombs dropped on major cities, beating Libya into submission. The seeds of Libya's eventual collapse are planted.

**October 12**—SWITZERLAND: France finally finds a partner in resisting corporate extraterritoriality. Switzerland revives the famous Rütli Schwur Oath, which vows common action in defense of freedom, and uses it to bolster their effort to resist the growing power of corporations.

**November 2**—USA: Philip Bester defeats Martin Hunt and is elected president of the United States.

2004



## 2005—SHAKEUPS IN POLAND AND MANHATTAN

From the “Border Wars” chapter in *Adventures in History*, Schoolhouse Press

A common theme in many European conflicts is their seeming inevitability. If Archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated in 1914, the nations of Europe would likely have used an alternate excuse to come into conflict. Similarly, the economic damage and deep-seated resentment that occurred in the wake of World War I made another conflict inevitable, and so World War II followed little more than twenty years later.

While the Border Wars mirrored the build-up of tensions leading to World War I to some degree, the same sense of inevitability was not there. Some of this is due to the lessons that were supposedly learned from World War I—that global conflict was incredibly wasteful, and that alternatives should be found at all cost. While the ethnic and social conflict rippling through Belarus in the early part of the twenty-first century was significant, most observers assumed that the nation would find some way to avoid conflict.

The mistake most observers made was in assuming that because Belarus did not *have* to go to war, that they would not then *choose* to go to war. Outside observers, however, did not have the same perspective as the leaders of Belarus, who believed that the only way they could cling to their crumbling power was by uniting the nation and bringing in new resources through conquest.

**Discussion Question:** Why might a nation opt to go to war? What benefits could that nation realize from overt hostilities?

Following the example of many of its predecessors in war, Belarus opted to begin the Border Wars through a series of quick, devastating strikes designed to intimidate any opposition. The tactic worked. While many Western European nations condemned Belarus’ actions, those were not the opinions that mattered to Belarus, as those more distant nations were not likely to strike back. It was the nearby nations that truly concerned them, and most of them responded by becoming more isolationist, wishing to protect themselves and not get caught in an alliance that would drag them into a war they were not inclined to fight. While much of the world had come together to fight against common enemies

in World Wars I and II, the Border Wars saw many nations scattering from each other and even splintering from within as different elements looked to find ways of keeping the conflict away from their doorstep.

- One of the things we’re missing by focusing on individual events was the apocalyptic viewpoint that was spreading rapidly among the world’s faithful (had some of these things happened *before* the turn of the millennium, this tendency would only have been stronger). New churches popped up everywhere, and existing churches started taking a more end-of-the-world approach to their teachings. Some of the new groups, like the Church of the Whole Earth, took the devastation being wrought as an excuse to focus on healing the planet, but they were surrounded by hordes of churches that mainly told their parishioners to hunker down and try to hold on as God’s wrath kept spreading. Of course, they had no way of knowing what was really approaching.
- Goat Foot

## 2006—SALVAGING HONOR

Note left by Joseph Tateoka, Vice President of Internal Affairs, Miroyama Electric, and discovered after his death

I am aware that people in a situation such as mine often worry that an act similar to the one I am about to perform may be construed as an admission of guilt. I am writing this note so that there may be no doubt about this fact, and so that people do not spend any time debating the meaning of my action. Its meaning should be clear: I am guilty.

In saying this, I do not mean to say that I am directly guilty of patent violations or any of the other ephemera with which the lawsuit was concerned. It is true that the result of the lawsuit has led us to where we are now, but the events of the lawsuit are symptomatic of a larger issue, and it is this issue that has brought me to this point. That issue is our failure to protect the corporation.

In our time with Miroyama Electric, all of us who held positions of responsibility were honored to play a role in something larger and more important than our own selves. We were given a great trust, and the present state of affairs is a very clear indication that we have violated that trust, and thus forfeited our honor.

I have words and thoughts on my current situation that I will convey to my family separately, but I will not concern myself with that now, as business communications must always be distinct from familial issues. Instead, I would address some thoughts to the corporate family with whom I have labored these many years.

2005

**March 25**—USA: Though he pledged to reverse many of President Hunt’s policies, President Phillip Bester continues his predecessor’s corp-friendly policies by eliminating public funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting System breaks up shortly thereafter, and private broadcasters quickly consume its resources.

**May 13**—EUROPE: As has often been the case, increasing European tensions result in the invasion of Poland. This time Belarus does the honors, also moving against the Ukraine and some other Baltic states, and beginning the Border Wars.

**August 12**—USA: An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale hits Manhattan. While Californians might scoff at such a relatively low number,

the quake is strong enough to severely damage a city that wasn’t built to withstand such an event. Most skyscrapers besides the Empire State Building collapse and more than 200,000 people are killed.

**September 19**—USA: After the tremendous damage of the Manhattan quake, the East Coast Stock Exchange moves to Boston, which helps turn Boston’s economy around.

**September 2**—SOUTH KOREA: The assassination of South Korean President Dae-Jung Rhee leads to Commander of the Army General Kyung Han Yoon taking power. Yoon uses the fact that the assassin was a Communist to declare war against North Korea. Japan strongly supports Yoon’s actions, and the Second Korean War begins.





I, along with the other executives of Miroyama Electric, am taking this action so that it may be clear that the dishonor falls upon us and not upon you. We greatly regret the situation our actions have created, but we want to assure you that you do not bear guilt for the fate of Miroyama. We wish you to continue your lives with honor and dignity, and we are fully confident that you will carry the Miroyama standard of excellence wherever you go. Perhaps our greatest regret in the actions we are about to take is that we will no longer have the fellowship of such excellent co-workers.

The time has now arrived. The cleaning staff will be instructed on how to properly deal with the aftermath of what I am about to do.

- Looking back over the news coverage of the end of Miroyama, what strikes me is how unsurprised everyone was by the mass suicide. There were no screaming headlines, since the essence of a major news story is the surprise of the unexpected, and what the executives did was hardly unexpected. No one really condemned it, either—I'm not saying that the Japanese ideas of honor have permeated all societies, but some of their impressions of the critical importance of the corporation in one's life certainly have.
- Mr. Bonds
- That's why this article is here. It's not like the Miroyama-TI dispute plays a crucial role in today's society—Miroyama's gone, of course, and TI is far from a major player in the electronics market. What matters is what Bonds was saying about this not being unexpected. There was a time when this would have been bigger news, but as the 21st century limped along, this kind of behavior became more and more expected. Now it's the norm—the idea that the corporation is bigger than the individual is an all-too-common belief. It's one of the big reasons I'm out here in the shadows instead of buried in all that bright corporate fluorescent light.
- Snopes

**April 10**—JAPAN: Japan makes a strong statement to the rest of the world by launching a series of solar-power-collecting satellites that beam power to Earth via microwave.

**May 12**—USA: Though not as impressive as the Ghost, Boeing's High Speed Civil Transport completes a successful test flight. In six years, the craft will be the key to a profitable Seattle-to-Japan route.

**July 27**—AUSTRALIA: The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) announces the birth of a healthy Tasmanian tiger cloned from frozen DNA samples of one of the previously extinct beasts.

**October 17**—JAPAN: The struggling Texas Instruments Corporation essentially wagered its entire future on a patent violation lawsuit against Miroyama Electric, and after years of court proceedings, they finally receive a favorable verdict. The Japanese courts turn over all of Miroyama's assets to Texas Instruments, revitalizing the corporation, and every single Miroyama executive commits *seppuku*.

**November 17**—NORTH KOREA: AN attempted nuclear attack by North Korea on Japan backfires when the crude warheads fail to detonate. The attacks spur Japan to greater involvement in the Second Korean War, North Korea eventually falls, and Japan goes on to switch to an imperial government.

2006



## 2007—WHO'S TO SAY WHAT'S LEGITIMATE, ANYWAY?

### Excerpts from "The Legitimacy of Business"

SAMANTHA DUNNING, *THE HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW*, OCTOBER 2007  
Increasingly, then, what we are seeing is a redefinition of "legitimacy" to mean "any activity that supports the corporation's bottom line." There have always been gray areas in the business world, but current conditions seem to be shifting so that there is a tremendous gray middle with only a touch of black and white at each end of the spectrum.

This gives rise to the question of whether the Mexican drug cartels simply acted too soon in their quest for legitimacy. Some have asserted that rather than take the effort to move into activities currently deemed as legitimate by existing cultural norms, the drug cartels would have been better served simply waiting for their activities to be seen as legitimate in the common consensus, and then continued on in their normal actions.

There are several flaws with this notion, one being the unlikelihood that the entire spectrum of narcotics activities will ever be completely accepted and integrated into the general economy ...

Perhaps a more pressing issue is whether or not businesses that are engaged in legitimate industries will increasingly use illegitimate practices to support their normal activities. The concern has been voiced many times that large corporations will use their extraterritoriality to free themselves from the hindrances of conventional laws and use any means they have at their disposal to advance their goals. Thus, while most corporations have relied on the twin incentives of salary and benefits to lure promising personnel away from other companies, the new era of redefined legitimacy could open up a new box of tools for them to use. Will corporations continue to haggle and negotiate to get the employees they want, or will they use the forces that are now at their disposal and the loosening of restrictions to simply extract personnel from a rival corporation and place them in their own?

Continuing down this line of speculation, we can see a myriad of ways in which corporations could exploit these broad gray areas. Corporate espionage is already a long-established practice, but the new climate would likely see it increase tenfold, particularly since there would be far fewer repercussions for getting caught. Additionally, the cold wars of espionage could occasionally flare into open conflict. As more corporations support their own armed forces, corporate competition may take on a new aspect as CEOs begin to consider ways they can directly harm or even cripple their opposition. Trying to outsell an



**Spring**—AFRICA: Some of the seeds of what Africa will become are planted when two nations, Ghana and the Côte d'Ivoire, begin the two year process of removing themselves from the United Nations and step back from the international community. Given that the international community has not always been kind to African nations, the withdrawal is met with general approval by residents of both nations.

**August 14**—MEXICO: Three major drug cartels take several steps designed to bring their enterprises more into the legitimate business world through the foundation of ORO Corporation.

**November 2**—USA: President Philip Bester wins a Pyrrhic victory when the United States Supreme Court decides not to review the government's decision to disband the municipal government of Washington, D.C. While Bester had opposed many of his predecessor's policies, he supported the move in D.C. The general public, however, was growing increasingly disenchanted with the handling of the situation, and Bester's approval ratings start a decline from which they never recover.



opponent's products becomes much easier if many of your competition's products fail to make it to retail locations, or if manufacturing is disrupted before goods have the chance to leave the factory. Should corporations begin behaving with open hostility toward one another, retaliation is more than likely—it is inevitable. If corporations wielding their own armies get caught in a continuing cycle of violence and reprisal, who will be able to step up and bring these bodies to peace?

- This is, as you see, an incredibly prescient article. Dunning lays out the entire rationale for corporate shadowrunning, as well as outlining most of the major activities shadowrunners will be involved in, well before the term "shadowrun" was invented. The fact that she could foresee this is increasing evidence that human beings are, in fact, rational animals. We proceed in predictable, logical ways in response to the conditions around us. The only reasons we seem so crazy is that the conditions around us are created by an intense web of conflicting desires.
- Mr. Bonds
- Rational, hell. We want what we want, so we go get it, and then later we make up justifications so that we can pretend that what we did made some kind of sense.
- Kane
- Just because that's the way *you* work ...
- /dev/grll

## 2008—THE RICH FIND MORE RICHES, OR JUST ARE GIVEN THEM

Excerpts from "The Resource Rush: A Retrospective"

ALLAN J. BURROWS, *FORBES* MAGAZINE—11/25/08

We have long heard (and said) that "The business of America is business," but it wasn't until 2002 that the nation began to take those words seriously when it came to land use. The Resource Rush started by President Martin Hunt and continued by President Bester is one of the great modern business success stories, representing a time when some of the potential of America that politicians are always talking about was finally translated into real, tangible gain. With a new president set to take office on November, it is worth reflecting on the policies of the previous two national executives so that the future administration can learn from their experiences.

The ideas that led President Hunt to initiate the Resource Rush were not new. Property tax assessors have long assessed land according to its "highest and best use," not its actual use. That is to say, if you owned an apartment building and were charging less than market rates for the apartments, the value of your building would not be based on what you were *actually* charging but on what you *could* be charging. This provides an incentive for property owners to maximize their efficiency and extract the maximum value from their land.

Yet while we recognized the ideal of extracting as much value from land as possible in developed areas, it eluded us in some undeveloped or underdeveloped areas. These areas contained tremendous potential, yet we had not tapped into that potential because we allowed concerns other than pure business to occupy us.

President Hunt put an end to that. In what was perhaps his signature legacy as president, he stopped treating our land as a distant museum piece that is not to be touched and integrated it back into the flow of commerce. The boon to the economy has been tremendous—while different areas of the country have occasionally encountered economic slow-downs, as a whole the nation was much more prosperous with the new resources added to the gross domestic product than it would have been had those resources remained trapped in the ground and untouched.

How President Hunt convinced Congress to make this move is one of the critical political stories of our time. Popular opinion was not with him, and while most of the congressmen in the states with the resources were firmly on the side of putting the resources to use, representatives and senators in other states opposed the move. They would not gain directly from the influx of resources and jobs, so they sided with environmental and conservationist lobbyists in an effort to appear as if they were taking the higher road ...

- It's good to cut the story off there, because this joker wasn't going to tell us anything useful. The politics and "highest and best use" crap have little if anything to do with what was going on here. Yeah, the Awakening hadn't occurred yet, but that didn't mean forces weren't already aligning to take advantage of some of the hidden resources that people like this Burrows character knew nothing about.
- Plan 9
- Some things happen for some people before they happen for others.
- Axis Mundi
- That's great. Did you guys ever think about taking this show on the road?
- Winterhawk

**March 4**—PANAMA: The ORO Corporation announces the discovery of large deposits of molybdenum several kilometers off the Panamanian coast. ORO not only had full exploitation rights to this metal, but the corporation had managed to create a monopoly on all local molybdenum extracting and processing industries. They had managed to accomplish this before the discovery of the metal was made.

**April 18**—USA: In Texas, a new kind of militia is created, allowing governments to assemble armed groups of private citizens to fill gaps in law enforcement.

**June**—CENTRAL AMERICA: Several Central American countries pull out of international agreements regarding intellectual property and related matters. Piracy and other forms of copyright violations became legal in those countries, and the ORO Corporation positions itself at the head of the burgeoning technopiracy industry.

**August 23**—GERMANY: The coalition government collapses as the strain of the ongoing series of ecological disasters take their toll. The government weakness translates to ongoing social instability and violence in the streets.

**November 4**—USA: Jesse Garrety is elected President of the United States over incumbent Philip Bester.

2008



## 2009—WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE CORPS GET MORE POWER

Excerpts from speech of President Jesse Garrety  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

Good evening, my fellow Americans. Tonight, freedom found itself facing a severe test. And once again, freedom prevailed.

The most important thing I would like to say to you right now is that you are safe. Our troops are standing down, our missile stations have lowered their level of alert, and we are free from the threat of foreign attack. When you go to bed tonight, give your children a kiss, appreciate the things you have, and remember that we are always working to preserve your safety.

I ask you to also remember and give thanks to those men and women in uniform who stand on the frontlines of our fight for freedom. They played a vital role in helping us keep the peace today, and once again we must pay tribute to them for putting their lives on the line in defense of our most cherished values.

Along with my message of reassurance, I would also like to offer some cautions about how we as a nation will respond to today's events. There will be a temptation, once these events are in the past, to engage in speculation about what led to the events of the day. I sincerely wish that I could share the full details of the day's events, but I'm sure my fellow citizens understand that there are things that must be withheld from their knowledge in the interests of national security. And while our freedom of speech and our boundless imagination are some of our defining traits as Americans, I would like to caution people against reckless speculation. Some idle talk can have the dangerous effect of undermining our faith in government, and as this crisis has shown, the important of being unified and working together cannot be underestimated.

One item of special importance is avoiding casting any aspersion on our Russian friends. Cordial relations with Russia remain of vital importance to our nation, and any hostility displayed toward Russia by our people can only have a negative effect on our relations. I would ask, then, that we only speak of our Russian friends with respect and kindness, and not with suspicion and unwarranted antagonism.

- It doesn't take much political acuity to see that these are the words of a man who is scared shitless (tapes of the president made when he was in his secure

bunker reveal that this phrase was all too literally true). He knew, of course, how unstable the world was, and he knew how little it would take to set it off. He would have loved, I'm sure, to have done more than just advise people on what they could say—a little government control of what appeared in the press would have made him really happy. It's sad to think that he might have thought his little cautions would work and that people wouldn't be interested in finding out what led to them almost being vaporized. But they did, and of course most people weren't too happy with what they found out.

- Kay St. Irregular
- I would say that this was a bad year for Native Americans, but hell, how many good ones did we have between this one and 1492? Some people will tell you that 2009 was a turning point, when government relations with Native Americans turned from dysfunctional to hostile, but that's too charitable. I'll always look at it as the year when the hostility that had always been there went back to the good old nineteenth-century openness, instead of masquerading as "no, this time we're serious!" attempts at co-existence.
- Mika
- While this may not have been a big change from some of the Native's point of view, the Lone Eagle incident did a lot to re-arrange east-west relations. At first, of course, it looked like things were going to get much worse, with two nuclear powers coming closer to a nuclear exchange than they had in forty years. Then, as things progressed, the Western Hemisphere powers realized they needed to worry less about a threat that was an entire ocean away and pay more attention to the trouble erupting in their own backyard. I won't say that the United States and its descendant nations exactly ignored us from this point on, but they were increasingly distracted. Long-range threats seem less pressing when there are people right on your doorstep with the desire to blow you up and the means to do so.
- Red Anya
- It bears remembering that sometimes history is made in less flashy ways than nuclear standoffs (not that such standoffs aren't notable). One of the overlooked stories of 2009 was a coup pulled off by the major corps of the time coaxing the Trilateral Patent Offices (the United States, European Union, and Japan) into not accepting business-method patents. I realize that sounds a bit obscure, but it had huge effects, especially for companies like ORO who were willing and able to restructure their business in whatever way was most profitable to them, even (and especially) if it meant ripping off the competition.
- Mr. Bonds

2009

**March 4**—FRANCE: The Cattenom-GAU nuclear reactor loses its primary and secondary cooling systems. The failure leads to an explosion and a huge cloud of radioactive gas expands through eastern France and western Germany. More than 35,000 die immediately; the eventual death toll is more than 135,000 individuals.

**April 7**—UK: King Charles III ascends to the nation's throne.

**May 5**—USA: United Oil Industries receives the oil rights to one-quarter of the remaining national parks and one-tenth of the remaining Native American reservations. The action directly leads to the Lone Eagle incident.

**September 18**—USA, RUSSIA: Nuclear holocaust becomes a very real possibility in the Lone Eagle incident. Responding to land grants to United Oil Industries, a SAIM strike team invades a missile silo and threatens to launch.

**September 28**—USA: After a ten-day standoff, military forces break into the silo and kill the SAIM strike team, but not before they launched a single missile, targeted for Russia. President Jesse Garrety desperately tried to convince Russian President Nikolai Chelenko not to retaliate once the missile hit. Then the missile disappeared. No retaliation was needed. The cause of the disappearance remains unknown.

**October 19**—USA, CANADA: In response to the Lone Eagle incident, the Re-education and Relocation Act is passed in the United States, ordering all Natives with the remotest connection to SAIM to detention centers. In Canada, the Nepean Act is passed, legitimizing internment camps for Natives while dismantling the Inuit territory of Nunavut.



## 2010—VITAS: EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT FOREVER

Excerpt from *Madagascar: A Survivor's Story*  
BY PIERRE RADAMA, *GOOD HOPE PRESS*, 2011

Rather than being flown in to Antananarivo, the medicine was supposedly coming by boat to Morondava—a city 370 kilometers as the crow flies away from where I was, a straight line right through the heart of the island. I wasn't sure I had enough petrol to make it, but I did not have time to fight with every other traveler in Antananarivo for what fuel was available. I would have to look for petrol along the way.

I wanted to stay close to the highway, so I watched for a station near the road. I saw one or two on the outskirts of the city, but they were clearly abandoned and dry of fuel. Then there was another station with lines that were ten, twelve cars deep. I did not have time to wait.

Then I found a station that looked perfect, which should have been a warning sign. There were people walking around and cars at the pumps, but the lines were short. I left the highway and drove toward the station.

I do not know what alerted me to the ambush. Perhaps everyone at the station moved at once, toward me. Whatever it was, there was a quick knot pulling at my stomach, and I knew I could not stop. I slammed the accelerator to the floor and leaned forward, but the car seemed like it was crawling. Engines of the cars in the station roared to life, and many of the people on foot



pulled guns. They fired, but wildly, and only a few rounds struck my car, harmlessly hitting the rear.

I re-entered the highway and the cars were behind me, giving chase. But though it did not feel like I was going fast, I had been moving while they were getting started, so I pulled away. They did not stay behind me for long—I believe the purpose of the ambush was to steal what little gas I might have left and anything else in my car, and if they chased me over a long stretch they stood to lose more petrol than they stood to gain.

I was wondering how the engine could still be running with so little fuel when I arrived at the small village of Betafo. I no longer had a choice—I had to stop. I pulled off the road looked for a petrol station.

I saw no one. The streets were empty, and so were the buildings. My car finally stopped near the center of the village, so I got out and walked. Still I saw no one. There were birds singing and it was a pleasant day, but I had a chill in my spine. I found myself walking slowly, as if someone was about to jump out at me. But there was no human movement.

Then I found the residents of the town. They had gathered at a church in the center of the commune. They had come there because they had nowhere else to go. They had chosen to die together, and now they were all dead.

Horror filled my throat. I clamped my hand over my mouth and nose and ran away from death and the clouds of viruses I imagined were hovering there. I was back at my car before I remembered it could not go anywhere.

- VITAS stripped away our veneer of civilization, and it has yet to fully return.
- Winterhawk

**January 20**—USA: As the roundup of Native Americans continues under the Re-Education and Relocation Act, the government seizes all remaining Native American lands.

**February 10**—INDIA: A new disease is discovered, a virus that produces severe allergic reactions and kills most of its victims by inflaming their lungs to the point that they suffocate. The disease is named Kali's Harvest in India and kills 450 million people. Worldwide, the disease is named the Virally Induced Toxic Allergy Syndrome (VITAS), and it eventually kills a quarter of the world's population, including Pope John Paul III.

**February**—GLOBAL: Within weeks of its discovery, VITAS is diagnosed in countries across the world. Developed areas use their medical resources to somewhat mitigate the effects of the disease, but poorer and rural areas are devastated. Death and destruction are rampant—funeral pyres become common sights in European cities, while in Mexico City officials burn entire neighborhoods in an attempt to contain the virus.

**June 22**—FRANCE: The French economy breaks under the VITAS-induced strain, ending their long years of resistance to the new corporate culture.

**September 16**—GERMANY: Michael Beloit restructures BMW, integrating it with Saeder Munitions and Krupp Manufacturing, starting the organization that will grow into the behemoth that is Saeder-Krupp.

**October 28**—MADAGASCAR: Madagascar reports that ten and a half million of its fourteen million citizens have died from VITAS. The survivors soon leave the island, and it eventually becomes a pirate haven.

**October 31**—Québec secedes from Canada.



## 2011—THE AWAKENING AND THE YEAR OF CHAOS: EVERYTHING CHANGES FOREVER AGAIN

### Excerpts from “Naming Our New Reality”

BY ALBY MORGAN, *NEWSWEEK*—03/14/11

Across the nation and the world, the phenomenon known as Unexplained Genetic Expression has divided parents into two camps: those who refuse to refer to their children as anything other than normal humans, and those who recognize that the significant physiological differences manifested in their children might need a new label.

Geneva Cox of Bothell, Washington, is in the first camp. Her son, Mitchell, was born in February, and from his first day of life his almond-shaped eyes and pointed ears were clearly evident. Cox does not believe those differences are important.

“He is my son, and there is no reason to call him anything else. There are many children who have different traits than their parents, and they are not labeled,” Cox said.

The labeling is the particular sticking point for Cox.

“Once we label something as different, that’s the first step in treating them as different. Many of the people who want to call my son something other than human are looking for an excuse to treat him differently. I won’t allow that,” she said.

By contrast, Bert Cowell of Tulsa, Oklahoma, has decided that he will proudly refer to his son as a dwarf.

“He’s going to look different from the other kids. And I’d prefer he take that fact head on, rather than pretend it doesn’t exist,” Cowell said.

Cowell said he has sympathy with Cox’s point, and he agrees that he will need to be on the lookout for any potential persecution. “I’m

sure there will be people who don’t like him for what he is. But that just means he needs to stand up for himself, be proud, and not run from it. He’s a dwarf, that’s what he is and what he’s going to be, and I’ll be proud of him every day,” Cowell said.

This is a debate unlike any in our time, because these manifestations are beyond anyone’s experience, or even their wildest expectations. Doctors and scientists have been scrambling since the beginning of the year to discover why so many children are suddenly starting to look like characters in fairy-tale books, and they have yet to come up with an answer. That has left many of the parents of UGE children on edge—without an explanation of why their children are the way they are, they are concerned about how their children will develop as they grow older.

- Here’s what I like about this article—both parents seem to like their kids. They may want to call their children different things, but neither parent is going to reject the kid because of the way he looks. As far as I understand it, that’s the way things were in the first months of UGE—American culture had been making a 50-year-long push for greater equality and inclusion of all sorts of people, and people thought their UGE children would be accepted as part of that climate. ‘Course, they’d figure out how wrong they were soon enough—Pope John Paul IV’s blanket condemnation was only months away.
- Netcat

### Excerpt from transcript of Ghost Breakers television show BROADCAST LIVE FROM SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS—10/31/11

[Peter Murray] Okay, let’s see if we can talk to this lovely witch over here. Hi! What’s your name?

[Mina O’Hare] I’m Mina O’Hare. Oh, hey, you’re the ghost guy, right?

[Peter Murray] That’s me. So I’m guessing this isn’t your first Salem Samhain?

[Mina O’Hare] No way! I’m here every year! This is the best!

[Peter Murray] Well, you gotta love your enthusiasm. Now, I’ve heard about plenty of strange and unusual things happening at

**January 13**—GLOBAL: The first children with the odd physical traits known as Unexplained Genetic Expression are born.

**February 9**—EUROPE: Hurricane-force winds push the noxious waters of the North Sea into surrounding bodies of water, affecting several nearby nations. This phenomenon, known as the Black Tide, poisoned so much water that 500,000 people eventually died.

**February 20**—AUSTRALIA: The first Mana Storm on record appears.

**March 14**—USA: *Newsweek* magazine becomes the first major media source to label children who have experienced Unexplained Genetic Expression as “elves” and “dwarfs.”

**April 7**—MEXICO: The Mexican government disintegrates, mainly due to sheer exhaustion.

**May-end of the year and beyond**—GLOBAL: Some parents of UGE infants report their children missing, others give them up for adoption or just abandon them. Disappearances are especially pronounced in Haiti, and it happens for three more years.

**August 15**—INDONESIA: The Indonesian government collapses, buckling under the stresses of volcanic eruptions following the devastation of VITAS.

**September 3**—UK: The basalt columns of Giant’s Causeway rise on the coast

of Northern Ireland, taller and more solid than they have ever been.

Throughout the year, stone circles erupt from the ground across the United Kingdom.

**October 31**—USA: The annual Samhain ritual in Salem, Massachusetts is attended by some new guests: A ghostly hunting group, later identified as the Wild Hunt, appears out of the evening mist charges around the celebrants.

**November 18**—NEPAL: After a surge in the number of photographs purporting to show yeti in the mountains near Nepal, a tribe of yeti is conclusively identified.

**December 24**—JAPAN, USA: In Japan, the great dragon Ryumyo emerges from Mt. Fuji and immediately flies to two of the most magically powerful sections of the nation. At the same moment, Daniel Coleman (later to be known as Daniel Howling Coyote) leads his SAIM followers out of an internment camp in Abilene. They simply walk out, and guards that fire bullets at Daniel see them bounce harmlessly off a glowing field surrounding him. Also on this date, a manned flight to Mars crashes, killing five of eight astronauts.

**December 26**—UK: The great dragon Celydr emerges in Caerleon, Wales.

2011



Samhain, but you know the things we're most interested in are ghosts. Have you ever seen any spiritual manifestations here?

[Mina O'Hare] Oh, totally! I mean, you can feel them all around you! If you're quiet enough, you can almost, like, hear them whispering in your ear. It's so cool!

[Peter Murray] Do they ever touch you? You know, give you or someone near you a little shove?

[Mina O'Hare] No, that's never happened to me, but I've heard plenty of stories about it happening to other people. The ghosts, you know, I think they get a little too grabby sometimes, you know? Maybe they miss having a body, I don't know.

[Peter Murray] Well, I'd love to talk a little more about ghosts grabbing you, but my camera man clearly wants my attention so let me see what his problem—Oh. Oh my God.

[Mina O'Hare] What?

[Peter Murray] What the hell is that?

[Mina O'Hare] Where?

[Peter Murray] Jody, *come on*, we have to get closer. Do you see this? Is it showing up on camera? Can the people in the truck see it? {unintelligible speech from cameraman} Okay. Okay. We're getting this. Holy shit. Is this some kind of a joke? There are people, they're walking toward us, but I can see right through them. Right *through* them! They have, they have a glow, right? Kind of a glow? And these people, they're dressed—how are they dressed? They're Puritans, that's what they are. Good hell, there's a bunch of see-through, glowing Puritans, and they're coming right toward us. And ... and what is that? What is he *wearing*? Oh my God. Oh my God! What is on his ... what is ... get it away from me! Get away!

[Video goes black; Murray's speech devolves into screaming, then sound cuts out.]

- I know kids today don't like history and all, especially with all its 2-D videos, but immersing yourself in some of the stuff from 2011 is pretty damn illuminating. Tons of the things we take for granted, the environment we breathe in, was brand new, and most of it came out in a few short years. Some of us might get a little startled when a ghost pops up out of nowhere, but you're not going to see a big-time freak out like that *Ghost Breakers* program. I'm not saying we've fully adjusted to all the changes in the world—just ask the next metahuman you see—but at least we've made it past the shock of the new.
- FastJack
- I'm kind of sorry I missed it all—watching the whole world change underneath you would be cool. We've got all those wonders now, but we come at them with a seen-it-all jadedness. No one's impressed or surprised by anything anymore.
- /dev/grrl
- If you're not surprised or impressed by things, it's your problem, not the world's. We may be more used to some of the strangeness that's been going on for sixty years now, but even then there are still things stranger than most of us can imagine.
- Plan 9
- Oh please. Can we cut out the "nostalgia for a simpler time" shit and take a minute to notice that the Awakening happened more than sixty years ago, and still no one's got a decent idea about why it happened then and not at some other time? Or why it happened at all? Even Dunkelzahn's big interview did a whole hell of a lot more to explain what was happening than why it was happening. The best we've ever gotten is that it was "the right time for it to happen." If I didn't have to go out and, you know, make a living, I'd

be chasing down that question pretty hard. The entire world turned upside down—why?

- Clockwork
- I find it interesting that you think such questions are answerable—or that, should you somehow find the answers, you would understand them.
- Axis Mundi
- No big mystery here. Circle of life, rhythms of the natural world, that kind of thing. We caught the wave, and we get to ride it, which means we get to have a hell of a lot more fun than the poor suckers who were born when the seas were calm and the winds were down.
- Frosty





## 2012—DID YOU THINK THE AWAKENING WAS DONE?

Excerpts from Pope John Paul IV's New Year's Mass  
JANUARY 1, 2012

As disciples of God, we have a sacred duty to love all of his creations, and to act as stewards for all he has created. One of the great lessons of life, however, is that not all that we encounter in this world comes from God. True, he is the ultimate Creator, but many of his works have been twisted and perverted.

There are few things in life that are more difficult than when something that is precious and sacred in God's sight is corrupted. This is what we see happening in the world today. One of the greatest joys we have in life is the birth of a child and the extension of a family. In recent days, however, we have seen many births that cause worry and fear, where the works of God have become something far different than what they were supposed to be. They have become an abomination.

That is a strong word. It is true that these creatures that people have started calling "elves" and "dwarfs" are still very young, and some have said we cannot make full judgments about them until they are fully grown. When one sees a rotten fruit, however, one does need to wait for the fruit to grow even larger in order to be convinced of its essentially corrupt nature. So it is with these creatures.

These words will not be easy for many parents to hear. Parents have an instinct to love their children, and this instinct is a vital part of God's plan for us. Yet many parents have recoiled from the creatures they have given birth to, and it is not difficult to understand this reaction, for these are not just children. They are monsters. They are a different sort of being, and thus must be treated according to a different set of standards.

A central tenet of Christ's doctrine is an appreciation of all life. We cherish life, even when we recognize its occasionally corrupt nature. This means that we cannot kill any of these creatures, no matter how much we may abhor what they represent. What we can do is contain them.

The best that can be done for these creatures is to provide a place for them to go, so that the world can be preserved from their corrupting touch and so that they may have a chance to live in relative peace without bringing upon them the conflict and violence that inevitably follow corruption. It is our duty as a church to provide such places so that these creatures may have a place to be and so that their parents may be able to find rest and peace after the tumult and disruption of these unfortunate births.

- I know there's a few Jackpointers who are working up expletive-filled screeds even as I'm typing this, and I'm plenty sympathetic to their cause. It would be tough to find any single set of words in this century that have caused more harm than this speech. So I'm not going to tell anyone not to put their screeds up—all I want to say is this: Hate this pope if you want, but be careful of making the same mistake he did. Don't hate too much or go too deep with it. Now, screed away!
- Sunshine
- Fuck you. This clown and a bunch of the idiots following him killed more of my friends and family than I want to think about. I'll hate them, all of them, exactly as much as I want.
- Goat Foot





## Excerpts from the French Catholic Church's reply to the Pope's New Year's Mass

CARDINAL EDOUARD DUCHAMP—01/20/12

... and so we find ourselves at a crossroads. It is difficult to say what path we will take, because before this month we did not ponder, even briefly, some of the options that now seem quite feasible, even likely, to us. Since these options are so new, now is not the time to discuss them, though all who are listening can be assured that we will be making very difficult decisions in upcoming weeks and months and moving forward in fitting ways.

Whatever we decide to do, we will base our decision on one firm truth—that a child is a gift from God, no matter how it looks. We have tried to comprehend His Holiness' opinions and thoughts on this matter, but it remains incomprehensible to us. It seems that His Holiness has returned to the mentality of the seventeenth century, when humanity regularly decided which people did or did not have souls based on their appearance. History—and common sense—showed us how desperately wrong that line of thinking was, yet now His Holiness seems intent of repeating those mistakes ...

We affirm that any child born from a mother's womb deserves respect and love. We affirm that the goodness and worthiness of any individual is determined by their actions and their heart, not their appearance or their genes. We also affirm that God provides us with many tools with which to do his work, and if we can further the cause of good through the use of the magic now appearing in the world, then it is our sacred responsibility to do so.

- The big religious schism of 2012 is good proof of what I've always said about religion—it can be great, but in the wrong hands it can turn pretty bad. Since religions are invariably full of people, religious organizations are going to have the same flaws and greatnesses as people. The Pope went for people's worst instincts, the FCC went for the best. And no one's won yet.
- Goat Foot
- The FCC wasn't a bunch of saints on a crusade for good. They were opportunists. They saw that the pope would take a big hit on his proclamation, so they went ahead and staked out a different position. If they'd believed their own crap, they would have split from the main body of the church immediately, on January 2, but instead it takes them nineteen days and they are still at the "exploring options" stage. They wanted to take some power away from the Vatican, they put up a trial balloon to see if this would work, and it did. That's all there is to it.
- Snopes
- Not quite all. The FCC's rise in power had some deep roots, and exploring those roots would bring up some astonishing connections to some very interesting names.
- Plan 9
- You're not going to tell us any of those names, are you?
- Pistons
- Not yet. I have some extra vetting to do before that happens.
- Plan 9
- Are you vetting your information or us?
- Pistons

**January 1**—VATICAN CITY: In the traditional New Year's Mass, Pope John Paul IV proclaims that all metahumans are abominations in the eyes of God. The era of anti-metahuman discrimination officially begins. The Pope's words are later reiterated in a Papal Bull in March that also condemns all things magical.

**January 3**—YUCATÁN: The great dragon Hualpa emerges.

**January 12**—INDIA: On the first day of Diwali, the Ganges, Indus, and Jamuna rivers are purified and become manalines, though it is some time before people realize just what that means.

**January 12**—TIBET: Tibet gains its independence, thanks in large part to a magic barrier that protects and isolates the nation.

**January 20**—FRANCE: The French Catholic Church (FCC), which had been steadily growing in power in recent years, denounces the pope's words on metahumans. This initiates an irrevocable split between the FCC and the Vatican.

**January 27**—USA: The most gregarious of the great dragons, Dunkelzahn, appears at Cherry Creek Lake in Denver. Unlike his fellow dragons, the Big D quickly makes himself available to the media, sitting down with reporter Holly Brighton for a full twelve hours as he tries to help the world make sense of the Awakening. More great dragons emerge as the year goes along, including Rhonabwy in Wales, Aden in Turkey, Schwartzkopf in the Czech Republic, and Lofwyr, Feurschwinge, Nebelherr, and Kaltenstein in Germany.

**March 31**—CHINA: The great dragon Lung awakens at Mt. Emei. He is later seen flying over the Great Wall of China.

**April 8**—ISRAEL: A dramatic display of active spiritual manifestations forces the Israeli government to order the evacuation of Jerusalem's Old City. Evacuations become fairly regular occurrences in the months and years to follow.

**June 1**—JAPAN: The Japanese Diet passes the Yamato act, greatly deregulating Japanese corporations while adapting protectionist policies against foreign corporations. The Act also makes the nuyen the official currency of Japan, and it paves the way for future imperialist actions and anti-metahuman activities by the government.

**August 12**—USA: On the purported anniversary of the sinking of Atlantis, Sheila Blatavska founds the Atlantean Foundation.

**August 30**—USA: A coalition of local corporations agrees to take control of Dallas's struggling welfare system—as long, of course, as it adheres to their rules. Public-private partnerships, with the private sector taking the lead, become increasingly common.

**September 16**—GERMANY: After a four-month-long destructive rampage, the dragon Feurschwinge is killed by the German military.

**October 17**—GLOBAL: A hot war between BMW and Keruba (the first true corporate military clash) leads to a dramatic step. Seven of the largest corporations—BMW, Ares Industries, Shiawese, Mitsuhamu, ORO, Keruba, and JRJ form the Inter-Corporate Council (ICC) to represent their combined interests and mediate disputes—to step in, in essence, where governments no longer could.

**November 6**—USA: President Jesse Garrety becomes the first U.S. president of the millennium to win election to a second term. Pundits speculate that the voting populace was too distracted by everything else going on in the world to learn anything about the opposition candidates.

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