

the market for a time. Damien Knight got taken down a peg or two when Nadja Daviar was given Gavilan Ventures, which controlled a large enough percentage of Ares stocks to ensure that he needed her help to maintain his level of power. Damien Knight's long-time rival Leonard Aurelius sold his shares of Ares stock to prominent eco-lawyer Arthur Vogel—an attempt to implant a corporate conscience into Ares that has largely failed. Aurelius moved on to join forces with Lucien Cross—another of Knight's bitter enemies, reportedly also involved in the Nanosecond Buyout—joining Cross Applied Technologies' board of directors and thereby continuing to polarize the conflict between Ares and CATco (which had become a AAA megacorp in 2053). Newcomer AAA Wuxing received several bequests of artifacts—including a statue and a coin—that pointed to quite an investment of magical power which has steadily manifested and grown from then on.

## YEAR OF THE COMET

Though Halley's Comet was only around for approximately a year, it too brought forth a raft of changes to our world. Some called it a second Awakening due to the mainly magical upheavals that followed in its wake. Between SURGE, comet cults, natural orichalcum, and other strangeness, it certainly seems to follow ... but none of it really stuck around. What did, however, were the political and economic changes, as well as a new great dragon to contend with. Even the probe race, designed to see who could land an effective probe on the comet and bring back samples and other data, eventually got swallowed up in the fever.

## STORMS

Beginning in August of 2061, places all over the world experienced natural and magical storms of varying strength. First, typhoons battered the Philippines, the first storms in a long string of disasters that helped prepare the way for the island nation's later liberation from Imperial Japan. Mana storms swept a few nations around the world. Then in October of the same year, the Ring of Fire erupted; this afflicted Japan with volcanic eruptions and tidal waves. The Bay Area suffered earthquakes, the Philippines were hit with additional volcanic eruptions and an earthquake, and many other locations around the Pacific Rim were beset by smaller disasters that nevertheless disturbed or destroyed lives. In December, another earthquake hit—this time it was in Los Angeles, demolishing its carefully-built walls that kept the rabble out and setting people free to riot and loot in the previously shielded city.

## Shakeup in Japan

Once the Ring of Fire's fury was spent in Imperial Japan, its people began the task of cleaning up. One problem: the Emperor and all of his family, except for one young man, had been killed. This meant a new Emperor and a new era for Japan.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Diet ordered the withdrawal of troops from foreign soil in order to help rebuild Japan. Everyone complied except for General Saito, well installed in San Francisco and having taken it and the Central Valley under his control. Saito quickly became not only a worrisome irritant to the Diet and the Emperor, but a royal pain to the people of CalFree who

really hadn't counted on this, especially the metahumans, whom he wasted no time in oppressing. Ares Macrotechnology, feeling Silicon Valley was threatened, moved in troops to defend it and ended up being instrumental (along with Mothers of Metahumans and various pirates and shadowrunners) in eventually liberating the area in the late 2060s.

Once the new Emperor rescinded the Yomi Island decree in February of 2062, rebel forces (called the Huk) in the Philippines made their move to liberate their nation from Japanese control. After decades of foreign occupation and control, many Filipinos felt that it was beyond time to take back control of their own destiny, and did so with the backing of the great dragon Masaru.

## GHOSTWALKER

We should have known something was going to happen as early as September of 2061, because that's when Dunkelzahn's Rift began fluctuating and acting more strangely than anyone was used to seeing. We think that's also when powerful shedim ("the dead," various ancestor spirits called them) had begun breaking through the Rift to plague us. One of these may in fact have re-animated Ibn Eisa, leader of the Islamic Unity Movement and one of the most influential men in the Middle East and Muslim world, shortly after his assassination (the imposter wasn't unmasked until 2064, but by then the damage to the Islamic world had been done).

It wasn't until Christmas Eve (December 24) of 2061 that the astral form of a previously unknown dragon—dubbed Ghostwalker by the media—broke through the Rift. It's been said that he flew directly to Denver, picked up his physical body somewhere along the way, and then began a rampage that ended up with Aztlan kicked out and the CAS inheriting that sector.

It was a tense couple of days, with people thinking that perhaps the Treaty of Denver would be nullified, and we'd have war between the Native American Nations, the UCAS, and the CAS. A meeting cleared up everything, reshuffling Denver's organization, making Ghostwalker the prime authority of the region, and giving essential daily management powers to the Council that had previously handled everything with varying degrees of competency. The new Treaty of Denver also called for the creation of the Zone Defense Force (or Zonies, as the t-bird jammers and smugglers call them) from military personnel from all sectors. This allowed Denver the ability to defend itself in case of attack without necessitating any sector to raise its own armies (a violation of the treaty).

## Draconian Maneuvers

Though the public at large wasn't terribly aware that this was going on, anyone clued in to the power behind the scenes of the world knew that something was not quite right between the great dragons. Many of them had appeared in the skies over Dunkelzahn's Rift in the FDC as some sort of tribute, but that didn't mean that they were entirely happy with the late President's decision to distribute his wealth via a metahuman invention rather than according to dragon convention. (That much some of us picked up. Chatty bunch, dragons, when they choose to be). This meant a reckoning on their terms, of course, and Ghostwalker's appearance on the scene meant it was about to arrive.