

The Pentacle

[\[The Day After Ragnarok\]](#)

Make no mistake: Washington, DC drowned in the Serpentfall. The tsunami flooded every river and estuary feeding into the Chesapeake Bay all the way to their headwaters, envenoming Delaware and coastal Maryland down to the bedrock. That close to the ocean, no elevation was safe. The miracle is that anything survived east of the Appalachian mountains in recognizable form.

And yet, the Pentagon is still there. It's half-buried in acidic mud and probably sinking into the earth, but what few overflights of the Drowned Coast that still happen confirm that the building is still there. Not that anybody actually cared until recently, because what difference does it make? There was nothing in DC that's worth the trouble (and human lives) it'd take to retrieve it, there was nobody within four hundred miles who could even plausibly claim the fetid swamp that used to be the nation's capital, and everybody in the world had more important things to do than to muck about in the ruins.

Except that perhaps this is no longer true. About two months ago, a package containing the testimony of Captain James Hammond, USA was finally delivered to federal authorities in Sacramento. That testimony reported

that Hammond had managed to collect and protect certain key artifacts (including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Great Seal of the United States) prior to the mega-tsunami. It is unexplained how Hammond knew to do this, and the exact details of the rescue were only lightly touched upon. It does indicate, however, that Hammond took the artifacts to the Pentagon (which still remained standing, due to good construction and apparently blind luck) to secure them there.

That was two years ago. Is Hammond still there? Are the artifacts? That's a very good question. Unfortunately, these days an armored division couldn't secure the Pentagon long enough to check, assuming the United States had one to spare (it does not). *But*, maybe a small team could get through. The Atlantic Fleet can still barely project enough power to allow a coastal landing in Maryland; from there it's a matter of dodging monsters and maniacs long enough to get to the Pentagon, and see what the situation is there. If it's hopeless, then the team simply goes back, no matter what Groves says.

...Who is Groves? Ah, that would be General Leslie Groves. He's the man who built the Pentagon in the first place, so he's the perfect person to work out where its new treasures might be. He's also the person behind the Manhattan Project, which has a distinctly mixed reputation

these days. It would be merciful to allow the man the chance to rehabilitate his complex reputation, and he is extremely keen to lead the mission. He just needs some capable subordinates.

One last thing: this is a covert operation. Nobody is to be told the exact details, unless they're reliable. That just doesn't mean foreigners, Utahns, and Texans. That also means the governor of Puerto Rico, the governor of the Canal Zone, every leader or warlord of every town between here and DC, and frankly the members of the opposition party. If it were to get out that such priceless artifacts were salvageable, everybody would try to salvage them. By any means necessary.

PS: Only somebody *stupid* would even think about double-crossing the US government, and never mind how weak it is right now. It's still *much* more powerful than, say, a random group of adventurers. Savvy?

- Moe Lane
- <http://www.moelane.com>