

DYSTOPIAN AGE

THE COVENANT OF THE ENLIGHTENED

The architects of the Dystopian Age, the Covenant of the Enlightened wield their formidable intellects to sweep aside those who stand in the way of Science and Progress. These masters of technology covet knowledge above all things and believe that it is only they who can steer humanity on a path to enlightenment. Whether with monstrous fusions of man and machine or with their terrifying and wonderous war-engines, the Covenant of the Enlightened take every opportunity to demonstrate their technological supremacy. The discoveries that were intended to herald a new era for humanity are instead used to punish those who would misuse them. Only when the Covenant are lauded as the rightful leaders of the Earth this new Dystopian Age can the world be brought into a new dawn of achievement and prosperity.

Assessment by Service Agent Kingston - for the Director's eyes only.

Director Lincoln, it is human nature for like-minded individuals to seek each other out, to form deep and lasting bonds and to establish communities and societies in a world that often seems bent on keeping each person isolated and alone. As you may already be aware, one of the oldest such societies in Europe is La Societe des Amis du Nouveau Eclaircissement, which was founded in Vienna in the early sixteenth century. The Amis, as they called themselves, were scientists, philosophers and free thinkers who enjoyed an active, lively correspondence, sharing their desires, dreams, and scientific exploits through written letters and occasional symposia.

AHEAD OF THEIR TIME

Generally, to be invited into the Amis, a man or woman must have proven themselves through extraordinary accomplishments with extensive peer-reviewed research or intellectual treatises. As such, most members were relatively advanced in years and rather set in their ways. By the early-nineteenth century, most of humanity's greatest minds were clandestine members. The influence of the Amis was felt throughout the world, although of course, most people had never heard of them.

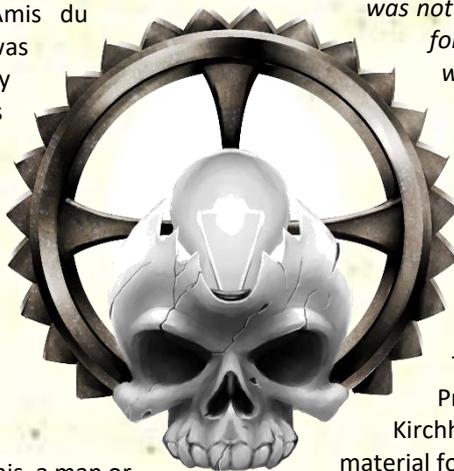
Records show that by 1845 the scientist-explorer Barnabas Draynes Sturgeon, a member of the Amis, had acquired extra-terrestrial artefacts from the crater at Bimini. *[Agent's note: for more detail on Bimini please refer to my report last week on Caribbean meteorite strikes.]*

Sturgeon shared some of that extra-terrestrial material with his associates Eberhard Bunsen and Gustav Kirchhoff who had recently set up a facility at the University of Königsberg. At Sturgeon's encouragement, the pair studied the artefacts for almost a year before unlocking the principles of atomic energy. The potential of this breakthrough was clear to Sturgeon and the other members of the Amis. *[Agent's note: Regrettably, the Service was not established at this point in history for if it had been, I am certain that we would have monitored the activities of the Amis more closely. It is likely that enemy agents from the Alliance, Commonwealth and Imperium had intercepted vastly more of the Amis correspondence than our own limited network managed to.]*

Tipped off by their spies, the Prussian Imperium had Bunsen and Kirchhoff arrested and claimed the material for their Teutonic Knight-Luminaries to study. This acquisition triggered a series of similar seizures all over the world by agents from other governments. The Amis were plunged into crisis. Their apolitical nature was under threat, but a solution would present itself from an unexpected source.

THE EXPEDITION SOUTH

In the midst of this intellectual upheaval, Barnabas Sturgeon was planning another extraordinary expedition. This time his destination was Antarctica, the vast ice-bound wilderness at the foot of the world. Theirs was to be a genuine voyage of discovery rather than conquest. The expedition was intended to prove a theory shared by Sturgeon and few other radical scientific minds: that the





wastes of Antarctica were not empty and desolate, but instead concealed treasures of incalculable value.

Sturgeon had kept back a particularly curious artefact previously recovered at the Bimini crater: a compass pointing south instead of north. After further tests, along with his closest friend the Greek physicist Leonidas Vasiliou, Sturgeon formed the belief that not only was the device pointing to a particular location in the south but that it was indicating something beneath the surface of the Antarctic itself.

Following the arrest of Bunsen and Kirchhoff, Sturgeon accelerated his plans, pulling together the resources needed to mount his expedition south. Despite his great adversity, he still managed to secure patronage from certain valuable parties, notably Crown Prince Vladimir of the Russian Commonwealth. It was Vladimir who introduced Sturgeon to a scientific polymath of extraordinary talent: Helsinki Markov. At first, he was a priceless asset to Sturgeon's cause, but later he was to become a figure of infamy.

A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The expedition made landfall in Antarctica in 1849 after a long journey fraught with difficulties. However, to the surprise of everyone, not least Sturgeon and his friends, they soon made what appeared to be a finding of great import. A series of reconnaissance flights were undertaken by Miranda Wells in her trusty modified Doncaster, the *Eye of Reason*. Her patrols inland revealed an extraordinary sight located deep inside the desolate Antarctic interior. A wide, chasm-like trench, many miles long and almost a mile wide was revealed. Shimmering, gnarled spires of impossibly polished metal and vast, glowing masses of blue-green crystalline rock spread out like a starfish across the ice. The landscape around the site was different from what had been originally expected. Though most of the landscape was, as anticipated, frozen tundra, there were valleys and mountains that held starkly differing climates, flora and fauna.

Though Sturgeon had paid handsomely for the services of Maximilian Schneider and his mercenaries to protect the expedition, it remained a journey of great hardship to navigate to this incredible site overland. Along the way, Sturgeon noted subtle changes to the landscape. These changes were imperceptible at first but the surrounding valleys to the chasm leading all the way back to their base camp were in a state of

comparatively rapid climate change. The permafrost and snow had melted away for the most part forming lakes or billowing clouds of vapour. Strange megaflores were seen sprouting from these freshly revealed landscapes. Though there were the occasional attacks of large beasts and birds to contend with, the expedition most frequently saw ever more exotic and otherworldly jungle plants and vegetation.

Losing more than half of their original expedition along the way, it took over a year to finally reach the trench. When they arrived, what they found was more astonishing than the initial reconnaissance had suggested. Buried amongst the eerie crystalline agglomerations and twisted metal spires, sunken into the earth and rock was a strange doorway. Beyond it lay what would truly become a discovery of earth-shaking proportions – the mysterious Antarctic Vault.

THE VAULT

Once they stepped through the doorway, Sturgeon, Vasiliou, and their retinue vanished beneath the Antarctic landscape for several days. A series of earth tremors heralded their return and they were changed profoundly by what they had seen. *[Agent's note: Despite several high ranking members of the Enlightened defecting to the Union, we still have no clear picture of what lies within the Vault. I would concur with General Grant's assertion that a military campaign to Antarctica is the most expeditious means of obtaining its secrets of the Vault for the Union.]*

More excited and animated than he had ever been, Sturgeon was still as shrewd as he was brilliant. He had observed what had happened to fellow members of the Amis who revealed their achievements to a greedy world without safeguarding them, and so he took steps to ensure the Vault was not stolen from him. In secret, Sturgeon sent his closest allies instructions to gather resources and material so that they might expand and fortify their camp around the Vault. The facility was dubbed *Wells Chasm* after the daring aviator who had braved the howling gales above the Antarctic to be the first to spot the crystals and spires.

Sturgeon, Markov, Vasiliou, and the others would embark upon several further journeys into the Vault. Inside virtually everything they found was beyond their ability to comprehend. The excursions were not without their own inherent dangers, as small parties could become lost in the Vault's



labyrinthine corridors and alien architecture. Most painfully for Sturgeon, his closest and most intimate friend Leonidas, became lost in the Vault, never to be seen again. Putting aside his grief, Sturgeon gleaned enough from the artefacts they recovered to set new paths of scientific discovery. Markov estimated that it would take several lifetimes to fully explore and catalogue the contents of the Vault.

At the centre of these efforts was the strange super-conductive mineral surrounding the Vault, and which extended in great veins outwards from it. Codified as 'Element 270', and later named *sturginium*, in honour of Sturgeon himself, the properties of this material would ultimately allow for accelerated exploration of existing fields of scientific undertakings. The mineral would be harvested and shipments sent from *Wells Chasm* to their original landing site on the Antarctic coast. This harbour camp was itself expanded into a second base of operations for the expedition. Sturgeon named the new harbour facility *Leonidas Spire* in honour of his late friend.

A GIFT FROM THE STARS

By their seventh journey into the Vault, Sturgeon and Markov had enough research gathered to theorise that the Vault was the core of some massive alien object which had crashed on the Earth centuries ago. There were records from the time that spoke of "a ball of fire in the sky" and a "great earth tremor". Expanding on this hypothesis and reversing the trajectory from the impact site in Antarctica, Markov noticed an unusual number of meteorite strikes recorded along the flightpath. This suggested that the object had begun to break up before it landed. This then pointed to the possibility that any parts of the alien structure's mass that had fallen along the way could also contain Element 270. The nature of the impact, erratic trajectory and calculated size of the object implied a controlled crash, guided by some intelligence or pilot. This suggested the object was some kind of colossal ship, perhaps akin to an ocean-liner to the stars themselves, only much larger; perhaps a kilometre or more in diameter. If such a craft had impacted with its full force it would likely have devastated the planet.

While it was agreed that the discoveries in the Vault were the birthright of humanity, such a wealth of knowledge needed to remain in the hands of a few. This custodianship was vital until the explorers had amassed sufficient allies to ensure that no one nation or interest group could pervert this profound

discovery for their own petty agenda. The Amis was nothing more than a correspondence group and with how helpless they had been to save Bunsen and Kirchhoff, something more was needed to safeguard the Vault and the new age of science it would unleash. Leaving Markov and several others behind to continue the work, Sturgeon returned to Europe to create the organisation he needed.

A COVENANT IS AGREED

1852 saw a conclave of the Amis held in the Palazzo del Borromeo on Lake Maggiore, Italy. This literal meeting of minds had one purpose: to secure a future for the great undertaking they had agreed on for the betterment of humanity. Freshly returned from his Antarctic expedition, Sturgeon called for a new beginning for the group. No longer would they be a loose collection of correspondents but instead Sturgeon declared that a more structured and independent movement was needed. This "Covenant of the Enlightened" as he termed it would be free from political or patriotic pressures from the nations of the world and would be founded as a technocratic oligarchy. The discoveries of the Enlightened, such as those he had seen in the Vault of Antarctica, would be ostensibly for the betterment of humanity, but only when wider humanity could prove itself worthy of those discoveries. Until such time, the Covenant would be custodians of the Vault and of the new age of scientific enlightenment that it would herald.

Other brilliant minds of the age stepped forward to join with Sturgeon including the warmaster Maximilian Schneider, President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte of the French Republique, the boyar magnate Oleg Tatamovich, the spymistress Julianna Drakenburg, the communications specialist Mahlon Loomis, the alternate energy prodigies Nikolai Tesla and Augusta Byron, and the engineering auteurs Herman Haupt and Gustave Eiffel. This was also the first time that the polymath Burson Carpathian found notice amongst this group as a peer and signatory on the Covenant charter.

The conclave became the First Symposium of the Enlightened and it was agreed that each Peer of the Enlightened would have an equal status within the Covenant. There were conditions to being granted a place in this new technocracy. To become a Lord or Lady of the Enlightened, an individual must have their scientific merits recognised by the Covenant. Beyond that, a prospective Peer must offer land or some significant holding or power base to serve as the location for their own secure place of learning. Sturgeon offered *Wells Chasm* as the model for the



ultimate form of such a facility - what he called a Promethean Complex. Though many Peers could not afford to build such a facility they were content for now to ally themselves with the half a dozen Lords and Ladies who could. Over time, and with the right opportunities taken, each Peer would go on to found their own Promethean Complex and by this method, the Enlightened began to develop a decentralised structure and a web of strongholds across the globe - essential if their independence was to be assured.

THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

Returning to *Wells Chasm* with many of the newly dubbed Enlightened, Sturgeon was gratified to see that in his year of absence, Markov had developed *Wells Chasm* and fortified it with new technologies to ensure that their position on the continent was relatively secure. It was regrettable that the new Eden that surrounded the Promethean Complex was already beginning to be despoiled by the industry required for the progress of humanity. A burden of the Covenant was the knowledge that for their destiny to be fulfilled, the world must be forever changed. What use are verdant flora and wonderous fauna if not harnessed for the enlightenment of mankind?

Markov, driven by a mixture of exploratory fervour and in part by the need to prove the value of their discoveries, had pressed on doggedly and codified a huge amount of the knowledge they found in their exploration of the Vault. He firmly believed the time was ripe for the fruits of these labours to be shared with the nations of the Earth for the betterment of humanity.

For several months there was heated discussion amongst the Enlightened as to the correct path. Thanks to Lord Lyon Playfair's cypher the Peers were able to discuss the matters in secret over their Loomis telegraphs. Markov's urging for the sharing of the Vault's secrets was mirrored by Carpathian, Eiffel, Tesla and the engineering genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel. There was a strong voice of caution, however, from Countess Byron and Lady Drakenburg. They countered that the nations of the world were not yet ready for such power. For years the Countess had attended the courts, salons and assemblies of power in Europe and knew how fickle and self-interested governments could be. Drakenburg was aware of a shadowy network moving within similar corridors of power to her own agents who appeared to have loyalty beyond any single nation. The true nature of this Dark Council she had yet to fathom, but her instincts warned that

it did not bode well. *[Agent's note: While our own research on the Dark Council is undoubtedly more comprehensive than the material gleaned by Drakenburg and her spies, there is surely no harm in sourcing a copy of her notes to cross-reference with our own? Our friend, Mr Morden, may be able to assist us in this matter.]*

Despite these warnings, the Enlightened agreed at a Second Symposium to dispatch envoys to the major scientific institutions around the world and share without bias their research, confident that as long as no single nation was given preferential treatment or privileged access they would be secure. Even the guarded Celestian Empire were receptive to the offer of mutual advancement.

In the first few years, this balance and equality stimulated the greatest surge of innovation and invention since the beginning of the Industrial Age. Regular and equal shipments of Element 270 were delivered to each nation's principle scientific institution in exchange for a copy of the research documentation and prototypes of whatever applications they made with the mineral.

The voltaic arc technology that the Prussian Imperium had been exploring for years was given a huge boost when Tesla introduced sturgenium infused superconductor coils into the design. After seeing what Element 270 could do for their metallurgical research, the Ottoman Sultanate sent Princess Sherezad to study at *Wells Chasm* so that they might embrace this new age of technology fully. Brunel's rotorcraft became a reality for the British Crown as a unique alloy of sturgenium and copper created a revolutionary metal combining light weight and incredible strength. The Russian Commonwealth continued to explore sonic applications now using sturgenium reinforced resonators while the Latin Alliance finally made the breakthrough in their attempts to miniaturise their thermal projectors so that the so-called heat lances could be mounted on war machines and fortifications. The Celestian Empire made great strides in the fields of magnetic levitation and atomic energy though true nuclear power eluded them as it continued to confound the Enlightened themselves.

Their hubris, of course, meant that the Enlightened retained most of the gathered Element 270 for their own work. It was they who produced the most bleeding-edge applications as the half dozen newly founded Promethean Complexes around the world began work on a series of extraordinary generators,



each only made possible by sturgenium crystals at their core acting as superconductors. Despite the protestations of Markov and Carpathian, the Enlightened saw caution in keeping the secrets of these most potent devices away from individual nations. For these were devices that could project thrumming shielding screens of energy to defeat projectiles, kinetic enhancers to augment engine efficiency and machines that could influence local weather patterns. Most incredible of all were bizarre temporal and distance distorters; engines of near-surreal complexity that could cause localised warps in time, or teleport men and material enormous distances in mere moments. The Enlightened arrogantly presumed that no nation should have these marvels as the applications for warfare were all too obvious and terrifying to them.

[Agent's note: Amongst all this ingenuity, no-one seemed to notice when Burson Carpathian combined it with molybdochalkos to create a casket suitable for his own grand scheme to come to fruition. This most unassuming of applications would set in motion events that would change the world far more profoundly than any generator would.]

RULE OF THE CUSTODIANS

For a while, the Enlightened basked in the glory of their accomplishments. The wave of new technology, for which they earned the plaudits they had desired for so long, spread out across the world. Sturgeon dared to believe that what he termed the Sturgenium Age would herald a new era of peace for all.

Across the globe the development of rudimentary mechanical servants known as automata grew rapidly from the machines carrying out instructions on simple punch cards to millions of complex instructions being engraved on silver disks so that these mechanical beings could ape more complex reasoning. The eagerness with which other nations absorbed the Enlightened discoveries and the innovations accelerated by Element 270 was matched only by their drive to take these incalculably precious gifts and turn them to warlike ends. Technology designed for weather control, disaster relief and agricultural resilience became the basis for whole industries of war. The discovery of new metal alloys and chemicals went into the construction of Battleships and hulking Landships, cannons and bombs.

The benefits of the Vault revealed, once again, the true nature of humankind. Each nation was

desperate for an advantage over the others and frustrated that their own developments would be shared impartially by the Enlightened. As the nations demanded more, the Enlightened felt compelled to impose rations on Element 270 shipments and demanded greater oversight as to its application. *[Agent's note: Predictably, the Enlightened would use any pretext to exert undue influence and control over the other global powers. It is a testament to our belief in the Union's manifest destiny that we did not capitulate to such demands.]*

Finally, in 1856 Sturgeon called for the Third Symposium of the Enlightened to propose a solution to the destabilising nature Element 270 was having on the world. The arguments became heated and splinter factions began to form. Sturgeon used all of his influence and patronage to finally carry the motion on the day. The Enlightened would become true custodians of the knowledge from the Vault which was now unleashed elsewhere in the world. All the secrets and technologies would be developed exclusively by the Enlightened and withheld from the world at large until they had proven themselves capable of the responsibility for the great power it contained. There would doubtless be some anger and even some military repercussions from the other nations, but as the Enlightened had contained those most terrible of technologies, including the generators, for their own arsenal, it would be a brief conflict.

THE REBELLION OF MARKOV

While Sturgeon was away, Markov had built a political power-base as a cover for his true activities. His followers, including Princess Sherezad of the Ottoman Sultanate and Burson Carpathian of Romania, believed this Custodian ideology was caused through fear and jealousy, in contravention of the goals of the more egalitarian principles of the Enlightened. On this proclamation from the Symposium, the authority of Custodians was challenged by a coup instigated by Helsinki Markov. Secretly an agent of the Russian Commonwealth, Markov utilised his allies to set in motion an armed insurrection at *Wells Chasm* and *Leonidas Spire* and fled in the ensuing chaos taking with him generator technology and a large shipment of Element 270 to his patron, Tsar Vladimir.

Fighting broke out between the Custodians and Egalitarians, resulting in chaos throughout Promethean Complexes around the world. Princess Sherezad and others took many of the prized secrets of the Covenant back to their homelands.



Thanks to Markov's treachery the world now had access to the most potent weapons and technology the greatest minds on the planet could envisage. The world was set on a path that must surely lead to self-annihilation.

Even the powers of the Generators were twisted: weather control devices intended to green the world's deserts were instead used to invoke tempests that devastated towns and villages. Terrifying force projectors were created with the power to make both metals and, more horrifyingly, flesh run like wax. Interminable minor conflicts continued to flare up around the world, now enlivened by a desire for a rival power's technological and scientific secrets as well as whatever territory and resources it had to offer. For all the scintillating knowledge bestowed by the supposed Sturginium Age, basic human nature, with its greed, pride, hubris, desire for power and dominance remained unchanged.

But the efforts of the Enlightened could not prevent human ingenuity developing ever more dangerous devices from the knowledge they had already unleashed. Pandora's Box was well and truly open and, for the Enlightened, even worse was soon to come. Although the revolt quickly subsided when its participants realised the truth it had already served its purpose for the traitor Markov. In the wake of the revolt and its consequences, the Enlightened left were shaken and shell-shocked. They had believed themselves and their new domain above the petty concerns of nationalistic fervour and factionalism. That conceit, that prideful self-assurance, now lay in ruins.

THE SCHISM

By 1857, although the Enlightened had managed to conceal news of the internal crisis from the rest of the world, Markov's treachery ensured that the Covenant was split into two distinct factions. Custodians believed that advanced technology should be guarded and hidden from the world until humanity reached the maturity to use it, while the Egalitarians believed that every man and woman had the right to self-determinism and that it was the obligation of the Enlightened to work with those nations to bring about a new age.

The Enlightened's most ardent scientist-patron, President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, had recently founded the Latin Alliance, a bold coalition of France, Spain and Italy. This emergent power promised to be a safe haven for the scientists and researchers, just as the French Republique had

been these past five years. As a signatory of the Covenant Charter, Bonaparte was obligated to establish a Promethean Complex, which he did with the renovation and expansion of *Mont Saint-Michel*.

It was while meeting at *Mont Saint-Michel* that Julianna Drakenburg discovered that many of the secrets stolen by Markov had made their way onto the blackmarket. Louis-Napoleon had purchased as many of these designs outright as he could to keep them out of the hands of rival world powers. As a continued show of good faith with the Covenant, the Latin Alliance shared everything they had aquired and kept out of the public domain. *[Agent's note: Though as all such technologies had been stolen from the Covenant to begin with there was little material gain for the Enlightened by this gesture. I am sure Louis-Napoleon was not unaware of this fact.]*

In light of the destruction unleashed in the world and the origins of Markov's treachery, the Custodians easily assumed complete dominance over the shell shocked Covenant. The most influential Peers ensured that those few Egalitarians who remained were consigned to the fringes of the organisation, effectively exiling them from the Enlightened. Though they were entitled to attend future Symposia, any secrets from the Vault were denied to them. The hope was that denied of further inventions, these ostracised members would wither on the vine. And indeed they most likely would have, being subsumed into their own national interests over time. Everything would have gone according to the Custodians' plan had it not been for the actions of one Enlightened Peer and a sturginium lined casket.

THE HEX SEED

Desperately searching for a discovery that might save the life of his ailing wife, Veronica, Burson Carpathian had come into contact with the mysterious Dark Council; individuals who had become bonded with an ancient alien entity known as the Hex. *[Agent's note: What follows contains a significant degree of supposition based on anecdotal accounts. When supported by what the Service has witnessed in the field I cannot help but feel that we are close to the truth of the matter, even with a lack of hard evidence.]*

The Hex itself existed in a geode-like Seed that was hidden away from the prying eyes of the uninitiated. Carpathian discovered the location and nature of the Hex Seed and, most interestingly of all



to him, that the base of this alien geode was a huge subterranean reservoir of a crimson fluid. The fluid was referred to as the 'Essence of the Hex', but other than helping fuel arcane powers or being ingested to cause physical mutation or transformation, the potential of the fluid was largely untapped. The viscous, crimson liquid was provided to him in small doses and seemed to invigorate his mind when a single drop is imbibed. Tantalised by the invigorating properties of the Essence, Carpathian thought that it might hold the secret to returning his wife to health.

With the aid of allies in the Enlightened, Carpathian managed to steal the Seed. The Dark Council had agents throughout Europe and Carpathian reasoned that it would not be long before he was identified as the architect of the theft. Nowhere in Europe would be safe for the experimentation he intended, but two of the Enlightened here in the Union of Federated States had offered him sanctuary. Gustave Eiffel and the brilliant geologist Petronella Gage had been forced into exile thanks to their support of Markov's insurrection. They had secured the town of Payson in the Arizona Territory as an ideal home for Carpathian and his work.

SHATTERED

Crossing the Atlantic on the steamer *Lady B*, Carpathian, his wife Veronica and their allies were aware that their prospective foster nation was wracked with tensions as the northern and southern states vied for control of the vast resources of the continent. They hoped to arrive unnoticed. They could not have been more wrong.

[Agent's note: Here we must again make an educated guess based on the available facts. As you know, the very existence of the Dark Council is difficult to verify, let alone to what extent, if any, it has influence here in Washington D.C. What follows in regard to General Grant is taken from information supplied in confidence by our friend Garrett Morden. Though his candour is appreciated, I feel it unlikely to be welcomed by General Grant should you share any of the following with him].

The Dark Council undoubtedly would have found itself severely weakened by Carpathian's actions. Clearly it was still more than capable of exerting its influence and exacting revenge - Carpathian had been marked for death. Using what resources and connections it had, the Dark Council manipulated Odysseus Grant, who was at this time a promising army Captain now reputed to have fallen to drink and paranoia. Fuelled by rumours of a fresh

European threat to the security of the Union, Grant was set on a course to destroy Carpathian and his newly arrived Enlightened entourage.

Taking the travellers completely by surprise, Grant's bombardment killed most of the Enlightened landing party and Carpathian was smashed like a rag doll against the Seed-carrying casket he had risked so much to bring to these shores. Twisted and broken, as consciousness left him Carpathian saw his wife, Veronica, dead at his side - her body pierced by a single bullet that had gone unnoticed in the cacophony of battle.

A NEW BEGINNING

Carpathian awoke days later atop the casket containing the Hex Seed. He had been carried many miles away from the carnage but he barely heard or cared. His wife was dead and he was delirious with pain. With consciousness came the realisation that both his arms and legs were shattered and he sensed the onset of infection. Death would surely claim him before long. The Enlightened made their careful way to Payson, where others of the Covenant were waiting for them. The eccentric Doctor Francis Tumblety immediately took charge of the barely-alive Carpathian and began to work on him.

As he recovered, Carpathian put aside the pain and despair of his wife's death and focused instead on the future. If Veronica could not be healed then perhaps she could be resurrected? He would need to make war against death itself to achieve this vision. Eiffel and another Peer in exile, Emily Roebling, had overseen the renovation and fortification of Payson. The town had become a Promethean Complex built on the example of *Wells Chasm*. Carpathian dubbed his new home '*The Warcradle*'.

The entire town had been completely rebuilt to their specifications, combining classic European architecture with the rough and ready materials of the American West. It contained extensive laboratory and meeting spaces, not to mention formidable defences that would make the town a veritable fortress should it come under attack. Most important of all were the catacombs excavated beneath *The Warcradle*, the deepest of which would serve as a vault to securely store the stolen Seed. Carpathian dismissed the workers who had helped him before collapsing the passageways that had led them down. An alternative route, known only to himself, led him back out into the hot dry air of Payson. As impressive as all this was, for the night



impossible feat he aimed to achieve, Carpathian knew that he would need resources and a power-base in the Union many times larger than he could currently call on. Now his work truly began.

THE INVENTION OF RJ-1027

With the Hex Seed now shielded securely beneath *The Warcradle*, Carpathian devoted all his time and resource to experimentation with the Essence. He exposed biological matter to the alien mineral and worked to create more of the volatile crimson fluid. Tantalisingly, he discovered that by mixing the fluid with gunpowder or other accelerants he could greatly increase the potency of weaponry and combustion engines - a process colloquially known as 'juicing' them. Once he had stockpiled a sufficient quantity and designed suitably armoured and durable sturgenium-enhanced containers for it, he announced the Fourth Enlightened Symposium to be held in Payson at *The Warcradle*. The date of this Symposium, the 27th of October 1859, had special significance for Carpathian as it was also the date of his wedding anniversary. As he stared into the glowing crimson fluid he felt a connection to his wife, as well as the promise of her eventual resurrection.

In the wider world, their authority challenged by the announcement, the Custodian leaning Enlightened were in a difficult position. Fearing a further division, Sturgeon and his allies at *Wells Chasm* acknowledged this Fourth Symposium but claimed security concerns in the rapidly destabilising Union for a reason not to attend in person.

Many Enlightened did attend, however, including Princess Sherezad and distinguished guests such as Amantine Dupin, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Louis-Jules Trochu. To them Carpathian unveiled his greatest invention, a new wonder-fuel he called RJ-1027. *[Agent's note: Presumably Carpathian believes that the pseudo-science of the name would hopefully distance the liquid from its true origins to the general public as well as to his Peers. Though the Service is fully aware of the true nature of RJ-1027, I understand the need for such facts to remain within the Service at this time].*

For the Enlightened, RJ-1027 represented a near-infinite power source limited in application only by their imaginations. That it had been developed and designed by Burson Carpathian, the self-proclaimed Father of the Enlightened was undisputed. Available for all the world to use, RJ-1027 rapidly became the means by which the designs of much of

the new wave of technology unleashed by the Enlightened became possible.

Sturgeon reluctantly contacted Carpathian via Loomis telegraph to offer his congratulations and Carpathian graciously gifted *Wells Chasm* with the first shipment of RJ-1027 canisters so that their important work in the Vault might benefit. Although some of the Enlightened like Nikolai Tesla and Augusta Byron still favoured power sources they had independently developed, within five years the Enlightened were almost exclusively powering their advanced technologies with RJ.

The energy contained in an oil drum sized RJ cylinder could power a family home for six months before it would need to be switched for a new one. The spent RJ cylinders would be collected and taken back to *The Warcradle* where they would be recharged for a small fee. Within a decade, a million canisters of RJ-1027 of all different sizes could be found in transit back to *The Warcradle* at any one time, a whole third of the immense factory city turned over to the safe storage and reprocessing of canisters.

CIVIL WAR

The sale and supply of RJ-1027 was only the first step in Carpathian's plan. The cost of processing and generating more of the Essence with the secrecy that required was relatively high. The vast majority of the world's fuel requirements were still driven by coal, oil, timber and gas. This was unlikely to change for the next few decades as the application of RJ-1027 tended to be for more advanced technologies rather than the day to day. Carpathian needed something to drive the purchase and distribution of the technologies. *[Agent's note: The Union did not disappoint in this matter].*

The initial flashpoint in 1861 was over the extensive oil and mineral reserves of Mississippi and Texas. Carpathian and the Enlightened loyal to him knew that the power they required for their greater work could only be acquired if these tensions and fears were stoked. Carpathian and his Enlightened needed to be in a position to demand autonomy and favour from whichever faction came out on top. To that end, they began to sell juiced rifles, automata, sonic cannons and of course the wonder-fuel that allowed all these infernal devices to be powered to both sides. Thus, when the Civil War erupted in earnest, it was fought with the most destructive weapons ever devised by man.



Armies were swept from the field as streams of crimson power flashed beneath the rising clouds of smoke and dust. Armoured landships crawled across the churned, muddy ground, shrugging off blasts that would have shattered castles. Millions died and the nation was devastated as the war dragged on, the Confederacy and the Union equally matched through the availability of Enlightened technology. As year after bloody year passed with no sign of an eventual winner, Enlightened elsewhere in the world began to fear that it would never end. They predicted with certainty that the country would be reduced to a smouldering cinder before the war reached a conclusion.

Eventually, it was Nikolai Tesla who broke faith with the rest of the Enlightened and intervened, despite Sturgeon and the other Peers warning him not to. Taking his voltaic technologies with him, Tesla journeyed to the Union, providing them with what would turn out to be the upper hand. Supported by Tesla-Coil powered automata and devastating Rolling Thunder tanks, the war ended within months. The exhausted populace on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line finally brokered an uneasy peace. *[Agent's note: Director Lincoln, have you ever asked Nikolai why he chose the North over the South?]*

Carpathian was furious, watching all of the groundwork he had laid with the Confederacy rendered useless with their defeat. He immediately moved to consolidate his holdings through the connections and alliances he had built with northern interests. The foundation of several Promethean Complexes had been established during the war and now these were greatly expanded and reinforced into massive industrial cities on the land ceded to them by the newly victorious Union.

ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE SELF

Knowing better than any other what the true purpose of the Enlightened was, Carpathian directed his servants and acolytes at *The Warcradle*, making it the most advanced source of weapons and research in the world. The aloof Sturgeon and his allies at *Wells Chasm* saw the emergence of Carpathian and those who followed him as a dangerous, unstable element within the Enlightened. The Union Civil War had been a flashpoint driving on scientific endeavours around the globe as well as the demand for RJ-1027 and the technologies that it could power. But the conflict had also breathed new life into the Egalitarian movement within the Covenant. Now the notions

of Carpathian became a credible alternative to the principles espoused by Sturgeon.

Following the betrayal of Markov, the facilities in the Antarctic have been expanded, with a large shipyard and airfield producing all manner of advanced craft to help the Enlightened project their principles across the globe. While Carpathian and his allies have chosen to portion out advanced technologies equally and fan the flames of industry and conflict, so too have Sturgeon and the rest of the Enlightened taken whatever steps they deem necessary against those same nations to ensure that no power gains a decisive advantage. Sturgeon is Lord of *Wells Chasm*, now a bustling metropolis built around the fabled Vault itself; and *Leonidas Spire*, the great port on the Antarctic Peninsula presided over by Maximilian Schneider. From these two Promethean Complexes spread a vast network of tunnels, cut and blasted by engineers with drills, ice-burners and the tireless TX 01 automata. Underground galleries contain workshops and farms illuminated by sun-like globes; made habitable by atmospheric controls; interconnected by railways and pneumatic pressure tubes.

Elsewhere in the world, though not quite to the scale of the Union Civil War, other opportunities have enabled Promethean Complexes to be established. Through such agreements, the Enlightened are usually left alone by their host governments, although their methods and attitudes often make for tense relationships with the local populace. The Promethean Complex known as *The Gateway*, was once the tiny south Atlantic island of South Georgia. This island-city is, quite literally, the entrance to the Antarctic approach, through which all visitors must pass. The Crown is resentful of being manipulated to sell the land to the Enlightened. *[Agent's note: The Crown may be resentful, but I think it fair to say that now that our dependence on the Enlightened has faded, we are in open aggression here in the Union - particularly against our 'guests' out in the Badlands. Even the general populace now see Carpathian and his Peers for what they truly are - opportunistic monsters making coats for themselves out of our widow's weeds. I understand that this mounting antagonism towards the Enlightened has caused Nikolai and his assistants go to great lengths to distinguish themselves from their Enlightened cousins. Having visited The Pipeworks myself, it is clear that beyond the publicly accessible lobby and conference room, the facility is still to all intents and purposes a Promethean Complex.]*



AN ENLIGHTENED PRESENT

The Enlightened are vastly changed since their founding a quarter of a century ago. Now more self-focused and fractured than before, they are still collectively driven by the ultimate goal of elevating humanity through science. Hulking monstrosities guard the entrances to their labyrinthine promethean complexes that are dotted around the globe. Overhead, their bizarre and wonderous rotor craft ferry materials back and forth between these strongholds. It is folly to mistake their unusual appearance for weakness as they are bristling with concealed rockets and searing lasers ready to annihilate any who would threaten them. Similarly, their fleet is usually hidden from view beneath the waves, elegantly rising only when needed to loose weaponry that cleaves through enemy armour and shields. The Enlightened make prodigious use of their vaunted generator technology, confounding their foes or harry them from new and unexpected quarters.

Thanks to the actions of the traitor Markov, the clash of nations and the influence of the Hex, the Enlightened's plan to control the world through science and technology has come to nought and the various groups and factions are left scrambling to follow the many counter agendas they have devised. Though the Covenant of the Enlightened still arrogantly places itself above the petty jingoism of the nations of the Earth, rivalries between the Enlightened members are fierce. Competing designs are often produced in different Promethean Complexes in an attempt to earn their inventor prestige amongst their fellow Peers or lucrative contracts should they feel that selling their creations will further their goal. An example of this conflict was seen when Zerah Colburn's Blackhoof Automata was replaced as the primary means of personal transport in the Union army by Erasmus Levett's Iron Horse. The sickness and death caused by the Automata's primitive atomic batteries resulted in such humiliation for Colburn that he flung himself from the cooling tower of his Promethean Complex, the *Iron Citadel*.

Within their Promethean Complex, each Peer rules as a technological autocrat and is responsible for maintaining a militia or retinue armed with the latest in Enlightened advancements. Some Peers make use of extensive mechanical augmentation to create a capable force out of the physically injured or idealistic volunteers. Others have explored the paths of automation to create marvellous machines capable of a semblance of independent thought processing. Able to carry out a variety of tasks with

the world's most advanced fleet of naval ships, armoured machines and aircraft, the Enlightened continue to push the envelope of human advancement, harnessing any technologies they can create or reverse engineer.

Beyond the predominant ideologies within the Enlightened of Egalitarianism and Custodianship, the reality is more nuanced and each Peer pursues the agenda of the Covenant in their own way. Isambard Kingdom Brunel spends his time at a vast workhouse complex known as *Bletchley* designing ever more impressive engineering feats for his patron, Queen Victoria. Brunel is convinced that the world was at peace when the Crown's rule was unchallenged and now puts his great intelligence to work considering how best to return the Crown to her former glory. For Barnabas Sturgeon at *Wells Chasm*, it is about developing the secrets of the Vault and dealing with those who would misuse them. For Lady Julianna Drakenburg at *The Gateway*, it is about keeping an eye on the scientific achievements of the seven great power blocs and eliminating or seizing emergent technologies that would prove a danger to the world.

Through these Peers and dozens more, the dream of the Sturginium Age has faded into the reality of the Dystopian Age. It is only a matter of time before the brilliant minds of the Covenant of the Enlightened are called upon to defend humanity in their darkest hour. Until then, they must each learn to find a place in this era of constant warfare and strife that they themselves have created.