ABSTRACT

Technopolis Gotham: An Original
Transmedia Intellectual Property

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As the title indicates Technopolis Gotham is an original transmedia intellectual property. 'Transmedia' is an emergent trend in narrative design for commercial entertainment properties that focuses upon building a rich narrative universe wherein multiple stories can be told through a variety of media. This document contains three original artifacts which together constitute the basis for such a commercially salable Intellectual Property: a Codex (aka Story Bible), a Teleplay, and a Game Design Document. The three documents are included as Appendices A, B and C, and are preceded by a text originally constituted as the Prospectus for the project, reformatted and now including a chapter analyzing the production of the artifacts and a bibliography. *Technopolis Gotham* is intended for the upper range of the Young Adult spectrum, Juniors in High School to College Sophomores, and is written in the Science Fiction genre.

Technopolis Gotham: An Original Transmedia Intellectual Proptery

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Communication Studies

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# PREFACE

The main body of this document describes the goals and methodology for my creative project thesis, including a description of the three artifacts which comprise the final product of the project and an annotated bibliography of the source material for my methodology; the three artifacts themselves are included as Appendices A, B and C.

The origination and development of an Intellectual Property is a highly complex and difficult process, even in well understood traditional formats such as book-to-film franchises like *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games*; the addition of the elements of the burgeoning 'transmedia' movement (I will discuss this term below) adds levels of uncharted intricacy. The main body of the document, formerly constituted as the project's Prospectus, is therefore vital in establishing my own perspective on the 'white space' within commercial entertainment production. In short, there is a market for deeply engaging narratives which encourage and incorporate audience collaboration: hence my path to charting a new 'blue ocean' within the entertainment sector focuses upon audience inclusion.

The three artifacts presented here represent a series of narrative innovations addressing the most prominent narrative media within the contemporary commercial entertainment landscape, all intended to act in concert towards a unified goal: a coherent and consistent approach to transmedia production that comprehends audience collaboration from the initial design phase all the way through product support. In short, this project is the culmination of years of dreaming and planning: it is an ambitious attempt to innovate within the meta-cultural institution of Storytelling, and I thank everyone taking the time to read this prospectus.

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This project would not have been possible without the guidance of several people. First and foremost, my Committee members: Chris Hansen, Corey Carbonara and Jeff Donahoo; they have been instrumental in the production of these artifacts through their careful guidance, shrewd critique, and generous encouragement. I would also like to thank Communication Studies faculty members Andru Anderson and Jim Kendrick, who have played large roles in shaping my creative interests and design philosophy during my time in this program. My fellow students in the program, too numerous to list here individually, also played a pivotal role in the development of this project, by expanding my knowledge of popular interests and the state of the entertainment industry, both internally and in popular perception. Thanks so much to all of you wonderful folks!

# CHAPTER ONE

## Project Objectives: Storytelling, Educational, and Professional Goals

This project has two major objectives with one important corollary: first, I hope to innovate new storytelling techniques to maximize the historically unprecedented and richly complex media ecosystem of the 21st century; second, I hope to create a framework of entertainment properties with a very strong but subtle educational component. The corollary goal is to present, by achieving my two primary objectives, a highly polished and salable product that can establish my professional reputation as a storyteller and transmedia producer.

My first goal, the innovation of storytelling techniques, is predicated upon my own understanding of the transmedia philosophy. The first instance of the term 'transmedia' in the sense of contemporary usage is in Marsha Kinder's *Playing with Power* from 1993. Briefly, 'transmedia' is an emergent trend within IP production and marketing: while there is no universally accepted definition, two common components are present in most cases – the use of separate media formats to advance distinct plot lines that are interconnected in a metanarrative, and the matching of a given plot line with the medium most suited to the stylistic and thematic needs of that (sub-)plot. Some variation of this definition is currently used by academics such as Elizabeth Evans, in the recent *Transmedia Television*, and Henry Jenkins in a number of his books, as well as working practitioners like Jesse Schell in his *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*.

Relevant to the concept of transmedia is a practice traditionally called the "shared story world", wherein multiple authors contribute to the construction of a narrative – one commercially successful example is the *Wild Cards* series edited by

George R.R. Martin. By definition, transmedia projects are so large that they will inevitably be a shared story world to a greater or lesser degree: I have been unable to discover any major commercial property wherein all of the novels, graphic novels, screenplays, games etc. for a single property were written by a single individual. I believe that it is a natural evolution of transmedia narratives-*as*-shared story worlds to include the audience within this process. It is my view that audience members engaged enough to pursue multiple plot lines across various media at sometimes considerable expense will reasonably expect to have some degree of input into the curve of the metanarrative's arc, thus making audience collaboration the third pillar of my own transmedia philosophy.

The importance of audience collaboration is supported by the enormous amount of 'fan fiction' on the internet – unofficial non-canonical material written by fans passionately engaged in the *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Harry Potter* universes, among many others. It is also underscored by the *Mass Effect* 'ending controversy' that has surrounded that franchise since the release of the final installment in the (initial) series on March 6, 2012. As of the time of this writing (4/15/12), over sixty thousand fans have signed up on the 'Retake Mass Effect' Facebook page – this group is determined to have studio and publisher, BioWare and Electronic Arts respectively, rework the ending sequence of the final game to provide what the marketing of *Mass Effect* promised: "Your choices matter." The players' responses underscore that the promised level of audience collaboration was not achieved, regardless of whether the ending was narratively coherent (or endings, as there were multiple, but ultimately similar, final cinematics). This failure to meet expectations set by the producers themselves is of no

small interest to me, given my own professional goals, and I will return to this point when introducing my own model for transmedia development below.

My second goal, designing a substantial educational component within the IP originated in this project (and in all of my future IPs as well, as a professional goal), is just as ambitious an objective as the first goal. In the spirit of Benjamin Franklin's vision of an educated and volunteer-oriented American citizenry as the staunchest base for Democracy, liberty and freedom, I hope to provide both those still in the traditional educational system and those already in the workforce with the opportunity and encouragement to increase their literacy and numeracy in the humanities and sciences. To this end, I hope to provide inducements within the context of the IP's narrative universe to encourage player growth, such as the opportunity to have a player's avatar 'canonized' within continuity and the gaining of competitive advantage within multiplayer environments. The specific narrative and game mechanic innovations designed to implement this goal will be described in detail within the methodology and artifact sections; within this section it is necessary to discuss the larger intent – to support the beleaguered American educational system.

My mother, sister, mother-in-law, several aunts and cousins, as well as one of my closest friends are all public school teachers, and based on discussions with them I feel safe in asserting that our system, both in Texas and nationally, faces serious hurdles with more looming on the horizon. Democracy is built upon the concept of informed choice, and that concept is undermined in direct relation to the erosion of the educational system. It is not hyperbole to say that one of the greatest enemies facing American and international democracy is the slow decay into an overwhelmingly undereducated and uncritical society. In this Era of Wikipedia, real literacy, numeracy

and critical thinking ability are more important than ever to sustain this glorious American experiment of freedom, liberty and justice for all. Given the massive size and scope of the economic impact of the entertainment industries and their massive cultural roles as well, it is incumbent upon all of its constituent members that this sector provides social benefits beyond increasing profit margins and production efficiencies.

I believe that my professional goals for this project, namely finding a party interested in producing or financing the production of the intellectual property originated herein and thereby establishing myself professionally, will be a natural byproduct of successfully achieving my two primary goals. Regardless of whether that belief is born out, successfully achieving my primary goals will insure that this creative project is worthy of the attention of those interested in the future of storytelling and entertainment IPs.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Methodology

While guidebooks and reference works abound on the topic of creating individual media such as the novel or the screenplay, there is as yet no established methodology for designing a transmedia property. There in fact have been a plethora of works on the subject published within the last 18 months, as a quick search of Amazon's book section with the key word "transmedia" attests. Given the sheer newness of the term, manuals on the subject can be considered somewhat premature at this point: depending on the definition of the term, nearly every commercial IP, or conversely nearly none, may count as a transmedia project. Having defined my own three-pillared foundation for transmedia in the previous section, I will outline my own theory of transmedia design in this section.

Tailoring a design philosophy for transmedia production requires that it structurally comprehend the three pillars: multiple interweaving plotlines, matching individual plots with a fitting medium, and incorporation of multiple authors including audience members. While the implementation of the first two criteria will vary only slightly depending on the size and scope of the project, the third is perhaps the most variable, in that all contributors will not be equal and the requirements and costs of production vary widely from medium to medium. Some authors will be charged with writing whole arcs and creating casts of characters, while audience-level contributors may only have the capability to add stories of smaller scale, or even just individual characters, through official channels.

To better explicate my stance on this issue, let me use two terms borrowed from software design: extensibility and scalability. A program is extensible when it can easily handle the addition of new features without crashing – in the transmedia context, I say that a narrative is extensible when the rules of continuity are structured in such a way that collaborators have the freedom to add new settings, artifacts, and characters that do not contradict existing and future continuity. A program is scalable when it can handle an expanding user base and/or increasing volumes of data without crashing – in the transmedia context, I say that a narrative is scalable when it can handle an indefinite number of unique plotlines without losing the structure of continuity. In other words, the world and its properties must be expansive enough for contributors to author stories that express their own vision of the narrative universe while keeping that personal vision within the bounds of continuity.

To achieve this goal and establish the three pillars effectively, a transmedia design philosophy must therefore chart a methodological trajectory between a starting point and an end state - that is, a singularity of premise that is logically and aesthetically expanded into a fully-fledged narrative universe. This end state, the narrative universe, is in turn the ground bed for the creative energies of all involved – if sufficiently constructed it will channel all of excitement and passion of creators and audience alike without breaking. This may seem like an unwieldy mixed metaphor, but the process of transmedia narrative design itself is a complex amalgam of strategies originally devised within the various media that make up the contemporary entertainment ecology.

Within my design methodology, the first stage of narrative design for a transmedia property is the selection of a premise. That a story should be the

exploration or extrapolation of a single premise is a common theme within a variety of guidebooks on writing for all sorts of media: for the sake of citation I shall point to Robert McKee's *Story* (1997), which is focused upon the production of screenplays, but from a highly theoretical and abstract viewpoint, thus making it applicable to general narrative design. McKee's main argument on this point is narrative coherence: trying to include multiple premises quickly becomes a logistical problem on both thematic and structural levels. In his view, focusing upon a single premise allows the author greater creative freedom through clarity of purpose, and the quality of the story produced in such a manner will by nature of the process contain sufficient depth to please a variety of tastes; whereas the messy confusion of multiple premises is likely to please no reader.

McKee also breaks the traditional concept of premise into two parts, the premise and the controlling idea; it is still the case that each story should have only one of each. Premise, for McKee, is an opened ended question, always following the pattern of "what would happen if…" An example is: "What would happen if Humanity faced extinction at the hands of an alien species?" The controlling idea is the story's specific answer to that question, and is in turn generated from two parts: value + cause. The value represents the core moral or ethical ideal represented within the story, and the cause is the specific event (the climax), that renders that value positively or negatively. An example of a positive valuation would be: "The nobility (value) of Humanity overcomes the aliens' wanton destruction through the self-sacrifice of a band of heroes (cause)." A negative valuation would be: "The greed (value) of the aliens blinds them to Humanity's true worth, and they are defeated by a band of heroes (cause)." In general, a story gives either a positive valuation to the Protagonist's values, or a negative valuation to the Antagonist's values. As I will discuss more in a moment, one of the primary modes of

dramatization is to oscillate between positive and negative valuations as the plot progresses: i.e. the aliens greed will seemingly give them the upper hand, only to be revealed as the source of their greatest weakness; or the humans' nobility will seem to make them too weak to defeat the aliens, only to prove to be their greatest strength.

Within the context of a transmedia narrative, I believe that all the individual stories and plotlines should conform to the meta-premise that establishes the narrative universe, but should each in turn explore their own premise and controlling idea. This is the basis of building up a transmedia narrative: the metaplot should be constructed in a fractal mode, with the individual subplots combining to achieve the execution of the meta-premise/controlling idea. Let us explore this fractal nature of transmedia narratives in greater detail.

The narrative fractal, as I term it, is a four part structure that provides the framework for building scenes from events, and in turn subplots from scenes, stories from subplots, and the meta-story from stories; the four parts are: the Hook, the Turn, the Twist, and the Fork. This structure is a mélange of concepts from a large number of writers and theorists of writing, but I can point to McKee's *Story*, David Bordwell's *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (2006), and Chris Klug's insights in *Interactive Storytelling for Video Games* (Lebowitz, J. & Klug, C., 2011), as major contributors. In McKee's terminology, each story event or plot point should be a *reversal* of some sort: either a reversal of a character's expectations (and/or by extension the audience's expectations), or the reversal of the 'charge' of a value, i.e. switching the valuation of that moral ideal from positive to negative or vice versa. Thus a scene starts with the Hook: a character or group is pulled or 'hooked' into a situation to which they must react. Next comes the Turn, wherein their reaction results in a new condition or state that was unexpected: a

new course of action or new stance must be adopted. The reaction to the Turn causes yet another new condition or state, the Twist: the reality of the situation is revealed as contrary to the perceptions or wishes of the character, or unknown causal forces now become known. The reaction to the Twist results in the Fork: the character is changed on multiple levels (physical, psychological, social, etc.) each providing the narrative impetus for a new Hook.

My terminology for the narrative fractal is metaphorical. The Hook of each scene should be tied to the narrative thread of previous continuity. Even if the reader is unaware of that preexisting continuity, this will provide a sense of consistency that will stand up to scrutiny, and critical scrutiny is an unavoidable part of the transmedia experience. Fans will test the narrative coherence of the world through their passionate engagement and immersion – failing that test is a fatal flaw for transmedia properties. 'Turn' and 'Twist' are descriptors of the process of reversal, serving as reminders to the author that variety and originality must be infused as often as possible for the sake of depth and richness, two vital qualities for narrative in general and transmedia universes in particular. 'Fork' refers to the old idea, attributed to many different sources, that a good ending should 'open more doors than it closes,' an idea especially relevant to transmedia development. While each scene should be constructed on this model (with variability and flexibility), so should each Act, Chapter, or Sequence (depending on the medium in use) also be constructed on this model with scenes rather than events as the basic unit; and in turn stories should be built up out of Acts, Chapters, etc. following this model.

This is not to say that all Chapters in a novel should have four scenes, and that each novel's chapter count should be some multiple of four. Rather, as many events as it

takes to construct the model should be employed to build up a scene, and so on up the fractal scale. As an example, three events might be necessary to constitute the Hook for a scene: a character is introduced in her new workplace, a co-worker dopes her coffee with a mysterious liquid, and she is subsequently sent home after becoming ill; yet only one event might be needed to introduce the Turn, five for the Twist, and two to provide the Fork. Thus the narrative fractal is not a rigid structure that constricts creativity, but rather a flexible framework that empowers spontaneity and originality. In this manner, the narrative fractal is used to expand a single premise (and controlling idea) into a whole narrative universe.

The next component of a narrative design philosophy for transmedia involves the selection of medium most appropriate to a given story. In my view, there are two aspects of any given medium that are crucial to this selection process: formatting and structuring. By formatting I mean the specific design of the presentation and setting for consumption; by structuring, I mean the specific ways in which content must be structured for apprehensibility within that medium. For example, television and film share a common structuring, i.e. motion pictures and synchronized sound with conventions of aesthetic style, but they have different formatting (screen size, settings of consumption); whereas comics and novels have similar formatting, i.e. the folded 'book', but different structuring between the pure text nature of the novel and the hybridization of static image and text within the comic. These two aspects of a medium work in concert to shape the aesthetic experience of a narrative – reading *The Hunger Games* novel at home alone is obviously a very different experience than seeing *The Hunger Games* as a feature film in a theater with fellow audience members, which is in turn different than watching the feature as a TV broadcast, or on Blu-Ray, at home

alone. A complete and thorough scheme for matching the artistic intent of a narrative with the aesthetic experience of a medium would require a thesis length treatise; for my present purposes it is enough to acknowledge these two vital factors, structuring and formatting, as the keys for selection.

One more important component is necessary for the construction of an immersive narrative universe or 'Secondary World,' as Tolkien called it. That component is a rule structure to act as prescriptive/corrective mechanism for authors: the basis for this idea is taken from the classic 'tabletop' Role Playing Game (RPG) *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D), as well as Marc Leblanc's MDA game design methodology (Hunicke, Leblanc & Zubek, 2007). MDA stands for Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics, which is a descriptive title for the process of iterative game design. Mechanics refers to the coding of the game's rules; Dynamics refers to the feedback loop between Player and Game State that emerge from the mechanics in and across game sessions, and Aesthetics for the emotional responses evoked within the Player by the dynamics. If the dynamics are not evoking the proper aesthetics, then the mechanics must be altered; hence the 'iterative' label for this design methodology.

By metaphorical extension to the process of transmedia narrative design, I see the 'Aesthetics' level as the emotional experience of the audience as evoked by the dynamics, 'Dynamics' as the interplay of narrative content and medium of presentation (specifically it's formatting and structuring), and 'Mechanics' as the rules of continuity that retain the coherence of that universe even as it expands. The importance of Mechanics for narrative can best be demonstrated by Gygax and Arneson's D&D (1977). D&D's statistical and mechanical approach to modeling characters, creatures and items, allows the Game Master to adjudicate the interaction of each of the three

with one another in a consistent and comprehensible manner. This framework allows player groups, guided by the direction of the Game Master, to spontaneously generate adventures that conform to the continuity of the D&D universe, even if they're not always conforming to the rules of good drama. This rule set for the universe can serve both as a template for game sessions and as a general guide for contributors in other media – there have been several notable characters created for novels set within the D&D universe, all of whom conform to the rules of the game. These mechanics do not have to take the form only of algorithms, data tables and dictums: the mechanics of Tolkien's universe are deep and rich, but presented entirely in prose narration in works like *The Silmarillion.*

I use the term *heximetry* to refer to this process of constructing the mechanics of the narrative universe: *hexis* is an Attic Greek word used by the Stoic Philosophers to refer to a state of being or condition of the universe (Sambursky, 1959). Heximetry covers the metaphysical and natural laws of the universe, as well as the social and cultural traditions, i.e. history and societies therein. *Idiotis* is the Attic Greek for person, and so *idiography* is the special sub-branch of heximetry devoted to the construction of characters and artifacts. *Chronos* and *topos* are the well-known Attic words for time and space, respectively, and thus *chronotopy* is the sub-branch of heximetry devoted to the construction of settings. The most common heximetry, found in works of realistic literary fiction, is simply the heximetry of Primary Reality, so-called by Tolkien; i.e. the story is set within our world. Fantasy, Sci-Fi, and Horror authors use heximetry altered from Primary Reality to a greater or lesser degree in order to create their own Secondary World. While I am the first to use this terminology of *heximetry, idiography* and *chronotopy,* this process exists (or fails to) in every narrative endeavor – failure to

produce a self-consistent heximetry will unfailingly result in plot holes and/or gaps in the story's internal logic.

So to sum up my methodological philosophy for transmedia narrative design: a meta-premise is extended into an entire narrative universe via the narrative fractal under the guidance of a heximetry unique to that world, selecting the appropriate medium for individual stories according to the aesthetic intent. This is a simple summation of a very large and complex process; to better understand both the process and its goals, I will now describe the artifacts which I will produce using this methodology in the fulfillment of my Creative Project Thesis.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Artifacts for the Project

The three artifacts which will comprise the Creative Project Thesis are: a screenplay which will act as the 'leader', introducing the audience to the world of *Technopolis Gotham*; a game design doc, which will describe the core of an exciting hybrid genre videogame that will allow audience members to create potentially canonical characters (more on that below); a 'codex', which serves as the equivalent of a 'story bible' as used in serialized TV production. These three artifacts will sufficiently establish the transmedia universe for full scale production, allowing for the realization of the property as well as providing room for expansion – a series of novels and comics might be warranted as more economical starting points for audience engagement, if the property is found to have merit by an interested production company or entertainment conglomerate (i.e. Disney, Electronic Arts, etc.). The first major arc of *Technopolis Gotham* will be modeled on the fractal: the screenplay will provide the Hook, the first videogame will provide the Turn, a second screenplay will provide the Twist, and a second game will provide the Fork – laying the groundwork for future major arcs set within the *TG* universe.

The cinematic medium is by definition best suited to the visual depiction of action in a linear narrative; hence a cinematic text will set the visual tone for an entire property, as well as providing the canonical physical description of important characters and settings. Whereas novels and comics allow the audience to fill in details with their own imaginations, and allow for the pleasure of pondering a given event or image, a feature film employs the power and majesty of pure spectacle to engage the audience

and clearly delineate the world so that the whole audience shares the same imaginary space. This strategy avoids the difficulties associated with properties originated in novels which are then adapted or extended to the cinema, typified by the comments often heard in such situations, statements like: "This isn't how I imagined it to be…" and "It looked different in my head." By introducing the audience to a property via the cinema, such disappointment is avoided, although clearly at the cost of vastly increased production and marketing costs compared with the novel or a serialized comic.

Given this tremendous cost differential, the novel and the comic are arguably superior 'launch vehicles', and it must be stated that the time and technical constraints of this creative project thesis were factors in the selection of a 'leader' medium, thereby barring a novel or comic. However, these negative factors were not the main reason for choosing the feature film as 'leader'. The primary factor for selecting cinema as the introductory medium was the low total investment for the audience member. The cost of a movie ticket, Blu-Ray disc, iTunes or Amazon digital download is comparable to the price of a new hardback novel or the total cost of a serialized graphic novel (i.e. a comic series), while the time investment for 'consumption' of the film is significantly less than the latter two options. A second major factor in the selecting the medium of the moving image as 'leader' text for this property is the possibility for monetization of the artifact via ticket sales in theatrical release, sales of physical and digital copies for home theatre, and licensing fees for broadcast and streaming, all of which present significant opportunities to achieve profitability and to expand the audience base.

As the 'leader' text for the *Technopolis Gotham* property, the screenplay will introduce the world via the story of two teenage characters, Julia "Jules" Kidd and Ripley "Rip" Rayburn. Structurally, the screenplay will be based upon the narrative

fractal as described above: along with the main plot, there are additional character development plots for the two main characters, each following the fractal. There will be an additional plot with its own fractal arc, serving as a set of 'act breaks' and an epilogue which will hint at further developments in the arc. This secondary plot will illustrate an important period in the youth of Nikola Tesla, a central character in the *Technopolis Gotham* universe – it will provide hints to the overarching plot of the entire first major arc set within *TG*. All of these various plots will tie into the metanarrative – in order to fit them all into film while staying within the standard runtime of contemporary cinema, many scenes will perform several duties at once, furthering multiple plotlines through the combination of dialog and action in each scene. The film will also hint at successful strategies for the first videogame, as well as give clues to the location of narrative and item 'Easter Eggs' hidden within the game.

The Moving Image, in its dual incarnations of Cinema and Television, was undoubtedly one of the great cultural achievements of the 20th century; it was also that century's most powerful and emblematic narrative medium. The Interactive Image, primarily in its most pervasive incarnation, the videogame, plays that role for the 21st century. While breathtakingly capable of incorporating most every preexisting narrative medium, with some necessary modifications of format, into a single text, uniquely the interactive image births a whole new cosmos of experiential possibility by generating a feedback loop between audience and text. In the midst of this innately innovative medium's aesthetic mechanics, a new cybernetic organism arises: each audience interaction with the text produces a new and unique experience going far beyond the bounds of traditional narrative media, transporting the inter-actor to a new plane of participatory art.

*Port Radium*, my design for the first game set within the *TG* universe, is a hybrid genre game that combines elements of the First Person Shooter (FPS), Role-Playing Game (RPG), and Adventure Game (AG) genres. Points of interest are the game's focus on fully customizable characters with extensive item & inventory management, open exploration and slowly mounting tension within the single-player content, and fast paced tactical action within cooperative multiplayer modes. Exposition of the narrative of *TG* will be expanded in scope and depth in *PR*'s single player mode, while 'environmental' and 'incidental' storytelling techniques will advance the narrative in the action-heavy multiplayer modes.

*PR* is intended to extend the audience base and deepen their level of engagement with unique gameplay mechanics, character customizability and advancement, while also serving as an entry point for audience collaboration: in *PR*, players will have the opportunity to craft 'canonical' characters. By advancing to a certain level of achievement and total play time, players are guaranteed that their character is granted existence within the canonical *TG* universe. This means that their character - complete with its specific look, name, and attributes (each when applicable) - may be used in the capacity of an 'extra', i.e. a non-speaking character used to fill out a scene or scenes, within future narratives in films/TV series/webisodes, novelizations, or serialized comics. Special events and achievements will allow a select group (i.e. a small number!) of player-characters to achieve the status of minor character, i.e. a character with lines of dialog and some impact on plot and/or major characters' development.

*PR* will use a core mechanic as an educational tool: a fictitious element 'dynamonium', has some amazing properties which serve as the narrative basis for fantastic powers within the world of *TG*. By subjecting dynamonium crystals to radio

waves via frequency and amplitude modulation, 'piezo-energetic' effects are achieved: high, medium, and low categories in both types of modulation produce a total of nine base effects, which can be combined to create more complex effects. In this way, players will be exposed to a variety of scientific and mathematical concepts, such as wave theory, modulation, the piezoelectric effect (metaphorically extended here), oscillation, standing waves, interference, etc. By mastering this mechanic to advance their player character and customize the avatar's powers, the players will achieve greater numeracy and scientific literacy.

Codex is the term I have chosen for the 'Story Bible' of transmedia universes, in an attempt to differentiate it from those artifacts, primarily found in Television production. The impetus for this dichotomy is a desire to highlight the focus on the transmedia nature of content production as opposed to the purely single medium domain of the Story Bible. A writer for a TV series must peruse the SB to conform to the show's continuity, as well as being knowledgeable on every 'aired' episode of that series. A transmedia universe, such as *Star Wars*, is simply too large for most writers to be fully and intimately knowledgeable thereof, and it is with this in mind that the Codex differs from the SB. Just as with a SB, the Codex must be a living document, constantly incorporating newly developed content: one of its primary functions must be as a reference list for all published and canonical material. A Codex, however, must include a rules-based rubric for heximetry and its sub-branches of idiography and chronotopy, given that creators and writers may be working in media within which narrative is a secondary or corollary concern, such as card games, tabletop RPGs, and videogames. Hence the codex produced for *TG* will include the basic rubric, a set of character biographies, settings with histories, and the initial reference list (consisting of the

screenplay & videogame). The codex will also contain general art direction notes to guide the selection of medium and the production of aesthetic themes (both visual and aural) therein.

These three artifacts will provide a solid basis for launching production of the *Technopolis Gotham* universe; in particular, the codex will be a suitable foundation for the generation of novels and serialized comics, which can serve as lower cost leader texts. The *TG* universe is unique and innovative, and with the proper budgeting and marketing, it can become a successful long-term commercial property that provides engaging entertainment and educational value to millions of people in America and beyond.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Review of the Literature

Over the last half dozen years or so, literally hundreds of books and articles have served as inspiration and have given direction to this project in terms of methodology and design philosophy: listing them all is at this point is a Sisyphean task which I will not undertake. The following works have contributed most directly to the current form of my design philosophy and production methodology. The first two entries are not in alphabetical order with the rest of the list, and they give the citation for the works as a whole, with the individual chapters cited below. These two books are edited works in a series, and both contain a wealth of material vital to my interests - this method of citing them, while somewhat atypical, is the most efficient; the chapters are listed alphabetically by author as a concession to APA formatting.

The following are all chapters within Harrigan, P. & Wardrip-Fruin, N, (Eds.). (2007). *Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Borgstrom, Rebecca. "Structure and Meaning in Role-Playing Game Design." pp. 57-66. Using her design for the tabletop RPG *Exalted* as an example, Borgstrom discusses the unique, collaborative generation of meaning within that genre of games. The experience involved in playing tabletop RPGs is determined by each game's ruleset, and the player group's communal agreement as to the employment of that ruleset.

Costikyan, G. "Games, Storytelling, and Breaking the String". pp. 5-14. Costikyan discusses the union of game and narrative within modern popular culture by giving a brief history thereof. While he is a noted critic of seeing games as stories *per se*, in this essay he concedes that interesting hybrid forms are possible and will continue to develop.

Hite, K. "Narrative Structure and Creative Tension in *Call of Cthulu*". pp. 31-40. Hite discusses the ways in which the rules of the *Call of Cthulu* tabletop RPG universe work to impose a consistent narrative structure within and across play sessions. Unlike *D&D*, in which player-characters are ultimately limited only by the level cap (i.e. the highest level of achievement possible), *CoC* employs a mechanic whereby the P-C is inevitably driven mad by the weight of the horrors they encounter.

Martin, G.R.R. "On the *Wild Cards* Series". pp. 15-24. Martin, a noted author, discusses the nature of shared story worlds by relating his own experiences with the *Wild Cards* series, which he co-created and edited with a circle of friends. Interestingly, the series' genesis emerged from regular tabletop RPG sessions he game-mastered; the games were set in the *Superheroes* universe.

Mechner, J. "*The Sands of Time*: Crafting a Video Game Story". pp. 111-120. Mechner, the celebrated lead designer of the *Prince of Persia* series of games, uses that series to illustrate the very real differences between narrative in videogames and traditional, narrative-centric media. He stresses the commonly recited axiom that the story must serve the gameplay; he also provides examples of the spreadsheet formatting of game writing (as opposed to the screenplay or novel formats).

Mona, E. "From the Basement to the Basic Set: The Early Years of *D&D*". pp. 25-30. Mona discusses the development of *Dungeons & Dragons* by Gary Gygax and David Arneson. The game emerged from the War Game simulation genre, and its ruleset developed into the industry standard known today over a series of iterations.

Wilson, K. "One Story, Many Media". pp. 91-93. Wilson's short essay discusses some of the issues associated with adapting an intellectual property from one media to another; specifically, from videogames and tabletop RPGs to board games. He stresses the importance of capturing the 'essence' of the original property while utilizing the strengths of the target medium.

The following are all chapters from Harrigan, P. & Wardrip-Fruin, N, (Eds.). (2009). *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives.* Cambridge: MIT Press. the book cited directly above.

Bartle, R.A. "Alice and Dorothy Play Together". pp. 105-117. Celebrated game designer Richard Bartle discusses the future of Virtual Worlds (and their subset MMOs) by introducing a new typology of the form. 'Alice worlds' give the player no direction and total freedom, taking their name from Alice of L. Carroll's stories; 'Dorothy worlds' require players to 'follow the yellow brick road', i.e. they give players little true freedom but with highly polished worlds and gameplay; 'Wendy worlds', provide a middle point, allowing players much freedom to explore, while also giving them direction and guidance. Bartle believes the most successful VWs and MMOs of the future will be Wendy worlds.

Glancy, A.S. "World without End: The *Delta Green* Open Campaign Setting". pp. 77-85. Glancy describes the intricate process of creating the setting for the *Delta Green* campaign, set within the *Call of Cthulu* tabletop RPG universe. The *CoC* universe is

based upon the Cthulu mythos, originated by H.P. Lovecraft and expanded by a variety of authors. Hence the Cthulu mythos and the process of writing and designing the *DG* campaign are both prime examples of transmedia production.

Hite, K. "Multicampaign Setting Design for Role-Playing Games". pp. 67-73. Tabletop RPGs are the most "open world" (i.e. player directed & authored) of all genres, in that the narratives generated by play sessions are primarily the product of the player group. Hite discusses the nature of designing settings that allow for the maximum flexibility of player choice while still presenting the probability of generating an interesting narrative experience for the players.

Laws, R.D. "Intellectual Property Development in the Adventure Games Industry: A Practitioner's View". pp. 59-65. Laws, a veteran writer and game designer, discusses the unique challenges of developing transmedia properties (without explicitly invoking that term). He stresses that one point of major difficulty for writers of such properties is the desire for a wealth of detail on the part of RPG players and gamers, contrasted with the simplicity of plot demanded by many traditional narrative media (i.e. too many characters making for a bad movie or unreadable book). He also notes that there is currently no completely satisfying methodology for producing such properties.

Parkin, L. "Truths Universally Acknowledged: How the "Rules" of *Doctor Who* Affect the Writing". pp. 13-24. Parkin situates the *Doctor Who* universe, terming it an "unfolding text", within a tradition of multimedia, long-running narratives such as Sherlock Holmes, Robin Hood, and King Arthur. He notes that writers must obey both established continuity and the expectation of fans, which presents a sort of unofficial

ruleset of continuity: i.e. fans expect a *DW* story to 'feel' as certain way, regardless of that story's adherence to or deviation from prior stories.

Rolston, K. "My Story Never Ends". pp. 119-123. Rolston is the narrative designer of the first four *Elder Scrolls* games, among other work. He shares his experiences in creating both open world games and more traditionally structured questing games. He argues that one of the primary strengths of both tabletop and computer RPGs is that they do not need to end: there is no necessity for providing a conclusion as in traditional narrative media.

Williams, W.J. "In What Universe?". pp. 25-32. Williams discusses the work that goes into building a convincing fictional world (i.e. the processes of heximetry), as well as his own experiences writing in the *Wild Cards* shared story world. Despite enjoying collaboration with talented peers, Williams is somewhat pessimistic about Shared Story World anthologies and novels surviving as a generic form.

The following are all complete works or cited as chapters within an edited volume.

Klug, C. & Lebowitz, J. (2011). *Interactive Storytelling for Video Games: A Player-Centered Approach for Creating Memorable Characters and Stories.* New York: Focal Press. Lebowtiz expands his MA thesis from typology of videogame genres bases on narrative mechanics and a subsequent survey to determine the habits and preferences of players in relation to that scheme, into a full-fledge guide to writing interactive stories for videogames. Veteran author and game designer Chris Klug provides insights and a frequent counterpoint to Lebowitz's own theoretical stance.

Howard, J. (2008). *Quests: Design, Theory and History in Games and Narratives.* Wellesley: A.K. Peters. Howard uses the medieval concept of the allegorical Quest to discuss the generation of meaning in videogames, on both theoretical and practical

levels, going so far as to provide tutorial projects for the Neverwinter Nights modding software. One interesting highlight is his discussion of the work of Richard Garriott in producing various levels of meaning in *Ultima IV*. Overall, this is an excellent book for anyone interested in the narrative and game design.

Carroll, N. (1990). *Philosophy of Horror*. New York: Routledge. Carroll gives a four part formula for horror stories of the Lovecraftian variety: onset, discovery, confirmation, and confrontation. This four part structure is specific to detective/horror hybrid stories first made popular by H.P. Lovecraft, and is perhaps indicative of a more basic narrative pattern. This is one of the influences on the generation of my concept of the Narrative Fractal.

Huntley, H.E. (1970). *The Divine Proportion*. Mineola: Dover. This book is a non-technical mathematical work concerning $\phi$, the Greek letter for 'phi', denoting the concept of the 'golden ratio'. Useful in the present context is Huntley's discussion of aesthetics and the nature of beauty: he describes beauty as the recognition of patterns in unexpected places and the discovery of new patterns. This is a crucial philosophical underpinning to the narrative fractal – I believe a story is beautiful when it conforms to the pattern described by the fractal in a unique and original fashion.

Sheldon, L. (2004). *Character Development and Storytelling for Games*. Boston: Cengage Learning. Sheldon provides his perspective as a veteran writer in games and traditional media, with a good combination of practical advice and theoretical discussion. Helpfully, in an appendix he adds a primer on building a writing team for larger projects.

McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style, and the principles of screenwriting.* London: Methuen. McKee's work is already considered a classic by many writers across a variety of media, due to the deep theoretical approach he takes to the subject, making this book applicable to narrative design in general. As a rich resource on narrative mechanics, this book is another major inspiration for the narrative fractal.

Bordwell, D. (2006). *The Way Hollywood Tells It.* Berkeley: U. of California Press. Bordwell's book is an historical examination of the narrative structure and style of Hollywood films, from 1960 through the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. He discusses a four part structure, developed by Kristin Thompson, for analyzing the narratives in feature films: Setup, Complicating Action, Development and Climax, Bordwell's discussion of Thompson's system is another major influence on the narrative fractal.

Fine, G.A. (1983). *Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Fine uses an ethnographic approach to explore the world of gamers in tabletop RPGs, at a relatively early period in their [the games] development. Having participated in a large number of gaming sessions as a 'participant-as-observer', Fine relates discusses many topics still relevant today, particularly the relation of aggression and sexuality to gamers and their in-game personas.

van Vogt, A.E. (1964). Complication in the Science Fiction Story. In L.A. Eshbach (Ed.), *Of Worlds Beyond* (53-66). Chicago: Advent. One of the most successful of the early modern Sci-Fi authors, A.E. van Vogt gives practical advice on writing: he stresses that using a methodological framework to guide the writing process increases

creativity rather than constricting it, by allowing the writer to weave multiple plot threads in a coherent manner.

Jones, G. (2002). *Killing Monsters*: *Why Children Need Fantasy, Super-Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence.* New York: Basic Books. Basing his argument in scientific research - clinical experimentation and ethnographic case studies supported by complementary anecdotal evidence - Jones makes a strong case that 'violent' media, including videogames, when properly designed and presented, actually helps children and adolescents develop fully rounded personalities, supporting their innate capability to channel their own natural aggression, as well as providing a place to deal with the violence of the modern world. Thus framed, the problem isn't exposing children to violent media, but when and how to expose them to it.

Despain, W (ed.) (2009). *Writing for Video Game Genres*: *From FPS to RPG.* Wellesley: A.K. Peters.This collection of essays on the specifics of writing for the various game genres runs the gamut from the more narrative-centric types such as the Role-Playing Game to games with seemingly little or no narrative content such as the broad Casual category (i.e. Tetris, Solitaire, Bejeweled, etc.). Helpful examples of documentation and formatting are included as appendices; despite each chapter being focused upon a single genre or thematic group (i.e. Sci-Fi or Fantasy), nearly every chapter contains insights helpful to any writer for games.

Rodowick, D.N. (2007). *The Virtual Life of Film.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Rodowick discusses the historical development of the film industry through the lens of the co-developed critical apparatus of Cinema Studies. While acquiescing to the fact that 'film' as a specific medium (i.e. silver halide crystals imbedded on a film strip) is

rapidly disappearing, the Moving Image is more alive than ever, and continues to build upon the conventions and traditions that emerged during its 'filmic' period.

Cohen, D.S. & Bustamante II, S.A. (2010). *Producing Games: From Business and Budgets to Creavity and Design*. Boston: Focal Press. Cohen and Bustamante bring their decades of combined experience in developing and producing games to bear in this excellent overview of standard industry practices and procedures. Emphasizing the need to stay on budget (financially & temporally) while maintaining a consistent creative vision, this book provides the template for my game design document.

Castronova, E. (2007). *Exodus to the Virtual World: How Online Fun is Changing Reality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Castronova, a skilled economist and veteran gamer, discusses the ways in which gaming, especially MMO and VW games, is already causing significant economic and social impacts; he also discusses the potential future interaction of game design and governmental policy-making. Along with Jones' *Killing Monsters*, this book is one of the primary influences on my understanding of videogames as the most culturally significant narrative medium of the 21st century.

Johnson, B.D. (2010). *Screen Futures: The Future of Entertainment, Computing and the Devices We Love*. China: Intel Press. Johnson describes the socio-technological developments attending the seemingly endless stream of innovation in digital products: the limited consumer resources of time and money vs. the truly incredible amount of entertainment content available – a vital consideration for any transmedia production.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Post-Production Analysis

There is always some level of disparity between any endeavor's initial goals and its ultimate achievements. Having completed the production work on three artifacts, I can state that as with many things in life, the journey was truly as important as the destination. I say "as important" rather than more important á la the folk wisdom, because of the nature of the work: these artifacts hopefully do constitute a salable product, and as such mark my entry into the world of professional narrative design. The theme of this analysis is *contingency*: the ever-present need to realign goals and objectives with reference to both internal and external limitations and opportunities.

The most pressing call of contingency in this process came with the limitations of time – for four and half months prior to my prospectus defense, I'd built up via handwritten notes a whole body of work to be transmuted into the three artifacts of Codex, Screenplay, and Game Design Document. With only five weeks for actual production time, the committee suggested a possible reduction in scope: specifically the excision of one or two of the artifacts from the project.

There are thousands of screenplays written each year, large numbers of story bibles and game design docs produced annually, most of which are lost in a sea of abundance. My hope in ambitiously choosing to produce all three was bipartite: to stand out from the crowd, so to speak, and to demonstrate an understanding of and basic proficiency in transmedia production. I therefore partially redesigned the structure of the property, replacing the series of feature films with serialized and

partially episodic content formatted as a 'TV show', but intended for internet streaming and physical media purchase (i.e. Blu-ray disc packaging).

This redesign was effective on a number of levels: it allowed me to complete all three artifacts on time at a satisfactory level of professional polish while also furthering internal goals of the project. Within the transmedia space, incorporation of the audience's innate desire to contribute material is not currently utilized by any major property, and hence exhibition of the audience's contributions is utterly lacking. A major intent of the project was to provide, originally through the feature films, a space to exhibit player-created characters in cameo and minor roles. The redesign to a serialized 'TV show' allows for more total content, and thus a greater number of opportunities to showcase player-characters.

Another area where contingency arose was the inclusion of educational content within the property design. While the property as-is contains 'spaces' so to speak to include educational content, explicit description of such content and its implementation is lacking. This is due to restrictions of industry standards: demands on the concision of information presentation as well as formatting conventions interrupted my plans to include detailed treatments of intended educational content. As stated above, this content can still be placed within the property with no major restructuring required.

Overall, this project was challenging in matching the scope of ambitions with the limitation of time. Meeting that challenge was excellent preparation for future challenges working within the professional entertainment environment. I once again would like to thank Chris Hansen, Corey Carbonara and Jeff Donahoo for their guidance and support in this process.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## Codex for Technopolis Gotham

# TECHNOPOLIS GOTHAM

A transmedia property
By
John Bronaugh Vorderkunz

# CODEX v1.1

[1]

# MISSION

**The content of *TG* is aimed at the upper range of the YA (17+) audience and college readers, with a style and depth that can be appreciated by adults. As such it may not be appropriate for younger audience members.**

The mission of *Technopolis Gotham* is to provide an engaging, entertaining and educational experience in a variety of media, breaking new ground in Young Adult Sci-Fi: set in an alternate past that is in ways more advanced than our own era, this property will challenge teenagers (and even adults) to think deeply about issues affecting the modern world.

The universe of *TG* is conceptually a mash-up of the tropes and clichés of Golden Era sci-fi (1920s-1940s): think of the world in 1991 as it was imagined in 1931. Space travel is not yet commonplace (as far as the general population knows), but skyscraper-sized transport vehicles traverse the sky, while cybernetic and genetically engineered super-heroics are the stuff of fact, not fiction. Unbeknownst to most of the human population, Earth has been invaded and is under the dominion of aliens! Audience members will follow the story of humanity's emancipation, even taking part in the fight for freedom themselves, via interactive media.

*TG* is a transmedia property that stands out in two important ways: 1) it introduces innovative approaches to incorporating audience collaboration; 2) it introduces narrative innovations within and between the 'Big 4' of modern media – videogames, flicks (TV & features), novels, and comics (web & print). This Codex is the transmedia equivalent of the "Story Bible" in television production: it provides the key histories and biographies of the universe to facilitate collaborating creators, as well as presenting the rubric of continuity for the universe to guide them in content creation.

Because *TG* is a transmedia property, while each individual text will have some degree of connection with the larger story, it should also be fully enjoyable if it is the only artifact a given audience member encounters. This means that while plots may be interwoven between artifacts, the major plot of each artifact should be self-sufficient for comprehension and enjoyment.

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# SYNOPSIS

Aliens have invaded the Earth! Specifically, a gigantic cybernetic hive-mind from Mars has sent shape-shifting robots to control the human population on Earth in order to rob resources from the planet. These resources are to be used in an eons-old battle against a giant planet-eating creature lurking in the Oort Cloud, i.e. the outer part of the Solar Sytem.

Just a few years before the alien's arrival on Earth, Nikola Tesla leapfrogged technology ahead by decades with the introduction of an array of marvelous new devices and gadgetry based upon the miraculous element *dynamonium*. After infiltrating powerful organizations globally, the aliens accelerated some of these technologies to benefit their own aims. The world of *TG* in 1931 is thus in many ways more akin to the real 1991, yet with some advances that even we lacked at that point!

**The first major Arc set within the *TG* takes place in 1931: the main plot revolves around two kids, Jules & Rip, who are about to graduate high school. Caught up in a whirlwind of events beyond their control, these two are thrust into the loosely affiliated network of resistance movements fighting the alien presence on Earth. They will eventually lead a missions to Luna, where the aliens have a staging base, and then to Mars in order to defeat the evil Overlord.**

The Overlord's defeat will set the stage for the next primary Arc as human and their newfound allies, organic intelligent Martian life forms, must find a way to defeat the Serpent, the planet devouring monster older than our Solar Sytem!

<u>The first major story Arc will feature three primary plotlines:</u>

- Jules & Rip's journey from school kids in puppy love to battle-scarred leaders with a deep but complicated love for each other
- Nikola Tesla's role in bringing the aliens to Earth
- Shadow Troop's efforts to defeat the aliens

<u>Secondary & Tertiary plots in the first Arc will explore four major topic areas:</u>

- The plight of humans enslaved by the aliens
- The willful blindness of much of the population (comfort by technology)
- The full betrayal of humanity by humans willingly collaborating
- The true nature and purpose of the aliens

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# NARRATIVE DESIGN

## OVERVIEW: *STATUS MUNDI* 1931

[See **Story Notes** section for more detail]

- Technology is advanced to various degrees: 1970s-20??: clunky computers & robots, and giant flying airships boosted by anti-gravity dynamos!
- Majority of the Earth's nations locked into a 2 sided cold war
- Sellout Pirates abduct tens of thousands monthly to serve as slaves for the aliens who have clandestinely conquered Earth!
- Much of the Middle East & Persia are aware of the alien presence
- There is a loosely affiliated network of resistance groups even in the fully 'colonized' areas

The Earth is locked into a cold war between two major factions: the LAST Alliance and People's Commonwealth – these two political structures control 90% of the Earth's habitable landmass and unknown to the majority of humanity, both are secretly controlled by The Overlord, a vast cybernetic intelligence roosting on Mars' Olympus Mons.

Over the last two decades a small portion of the human population has been subverted into directly and knowingly aiding the Overlord. The only 'hot' zones within this cold war are in North Eastern & Central Africa and the much of the former Ottoman Empire – in those regions the general population possesses some level of awareness that non-human agencies are responsible for the global strife.

Within the LAST and the PC, the respective populations believe that the regions listed above are mired in civil strife for which the 'other side' is responsible, when in reality resources from both 'sides' are being employed to defeat the human resistances and prevent the wider spread of their knowledge of alien involvement.

Bands of pirates operate on the land, sea and in the air: around the edges of both factions, within the 'frontier' regions of the Caribbean and Polynesia, and in the areas of strife in Africa and Persia. Many of the pirate groups act directly as slavers and mercenaries for the Overlord, while some are simply buccaneers capitalizing on the general state of perpetual violence and warfare. A clandestine society of Americans known as Shadow Troop is secretly waging war against the aliens and their willing human subjects.

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In terms of society, the 1931 of *TG* is in some ways similar to the real 1931 and yet wildly different. Thanks to Nikola Tesla's discovery and utilization of the incredible element dynamonium, a variety of technologies are already extant that in actual history were not developed for decades or even have yet to materialize on the mass scale: such as jet aircraft, 3D projection, computers, robotics, and cybernetics.

Due to the rapid development of these technologies, much of society is still full adapting to the Industrial revolution – that is, very few private individuals own robots and many people living in rural or economically depressed areas have rarely or never seen such devices. The number of people who have any real understanding of the technologies they employ daily is quite limited: technicians, engineers and research scientists now truly play the role of an almost religious hierarchy, controlling the world in seemingly magical way – as far as the general population is concerned.

Cultural styles, such as taste in dress and music are similar to the real 1931: one difference, electric guitars have been extant for two decades, recording/playback media are much advanced, and musical synthesizers exist, so there are electronically based approaches to making music (although with direct continuity to real period styles).

# THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Development of the first major Arc is split amongst the two primary media of delivery: the streamed content ('TV show') and the videogames; additional development can be added via content hosted on the website, i.e. comics and short stories.

- The story is advanced primarily through a streamed video series & a videogame with episodic 'expansion' content.
- Secondary and Tertiary plotlines can be explored through content hosted on the official website
- The audience may begin contributing Tertiary and Quarternary stories via official channels under official guidelines
- Each story must have a self-contained plot while also touching on plot thread related to the broader narrative.

### Streaming Content

The streamed content will be formatted in the conventions of modern HD television: 1920x1080p60, with 44 and 22 minute play times for 'hour' and 'half hour' slots. It will be hosted on the official website and be available for purchase as digital download or in boutique physical media (Blu-ray) packaging. Licensing to streaming services such as Netflix, Blockbuster, etc. is also a possible monetization pathway.

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The streamed content will advance two of the primary plots: the Jules & Rip plotline and the Tesla plotline. The major topic areas (listed in the Synopsis section) will be explored through secondary and tertiary plotlines that usually act as the 'main' plot for individual episodes. That is, the streamed show will approximate the model of *Hill Street Blues* and *Battlestar Galactica* in terms of plot weaving: each episode will have a main internal plot (some will stretch 2-4 episodes) focusing on one of the major topic areas, with subplots touching one of the three primary plotlines. Occasionally one of the primary plotlines will dominate an episode.

**Character Arcs**

Within the streamed show Jules, Rip, and Tesla will undergo changes over the course of the series:

Jules will grow out of her reflexive distrust of authority, coming to respect the leadership of Silas and Sidd, as she learns to lead and command her own band of warriors. She will be forced to recognize the extent to which her birth into privilege aided her early life and commit herself to truly aiding the underprivileged rather than pretending to be one. Her love for Rip will be both a source of strength and an occasional obstacle to doing the right thing.

Rip will overcome his timidity to become the major public spokesman for the movement when they deem it right to 'go public'. He will nearly succumb to the desire for wealth and success that he's secretly harbored since early childhood in abject poverty. His love for Jules will aid him in times of need, but will also be used against him by the Shifters.

Tesla will go from being an enigmatic figure disliked by the audience for his role in bringing about the alien invasion, to a heroic figure willing to sacrifice his life for the whole of Humanity and his closest friends. He will be forced to fully confront his lingering grief over Esmeralda and his guilt over ignoring the destiny prophesied for him by the Crone.

## Videogames

The videogames will use a PC model of development used in *World of Warcraft* except without a subscription fee: a $60 initial purchase price for the core game, essentially purchasing the client side engine along with the first batch of content, along with future installments of content expansion priced at market value for large DLCs (i.e. the 6.99 to 10.99USD).

The videogame will focus on advancing the third primary plotline: Shadow Troop's efforts to defeat the aliens. Player-Characters can be used for cameos/minor roles within the streamed content: a unique innovative form of audience collaboration.

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## PLOT BREAKDOWN

| | Act I:<br>The World of Tomorrow | Act II:<br>*Ad Astra per Aspera* | Act III:<br>Yesterday's Tomorrow |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stream. Content | Jules & Rip join Shadow Troops and become leaders in the fight!<br><br>Tesla sabotages his prized Wonder Factory to escape captivity! | Jules & Rip are major figures in the assault on the aliens' Luna base!<br><br>J&R, Telsa & Silas lead a small expeditionary team to Mars! | The team gains the cooperation of remaining organic Martians!<br><br>War for Earth is fought on Earth and Mars. Humanity wins! |
| Video Games | Shadow Troop investigates and disrupts the alien's Port Radium operation.<br><br>They learn more about what the aliens want and where they come from. | Shadow Troop reconnoiters Luna base and prepares the way for the assault.<br><br>ST operatives are vital in taking the base, with simultaneous related operations on Earth. | Shadow Troop fights on both fronts: Mars and Earth.<br><br>They make the final push into the Overlord's massive Olympus Mons fortress. |
| Website | Backstory: Wonder Inc., Gotham, and the Franklin Academy. | Backstory: Shadow Troop, Silas Buck, Dr. Gamble, Tesla, and Sidd Johnson. | Backstory: Overlord!!! Teaser for Arc II, The Serpent!!! |

# AUDIENCE INCLUSION

The major 'Value Proposition' of *TG* is the innovative way in which it incorporates the audience, simultaneously enriching their experience and the profitability of the property, resulting in and stable and sustainable structure:

**Audience members will be able to create canonical content, and by doing so can receive in-game rewards, escalating discounts on customized merchandise, the canonical presence of their player character within the universe of *TG*, and royalty fees from content generated by them.**

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# AVENUES FOR CONTRIBUTION

Anyone will be able to view the streamed content, i.e. the 'TV show', which will also be made available in boutique packaging (e.g. sets of Blu-ray or analogous media). Those audience members who wish to contribute material will be required to purchase and play the game.

By purchasing the game and creating a character, they will instantly receive two benefits: the creation of an account which will store their progress (and by that measure open discounts for merchandise & in-game content), and grant access to the web forum. By advanced their character far enough within the games, they are by license agreement gaining the opportunity to create canonical content.

Reaching a further level of achievement, Players may then begin submitting original short stories and artwork to the forum under a rubric published on the website: accepted pieces will be added to the canonical continuity of the *TG* universe, awarding player accounts' "points" that can be spent to deepen merchandise discounts or purchase in-game content. Accepted material that is subsequently packaged for boutique merchandising (stories collected for books, art for t-shirt designs, etc.) will also generate royalty payments to the contributing audience members.

# CHARACTER GENERATION

The template for character generation will allow players to choose basic physical characteristics such as gender, skin tone and body type. They will be required to follow a naming convention (or select from a combinatorial list of names), and will be able to choose from a list of basic personality profiles that will dictate speech patterns for automated responses (i.e. how the character yells for help when hurt).

*TG* has a proprietary ruleset that undergirds the gameplay and character interactions: P.O.W.E.R. Level. This ruleset is analogous to the *AD&D* or *SPECIAL* role-playing systems, combining traditional aspects of many RPG systems. The videogame contains two distinct modes, providing a rich array of experiences and thus catering to widely different interests in gaming –for more info, see also the ***Port Radium GDD***.

By playing for tiered durations of time with a single character (i.e. ranks of 50hrs, 200hrs, and 1000hrs), players gain merchandising rewards and eventually the right to submit potentially royalty generating content. Specific achievements, in addition to hitting duration marks, make player-characters eligible to be featured in within official house content, i.e. the 'TV show' and other media such as comics and novelizations.

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# FORUM & ART RUBRIC

The forum rubric will undoubtedly undergo changes during the actual development process, but will certainly contain the following provisions:

1) **ARTWORK & NARRATIVES MAY NOT CONTAIN OFFENSIVE OR INAPPROPRIATE IMAGERY OR LANGUAGE**
2) **CONTRIBUTIONS MAY NOT CONTRADICT ESTABLISHED CONTINUITY**
3) **CONTRIBUTIONS MAY NOT BY DIRECT OR INDIRECT MEANS BIND FUTURE CONTINUITY OR THE ACTION OF OTHER CHARACTERS**
4) **CONTRIBUTIONS MAY NOT ADD NEW MAJOR CHARACTERS, AND MINOR CHARACTERS ADDED MUST ADHERE TO RULES #1-3**

The narrative design of *TG*, structurally and in thematic richness, allows for a wide variety of directions for audience contribution: they may want to tell the story of rescuing a group of orphans from slavers, defeating a Shifter in the depths of Moleville, etc. The rubric above gives forum moderators, submission reviewers, and the audience a shared standard for evaluating contributions.

# MERCHANDISING & ROYALTIES

Opening an account by creating a canonical character via the game, players receive a basic discount on all *TG* related merchandise, which will be exclusively available through the website or licensed vendors who will also accept the player's discount. The opportunity to purchase customizable merchandise, such as t-shirts, wall prints, and figurines will become available to them as they advance their character.

As they open access to avenues of contribution via the submission forum and subsequently have submissions accepted, players will have the opportunity to receive royalties based on their submissions. If their short story or artwork is included in a collected book, they will receive a share of the profit generated by the item. Likewise, if they submit a verbal phrase or image design that constitutes the whole or part of a t-shirt, wall print, or similar item, they will receive a significant portion of the proceeds from each purchase.

**This approach to inclusion of the audience thus provides an official channel for audience members to engage their creative drive and passion for the property while reaping tangible rewards for their efforts.**

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# STORY NOTES

This section contains the 'meat' of the story: the presentation is hopefully entertaining to a degree, but necessarily dense with informational content. Bullet point lists are provided at the beginning of each section to aid the reader in quick comprehension.

## DISCOVERY OF DYNAMONIUM

- *Dynamonium* is the source of the amazing tech in *TG*
- It is a super-stable super-heavy element, A=262
- Found only in the core of terrestrial planets
- Asteroids from the Belt are the only available source

Nikola Tesla founded Wonder Incorporated in New York City in 1899, initially producing radio-operated (wirelessly controlled & powered!) servomechanisms for mass transit operations and mass production facilities. In November of 1903, he unveiled plans for a large scale wireless power station to be provided to the public at no cost. True to his natural showmanship, when called before Congress to elucidate the plan he also unveiled his discovery of a new element, heretofore unknown and theoretically implausible: the super-heavy dynamonium.

With a stable mass number of 262, dynamonium is a marvelous element with a startling array of properties, all of which are based around the piezoelectric effect. More accurately dynamonium might be called "piezoenergetic", as it produces a variety of particles beyond the electron when excited by mechanical force. Wonder Inc. researchers lead by Tesla have discovered nine basic combinations of frequency and amplitude modulation of mechanical force, each of which produces a specific effect: High, Medium, and Low bands of frequency, as well as High, Medium, and Low bands of amplitude are the constituents of these combinations. These nine basic types of effect can in turn be combined in a variety of oscillating cycles to produce an even wider array of effects. These effects include magnetic and gravitational manipulation, entropic and energetic reactions for near-instantaneous state changes, highly variegated and precisely controllable photonic discharge. As with the piezoelectric effect, dynamonium and alloy configurations can be made morph shape by energetic and entropic bombardment.

Dynamonium can be harnessed effectively by technological apparatus: thus truly gigantic airships are commonplace, as well as hundreds of other technological marvels like the 'Magic Globe', a spherical device that recreates 3D moving images in real-time for communication and entertainment purposes. However, the most astounding breakthroughs have occurred within biological research, where cybernetic implantation

at the cellular level produces superhuman capabilities within the recipient. The incredible expense and extreme expertise required for such procedures has limited them to a miniscule portion of the human population – primarily in government sponsored 'superhero' teams and a very few radical groups, such as Shadow Troop. The only factor limiting dynamonium's world-shaking effects on society is its extreme rareness. The source of dynamonium is a closely guarded national secret: a mine in the Northwest Territories of Canada provides the LAST Alliance's supply, while the large meteorite responsible for the Tunguska event is sole source of the PC's supply. The Overlord is responsible for sending the Tunguska meteorite to Earth, in order to balance the power of the two major factions.

# TESLA & THE MARTIAN INVASION

- Tesla discovered alien signals during experimentation in radio telescopy
- Tesla's brash attempts to communicate attracted notice of the Overlord
- Overlord began observing humanity in 1904 remotely, 1906 by proxy
- By 1910 Overlord's proxies had infiltrated all major human organizations
- Overlord seeks to rob Earth of resources for an ongoing battle elsewhere

In June of 1904, Dr. Tesla discovered signals coming from Mars and Venus while experimenting with his radio telescope in Colorado Springs. After a week of furtive investigation, he succeeded in demonstrating that the signal was of intelligent origin, by determining that it contained a basic set of three discrete 'blips' all of the same frequency and amplitude which varied only in duration: roughly half a second, one second, and two seconds. These bleeps were combined in multitudinous arrays with a variety of repeating patterns. He immediately made a public announcement, which was initially greeted by a wildly vacillating mix of optimism and fear.

Over the next month, speculation about the possibility of Extraterrestrial Intelligent Life, with all of its attendant social, philosophical and theological implications, ran wild in public and government spheres. The inability of Tesla and his team to decode these transmissions, in addition to the general unrest which the discovery caused, led a group of major scientists to declare the signals as natural phenomena, interesting but ultimately inert. This group went so far as to postulate several different potential models for the generation of the signals – despite the fact that no scientifically satisfactory model was actually found, the announcement calmed the state of global anxiety.

Shamed by the public dismissal of his claims, Tesla began broadcasting in the signal code despite having no idea what he was 'saying', intermittently sending patterns encoded in the 'blip' system intended to begin basic communication with the mysterious

originating agency. Unbeknownst to him, the code was maintenance software communication between the Overlord and its various satellites in the Inner Solar System. Having been dormant for nearly three hundred thousand years, the Overlord's surveillance of Earth resumed, and within several hours launches from Mars began. Tesla could not detect significant changes in activity within the signal - receiving no response in the form of directed attempts to establish communication he gave up, dejected and defeated.

Using minimal power, the assets (see below) launched from Mars took two years to arrive, while the Overlord spied upon Earth through satellite 'eyes' from the depths of space. In 1906, 45 Shifters along with a supply of dynamonium landed in Siberia – as far from Tesla's observatory as possible. For the next four years, the Overlord began direct observation of human society: in 1910 the Shifters, their number bolstered to 109, began infiltrating and subverting governments, religions, & socio-political organizations. By 1911 the Overlord effectively controlled, through direct and indirect means, all significant nation-states and mercantile entities. In 1912, it began restructuring the global political and economic landscape to accomplish its goals: the unseen invasion of Earth was complete.

# MARTIANS!

- Planets are living things, producing life analogously to human cells
- Intelligent of varying degrees is thus found on all 'healthy' planets

Within the universe of *TG*, Life as it is known to us is a natural part of the development of all terrestrial planets, because planets themselves are a form of life, and the biosphere which we are a part of is a part of the planet's homeostatic 'metabolic' processes. The process of evolution in this context is thus the adaptation of that system to changing conditions within the Solar System – intelligent species of varying degrees of capability emerge in response to specific needs of the planet, regressing as those needs change. There are two major groups of intelligent life on Mars: the original Martian race of avian humanoids and a cybernetic hive-mind known as The Overlord. There are other intelligent species within the Solar System – The Overlord is aware of such life on Venus and Mercury, but not of humanity on Earth.

# THE SERPENT, THE OVERLORD & MINIONS

- The Serpent is continent-sized predator of planets
- The Overlord was created by Martian life to defeat Serpent, 500M yrs ago
- The Overlord 'lives' atop Olympus Mons; generates its own minions

Nearly 500 million years ago, the Overlord was created from a group of the avian humanoid race of Martians – their personalities were fused within the dynamonium-alloy core of a gigantic quantum computer, which was in turn installed within a massive apparatus giving the object self-mobility and various capabilities for the manipulation of matter. This core 'body' of the Overlord 'lives' in a gigantic fortress atop Mons Olympus – it has not left those confines in 65 million years, and has done so only when an overhaul of the fortress is needed: after each attempted return of The Great Serpent, the World Eater.

The Serpent is a gigantic intergalactic predator several billion years old. It currently rests in a spore-like form within the Oort Cloud – every 60-80 million years reemerging to attempt to eat again. The Serpent eats dynamonium, which is the centermost material in the core of terrestrial planets. Early in our Solar System's history, the Serpent arrived and began feeding on the fifth planet: the Asteroid Belt is in fact the remnants of that world. The planet's intelligent life, realizing that no hope for it remained, engineered an imagination-staggering explosion in an attempt to kill The Serpent as it began feeding on the planet. The Serpent was left severely injured, retreating to the Oort Cloud to heal. Lacking the necessary energy to leave the Solar System, it must remain until it can consume another planet.

Around 500M years ago, the Serpent remerged from a billion-year hibernation of self-repair in the Oort Cloud. Mars had suffered cataclysmic devastation in the explosion event, effectively leaving it 'crippled'. Under these conditions, the avian race emerged under the compulsion to heal Mars. This proved impossible, yet the race persisted. The desire to leave the planet was never present for this race, but in their [quest to heal Mars] they discerned the presence of dynamonium within the Asteroid Belt and conceived of it as the source of a curative measure.

Within a decade of their initial recovery of samples, the Serpent was perceived and identified as it began to slowly approach Mars from the distant orbit of the Oort. Making the connection between the Serpent and the Devastation, they resolved to construct the Overlord, believing such a creation to be the only being capable of defeating it without sacrificing Mars in the way of the fifth planet.

The Overlord, seeking to preserve its germinal species, drove them into the crust of the planet, and immediately began converting every available bit of biomass and material resource on the surface (including the upper portion of the crust) for the 'war effort'. The resulting battle drove the Serpent back into the Oort, but at the cost of leaving Mars' surface in its current state: a nearly total lack of atmosphere and covered in rust-dust (only recently non-radioactive).

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Throughout its history, the Overlord has used a massive variety of remotely controllable, partially autonomous creations (assets) for self-maintenance and for fighting The Serpent at each inevitable return– which has occurred 6 times: the 7th return will be the focus of the second major arc within *TG*. Though the Overlord, in the dynamonium-based quantum computer, has an immense intelligence at the core of its consciousness it operates as a quasi-hive mind vis-a-vis the input and autonomy of its many creations, reacting to their behaviors and needs without actively and continuously directing them at all times.

The Overlord has always employed some form of Shifter within its 'superstructure of extension'. Shifters are largely autonomous (i.e. 'artificially intelligent') and capable of performing well in a variety of applications, but their high resource cost limits the number of operational units to 1000 at any given time. Equipped with a highly advanced thermoplastic and dynamonium-alloyed matrix for their 'surface', they resemble the concept of Hans Moravec's 'bush bot': the 'surface' material branches in the manner of a bush's limbs, but on the nanometer scale, allowing them to take almost any shape and exhibit a variety of properties (extreme durability, conductivity, etc.).

Their interior core houses the 'brain' and communication equipment: when not specifically directed by the Overlord, they are capable of a near-genius level of human intelligence, with memory capable of centuries of storage. The Overlord maintains a satellite network throughout the Inner System – this system relays instructions to and communications from the Shifters. Because of their dynamonium content, damaged or malfunctioning Shifters are always retrieved for recycling into new units. In 1931, there are 340 Shifters dedicated to controlling and manipulating the human population on Earth.

Originally intended to fight off the Serpent and then begin restoring Mars' health, The Overlord does not recognize the latter mission – it is instead focused solely on defeating the Serpent in their cyclical battles. Having exhausted the resources available to it – within preset limits based upon the restoration mission – and having discovered humanity's level of development on Earth, The Overlord now plans to use humans as puppets to exhaust the Earth of certain resources: particularly biomass and petroleum. To that end, vast amounts of petroleum as well as various bacterial and more complex organic life forms are shipped regularly back to Mars. These resources are used, along with minerals and metals collected from the Asteroid Belt, to generate new members of the 'superstructure' extending the Overlord's capabilities.

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# THE FUGITIVE RACE

- Avian-humanoid species spawned by Mars for self-repair
- Creators of the Overlord, who drove them into the Crust for protection
- Stranded in vast network of subterranean caverns, history & tech are lost to them

The avians are still present, and retain their level of intelligence, eons after creating the Overlord. Being driven underground, they have mutated somewhat – now resembling semi-bioluminescent humanoid(-ish) penguins. While a small measure of life still 'beats' within Mars in the form of a hot core and cooling inner mantel, the outer mantle has 'ossified' into a truly gigantic network of crystalline caves, partially filled with the water once present on the planet's surface – heat from the mantle drives it upwards, so that it fills the 'middle half' of the crystalline structure. A surprisingly large variety of life still subsists in this bizarre ecosystem, keeping the system as static as possible, delaying the final stages of death.

The avians, with no access to metals, cannot defeat the Overlord, who despite fending off the Serpent, now acts as a deterrent to the eventual resuscitation of the planet. They are thus trapped in tragic cycle, longing for a destiny they cannot complete. Ignorant of the Overlords' machinations within the Inner System, and having forgotten the history of its creation, they will ally with humanity to disable the Overlord and heal their own planet – unaware that the threat of the Serpent looms nigh.

# THE SPLENDID REVOLUTION

- Agents of the Overlord engineered a massive global revolution
- 'Centralist' parties overtook British Empire, Russia & China, joining all 3
- USA formed opposing political bloc – also engineered by Overlord

The two primary political factions in *TG*'s 20th century Earth are The League of American States & Territories (LAST) and its allies, collectively known as the LAST Alliance, and the People's Commonwealth, both of which formed during the tumultuous period of 1912-1914. The 1848 publication of Carlos Heyduk's *Centralist Manifesto* became the cornerstone of Centralist Parties that sprouted up worldwide in the wake of its publishing. Based on a platform of shared labor and wealth, with centralized authority in a theoretically merit-based appointment to governmental positions - known as The Grand Game because of its ludic structure, applicants scored points based on an arcane criteria and then 'competed' via point comparison - Centralism became over the next six decades a popular ideology, primarily within the working and impoverished classes. It proved ripe for Shifter infiltration.

The formerly staid and stolid British Empire erupted into violence as the first political structure to fall to Centralist forces in December of 1912, when the Knights of Labor, a Centralist workers union with chapters in every country in the Empire, organized a worldwide coup originally intended to be bloodless but which nonetheless resulted in the murder of the Royal Family in Britain and localized BE potentates globally. The entire Empire was thus mired in civil war for the next year and a half as the Centralists fought Loyalists and local anti-Centralist movements. Inspired by their Centralist 'compatriots' in the BE, Russian and Chinese Centralists as revolted.

In 1914 the situation 'stabilized' and the entire former British Empire along with Russia and China coalesced into the People's Commonwealth under the aegis of the new Centralist masters – being unwitting puppets of the Overlord themselves. This overthrow of the British Empire is popularly referred to as the Splendid Revolution by Centralists, and The Great Bloody Mess by almost everyone else. The PC's government is comprised of the Central Planning Bureau, located in London, with subsidiary branches in each region. The former BE, Russia and China each have a single member sitting on the CPB's tripartite Supreme Council.

Concurrently in 1914, with the entire world teetering on the brink of chaos, the United States, Canada, Mexico and the other Central American countries formed the League of American States and Territories for the sake of joint defense against the spread of the Centralist warring. Each nation and territory is largely still autonomous, but all are bound by the decisions of the Executive Board – on which the three major founding countries hold permanent seats, with the rest of the LAST sharing four annually rotating seats. As the largest, most populous, and most formidable military power, the former US held the bulk of political clout within the LAST – a situation which persists into the present of 1931. The LAST, as with the PC, is a design of the Overlord; both factions being aligned against one another to generate a state of perpetual warfare and thus enough confusion and misdirection to hide the Overlord's machinations.

# THE GREAT WAR

- Massive war between PC & LAST results in devastation & destabilization
- War effort occludes accelerated development of technologies of control
- Cold War ensues, giving Overlord perfect 'climate' to operate

In 1915, facing imminent wars of expansion with the PC, a host of countries signed protection treaties with the LAST, forming the LAST Alliance: Japan, the Central and Northern European countries, as well as several nation-states in Africa. South American countries considered themselves sufficiently isolated from Centralist powers – a belief that proved unfounded when insurrectionist groups began fomenting

revolution in Venezuela, Peru and Brazil. Mass shipments of weapons, munitions and vehicles from the PC had covertly been underway for months, and large scale conflict broke out in the region in January of 1916. Simultaneously a "war of liberation" was begun in Europe, as the PC attempted take that region before the Alliance could sufficiently mobilize. An African campaign began in July of 1916. The fighting was brutal, deadly and costly in human life and material damage. Four years of virtual stalemate on all fronts resulted in the Armistice of 1920, setting borders almost identical to those before the War: the PC did expand its initial holdings in Guyana to include Surinam and French Guiana, with the rest of South America becoming official members of the LAST Alliance.

Technological development accelerated on both sides, with advancements in vehicle and weapon design particularly – high speed and high load-capacity aircraft, walking and treaded tanks & artillery, as well as sophisticated submersibles and watercraft were all introduced in quick succession with rapid iteration. The final year of the war saw the introduction of teams of superhuman dynamonium-enhanced soldiers – in very small numbers 9 each for the LAST and the PC. Silas Buck, aka Commander Freedom, was the first publically acknowledged cybernetic superhuman – a lattice of dynamonium-based, nerve tissue sized wires were implanted in his body, giving him super strength, agility, and two more 'magical' abilities: directed projection of a 'psyonic field' for temporarily stunning enemies; and limited close range manipulation of electronic devices. Each of the superhuman subjects represented an experiment of the Overlord's in reconfiguring humanity for its own purposes.

The entire conflict was designed by the Overlord to introduce technologies of control over the human population and general psycho-social destabilization: dozens of millions of veterans and survivors were now so debilitated or disheartened that direct and open subservience to the Overlord's goals was made possible. The Northwest Territories dynamonium site, known as Port Radium, became one of several loci where interplanetary shipment operations began - unknown to the bulk of Earth's population, millions of humans now live as chattel, performing the Overlord's work with a minimum of resource expenditure on its part. Hence starting in 1920 and continuing to 1931 (i.e. "the present"), most of Earth's population has lived in ignorance of the actual situation, comfortably enjoying the seemingly miraculous technologies that are now commonplace.

# WONDER INCORPORATED

- Company started by Tesla, introduced *dynamonium*-based tech
- Transcom: a client-server type of computer terminal
- Magic Globe: 3d real-time sculpting using *dynamonium* dust
- Roboids: clunky and expensive robots

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Wonder Incorporated is the largest individual company in the world, with major facilities in Colorado Springs, CO and Great Neck, NY. Founded in 1899 by Nikola Tesla, Wonder Incorporated has been fully under the control of the Shifters since 1910. Infiltrated in 1909, Tesla was 'remanded to custody' within the monolithic Great Neck installation by a top secret executive order of a Shifter playing the role of US President. Still allowed to experiment within certain avenues and under constant surveillance, Tesla continues to contribute new ideas and technology. Wonder produces a wide variety of products, all of which are sold only in the LAST, despite nearly identical designs popping up in the PC within months of introduction – in technological development the Overlord frequently allows humans to act independently of its machinations, with the Shifters intervening only when its goals are threatened.

Among such important products are various types of data terminals known as transcoms (pronounced tran'skom), all of which connect to the central computer processing stations created by Wonder and operated by governmental agencies. Transcoms are sort of a combination of video sender/ receiver and x286 level computer in functionality – globally, most of the upper middle class and above have home versions, while a large part of the workforce routinely utilizes them for day to day operations.

The Magic Globe is another socially important product: ranging from 2ft to 20 feet in diameter, in 'home' and 'theatre' versions respectively, the Globe is a glass sphere with an extremely fine gauge dynamonium alloy lattice, producing 3D imagery by magnetically manipulating dynamonium-alloy dust. The shapes and their movement are startlingly life-like – a Magic Globe can recreate almost any scene dreamed up by the 'playwrights' who generate the programming. The playwrights all work at Wonder Inc. which broadcasts content to all Globes. The Globe was the brainchild of Tesla, but PC factories have been producing similar devices since the Armistice. Globes are socio-cultural focus point, generating a unity or conformity similar to Television in the 1950s and 60s.

The other culturally important piece of Wonder technology is the roboid. Roboids are vaguely humanoid (varying from more to less between the model types) robots capable of menial tasks and dangerous manual labor. Only the very richest individuals and families own personal roboids, but they are relatively common in a variety of dangerous labor-intensive industries such mining and smelting. Their native 'intelligence' level is very low, although connection to one of the central computing units allows them to perform more complex tasks. Expense of construction and maintenance, along with the issue of their limited autonomy, prevented their use as weapons in the Great War.

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# SHADOW TROOP

- Clandestine Agency originated by Abraham Lincoln
- Charged with protecting the American People and the POTUS
- Driven further underground by aliens, fighting them is now priority one

Discovering machinations beyond his direct ability to deter or impede, in 1863 Abraham Lincoln created by secret order the Office of Special Operations, tasking them with protecting the interests of the American People, primarily by keeping the office of POTUS free of coercion by whatever means necessary. Their great failure in keeping him alive drove them even deeper into the shroud of clandestine operations - taking the name Shadow Troop, this covert organization has maintained a membership since that time dedicated to its original mission.

Over the last seventy years, they have operated globally in an effort to stave off threats to the American public – their second failure in 1881 to prevent Garfield's assassination and their subsequent discovery of the involvement of foreign powers in that act opened their field of operations significantly. The newly elected POTUS has always been approached at midnight on the eve of inauguration and informed of the history and purpose of Shadow Troop. They are run by an Executive Committee of nine members, elected every four years (1 year prior to the presidential election) by the whole organization through open voting, a process that can itself take nearly a year given the necessity for secrecy. The Executive Committee itself then votes a Head of the Committee.

In December of 1909 the organization, already aware of the alien presence on Earth, suffered a third major failure when President Taft was replaced by a Shifter. Forced further underground than ever before, Shadow Troop's primary goal has been to determine the true nature and extent of the alien threat and thusly armed defeat it. They have made several attempts to extract Nikola Tesla alive from the Wonder facility. In 1926, after developing techniques for total interrogation, the Overlord became aware of Shadow Troop's existence, but not the exact membership, and sees the group as the greatest single threat to its operations on Earth. Buck's enhancements have left him immune to various forms of psychical and physiological manipulation by Shifters, so his identity as a 'plant' remains safe.

In order to maintain global flexibility and elusiveness, Shadow Troop controls and operates the quasi-piratical semi-mercenary group known as The Thunderbirds – but not all Thunderbirds are members of Shadow Troop. Praised for their refusal to harm common citizens, the Thunderbirds often skirmish with the various pirate groups

that, especially during the Great War and into the Armistice period, are more or less willing thralls of the Overlord. Such conflict has intensified greatly since 1926.

# THE FRANKLIN ACADEMY

- Founded by Benjamin Franklin to educate America's best and brightest
- Admits based on talent not social connections
- Creates self-study educational material superior to any other textbooks
- Secretly the primary recruiting ground for Shadow Troop

Located on the edge of Central Park in Gotham, NY and created by Benjamin Franklin in 1789, the Franklin Academy is a school dedicated to developing the best and brightest young minds in America as well as providing high-quality learning materials and textbooks to any interested individual. In its 142 years of existence, the Academy has pioneered the education of women, ethnic minorities and immigrants well beyond the contemporary standards of schools around the world. At Franklin's behest, the school has always focused upon a rich and rounded education, requiring all students to learn mathematics and the current state of the sciences and technology in addition to a classical humanistic curriculum.

Beginning before the Industrial Revolution with devices such as the Leibniz Wheel and continuing through the technological sea change accompanying the Great War, the Academy has insisted that all students be capable of performing calculations, within reason, without recourse to technological assistance. This retrograde tendency intensified with the introduction of Wonder's electronic devices, which are banned from the campus – a dictate of school's headmaster, Siddhartha Johnson. Johnson is the fifth in a continuous line of Shadow Troop members taking the role of headmaster, as the Academy serves as one of their primary recruiting grounds – although students are not approached for recruitment until after graduation. Rip Rayburn and Jules Kidd are both students who have been selected for recruitment.

# GOTHAM

- Largest and most technologically advanced city in LAST Alliance
- Badly damaged in Great War, rebuilt by Wonder with fantastic skyline
- Large underground network community known as Moleville

The city of Gotham, formerly New Amsterdam, is one of the most populous and storied cities in the LAST – the population of Gotham in 1931 is 1.5 million, with 10k new residents daily, some temporary and some permanent. Gotham is also the only American city directly affected by the Great War. In early 1916, a group of PC suicide bombers using high-altitude balloons crossed the Atlantic, remaining entirely unnoticed

until the bombs began dropping. All of the PC combatants were KIA, but not until causing widespread destruction in every borough – twenty five thousands Gotham-ites lost their lives in the attack, and hundreds of thousands were injured and displaced from their homes. Queens and Manhattan were the most severely affected with 45% of the buildings in each borough destroyed or rendered uninhabitable.

The city recovered quickly, as nearly a hundred new skyscrapers and dozens of living complexes, designed and built by Wonder, sprung up within the next three years. Thus despite its heavy losses and lingering sense of tragedy, a pugnacious pride emerged as Gotham quickly became the most technologically advanced city on the planet. Day and night it is a city of contrasts, as architecture surviving from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is intermixed with ultramodern buildings.

The city also boasts highly advanced utilities and mass transit systems, with a gigantic and labyrinthine system of underground facilities. Just as with the surface, there is a surviving remnant of old Gotham interlaced with these underground marvels of technology. Known collectively as Moleville, this network of underground ruins has become home to thousands of refugees from the horror of the modern world. 100k people annually descending into the Moleville network as their lives above crumble: lost jobs, bad habits, and mental instability are the frequent culprits – most only survive for 9 months, but there is a core group of 10k or so that are 'permanent' residents. Many of the inhabitants of Moleville, those still relatively sane and healthy, are aware that the 'upper world' is being manipulated by unseen masters – evidenced by the fact slavers routinely conduct raids on the population for shipment to Port Radium and similar sites.

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# CHARACTER BIOS

The following characters are central to the unfolding of the first major arc. In the course of development new characters of equal importance will undoubtedly emerge and be added to the list.

## NIKOLA TESLA

Born July 10, 1856 in the Austrian Empire, Nikola's father was a priest and his mother a highly intelligent but illiterate housewife (two facts of the real Tesla as well). They instilled in him a love of learning and an appreciation of the gold to be wrung by application of the intellect to the endeavors of life. Logical discourses on theology & philosophy with his father and inventive tool crafting with his mother spurred Nikola's love of science and technology: harnessing his understanding of physical processes for the creation of new tools and machines became a lifelong driving passion.

Tesla is gregarious and passionate about the arts and humanities as well as science – befriending, among other noted artists, the famous 'warrior poet' Silas Buck, years before his transformation into Commander Freedom. Tesla is a born showman, loving spectacle and pomp – every presentation he has ever given has contained no small degree of theatrical effect. He is given to cycling between moods of manic energy and dark brooding, although throughout his life the former attitude has predominated. Because of his majority stock control of Wonder, Tesla is the wealthiest man in the World several times over.

As a boy, each summer Nikola would play with Esmeralda, a beautiful gypsy girl whose caravan summered just outside the town where he lived. Every year they grew closer, falling in true love as they entered adolescence. When his family moved in his sixteenth year, they lost contact and his heart was broken. In 1877 while attending college, taking his daily stroll through the city park, he happened upon her caravan as they set up camp in an adjacent copse of woods. Instantly, their love was rekindled and they spent every possible moment together, stealing kisses at the river's shore, ignoring the disapproval of the city folk untrusting of gypsies. When Esmeralda died in an accident, run down by an out of control horse-drawn carriage Nikola was crushed, becoming border-line suicidal.

At his lowest point, he visited her caravan, wishing to say goodbye to friends among them: they corralled him and demanded he speak to the Crone, an ancient old woman who prophesied for the troupe, determining where they should go next. The Crone told Nikola that he would see Esmeralda again, but that to do so he must travel amongst the stars themselves. Already on the verge of a nervous breakdown, desperate

to believe her yet totally incredulous of the possibility of space travel in his own lifetime, he started to storm out of the tent.

Her wizened old hand proved far stronger than it looked, and as he stood trapped in her grasp, she told him the great secret of her clan. She claimed to be four hundred and nineteen years old, a priestess in an unutterably ancient line who had protected a great treasure by remaining ever on the move. Crossing continents and oceans, her line was dedicated solely to preserving its precious secret, which was in turn the source of their longevity and their powers: a crystal shard, of pure dynamonium. Esmeralda was being groomed to become the next priestess in the line, because Nikola had been chosen as the Guardian of the Shard – he would be the first Guardian in eons, tasked with using the Shard to defeat a great evil. The Crone showed Telsa the truth of her story, manipulating the Shard in sophisticated ways via a collection of ancient tools – magnets and tuning forks for producing certain effects such as a restorative healing field responsible for the priestesses' longevity. Before his eyes, Age melted away from the Crone by decades, until she appeared to be a woman of forty, stunning in beauty and very near Esmeralda in appearance. This was too much for the grief-stricken young man, and he swooned into a stupor requiring several days of nursing before he regained complete consciousness and coherence. The Crone bid him travel to America, telling him that he must seek his destiny in the bitter cold of the far north of that land. She warned him that the Great Evil would be drawn to Earth once he had fully assumed the role of Guardian, advising him to build up an army of friends and followers, strong men and women who could aid him in the great battle to come. If he were to succeed, she told him, to him it would be given to travel amongst the Stars, where he would be reunited with the wandering soul of Esmeralda.

This idea of this great quest consumed him for the next five years of his life; he kept the secret of the Shard to himself, telling no one. Time wore on, though, and as he struggled to succeed in Gotham, cheated out of a burgeoning empire by the machinations of Thomas Edison, he slowly began to discount the Crone's story. The obviously marvelous nature of dynamonium, he now believed, had led her and her forebears to invent a religion that was nonetheless a convenient and self-serving fiction. After founding Wonder Inc., Nikola achieved undreamt of success – enough to allow him the luxury of a few frivolously expensive endeavors, such as searching the Northwest Territories for the source of dynamonium in 1902. Although he no longer allowed himself to think of Esmeralda directly, this search for dynamonium became a sort of transference mechanism allowing him to retain a vestige of her memory.

The shock of finding, via a radar device of his own design, a large meteorite of dynamonium cratered in the deeps of Great Bear Lake on July 3rd of 1902 nearly broke

through Tesla's self-imposed denial of destiny. Separated over two decades from the most powerful and painful experiences of his life, he continued to ignore the warnings of the Crone. Armed with this massive new supply of dynamonium, after several months of feverish research and experimentation, Tesla had designed dozens of powerful new devices such as the Magic Globe and the central computer and its attendant transcom terminals.

His willful ignorance of destiny, however, blinded Tesla to potential threat of the mysterious signals discovered in 1904, hence the infiltration of Wonder, and more broadly of Earth, went initially unnoticed by him. The dramatic success of Wonder Inc, as it continued to blossom into far & away the largest and most powerful company in the world, diverted his attention from the impending dangers: until Hunter Gamble showed him the 'corpse' of a Shifter in the Whiteface laboratory in December of 1909, at which time Gamble also disclosed the existence of Shadow Troop to him. Rocked to his core, vivid memory of the Crone's warning came flooding back to him.

Upon his return to the Great Neck facility, he noted that several of his research directors had made uncharacteristic decisions during his absence; as he attempted to flee, realizing that Wonder was already compromised, Shifters posing as US Marshals captured him. He resisted strongly all attempts to physically corral him on the Great Neck grounds: still in good physical condition, he very nearly escaped several times. Since that time he has been allowed contact only with the staff of his castle-like mansion and is under constant surveillance by four US marshals – all of whom are Shifters in reality. Although they have never directly communicated, the Overlord sees Tesla as a prize or pet of sorts: the most intelligent and powerful human alive under total confinement.

## JULIA 'JULES' KIDD

Born in Gotham March 9th 1914, Jules is in her senior year at the Franklin Academy. A tomboy in childhood, Jules is highly athletic and fond of the outdoors. She hails from one of the richest families in Gotham: Jules is the great(x4)-granddaughter of the infamous Captain Kidd. The family maintained considerable wealth despite his ignominious end, and that fortune has grown with each generation - yet they have assiduously guarded their privacy, fading from the public consciousness over the last two centuries. Jules takes this family legacy demanding extreme success and puritanical avoidance of fame quite seriously. Having read her infamous ancestor's private journals and sympathizing with his justifications, it is Jules' secret wish to become an air pirate – rather than a lust for murder and mayhem, disobedience to an oppressive and exploitative authority drives this wish.

She fought against her mother's attempts to raise her as a belle of Gotham's elite society. Her mother, Abigail nee Smith, has always disapproved of the Kidd family's history of accepting the non-traditional roles taken by many of the Kidd women. Jules' aunt Sophie Kidd raced cars professionally and her great-aunt Agnes Kidd led safari hunts, outshooting family friend Teddy Roosevelt on many occasions. Jules has visited much of the LAST on family trips, and she is very familiar with Gotham, including having braved trips to some areas of Moleville. These displays of courage are one of the primary reasons that Shadow Troop wishes to recruit her, along with her high level of intelligence.

Jules wishes to avoid any of the trappings of her station, and poses as someone much lesser means within the Franklin Academy – a tendency aided by her family's jealously guarded privacy and the fact that most Academy students are not from Gotham, nor from socially elite families. Determined to excel in her studies at the Franklin Academy, she is often at odds with the other students in her class – she is both fiercely competitive and poorly responsive to complements. Over her six years of attending the Academy, she has developed a rebellious and deliberately un-feminine demeanor, going to great lengths to downplay her extraordinary beauty. Jules' distaste for wealth, linked with her deep distrust of authority and desire for anonymity have prevented her from achieving higher success in her endeavors and from developing any meaningful relationships with peers. Her father and brother are the only men she truly trusts, although she has a begrudging respect for Sidd Johnson. In the last year she has become attracted to Rip Rayburn from afar, but is too stuck within her own habitus to pursue him.

## RIPLEY 'RIP' RAYBURN

Born August 11th 1914 in Galveston, TX, Rip is a senior at the Franklin Academy. Gifted in mathematics and quick to comprehend concepts in physics, Rip has also won awards for his creative writing, having been published within the prestigious Gotham Review at the age of 16 for a series of interconnected short stories. Rip's true love, however, is mechanics and machinist work – whenever he is set loose in the Academy's workshop with tool & die equipment, he spend hours manufacturing new and unique tools.

Being from a poor family in a rough neighborhood only increased Rip's natural shyness and timidity in confrontation. Being a year younger than his classmates, and a late bloomer physically added to this condition – Rip has friends at the Academy, two with whom he is close, but he is not very social. In his last year at Franklin, he has blossomed physically, gaining considerable strength and agility through his time in the workshop – so much so that he has considered trying out for the hockey team, yet his

years of non-confrontational behavior have thus far proved too ingrained to overcome and he remains merely a spectator. His shyness and late-blooming have prevented him from pursing romantic involvements despite interest from several female classmates, more importantly he has a harbored a secret puppy love for Jules since their first semester in school together, six years ago. Because of his longstanding shyness, Rip has never lived up to his full potential: despite his good looks, quick wit and a natural gift for rhetoric, he is more of a social hermit than a social magnet, and he unilaterally refuses to engage in classroom discussion.

## SILAS BUCK

Born in 1881 on a ranch near the Oxbow Quadrangle of Montana, Silas grew up living a life of adventure: as a fourteen year old cattle rancher protecting the family herds in the wilds of Montana he routinely fought off bears, cougars and wolves with his best friend, a donkey named Oscar, to protect the herds. At fifteen he attained membership in a band of a Kootenai Native Americans. In the midst of a blizzard, he saved several of their members from a starving wolf pack and subsequently let several cows and bulls 'go missing' from the herd to stave off the band's impending starvation during the unprecedentedly harsh Fall and Winter of '96. He fought with the tribe during the next spring and summer and was crucial in helping them defeat a band of marauding ex-US Cavalrymen seeking to take over the area for the sake of gold prospecting. Unwilling to leave the lands he loved, Silas had at age 12 declined to directly attend the Franklin Academy, yet by the age of sixteen he had already completed the entire set of "Curriculum in a Book" volumes published by the Franklin Academy, scoring perfect or nearly perfect on every one of the associated correspondence tests.

At seventeen he wrote an epic poem about his adventures on the range and with the Kootenai, with only slight poetic embellishment, winning national acclaim when it was serially published in the Gotham Review. Hailed as "America's young Warrior-Poet" by Theodore Roosevelt, Silas became a member of Roosevelt's safari entourage where he became acquainted with Teddy's field surgeon Hunter Gamble; two of the last legends of the waning Wild West, they became fast friends. The last US president that was not actually a Shifter, in 1900 Teddy Roosevelt personally inducted both men into Shadow Troop. Over the next 12 years Buck roamed the far and wide, reconnoitering nearly every nation on Earth for unknown threats and potential allies. From 1907-1910, Silas along with several other Shadow Troop agents and their various contacts began documenting large numbers of meteorite landings particularly in remote areas. In February of 1909 Silas captured a damaged Shifter from a crater site in the Andes, transporting it to Hunter Gamble's Whiteface Mountain laboratory.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Buck joined the LAST Expeditionary Force's elite Special Infantry Logistics and Tactics unit, along with fellow Shadow Troop member George Fitzhugh. When Wonder Inc scientists began selecting candidates for cybernetic enhancement, both men were chosen. Fitzhugh's operation was a total failure resulting in his death; struck with grief and no small amount of trepidation, Buck agreed to undergo the procedure, which proved to be successful. Newly commissioned as a full Colonel and given the publicity title 'Commander Freedom', Buck became the face of the Alliance war effort over the final two years of the fighting. He directly faced PC nemesis Nicolai Sandovsky, aka The Guardian, several times. While there is no PC group directly corresponding to Shadow Troop, it was through contact with Sandovsky that Silas learned there were pockets of knowledgeable resistance within the PC, most especially a 'terrorist' group known as the Dada Collective.

Postwar, now more truly than ever "America's Warrior Poet", Silas joined officially joined Wonder Inc as 'artist in residence', ostensibly to write poems and globe-plays – in reality The Overlord does not trust this powerful and uncontrollable 'creation', and thus Silas is under constant surveillance. He suffers from infrequent but devastating bouts of near-catatonia inducing migraine headaches due to the cybernetic implants. Having a limited degree of free mobility and working with Gamble have allowed Silas to continue to operate as an agent of Shadow Troop, and given the chance he is prepared to go on the run if a significant opportunity arises: like a chance to discover who or what controls the Shifters.

## SIDDHARTHA 'SIDD' JOHNSON

Born in 1869 in New Orleans, Sidd's Cajun father was a prominent doctor with a thick drawl and an equal fondness for modern science & folk cures. His Indian mother, tired of hiding her expertise in yogic method and Hindi philosophy in her patriarchal homeland, had journeyed around the world on family wealth, and it was in New Orleans that she found her true love. Together with the young Sidd and two younger daughters, they traveled the world, living in Germany, Peru, and Japan before settling back in New Orleans permanently just prior to Sidd's 16th birthday. Sidd's own interests and mannerisms reflect the variegated tapestry of cultural wisdoms to which he was exposed as a youth. He is multilingual, speaking and writing fluently in English, Hindi, German, Spanish, French, and Japanese, as well as having an expert command of Classical Greek and both Classical & Medieval Latin. From the age of 18 to 21 he completed training as a MD and surgeon at the prestigious University of Gotham Medical School – upon graduating, after being watched for five years, he was inducted into Shadow Troop.

Stationed as a surgical specialist within the gargantuan Gotham General Hospital, Sidd acted as a spymaster for Shadow Troop, reading reports and writing missives, performing so well at his duties that at the age of 31 he was the youngest agent ever elected to the Executive Committee; in 1907 at 38 he became the youngest Head ever – and he has been voted Head continuously since that time. In 1909 he accepted the role of headmaster at the Franklin Academy and continues in that role to the present time of 1931: he is thus able to keep close personal watch on future crops of talent for the Troop. In 1916, after the Firebombing of Gotham, he married fellow Shadow Troop agent Eudora Hertz – they had been in love for a decade, but only after her retirement from active service could they officially consummate their love. Together they live in the Headmaster's Lodge on the Franklin Academy grounds.

# DR. HUNTER GAMBLE

Born in Dodge City, KA in 1872, bastard child of the sheriff and a local nurse, Hunter saw violence and its consequences daily as a boy: by age 7 he was assisting his mother and her employer Dr. Henry Judson. By age 11, during the infamous Dodge City War he was performing minor surgical operations like bullet removal and the cleaning & stitching of major knife wounds. He spent his teens making money treating Cavalrymen during the Indian Wars – unbeknownst to the US Army he also spent much time among various Native American tribes: hence many dishonorable and particularly dastardly soldiers mysteriously failed to recover under his care. On both sides of the conflict he learned to ride, shoot and fight with exceptional skill. Displaying remarkable intelligence despite the lack of a formal education in childhood, he was one of the first graduates of the University of Austin's Medical School in 1894.

His legendary status as a frontier miracle-worker and a skilled marksman & gunslinger attracted the attention of Theodore Roosevelt, who hired him as field surgeon for safaris in 1895, at that time he relocated from Texas to Gotham and became acquainted with Sidd Johnson. Gamble, being fascinated with the idea of a connection between electricity and the impetus of Life, read Tesla's early writings on the subject. So it was with great enthusiasm, upon his induction into Shadow Troop, that he took his first assignment of infiltrating the fledging Wonder Inc. to determine the scope of Tesla's ambitions and capabilities. Tesla and Gamble became close friends quickly, as Gamble realized that as grand as Tesla's ambitions were, his intentions were equally magnanimous. Gamble's stock in Wonder, Inc. made him one of the 25 wealthiest men in America by 1903; he built a mansion on Whiteface Mountain in upstate New York in 1905 – a secret, expansive laboratory complex was also built into the mountain underneath the mansion with help from Shadow Troop agents. In 1906 Hunter officially retired from Wonder Inc. in order to dedicate his time to research projects for

Shadow Troop, although he still visits Gotham from time to time – and up until Tesla's sequestration maintained a close connection.

July 19th 1909, Silas Buck arrived at Whiteface with a lead-lined casket containing the 'corpse' of a Shifter. Gamble and Silas investigated the bizarre creature – unable to determine its specific origin, they immediately alerted Sidd Johnson who briefed the entire organization. After Silas' departure to continue seeking answers in the field, Gamble began studying the Shifter closely, eventually developing a set of polarized lens, wearable in any normal eyeglass frames: a Shifter viewed through such lenses is brightly illuminated within a glowing aura. A similar but much weaker aura is present on any dynamonium-enhanced human.

[30]

# APPENDIX B

Teleplay

BLACK

SILAS (O.S.)
Fate, in the Grand Calculus of Life, is the exponentiation of Chance by Choice.

One by one at first, slowly and faintly stars begin to fade in, just as Silas begins speaking.

SILAS (O.S.)
(Cont.)
We are neither the bound thrall of Chance, nor can we impose a final Certainty. Destiny is the struggle of the elective and the immutable.

Stars continue to fade in as the Milky Way takes shape.

SILAS (O.S.)
(Cont.)
In the face of hopelessness remember always, my sisters and brothers, forever & always there is a choice to be made.

EXT. LONDON - NIGHT

London is blanketed by fog, stars only vaguely visible through the smoggy haze above.

The city is still predominated by ancient and merely old buildings, but dozens of new buildings dominate the landscape.

Theses buildings are utilitarian in the extreme - tall masses of concrete and little glass, no decoration at all.

On the steps of the respectably baroque Armitage Hotel, SIDD JOHNSON is smoking a pipe.

A tall man of 61 years with tan skin and a shock of brilliant white hair, Sidd speaks with an educated but slightly Cajun accent.

A mile away down the same street, an explosion blows the roof off of a factory. Flames gout out of the destruction.

Shouts and screams erupt from the factory.

Eleven concerned citizens poke their heads out through various windows of the petite bourgeoisie townhouses along the street.

(CONTINUED)

Armed security emerges from several doors in the factory.

Two curvy open-wheel sedans pull out of the factory's alley nearest to the hotel.

Car occupants and security personnel fire at each other, as the cars speed away, towards the Armitage.

Sidd takes cover in the hotel's edifice, still watching the action.

Across the street in a darkened window on the second floor of a slate gray townhouse, an AGENT presses a earpiece tight and whispers into a mic concealed in his lapel.

AGENT
No, Sir, he's made no contacts.
Shall I break off to pursue the...

Sidd watches the cars speed away into the distance, chuckling softly at the security men who've given up pursuit and are now huffing and puffing half a mile away.

AGENT
(CONT.)
(angry garbling can be heard
from the earpiece)
...of course, Sir. Remaining on
station, Sir.

More angry garbling through the earpiece, so loud that the Agent winces.

Sidd snuffs his pipe and glances up, directly at the poorly concealed agent, giving him a wink.

Mortified, the agent ducks back into the shadows.

INT. ARMITAGE HOTEL - DAWN

The 23 students on the Franklin Academy senior trip are half-asleep, gathered together for an itinerary speech by Sidd and his two assistants, MR. & MRS. BRIDGE.

A huge cabinet dominates one wall, with a 30" CRT color TV screen displaying a government newscast covering the morning's explosion. The sound is turned down to a murmur.

FRITZ BURGER and RIP RAYBURN sit next to each other. Both are athletic young men: Fritz 6ft tall with brown hair and Rip 5'9" with strawberry blond hair.

SIDD
...and that is why we've made this historic trip, into the heart of 'enemy territory', so to speak.

Fritz prods Rip with his elbow as Sidd continues.

FRITZ
(to Rip)
So that's why, eh Rip? I thought it was to chase Centralist skirts.

Rip disguises a laugh as a cough.

SIDD.
...adding last night's drama, I can assure you P-C security is tight.

FRITZ
When's the butthole of the People's Commonwealth not puckered tight?

SIDD
Mr. Burger, I'd appreciate the employment of your considerable erudition...

Looking at Fritz, Rip laughs.

SIDD
...not your remarkable vulgarity. As I was saying, do not attempt to...

RIP
This part' s for you, Fritzie, no smuggling!

FRITZ
To late for that, kid. I'm already smuggling a set of jewels.

Rip is unable to hide his laughter this time.

SIDD
Mr. Burger, would you like to sha..on second thought, please don't.

Most of the students laugh.

INT. BOYS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Bridge is overseeing the 11 boys as they pack up for the trip home. Fritz and Rip share a table for their baggage.

MR. BRIDGE
Fifteen more minutes, fellas. We've got a bus to catch.

Rip deftly slips something metal from underneath his mattress straightway into his luggage.

FRITZ
Saw that machining tool thing you just stowed. Bad idea, guy.

RIP
Just a piece of metalworking history's all.

Rip holds ups the piece: a metal template with markings for measurement of length and angles. He's grinning widely.

RIP
Bellman #19 Planing Angle, You can't find one in Gotham.

Fritz grabs Rip's shoulder.

FRITZ
Smuggling stuff outta the PC ain't the way to come out of your shell.

Rip knocks Fritz's hand away.

RIP
Dewar used one of these when he made the first vacuum cell. It's even got a logarithm table inscribed on the back.

Fritz laughs.

FRITZ
Holy Smokes you're such a wonk. Who loves math and metalworking?

Rip gives a fake laugh back at him.

RIP
I hear they give great jobs to womanizing clowns with no skills.

FRITZ
Just sayin', try talkin' to a girl for the first time in your life. Beats a PC jail for smuggling.

INT. GIRLS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Bridge looks on as the 12 girls are also packing up.

MARY and JULES share a table to pack their bags. Mary is small and lithe and raven-haired, Jules is a blond, athletic girl of stunning natural beauty, dressed to downplay it.

MRS. BRIDGE
I'm headed to the...what's it here, the loo?

Mrs. Bridge laughs at her own attempt at humor.

MRS. BRIDGE
And I'd suggest you do the same, we'll be departing shortly.

She leaves the room.

Jules sneaks a small book of lithography prints out of her luggage. It tells the story, in explicit illustrations, of two wealthy young lovers persecuted by the unwashed masses.

MARY
Ok, so it's a famous piece of subversive underground art...

Mary moves closer to peruse the provocative imagery.

MARY
...illustrating the bourgousie's plight under the tyranny of the masses in the PC.

Jules flips the page, both girls flinch. Jules is mildly disgusted, Mary is mildly interested.

MARY
Fun. But you're not really going to try 'n smuggle it out, are you?

JULES
Aren't you always telling me to live a little?

(CONTINUED)

MARY
Yeah, like kissing a boy five years late..not getting jailed for fifty.

Jules gives Mary a hyperbolical frown.

MARY
I know I caught you staring at Rip Rayburn again.

JULES
I don't know what you're talking about.

Mary laughs.

MARY
Right. Sure. Jules the Secular Nun. Still, you two wonks'd be a good match.

Jules playfully hits Mary on the shoulder.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - MORNING

The students load their baggage into the undercarriage of a bus idling outside the Armitage.

The flat-front bus is just big enough to hold the group. A steady stream of black-grey smoke fumes from the exhaust. Centered on top a small antenna array slowly revolves.

A roboid driver loops through a pre-drive checklist, plugging a connector-fingertip into receptors beneath each of the dial gauges on the dashboard.

A bored human monitor sits beside the roboid, facing the passengers, absently markingu a checklist with a pencil.

A bleep rouses him - he clicks a lever on the chair, swivels it around and begins typing data from the checklist into a transcom mounted in the dash.

[transcom are client-side networked computer terminals]

Fritz and Rip sit together; Mary and Jules sit together.

The bus pulls away, threading into the bustling traffic.

It passes LIAM, a man wearing glasses with dark lenses, as he walks briskly down the sidewalk to the bus' left.

Liam is of average height and build. His appears nervous on the verge of paranoia with his head turning constantly as his gaze shifts erratically around the crowded street.

The bus stops at an intersection. Rip & Fritz see a 1m Magic Globe playing a scene of war in a street-side pub's window.

The pub is large but mostly empty, hunting lodge decor populating its walls.

Magic globes are spherical devices ranging 1/3m for personal units to 10m for theaters. They conjure up 3D images, mobile within the sphere, recreating anything in verisimilitude.

A clunky robot tending bar is being harangued by a drunken patron in a tweed suit and straw hat who is demanding another drink.

The human proprietor is looking on in bemusement.

In the globe, dastardly cliches of LAST soldiers are being routed by honorable PC forces.

Both sides wear uniforms that are a mashup of medieval armor and WWI equipment. The LAST soldier's wield G6-style assualt rifles, the P-C soldiers have bullpup style guns.

Five patrons nurse their beers while staring fixedly into the globe.

They cheer as the P-C soldiers gain the upper hand, the LAST soldiers holding up their hands in surrender.

FRITZ
Riiight. If that's how it'd gone down things would be just like this, eh?

In the globe, Commander Freedom rushes into the scene. He brutally turns the battle's tide, fighting without honor.

The Commander lets loose with shimmering waves of force from his hands, disabling a P-C walking tank.

He howls and glares at P-C soliders, a shimmering beam emanating from his forehead incapacitating.

He callously fires on their limp bodies.

The pub goers yell profanities and gesture curses at the demonish Commander Freedom.

Fritz laughs.

FRITZ
Give 'em Hell, Commander Freedom!

Rip nudges Fritz with his elbow.

RIP
Think they'd storm the bus if they knew we'll hear a speech by their villain tomorrow night?

Liam catches up with the bus, heading left at the intersection as the bus pulls away.

He flits down an alley behind the pub, scampering up a rickety wooden staircase.

INT. ATTIC WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

There are six men and two women working in a dingy attic workshop, loading weapons and packaging explosives. A man and woman test the explosives' circuitry on an oscillscope.

Th disparate clothing styles of the group portray the entire social spectrum from working poor to effete elite.

Two of the men are dressed as common laborers with hempen shirts, pants and belts of drab color. Across their backs, printed in giant block letters are the words AIRFIELD CREW.

Two other men and one of the women are dressed as middle class travelers, wearing wool suits and a linen dress.

Silhouetted as he steps into the darkened room, Liam gives a furtive nod to the Dadas gathered inside.

LIAM
Right then. Quickly now, we've got an airship to catch.

DEIRDRE, a beautiful woman in the garb of a flapper-ish socialite moves to Liam and begins rubbing his shoulders. He flinches at her first touch.

DEIRDRE
Oh Liam, my deary. You've worked so hard and so long for this. Don't go to pieces now.

She gives him a coy smile. He gives her a crooked smile in return.

LIAM
Long way from the mines we are now, eh?

DEIRDRE
You're still trapped down in the dark though, eh?

Liam gives her a weak smile as he lurches over to a workbench where a bottle of whiskey sits.

With a shaky hand he grabs the bottle and takes a deep swig. He gives another crooked smile and taps on his tinted glasses.

LIAM
No, my lady. Now I see the Light.

EXT. CROMWELL AIRPORT - DAY

The Cromwell airport is colossal: a few antique buildings dot it, but most structures are cold utilitarian masses of concrete like the other government buildings in London.

It is heavily fortified against unwanted entry and exit. Guards with rifles man numerous checkpoints wreathed in barbwire.

Thirty different aircraft are landing and taking off, ranging from a dozen single-seaters to three of massive intercontinental airships that are as large as skycrapers laying lengthwise.

The aircraft are tracked by several large gun emplacements with .50 machine guns and 40mm cannons.

The bus passes through the final checkpoint to enter the airport proper.

The bus passes a public billboard-sized video screen set into one of the buildings. It displays warning messages about the Dada Collective.

The 10ft screen shows in quick succession: mugshots, pics of the aftermath of last night's explosion, & possible targets.

INT. CROMWELL AIRPORT - DAY

The Franklin Academy group is standing in line waiting at a security checkpoint, mixed with other passengers.

The walls are covered in signage warning against smuggled goods and fraudulent IDs - severe penalties are insinuated by stick-figure illustrations.

There are six lines of passengers branching from a single point where a roboid scans their passports and directs them into one of the lines.

6 human luggage checkers man a massive desk against the far wall.

Each person passing insepction is waved on, passing through a large exit doorway to the right of the desk.

A 50" CRT video screen sits in the center of the wall behind the luggage checkers, showing a loop of Centralist propaganda: a mix of realistic scenes and abstract imagery.

Liam and the eight Dadas are in the mix.

Liam, still wearing the dark glasses, is doing a poor job of concealing his nervousness.

Standing in the next line over, Deirdre tries to calm him with a flirtatious smile.

She then turns to RODGER, a businessman with a leather briefcase, who is standing behind her.

Behind Rodger stands another Dada, holding a briefcase nearly identical to Rodger's.

DEIRDRE
Damien? Oh, excuse me I thought I knew you.

She brushes his arm with her hand, and he beams a smile.

ROGER
No trouble, mam. None at all. Name's Roger. Roger Sullivan, pleased to meet you.

She drops her purse, the contents spilling onto the floor.

Rodger stoops to help her pick up the various items strewn about.

(CONTINUED)

The Dada behind Rodger quickly switches briefcases while his attention is occupied.

DEIRDRE
Oh you are too kind, Roger.

She leans forward and gives him a kiss on the cheek, squeezing his right arm with one hand, deftly slipping a note into his left pocket with the other.

Rip, Deirdre, Roger, and Jules are amoung the next group of six called up to the checking stations.

Rip's CHECKER is the first to notice something amiss.

CHECKER #1
What is this?

He holds up the tool stowed in Rip's bag.

RIP
I...uh...I.

CHECKER #1
Please remand yourself to the temporary detainment zone.

He points to a rectangle of flooring emblazoned with yellow stripes.

Rip is trembling in fear as he takes position in the zone.

Sidd walks over, adopting a mien of austere authority.

SIDD
What seems to be the problem here?

CHECKER#1
Potential contraband in this young man's baggage.

Sidd shoots Rip a stern look but softens at seeing the young man's fear.

Jules' Checker is the next to find a problem, holding up the book of lithographs with a look of disgust. He points to the detainment zone.

CHECKER#2
Please join your compatriot.

Jules is nervous, but hides it with a smirk to Rip.

Sidd throws up his hands in mock resignation.

SIDD
I assure you, Sirs, these two may be idiots, but they are harmless.

JULES
(to Rip)
I see we're the only two with any guts around here.

She winks at him, and Rip blushes, loosening up briefly.

RIP
I...I didn't think they'd really care about...

JULES
Relax. Happened to me in Mumbai,too.

RIP
You've been to Mumbai?

JULES
My mother insists on taking evangelical trips to the P-C, but suspiciously only to the cities with any decent shopping.

Rip smiles.

JULES
Even going between L-A-S-T countries you've gotta go through customs. This can't be your first international trip, right?

Rip give small embarrassed head shake.

RIP
Hadn't ever left Galveston 'til I got to the Franklin Academy.

Two armed guards leave their posts at the doorway and begin looking over the contraband items with stern faces.

Rip tenses back up.

JULES
Seriously, your parents never took you anywhere? They stink.

Rip glares at her.

RIP
Only trips my Dad ever went on were to the liquor shop, and the only place my mom traveled to was the hospital. We ain't all rich.

JULES
Look, I'm sorry, Ok? I just meant that every kid should get to...

Alarms sound and the guards draw their weapons.

Jules and Rip clutch each other in a fear-struck embrace.

Sidd moves towards them on protective instinct.

The guards, however, are aiming at Roger.

ROGER
What is going on here?

Roger's CHECKER#3 is nervous, trembling as he stares into the suitcase, his hand still on the alarm button.

CHECKER#3
Guns. He's got several guns in his bag!

Roger is now terrified. The guards bear down on him.

ROGER
See here now, that's not my bag! Mine's got blue lining not red!

The guards tackle him to the ground. They check him for more weapons and find the note in his pocket.

GUARD
He's got some kind of terrorist suicide note! Bloody Dada Collectivist we got here!

ROGER
No! I don't know what's going on here! It was that woman! Her!

He's nodding frantically towards Deirdre. Her Checker has coolly continued checking the other suitcase during the commotion.

CHECKER#4
(to the guards)
'ey boys! Sure enough same bag, blue lining...

With a dry smile he holds up male undergarments.

CHECKER#4
...and a man's knickers. Get 'er!

One guard continues restraining Roger while the other rushes Dierdre. She flees through the entryway.

Liam convulsively lurches after Deirdre, but another Dada clutches his wrist and gives him a brief but intense look of warning.

Checker#1 waves Jules and Rip towards the boarding side of the security checkpoint as he tosses their contraband in the garbage.

CHECKER#1
Move on you bloody fools, we've got real problems to deal with.

Sidd and the two youths go slack with relief.

EXT. GS#9 - DAY

The Global Skyways #9 is a gigantic transatlantic passenger airship of roughly cylindrical shape, 500ft long, 60ft tall, and 90ft across. It's spotted with safety & warning lights.

There are 2 massive exterior pusher engines at the rear and 8 lift units 25ft in diameter, 4 to each side spaced evenly along the length. The ship is resting on 10 huge skids.

"GS#9" is painted in 20ft letters on each side. There are four passenger-accessible decks, each with dozens of windows and portholes along the length of the ship.

The FA group is boarding from a docking bridge in the aft section, there are four other bridges.

A roboid clumsily waives two LAST flags at the entrance to the ship as a sign that they have officially reentered LAST sovereignty.

37 workers are required to release the tethered docks and finalize exterior preparations for takeoff.

A loud whining SQUEAL emanates from the anti-gravity lift dynamos as they power up.

The gyroscopic mechanisms of the lift dynamos spin.

In a cloud of dust, the huge ship ascends several hundred feet vertically.

It engages the pusher engines while still climbing slowly.

INT. GS#9 - DAY

A Titan Class airship, Global Skyways #9 is a floating city. Offices, shops and restaurants are stationed betwixt the various cabin compartments for up to 1100 passengers & crew.

The decor is much like that of the original Queen Mary and similar cruise ships, with an Art Deco elegance. On this flight the ship is near capacity, bustling with activity.

Most of the service staff is human, but roboids are stationed throughout the food service and barroom settings, as well as acting as external maintenance units.

In a rotunda central to their cabin suites, Sidd is giving the FA students a rundown of the itinerary for the transatlantic trip.

SIDD
...and I trust we won't have anymore poor decisions.

He casts a stern but not unkind look from Rip to Jules.

SIDD
So you're free to roam until the illustrious Silas Buck's speech...

Fritz nudges Rip.

SIDD
...tomorrow evening. But before you all scamper off, I'd like to say...

FRITZ
(to Rip)
Great steaming turds, man! For half a second I thought you were dead and gone.

RIP
So did I.

SIDD
...and when such a historic occasion as this presents itself...

FRITZ
At least you got to frisk your dream girl, eh?

(CONTINUED)

Rip looks over at Jules. Catching her looking back, he quickly turns back to Fritz.

RIP
Whadda mean, dream girl?

FRITZ
Oh come off it man. I've seen you pining since we were frosh.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Fritz and Rip make peruse the menus of a food court. Several server roboids assist the food service staff.

FRITZ
I'm mean, I've never seen you stare like that at someone else.

RIP
Drop it already, Fritz.

Fritz shrugs his shoulders. He nods at the nearest roboid.

FRITZ
Can't believe there were so few rowbies in the P-C. That place was piss poor.

RIP
Not everyone can be a rich elitist butthole.

FRITZ
Awww, did I offend the Pauper Prince of Geniuses? Come off that already.

RIP
Aww, did the King of Jerks not like reminded that he's an ass?

FRITZ
Reminded? That's my most prized personality trait!

The two boys pick a short order grill station.

Jules and Mary enter the food court.

FRITZ
Don't look now but your dream girl is here.

Rip spins around, almost knocking into Jules.

MARY
Easy there, Rip. She's not a PC thug here to arrest you for smuggling.

Fritz winks at Mary.

MARY
Hey Fritzie. Wait, I'm still mad at you.

She feigns anger and storms off.

FRITZ
(sarcastically)
Oh Mary my dearest, be not so cruel.

He heads off after her, leaving Jules and Rip alone.

JULES
I didn't know you were an international thief.

RIP
Well, I am mysterious figure. Dashing through the night, things like that. Superhero stuff.

JULES
I bet.

Rip looks over his shoulder, searching for Fritz.

JULES
I'm sure he and Mary have snuck off for a quick snog.

Rip raises his eyebrows and Jules laughs. She grabs him by the hand.

JULES
Come on, international man of mystery, let's go see what movies they've got.

PROJECTION THEATER

Jules and Rip are among the only four patrons in the small projection theater. On screen a B-movie type horror movie is playing.

As the monster attacks the damsel on screen, Jules laughs.

JULES
That's why I like projector theaters more than Sphereums...Spherea?

RIP
Spherea.

JULES
You get more schlocky stuff 'cause these flats are cheaper to produce than Globe shows.

The monster chases the damsel. Jules laughs.

JULES
See what I mean. Plus here you can talk at the screen and no one cares.

PATRON
I care. Keep it down!

Jules gives the speaker a quick annoyed stare.

JULES
(quieter)
All that patriotic and high minded junk they show in the Spherea, ugh!

Liam, still in dark glasses, is the other patron besides the speaker. After checking a pocket watch he gets up and leaves.

CORRIDORS

Liam falls into stride beside FRANK, another Dada.

The corridor leading to the projection theater is ornately appointed with cherubim and figures of Orpheus.

They pass through a junction, and head down a more drably decorated corridor, dodging a roboid carrying four boxes.

At the end of that hall is door marked 'MAINTENANCE'. Liam picks the lock; a heavy thrum of machinery and wind noise greets them.

They pass into a maintenance corridor that runs along the hull. Bare piping and wiring of all sizes are the only decoration here.

They continue on in fits and starts, having to pause several times in hiding as roboids pass by, going about maintenance routines.

PROJECTION THEATER

The credits are rolling, Jules and Rip are now alone in the theater.

JULES
So, are you a fan of flats now or what?

RIP
Flats were the only thing I could afford to see as a kid. Afford. Easier to sneak into, I mean.

JULES
I'm sorry. Did you like this one?

Rip laughs.

RIP
Are you kidding? An escaped science experiment swamp monster defeats a platoon of commandos and the damsel in distress turns out to be an international assassin who kills it with a bazooka and oil drums. What is not to love.

She grabs his face with both hands and plants a kiss on him.

For the first instant Rip is too surprised to move - the kiss quickly becomes deep and passionate.

The house lights come up as an elderly attendant shuffles in with broom and dust pan.

Jules pops up and grabs Rip by the hand.

JULES
Come on. I know where we won't be interrupted.

INT. MAINTENANCE AREA, GS#9 - NIGHT

Two other Dadas are awaiting Liam and Frank in a storage area, preparing the explosive devices.

They stow guns and knives into into four suitcases.

(CONTINUED)

Frank and another Dada change into maintenance worker uniforms with attached safety harnesses and tool belts.

FRANK
Where are you boys from then, eh?

LIAM
You know the rules, no pasts.

FRANK
Well seein' as how we aren't like to make it back from this one I don't reckon I see how that rule matters.

Liam snorts a brusque laugh.

LIAM
Tin mines of Wales, meself. You?

FRANK
Bollocks, I thought you were old enough to 'ave fought in the War. Guess it's just all that dust and dank, eh?

LIAM
Something like that...

A metallic clang interrupts Liam, and the sounds of conversation can be heard from outside. Liam draws a gun.

FRANK
Easy now fella.

They wait for a few moments as the talking grows quieter.

FRANK
Me, I'm from Penzance. Regular old pirate, I am.

The other two Dadas laugh.

LIAM
You part of that business back in '22?

Frank's visage grows stern.

FRANK
Me brother was. He...he died a hero, he did.

LIAM
Sorry my friend. We've all lost something, eh? 'S why where all here, eh?

FRANK
Aye.

INT. EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE AIRLOCK, GS#9 - (CONTINUOUS)

Warning signs and lights surround the airlock door.

[Signs:"AIRLOCK DOORS CANNOT BE OPERATED WITHOUT WATCH OFFICER'S PERMISSION: DO NOT ATTEMPT-ALARM WILL SOUND" and "ATTACH SAFETY HARNESS TO RAIL BEFORE OPERATING AIRLOCK" are in large red block letters]

Liam works on a junction box with several tools while the non-uniformed Dada keeps a lookout.

Liam looks over his shoulder and Frank and the other suited-up Dada.

LIAM
When I clear you to open the inner door ya've 10 seconds to close it...

He turns back and fiddles with a tool in the box, increasing his volume.

LIAM
...open the outer door and get that closed 'fore the alarm circuit is functional again.

Liam grabs another tool from the pouch stowed inside his coat, using it in conjunction with tool already in use.

LIAM
When I hear ya knock on the outer door I'll crack the circuit again and wave ya in.

A few SPARKS fly out of the box as Liam CURSES under his breath.

LIAM
Move now boys!

Frank and the other uniformed Dada nod their heads, opening the airlock.

Liam is counting time on his pocket watch.

They step inside and close the door behind them. The other man connects his safety line, but Frank's won't latch.

Frank HAMMERS the safety latch on the rail frantically.

Liam shifts his gaze furiously between the pocket watch and the airlock porthole.

The second hand ticks.

The latch catches, Frank SPINS around releasing the outer lock.

Fierce winds buffet them, pulling the two men towards the open sky, only their safety lines keep them from blowing away.

EXT. GS#9 EXTERNAL SERVICE WALKWAY - (CONTINUOUS)

Frank and the other Dada are now outside, just aft of the 3rd lift dynamo.

Everything is either in near total darkness or the blinding brilliance of safety lights.

Fighting the wind they move down the walkway to the nearest lift dynamo.

Several roboids are performing maintenance duties and checks externally - the men avoid them carefully.

Arriving at the dynamo, Frank removes an explosive device from the other man's pack.

Both using tools from the belts, they secure the bomb to the dynamo.

INT. GS#9 - (CONTINUOUS)

Liam and the other Dada hear two MAINTENANCE men coming down the corridor.

MAINTENANCE#1
Hell if I know. All the trouble back in London got the Chief on edge I guess.

The two Dadas quickly conceal themselves as best they can.

MAINTENANCE#2
So we gotta check a voltage spike on break? We need a union, I tell ya!

(CONTINUED)

#1 grunts a chuckle as they arrive at the airlock's junction box.

MAINTENANCE#1
That sounds like Centralist talk to me...Hmmm. Box looks funny.

Liam tenses upon hearing this. He signals to the other Dada to prepare for violence if necessary.

EXT. GS#9 EXTERNAL SERVICE WALKWAY -(CONTINUOUS)

Frank and the other Dada are fighting the wind as they traverse the walkway towards the next lift dynamo towards the stern.

A tool blows loose from Franks belt, plummeting to the clouds far below.

They plant the bomb from Frank's pack and begin the return trip to the airlock.

INT. GS#9 - (CONTINUOUS)

#1 has a voltimeter out and is testing the junction box. #2 is peering over his shoulder.

MAINTENANCE#2
Looks like a bad piece 'a wiring.

EXT. GS#9 EXTERNAL SERVICE WALKWAY - (CONTINUOUS)

Frank positions himself in front of the porthole. Unable to see Liam, he pulls a wrench out of the tool belt attached to the maintenance uniform.

INT. GS#9 - (CONTINUOUS)

#1 is replacing the voltmeter in his work belt, turning to face #2.

MAINTENANCE#1
Functional for now. Write it up and the next shift can replace it.

With his back to Liam and the airlock, #1 drops a tool from his belt.

It rolls with a CLANG into the sub-flooring. #2 stoops to pick it up.

Liam pokes up and sees Frank, illuminated by a safety light, preparing to bang on the airlock.

(CONTINUED)

MAINTENANCE#2
Thing rolled far enough. Why again, am I searching for it?

Maintenance#1 chuckles and taps his ID badge.

MAINTENANCE#1
Seniority, pal.

MAINTENANCE#2
Oh. I thought it was because you're too fat to do it yourself.

Liam ducks out of cover long enough to wave frantically at Frank, signaling "NO".

EXT. GS#9 EXTERNAL SERVICE WALKWAY (CONTINUOUS)

Frank, just about to bang the wrench on airlock, sees Liam and ducks out of sight.

INT. GS#9 (CONTINUOUS)

#2 gets up just as Liam slides back into cover, looking in Liam's direction. He gets up and takes a few steps in that direction.

MAINTENANCE#2
Here's your precious tool. What the...

#1 gives #2 a mildly annoyed look.

#2 looks hard in Liam's direction, who is completely behind cover now.

Also in cover nearby, the other Dada draws a knife as #2 takes two more steps, still looking hard.

MAINTENANCE#1
Seeing ghosts? Break's almost over. So if you'd kindly?

#2 shrugs his shoulders and turns around.

MAINTENANCE#2
You're the boss.

The two maintenance workers head back the way they came.

Liam sinks to the floor. He looks at his hand, trembling as it clutches a dagger.

HALLWAYS

The Dadas traverse the interior maintenance corridors, carrying the suitcases.

They split up, with Liam and Frank heading in one direction, the other two men in a different direction.

As Liam and Frank round a corner, Rip and Jules emerge in a near spill from a maintenance closet.

Jules lips purse in amused surprise; Rip blanches in embarrassment, nervously gulping.

There is a tense second - both parties quickly decide it is in their best interests to ignore one another.

Liam and Frank move on quickly without a word.

Jules giggles as they turn out of sight.

JULES
Close one, eh?

RIP
Oh my god how do you do that?

JULES
What?

RIP
Stay so calm about everything. I almost had a heart attack just now.

JULES
Don't ya know I'm Captain Kidd's most prized descendant? Family rules: One, never go anywhere you can't get back out of and Two, always know the layout. Rule number 2 determines the application of rule number 1, in my experience.

RIP
What if you don't know the layout?

Jules flashes a small set of lockpick tools and gives Rip a mischievous wink.

RIP
So that's how you got that door open. That's why you had me playing look out.

(CONTINUED)

JULES
And you did such a good job for a fledging criminal.

She plants a quick kiss on him.

RIP
You are crazy. We'd better get back, we've pushed our luck enough.

Jules playfully runs her finger down his cheek.

JULES
Oh that's my brave spy...you're probably right though.

She sashays away from him, swinging her hips as she looks at him over her shoulder with a playful smirk.

JULES
Well come on, we wouldn't want to get in trouble would we?

INT. GS#9 - MORNING

Sunlight streams into the cabin suites' rotunda. The students are all half asleep.

MR. BRIDGE
I trust you all had a good night's sleep?

Several students mumble responses. Jules beams at Rip, who blushes.

Most of the kids are whispering to each other as Mr. Bridge obliviously trudges on.

Fritz pinches Rip on his torso. Rip winces. Fritz grins.

He glares at Fritz, who is pretending to wipe tears from his eyes.

FRITZ
(to Rip)
His first go at kissyface. My little boy's almost a man.

RIP
What'd you mean almost?

Fritz pats Rip on the back condescendingly.

FRITZ
I'm sure you'll find out soon enough.

MR. BRIDGE
...Headmaster Johnson will rejoin our group before we...

Mary is watching the exchange between Fritz and Rip. She catches Jules staring at Rip.

MARY
Ok, I know you're totally new at this, but pull it together sister.

JULES
What?

MARY
Oh come on girl. This is a crucial time.

Jules narrows her eyebrows in feigned distrust at Mary.

JULES
What are you talking about?

MARY
You have to ignore him the rest of today. Act like you're mad.

JULES
And why would I do that?

Mary gives an exaggerated eye roll.

MARY
Wow. You really are new at this, huh? So he'll be even more desperate for you, duh! Gee Whiz.

JULES
Wow. You really are crazy aren't you?

MARY
Ok that's it. For your own good I'm not leaving your side today.

Jules pinches Mary on the leg. Mary sneers at her.

MARY
No tongue wrestling for you missy.
That's final.

INT. FOOD COURT, GS#9 - DAY

Maintenance#1 is eating lunch in a food court. Liam, still wearing the shades, sits down at his table.

MAINTENANCE#1
Last night was a bit too close,
Liam.

LIAM
Agreed. Is the speech still on
schedule?

MAINTENANCE#1
Yessir. Globe plays at seven, Mr.
Buck's speech follows at nine.

Liam shakes his head softly, giving an inscrutable smile.

LIAM
Commander Freedom...quite likely
dead tonight.

Maintenance#1 gives an equally enigmatic grin.

MAINTENANCE#1
Only if the official plan goes off.

LIAM
Well then, we sha...

Liam starts to speak, but cuts himself off as the elderly theater attendant enters the food court.

Liam stands quickly and exits the area as rapidly as nonchalance allows.

The attendant looks in Liam's direction and then at Maintenance#1.

The attendant shuffles behind a large standing advertisement that blocks him from view for half a second.

The maintenance CREW CHIEF emerges from behind the ad.

Maintenance#1 is finishing his sandwich, and is startled by the chief who walks up behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CREW CHIEF
Who was your friend there, eh?

Maintenance#1 coolly shrugs his shoulders.

MAINTENANCE#1
Heck if I know. Some bum trying to wrangle a quarter off me.

The chief gives a cold smile, panning his gaze from #1 to the table and back.

CREW CHIEF
I see you're all done. Walk with me.

Maintenance#1 tries to hide his trepidation, being mostly successful as he rises from the table.

MAINTENANCE#1
You're the boss, Chief.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE, GS#9 - DAY

The Security office on the #9 is a large room monitors displaying surveillance camera views. Four operators are stationed at transcom equipment.

Transcoms are data terminals with video send/receive capability - they have QWERTY keyboards and 480x640i CRT screens.

There is a set of six holding cells adjacent to the main room, two are currently occupied in 'drunk tank' capacity.

Head of Security TATUM is overseeing the operations. Transcom OPERATOR#1 recieves a warning message on his unit.

OPERATOR
Mr. Tatum, sir, official Interpol report from London.

Tatum walks over to the operator and leans to view the on-screen report.

TRANSCOM SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

Low res images of rioting and destruction flicker across the screen. Several mugshots quickly pass across as well.

TATUM (O.S.)
Of course. Crazy Brits.

The words 'HIGH PRIORITY' and 'SEC. ROBOID USE AUTH.' flash across the screen.

SECURITY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tatum pulls upright assuming an authoritative stance.

TATUM
Ok, boys. We already know that tonight's Sphereum presentation is big.

Two of the operators glance at each other, one rolling his eyes.

Tatum catches this.

TATUM
Dammit! There will be no incident with Commander freakin Freedom aboard my ship!

The operators slink into their chairs.

TATUM
We have been authorized to activate our security roboids.

OPERATOR#2 coughs. Tatum glares around the room.

TATUM
That's right, it's serious damn business. Everyone shapes up now!

Tatum storms out of the room.

OPERATOR#2
Jeezuz.

OPERATOR#1
He's been like that since we took off. Must be that hot little new thing Officer Sikes.

OPERATOR#2
She doesn't outrank him but he sure acts like she does.

OPERATOR#1
Look at him. Bet he hasn't gotten to talk to a dame like that in decades.

Operator#2 gives a quick laugh but then turns serious.

OPERATOR#2
What did he say about security roboids? I thought it was a felony to operate roboids with lethal deterrent capabilities?

OPERATOR#1
There's some loophole about national security. Must be pretty damn serious, whatever's going on.

INT. GS#9 - TWILIGHT

The Franklin Academy contingent is all dressed in stylish suits and fine dresses.

The attendees of the globeplay viewing are all members of society's elite. A sommelier makes the rounds, offering wine ported by two roboids trailing him.

A few pretty girls in flapper dresses catch the eye of stodgy older men who in turn earn the reprimand of their conservatively dressed wives.

Standing in front of a large window, the Franklin students are silhouetted by the setting sun's glow cast on the clouds, as they gather in a semi-circle around Sidd.

Mr. Bridge stands to one side with the boys, Mrs. Bridge on the other side with the girls.

Rip beams at Jules. She winks at him.

Mary pinches her.

MARY
Stay strong girl. You're almost there.

Jules glowers at her.

JULES
I hate you.

MARY
Oh you don't mean that. Do you?

Sidd coughs loudly into his hand.

SIDD
Ahem. Students if I might have your attention. You too Mary.

Mary gives Sidd a wide smile.

SIDD
Thank you. As Mr. and Mrs. Bridge hand out your tickets...

Mr. Bridge nods, patting his pocket. Feeling something amiss he looks panicked.

Mrs. Bridge smiles, producing both sets of tickets.

SIDD
...I hope you all appreciate the magnitude of the opporunity you have tonight...

Fritz leans to whisper to Rip.

FRITZ
Mary's forced the old hard-to-get strategy on Jules. But clearly she's hating it.

RIP
Oh really?

FRITZ
You are in, my friend. Somehow your dream girl finds ya irresistible.

Rip gives Fritz a facetious grin.

FRITZ
Hey I'm serious. Just don't blow it. I'm not sure this will ever happen again.

Rip playfully slugs Fritz in the shoulder.

INT. SPHEREUM, GS#9 - NIGHT

The Sphereum's globe is 10m in diameter, with eleven tiers of seating surrounding 2/3 of its circumference.

Amidst the throng of patrons, the FA students take their seats.

No one takes note of the three roboids stationed along the top aisle.

These differ from the server roboids in food courts, having no hands: their arms ending in bulbous concavities with needles in the center - ray guns!

There aren't enough seats on the row Sidd has chosen. At Fritz's nudging and despite Mary's deterrence, Rip and Jules sit together four tiers lower.

The murmuring crowd falls silent as Silas Buck, a large athletic man of 50 years, steps up to a podium placed before the Globe.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER
Hoo-rah for Commander Freedom!

The audience applauds wildly. Silas has a look of grateful bemusement.

SILAS
Thank you, my friends. Tonight, I hope you will join me in solemn celebration.

The audience quiets down, some still whispering excitedly.

SILAS
Tonight we remember the Bombing of Gotham...

Total silence falls.

SILAS
The symbolism of premiering this globeplay as we cross the Atlantic from London to Gotham will hopefully not be lost upon you all...

There are a few murmurs from the auidence, mostly it is quiet.

(CONTINUED)

SILAS
As a playwright, this was one of the most challenging pieces I've attempted. For any of you who were present at the Bombing, I'm afraid it will challenge you as well.

He smiles kindly at the audience.

SILAS
If you'd be so kind as to remain after the viewing, I've prepared a few remarks.

He retakes his seat and the house lights dim.

FRITZ
(to Rip)
Ya think he's really got magical powers? Brain blasts and electrical whatsits?

Rip elbows him.

RIP
Shh!

INT. SPHEREUM BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The backstage area of the Sphereum is filled with the various machinery, wiring and piping necessary for the function of the giant globe.

Within the limited workspace in the area, Liam and the Dadas prepare themselves: loading guns, stashing melee weapons on their persons.

Some of them are still putting on apparel: all are dressed in the style of the Dada Collective for the attack: motley mismatched clothing equally functional and symbolic.

LIAM
This is it. We'll only have one shot, make it count.

The group gives a variety of grim assent - nods, "aye", and Frank snorts loudly, spitting onthe floor.

LIAM
The world will never know the whole truth of what happens tonight...

Again the group responds with dark murmurs and gesturing.

LIAM
...but the single most important fact: whether Silas Buck lived or died, that will be undeniable.

INT. SECURITY STATION - CONTINUOUS

All stations are manned as the operators watch the ship closely.

Chief Tatum, surrounded by six armed guards, is on one of the screens, standing in the Sphereum lobby.

He speaks to the camera.

TATUM
Have you located anything yet?

OPERATOR#1
No sir, everything appears to be normal.

INT. SPHEREUM LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Tatum turns around to the guards.

TATUM
I'm sure they're here. Position yourselves at both entrances, no one goes in or out, understood?

The men nod and jog into position. Tatum follows the group headed to the right.

TATUM
I'll scout the backstage area. Move on my signal only.

Tatum heads through the exterior set of doors leading into the theater.

INT. SPHEREUM THEATER - CONTINOUS

The figure emerging from the interior set of doors is the elderly attendant.

INT. SPHEREUM BACKSTAGE - CONTINOUS

Wearing his dark glasses, Liam is spying out of the one-way porthole in the backstage door.

*LIAM'S POV:* We see through the shaded glasses. The Globe is a brilliantly sparkling ball, the shapes inside vaguely discernable; the audience is a dull mass.

(CONTINUED)

*LIAM'S POV:* As his gaze shifts to the aisle leading to the backstage area, the attendant shows up as a glowing figure, as bright as the globe.

LIAM
Shite! A damn Shifter's coming. Everyone, into the access hatches. Now!

The Dadas scramble into maintenance tunnels through hatches in the floor.

The elderly attendant enters the room just after the last hatch is closed.

He looks around, glancing at the floor hatches.

INT. SPHEREUM LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Tatum reemerges from the exterior doors. He signals to his men.

TATUM
Contact made. They're in the maintenance tunnels.

He motions to a door labeled "MAINTENANCE".

TATUM
Go to the backside and await their exit on Deck C. Do not move on them.

The men hustle away. Tatum looks up into the camera.

TATUM
Have the roboids finished IDing the patrons?

OPERATOR#1 (O.S.)
Yes sir. They have no-fire locks on all patrons.

TATUM
Excellent. Double check no-fire protocols to be sure and record the logs.

OPERATOR#1 (O.S.)
On it, Sir.

TATUM
I'll be in the theater with the roboids. Time to landfall in Gotham?

OPERATOR#1 (O.S.)
Fifty seven minutes.

He strides through the exterior doors.

INT. SPHEREUM, GS#9 - NIGHT

Tatum-Shifter is carrying a long barreled pistol and now looks like Liam, with a different but equally mismatched Dada-style outfit, as he emerges from the interior doors.

It is the end of the final scene, and he takes up position next to the roboid in the center.

*IN GLOBE*: A younger Silas, bloody and bruised, helps carry a wounded man on a stretcher to a waiting helo as snow begins to swirl around them. The whole globe fills with snow.

The house lights go up and the audience begins applauding loudly. Many are weeping.

Jules and Rip are both nearly ashen with sympathy. They squeeze hands, looking deeply at each other.

Silas moves to podium.

SILAS
Fate, in the Grand Calculus of Life...

As he speaks, Silas looks up and notices Tatum-Liam.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINOUS

Liam is watching through the porthole.

LIAM
Now, Frank, Now!

Frank triggers a detonator.

INT. SPHEREUM - CONTINUOUS

Tatum-Liam stares Silas eye to eye, raising his gun.

Audience members are turning to look up and back at Tatum-Liam.

The crashing sound of a huge explosion clangs through the theater.

The entire ship rocks towards the backstage side then away from it, pitching many audience members from their seats.

Every light goes dead. Emergency strobe on.

Real Liam and the Dadas burst from the backstage area, screaming battle cries.

Tatum-Liam takes aim at Silas and fires.

Frank jumps in front of Silas, saving Buck's life at the cost of his own.

SIDD
(yelling)
Everyone get down! Now!

The roboids begin firing on the Dadas.

Their shots are preceded by a brief whine that instantly descends into a heavy thrum, then a blinding flash.

The roboids fire slowly, but each shot results in a Dada poofing into a cloud of dust, instantly vaporizied.

Three Dadas are gone in the first volley. The remaining four are firing at the roboids.

Many of the audience are screaming in abject terror. People are knocking each other down in a mad flight for the exits.

Some are frozen in a panic.

One of the roboids is disable by a well placed headshot piercing it's optical conduits.

Using a heavy semi-automatic rifle, Real Liam lands three quick shots on Tatum-Liam.

Where Real Liam's shots have landed, Tatum-Liam looks like burnt thermoplastic: three large, blackened and obviously non-human-tissue holes gape in him.

The roboids stutter back and forth between targets, unable to fire with audience members blocking their shots.

Liam gives Frank's body a pained look. He grabs Silas by the shoulder and they dash towards the backstage area.

Tatum-Liam's face contorts with rage, and a NOISE like a hive of metallic bees emanates from his mouth.

Jules and Rip dash into the backstage area, frantic to get out of the fire fight.

The roboids begin free firing, vaporizing several audience members while trying to hit the Dada, who are still firing at the roboids.

Silas sees the audience members hit, and raises both hands, one at each of the remaining roboids.

Conical pulses of shimmering energy flash from his hands towards the roboids.

Both robots fall to the floor, inert.

Silas collapses.

Liam groans with effort and slings him into a fireman's carry, running to the backstage. The other Dadas fall back as they continue trading fire with Tatum-Liam.

INT. GOTHAM AIRPORT - NIGHT

A throng of reporters with cameras and notepads surround a red-carpeted disembarking area.

One of the reporters is broadcasting live back to studio.

REPORTER
(into camera)
Only forty five minutes till the #9 arrives back home in Gotham. Just what will the attendees of Silas Buck's new premier play have to say? Stay tuned to find out! Back to you, Judy!

INT. SPHEREUM BACKSTAGE, GS#9 - CONTINUOUS

Jules and Rip are huddled in the corner of the backstage area when Liam flies in with Silas.

The remaining three Dadas file in backwards, firing out at Tatum-Liam.

As they quickly bar the door, Silas begins coming to.

Silas sees the two youths.

SILAS
Julia Kidd? Is that you?

Jules is surprised by this, Rip is shocked.

SILAS
What are you doing in this mess, girl?

RIP
You know Jules?
(to Jules)
Silas Buck, THE Commander Freedom, knows YOU?

Silas is gently massaging his own temples.

SILAS
Her aunt's one of the world' greatest big game hunters. Been on many a safari with her and Teddy Roosevelt.

He grimaces with pain and smiles.

SILAS
Jules there is a helluva shot.

The Tatum-Liam Shifter has begins hammering at the door. Liam nods to a DADA who opens one of the floor hatches.

Liam helps Silas to his feet and stares at the two kids.

LIAM
If you want to live you'll have to come with us. That Shifter's going to kill everything in its path 'til Silas is dead.

Jules nods blankly. Rip stares at him.

DADA
We ain't got no time for dead weight Liam!

Liam steps to him, getting in his face.

LIAM
They are witnesses to the truth and they deserve to live. We need them to live. We need all the witnesses we can get, eh?

Liam pulls up the other maintenance hatch and gives them a mirthless grin.

LIAM
(to Rip)
Sounds like she's a peach. You know how to use a gun? This battle's only just begun.

INT. SPHEREUM - CONTINUOUS

Tatum-Liam is still smashing on the backstage door. He now looks like Tatum again and his 'wounds' are gone.

The security team bursts through the interior doors on both sides of the theater.

Tatum is enraged to see their presence.

TATUM
Get back to your damn stations! I told you to watch the maintenance tunnel exits!

They quickly file back out as he finally breaks through the door.

Scraping sounds filter out from the backstage area as he enters the tunnels.

Sidd pops up and looks around.

SIDD
Quickly, students. Everyone up!

The FA students are scared, many crying. Mr. and Mrs Bridge are visually scanning them for serious injury.

Sidd is totally composed, managing a smile weighted down by the gravity

SIDD
We are staying together and moving fast. Straightway to the emergency balloons. Now!

INT. MILITARY AIRCONTROL TOWER, GOTHAM AIRPORT - NIGHT

Several alarms are going off in the military control tower at Gotham Regional Airport.

Commander HOBSON is the presiding officer, in full dress uniform for the special occasion.

HOBSON
Simmons, what the Hell is going on?

SIMMONS
GS#9 is reporting on-board explosions and gunfire.

HOBSON
Status?

SIMMONS
Partially disabled. Two lift dynamos out.

Hobson leans over Simmons' screen.

HOBSON
Is it capable of making it to Gotham?

SIMMONS
Possibly sir. Any more critical failures and it won't.

Hobson smashes his fist on the console.

HOBSON
Scramble the fighters.

He takes a deep breath and sighs.

EXT. GS#9 - NIGHT

The Airship has begun listing badly - fires rage on where the two lift dynamos have been blown off.

It is slowly losing altitude.

INT. GS#9 - NIGHT

Panic has hit the ship. The crew is struggling to keep the passengers calm and orderly.

PA ADDRESS SYSTEM
Passengers are encouraged to act in a safe and courteous manner.

Fighting the list of the ship and other passengers, people are making their way to the glowing exit signs.

Maintenance#2 storms through a throng of passengers attempting to follow the exit signs in the chaos.

He pauses before opening the Security Office door, checking to see if anyone is looking.

SECURITY OFFICE - CONTINOUS

The Shifter who enters the security office now looks like Deirdre, but wearing official security garb.

OPERATOR
Officer Sikes, Chief Tatum has the terrorists cornered in the Central Power Station.

SIKES
Show me.

The operator clicks several switches and turns knobs on his console, switching the views on his screen.

*ON SCREEN:* Tatum and security forces are stationed around three sets of doors in three areas.

Sikes leans over and flicks a toggle, grabbing the tethered mic from the station.

SIKES
Tatum, this is Sikes. Report.

Tatum looks into the camera over his shoulder, in annoyance.

TATUM
(into camera)
What does it bloody look like, Sikes?

SIKES
L.A.S.T. fighters are preparing to fire on us. Shall I tell them the situation is under control.

INT. MILITARY AIRCONTROL TOWER, GOTHAM AIRPORT - NIGHT

SIMMONS
Transmission coming in, sir.

Hobson nods to him. Sikes appears on a video screen.

SIKES
Commander Hobson, we have the terrorists contained.

HOBSON
Right. I'll allow evacuation balloon launches. Anything but a balloon is getting shot out of the sky.

Sikes nods.

INT. ESCAPE BALLOON BAYS, GS#9 - NIGHT

Sidd and the Bridges have the students gathered. Many of the students are crying. Mary is sobbing and Fritz is trying not to.

SIDD
No one panic. I'm sure we'll find them when the balloons are gathered by rescue workers.

A security guard and a roboid stand positioned at the door to the emergency balloon.

GUARD
Alright. Single file. Failure to achieve positive ID means you will not be boarding this balloon.

INT. CENTRAL POWERPLANT - NIGHT

Jules, Rip, Silas and the Dadas are holed up in the Central Power Station. Giant twinned dynamonium reactors thrum steadily.

LIAM
Can't believe we're trapped like rats. Damn!

SILAS
There are several emergency gyrocopters hanging in bays one deck down.

LIAM
We'll never all make it to them.

Silas gives him a pained, gentle smile.

SILAS
No, we won't.

Liam grins as big as he can manage.

LIAM
But you three could.

EXT. GS#9 AIRDECK - NIGHT

The escape balloons begin taking off as the ship continues sinking to the ocean.

The large balloons inflate quickly. Then they detach from the deck.

In less than 30 seconds all 18 are away.

INT. GS#9 POWERPLANT CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Tatum is looking up into the camera.

TATUM
Have we been cleared to commence operations?

SIKES
(on camera speaker)
Roger that. Clean them out.

Just as Tatum signals to his men to breach the door, it rips off the hinges in an explosion that knocks them all down.

Gunfire spatters out of the doorway.

DADA (O.S.)
Earth for Earthlings you bastards!

INT. LOWER GYROCOPTER PERCH - NIGHT

The ship is listing badly, falling perilously close to the ocean as Silas, Jules and Rip enter the gyrocopter bay.

The gyrocopter is a closed-cabin two seater, hanging in the bay from a hook attached atop its rotor.

SILAS
I hope one of you doesn't mind sitting in the other's lap.

Jules and Rip, crying softly, look deeply at each other for a brief instant before breaking into uncontrollable laughter, hugging tightly.

They climb in.

Jules hoping into Rip's lap. She kisses him deeply.

Silas politely ignores them as he checks the instruments.

SILAS
We'll have to wait another minute or two, we need to be as far down as possible.

JULES
Why?

RIP
The military will have scrambled figthers. Any unknown launches will be shot down.

Silas grins.

SILAS
That's right. You two are quite amazing, ya know that? Handled yourselves better than anyone could have asked. Here we go!

He releases the hook latch and the gyrocopter drops, quickly at first, but the rotor autorotates and their descent slows as the pusher engine engages.

They level off a few yards over the Atlantic.

EXT. GOTHAM SKYWAY - PREDAWN DARKNESS

The gyrocopter skirts above the choppy Atlantic in the general direction of Gotham. The glowing lights of Gotham's fantastical skyline can be clearly seen.

SILAS
So, I guess y'all'd like to know just what the Hell is going on, eh?

RIP
I'm guessing it's along story.

Silas pauses before answering.

The sky is growing lighter.

SILAS
Son, you've got that right. You don't know how right you are.

Dawn breaks.

They veer off to the north.

INT. GS#9 - MORNING

The ship is only feet above the ocean now.

Liam is holding off security forces with sporadic firing.

A grenade lands next to him, smoke fuming out of it madly.

He falls in a swoon, losing the dark glasses.

He is near to losing consciousness as Officer Sikes approaches him.

SIKES
Oh my, you look awful. You must be so glad to see my face.

Dazed, Liam focuses on the Sikes-Shifter's face, seeing Deirdre's visage, he SCREAMS in fear and anger.

BLACK.

# APPENDIX C

Game Design Document

# PORT RADIUM

## GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT
## v1.0.0*

A videogame set in the world of
*Technopolis Gotham*
by
John Bronaugh Vorderkunz

* 1st draft, prior to full scale pre-production, hence no ADD or TDD content.

[1]

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# HIGH CONCEPT

**Players create a unique avatar and join the clandestine operations of Shadow Troop to fight the alien invaders that are secretly robbing Earth of its resources!**

## Features

- A retro-tech world right out of the Golden Age of comics and pulp sci-fi: clunky robots, skyscraper-sized airships, and walking tanks! Cyborgs with laser eyes and fireballing palms! Shapeshifting Martians! Jeepers Creepers!

- FPS/RPG hybrid featuring the *P.O.W.E.R. Level* system for character creation/customization allows the player to generate a truly unique avatar, plus there's gear galore. Loot upgradeable weapons, equipment and apparel!

- Quest and Battle Modes give a wide range of experiences: tense, atmospheric exploration and puzzle solving in Quest; fast paced, richly tactical combat in Battle. New loot & upgrades are found in both modes!

- Forces! Players can customize each Force and their whole Force set: shoot fire or lightning, freeze opponents, crush them with gravity, etc.!

- Battle Mode is full of fast paced tactical cooperative action: whether battling aliens & human slavers, rescuing abductees, or recovering vital resources & assets, players must work together to succeed!

- Quest Mode environments feature awesomely expansive vistas and claustrophobically tense spaces: mountaintop spaceports, robotic oilfields, dank mines, and dense forests. A bit of procedural generations keeps it fresh!

- Both Modes share four Difficulty levels that can be replayed indefinitely: Flat, Bumpy, Steep, and Sheer! Higher Diff. levels must be unlocked – new Battle Mode missions become available with each unlocking!

- Quest Mode features four Acts, each with its own environments. Classes have different arcs, traveling through the environments in different orders. Coop Quest Mode lets any class experience the story for every class!

# Overview

## PLAYER MOTIVATION

Players develop a unique avatar in the quasi open world Quest Mode; the same avatar is used in multiplayer-only Battle Mode combat scenarios. Reaching certain achievements in both Modes 'canonizes' the avatar in the *TG* universe.

## GENRE

*Port Radium* combines the character customization and narrative depth of RPGs such as *Skyrim* and *Fallout: New Vegas*, the fast tactical action of FPSs like *Borderlands* and *Mass Effect 3*, and puzzle solving of games like *Metroid Prime 3*.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

By providing a rich mix of play styles and genre conventions in combination with the ability to achieve canonical enshrinement in the *Technopolis Gotham* universe, *PR* will attract hardcore gamers, role-players, and casuals alike. **(17+ in age)**

## UNIQUENESS IN THE MARKETPLACE

- By innovatively hybridizing several genres this game separates itself from any direct competitor.
- No other game allows players to create characters that can become a permanent part of a major transmedia franchise.
- Loot drops + Upgradeable Gear = the draw of *Diablo* & *Borderlands* style loot farming with the satisfaction of *CoD/Battlefield/New Vegas* style gear tailoring.
- Quest Mode features an open world design that still provides the 'cinematic' experience of a well-developed 'on the rails' narrative. Up to four friends can experience Quest Mode together.
- Battle Mode uses rankings & stats galore to entice hardcore gamers, with human teams vs. AI of four difficulty levels to interest casual gamers. Match types range from 4 to 16 players in cooperative action!

## TARGET HARDWARE

The perfect console is the WiiU with its integration of multiple gaming technologies: HD output, analog stick & touch screen interfaces, and online capabilities. This version of the GDD (v1.0.0) assumes the WiiU as hardware.

# Design Goals

**Ripe**! Procedural generation of loot, certain map areas and certain enemies integrates the best innovations from other games for a unique experience.

**Rich!** Narrative interactivity, fully customizable avatars, and support for a variety of play styles create a rich experience with great re-playability.

**Full!** The Quest and Battle Modes cater to different gaming appetites, giving the player a wealth of options to match mood and context.

**Deep!** The deep integration of narrative and gameplay provide the player with serious food for thought, creating a game that is as provoking as fun.

**Wide**! Combat & Skill systems + Difficulty level support players of low skill, but scale upwards in complexity/customizability to challenge skilled & experienced gamers. Player progression is natural: noobs don't stay noobish!

# Synopsis

It is the year 1931 in an alternate universe where fantastic technologies are present within a world still yet enmeshed in the styles and tastes of our own 1931. Two major political factions, The League of American States and Territories and their allies known as the LAST Alliance, are locked in a cold war with the People's Commonwealth, a political consortium of the former British Empire, Russia and China with a unitary governing body organized under the principles of the Centralist political philosophy.

Unbeknownst to most of the world's population, both the LAST and the PC are puppet governments, under the control of the Shifters: shape-shifting robots from outer space! While millions of Earthlings are in fact aware that an alien force has subverted Earth, no one knows of their exact origin or just what their sinister goals truly are.

The player takes the role of a new recruit to the clandestine organization known as Shadow Troop. Originally a government agency, Shadow Troop has been driven completely 'underground' by the invasion of the Shifters. Spread thin across the globe, the player takes part in Shadow Troop's investigation into Port Radium, the mysterious and closely guarded source of the marvelous element responsible for the era's fantastic technology: *dynamonium.*

The player will discover that not only are the aliens mining and processing *dynamonium*, but they are also using human slaves to drill for oil and mine uranium and other ores – shipping it all off planet! Depending on which Class the player chooses, they will be involved in either sabotaging the aliens' facilities, reconnoitering their activities, or recovering assets; every class will be involved in rescuing human slaves and defeating robots, aliens, and human mercenaries who have sold humanity out.

See the Plotting section for more detail on the Class storylines. See the *TG* **Codex*** for a deeper treatment of the background, setting and characters of the universe at-large.

*contact bronaugh.vorderkunz@gmail.com for inquiries concerning the Codex.

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# GAME DESIGN

Covered in this section are: Basic Gameplay and the *P.O.W.E.R. Level* system. All items are subject to change in future versions of GDD during pre-production. In GDD v2.0.0 this section will include Player Controls, AI behavior, and UIs.

## Basic Gameplay

*Port Radium* uses a First Person perspective: many of its basic gameplay elements will be familiar with players of FPSs and FP-RPGs like the *Elder Scrolls* series: Players maneuver through 3D environments, employing stats-based skills to interact with objects and NPCs in order to achieve goals. Quest Mode focuses on exploration, investigation and puzzle solving while still including plenty of action; conversely Battle Mode focuses on action.

### Character Creation

Players create* an avatar using the following basic selections:

- **Attributes:** Avatars have a base score of 25 in each of the attributes: Power, Observation, Wisdom, Energy, and Reaction. Items can add bonuses to attributes, and points are gained for each attribute by level and class.

- **Class:** Saboteur, Shootist, and Scout. Class choice is permanent for each character. Class Skills can be re-selected by the player at any time; new skills are accessible with each level gained. Class Skills are either active or passive.

- **Gender & Body Type:** Males start with a bonus to Power score, Females start with a bonus Reaction score. Body types are: Small, Medium & Large. Each has an overlapping min/max range of Power & Energy.

- **Forces:** The player selects on initial Force from the nine basic types, and unlocks three more Force slots as they level up. Forces can be made active or passive.

- **Personality Profile:** Three choices – Edgy, Stodgy, Happy – use different voices giving different 'barks' and eliciting different NPC responses.

*for more details on Character Creation see the *P.O.W.E.R. Level* section.

## Combat & Environmental Interactions

- Players can interact with objects and NPCs via **Skills** & **Forces**, and by using **Tools** (includes weapons).

- **Skills** Some give the player the capability to perform specific actions in combat. Each class also has skills that can be used in noncombat situations.

- **Forces** are used in combat for offensive, defensive and healing effects, but can also be used to interact with objects in the environment: Fireball burns stuff!

- **Tools** can mostly be used by any class; there are class specific tools; class abilities can also modify the effects and effectiveness of tools.

- Players can interact with various NPCs via conversation to advance the plot or simply to gain new information about the world of *PR*.

In general, interactions follow the model found in games like *Borderlands*, *Fallout: New Vegas*, and *Skyrim*, i.e. activation of skills/forces/tools and a general 'use/talk' button for initiating specific interactions with objects and NPCs.

## Difficulty Levels

- Four Difficulty Levels for both Quest and Battle Modes: Flat, Bumpy, Steep and Sheer. Enemies get stronger and smarter!

- Flat is available to each character upon creation. Quest Mode must be completed in Flat Difficulty to unlock Bumpy, and so on.

- Each character must unlock the levels of Difficulty. Players can replay Quest Mode in any Difficulty level once completed, as many times as they wish.

- Battle Mode only has two Missions for Flat Difficulty; a new Mission is unlocked with each new level of Difficulty for a total of five Battle Mode Missions.

## Quest Mode

Quest Mode has two major goals:

- Narrative explication via cinematics, scripted events & NPC interactions, artifact discovery, and environmental storytelling.
- Character development via leveling up, and loot collection/farming.

Quest Mode has a four Act structure, and can be played single-player or with up to 3 friends cooperatively. All three classes have similar Act I's, while Acts II-IV are specific to the avatar's class; see Narrative Design section for more detail. For coop, whoever starts the game session will determine which storyline is followed. Experience for character level progression is only awarded in Quest Mode.

**Level progression corresponds to Difficulty Level within Quest Mode:**

- Levels 1-25 for Flat, 26-40 for Bumpy, and 41-50 for Steep.

- Sheer is tough enough that characters will need to have hit the level cap with corresponding availability of all Skills, Skill Mods and Forces!

## Battle Mode

Battle Mode has two major goals as well:

- Cooperative/Social Play so that players can fight the battle with friends & family.
- Ranking/Achievement for players to show off their skills and earn rewards in-game and within the broader *TG* universe.

Battle Mode requires players to work together to complete Missions. There are five total Missions; only two are playable by characters level 1-25: each successive Difficulty level unlocked in Quest Mode adds a new Mission.

Players can set the Difficulty level of a Mission higher, i.e. the first two Missions can be played on Sheer, but not on a lower Difficulty, e.g. the last Mission cannot be set to Flat. Unlocked Missions are progressively larger, i.e. the final Mission has more Objectives and hence takes longer to complete.

## The five Missions:

- **#1, Rough Riders** 2-4 Players must defeat the mercenary group The Rough Riders as they transport captives to Port Radium via a massive airship.

- **#2, Oilfield Follies** 2-4 Players must permanently disable four oil derricks without causing gushers.

- **#3, Mineshaft** 4-8 Players must retrieve processed *dynamonium* from deep within a mine.

- **#4, Arboreal Ordeal** 8-12 Players must disable a train without destroying it, rescue captives and capture a Shifter.

- **#5, No-Go** 8-16 Players must prevent a rocket-boosted spacecraft launch and retrieve data and equipment from ship.

Battle Mode is intended to function much as the 'battlegrounds' areas of *WoW*, giving the players a chance to work together in an epic combat setting. **Missions are all about coop, not PVP. However…** at the level cap of 50, PVP could be introduced with a 'sellout' narrative mechanic where players can opt to fight for the bad guys.

# *P.O.W.E.R. Level* System

The POWER Level system is the ruleset & rubric for character creation and customization; it is modeled on traditional RPG & CRPG systems such as *AD&D4* and *SPECIAL*. There are 5 attributes, 3 classes, 9 Forces, 2 genders, and 3 body types in POWER. Characters advance in level by gaining experience, starting at level 1 and advancing to level 50. Each level gained adds points to the attribute scores, in amounts dependent on class. New Skills, Skill Mods and Forces are unlocked with new levels.

## Attributes

Attributes determine many of the specifics of a character such as the number of hits points they have, how much damage their attacks inflict, how fast they move, etc. There are five primary attributes; the total number of secondary attributes is TBD. Primary Attribute scores start at a base of 25, and are incremented each level by class determinants; items can also boost PA & SA scores. Level 50 scores can top 1000.

Primary Attributes:

- **Power** is the physical strength of the character. This affects melee damage, weapon stability, health and movement speed. Primary attribute for Shootists.

- **Observation** measures the character's ability to perceive. This affects range of spotting enemies & objects for investigation. Primary attribute for Scouts.

- **Wisdom** is the character's intelligence, discernment and recollection. This affects tool use, success of investigation and NPC interaction.

- **Energy** is the physical endurance of the character. It affects health, stamina (frequency of Force usage), and movement speed.

- **Reaction** is the quickness of a character's reflexes. This affects critical hit chance, move speed, and weapon accuracy. Primary attribute for Saboteurs.

Secondary Attributes are generated from Primary Attributes:

- **Health** number of hit points. ((Energy*2+Power)/3)*(Exp. Level)
- **Movement Speed** = Base+(Energy+Reaction+Power)/Level
- **Weapon Damage** = Base+((Power*(Energy+Reaction))/4)
- **Critical Hit Chance** = Base+((Power+Reaction+Observation)/160)

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# Classes

The three classes are Saboteur, Scout, and Shootist. Each class has a different set of Skills, which players can swap between at any time, with a cool-down penalty to prevent swapping within combat encounters. The total set of Class Skills is TBD, but each Class has both active & passive Skills.

**Points for non-primary attributes are gained at the same rate for all classes, primary attributes are gained faster.**

## Saboteur

- Plant Device**:** The player can plant one of several devices, depending on Skill Mod – bombs, motion sensor, decoy, etc.
- Defunct: Temporarily disable mechanical and electrical devices.
- Hotwire: Start a dormant electrical device or restart a disabled one.
- Loadjack: Gain stamina when in proximity to electrical devices.

## Scout

- Campsite: Station a camouflaged box in which the avatar is hidden; only capable of firing within a small cone while inside.
- Scan: Search the immediate area for hidden loot & artifacts.
- Sprint: Dramatically increase move speed for a short time.
- Shady**:** lessens the distance at which enemies can spot you.

## Shootist

- Mark: Increase all damage types on target for 10 seconds.
- Steady: Briefly increase weapon stability by 100%.
- Dualing Pistols: wield two handguns at a time.
- Nimble Digits: reload instantly (45 second timer).

# Forces

Forces are superhuman abilities gained from the corporeal implantation of *dynamonium** based alloy matrices linked to the central nervous system. There are 9 forces available to the player: initially they may only choose 1, with two more 'slots' becoming available as they level up.

Forces are generated by the application of mechanical vibration to the *dynamonium* crystals imbedded in the matrices. Modulation of the frequency and amplitude of these minute vibrations produces the Force effects. The ranges for FM and AM are High, Medium, and Low – thus the nine Forces resulting from the nine possible combinations of these ranges. The Forces can be modified by the player to produce different effects.

| | High Frequency | Med. Frequency | Low Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| High Amplitude | THERMAL<br>Plasma beam,<br>Fireball etc. | POISON<br>Gray Death,<br>Deadly Rash, etc. | ANTI-GRAV<br>Featherweight,<br>Levitate, etc. |
| Med. Amplitude | ELECTRICAL<br>Shock Burst,<br>Lightning, etc. | HEALING<br>Burst Heal,<br>Life regen, etc. | ENTROPIC<br>Matter Decay,<br>Phase Shift, etc. |
| Low Amplitude | GRAVITY<br>Mass Bump,<br>Crush, etc. | DISORIENT<br>Friendly Fire,<br>Coma, etc. | FRIGIDITY<br>Ice Beam,<br>Cold Snap, etc. |

*See the *TG* Codex for more info on *dynamonium.*

# Physical Characteristics

- Players may choose between Male or Female
- Players may choose from seven different Skin tones
- Body Types: Small has lowest range for Power Scores, but highest for Reaction, Large is the reverse and Medium is the average of the two.
- Males start with a bonus to Power, females with a bonus to Reaction
- 3 different personality profiles give different 'barks' and NPC responses: Edgy, Stodgy, and Happy.

# NARRATIVE DESIGN

## Overview

The narrative design of *PR* is inseparable from its broader context within the transmedia universe of *Technopolis Gotham*. See the *TG* **Codex*** for a deeper treatment of the background, setting and characters of the universe at-large. The information contained below is the necessary elements for *PR*. Setting and Plotting are outlined below, with detailed treatment in their respective sections.

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## Environments

This game takes place in the northern wilds of Canada: the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. It is set in an alternate 1931 with a mix of period stylizations and anachronistic technologies.

The environments each have both natural and artificial landscape elements. With an open world design, these environs will be large with lots of 'optional' areas that are not required to advance any quest but serve to deliver extra information and entertainment via artifacts and story events, as well as being attractive sites for loot farming.

There are four specific environments corresponding to the four Act structure of the game. All three classes have the same environment for Act I, however the sequencing of the environments as Act II, III and IV varies by class; see section on Plotting for more detail concerning the matching of environments with Acts.

### Boreal Forest - Act I

- Full of a variety of trees: Alaska Birch, Alpine Fir, Tamarack, Lodgepole Pine, etc., depending on immediate context – riverside, bog, deep forest.
- Marked by a large variety of bodies of water: the huge Mackenzie River and its various tributaries, lots of small lakes and ponds.
- Three parallel train tracks run through this area; there are several depots serving as processing centers for abductees marked for slave labor.
- Silas and Gamble's log cabin and underground laboratory is in this area, acting as headquarters for player's operations.

## Lakeside Mines

- Great Slave Lake is gigantic and deep. There is a large pit mine for recovering uranium from ground level at the edge of the eastern shore.

- Near the pit is a deep mine shaft for recovering *dynamonium* meteorite buried under crater in lake's deepest section. Lots of robotic equipment.
- Large slave-worker and guard population with attendant facilities. Train yard and airfield located onsite as well.

## Oilfields

- Giant oil pumping and refining center on the open tundra. Hundreds of slave workers and guards are housed here for 24 hour operations.

- Train yard and airstrip also present here; rail lines connect the oilfield to Mines in the south and Spaceport to the southwest.

- Pumping and Refining centers are largely automated, with human slaves used for repairs and manual labor in conditions too harsh for the clunky robots.

## Spaceport

- Located in a shallow valley within the Selwyn Mountains. Massive facility with primarily robotic attendants and guards, with some human slaves & mercenaries.

- Central launch site is gigantic, with a huge craft atop enormous rocket boosters.

- Large field of radio dish-antennae used to coordinate with Mars and the various robots and automated processes in the area.

# Plotting

Act I of Quest Mode is the same for all Classes, and consists of the tutorial section and first quests: approach train depot unnoticed, rescue abductees and defeat mercenaries. The chart below describes the rest of the plotting:

| | Saboteur | Scout | Shootist |
|---|---|---|---|
| Act I | BOREAL FOREST<br>Discover the horrifying extent of the slave operation | BOREAL FOREST<br>Discover the horrifying extent of the slave operation | BOREAL FOREST<br>Discover the horrifying extent of the slave operation |
| Act II | SPACEPORT<br>Find out how often the ships are launched:<br>One a week! | MINES<br>Reveal the secret of Uranium City:<br>meteorite still not hit! | OILFIELDS<br>Uncover the truth of the 'refinement': oil is converted to…??? |
| Act III | OILFIELDS<br>Reveal the nature of the petroleum processing:<br>Biotic substrate! | SPACEPORT<br>Determine how much material is shipped out on each flight: 200 tons! | MINES<br>Recovered ore is getting purer:<br>Now at 60/40 mix. |
| Act IV | MINES<br>Find Tesla's big secret:<br>Big load is actually at Great Bear Lake! | OILFIELDS<br>What is substrate used for: Cloning experiments! | SPACEPORT<br>Where are the ships headed? Mars! |

The different Arcs intersect in this way: the activities, i.e. quests, of the other classes inform the direction of the missions taken by the players's Class. In other words, in each Act it is as though Shadow Troop agents representing the other classes have already submitted their reports for the last Act, thus giving the player-character a definite list of objectives to accomplish. In this sense the player always gets the 'whole' story, but must either join a friend Questing with a different Class or play another Class to see that part of the story 'in detail'.

# Characters

## Player-Character

The player takes on the role of a new agent of Shadow Troop. Their role is to perform specific missions at the behest of Silas Buck and Dr. Hunter Gamble, two senior members of Shadow Troop. There are three storylines for the player to experience; the Class chosen by the player at character creation will determine which one. The player character is not a *tabula rasa*: having selecting physical traits and a personality profile, the story will tailor itself to the player.

Player-Character backstory is, however, up to the player. Completing Quest Mode and all five Battle Mode Missions in Sheer difficulty mode will allow the player to make a backstory entry on the official *PR* website, in accordance with a story rubric posted on the site.

This feature allows players who have invested significant time and effort to achieve a unique reward in mass market entertainment: having an officially recognized and 'canonized' character in the *Technopolis Gotham* universe!

Further achievements in duration of play and specific in-game accomplishments can elevate the player-character even higher, gaining it a 'cameo' spot in future game cinematics, the streaming episodic content or other TBD media.

## Silas Buck

Silas is a senior member of Shadow Troop, acting as one of two mentors to the player character. Extremely athletic for his age, he was born in 1881 on a ranch near the Oxbow Quadrangle of Montana. Silas grew up living a life of adventure: as a fourteen year old cattle rancher protecting the family herds in the wilds of Montana he routinely fought off bears, cougars and wolves with his best friend, a donkey named Oscar, to protect the herds. At fifteen he attained membership in a band of a Kootenai Native Americans. In the midst of a blizzard, he saved several of their members from a starving wolf pack and subsequently let several cows and bulls 'go missing' from the herd to stave off the band's impending starvation during the unprecedentedly harsh Fall and Winter of '96.

He fought with the tribe during the next spring and summer and was crucial in helping them defeat a band of marauding ex-US Cavalrymen seeking to take over the area for the sake of gold prospecting. Unwilling to leave the lands he loved, Silas had at age 12 declined to directly attend the Franklin Academy, yet by the age of sixteen he had already completed the entire set of "Curriculum in a Book" volumes published by

the Franklin Academy, scoring perfect or nearly perfect on every one of the associated correspondence tests.

At seventeen he wrote an epic poem about his adventures on the range and with the Kootenai, with only slight poetic embellishment, winning national acclaim when it was serially published in the Gotham Review. Hailed as "America's young Warrior-Poet" by Theodore Roosevelt, Silas became a member of Roosevelt's safari entourage where he became acquainted with Teddy's field surgeon Hunter Gamble; two of the last legends of the waning Wild West, they became fast friends. The last US president that was not actually a Shifter, in 1900 Teddy Roosevelt personally inducted both men into Shadow Troop.

Over the next 12 years Buck roamed the far and wide, reconnoitering nearly every nation on Earth for unknown threats and potential allies. From 1907-1910, Silas along with several other Shadow Troop agents and their various contacts began documenting large numbers of meteorite landings particularly in remote areas. In February of 1909 Silas captured a damaged Shifter from a crater site in the Andes, transporting it to Hunter Gamble's Whiteface Mountain laboratory.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Buck joined the LAST Expeditionary Force's elite Special Infantry Logistics and Tactics unit, along with fellow Shadow Troop member George Fitzhugh. When Wonder Inc scientists began selecting candidates for cybernetic enhancement, both men were chosen. Fitzhugh's operation was a total failure resulting in his death; struck with grief and no small amount of trepidation, Buck agreed to undergo the procedure, which proved to be successful.

Newly commissioned as a full Colonel and given the publicity title 'Commander Freedom', Buck became the face of the Alliance war effort over the final two years of the fighting. He directly faced PC nemesis Nicolai Sandovsky, aka The Guardian, several times. While there is no PC group directly corresponding to Shadow Troop, it was through contact with Sandovsky that Silas learned there were pockets of knowledgeable resistance within the PC, most especially a 'terrorist' group known as the Dada Collective.

Postwar, now more truly than ever "America's Warrior Poet", Silas joined officially joined Wonder Inc as 'artist in residence', ostensibly to write poems and globe-plays – in reality The Overlord does not trust this powerful and uncontrollable 'creation', and thus Silas is under constant surveillance. He suffers from infrequent but devastating bouts of near-catatonia inducing migraine headaches due to the cybernetic implants. Having a limited degree of free mobility and working with Gamble have allowed Silas to continue to operate as an agent of Shadow Troop, and given the chance

he is prepared to go on the run if a significant opportunity arises: like a chance to discover who or what controls the Shifters.

Due to the events of the first streamed episodic content, aka the Crash of #9, Silas is now officially a fugitive, having been declared a 'terrorist' by the LAST. He has been assigned by Shadow Troop to the Port Radium task force because its remote location is unlikely to bring him or Shadow Troop any additional 'heat'.

## Dr. Hunter Gamble

Born in Dodge City, KA in 1872, bastard child of the sheriff and a local nurse, Hunter saw violence and its consequences daily as a boy: by age 7 he was assisting his mother and her employer Dr. Henry Judson. By age 11, during the infamous Dodge City War he was performing minor surgical operations like bullet removal and the cleaning & stitching of major knife wounds. He spent his teens making money treating Cavalrymen during the Indian Wars – unbeknownst to the US Army he also spent much time among various Native American tribes: hence many dishonorable and particularly dastardly soldiers mysteriously failed to recover under his care. On both sides of the conflict he learned to ride, shoot and fight with exceptional skill. Displaying remarkable intelligence despite the lack of a formal education in childhood, he was one of the first graduates of the University of Austin's Medical School in 1894.

His legendary status as a frontier miracle-worker and a skilled marksman & gunslinger attracted the attention of Theodore Roosevelt, who hired him as field surgeon for safaris in 1895, at that time he relocated from Texas to Gotham and became acquainted with Sidd Johnson. Gamble, being fascinated with the idea of a connection between electricity and the impetus of Life, read Tesla's early writings on the subject. So it was with great enthusiasm, upon his induction into Shadow Troop, that he took his first assignment of infiltrating the fledging Wonder Inc. to determine the scope of Tesla's ambitions and capabilities. Tesla and Gamble became close friends quickly, as Gamble realized that as grand as Tesla's ambitions were, his intentions were equally magnanimous.

Gamble's stock in Wonder, Inc. made him one of the 25 wealthiest men in America by 1903; he built a mansion on Whiteface Mountain in upstate New York in 1905 – a secret, expansive laboratory complex was also built into the mountain underneath the mansion with help from Shadow Troop agents. In 1906 Hunter officially retired from Wonder Inc. in order to dedicate his time to research projects for Shadow Troop, although he still visits Gotham from time to time – and up until Tesla's sequestration maintained a close connection.

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July 19th 1909, Silas Buck arrived at Whiteface with a lead-lined casket containing the 'corpse' of a Shifter. Gamble and Silas investigated the bizarre creature – unable to determine its specific origin, they immediately alerted Sidd Johnson who briefed the entire organization. After Silas' departure to continue seeking answers in the field, Gamble began studying the Shifter closely, eventually developing a set of polarized lens, wearable in any normal eyeglass frames: a Shifter viewed through such lenses is brightly illuminated within a glowing aura. A similar but much weaker aura is present on any dynamonium-enhanced human.

Because of Gamble's combat capabilities, general 'old coot' toughness, and prodigious scientific acumen, he has been tasked with leading the Port Radium task force in their mission to 1) better understand the Shifter's goals and 2) determine their ultimate base of operations, i.e. their home planet.

## Adolphus Lee Grey

Born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1890 to wealthy parents Warren and Eliza Grey, Adolphus Lee Grey is the bloodthirsty leader of the Rough Rider mercenary group, which acts as the primary slave providers for the Port Radium facilities. Generously rewarded by the Shifters, Grey is fabulously rich and well respected within the elite circles of LAST society.

In 'polite' society he is known as a debonair playboy, although rumors of aggressiveness and outright brutality towards women have plagued him since his youth. The rumors are absolutely true. He followed his father's footsteps by attending Harvard Business School, becoming a titan of Wall Street at a young age by secretly practicing unethical and outright illegal forms of trading and information sharing. Despite his physical vigor and courageous posturing, he did not enter the Great War, but did make millions of dollars off the wholesale slaughter of his compatriots.

In 1920, approached by a figure who was unknown to him actually a Shifter, Adolphus was recruited to begin funding and operating a slave labor ring of massive proportions. By 1925 he was fully aware of his masters' true nature, although even he does not know from whence they came or who controls them, and he has been gifted with *dynamonium* augmentation granting him Thermal, Disorient and Poison Forces.

Adolphus can be charming when he wants, but when living out his ultimate power fantasy as leader of bloodthirsty slaving pirates he is anything but charming. When angry he develops a strong tick in his left eye: shortly after this happens someone usually dies. Adolphus is essentially like any bully: he seeks to hide his own pain and fear by inflicting it on others.

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