

# DYSTOPIAN AGE

## THE UNION OF FEDERATED STATES

*Tarnished by a recent Civil War and brutalised by the horrific technologies it unleashed to claim victory, the Union is a dark reflection of its former glory. The conquest and subjugation of the former Confederacy and the deeper south, as well as the new opportunities opening in the West stand as grim consolation for the Union's war-wearied soul. The Union cheer the formidable military might their country now wields to ensure that never again will anyone have to pay the brutal price that freedom demands. Nothing, however, can truly extinguish the fire of the American spirit. Scarred and brutalised by their own experiences, the Union's military industrial complex is well-aware of the depths to which man can fall – the only hope is to be found in having strength and resolution to stand tall in the face of great adversity, whatever the cost.*

### **First draft of 'Rise of Our Nation' by the Committee on Public Information.**

Manifest Destiny. Two words that define the Union of Federated States. A rejection of the old order of the world and the foundation of a new nation in the midst of a pristine land blessed with natural resources. The Union was founded as a beacon of freedom and equality in the world; a country where every man and woman would have a voice, where every person's rights would be sacrosanct. Emerging from a war for independence against the stagnant and oppressive Imperial British Crown, the Union of Federated States was born into a future that could not be denied. *[Editor's note: Starting strong! I like it.]*

### **EYE OF THE BEHOLDER**

Yet, at the heart of the endeavour, at the very core of that great nation-in-infancy, fissures were already forming. The corners of the Union hid a dark shadow, where the voices of the dispossessed, the disenfranchised and the excluded echoed in fear and anger, striving for their own hopes and dreams to be heard, to be acknowledged, and to be included in the great endeavour.

Those voices went unheard, their demands went unnoticed, and so, even as the Union began to take its first few steps on the world stage at the end of the Eighteenth Century. Suffused with its victory over the Crown, the Union was ready to accept its role as champion of liberty and freedom, to prove to all the nations of the Earth that it was possible

for a free people to work together to create perfection. But the fault lines of division and failure were already there.

### **ENEMIES WITHOUT**

For decades, the Union flourished – at least externally. Each of the former colonies in America had become a Federated State, brimming with pride at their new standing and the part that they had each played in defeating one of the greatest powers of the world to earn their freedom. A feverish energy swept the land, and the newest nation on Earth began to press out in all directions, moving from the original Crown Colonies into the surrounding countryside.

But the Crown was not about to lose such a precious jewel so easily. There were constant skirmishes as the Crown pushed and prodded its wayward child in a thousand petty ways. The dissatisfied and dispossessed within certain States were nurtured

and goaded into all manner of treacheries. To the North, the Crown Dominion of Canada was incited to cause all sorts of problems, while around the world the fledgling navy of the new nation was harried at every turn. The newly born French Republique, so quick to support the Union in their war for independence, elected to remain outside the conflict. The Union would stand or fall alone.

But whether it was driving back northern land grabs from the Dominion, the rising outlaw posses in the South and West of the country, or naval clashes with the Crown, the Union withstood it all. Even





when Crown forces swept down from staging points in the Dominion and ransacked the capital, the Union could not be brought low. The bones of the new nation were strong and united the will of the people were indomitable.

### ENEMIES WITHIN

Despite this sense of invincibility, the fractures that grew deeper and deeper with each passing triumph could not be ignored forever. The Crown did all they could to give succour to the diverging ideology separating the northern states from the southern. The grievances were many and were deeply felt on both sides. But it was not the Crown who eventually set brothers and sisters against one another in the Union.

For nearly a decade the Union had tolerated the presence of a group from the Covenant of the Enlightened, a global coalition comprising of many of the preeminent brilliant minds of the age. This cabal of Enlightened had ensconced themselves deep in the western territories, hiding from the prying eyes of the world. While most of the Enlightened arrogantly declared themselves to be the sole custodians of the fruits of their brilliance, the Enlightened led by Burson Carpathian were of a different philosophy. Unlike their peers elsewhere in the world, these 'Egalitarian' members of the Covenant believed that the marvels that they developed should be made freely available to all who could afford them. Where money could not be readily given, perhaps some other currency might be offered such as land titles, mineral access or information that might lead to further breakthroughs. Like their peers elsewhere in the world, these men and women could turn their genius to create the most destructive weaponry imaginable. All they needed were willing customers desperate enough to pay their price

It is impossible to know in hindsight if the War Between the States would have occurred without the offer of support from Carpathian and his Enlightened. It is possible that men of reason and peace living and ruling on either side of the great divide might have come to some accommodation. Many of the differences were fading even as the violence grew imminent. It was argued by several statesmen of the day that, if given enough time, peace would have been possible. *[Editor's note: This will play well to the South. I like it.]*

### THE ORE WAR

The initial flashpoint in 1860 was a dispute over

whether state or central government should have control over the extensive oil and mineral reserves of Mississippi and Texas – indeed, the Civil War was also known as the Ore War for just that reason.

Carpathian and the Enlightened Peers loyal to him, knew that the wealth and power they required for their greater work could only be had if these tensions and fears were stoked. Weapons of terrible efficacy and horrific power found their way to any faction who might conceivably triumph in the coming conflict. Money, credit, contingencies, and future considerations were traded at a feverish rate for juiced rifles, automata, sonic cannons and RJ-1027, the wonder-fuel that allowed all these infernal devices to be powered. The Ore War escalated into all-out Civil War, a conflict the likes of which had never been seen by man on Earth before.

Entire towns were turned to storms of ash, twisting on infernal breezes roaring up into blackening skies. Armies were swept from the field as streams of crimson power flashed beneath the rising clouds of smoke and dust. In the first year alone, over a million souls were lost, civilians and soldiers together, as the nation went mad, tearing at itself like a diseased animal without reason or sense.

And that was only the beginning...

### CONFLICT ON A NEW SCALE

Brutal raids on towns and villages swept out from dark, foreboding forests, cutting down farmers, merchants, and craftsmen and their families. In acts of reprisal, the forests were set to the torch, the raiders screaming their last agonised breaths into the fury of the flames.

The war spilled beyond the borders of the Union and soon the Republic of Mexico became a battleground too. The Mexicans were drawn into the conflict to aid the Confederates in exchange for a promise of favourable terms after the conflict ended.

Armoured landships crawled across the churned, muddy ground, shrugging off blasts that would have shattered castles. And then, as they fell upon fortified enemy positions, they were rendered in turn into pyres for their crews, as even more powerful weapons were brought to bear.

And all the while the factories of the Enlightened weighed and measured, making certain that the Confederacy and the Union were evenly matched



so that neither would have the decisive advantage and equal currency and titles were pledged by both sides should they be victorious. That very balance, of course, only made the conflict much more terrible. *[Editor's note: Excellent, the more blame laid at the feet of the Enlightened the better this will play with the government. I like it.]*

### **SALVATION THROUGH BETRAYAL**

In the end, as the bloody years trailed by, redemption came from the same quarter that had provided the tools of destruction. One of the most brilliant scientists in the Enlightened, a young Serbian by the name of Nikolai Tesla, was horrified by the bloodshed and the unending pain Carpathian and his peers had unleashed. Against the counsel of the other more conservative Enlightened and his patrons in the Prussian Imperium, Tesla travelled from Europe to the Union and offered his expertise and assistance in ending the war.

The government in Washington, headed by the beleaguered Abraham Lincoln, knew at once what they were being offered, and accepted graciously. The most senior General of the Armies of the Union, Odysseus Grant, was quick to see the advantages as well. They were essentially being offered the chance to field advanced weaponry the Confederacy could not hope to match. They would launch an offensive that the rebels would have no means of countering.

Grant's family had been murdered and he had been hideously wounded by a raiding party armed with these new hellish weapons early in the war. As a result, he had developed a hatred of both the Enlightened and the Confederacy. This attitude had only hardened through the grinding, endless years of conflict. Knowing now that his opponents would be helpless before him, he would not wait for a moment more than necessary for Tesla to supply a small unit of soldiers with his lightning guns. They were dispatched on a raiding mission, deep behind enemy lines, to make a show of force and shock the rebels, it was hoped, into quick submission.

Just in case they proved recalcitrant, however, Tesla was given control of the *Pipeworks*, a massive manufacturing centre in Washington, to convert to his own compound of factories, laboratories, and staging areas. If the war were to continue past this moment, the Union would not lack for these new weapons.

### **THE FINAL CRESCENDO**

The Union soldiers learned, all too soon, that possessing more deadly weaponry than the enemy does not necessarily, rob the enemy of their own lethality. The battles that ensued were perhaps even bloodier than any that had gone before, but Tesla's new technologies were terrible to behold, capable of blasting the life from an enemy soldier no matter their protection. Men were fried alive while piloting the massive armoured vehicles or were seared into the hereafter as they slept in their fortress barracks. The skies of the South flared electric blue with the power of Tesla's inventions, and the Confederacy, no matter how brave their soldiers or savvy their generals, could not hope to stand against them. *[Editor's note: Beautiful imagery. I like it.]*

Just as Tesla's weaponry came into use, the Confederacy had dug in at Petersburg. Less than 150 miles south of Washington, this was the place from where they could defend Richmond, the capital of the embattled Confederate States. Between the two cities, virtually all the strength of the Confederate Army was deployed in a defensive posture, and all but one of the Union Generals agreed that it would be impossible to dislodge them, despite Tesla's magnificent weapons, without horrendous loss of life.

Odysseus Grant, however, felt differently. He did not question that there would be casualties. He only disagreed with his colleagues on one salient point; he believed the losses would be worth the victory they would secure. Pushing south from Washington with the Army of the Potomac, Grant meant first to crush Petersburg, thus eliminating the final military threat to his forces, and then push on to completely raze Richmond, the spiritual and political capital of his enemies.

Grant was brutal and merciless in these final attacks. As the Confederate command tried to rally their forces in Richmond for the final battle, Jonathan 'Stonewall' Jackson, their most gifted field commander, did his best with the orderly retreat from Petersburg. Unfortunately, he was ambushed with his vanguard just ten miles from safety. His body was carried from the field, his ultimate fate lost amidst the chaos of the running battle. *[Editor's note: Not sure old scarface is going to like being called 'brutal and merciless'. I don't like it either.]*

Jackson's loss was the final straw for Confederate President Davis. As Grant began to rain down hellfire on Richmond and the entire city burned,



Davis instructed General Lee to sue for peace, making certain their offers of surrender were carried to President Lincoln himself, as they felt Grant might be too inclined to ignore them in favour of his great, blazing victory. Lincoln accepted the conditions of surrender, immediately commanding Grant to cease his attack. Nearly three-quarters of the city of Richmond had been destroyed as the last fire went out and the Confederate Army was utterly shattered with less than a tenth of their fighting strength remaining.

### THE ROAD BACK

By late 1865 the war was over, but the Union's wounds ran deep. Six million souls, almost a fifth of the total population, had died or would not survive their wounds while the South was largely devastated. In addition, there were even greater threats rising all around. The Crown, always eager for an easy opening, attacked the Union both financially and militarily, weakening them abroad. In the West, the indigenous tribes threaten to halt westward expansion, if not unleash outright invasion. Coupled with this was the ever-present fear that while an all-out war was unlikely, a resumption of small skirmishes could erupt again South of the Mason-Dixon Line. It was clear that the Union Army could not be disbanded or reduced to pre-conflict levels. The war might have ended, but this was certainly not peacetime.

The Union continued to function as it had during the war, with conscription and recruitment continuing apace. Service in the Army was seen in many quarters as the greatest honour one might achieve. It became fashionable for the most wealthy and best families to send their second-born sons and daughters to officer training to serve.



### SACRIFICE AND UNITY

As Union society shifted to acknowledge and accommodate the need for a well-trained, well-prepared standing army, most states saw more and more of their surplus resources going back into a military who had already won its war. A massive

bureaucracy stretched out from Washington to oversee taxation and other support activities to ensure peace and the slow recovery of the brutalised country. Sacrifice was the watchword on the thin lips of these agents of the government, and sacrifice was the national virtue they embodied.

One remarkable aspect of the Union compared to other major powers is the relative unity of its populace. Since the abolition of slavery in the country after the War of Independence, black citizens have become steadily more integrated into the country's population, and those of Latin descent are following suit after the acquisition of the bulk of the Spanish-speaking lands of North and Central America, so much so that Spanish is close to gaining recognition as an official language alongside English. The overall effect is that where many empires encompass many different peoples, societies and creeds, the people of the Union, whatever their origins, are slowly but surely coming to think of themselves primarily as one people united by a common cause - the survival of liberty.

The men and women of the Union were not alone in their sacrifices. It became painfully clear to President Lincoln that he could not rule effectively with such a diverse array of enemies and challenges rising up against him. The nation needed to be able to respond to these countless threats with a speed and versatility that the Founding Fathers had just not imagined. He was best suited, of all the men and women alive, to shepherd his beloved nation back to peace, but he could not do it from the White House.

### THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT

Using his ever-expanding web of agents to assist him, Lincoln plotted his own assassination in 1866. Enlisting an actor friend of his son's, a man who truly believed in the Union and what it stood for, plans were laid for a massive public attack that would seemingly result in the president's death. He would then be free to assume more direct control of the varied defences of the nation, while his vice-president, Andrew Johnson, a capable bureaucrat with little to no imagination or drive, would be left as a figurehead to rule in his place. *[Editor's note: What the hell is this?!? You can't talk about this kind of stuff in public. Cut it all out. I hate it.]*

Knowing that for the ruse to succeed, he would have to die, John Wilkes Booth was not afraid to give his life for his nation. As planned there was a struggle, and a juiced blaster roared within the confines of a small private theatre box. When the



smoke cleared the world reeled at the death of the President, even his own family believed he died that night. The sacrifice made that night was by two men. Booth was caught as planned and killed for his actions and Lincoln would never be allowed to return to his private or public life again

Abraham Lincoln was now relieved of the trappings of office. He was free to move out into the wide world in order to lead his extensive army of gifted killers through the shadows, conducting the infinite number of dark and dreadful deeds the times demanded of the nation should she expect to survive. Lincoln knew that there were things the Union Army could not be called upon to do, whether it was investigating dangers to the wounded country, to ferret out plots and schemes that threatened her, or eliminate potential problems before the public could even be aware of them. His Secret Service was essential to the health of the Union. *[Editor's note: Are you nuts? Do you want to go missing? Cut it all out. I hate it.]*

### GROWTH OF THE UNION

The Army places its faith in themselves and their arsenal. Grant remained the General of the Armies, and although his bitterest foe was no more, he began to view all threats to the Union as equally despicable. He had seen the horrors of war. He had seen his family destroyed before his very eyes with the terrible weapons unleashed by the covetous Enlightened. He had seen the savages of the Warrior Nation tear his beloved soldiers' limb from limb. There was only one way his nation was going to survive this terrible time, and that was through strength. *[Editor's note: Ease up on the slaughter of the Union, eh? I don't like it.]*

To the north, the Union's border stretches the length of the Dominion of Canada to the cold reaches of Russian Alaska; frontier territory of the most inhospitable kind. To the south, the war-ravaged and lawless hinterlands of Mexico still harboured rebels and dissidents contesting the Mexican Absorption into the Union in May 1868.

The Army knew such challenges could not go unanswered. Whilst the northern borders are reinforced against Crown incursions and further reinforcements funnelled into the West, the invasion of Gran Columbia in the Spring of 1869 ensured that not only were future attacks on the Union's southern border discouraged but that further resources and territory enriched the lives and coffers of all the member states. Such rapid expansion requires the deployment of large

garrisons of Union troops to ensure these new territories remain loyal to the manifest destiny that drives the Union ever onwards. Looking to repeat the gains made in Gran Columbia, the Union army mobilises itself once more with an eye southward on the newly emergent Socialist Unity of South America.

### THE UNION ASCENDANT

Building on the designs purchased from the Enlightened during the Civil War, Union military technology is mostly an effective mix of the innovative and reliable. Though Carpathian and his Enlightened continues to supply the Union with RJ fuel cells, the nation has warmed towards other, less fickle sources of innovation. Union manufacturers, such as Orlington and Chace produce an array of functional, but beautifully engineered weapons and operating systems. Tesla continues to contribute automata designs and spark reactors for the military as well as to improve the lives of the citizens of the Union. As a result, the war machines of the Union are well equipped with labour-saving devices for weaponry and control systems, allowing them to devote more crew-space to their fighting compliments, especially the Marine Corps sharpshooters.

When it comes to offensive power, in all spheres the Union prefers relatively simple weapons: massed rocket batteries and big guns – lots of them! Land Ships and Rolling Thunder battle tanks bristle with heavy cannons, whose long barrels, superior ammunition and automatic loaders allow them to lay down heavy barrages at extreme range. Union warships are driven by huge paddle wheels, rather than propellers, allowing them to manoeuvre far more efficiently than their great size would suggest. Reinforced with another Enlightened development, Sturginium, these massive structures are very resistant to damage. Union airships, the core of its aerial forces, are also highly resilient beasts. Filled with inert Helium gas – a by-product of the nation's oil industry – they can absorb immense amounts of punishment while dishing out huge quantities of their own. *[Editor's note: The official story here is that Brigadier General Samuel Sturgis discovered Sturginium while leading an expedition in the Dakota Territory. The Enlightened then stole it and took to south to the Antarctic to mass produce it. Are we clear?]*

There is one thing that all of the men and women who have answered the Union's call can agree on: With weapons and technologies such as these, the Union of Federated States is still the greatest hope



for instilling liberty and independence in the world.

### **AN UNCERTAIN AGE**

The President says that there will be time to return to the values that once made the nation a beacon of hope. At some point in the future, there will be peace again and the time for relinquishing weapons will come. Until that time, there can be no peace. Better to curtail freedom today that the Union may live on to be an example to the rest of the world tomorrow.

For without the Union, how else will freedom in the wider world prevail?

*[Editor's note: Great ending, but that stuff about Lincoln has to go. If the public knew the truth...]*