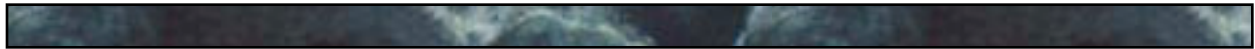


STORM KNIGHTS

WORLD LAWS

OF EARTH

JASYN JONES



WORLD LAWS OF EARTH

Game Design: Jasyn Jones

Design and Commentary: Ks. Jim Ogle

Commentary: Phil Dack, Winston-in-a-Box, Gordon R. Dell

Editing, Layout & Graphic Design: Jasyn Jones

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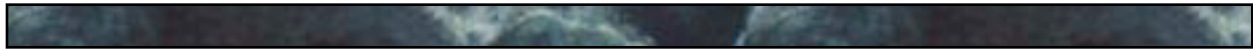
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These are original rules, intended for use with *TORG: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. The most recent version of these rules (and other TORG resources) can be found on the STORM KNIGHTS website:

<http://web.me.com/stormknights/>

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INTRODUCTION

TORG is a cinematic multi-genre game. Its mechanics support not only multiple genres, but also trans-genre play. In the game, each cosm is representative of a genre: Ororsh for horror, Aysle for fantasy, the Nile for pulp action, and so forth.

These cosms are rated in Axioms—numeric levels of advancement—and World Laws. Axioms are invariant: a 23 means the same thing in all cosms.

World Laws are custom rules, unique to a cosm, that define and implement the genre of that cosm.

Earth's World Laws (originally published in the *Delphi Council Worldbook*)

are widely regarded as among the worst. They are bland, uninspiring, and don't define a genre at all.

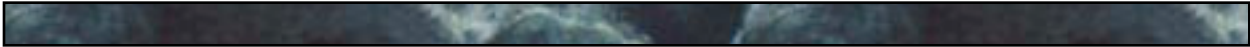
One can't fully blame the writer; it's hard to devise World Laws for a cosm with no defined genre and Core Earth, alone of

all the cosms, has no explicit genre. We know Aysle is the Reality of Magic, but what is Core Earth the reality of?

This article gives new World Laws for

Core Earth, World Laws that embody the genre of the cosm and offer mechanics to reflect that genre in play.

In order to devise appropriate World Laws for Earth, we first have to start by de-



fining its genre.

The Genre of Earth

Defining Core Earth's genre involves a straightforward restatement of what Core Earth actually is. TORG is a "cinematic" game, where "cinematic" means "reflecting the pacing and action of Action Movies." Core Earth is the real world as it exists in TORG. Therefore, Core Earth is "cinematic" Earth: The real world as it is depicted in Action Movies. "Cinematic" Earth is the genre of Core Earth.

Not only is this a logical inevitability (if you have a "real world" setting in a cinematic game, it has to be the "cinematic real world"), but it also matches the nature of Earth as explored in the game material. More, it matches the themes and pace of TORG (almost by definition). And, as we shall later see, the tropes of action movies help explain some of the more fantastic elements of Core Earth's reality.

WHY WORLD LAWS?

The simplest explanation is that Earth already has them, in the aforementioned *Delphi Council Worldbook*. Even if we ignored that, Core Earth does have custom rules, unique to itself, and these custom rules are World Laws.

It could be argued that, since Core Earth reflects the real world, and the real world has no genre, Core Earth can't have a genre. The problem is, Core Earth isn't the real Earth. It's a cinematic version of Earth, and "cinematic Earth" accurately encapsulates this. "Cinematic Earth" is what Core Earth is, "Cinematic Earth" is what Core Earth must be in *Torg*. This is a genre, one intrinsic to the nature of the Core Earth reality.

Core Earth has a genre and it already has World Laws. Given these, the World Laws of Earth ought to match the genre, ought to encourage events and tropes common to the genre. More, the World Laws must also implement and explain the unique powers of Core Earth's reality. Since the official World Laws don't achieve this, new World Laws are needed.

SOURCES AND INSPIRATION

While designing these World Laws, the author drew on a wide variety of "near real-world" action-adventure movies for inspiration, including (but not limited to) the following:

Die Hard, Die Harder, Die Hard With a Vengeance, Lethal Weapon, Lethal Weapon 2, Under Siege, Executive Decision, Murder at 1600, Broken Arrow, Face/Off, Mission Impossible 1, Mission Impossible 2, The Sum of All Fears, Con Air, The Rock, Bad Boys, S.W.A.T., Speed, True Lies, Eraser, and Enemy of the State.

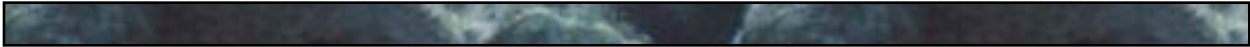
By looking at the tropes and themes of "nearly real world" action movies (such as Die Hard, Speed, Lethal Weapon, Mission Impossible, and The Rock), we can gain insights into the genre of Core Earth, and thus derive World Laws for the cosm. Of course, the extant official material must guide us as well.

The Powers of Core Earth

Even though action movie tropes are the core of Earth's reality, they are not its whole. According to the game material, Core Earth has a powerful influence far beyond the borders of the cosm. Core Earth forms more Storm Knights than any other reality involved in the Possibility Wars. The Storm Knights it creates are filled with Possibility Energy, more than any other cosm (see pg. 42 of the *Ravagons Sourcebook*).

Not only that, but Core Earth creates new Storm Knights in the realities invading Earth, Storm Knights of that reality, and does so even in their home cosms. These Knights are filled with extra Possibility Energy as well.

This means that, through a mechanism not explained in the official material, Core Earth has the ability to alter what happens in a Moment of Crisis, even the power to cause a Moment of Crisis and create a Storm Knight. This power extends through-



“Core Earth is reaching out into the cosmverse, to far distant realities, and drawing Storm Knights to her, to aid against the High Lords.”

out the Core Earth cosm and into the cosms attached to her.

There’s more. Core Earth is reaching out into the cosmverse, to far distant realities, and drawing Storm Knights to her, to aid against the High Lords (Core Earth cannot create Storm Knights there, but she can draw them to her). Core Earth’s influence extends far beyond the cosm itself, even beyond the cosms attached to Earth, out into the cosmverse.

All of these abilities are present in the official material (see pg. 184 of the *Revised and Expanded TORG Rulebook*) and are dramatically different than those any other reality has. They are custom rules, unique to the Core Earth cosm. That is,

they are part of Core Earth’s World Laws, and any proposed Core Earth World Laws must account for them. In particular, the World Laws have to explain why Core Earth has an influence far beyond what is possible for any other reality.

Genres of Reality

Last, as Core Earth is the cinematic version of the Real World, it has the same media and cultures as the real world, including fantasy novels, horror novels, comic books, and cyberpunk novels. It can be noted, and seems a bit strange, that the invading cosms so neatly match the fiction of Earth.

Out-of-game, this is the result of a conscious choice by the designers of TORG to make a multi-genre game. There needs to be an in-game explanation as well, one that identifies why so many cosms match Earth’s fiction and what that means. The World Laws of Earth should provide this explanation.



THE WORLD LAWS

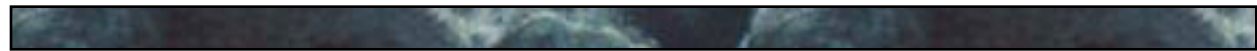
OVERVIEW

Earth has powerful abilities that have an effect far beyond what would normally be possible. A game mechanical explanation is simple: Core Earth's World Laws are Powers, like Orrorsh's Powers of Fear and Corruption. As Powers, they evade the restrictions normally placed on World Laws (cf pg. 57, the *Orrorsh Sourcebook*).

In-game, Earth's Powers are caused by her immense reservoir of Possibility Energy. This energy is filtered through the cosm's Possibility Nexus, then broadcast throughout the cosm, into invading cosms, and across the cosmverse. In cosms attached to Earth, this acts to create Storm Knights (among other things), and in cosms far removed from Earth, it draws Storm Knights to the cosm.

Possibility energy is required for this to work. The Everlaws, including the Everlaw of One, enforce their dictates through Possibility Energy. To create new Storm Knights, Core Earth must strengthen the Everlaw of Two (or Four, depending on circumstances), sending it enough Possibility

“Earth's Powers are caused by her immense reservoir of Possibility Energy. This energy is filtered through the cosm's Possibility Nexus, then broadcast throughout the cosmverse.”



Energy to make it stronger than the Everlaw of One.

Since the Everlaw of Two is what allows contradictions to exist, strengthening it allows Core Earth to have an effect even in places where the Everlaw of One would shut it down. The Everlaw of One sends a surge of energy, in an attempt to remove the contradiction, but the Everlaw of Two (strengthened by Earth's Possibility Energy) prevents this from occurring. By this, Earth can affect natives of other realities, even in their home cosms.

The Paradigm of "Cinematic" Earth

Most action movies follow a similar story template: a villain launches a dangerous plot, which a hero accidentally stumbles upon and, after a struggle against great odds, overcomes. This is the plot of movies like the "Die Hard" series, "Under Siege", "Broken Arrow", "Face/Off", and others too numerous to mention. Cinematic Earth's central paradigm is this:

THE THREAT OF VILLAINY

This World Law states: "Heroes and villains are extraordinary, larger-than-life individuals who have made a choice to follow a specific moral path. Heroes choose the path of benevolence and selflessness, villains the path of selfishness and malevolence. Villains will conspire to gain power, wealth, or to indulge other selfish drives."

Transcendence, in other realities, is a matter of pure chance. Whether by confronting an alien reality or through the

"Heroes take up the burden to defend the innocent, protect the defenseless, and act with courage in the face of danger."

WORLD LAW PRECIS

The Threat of Villainy: Heroes and villains are extraordinary individuals who have made a choice to follow a specific moral path. Heroes choose the path of benevolence and selflessness, villains the path of selfishness and malevolence. Villains will conspire to gain power, wealth, or to indulge other selfish drives.

The Power of Hope: Whenever villainy manifests, a hero will arise to confront it. If the hero perseveres, they can overcome and succeed against incredible odds. No matter how bleak the situation may seem, there is always hope.

The Gift of Inspiration: Possibilities inspire, and no cosm has more Possibility Energy than Core Earth. Core Earthers have an unusual knack for sudden insights, insights which allow them to understand something new or to see something old in a new light. These insights inspire artists, researchers, and larger-than-life heroes and villains, enabling them to do things they never could have otherwise.

"Villains plot to do evil, and heroes appear to fight and eventually defeat them." This clash between villains and heroes is central to Cinematic Earth.

graces of the Everlaw of Four, Moments of Crisis occur randomly, without regard to the morality of the individual involved. In contrast, Earth's World Laws choose specific individuals to transcend: individuals who are either villains or heroes.

Villains are people who seek to fulfill their own needs and desires above those of any other. They have little concern for others, save in those cases where others can help them achieve their goals. Villains are malevolent. They enjoy the suffering of others, or simply ignore it. They have no desire to help those in need.

Heroes are those who take up the burden to defend the innocent, protect the defenseless, and act with courage in the face of danger. Heroes are people who

WORLD LAWS IN ALIEN REALITIES

According to the *Torg Rulebook*, Core Earth's reality has an influence throughout the cosm, even in invader's realms, and into invader's cosms. Core Earth's World Laws, therefore, are in effect throughout Core Earth, even in invader's realms, and in the invader's home cosms.

This means that Core Earth Storm Knights always have access to their own World Laws in all those places. So long as they are in the Core Earth cosm or in a cosm attached to Core Earth, they can access their World Laws without contradiction, even in alien Pure Zones, as if they were using a Reality Bubble. This (as discussed in the Overview) is because Core Earth is sustaining its World Laws far beyond its borders, allowing them to work where they normally wouldn't.

This effect is similar to the Ravagon Law of the Most Real (pg. 40, *Ravagons Sourcebook*), except that it only supports Core Earth's World Laws and then only in invader's realms or home cosms. In cosms removed from the Wars, Earth World Laws cause contradictions as normal.

have a strong sense of duty, selflessness, and responsibility. Heroes seek to aid the needy, protect the helpless, and ease the suffering of others. They are benevolent, decent, and charitable.

Unlike the Nile, these categories are not proscriptive- no one is forced to fit into either. On the contrary, these are descriptive- they define certain behaviors, and individuals who follow those behaviors are proactively transcended, while those who do not remain ordinary.

Core Earth seeks to create heroes and villains who are "larger than life." This is satisfied, in part, just by transcending them: by becoming possibility-rated, they have higher attribute and skill values than ords. In addition, during character creation Earth Storm Knights can get either a type specialization or a trademark specialization without spending any possibilities (see ppg. 34-35, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*). More, they gain one free roll-again per module to use with that one

specialization at any time. In general, characters who choose such a specialization will gain a reputation as being "the best" at what they do- it will become their signature feature, even above a tag skill.

Non-Player Characters, both heroes and villains, will often have such specializations. Gamemasters are encouraged to think of colorful and unusual specializations, to individualize these characters.

Villainous Plots

As a result of this World Law, villains are given opportunities to conspire and plot, so that the Threat of Villainy may manifest. Heroes are placed in situations where they can discover and defeat the plots of villains.


This World Law fosters the villainous plots that heroes encounter and fight

ON HEROISM AND VILLAINY

In most cosms, there is no definite line between heroism and villainy. The Nile is an obvious exception, with its stark contrast between Good and Evil. Even so, the Law of Morality doesn't identify heroes or villains, as it affects everyone in the cosm. A Good shopkeeper who isn't necessarily a larger-than-life hero and an Evil teacher isn't always a nefarious villain. On Earth, heroes and villains are always at least somewhat larger than life.

In contrast to the Nile, cosms like Tharkold lack a definite morality, and moral decisions are colored in tones of gray. The very notion of a "hero" would strike most Tharkoldu or Race members as a bizarre, aberrant state of mind- a person who tried to act heroic in Tharkold would very quickly wind up dead, as the odds are just too stacked against him. The ugly, grinding brutality of the War makes heroism impractical. In addition, the World Laws of Tharkold encourage behavior that is unheroic (Domination, Pain, and so forth).

The morality of Earth lies somewhere between the stark Good/Evil of the Nile and the brutal moral ambiguity of Tharkold.



against. It empowers villains to take those actions that cause a Threat of Villainy to manifest.

Villains have many goals, chief of which are wealth and power. In order to achieve these goals, Earth villains devise and enact intricate and improbable plots. In the real world, such ambitious plots would be highly implausible, overly complex, and virtually guaranteed to fail. The reality of “cinematic” Earth ensures that these plots remain undiscovered and unchecked, until the Threat fully manifests itself and a hero can rise to confront the villain. The reality of Earth rewards villains

VILLAINOUS PLOTTING ELSEWHERE

Villainous plots are central to cinematic Earth’s paradigm, but are also a central theme of the *Torg* game as a whole. Many *Torg* modules and much of *Torg*’s fiction involve villainous plots that Storm Knights stumble upon and stop. This isn’t problematic.

World Laws exist to enhance a certain theme appropriate in a given reality, not to ban that theme from every other reality. The Nile Empire has a World Law of Action, but it isn’t the only realm that has action scenes. The Cyberpapacy has the World Law of Suspicion, but it isn’t the only cosm where people are suspicious. The Land Below has the Law of Savagery, but people from other realities can also be savage.

Similarly, even though schemes of villains are central to the Cinematic Earth genre, and thus must be part of Earth’s World Laws, villains in every reality can and do scheme. And if villains scheme a bit more on Earth than they would normally, well that’s just because Earth’s reality encourages that sort of thing. Really, it is to be expected.

Earth’s World Laws are Powers, and even extra-cosmic villains in Earth find that they both aid and hinder them. Their plotting and planning will go far better than mere chance would dictate, up until the moment when a hero responds, whereupon they find themselves engulfed in a fight they may not have anticipated. A wise and experienced villain might plan for this, but no plan can guarantee success in the face of Storm Knight opposition.

“A Threat of Villainy is a plot so large, so ambitious, and so dangerous that only reality-rated heroes have a chance to stop it.”

who do not think small.

Not all crimes qualify as a Threat of Villainy. The police can solve normal crimes. Threats of Villainy require the direct intervention of a larger-than-life hero, or even a group of heroes. A Threat of Villainy is a plot so large, so ambitious, and so dangerous that only reality-rated heroes have a chance to stop it, and then only after a significant, sustained effort in the face of nearly overwhelming opposition.

Villains who organize a plot find that this World Law actively aids them, by manipulating events through seeming coincidences. Against all expectations, these plots are planned and launched with no interference (the World Law ensures that this is so).

Villains usually find just the individuals they need to carry out their plot. They will meet or discover lieutenants with the knowledge and skills that are required, they will find officials who can be bribed, scientists who can be blackmailed, or inventors who have created the exact tool that the villain needs. (Very often, their chief lieutenants will themselves be reality-rated villains- assisting in another villain’s plot satisfies the demands of the Threat of Villainy as well.)

Apparent coincidences will aid the villain in other ways. The police, the FBI, and other mundane authorities will remain ignorant of the plot, allowing the villain to carry out most activities completely unopposed. The villain will conveniently gain access to plans, blueprints, or other



ORDINARY HEROES

The World Law descriptions in the rest of the article focus on possibility-rated heroes and villains, because the focus of the game is on player characters, all of whom are possibility-rated. Yet the World Laws so described also have an effect on the ordinary citizens living and working in Core Earth.

Most of the time, Ords in Core Earth live lives virtually indistinguishable from those lived by people in the “real world.” The technologies and societies are the same, and the same mundane struggle for survival that engages us, engages them. (Obviously, this is before the Wars begin.)

Sometimes they become embroiled in the clashes between heroes and villains, in which they are usually outmatched, and they must rely on a hero to save the day. In many other cases, they themselves are the hero.

For ords, the Threat of Villainy manifests in small, day-to-day matters. A grocer might see a customer being harassed by punks, by intervening to save the customer, he is drawing on the Power of Hope to thwart their Threat of Villainy.

Such events are as common for Core Earth ords as for people in the real world. In a specific sense, these events are the heart of life in Core Earth and the cumulative effect of such small moments of heroism matters far more (in most cases) than the efforts of heroes.

In one sense, heroes only exist to inspire people, to set an example, to give them hope. By serving as an example, they inspire ords to act like heroes themselves. A heroic decision, made by an ord at a key moment in time, may actually cause the ord to be transcended by the reality of Core Earth.

Heroes inspire, and those they inspire can also become heroes. For the ordinary citizens of Core Earth, this is the significance of Hope and Inspiration.

sources of information. They will gain access to enough money to finance the elaborate scheme. Very little will go wrong, up until the moment when the villains plan has progressed far enough to prove a real threat to a band of heroes. At that point, the Power of Hope takes effect.

If game mechanics are needed, villains are considered to be Up when making skill

checks to advance or implement their plan. Almost always, once the Player Characters have gotten involved, the Power of Hope has taken effect and the villain loses the Up advantage.

It may seem that this World Law is opposed to the Power of Hope. In reality, this World Law seeks to provide the circumstances that allow Hope to exist. If there were no dangers, courage would be impossible. If there were no challenges, hope would be superfluous. Villains exist to endanger and challenge innocents and heroes. In this manner, villains make hope possible.

Personal Stake

This World Law seeks to raise the ante for both heroes and villains. It does so for villains by increasing the stakes involved in their plots. It does so for heroes by making the Threat of Villainy personal.

Whenever a Threat of Villainy manifests, a Earth Storm Knight can choose to activate a Personal Stake subplot (as the card) without having to draw the subplot from the Drama Deck. This subplot represents a friend, relative, partner, or other emotionally significant NPC being drawn into the villain’s plot.

The player must roleplay the subplot accordingly, evincing a desire to save their NPC, just as if the Personal Stake subplot was in play. This may only be declared once per adventure, and does not count towards the player’s two-subplot-per-adventure maximum. As with all subplots, this is subject to gamemaster approval.

Players can even choose to create a dependent, such as a spouse or child, who is frequently drawn into their adventures. When they player chooses to activate their “bonus” Personal Stake subplot, this dependent is the character who has become embroiled in the plot.



Dark Heroes and Noble Villains

The definitions of “hero” and “villain” (ppg 5-6) are fairly extreme and seemingly one sided. If proscriptive, they could render any character into a one-dimensional caricature. This is not the intent of the World Law. No hero need match every one of the listed characteristics, similarly no villain need embody all of their description. What matters, in both cases, in what they choose to do.

Villains pursue their own goals, at the expense of others, even innocent others. Heroes choose to place themselves in danger, to protect others. Villains can be noble and heroes can be arrogant, alcoholic, selfish, racist, or ruthless. When it come down to making a choice, heroes choose to aid others. Villains choose to aid themselves.

An example of a noble villain is Gen. Francis X. Hummel, from *The Rock*. His plot—to steal 20 VX gas rockets and threaten San Francisco—is a classic Threat of Villainy. That he had no intention of murdering civilians, is irrelevant: he placed innocent others in danger, to achieve his goals.

When pressed, he acquiesced in the execution of the SEALs. He threatened—with apparent sincerity—to kill a civilian, in order to get the guidance chips back. That his goals may have been noble (to see his fallen soldiers honored and their families recompensed) is irrelevant: he was committed to his ends over all other considerations, and risked the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocents to achieve his goal.

At the end, when pressured to make good on his threats, he turned away from becoming a mass murderer. Betrayed by his subordinates and shot, he sought to rectify his error and undo the damage he caused. In that moment, he turned away

from villainy and was (somewhat) re-deemed.

The redemption of a villain is always a possibility, perhaps more so in Core Earth than any other reality. Giving the villain a chance to recant and atone is an act of nobility and heroism. When facing a noble, and perhaps penitent, villain the use

WHY DOES THIS **** ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?

Storm Knights in Earth tend to be at the center of unusual events much of their lives. Coincidence drives them to stumble upon Threats of Villainy, and villains seem inexplicably drawn to them and their loved ones.

If there were one Storm Knight in all of California and one vampire in all of California, the vampire would coincidentally choose to attack the hometown of the Storm Knight, or his sister, or him. The same stuff can happen to a guy twice, no matter how outré it seems. The reality of Earth guarantees this.


Those Storm Knights who continually turn away from Threats of Villainy, ignoring the plight of others, may find the reality of Earth no longer aiding their actions. In extremis, they may find themselves stripped of their status as Storm Knights, becoming ordinary again.

Core Earth possibility-rateds are meant to be larger-than-life. Those who shun this role, who evince a desire to be ordinary, become ordinary. Others step into the spotlight in their place.

There are no specific mechanics for this, as it is exceedingly unlikely to happen to a Player Character. Player Characters go through modules, and by definition the actions that take place in a module are of sufficient heroism as to avoid this fate.

This has more of an effect on Non-Player Characters. A hero who left the spotlight, shunning his abilities and consequently losing them, might be an interesting NPC. Such an individual could serve as a Contact or Personal Stake. If the module involves discovering the heroic past they've hidden, that's a True Identity.

Or, this could be the background of a Player Character. A retired hero, reluctantly drawn back into the spotlight is the sort of character whole movies—and Clint Eastwood's career—are built upon.



of *persuasion* and *charm* might be advised. Gamemasters might consider allowing this, even if the original module didn't call

for it. After all, noble villains have less-than-noble henchmen or lieutenants (as Hummel did) who can step into his shoes.

THE POWER OF HOPE

The Power of Hope states this: “Whenever villainy manifests, a hero will appear to confront it. If the hero perseveres, they can overcome and succeed against incredible odds. No matter how bleak the situation may seem, there is always hope.”

Most action movies revolve around a hero who stumbles on a villain's plot, and must defeat it. Similarly, heroes of Core Earth are drawn, by apparent coincidence, to places where Threats of Villainy are about to appear (or have already appeared).

Like the previous World Law, this operates mostly by coincidence. A hero might find his flight cancelled, his car might break down, his superiors might order him on an unexpected trip. Alternately, the villains might find themselves unexpectedly stumbling across a hero (or hero-in-waiting), even in the most out-of-the-way, nondescript location. Coincidence acts to bring heroes and villains together. And, when coincidence fails, this World Law just creates a hero.

Action movies are rife with apparently

HEROES WITHOUT VILLAINS

In the real world, people can act heroically in situations where no villains are present. Firemen, police, soldiers — all these professions occasionally involve the need for heroic actions. (In fact, some of the exploits of real world individuals — such as Audie Murphy — dwarf the exploits of fictional heroes.)

Such events happen in Core Earth, just as they do in real life and possibility-rated characters can obviously do much to protect or save innocent lives. The World Laws of Core Earth neither encourage nor discourage such events, instead focusing on the clash of heroes and villains.

normal people who, in the midst of a crisis, become a hero and do great things, even against monumental odds. This is an intrinsic part of Core Earth's reality.

Example: A common street cop, an ord, is attending a Halloween party, when a band of terrorists take the revelers, including his estranged wife, hostage. Though originally an ord, he is the only potential hero in the vicinity, so the Power of Hope infuses him with possibility energy, and causes him to transcend. He becomes a Storm Knight.

In such cases, the ord gains the *reality* skill at 1 add, 10 Possibilities, 10 attribute points and 3 skill points. (All of these will stand him in good stead, as the villains will almost surely have him outmanned and outgunned.)

In other realities, reality-rated individuals receive 5 Possibilities upon transcending (see the *Ravagons Sourcebook*, pg. 42).

In Earth, Storm Knights (those who transcend because of a heroic choice) receive 10 Possibilities when they transcend.

Through this World Law, Core Earth summons or creates heroes. And because Core Earth World Laws are Powers, this happens in places other than Core Earth.

Whenever a villainous plot arises, Storm Knights are drawn to it, through apparent coincidence, to oppose the villain. This World Law draws Storm Knights to the cosm, from across the cosmverse, to oppose the High Lords. More, if a villainous plot is underway anywhere in those realities invading Earth, Storm Knights will appear to oppose it. If no Storm Knights are



CHANGING THE RULES OF THE GAME

Storm Knights always lose. Other than Krand, every High Lord who invaded Earth has won every single invasion they've ever attempted. The youngest, Pharoah Mobius, has destroyed nine cosms in 30 years. The most experienced, the Gaunt Man, has had 2000 years to invade and destroy realities and he won every single time. It is a simple, ugly fact that Storm Knights always lose.

Until now. Core Earth's World Laws ensure that all villainous plots are opposed, if only by a single Storm Knight. This lone Storm Knight isn't guaranteed a victory, but without him a defeat would be inevitable. And, while not having a guarantee of victory, the World Laws of Earth ensure that defeat is never assured. Earth-created heroes can fight the High Lords on their own home ground and win.

This facet of Earth's reality is explained in the Torg *Boxed Set*: Storm Knights are presumed to win every (or nearly every) module. On Core Earth, Storm Knights can hope to win, and Earth's unique World Laws make this possible.

Most High Lords rule their home cosms unchallenged. Storm Knights, those who fight the High Lords, are rare and rarely succeed. The odds are just too heavily stacked against them. On Earth, this isn't true. More, because of the Power of Hope, it isn't true in the High Lords' home cosms anymore. The appearance of dozens or hundreds of new Storm Knights—who, against all odds, can actually defeat the High Lord's plans—threatens their power base.

The Threat of Villainy raises the stakes for heroes and villains, even in the Possibility Wars. For villains, Earth offers them a chance to become the Torg, but if they falter, they fall. For Storm Knights, the whole world is at stake. If they falter, Earth dies. For Storm Knights and High Lords both, the stakes couldn't be higher.

THE GIFT OF INSPIRATION

This World Law states: "Possibilities inspire, and no cosm has more Possibility Energy than Core Earth. Core Earth's have an unusual knack for sudden insights, insights which allow them to understand something new or to see something old in

available, Core Earth simply creates one.

(Newly created Storm Knights from the realities attached to Earth receive 10 Possibilities, just as Earth Storm Knights do. Stormers do not.)

This World Law ensures that Earth has more and more active reality-rateds than any other cosm. It is the reason that the areas that have been conquered by the High Lords exhibit more Storm Knight activity than the High Lords are used to. In the past, High Lords only needed to send a few stormers into newly conquered areas in order to subdue the heroic backlash.


This response was inadequate for Earth, and stemmed from a fundamental misunderstanding of Earth's nature. High Lords who do not take this into account may find each stela triangle they take to be more trouble than it is worth.

Group Powers

Even as the Power of Hope empowers individual Storm Knights, it also seeks to empower groups of Storm Knights. The Power of Hope, working through apparent coincidences again, also drives the creation of Storm Knight groups (who can manifest Group Powers). Outrageous and improbable circumstances tend to drive complete strangers into close proximity, all of whom are Storm Knights (or potential Storm Knights). These strangers then form close bonds and quickly learn to trust each other, even when circumstances might indicate otherwise.

a new light. These insights inspire artists, researchers, and larger-than-life heroes and villains, enabling them to do things they never could have otherwise."

Possibility Energy is a potent force, the most fundamental force (and most funda-



mental substance) of existence itself. Possibility Energy enforces a reality's Axioms (through the Everlaw of One) and (through the Everlaw of Two) makes bending the limits of those axioms possible. It does more beside.

Possibility Energy not only enforces the limitations of axioms, not only allows those axioms to be bent, but actually inspires people with visions of what is possible at higher axioms. Possibility Energy inspires inventors and philosophers, prophets and mystics, artists and writers. It inspires them to dream of the impossible, to imagine things not yet real—because their axioms don't allow for them—and drives them to make their visions real. It drives them to challenge the axiom and eventually to raise the axiom.

This process occurs in all cosms, but is far more prevalent on Earth. Earth's reality is almost totally Dominant: the Possibility Energy of the cosm (molded by this World

“Possibility Energy inspires inventors and philosophers, prophets and mystics, artists and writers. It inspires them to imagine things not yet real and drives them to make their visions real.”

Law) makes experimentation and investigation into higher axioms easier than in other realities.

This also makes it easier to raise the axioms of Earth (meaning Core Earth's axiom raise more quickly than those of other realities). In addition, many areas of Earth have axiom levels that are higher than the cosm's usual ratings. Haiti, for instance, has higher Magic and Spirit axioms than

POSSIBILITY ENERGY AND MORALITY

A good question could be asked: Why? Why do the World Laws of Earth engineer clashes between heroes and villains?

The answer is found in the nature of Possibility Energy itself. Possibility Energy is a bipart energy, embodying both creation and destruction. This is shown in its red/blue color scheme: red for destruction, blue for creation. Possibility Energy is constantly driving both these opposing effects, destruction embodied in High Lords and creation (or preservation) in Eternity Shards and Storm Knights.

On Core Earth, the struggle against destruction and creation takes the form of the Threat of Villainy and the Power of Hope. They are the local manifestation of a cosmiversal struggle between the two halves of Possibility Energy.

normal. Such realms can exist in most cosms (see ppg. 147-148, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*), but they are usually temporary. This World Law makes such realms more common in Core Earth than in other realities, and more likely to become permanent.

Characters from such realms gain the benefits of the higher axiom during character creation. Even Core Earth characters who are not from such area can, once they encounter such a realm, attune themselves to its higher axioms. By spending a Possibility (or gaining an add in a skill that is affected by the higher axiom), the character gains the benefit of the axiom increase.

Example: A Core Earth character who goes to Free Portland (a Tech 24 hardpoint in the Living Land) can spend a Possibility or gain an add in a Tech-related skill (computer science being the most appropriate, for Portland) and thus change their axiom from Tech: 23 to Tech: 23 (24).

For more rules pertaining to such increases, see ppg. 10 & 113 of the *Delphi Council Worldbook*.



Inspiration, Hope, and Villainy

Possibility Energy's ability to inspire visions of the possible may be where it got its name: it's the force that shows us what is possible. This ability to inspire is what lies behind the coincidences of the other two World Laws: the reality of Earth subtly influences peoples' actions, by showing them what they could do.

This World Law works with the other two in other ways. It inspires villains to plot, so that Threats of Villainy may manifest. And, in connection with the Power of Hope, it inspires heroes to endure.

The Power of Hope states that "[i]f the hero perseveres, they can overcome and succeed against incredible odds. No matter how bleak the situation may seem, there is always hope." It is part of the paradigm of "cinematic" Earth, that when heroes strive against villains their first efforts fail. In order to qualify as a Threat of Villainy, the plot has to be so dangerous, the villain so empowered, that heroes can overcome it only with great exertions.

Some time during that struggle, the heroes reach their lowest point, when it seems as if everything is lost. This is when they are given the Gift of Inspiration. Inspiration gives them an insight into the villain's plot, reinvigorates the heroes, alleviates their exhaustion and makes it possible for them to continue the fight.

In game terms, once a module a Core Earth character can Inspire his party (as per the Conflict Line advantage, see pg. 116,

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Ks. Jim has graciously given his permission for them to appear here.

BELIEVING IN ANOTHER REALITY

It takes more than mere fascination for ords or stormers to support an alien reality. Reality informs one's world view. People innately feel that their reality is right, that this is the way existence should be. In cosms that have never had contact with alien realities, people usually believe that their reality is the only possible one, that any other reality simply doesn't exist.

Even before the Wars, many Earthers could accept the existence of other realities: they believed (even if unconsciously) that other realities could exist. Some went even further. They didn't just believe in other realities in general, they accepted the truths underlying some other reality, possibly even rejecting this reality.

People who sincerely believe that another reality would be better than the real world, and wished that the other world existed, could qualify as supporters (even if they didn't believe that other world was real). Someone who strongly desired to live in a world of chivalrous knights, castles, and dragons might be susceptible to Ayslish reality (even if Aysle doesn't fulfill all their expectations). Those who believe in the Singularity and look forward to it, might become believers in an invading science fiction reality.

To count as a supporter of another reality, the individual would have to show more than mere interest or enthusiasm for some aspect of that reality. Typically, they would be enthusiastic to the point of eccentricity, perhaps to the point of loathing or hating their own world because it doesn't measure up to the one they imagine.

It is up to players and gamemasters to determine if any given Core Earth player character qualifies. Gamemasters decide for non-player characters, of course.

the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*). This removes all shock, KO and knockdowns, and wakes unconscious characters. All characters in the party immediately draw an additional Drama Deck card. In addition, the Core Earth character receives a clue, usually an important clue or a vital clue, about the villain's plot, his intended target, or his weaknesses.

Hope inspires, and the two World Laws work in concert to bring this about.



Inspiration in the Possibility Wars

That is how The Gift of Inspiration usu-

“When people of other realities dream, they dream of what is possible in their world. When people of Core Earth dream, they dream of what is possible somewhere, of what is possible elsewhere.”

ally functions, how it functioned before the Wars began. After the Possibility Wars started, other abilities of the World Law came to light.

Invading cosms each embody some genre of Core Earth fiction. Though the reason isn't known on Earth (and is the subject of much scientific speculation), the fact is that Earth's Possibility Nexus broadcasts Possibility Energy into the cosmverse and draws it back, and has done so since the cosm was first created. As Possibility Energy inspires, the alien Possibility Energy has inspired the fiction of Core Earth, subtly shaping it to reflect the nature of foreign realities.

Core Earth has been influenced by other realities, perhaps more so than any other cosm ever. When people of other realities dream, they dream of what is possible in their world. When people of Core Earth dream, they dream of what is possible somewhere, of what is possible elsewhere.

One of the chief tools of High Lords is shock. It is hard for most people to accept that another reality is even possible, let alone that it actually exists and more, that it has landed in your backyard. On other worlds, even when stormers did appear,

they didn't have enough time to adapt to the new tools, new abilities, new truths of the invading reality. Before they could get their bearings, their world was gone and the High Lord had moved on to some other cosm. That didn't happen on Core Earth.

It didn't happen here because the natives of Core Earth had an innate understanding that other realities existed. The Gift of Inspiration has acted to inform people, subtly and invisibly, of the existence of foreign realities. Subconsciously, many were prepared to believe that other worlds, where reality was different, could exist. For some, these realities were so compelling they were ready to believe in them even before the invasion began (see “Believing in Another Reality”, pg. 13).

Invading another reality requires believers. Because Core Earthers are, in general, more willing to believe in other realities, invading Core Earth only requires 25,000 believers per zone (pg. 176, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*), whereas invading another cosm requires

“On other worlds, even when stormers did appear, they didn't have enough time to adapt to the invasion. Before they could get their bearings, their world was gone and the High Lord had moved on to another cosm.”

twice that, or more. Additionally, those Core Earthers who believe in an alien reality are more easily transformed than usual. For these people, use the result two columns lower on the Transformation table (pg. 158, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*), to reflect the speed with which



FICTION AND REALITIES

One consequence of the Gift of Inspiration is that Core Earth's fiction (including folklore, myths, and stories) is more flexible, more varied, more multi-faceted and contradictory than that of other realities. In one sense, this limits other cosms, they're just not as flexible as Core Earth.

Core Earthers are just as limited, though. We can only dream of magic, in Aysle it's real. We can only tell tales of miracles, in the Living Land they actually happen. We can only dream of traveling the stars, while the Akashans do.

In that sense, our existence is the more tragic: We dream of other worlds, we long for other worlds, other worlds seem real to us and we want them to be real, but in the end we only live in this world. Other realities are beyond our grasp.

they transform.

Paradoxically, this World Law has also made some Core Earthers more resistant to alien invaders. Those who do not support other realities cling to their own far more fiercely than in other cosms. For these ords, use the numbers given on the Transformation chart (see sidebar, pg. 157, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook* for an explanation).

These tendencies affect possibility-rated

individuals as well. Possibility-rated individuals who are strongly attached to Core Earth's reality gain +1 add in the *reality* skill. Those who are susceptible to foreign realities more easily transform to those realities: in Reality Storms involving that reality, they are considered Stymied.

Core Earth's reality also aids the planting of Glory seeds (pg. 186, the *Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook*). Both the storyteller and the audience are inspired, the storyteller to relate a story well, the audience to remember their former lives. When planting story seeds on Earth, storytellers gain a +2 bonus to their skill total.

Last, this World Law aids Storm Knights in appropriating and using the High Lords' tools against them. Their innate understanding of other realities allows Storm Knights to select one skill normally not native to their reality, and learn and use it as if it were native. The use of this skill isn't a contradiction for the Storm Knight anywhere in Core Earth or in the reality the skill is native to. In other cosms whose axiom's don't support the skill, its use is considered a 1-case contradiction (as the character supports it, but the land doesn't).

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