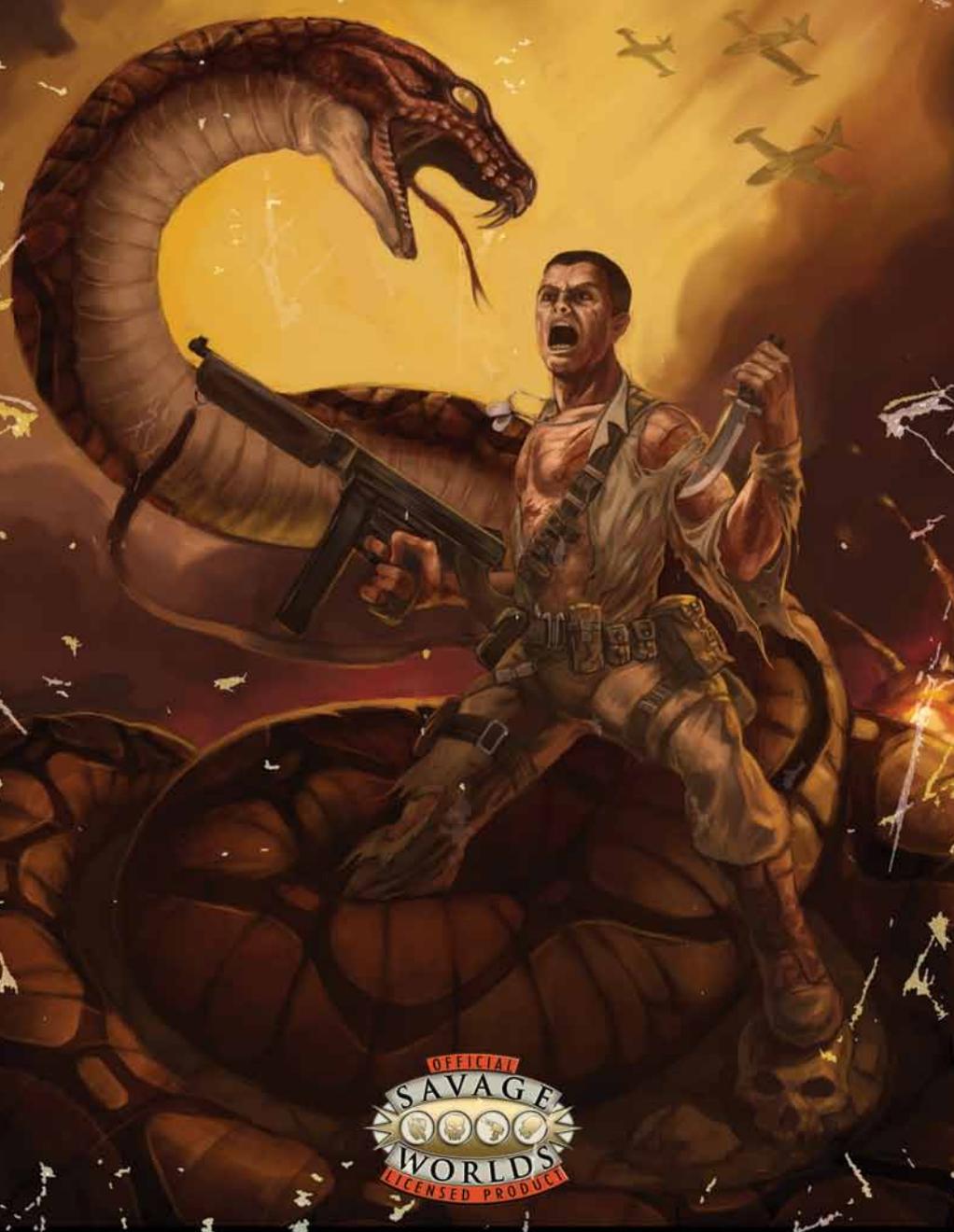




AOP2003 * \$19.95 * AN ATOMIC OVERMIND BOOK

THE DAY AFTER RAGNAROK



A SAVAGE SETTING BY KENNETH HITE

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The Eye of Jörmungandr

The baleful looking symbol at right is the Eye of Jörmungandr. This symbol indicates which monsters and NPCs presented in *The Day After Ragnarok* are Wild Cards. Some monsters have boss versions (such as the Dero Leader or the 80-foot Giant Snake) that are also Wild Cards, but don't have the Eye of Jörmungandr there to show the way.



Serpentfall

"The Nazi myth which is important ... [to] men like Hitler requires a Götterdämmerung..."

— U.S. WAR DEPARTMENT COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT, FEB. 12, 1945

Patton's death in September didn't do it, although the wilder-eyed addicts in the Wewelsburg basement claimed that Skorzeny's "Operation Walküre" had changed things, that the American general was "the rope of the Norns," somehow tied to past and future in a way that others weren't. His breaking, they swore, signaled the new Twilight. But the Bulge ground to a halt in sight of the Moselle, and Montgomery slowly pushed the Wehrmacht back across the Ardennes. Not to worry, swore the Ahnenerbe men, sweating out the amphetamines and stinking of extinct herbs pulled from Finnish bogs. The Norns' rope was broken. Things would be different.

Montgomery swept into Lübeck, and Bradley's armor growled closer to Nuremberg, and Zhukov smashed across the Oder, and the sun of July rose over a prostrate Reich. Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* played on Berlin Radio night and day, and the smoke blotted out the stars. And then it happened; the whole world heard the howl of Garm, and the moon was eclipsed in blood. The head of Jörmungandr, the Midgard Serpent, 350 miles across, breached the surface of the Arabian Sea

and rose up into the troposphere. Its first lunge destroyed three troop convoys and their escort carriers, swallowed in one bite 100 miles south of the Azores. A coil of the Serpent now stretched across Africa from Mogadishu to Morocco.

When the head reared up again off Vigo Bay, it gulped down the U.S.S. Essex and TF 24, and paused to splinter a few hundred thousand tons of shipping. President Truman gave the go-ahead, and a lone B-29 took off from Iceland. Its original target had been Berlin, but Captain Joseph Westover had new orders. He, and the crew of the

Das Ahnenerbe

Waischenfeld-Boppurth am 22. September 1944.

Der Kritischmanager

Leute leben glücklich am Gestern und in der Zukunft, solange sie ihren Schwanzgriff und den Griff ihrer Oberführer benutzt sind

HIGHLY SECRET

TO: Heinrich Himmler
Reichsführer-SS
RE: FALL RAGNAROK

1. At last, Weisthor has spoken! Sturmabführer Skorzeny's success in UNTERNEHMEN WALKÜRE has, as promised, "severed the rope of the Norns." With the death of the American General Patton, Weisthor says, "a world-branch is broken, and our Midgard now swings loose, fruit falling through the World-Tree for us to catch." I report his exact words as you requested. The full transcript of his trance-prophecy is attached to this report.

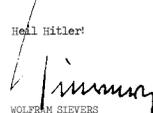
2. FALL RAGNAROK can now go forward on a basis of potential success, as the prerequisites are complete:

- The tests at Dachau have produced the correct formulation of amphetamines for the Sleepless Rite.
- Reich botanists have successfully cultivated the necessary Pleistocene bog-herbs from the samples harvested in Finland.
- The deciphered texts from Gothland-Ukraine offer the correct poetic structure for the Seers to work within. All Ahnenerbe resources will now be dedicated to translating the Edda into this new structure.

Dosed with the correct herbal mixture, Sleepless Seers will continuously incant in parallel, each working from a separate translation to ensure redundancy of effect.

3. If the Reich can hold out until Midsommer 1945, I as Reichsmanager Ahnenerbe promise to you the awakening of Garm, Jörmungandr, and Fenrir, and consequently the unstoppable beginning of Ragnarok. The Jotunn will destroy the Bolsheviks from the North, and the Svartalfar will emerge from Nidhavelir to bedevil the Americans in the South. The Aryan race will rule the new-made world forever, as the restored Vanir.

Heil Hitler!


WOLFRAM SIEVERS
Standartenführer-SS
Reichsmanager Ahnenerbe



Forschungs- und Lehrinstitut des Ahnenerbe e. V.

Strange Cargo, were to seek out and engage the Midgard Serpent with the Trinity Device. On July 21, 1945, spotter planes for "Operation John Henry" zeroed the *Strange Cargo* in on the Serpent, its head 20,000 feet above Oslo and moving southeast at 80 knots. Captain Westover was an ace pilot, capable of flying a plane through something much smaller than a snake's pupil 500 yards across. The Device detonated, tearing a piece of the Sun down from heaven and destroying the Serpent's brain in a torrent of atomic fire. Westover and his crew died instantly. Jörmungandr took a little bit longer than that.

THE SERPENT DIES

The polar vortex drove strong high easterlies that day, and a plume of radioactive venom hit the upper atmosphere and headed west. It slowly fell out of the sky into clouds and storms, twisters and waterspouts, all headed west. Dark crimson rain fell from Dublin to Denver. Where it struck, the seas boiled and the earth drank poison. And things engendered, mutated horrors born of dragon's blood and broken strontium atoms. Some coiled down to the sea's depths; others clumped together and pulled apart ships. Some climbed or flopped or skittered or slunk from swamps and sewers and gutters and ponds and everywhere else rain ran in eastern North America. And some people and beasts drank from those pools and reservoirs before they knew, and some people's blood changed and they knew it not. Or at least not yet.

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C.

20 July 1945

TO: General Carl Spaatz
Commanding General
United States Army Strategic Air Forces

RE: OPERATION JOHN HENRY

1. The 509 Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as reliable visual intelligence is available on its target: the so-called "Midgard Serpent." To carry military and civilian scientific personnel from the War Department to observe and record the effects of the explosion of the bomb, additional aircraft will accompany the airplane carrying the bomb. The observing planes will stay several miles distant from the point of delivery of the bomb.
2. Additional bombs will be held in readiness pending analysis of OPERATION JOHN HENRY as soon as made ready by the Project staff. Further instructions will be issued concerning targets other than the one listed above.
3. Discussion of any and all information concerning the use of the weapon is reserved to the Secretary of War and the President of the United States. No communications on the subject or releases of information will be issued by Commanders in the field without specific prior authority. Any news stories will be sent to the War Department for specific clearance.
4. The foregoing directive is issued to you by direction and with the approval of the Secretary of War and of the Chief of Staff, US Army. It is desired that you personally deliver one copy of this directive to General Eisenhower and one copy to Admiral King for their information.

Thos T. Handy
THOS. T. HANDY
General, G.S.C.
Acting Chief of Staff

cc: General Leslie Groves

But it hardly mattered, not at first, because the fall of the Serpent's body back into the Atlantic sent up a wall of water a hundred miles high that smashed into the coast from Halifax to Havana. New York, Washington, Boston, Charleston, Philadelphia, Miami (and poor low-sunk New Orleans) all drowned. Montreal and Cleveland and Chicago, and Veracruz and Houston and Caracas, were merely battered. Salt water, flecked with venomous foam, lapped against the Appalachians.

The Serpent's head, its skull cored out by nuclear flame, kept moving toward Nuremberg where

Ophi-Tech

The Serpentfall not only reshaped the geopolitics, and even the geography, of the Earth; it also reshaped the sciences. Quite simply, the Serpent should be impossible: Nothing that large should exist, or be able to move. And it certainly shouldn't breed monsters when it's dead, or while alive have responded to magical rituals cast by deranged Nazis in amphetamine fugue states. Understanding the "how" of the Serpent is the goal of ophiurgists from Grahamstown to Gorkiy—but they're not even sure about the "what" yet.

But the tiny pinpricks of knowledge the ophiurgists have drained from the Serpent's corpse have created an increasing flow of "ophi-tech," which some people (and governments) are willing to use without knowing anything else.

ACQUIRING OPHI-TECH

As mentioned under the Arcane Background (Ophi-Tech) Edge, almost everyone with reliable access to ophi-tech works for Rhodes University, a government, or another high-powered research institution. The GM is perfectly within her rights to insist that any hero with ophi-tech has to accept such apron strings as a condition of the Edge.

However, the GM might also decree that independent heroes can begin with "gray-market" knockoff versions, post-military issue equipment, or (hopefully) untraceable black-market stolen ophi-tech. It might even be available later in the game, to people who know just who to ask. (Streetwise at -4, even in a suitable location.) She should set the price considerably higher than the heroes can pay, at least not without doing something horribly risky and adventurous to earn it...

In such a version of the setting, the GM might also decide that such street versions of ophi-tech are less reliable than the officially issued gear: Where Rhodes University ophi-tech only malfunctions on snake-eyes, the unlicensed sort malfunctions on a 1.

In no version of the setting should heroes be able to invent new ophi-tech devices, unless they have access to a major research laboratory like Bell Labs or the Woomera Proving Grounds. Ophi-tech research is like atomic research: even the unclassified stuff takes million-dollar pieces of equipment and a team of Ph.D.s. Getting the New Power Edge should be justified by story developments: taking a jet pack off the fallen body of a villainous Argentine fascist, or getting a Marconi gun as a reward for services rendered to His Majesty's Government.

OPHI-TECH GEAR

Ablative-Metabolic Suit

Resembling a flight suit made of snakeskin and stuffed with particularly lively eels, the ablative-metabolic suit protects the wearer from any extreme of temperature or pressure known on the Earth's surface (though not magma) or in near space. It is a full body suit including gloves, boots, cowl, and visor; the wearer looks out through polarized obsidian goggles. It weighs

Sometimes The Serpent Bites Back

As an optional rule, the GM can decide that any hero who suffers from a certain number of ophi-tech malfunctions—3, or 6, or his Vigor die, or 13, or whatever—gains the Minor Hindrance Snakebit, as whatever safeguards exist on the biochemistry of these horrid things are obviously not working any better than the rest of the design. A hero who's already Snakebit and suffers such repeated malfunctions has the Hindrance "upgraded" to Major.

The World After Ragnarok

Adventures can happen anywhere and everywhere on **The Day After Ragnarok**. This guide gives you the lowdown on the world situation, with enough information to get you started running savage scenarios in any corner of the globe. Don't worry about history: It went off the rails in a big way a few years back.

Inventions might get made early or not at all, plenty of folks died in this world that didn't in others, and the geopolitics can go any which way in the wake of the Serpentfall.

*“Brothers shall fight and fell each other,
And sisters’ sons shall kinship stain;
Harsh times on Earth, a wanton age;
An Axe Age, a Sword Age, when shields are sundered,
A Wind Age, a Wolf Age, before the world falls;
No man to another shall show mercy.”*

— VÖLUSPÁ, STANZA 45

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The falling Serpent smashed the British Isles, but the Empire was bigger than that. The Duke of Gloucester, Prince Henry, serving as Australia's Governor-General in 1945, transferred the Imperial capital to Sydney and took the throne as King Henry IX. He and Prime Minister Menzies have taken controversial steps since then: negotiating an armistice with the Japanese, holding on to as much of India as they could, pushing ahead with ophiurgic research, and drawing a “thin red line” across the path of Soviet expansion. However, most Australians see no better plan on offer, and the rest of the Empire is if anything even more monarchist and supportive. So far, Henry has managed to govern an Empire of four parliaments (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa) with one (mostly Australian) Cabinet; constitutional reform is one more question that opponents accuse Menzies and the King of ducking. They, on the other hand, see other problems as bigger and more immediate: the Soviets, the Serpent, and the need to hold onto Empire by the skin of their teeth or see barbarism roll over the world unresisted. His Majesty's Government has decided who and what its enemies are, and what it needs to do and build to fight them in this new world.

Australia

With a population of 10 million, Australia is the country on Earth least affected by the Serpentfall physically. Even the “years without a summer” were milder in Australia, on the other side of the world from the Serpentfall's plume of dirt and mist. But it is one of the most affected politically: it has suddenly become the heart and fulcrum of the British Empire.

Australia has no bandits worth mentioning, although some Aboriginal tribes in the interior worship the Serpent. The desolate Outback allows the government to isolate major experimental facilities such as the Woomera Proving Grounds for ophiurgic and rocketry research.

South Africa

The Union of South Africa is the other major pole of the British Empire. Its white population of less than 3 million maintains near-total control over the economy and political structure of the country, although it is split between the monarchist South African Party and the National Party of mostly Boer stock. The National Party believes first in controlling the 10 million Xhosa, Zulu, and other blacks in South Africa, and secondarily in pursuing South African independence. (There are also about 3 million Indians, mostly laborers and small businessmen, in British Africa.) King Henry and his government must walk a fine line in South Africa. Trying to bring it completely into the Imperial mainstream will offend the Boers and possibly splinter the Empire; leaving the Boers to their own devices will encourage white nationalism and stir up native unrest

throughout Africa. The presence in South Africa of Rhodes University, the Empire's premier (and indispensable) research facility, only complicates matters. Rhodes U. is itself split: institutionally, Rhodes very much favors a "strong hand" in Africa, but many of its scholars are socialists, internationalists, liberals, and otherwise suspicious of Boer policy. South Africa also produces strategic minerals necessary for British industrial and weapons development.

With the British Isles destroyed, there is an urgent shortage of colonial administrators for King Henry's Empire. South African and Rhodesian whites increasingly flow into African colonial posts, including Tanganyika, the "protectorates" of formerly Portuguese Angola and Mozambique, and the former Belgian Congo. (British East Africa has its own native British aristocracy.) Hence, South Africa and Australia find themselves competing for influence in Africa under the common British Imperial crown.

With its vital strategic location, mineral deposits, colonial presence, and Rhodes University, South Africa has a good deal of scope for independent action. For example, the South African Police (SAP) maintains their own network of spies and mercenaries to keep rebel groups and "subversives" down. The SAP does not accept MI5 control or oversight, although it cooperates with British Intelligence on a case-by-case basis.

British India

After the Serpentfall, the British government altered its policy of treating India as an indivisible dominion on a single track to independence. The elections of 1947 included an option to remain under British control: the Muslim and Sikh sections of India, along with a number of the "princely states," voted to remain British rather than join the rest of India in independence under the Congress Party of Nehru and Gandhi. "Congress India" denounced the results, claiming that the British and their native client rulers had manipulated their subjects to once more "divide and conquer" India. This was almost certainly the case, although neither side's hands were clean in that election. British India and Congress India both remain tense, with political rioting and the occasional massacre common events in both jurisdictions. In both Indias, angry majorities pressure or coerce people who voted "wrong" to emigrate to the other side of the border.

The main areas of India remaining under British control include: Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal, Rajasthan, the Punjab, Nepal, Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Mysore, along with the "associated colonies" of Ceylon and Burma. A Viceroy administers British India from Calcutta.

Fimbulwinter

According to the sagas, the "Great Winter" comes before Ragnarok: three years without a summer before Garm howls. And indeed, 1941-1944 were exceptionally cold and wet, another doom for Operation Barbarossa. But in 1945, the Serpentfall truly brought on the great cold.

The Serpent's coil fell into the sea, splashing not just the mega-tsunami across the Atlantic but a plume of water up into the atmosphere. There, it froze out and fell again as snow in August. And September. And for nine months after that. Burning cities tossed their share of soot and smoke into the darkening skies, as people starved and rioted all across the Northern Hemisphere. (Except in Russia, where the Narts' "Red Spring" held winter at bay, and the NKVD liquidated any rioters.) The icy atmosphere reflected more of the sun's light back into space. The Gulf Stream, blocked by the Serpent's corpse, slackened. The globe began to cool.

In Africa, rain fell in the Sahara, as the wet air hit the miles-high wall of the Serpent's coil. Even more rain fell in Algeria and Libya, on Spain and France, as the wet air from the Atlantic poured between the Serpent's coils in a storm channel from Ireland to Aden. None of that moisture crosses the Serpent's European coil—without the Narts, the Soviet empire would be in the first stages of a millennia-long drought.

While running games, make sure to mention the terrible weather: snow, rain, sleet, freezing rain, hail, blizzard, ice storm, drizzle, fog. The skies are gray, and cloudy, and overcast, and threatening, and roiling, and murky, and thunderous. Roads are slick, and treacherous; passes are snow-choked and impassable. Good weather should feel like a reward; like a dramatic sunbeam at the end of the movie. Or it should be a contrast: Australia is still sunny, while the rest of the world grays out.