

for EABA™

# WarpWorld™

the old gods... have returned



 **BTRC**

greg porter

*Thomas Darrell Mignola 1999*

## **WarpWorld™ v1.0**

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*I've got somethin' inside me,*

*to drive the Princes blind.*

*There's a wild man wizard he's hidin' in me,*

*Illuminatin' my mind.*

*Oh, I've got somethin' inside me,*

*not what my life's about.*

*'Cause I've been lettin' my outside*

*turn me over 'til my time runs out...*

*-from **Taxi**, by Harry Chapin*

"We have known this day would come, as it has many times in the distant past. Maybe not at the Beginning perhaps, but long before we grew bored of empty space and decided to make Men in our image. The weave and shape and brightness of space that makes light flow and mass pull, which holds the nature of existence in place, it changes. The Moon waxes, and it wanes. That which makes us real, that which gives Men their magic, that which links souls by love and hate and destiny and prophecy, it wanes. Suddenly, like a step off a cliff for an unwary mortal, we shall cease to be, and all that which we have made of thought and being shall vanish."

The Eldest waited for the stir to die down, gazing over each of the First Causes, and noting those who were absent. Whatever their reason, whatever their plans, wherever they were, the end of all things would *still* find them.

"Our works may vanish, and we shall as well. But, what wanes with time, shall wax with time. We know not how long it will take, but the universe will once more allow, nay, *require* our existence, and we shall return. To us, however long it might be, it shall pass in the blink of an eye." The Eldest looked up at the Sun.

"See it approach on dark wings. Slower than perception, yet faster than the light. Feel the sparks of mages on Atlantis, casting spells that they hope will shield them, propping up the magics that have held their frail bodies for centuries, buttress the pillars of their grand city. See the unicorns flee to the horizon, the dragons crawl deep into their caves. They know their end is upon them. As it is soon upon us. Wait for it. Gaze at the world below, and remember it well, for you will never see its like again. And...."

▼ **10,000BCE:** The First Causes looked down from their conclave, held in a magnificent edifice of shaped thought atop an ever-changing yet always magnificent mountain of human dreams. Unseen and unfelt to most of the mortals living on the material world below, they gazed at great Atlantis in the distance.

This was no ordinary occasion. Seldom was anything important enough to gather all of them together. Even this, the end of existence, was not important enough for that. Among themselves, they eschewed mere names, for they knew each other by appearance, by touch, taste and senses mortals could not fathom, much less give name to. They had known each other since the Beginning, in a way that even the longest lived of wizards could barely imagine.

The Eldest among them spoke. The title had no power save tradition. He alone sprang forth fully formed into the void. Alone, confused, his being coalesced into patterns, thought, shape, and for some short but infinitely lonely time, the Eldest was the only sentience within the fabric of space that eventually encompassed an otherwise nondescript yellow star and its crown of satellites. Then, the nature of space and time that allowed (or perhaps mandated) his existence caused the rest of the First Causes to spring into being. They found their own form and thought, but all were in some way shaped by the nature of the Eldest. And since by their own reckoning, they turned out pretty well, they gave the Eldest a measure of respect. Their attention turned from the world below to him, and he gave a slight nod, accepting their focus with equanimity.

**2010CE:** "...now. Hmmm. That was interesting. Let us gaze and see what Men have done in our absence...."

The Eldest staggered, as a wave of seven billion shrieking human thoughts and terrified emotions rolled over him like a tidal wave. His form scattered into nothingness like dust in the wind. The rest of the First Causes fared no better. *They did not die.* The concept of death could hardly apply to beings such as they. But they were disrupted, thought and essence scattered through space both material and ethereal, and would take hours, days or even months to reform sufficiently to hold thought and shape once more. Parts of each were temporarily lost, passing into and abiding in the nearest shell that could hold a divine spark.

Only when enough of the First Causes had regained their senses and examined the world below did they see what their creations had done in their absence, and how long that absence had been. Men had built a new world on the new fabric of reality. They had replaced magic with light and lightning, living wood with dead metal, faith with universal constants. They assumed it was the true and only world, and would abide until the end of time. *They were wrong.*

The First Causes had been forgotten, relegated to myth and ridicule and ancient ruins, replaced at best by caricatures and imposters and poorly remembered thrice-told tales. But what waned had waxed again. The old gods had returned.

*Things were going to change...*

▼ **WHAT IS WARPWORLD?** - **WarpWorld** is a revision and re-issuing of one of **BTRC's** older and more interesting post-Ruin concepts: *The universe has changed in such a way that the old gods, beings absent so long as to be reduced to legend and myth...have returned.* And if that was not enough, the fundamental properties of the universe that changed in order to allow this, changed in such a way as to make most of our essential technology useless! *Things start off bad, and get worse.* The basic idea is that in a modern world where an average person can talk to someone anywhere in the world on a whim (cell phones), pull images out of thin air (television) and project mass destruction at great range (missiles), in such a world the fairly conservative abilities attributed to the old gods would not be all that impressive. So, the gameworld sets humanity back a hundred years or more, and creates an initial situation where individual survival is often tied to allegiance to a higher power. Instead of the nominal loyalty to a government or religion that most people profess, in the immediate post-Warp environment, whether you live or die, eat or starve will involve true loyalty and devotion to a secular government or new religion, and this early mindset will shape the redevelopment of civilization over the next several centuries.

**WarpWorld** is not one campaign setting and set of adventures, but two. Two separate but related gameworlds, two separate but related campaigns. The first takes place in the days, months and years immediately following what will come to be known as the Warp. Technology grinds to a halt, society crashes in the worst possible way, and things are generally ugly (see [pages 6.5 to 6.7](#)). Adventurers take on the roles of ordinary people (actually, *extraordinary* people) facing an uncertain future, and dealing with the reality of manifested gods, magic and the notion that some of them may have a share of this new power. And as the classic phrase goes, "with great power comes great responsibility". Adventurers will be called upon to use that power, and take that responsibility. As time passes and society rebuilds, plots unfold, enemies are thwarted, villains are vanquished, unnatural monsters and grotesque mockeries of life are sent to their eternal rest. But eventually, adventurers will retire or meet their end by natural or unnatural means. And hopefully their piece of the world is a better place for them having been there.

The second campaign takes place a full three hundred years later, perhaps fifteen to twenty generations after the first adventurers have shuffled off this mortal coil. The world has rebuilt itself around the new way of doing things. New nations have taken the place of old, new faiths likewise. Some of the old borders and enmities are still there, some are long vanished, but there is no shortage of reasons for conflict. There are still wild places to be explored and wild things to be dealt with, but there are also international incidents and border disputes, espionage and assassination. Plus a major threat looms on the horizon that will even take the First Causes by surprise, and threaten all of humanity as well. This second campaign can last for decades, even centuries, in a world whose foundations were built by the adventurers of the first campaign.

That is, there are certain basic features to the gameworld in terms of its history, but the fine details of how it will evolve in any given area may be affected by the adventurers. Just like a pebble can start an avalanche, seemingly small actions by the adventurers at the very start can make a huge difference way down the line. Or, they could just be another pebble falling unnoticed down the hillside. It is up to the adventurers, players and gamemaster to make history, for better or worse.

The campaigns run on a sort of exponential scale, the most important bits separated by short intervals, with the time between adventures getting longer and longer. Each segment of the campaign feeds into the next when possible. Something the adventurers say or do or encounter in each one has some consequence that may come back to haunt or reward them later.



## WarpWorld<sup>v1.0</sup>

In this way, the players and gamemaster can *jointly* create the final gameworld by focusing on the high points, the key events that happen near or revolve around the adventurers, events that start with the end of everything they know and thought was real, to a final adventure of the survivors, aging legends coming out of retirement to save what they hold dear or die trying. The first phase is *not* open-ended. *Everyone knows going in that their adventurers won't be around forever.*

And then you pause for nearly three hundred years, twenty generations or so, and start a new set of adventurers in the world the first adventurers have made, for better or worse. This campaign has its own major plot and story arc, but it can be open-ended and a continuing setting for adventure and intrigue.

The next chapter deals with the technobabble behind how and why the world has changed, and the obvious and not so obvious consequences of that change. As you go through this, try to imagine the setting, your players, and the way they play, to figure out the region of the world you want to start the campaign in, and the type or types of people the adventurers might be. A group of cruise ship passengers stranded on a Caribbean island is going to be different than a crash-landed airliner on an uninhabited one. City-dwellers in Europe will face far different challenges than rural populations in the United States and troops in a war zone will have a campaign markedly different than any sort of civilian population.

If you are going to run **WarpWorld**, read the *entire* book before doing anything. It is a *lot* of pages, but it *will* be well worth your time. This book is a campaign setting that spans three centuries, and every chapter will have bits that relate to different parts of that span. Things that happen in the first few adventures might have consequences that show up decades or centuries later. Look at **WarpWorld** not just for adventures in the now, but also as a continuous story arc, with each time and place and adventurer playing an important part.

The more you imagine and visualize the world of the Warp, the more possibilities you will see for fun, adventure, adventurers, good stories, grand heroism and all the other reasons you play rpgs.

"If you have a major disaster involving hundreds of thousands, or in this case millions of people, whether it be a natural disaster or an act of terrorism, the first seventy-two hours are going to be totally chaotic no matter what you plan to do."

- Warren Rudman

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - Most of the time in a **BTRC** product, when we twist around the laws of nature as part of a game background, we'll give a little bit of explanation as to *how* we did what we did, how those changes affect the gameworld. *And this time is no different.* The key part of suspension of disbelief in fiction is making it work. If there is a fundamental change that the adventurers run into on a daily basis, it does not have to be believable, but it does have to be unbelievable in a believable way. That is, you might not believe in hyperdrives, but you certainly would *not* believe that if you opened one up you would find it full of squirrels. You accept the *premise* of hyperdrives, as long as they fit into the rest of the "real world".

This chapter is not quite backstory and not quite physics. It is the technobabble and game details behind the Warp and exactly what it means in game terms. As a gamemaster, you should *definitely* read this before starting a campaign. As players, the gamemaster will decide on whether or not you should have access to it. Part of **WarpWorld** is facing challenges and deciphering the unknown. And at the *start* of a **WarpWorld** campaign, most of what is in this chapter is going to be unknown to the adventurers. So to that extent, *not* reading this as a player will give you a bit more of a challenge and surprise than if you had. In general, we recommend that the gamemaster simply say that it is going to be a post-Ruin campaign, and that powers which either are, or are indistinguishable from magic, will pop up eventually. Players will be told which Traits adventurers can have which are related to the paranormal, and any limits on Attributes and skills, which we'll go into in a bit more detail on in the **Adventurers** chapter.

▼ **HOW DID THE WARP HAPPEN?** - The nature of the universe we know and love is shaped by various "universal constants". These are numbers like the speed of light in a vacuum, the Newtonian constant of gravitation, the magnetic permeability of free space and a bunch of other numbers that while fascinating to only a few, are relevant to everyone and everything. It is the interplay of these many constants that make the universe what it is. Each of these universal constants interacts with all the others so that things work out "just right", at least as far as we're concerned. The basic thought is that the universe is the way it *is*, because it is really the only possible way it *can* be.

But, those things that we consider universal constants, the numbers that literally define the universe as we know it...are constants, but can change from one constant value to another. The speed of light, the gravitational constant, all of these are subject to change. The problem is, if you alter any of these constants by even a *little* bit, everything changes *profoundly*. To the extent that the universe as we know it might not be possible.

As a simple example, take gravity. A little less, and fewer stars would have condensed out of the sea of light elements populating the universe after the Big Bang. Gravitational turbulence from the first stars might stir up the early gas clouds to reduce the subsequent number of stars forming. A little more gravity, and fewer stars again, as gas clouds condensed across a larger area, forming a smaller number of huge, short-lived stars. Make gravity significantly less, and no stars might have formed at all. Make it too great, and the universe would have collapsed into a giant black hole already.

Or, if the speed of light were a little different, then the maximum possible energy from  $e=mc^2$  would change, radically altering the total energy available in the universe. Changing the value of any *one* of these universal constants is likely to be catastrophic.

But, of the many billions or trillions of possible combinations of altered universal constants, there is a limited set where it all *still* works, but *differently*. As the universe ages, expands or contracts, stress is placed on the fabric of spacetime, and when the stress can be borne no longer, spacetime snaps to a new configuration of constants. Everything looks the same on the surface, but deep down, at a fundamental level, things have *changed*.



And *that* is a Warp. On average, it happens every few thousand years or so, but it can happen for as short as an instant, or wait for hundreds of thousands of years. When it happens, things previously impossible become mandatory, and things that were previously mandatory become impossible. Things like magic and godlike beings go from a matter of faith to a near-certain thing, while certain quantum effects we depend on for the functioning of our technological society, things people have spent their lives measuring and quantifying, these simply stop working for no measurable reason.

For this universe, there are only two viable configurations of constants, or at least for purposes of the game, there are only two that we need to worry about. One of those combinations is the world we live in now. The other of the combinations is **WarpWorld**. In the **WarpWorld** frame of reference, what we refer to as the supernatural is actually the supremely natural. The forces we refer to as the First Causes are intelligent entities whose internal order and structure coalesced out of spacetime shortly after matter did. They are *not* gods, but from the scale of mere mortals, there is little difference. They are for all practical purposes as indestructible as matter, but some mortals are determined to see if they can be converted to energy. *But that's another story entirely.*

Another facet of the **WarpWorld** reality is that thought has energy, and creates entropy. If you know how, you *can* hurt someone by thinking bad thoughts at them, or heal them by drawing that entropy away and putting it somewhere else. *This is magic.* Related to this is that the more energy of any kind that you put into making a material object, the weaker it becomes. The entropy you add to it in terms of heat and work and thought makes it less and less strong. The closer an item is to its natural form, the stronger it is. There are certain minimum limits. A sword will always be stronger than a piece of wood. But, a piece of steel weighs perhaps ten times as much as a piece of dense wood, but in **WarpWorld** is nowhere near ten times as strong.

In game terms, the closer an item is to its natural state, the stronger it is. A piece of hardened leather is, kilogram for kilogram, a better armor than forged steel. A knife hammered from a piece of meteoric iron is far stronger than one hammered from iron smelted from ore. Even chemical compounds suffer a sort of debasement from too much processing. A fresh medicinal herb may be more efficacious than a prepared pharmaceutical with the same active ingredient. Primitive black powder may explode with more force than dynamite.

As a result, the world has regressed. Maybe not back to the time of Atlantis, when magic was the most powerful force, and technology was primitive. Not because of ignorance, but because the products of technology were measurably inferior and not worth the effort or the time spent studying their principles. Instead, people in the years that follow the Warp of 2010CE remembering and rebuild the technology of their grandfathers, creating a world of magic *and* steam engines, flying mages *and* wooden biplanes.

A Warp is not a perfect transition from one state to another. There are minute imbalances of energy that result from the process, so small as to be undetectable on a local scale, but on the scale of a planet, the force imbalance can be severe. Side effects include earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, violent weather, premature flipping of a planet's magnetic field and so on. In the first week after the Warp, there will be tens, maybe hundreds of millions of casualties from natural disasters, plus the destruction of countless irreplaceable bits of infrastructure. Rail and shipyards, factories, bridges and tunnels, things that took massive amounts of labor and capital and technology to create, destroyed. And in a world with shortages of labor and capital and technology, it will be centuries before they are rebuilt, if ever.

One interesting side effect is that half the Warp allows the development of the technology we have come to depend on, and the other half keeps that technology from working at all. *The reason we have never been visited by advanced alien civilizations?* They have all been knocked back to the ground for thousands of years every time a Warp happens, and lose virtually all their high-tech knowledge in the interim millennia as they struggle to understand the new reality of magic and gods...only to have that reality collapse around their ears or pseudo-pods or whatever when the Warp shifts back to the reality we are living in now.



▼ **Note** - For those of a scientific bent, the idea of non-constant constants is not as far-fetched as it might sound, and was first proposed by physicist Paul Dirac in 1937. In 1997, researchers investigating the light from a quasar 12 billion light years away found results that could be interpreted as meaning that the fine structure constant (which determines how light interacts with matter) had a different value at some point in its 12 billion year journey. Similarly, the ratio of isotopes produced in a reactor depends on this constant, and some researchers doing analysis of the 2 billion year old Oklo "natural reactor" (Gabon, Africa) think this constant may have been different at that time. *Is any of this definitive? No. Does it mean magic and gods are possible? Hardly. But it does mean you can leave certain preconceptions at the door and not feel too guilty about it. Read, and enjoy.*

The Warp did not acquire that name until many years after it happened, and it was probably a generation or more before the term became the most popular and edged out competing terms like "the End", "the Godbirth", "the Collapse" or just "that wierd sh\*t". Right after it happened, the latter term was probably the most common. Also, since the Warp happened on October 10th, 2010CE, many places using that calendar just started calling the Warp the "ten-ten" event, just like people in the United States know what is meant by "nine-eleven".

As far as people can tell, the Warp happened everywhere on Earth at the exact same instant, which in fact it did. For all practical purposes, it happened simultaneously everywhere in the universe, though it may have just propagated at some terrifically superluminal speed from whatever spot in the universe first split open from the stress. Like many things that people speculate about, it is irrelevant to whether they lived or died in the aftermath, or to life on Earth in general.

▼ **HOW DID IT MANIFEST?** - In the instant the Warp rolled over this part of the universe, the nature of things changed. If it was night, there was a flash and a sparkle in the sky. No one who actually witnessed it remembered it, though. Their exact recollection of what happened was overwritten by mental imagery and emotions so powerful that they will have difficulty remembering any particular event that happened to a few minutes on either side of the Warp. There will be a sense of missing time that no one but Prophets will ever be able to recall, and even the Prophets will be unable to adequately communicate what they felt in that interval.

There was a slight tremor in the earth. Things were shifting, and would do so more violently in the days to come. Other indications of far-reaching effects at a quantum level were immediately obvious. Any electronics more sophisticated than vacuum tubes stopped working, and never started back up. Certain chemical reactions progressed more slowly or less energetically. Materials of an advanced technological nature instantly lost anywhere from fifty to ninety-five percent of their normal strength.

Cars stopped. The electronic ignition systems were now inert chunks of slightly impure silicon. Turbochargers spinning at tens of thousands of rpms spun apart like shrapnel. Hydraulic lines failed as people slammed on the brakes, and when the lines held the pressure, wheels snapped off their axles. Airliners fell from the sky like flaming bricks, exploding turbines ripping through weakened aluminum wings filled with jet fuel.

The power grid shut down, and with very few exceptions, never came back up. Even survivalists were out of luck, their semiconductor-based solar panels now just fancy and expensive parasols, their batteries full, but the circuits to turn that into household power now useless. Fancy LED flashlights wouldn't work, and the regular kind drained their batteries far faster than they should have.

Anyone and everyone who relied on advanced medical technology simply *died*. Life support systems shut down. Emergency generators didn't. Pacemakers failed. Worse, high pressure oxygen cylinders sometimes violently ruptured, and only the lack of electricity to generate sparks kept the damage from burning many facilities to the ground.

Other Traits are handled normally, with any adjustments or notes below:

● **Age** - Adventurers in either the early or late campaign can be any age the gamemaster allows. Bear in mind the early campaign has adventures stretching out as far as thirty years after the Warp. If your adventurer *starts* middle-aged, they will be at least elderly by the time the early campaign ends (assuming they live that long!). Magic *can* prolong or improve the quality of life, but not to an excessive degree. Adventurers who pass an age bracket during play gain or lose points as normal, and can spend them according to the normal rules for this Trait. However, they should not start play with less than 1 year to the end of their age bracket.

◆ **Blessing/Curse** - There are a few of these out there, in both early and late campaigns.

**Godtouched:** A godspark is a tiny fragment of a Cause, blasted from the ether into the material world during the Warp, which lodges in a mortal body, giving that person an increased potential to be a mage. Those struck by godsparks are often referred to as the "godtouched" during the early post-Warp period, though in later use it refers to anyone with above average magical potential.

One level of Godtouched allows a mage to avoid 1 point of stress buildup per spellcasting (see page 4.4), and is considered a small Blessing. A medium Blessing allows avoiding 2 points, and a large Blessing allows avoiding 4 points. This Trait is only available from being hit by a godspark or possibly as a boon from a Cause, so an adventurer *cannot* acquire it or upgrade it with normal experience gains after creation of the adventurer. Those born after the Warp can have the same benefit, with gamemaster permission and limits on the maximum level available.

Players who take this Trait for adventurers in the early campaign may buy no more than lowest level, and they must balance it with two levels of the the Personality "voices in my head". Someone touched by a godspark in the early campaign has fragments of memories not their own, and even more fragmented bits of personality that try to influence the adventurer's actions. The player can just make a selection of a Trait at two levels to represent a shift in personality, which counts as +4 to the difficulty of any Will or other task that would seem to be against the ethos of a particular Cause of the gamemaster's choosing.

**EXAMPLE:** If an adventurer had acquired a godspark from a trickster Cause, then the player might have to make a Will roll of some kind at +4 difficulty to avoid an opportunity to cheat, or to deal straight with someone instead of concealing certain facts or vital information. Or, if the godspark came from a Cause associated with care and lifegiving, any attempt to cause harm to someone might have +4 difficulty on the skill roll as the adventurer struggles for control with the alien presence within them.

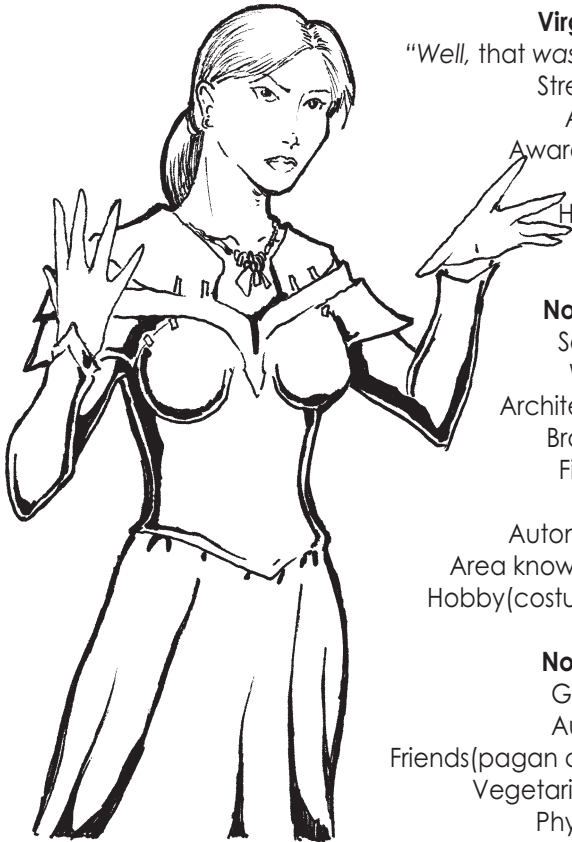
Players do not get to choose the nature of the personality quirks from being Godtouched in the early campaign. However, those who are born after the Warp can have the Trait of Godtouched without any Personality baggage attached.

▼ **Note** - Remember that potential mages will also have to buy their Fate up to a level of at least 1d+2 in order to actually learn any spells, and will also have to acquire Sorcery skill. Adventurers who start the early campaign as Godtouched may buy up to +0d in Sorcery and a Fate of up to 1d+2, but may *not* put any of their initial points towards any spells. The godspark gives them the potential to use magic, but they do not know any actual spells yet. Learning their first spell may take as little as a week or as long as a few months.

**Ethereal:** This is a large Blessing, and is not available to adventurers. It simply describes the behavior of ghosts and other nearly-but-not-quite intangible beings. An ethereal creature takes -4d from all physical attacks (including telekinetic effects), -2d from energy-based attacks (including magically generated energy like fire), and -1d from purely magical effects. Ethereal beings also do not need to breathe and generally do not age or suffer any malady or vulnerability related to being alive. Ethereal beings generally suffer the same penalties when they try to interact with the material world, but at 1d less (-3d to their attempts to make physical attacks, -1d from any energy-based attack they make, and no penalty to purely magical effects they do).

Ethereal beings *are* constrained by matter and gravity, but can pass mistily through or around any barrier that is not air-tight. It will take them on average several seconds to get through such a barrier.

▼ **SAMPLE ADVENTURERS** - Here are four sample adventurers, built according to the standard guidelines, so you can grab one and just jump into the game, or have a standby ready if someone wants to join your campaign on short notice.



**Virginia Green**

"Well, that was *unusual...*"  
 Strength: 2d+0  
 Agility: 2d+0  
 Awareness: 2d+1  
 Will: 2d+2  
 Health: 2d+0  
 Fate: 1d+2

**Notable skills:**

Sorcery: +0d  
 Wicca: +0d  
 Architecture: +2d  
 Brawling: +0d  
 First aid: +0d  
 Pistol: +0d  
 Automobile: +0d  
 Area knowledge: +0d  
 Hobby(costuming): +1d

**Notable Traits:**

Godtouched  
 Aura reading  
 Friends(pagan community)  
 Vegetarian(2 levels)  
 Physical prime

Virginia worked in a architecture firm before the Warp, mostly working on the interior details of office buildings, hotels and other large structures. Virginia was a practicing Wiccan before the Warp, but it was more of a stress management technique and alternative to traditional religious belief than it was a genuine belief in supernatural forces. That's sort of changed now. She can feel something *different* in her and in the world around her now, and in some cases, even see the difference.

▼ **Note** - Virginia's pick from page 3.4 should probably be a decent place to live. If these adventurers are used as a group, her place becomes the *de facto* headquarters. She might know Matt Chelson, or at least be acquainted with him through mutual friends in a medieval recreation group.



"It's still better than being in Iraq..."

**Thomas Terrell**

Strength: 2d+1  
 Agility: 3d+0  
 Awareness: 2d+1  
 Will: 2d+0  
 Health: 3d+0  
 Fate: 0d+2

**Notable skills:**

Electronics: +2d  
 Longarms: +0d  
 Brawling: +0d  
 Automobile: +0d  
 Carousing: +0d  
 Running: +0d  
 Climbing: +0d  
 Camping: +0d  
 Scrounging(woods): +0d

**Notable Traits:**

Experience(carrying)  
 Cast-iron stomach  
 Mature age  
 Jingoist(2 levels)

Thomas was a communications tech before the Warp. He got through college with the help of money he got from enlisting in the National Guard, and this also got him two tours in Iraq several years later. He was working for the local phone company as a field tech when the Warp hit. He has no clue as to what is going on in the world now, save that it is really wierd. For now, he's putting his trust in cantankerous, but still fairly lethal firearms. He's politically conservative, but fairly open on most other issues. He just isn't all that fond of people badmouthing the government or what he considers his "national values".

▼ **Note** - Thomas's pick from page 3.4 should probably be whatever weapons he can carry. He isn't a very good shot (he was never in combat), but he does at least know how to use a variety of military hardware. Thomas does not directly know the other adventurers, but his line of work could place him in contact with one or more of them at the time the Warp hit.



"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Mana exists on a plane of existence that we will call the ether. The ether is the flow of mana that permeates the universe, most particularly where there is life. The best way to think of it is like electromagnetic radiation. It passes through us in various forms night and day, yet we detect only the tiniest portion of its vast spectrum. Causes are shaped of different flavors and textures of mana, giving them form and personality.

Mana intersects the material world through the will of the mage, using Sorcery skill to harness the mana, and a specific skill (a spell) to shape that mana into a useful effect. Humans can tap and manipulate mana. The Causes are mana. Just don't try to manipulate one...

Places in the ether correspond to places in the material universe, and Causes are entities that occupy a particular spot in the ether at any given moment. They are not everywhere, and cannot see everything. They can manifest and manifest powers anywhere in the material world, though this ability can be reduced or limited by magic, and trying to project their presence and perception through a mana-containing barrier is a bit of problem. Causes, being animate mana, can see mana and its strength with little difficulty, though they cannot see it through solid barriers in the material world. A Cause in the ether can readily spot a powerful human mage in a group of normal people, but that mage can hide from divine gaze in a cave just fine. But, if the Cause knew *exactly* where the mage was, even miles of solid rock would not prevent them from manifesting there or lobbing a lightning bolt or other magical energy into the mage's refuge.

For humans, learning spells is a gradual process. The simplest effects must be mastered before more complex ones can be attempted, leading to a hierarchy of spells within a given discipline.

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - Magic is real, and so are the gods, or forces close enough that there is no real difference. This chapter will detail the nature of magic and somewhat of the Causes, and how adventurers and their foes will interact with these forces.

The force which all life has within it, and which makes magic possible is called *mana*, and is represented by the Fate. Things like plants and lesser animals have vanishingly small amounts of it, effectively zero for rule purposes, and inanimate objects also have a Fate of zero. Higher animals have a Fate of perhaps 0d+1, while the average person in the immediate post-Warp environment has a Fate of 0d+2. In the later campaign, the average person has 1d+0 or 1d+1. In order to use magic, a person must have a Fate of at least 1d+2. The First Causes will have a Fate of at least 30d+0.

▼ **Note** - Since each +1d in **EABA** represents about a doubling of ability, a 30d+0 First Cause has about a billion times ( $2^{30}$ ) the arcane potential of an average person! Fortunately, a lot of that potential is tied up in simply holding the Cause together, and the efficiency with which they can project the remainder into this plane of existence is dreadfully low. Of course, this could still hit with the literal force of a lightning bolt...

*"The Trickster granted the Arch-mage Maybon his wish, and poured his power into Maybon, that he might complete the spell he longed for, with power enough to endure for centuries. Only as the mana poured from him like a river did Maybon realize his mistake, and by then the Trickster was gone. The weight of the spell hung over Maybon like a mountain dangling from a thread. Any future spell he cast, no matter how trivial, would snap that thread, and the backlash would burn him to a crisp. It truly was Maybon's greatest spell, but also his last. Actually, his next to last. The last year of his life he spent in hiding, working on a final spell with which to confront his greatest enemy. And on the day he finished it, the world had two less Arch-mages, one new crater and a very happy Trickster..."*

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - The First Causes are the deities of **WarpWorld**. A lot has been implied about them up to this point, but now for some details, both for gamemaster reference, adding flavor to the gameworld, and a few crunchy rule-based bits.

The Causes and their lesser brethren are *not* beings adventurers should have regular dealings with. Over the course of the first nine adventure segments, a group of adventurers as a whole may only encounter these aspects of the ether once or twice. In the early campaign and mid-campaign, the Causes are forces of nature, things that adventures are based on or instigated by, but not things that the adventurers personally encounter any more often than the average soldier is going to personally encounter their Commander-in-Chief.

The lesser entities are another matter. Seconds would be like generals and Heralds like colonels. Average troops might catch a personal glimpse on occasion, or take a direct order, draw a kind word, commendation or reprimand from one of the hundreds of Seconds and Heralds out there.

## WarpWorld<sup>v1.0</sup>

In the late campaign, when the Causes are banished to Earth, the chance for direct interaction and recognition is far greater, and the campaign may have adventurers dealing with one or more Causes, Seconds or Heralds on a regular basis.

The Causes drive the way the post-Warp world works, what people believe, live for and are willing to die for. Even the Forsaken, who hold to no gods, are still shaped by them. That is why understanding them is important to the gamemaster and players, so that they can understand their influence on the gameworld. One of the things that is hardest to understand is the inherent "vastness" of the First Causes. They are capable of thoughts and modes of thought that we simply *cannot* comprehend. Our minds are too small and too limited to even grasp some of their concepts. We *think* that we can imagine anything, but the sentience of the Causes is a notch above our level of understanding. We are in an intellectual sense, children to them. If a child asks a parent "why is the sky blue?", the parent does not respond with the scientific reasons for it. They make up an explanation suitable for a child's level of understanding. So it is when the Causes speak to us. *Of course, children have logic all their own that is incomprehensible to adults...*

We tend to view the Causes as children view adults, powerful figures that we literally *have* to look up to. Strangers we are warned to stay away from, teachers we respect, parents we love, and so on.

▼ **WHAT ARE THEY?** - The First Causes are, by all practical definition, gods. They have existed for far longer than mankind, and depending on the quirks of the universe, may well outlast mankind. They are a form of sentient energy that can convert itself to matter in a blatant violation of  $e=mc^2$ . They are made of what most mortals call magic or mana, each one having some flavor or color or shape of magic that shapes who and what they are.

If you had the temerity to ask the Causes if they created humankind, the Earth and the universe, they would probably say yes. They would be lying, of course. *They are nowhere near that powerful.* They *did* exist long before any sort of matter-based life, but they have little recollection of that far-distant time. They watched the stars and planets form, and may have considered that since they were there first, the stars and planets formed from their desire to have something to do. They may truly believe they had a hand in the creation of the universe, but that is not what *actually* happened.

The Causes actually had very little in terms of personality and drive until very, very late in the evolution of the universe towards its current state. They more or less just existed, slowly waning, fading in and out with countless Warps until the first life appeared on Earth. There are rumors of ancient wars, Causes fighting each other in some primordial time as hunters and prey, consuming the power of the loser to sustain themselves, but that is something that the Causes do not like to discuss, even among themselves. Much like *you* wouldn't want to discuss having cannibalized your siblings. *They may be godlike, but they can also be very touchy about certain subjects.*

Each Cause had its own "flavor", core drives and preferences, but they were very, very weak differentiations, and meaningless without the desire to act on them. The trickle of mana from the first primitive organisms allowed the Causes to stabilize after an eon of slow starvation (or consumption of their lesser brethren in some etheric ecosystem), but nothing more. They were still merely observers, with little thought and negligible creativity. It was not until some hundreds of thousands of years ago that one of them had the bright idea of shaping the lifeforms on the interesting green-blue world into something useful. By a magical means reminiscent of Arthur C. Clarke's *2001*, evolution of some key species was speeded up. Simians became protohumans, protohumans became humans. Instinct and intelligence combined to become culture and civilization, and the Causes were there to take advantage of the opportunities for both power and entertainment.

As thinking beings directly shaped by the Causes, humans were capable of understanding and worshipping the Causes (within limits), and aligning their souls or mana with a particular Cause. So, the richest source of mana on Earth became one that a *particular* Cause could shepherd and claim for itself. As the Causes slowly learned the art of what mortals expected of their gods, and drew generation after generation of mortal essences unto themselves, their nascent personalities and limited drives became more pronounced. They did not so much take on the thoughts and desires of their flocks. Rather, the flavor of that power flipped a switch to fully awaken that which was already within the Cause. While they do not and perhaps cannot reproduce in ways humans can actually comprehend, most of the Causes seem to prefer an aspect that indicates a male or female gender, but some have both (or neither).

So, the Causes became the gods, beings of great power and powerful personality, embodiment of a particular belief or ethos. That happened within a few dozen generations of what the Causes would call "creation", when the first true humans developed the ability to ask themselves "how?", and to try and figure the answer to "why?". This age lasted some thousands of years, culminating with the civilization that created Atlantis, a world brimming with magic and meddling Causes, heroes and villains, wars and intrigue, all brought to ruin when the Warp hit and dissolved the bonds of magic that men used to hold their civilization and works together.

With no real need for technology and held together by magic, the Warp of 10,000BCE destroyed the Atlantean civilization and all the other great nations of that time. Earthquakes, volcanoes, war, famine and disease ravaged the survivors and buried or destroyed most of their works. Worse, without the influence of the Causes, humanity itself regressed for a while to barely sentient barbarism. The educated and cultured survivors gave birth to children who could not fully understand the knowledge their parents tried to teach them. And their grandchildren were even less capable. In two generations, all that was left was oral myth, crumbling ruins and barbarism. Some post-Warp scholars think that human intelligence itself was somehow mana-enhanced and that later generations born without it lacked the capacity to redevelop civilization. It would be some *thousands* of years before the survivors re-discovered agriculture, and even more before they were able to regain literacy, and give us the many garbled legends of a vastly older time, global catastrophes and a fall from divine grace.

The closest approximation to the Causes of Atlantis comes from the writings of the ancient Sumerians, and it is from them we have the names and natures of the Causes, at least so much as they *can* be known.

Mana is what they are, what they breathe, eat and drink. And what they excrete, according to some natural philosophers. Anyway, they need new mana to replace what they use and lose. They are powerful enough that they can go a *long* time without new mana (measure it in geologic terms), but like people, they see no reason to starve themselves when food is there for the taking. What mana exists in the post-Warp world is concentrated in people, and is released and presumably recycled upon their death. When a mortal seals themselves to a Cause, their mana instead goes to the Cause when they die.



You can study the ancients,

you can learn every fact.

You can follow the cycles,

that leave and come back.

How everything changes,

it's been ever thus.

One day you're a comet,

the next day you're dust.

There's always the future,

and you won't stop there.

- from **Won't Stop**, by Bob Seger

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - This is the fun chapter, the biggest chapter, the "gamemaster eyes only" chapter. It covers details of a possible **WarpWorld** campaign that spans over three hundred years, from the first chaotic day after the Warp, to what might be the final conflict that determines the fate and survival of humanity. Everything you have read up to this point is simply preparation for the details of this chapter. *The wait will have been worth it.*

**The Campaign** - A **WarpWorld** campaign is not the normal linear progression of events you are probably used to. It is meant to run in several interrupted segments, each one separated by three times the distance in the future of the last one, each segment running longer than the last, with the final segment using new adventurers, assuming of course the original adventurers survived all the previous segments. The gamemaster does not *have* to run things this way, of course, but the **WarpWorld** campaign guide only covers the designed segments in great detail.

Adventurers are generally going to be designed for the "early" campaign, which starts at Warp plus zero, and technically runs to Warp plus 30 years. However, we'll refer to anything past Warp plus 100 days as the "middle" campaign.

▼ **OVERVIEW, EARLY CAMPAIGN** - The early campaign covers the first five segments, and revolves around the immediate goals of survival and figuring out exactly what *has* happened, and what *is* happening. The threats to life are mainly going to be the environment and other people, which as history has shown, are quite capable of doing the job. It sets the emotional stage for the mid-campaign by putting players and adventurers in the nastiest, most chaotic parts of the post-Warp environment, without actually having to go through the whole period in "game time".

**Segment 1, Warp plus zero:** *The first day of the new world.* The game play lasts until the group of adventurers gets together and makes some sort of plan of action and possibly even tries to implement it. This segment lasts no more than twelve hours, but it will be the strangest twelve hours of their life, and how they handle themselves could affect the rest of their lives (however long or short this might be).

**Segment 2, Warp plus 3 days:** *A hundred rumors for every fact.* What is unmistakably true is that whatever is happening is widespread enough that outside help is not immediately forthcoming. Adventurers have to stop thinking about just today, tomorrow and the next day, but possibly about next week, or even longer. This segment lasts no more than one day. Segments 1 and 2 should probably be run as the same game session, unless Segment 1 also included the time taken to create adventurers, but in any case, there should be a break in play between Segments 1 and 2 to let the players discuss things over pizza. After all, the actual *adventurers* are going to have a few days to hash things out amongst themselves, with important decisions to be debated and argued over, and preparations made to implement those decisions.

**Segment 3, Warp plus 10 days:** *Things are starting to happen.* It is now a week and a half since the Warp. The rumors, wild as some of them are, are not completely unthinkable, based on things you have actually seen, or heard from reliable sources. Something is going to be an immediate threat, problem or one-shot opportunity in the next twenty-four hours. The adventure lasts until this situation is resolved, but no more than forty-eight hours.

**Segment 4, Warp plus 30 days:** *As if things weren't bad enough.* Men and women calling themselves High Priests are starting to show up. Claiming a higher power, they offer assistance to those who offer up allegiance to their strange gods. Most turn these strangers away. The few who attempt to do them violence regret it. Some offer their loyalty to this new gods, and seem to prosper for having done so. Adventurers have some sort of encounter or problem that revolves around one or more of these new religions, either directly, or as an indirect result of their influence. This segment lasts for up to a week, or until the situation resolves, at least on a temporary basis.

**Segment 5, Warp plus 100 days:** *Three months since the Warp.* Things are extremely dark and grim, with humanity at an ebb and inhumanity at an all-time high. A crisis looms. It might be the threat from the march of autumn to bitter winter, the threat of a local warlord coveting something you have, the threat of godzombies, ghosts, Arch-mages or even lesser mages first learning how to use or abuse their powers. Plus, the old gods have seemingly returned, and they walk among men making promises and collecting souls. *It is truly a dark and perilous time.* The adventure revolves around some event or events from a previous segment that have come back to haunt the adventurers, perhaps literally. This segment lasts for up to two weeks, with any incomplete resolution left to the gamemaster to fill in the details of how it finally ends.

**Survival** - One important part of the early **WarpWorld** campaign is simply managing to survive in an increasingly resource-poor and hostile world. The gamemaster can make the daily struggle to find food and fresh water and shelter and fuel to keep warm part of actual play, but there are plenty of more exciting things going on, and far more interesting ways to die than mere starvation. So, while basic survival is important, and adventurers will be happy if they have any sort of skill in this area, keeping body and soul together is going to be handled at the start of Segments 1, 3 and 5 by a simple Scrounging roll, appropriate to the location they are in at the time. Adventurers will have to make a Scrounging roll of some kind in order to have safe and secure shelter, food and water, unless some aspect of their starting setup gives them an automatic success. An adventurer with Urban Scrounging may do well at first, but if they manage to escape the hell which the megacities become, then their particular Scrounging skill will no longer apply...

If a group of adventurers wishes to roll as individuals, they can. However, failing the roll as an individual means you take *double* the listed effects. You were out alone and had an accident, or were ambushed by someone, or suffered some other problem that could have been mitigated or avoided if you had assistance. Adventurers with a useful skill and a weapon for hunting or equipment for fishing can make individual skill rolls using the weapon/fishing skill as complementary to their Scrounging roll (a +1d bonus to the Scrounging roll, 0d+1 bonus if the useful skill is only a hobby). You *do not* get to use the weapon or fishing skill by itself as the survival tool. Complementing it with the Scrounging is because you have to take into account your own safety, getting the food back to your friends without being accosted, finding a place to hunt or fish that hasn't already been thought of by someone else, getting fish or animals that haven't been tainted by toxic runoff, and so on. If you roll by yourself and are successful, you find sufficient resources for yourself, and for one extra person for each 2 points you make the roll by.

**EXAMPLE:** If you needed a 7 and rolled a 9, you would be able to provide for two people, yourself and one other person.

It is assumed that unless adventurers have some sort of stockpile, that they have to spend 3-4 hours *each day* scrounging for their daily provisions. This includes days spent actually adventuring, though the actual success of such endeavors is part of that initial roll. Some days adventurers may scrounge all day and come up empty, on others they may hit a jackpot after only an hour or two. Regardless, it means they *have* to be out and about, with new opportunities for conflict, diplomacy, learning things, meeting new people, and so on. This is a good way for the gamemaster to introduce new elements into the early campaign segments.

If you roll as a group (three or more people), the person with the best roll gets a -1 to the difficulty for each *doubling* of people. The person with the best skill tries to teach and coordinate the actions of everyone who is scrounging. Only one roll is made, and if successful, one person can be supported for each point the roll is made by.

**EXAMPLE:** If one adventurer has a Scrounging skill roll of 3d+0 against a difficulty of 9, and there are four people in the group, the difficulty is reduced to 7, and each point the person makes the roll by feeds or shelters 1 person. So, they have to roll a 10 or better to scrounge sufficiently well for everyone to get what they need.

▼ **WARP PLUS ZERO** - In addition to anything else you tell them, read the following to the players:

*"Try as you might, you cannot remember exactly what you were doing when the Warp hit. You might infer it by the steering wheel in your face when you woke up, the bicycle you were entangled in, or the stairs you were crumpled up at the bottom of, but you can't actually remember what you were doing or thinking at that instant. What you do remember, for a few minutes anyway, is everything else. For an instant, maybe an eternity, you were connected to every other soul on the planet. All seven billion of them. You felt the pain of hundreds of childbirths, the joy of hundreds of mothers. The anguish of uncounted souls in the final instants of life, the grief of thousands who recently lost a loved one. Uncounted first loves and first lovemakings, bitter breakups and tearful reconciliations. And you also touched something larger, more beautiful and more terrifying than all the rest put together, but you have no idea what it was. You felt it all, and you felt it all at once. And you knew that whatever you had been feeling at the time, everyone else in the world felt a little of it as well."*

*"As you came back to full consciousness, you tried to hold onto the vision, but it drained out of you like you were a vessel incapable, maybe unworthy, of retaining it. Everyone else around you was in a similar state, dazed, confused. And you, singularly and collectively, began to take stock of the situation over the next few minutes and hours."*

*"Absolute chaos. Everything you rely on in your daily life has either stopped working, works poorly or works dangerously poorly. For every fact, there are a hundred rumors, and no way to tell which is which. Alien invasion? The Rapture? EMP from a nuclear attack? Terrorism? Local? Global? The National Guard is coming? Washington DC has been wiped out? Who knows? All you know is that the earth is trembling, buildings have collapsed, stuff is on fire, wrecks are everywhere, any vehicle more sophisticated than a bicycle seems to be down for the count, power is out, water isn't flowing anywhere that isn't downhill, and that there is a mob mentality out there that you don't want to get on the wrong side of. Maybe you'll figure out more later, but later won't be today."*

Adventurers have to make Scrounging survival rolls. Adventurers who are together at the very start may work together, but otherwise rolls are made alone. Note that this is the *only* overall survival roll where failure represents one bad event happening, which might be a side effect of what you were doing at the instant the Warp hit. As such, it is also the *only* overall survival roll where Fate can be used to get an extra die to add to the skill roll. As a result, it is extremely unlikely any adventurer will be affected. However, Fate rolls are not reset until the end of the *next* segment the adventurers are involved in. This would be the Warp plus 3 days segment.

**Goals:** Get together, get organized. This short segment is just to give players and adventurers a first taste of the chaos to come, and a chance to get together to compare notes and figure out where to go from there.

**Adventure ideas:** The results of any of the adventurer's random Traits or free benefits (page 3.3 and 3.4) are good seed material for keeping the adventurers on their toes for twelve gameworld hours or so, after which they will probably collapse from exhaustion. If players want to do more than you think they can handle, remember the exertion rules. If they've been working, they'll have to rest.

**Experience:** 1 point per 2 players (round experience total down), no more than 1 point for any adventurer. Just as the adventurers will have to share scarce resources, the players will have to decide who gets a point that may be needed later to boost a critical survival skill, and who goes without.

▼ **Note** - One of the most useful tools someone can have in the early post-Warp environment is a mountain bike. In general, assume one will have a weight of about 15kg, an Armor of 1d+0 and about 5 Hits. It will act as a running multiple of x2 on the level, x3 or x4 downhill and x1/2 uphill, assuming a decent surface to ride it on. A bought skill in Bicycle allows use of a skill roll, otherwise skill rolls are made with unskilled Agility roll. Remember that radical bike stunts are *not* recommended. First, the medical care to patch you up is no longer there, and second, the aluminum alloy or modern steels in your bike simply aren't up to the abuse anymore. This is another case where being able to use Fate once might save you, as your bike crumbles around you during a high-speed escape down a cement staircase...



She doesn't think she has much chance of succeeding, but she is unwilling to kill herself and this is the next best thing. There is also the possibility that the failed attack will get her locked up someplace more secure than her present quarters, or that she might injure him in a way that reveals his unliving nature. If adventurers (especially female adventurers) have been exceptionally kind to Jenny, she might confide her secret terror of Horace to them, or if they had given her some work to help her pay her way, it might be one of *their* weapons that was stolen.

How things resolve with Horace is *not* going to be pleasant. Not entirely rational, he would back down from superior force only in his most lucid moments. Otherwise he will vent his rage on whoever looks like the ringleader of his opposition, and failing that and realizing he is vanquished, try to take out Jenny before he goes. On the other hand, adventurers might accidentally tip Horace off as to where Jenny is, allowing him to kidnap her and flee town. Someone dropping in on her quarters will find them in disarray, signs of a struggle, and both Jenny and the new stranger in town gone. Jenny's personal diary, a full, graphic and grisly recounting of the events as she saw them, will be among her personal effects left behind.

Horace has no innate ability to resist damage, though he does regenerate lost Hits like any other godzombie, and can only be permanently killed by total destruction of the body or taking sufficient damage to head and heart.

Remember that the destruction of Horace is by no means the end of the adventure. There are still two loose ends to be tied up. The first is that there is a Herald somewhere, in a psychic coma, bound in a special pentagram far from the eyes of its Cause, who may not yet even realize the Herald is missing. Clues to the Herald's existence might not even surface for several months. The other loose end is Jenny's child. If the child was conceived before Horace's death, it will be a normal child in all respects, though with a greater potential to be a mage. However, what if the child was conceived right *after* Horace died? In this case, the child will have some of its spirit or lifeforce derived from Horace's insane soul, and some from the spirit of the imprisoned Herald. What this will mean for the child is a complete unknown.

And last, consider that Horace was unliving, totally obsessed with becoming alive again, and had found a means to drain the lifeforce from the living. If the adventurers manage to totally destroy Horace, it is quite possible he will literally come back to haunt them as an angry ghost...

▼ **WARP PLUS 10 YEARS** - In addition to anything else you tell them, read the following to the players:

*You really never accepted it until now, but the old world is truly gone. It hit you as you slit open what might be the very last tube of toothpaste within a hundred kilometers, just to scrape a last minty bit from the inside. Trees are growing through the broken windshields of long-dead cars. Children are told boogey-man stories not to frighten them, but to prepare them. The mechanical precision of manufactured goods has been replaced by home-spun craftsmanship. You don't see blue jeans much anymore, replaced by undyed cotton or hemp fabrics. The tractors left are few and far between, cars, generators, chain saws and lawnmowers too. You saw a group of third-graders with a set of precision tools, dismantling an old computer like it was a swiss watch. You wondered who was teaching them electronics in this day and age, until you saw the girls delicately clipping out components to use as jewelry, and the boys rolling dice to see who would get the magnets out of the hard drive. And you realize that you have a college degree whose knowledge you have not touched for longer than those children have been alive...*

The world has adapted. The earth stopped trembling within a few weeks of the Warp, but the shaking of society has just now settled down. Ten years gives a lot of distance and perspective. Temples have replaced churches, horses have replaced cars, and books and storytellers and live theater have replaced television. People have come to accept a larger world and smaller horizons. No longer can they get worldwide news and weather 24/7 or drive a quick 20 kilometers to get something at the store and still be home in time for dinner. Gossip, travellers, and in the most secure and advanced areas, newspapers and telegraph are the information sources.



