TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOKENS

Torg Eternity uses different conditions and damage types to show the effects of combat on a character and his foes. You can write these effects down or use tokens to represent them. Official tokens are available in the *GM Box*. Sometimes the official token's visual may be used to represent a condition, as shown below:

Stymied / Very Stymied   **Shock**   **Wound**   **Vulnerable**

Waiting   **Aiming**   **Disconnected**   **Malfunction**   **Concentrating**   **Restrained**

Step A   Step B   Step C   Step D

Step Marker

THE INVASION OF EARTH TOLD IN PREVIOUS TALES OF
TORG TOOK PLACE ON ONE VERSION OF OUR WORLD.

THE HIGH LORDS THERE WERE SUCCESSFUL FOR MANY
YEARS, BUT WERE EVENTUALLY STOPPED BY THE PLANET'S
VALIANT STORM KNIGHTS.

BUT THERE ARE INFINITE VERSIONS OF OUR WORLD.

THIS IS A TALE OF A DIFFERENT EARTH.

ONE WHERE THINGS DID NOT GO AS WELL...

FOREWORD

By Greg Gorden

A bit of business first: this is the best version of *Torg* ever produced. Don't get me wrong, I am proud of the work I did on the original game, and the talent of the team and freelancers I worked with at West End still has me wondering how I got so lucky. But the book you hold in your hands contains a better game than the one I designed while at West End, building on the best of their ideas, and modernizing the game system. Perks, enhanced card play benefiting from two decks, improved combat, clean-up of many of the varied systems, and artwork with that radical concept of…color.

If you have not yet explored the idea of realities at war with each other, welcome, you have come at the best possible time. If you are an old hand at realm running, you will find familiar faces and mechanics. Dr. Mobius and the Cyberpope Jean Malraux are still scheming, Tolwyn of Tancred battles Uthorion more furiously than ever, darkness devices lurk, and the benchmark chart is still there to figure out what number you need for that kaiju. I believe you will find a cleaner, more consistent game system which will allow you to explore the many new bits the crew from Ulisses Spiel has added: The Law of Wonders, Tharkold in Russia, edeinos that look bad ass, perks that are specific to races and cosms? Yes, please. I give a heartfelt thank you to Markus Plötz for realizing his vision of Torg and bringing the game back better than ever.

Torg still stands as my most personal design. It came at a time when I was shifting design gears. I had started firmly in the simluationist camp of roleplaying game design, building mechanics and games to faithfully recreate the world of James Bond 007 and DC Heroes. As I was mulling over the ideas behind *Torg,* I was branching out into narrativist styles of gaming in my personal gaming. Yes, I wanted the unicorn GNS theory said you shouldn't bother with.

I had a ridiculous number of goals for *Torg.* Chief among them, I had come to appreciate the power of RPGs as explanatory shorthand for real-world behavior. You could tell a fellow player that your co-worker Thorton had an intelligence 17, wisdom 3, and the player would have a basic understanding of what problems Thorton caused at work. But almost all game metaphors were at the character level. I wanted game metaphors at the social and cultural level, to feed into a different discussion.

I was living in Chicago at the time. I was freelancing; most of my friends were fellow freelancers or actors. My then-wife Barbara was working for Continental Bank. Let's just say our two constituencies did not see the world the same way.

Continental Bank had recently become the largest bank failure in American history. The bank had been purchased by the FDIC to prevent financial panic; Continental had fallen into the "too big to fail" niche. One night at a Continental function, a senior manager was telling me that the arts deserved to fail because they did not respect market forces. I smiled, slid his drink from in front of him to in front of me, and wished him luck respecting market forces until taxpayers no longer had to buy his alcohol. A kerfuffle perhaps followed.

On the drive home, Barbara said the manager and I were just from different worlds, and could I please be more careful. I apologized for my failure as professional spouse sidekick, then fell into one of my bad-husband moments semi-listening, staring over the moonlit waters of Lake Michigan as we made our way up Lake Shore Drive. The idea was just about there.

The senior manager and I shared the same world, but something else was off. The same thing that was off when I could get a police escort to the polls to vote in a mayoral election and my friends could not; or when my wife couldn't get heard at a tech meeting where she worked; or when they lined us up for lunch by religious affiliation when I attended elementary school in Colombia. There were plenty of -isms that would explain that, but how could I generalize these conflicts and blow them up to game size? Ah…the world was the same, but reality was different for each participant, the realities were in conflict, and there was a price to be paid for that. That was the metaphor I was looking for. It wasn't yet enough for a game; but if the realities governed every aspect of existence, technology, magic, spirituality, even what ideas could be successfully expressed? That. Could. Work.

The next few days were the sort of days for which I have lived for my whole life. I was consumed by the ideas central to *Torg,* in a flow where hours just evaporated, and the design notes just seemed to appear. Realities organized along the lines of familiar genres, with a few twists. How the realities were contained, what the price was for those who lived in a reality that wasn't theirs, how the conflicts might play out, how realities could flip. Could dinosaur

creatures violate the inverse square cube law and ravage Manhattan? Sure, at a cost. Could demons patrol the Chicago skylines? Sure, but that should be this much riskier than dinosaurs. What if the demons created magically enchanted cavalry out of dinosaurs to take on the 1st Armored Division? Er…okay, some things I might have to figure out later. But I was ready to start playing.

Before Hollywood, before he wrote for *Torg*, Chris Kubasik was a player in my homebrew campaigns. One of these was the Stillearth War, a campaign where the ideas for *Torg* percolated. Chris was playing a priest; his character was facing a demon at the top of the Hancock Tower in Chicago. The demon was injured, but currently having the better of the confrontation, calling on the powers of the night to finish off our hero. His character about to be tossed a few dozen stories to his doom, Chris attacked the demon…with an impassioned speech about the value of humanity. A couple of rolls later and the demon cratered into the streets, another problem for the recently busy Chicago Department of Public Works. Chris had won, not through firepower but through superior expression of ideals. That was cool; I now knew I had the core of the game.

The project went on my mental back shelf, the one way in the back, when I took a job at West End Games. I was happily designing bad guy stuff for their Star Wars line, and enjoying the rigor of working with a talented team. A little over a year after I joined, West End started considering publishing a new roleplaying game. I pitched my idea to Bill Slavicsek. A week later he came back and said, "We can do this. But you have to remember we cannot put Greg in the box with the game." He meant my ideas had to rub against ideas from the team, to be tumbled smooth, to be modified or replaced by their suggestions so we could have a less idiosyncratic game. That was a great call, and an easy one to accept.

The work began in earnest, albeit without a title. We bandied titles about, but nothing completely stuck. Internally it was called *TORG*, for The Other Roleplaying Game, until we could come up with something better. Well… er…we may have failed in that task. Gradually, *Torg* grew on us as a game title, and as the ultimate title for which High Lords were striving.

The people I was working with really bought in and did great work. Other experiences since have taught me that collaboration can sometimes mean a race to the mediocre, with great ideas dying in the arena to good ideas, in the name of consensus. My experience with Torg was exactly the opposite; the strange, the cool, the unique, each idea brought by the team made the game better.

The story arcs benefited; Bill Slavicsek worked tirelessly to create a coherent narrative from all the disparate pieces. As soon as he succeeded,

I would walk into his office and blow it up by adding just one more cool bit the team had discussed. He still talked to me throughout the entire process, which was an amazing feat of patience.

The setting benefited; Ray Winninger championed a world of Saturday Morning serials, and my low power supers idea transformed into the Nile Empire. Jim Bambra brought a great dose of horror to my religious technology vision for the Cyberpapacy. Chris Kubasik told me I needed to be all-in with the Living Land, spirituality absolutely triumphing over technology and magic.

The game systems benefited; the Drama Deck in particular improved with team ideas, many championed by Doug Kaufman and Jonatha Ariadne Caspian. Ed Stark proved to me that the magic system could convert the entirety of England to glass. The axioms and world laws were made for debate with the team, especially Ray, Chris and Paul Murphy. Never since have I had so much fun losing arguments; all manner of philosophical, social, and technological points were debated. Everything from edeinos surviving in the cold, what it was like to cause a Contradiction, how possibility energy might manifest, the ethics of living in Orrorsh, how would a Kanawa agent's penchant for subtle subversion translate when dropped into the four-color good guy versus bad guy world of the Nile Empire, came up for debate. The discussion was fun, it was pertinent, and it resulted in a richer, better setting.

I am grateful for Bill's support of perhaps my craziest idea. I thought that the discussions we were having in the office around Torg could be scaled into an interactive campaign called Infiniverse. This was before the world wide web, so was done by printed newsletter. The dispatches and comments returned by players would be crunched through a primitive amalgam of Excel and Fox Pro, to modify a 10-foot wide world map on which we charted the progress of the Possibility Wars with push-pins and string. I know, right?

The players who joined the Infiniverse did not disappoint. Almost immediately, they seized on an idea Bill Slavicsek had used as a bit of color in his book; the failed invasion from the techno-demon realm. The results of the Infiniverse campaign became the basis for West End's cosm book on Tharkold. The players hadn't just played with the story, they had created a whole new storyline. This emergent storytelling was really exciting for me, and was everything I had wanted for the game.

The players' influence did not stop there; a few of the players I met became designers for *Torg*. Shane Hensley, Brian Schomberg, Jim Ogle, and Stan! Take a bow; it was great fun watching you guys at liftoff of your careers.

A quarter of a century later, I am once again excited by Torg. Another great team has put together the game you are now reading. You are the new players for this new version of the Possibility Wars. The settings, characters, and ideas are yours to play with. May your imagination build epic stories out of this clash of cosms. May the High Lords come to fear the opposition of your Storm Knights. And may the best reality win.

Greg Gorden

10