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# CHAPTER 7

## NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM



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**R**oleplaying game campaigns based on historical events, especially wars, have a finite and known length. This gives historical roleplaying settings a special advantage and a disadvantage over other settings. Known events give structure but lack flexibility and surprise. If every player knows what happened at Gettysburg those three hot days in July 1863, they also know that the Confederacy is doomed to lose the battle, and eventually the entire war.

What's the point of playing larger-than-life characters when the entire outcome of the conflict is not only predetermined, but also widely known? That's where this chapter comes in. It offers advice on running historical campaigns, alternate history campaigns, and what ultimately happens (or can happen) to *The Gifted* in the universe of *This Favored Land*.

## THE SOUND OF THE GUNS

The default starting point for *This Favored Land* campaigns is the spring and summer of 1861, coinciding with the start of the American Civil War. It allows a campaign to span the breadth of the war, from the firing on Fort Sumter through to Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the beginning of Reconstruction. The adventure in Chapter 8, *Broken in Their Violence*, is set in

September 1861 at the point when the bloody warfare in Missouri began.

This is a logical starting point, but is it the best starting point for your campaign? The months of April through July 1861 saw a lot of chaotic activity but few battles. Intelligence activity was in its infancy and relied heavily on spies. Northerners suspected Rebel fifth columnists were hiding around every corner, while Southerners rooted out Unionists. Confederates gobbled up Federal installations and property. Rich citizens formed their own volunteer regiments. Flags flew everywhere, patriotism was rampant, and everyone expected a short, glorious fight with the boys coming home by Christmas.

It was a time when small bands of characters could make a dramatic impact. Campaigns featuring civilian characters are about equally effective at any point in the war. However, the early months of the war present a challenge for military campaigns in the east. After the Battle of Manassas/Bull Run on July 21, the eastern theater fell into a "phony war" that lasted until the spring of the following year. There were no major encounters in the east until Union Major General George McClellan began his Peninsular Campaign in March, 1862. Army life became monotonous for both sides' eastern armies. There are still interesting stories to be told in this period, but if you want a campaign of battles and maneuver in Virginia, you are best advised to fast forward the time period to 1862.

## Chapter 7: New Birth of Freedom

After the start of the Peninsular Campaign, virtually all of Virginia was in a near constant state of war. The town of Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley changed hands more than 70 times, with six significant battles (at least 10,000 troops engaged) fought in the town and its vicinity. The only respite given the state was Lee's invasion of Maryland in the summer of 1862 and his invasion of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. The capitals of the two belligerents (Washington D.C. and Richmond, Virginia) were only 110 miles apart. More major and minor battles were fought in this state than in any other. Virginia was the most populated Southern state. If you can't come up with ways to run a campaign set in Virginia, you should reconsider the Civil War as a setting!

The war in the western theater was just as heavily contested as Virginia, but the conflict ranged over hundreds of miles of territory. While characters living in Virginia can afford to let the war come to them, this is not the case with characters living in the west. The first major battle in the west was Wilson's Creek in August 1861 in southern Missouri. Within a year the war reached as far south as the Gulf coast, as far west as New Mexico; New Orleans, the jewel of the Confederacy, was in Union hands.

The west was actually divided into two sections. The "western theater" typically covers the war west of the Allegheny Mountains and east of the Mississippi River. Sherman's march through Georgia and the Carolinas in 1864 and 1865 is considered a "western campaign" mainly because the Army of the Tennessee was a western army.

West of the Mississippi River was the Department of the Trans-Mississippi. Although the largest section of the war in area, it was the least populated. In many ways it's also the most interesting part of the war. It covers the bloody, contested ground of Missouri, the Indian territories (where some ex-Confederates fought as members of the regular Union army against the natives), and the isolated Confederate states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Arkansas and Louisiana were divided for most of the war, with the Union occupying northern Arkansas and southern Louisiana. This section of the country (as well as West Virginia and Kentucky)

saw a lot of irregular warfare between rangers, partisans, and guerrillas. The fighting in Missouri was particularly vicious (see Chapter 8).

There are plenty of military adventure opportunities in the west, but civilian campaigns in a static location will usually see the war flare up briefly, and then disappear almost as quickly. The exceptions are the Southern cities occupied by Union forces for most of the war (such as New Orleans, Memphis, and Nashville) and the bloody border war in Kansas, Missouri, and northern Arkansas.

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

When most people think of the Civil War, they think of the corridor from Virginia through southern Pennsylvania. In actuality, the war was fought as far north as Vermont, as far south as Florida and as far west as Oregon. Confederate commerce raiding occurred all over the globe. While a great many important battles happened in Virginia, there was a lot more to the Civil War. Here are just some less obvious locales for your Civil War campaigns.

**Missouri:** Missouri remained officially a northern state throughout the war, but it was also a slave state with strong Confederate sympathies. Pro-slavery Missourians had tried to influence the Kansas state constitution in a violent antebellum conflict known as "Bleeding Kansas." When the war began, Kansas Jayhawkers saw an opportunity for revenge. The result was a horrible guerrilla war where murder and terrorism were common. Missouri is the most interesting state for a guerrilla war-themed campaign, as the war lasted there well into 1866 and spawned numerous Wild West legends, such as Jesse James and the Youngers.

**Appalachian Mountains:** While Missouri's guerrilla conflict may be the most famous of the war, it was not alone. Union and Confederate guerrillas operated in the Appalachian Mountains from West Virginia down to South Carolina. Both sides famously used the mountain's valleys for military operations in Virginia and Tennessee, but the irregular warfare in the mountains is less well known.