

A Real Friend

There's a bit of a problem. To be specific, there are lots of bits of about eight or so problems.

You see, about eighty five years or so there was a bit of a firefight in a construction area. It was one of those fun, zany little adventures that was fraught with enormous weight at the time -- the Destiny/Fate of nations hanging on a thread, the future of humanity itself at stake, the usual stuff -- but is not currently noteworthy except as the metaphysical equivalent of a Trivial Pursuit question. Indeed, it wouldn't even be *that* if it weren't for the fact that the event spawned a minor record: 'most Vessel replacements made during a single combat lasting less than twenty minutes' (thirteen).

The holder of this record is Vern, a Malakite of Trade who happens to have extraordinarily good contacts among his Word's logistics organization. That night, he needed them: he kept getting shot out of his vessel by an incredibly obnoxious piece of Vaputech, and the usual Malakite rapid-response teams were busy putting out other fires, so he kept grabbing spare vessels and jumping back into the fight. Well, eventually Heaven was victorious, the demons

defeated, dead or fled and Vern and his allies had won the day.

They had also won the dubious honor of having to get rid of a lot of bodies, many of whom looked just alike (Malakim tend to favor using identical vessels: for them, Trauma isn't necessarily the Role-killer that it is for other Choirs). They did their best, but no matter how many they were able to cram into various forms of transportation, they ended up with eight vessels still to be moved and the sun coming up. Luckily, there was a handy-dandy concrete foundation, still liquid enough to receive some unusual additives - so they dumped the vessels in, smoothed it over and got the heck out of there. Problem solved.

Fast forward seventy years.

Vern just got a call, and he's not very happy about it. It seems that the aforementioned foundation is starting to show its age, and there are plans afoot to repair it. The humans are going to be very surprised to find a skeleton in there: one can imagine how they'll feel when they discover eight of them, all of which incidentally share the same DNA and dental patterns. It should also be noted that said DNA and dental patterns are identical to the vessel that

Vern is currently wearing, and using to support his Role as a quite public financier. Sloppy tradecraft, but Vern always liked that particular vessel's lines: the elbows never felt quite right on any other model. Obviously, the bodies have got to be removed. Simple enough for a metaphysical being, right?

Wrong. The foundation in question happens to belong to the Empire State Building. This makes the whole bloody mess *political*.

Allow me to explain. The Empire State Building does not currently possess a Tether (in this setting, at least), but every Superior on both sides of the War would like to have one there, except maybe Jordi. It's smack dab in the middle of one of the five most important cities on the corporeal plane, is iconic in its own right and, of course, every Superior on both sides of the War would like to have a Tether there, which is probably the most important consideration. Needless to say, having this kind of interested attention is pretty much interfering with the possibility of **any** Tether forming -- which is an acceptable second prize. Still, there are still rules against causing Disturbance in the vicinity. Quite draconian ones, all things considered. But Vern needs to get those bones gone anyway, and he doesn't have a clue about how to do

it without attracting either corporeal or celestial attention. Luckily, being in Trade means being able to hire the best. Or at least the best available.

This is where the PCs get sucked into this little exercise, of course. Do they owe any Servitors of Trade any favors? Do they want a well-connected Servitor of Trade to owe *them* a favor? Do they need assistance in a problem of their own? If they don't currently have any problems, can one be arranged (not that any reputable Servitor of Trade would do such a thing, of course)? Do they recognize the Plot Wagon when it comes trundling up? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then there's your hook.

This is meant to be a 'stretch the brain' scenario: the idea is to work out some way of doing this job quietly and quickly, not re-enact that really good slow-mo foyer action scene from *The Matrix*. If combat is absolutely required, then add another team from the Other Side who *want* the bones found. They're from Saminga, who with typical arrogance is **sure** that the revelations of 'Satanic building sacrificial rituals' will be just the thing to turn the Empire State Building into a Tether to Death. The team knows better, so when it doesn't happen they're planning to

appease the Dead Prince by racking up a ritualistic body count. Hell, that even might work.

Other complications include the tenants of the Empire State Building, who are fully aware themselves that they work in an iconic building, and that there are people out there who would quite like to knock it down (which makes them fairly suspicious these days, alas), and the building's security force, who differ from the tenants in only in that they are rather better armed. And let's not forget the tourists, who pretty much act as background / sacrifice fodder / general distractions. Well, you could include some actual terrorists, if you like. What else could complicate this mess?

Don't answer that.

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