

The Near Now ...

Later today, early tomorrow, sometime next week,
the world began to end.

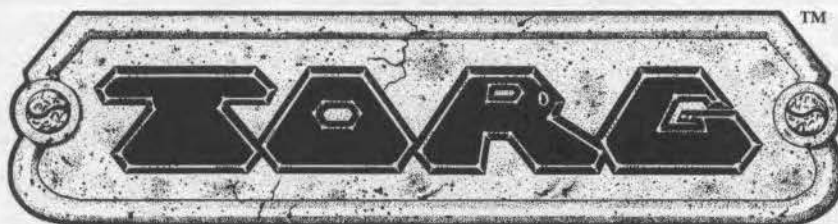
Earth has been invaded by raiders from other cosms — other realities. They have come to steal the the planet's living energy ... to consume its possibilities. They have brought with them their own realities, causing parts of the planet to become someplace else.

Seeking to stop them, Storm Knights lit a mysterious Signal Fire in the Himalayas. Now that call has been answered — a starfaring race known in Earth legend as the "Space Gods" have returned to South America, bringing with them psionics, biotech, and a strange new reality technology that could mean victory for the Knights in the Possibility Wars.

But an evil has reached Earth in their vessels, a plague that threatens to turn men into slaves of a power-mad Space God. Already it has begun to sweep through South America, threatening to destroy any dream of human triumph.

Incredible powers of the mind, bizarre technology, and a new reality make this the last, best hope for the human race.

This is the realm of ...



Roleplaying the Possibility Wars™

Space Gods™

The Sourcebook of Science-Fiction Reality

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TORG - Space Gods

US39511PDF

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Introduction



he Akashan Council members started as the doors to their chamber opened to admit a visitor. Monitor Zynn stood

before them, barely able to gather the breath to speak and looking as if he were flushed with fever. For a horrible instant, the elders wondered if the plague had taken a new turn.

But Zynn's excited condition had been sparked by something quite different. With great effort, he mouthed the words that Akashans had both longed for and dreaded for almost five centuries:

"The Signal Fire has been lit!"

The chamber erupted, half the council members cheering, the others sitting with furrowed brows and dark expressions.

"You are certain of this, Monitor?"

Rotan Ulka said, in a voice like thunder. "You know the danger this could represent, do you not?"

The Monitor swallowed hard, but stood his ground. "I do, Rotan. I received the report from the lightship myself, and twice queried the vessel's master. The messages are confusing, but clear. There has been no mistake — Earth has called to us at last."

Ulka sighed. "Then leave us. The time has come for decision."

After Zynn had departed, Ulka turned to his colleagues. "Centuries ago, we reached out to other galaxies, hoping to share our knowledge with them. We left Signal Fires for the native beings, to be used when they had reached a sufficient level of civilization and an understanding of themselves.

"But you all know the results of our ... tampering. I ask you, High Council members — dare we answer this call?"

Hakia spoke first. "How can we not, Rotan Ulka? You know the plague ravages our people, turning them from peaceful believers in balance to blood-

crazed monsters. You have heard the voices of the people, crying out for the council to act. How can we not explore every possible source of aid?"

"And our people remember well Those Who Wait on Earth," said Dala. "We risk much if we abandon them to their fate."

Sarila stood, shaking with rage. "Fools, all of you! You would risk bringing the plague to Earth, the possible contamination of Akashan culture, and break our people's most sacred vow for the sake of Those Who Wait? Their day is done, and it is only the revolutionaries who would see us intervene on other worlds once more! Akasha, the entire Star Sphere, are in peril, and we cannot chance their destruction on the basis of an archaic signalling device!"

Ulka glanced around the chamber, and saw some heads nodding in agreement. He knew the decision he made here would be a crucial one — never had there been a greater need for balance among the Akasha, and never had there been a greater danger to that balance.

The Rotan pondered for several moments. Then he lifted his head and said quietly, "The Rotan speaks, let all attend. The decision is made.

"The Signal Fire will be answered. The Akashans will return to Earth."

The Possibility Wars

Earth has been invaded. Powerful beings who call themselves "High Lords" have come from different realities to steal the energy of this cosm. Each High Lord has conquered a section of Earth and reshaped its reality to suit his wishes. That is the situation in the Near Now of *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*.

The High Lords are opposed all over the globe by valiant Storm Knights. Early in the struggle, a group of Knights obtained an ancient artifact known as "the Possibility Chalice" and used it to light a Signal Fire in a lost city of the Himalayas. The immediate effect of this was to create hundreds of new Knights to aid in the fight — but the true purpose of the Signal Fire remained a mystery.

Now the message sent that day has reached the Akashans, aliens who visited Earth centuries ago and left the Signal Fire behind. Armed with psionic powers, biotech, and non-invasive reality technology, they have returned to South America and discovered the horrors of the Possibility Wars.

They have come to aid mankind, with a reality technology unlike anything ever seen before, something which could spell final victory for the Storm Knights. But they also bring with them perhaps the greatest menace of all ...

Important!

This sourcebook is a companion volume to *Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. It is possible to make use of the *Space Gods* setting with other roleplaying games, but many of the rules and concepts presented within these pages are explained in greater detail in the *Torg* boxed set.

The Sourcebook

This sourcebook provides all the information and advice needed to design exciting campaigns in the bizarre and fascinating lands visited by the *Space Gods* and the *Torg* universe, as well as a psionics system, biotech equipment, and rules for the spreading of non-invasive reality.



Chapter One

The Cosm



The Akashans are residents of a small galaxy which they call the "Star Sphere." Roughly 750 parsecs across, the cosm is home to over 500 races, and dominated by the Akashan High Council.

Although much of their galaxy has been mapped and catalogued, there remain some areas that the Akashans and their client races have yet to explore. Following the failure of their mission to Earth, the Akashans grew increasingly isolationist, reluctant even to study the planets and stars that surrounded them.

The High Council has been forced to reconsider this policy, however, due to the effects of the Comaghaz plague (see below) and the need to control its spread in the Star Sphere. Expeditionary teams of Monitors have been dispatched to the furthest reaches of the galaxy to determine the extent of the plague and hopefully discover a means to combat it.

The Genesis of the Star Sphere

An excerpt from the *Akashic Records*:

In the beginning, there was the Void. Then Eternity entered the Place; dreams and possibilities were unleashed and spread throughout the Void. The Maelstrom was born from the meeting of these two great powers of the cosmverse.

The possibilities spewed forth from the Maelstrom created galaxies and worlds, only to see them consumed by the Void. Eventually, only two possibilities survived — Apeiros, the Creator, and the Nameless One, the Destroyer.

Apeiros spang from the side of Eternity to send possibilities spinning throughout the Void. Life began, and

Apeiros' power was multiplied billions of times. But the Nameless One emerged from the Void and consumed the energy provided by Apeiros, and then attempted to consume the Creator himself.

Apeiros spread his wings and soared from the Void. He entered the Sphere of Stars where galaxies spun from his wings. Whirling on their axes, the galaxies flickered and flared, and novas blasted across the Star Sphere. Where the Creator's wings touched, worlds were imbued with possibilities and began to glow with power.

Slowly, the worlds began to revolve around the stars. The stars warmed the planets, causing oceans to boil. Great winds blew, mountains arose from the ground and volcanoes exploded, shooting fire into the sky. In time, these worlds grew quiet, and the seeds of life, planted by Apeiros, began to bloom.

Beings created in the image of Apeiros thrived. But the Nameless One envied the Creator's accomplishment, and sent his darkness to consume the civilizations of the Star Sphere. He did not succeed, for the children of the Light were strong.

The Nameless One is an entity of limitless patience, and we must never relax our vigilance. Someday, he will return and attempt to undo all creation, and on that day, our courage and strength will be our only weapons.

The Akasha

The civilization of the Akasha has existed as such for roughly ten millennia. The prehistory of their race was marked by visits by the Mohani, spacefaring beings from beyond the Star Sphere, who took it upon themselves to shepherd the fledgling society. They taught the Akashans the need for balance in all things, how to live in



harmony with nature and how to harness the energy of the world around them for their own benefit.

The Mohani referred to themselves as *pultaak*, a word which can be roughly translated as "caretakers." They explained to the Akashans that they believed having knowledge gave one a responsibility to share it for the good of all, and that they had visited many races over the centuries. They told the Akashans of the stargates, great holes in the fabric of space through which one can travel countless light years in the space of seconds.

The Mohani often expressed the hope that one day the Akashans could become the *pultaak* for other civilizations. They vowed to inform the Akashans when the time came that the mantle could be passed, but shortly after that, the Mohani ceased to appear. Why they vanished — whether their vessel was destroyed on the return trip to their planet, or their race was the victim of some natural disaster — is the subject of much speculation in Akashan myth.

The race had by this time learned enough from the Mohani that they were able to thrive on their own. Some began to believe that the Mohani's departure meant the Akashans had been deemed ready to act as caretakers for other worlds. This view prevailed, and the Akashans began to move out into space, spreading the philosophies taught them by the Mohani.

Physiology

The Akashans are a humanoid race, averaging 1.75 meters in height, with facial features resembling those of the Mayan Indians of Earth. Their skin is reddish-brown, their hair black, and most have slim, well-proportioned builds. There are no external physical differences between Akashans and humans. The only major biological difference is that their body temperature rarely exceeds 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and their touch will feel cool to a human.

Akashans have developed powerful psionic abilities, although only a relatively small percentage are telepathic. Those who have that talent are

both valued and scorned, considered extremely valuable for government or diplomatic service but also suspected of spying on private conversations. Telepaths whose jobs do not specifically require the use of that ability often keep their possession of it secret, preferring to avoid societal prejudice.

Akashans have a life expectancy of roughly a century. When they reach the age of 60, they are allowed to retire from whatever occupation they have pursued and devote themselves to introspection and meditative pursuits.

Standard Akashan

DEXTERITY 9

Dodge 10, unarmed combat 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

PERCEPTION 10

Evidence analysis 12, find 11, introspection 11, language 11, scholar 11

MIND 10

Test 11

CHARISMA 9

Charm 10, persuasion 10

SPIRIT 9

Faith (Akashan) 10

Additional Skills: three at +1 adds

Possibility Potential: some (30)

Psionic Potential: some (5)

Alignment: varies

Government and Economy

Akashan society is governed by the High Council and a lesser body called the Kyat. The most powerful office is that of Rotan, the chairperson of the High Council who is charged with balancing both sides of every argument and then rendering a fair judgment.

The High Council is made up of representatives of the various states of the Akashan homeworld, with each member having an equal voice in debate. There is no actual voting, but all are allowed a substantial amount of time to state their case before the Rotan announces his decision.

The Rotan himself is not an elected official, but is appointed from among the High Council members. His position is more akin to that of a judge than a president, and it is a station which

must be earned through service to the society. A Rotan's position is normally his for life, although a lax performance of duty or a particularly impressive contribution to the Akashan people by one of the other council members can lead to a change.

The current Rotan, Ulka, had gained renown while a High Council member for ending the Lorbaat riots through diplomacy, rather than force. A student of history, he is well aware of the dangers of intervention, but also realizes the threat posed by keeping his peoples' innate yen for exploration in check indefinitely.

The Kyat is made up of representatives sent from the client worlds of the StarSphere. Although they are allowed a vote on various issues and are noted for their prolonged debates, they have in general no voice in major decisions. The Kyat was created in large part to appease agitators both within and without Akashan society, and a great hue and cry rises from the client worlds whenever anyone has the temerity to suggest their representatives are simply going through the motions. Most of those who have never seen the Akashan government at work firmly believe that the Kyat is a crucial part of the decision-making process.

The primary unit of Akashan currency is the *ciara*, which resembles a small scarlet gemstone. The Akashans are an extremely prosperous people, collecting income through trade with other planets in the Star Sphere and the use of technologies acquired from worlds beyond the stargates in the years prior to the withdrawal. This wealth has allowed many Akashans to focus on esoteric studies and lives of leisure, with client races assuming much of the menial labor that needs to be done.

This is not a situation that sits well with some younger Akashans. They believe that the isolationist tendencies of their race, combined with assured wealth, have turned their elders into naive, detached leaders incapable of handling a crisis. Many point to the predominance of alien crews on Akashan vessels and alien laborers performing essential services as signs of a gradual erosion of their society.

