

MEET THE NEW BOSS

by Elissa Carey & Patrick Goodman

🔴 Hot off the datastream, girls and boys, for those of you who missed it the first time around. Please try to keep the commentary relevant; we expect a little topic drift, but we've set up a couple of SIGs for some of the wilder speculations, and we'd really appreciate it if you used them. Things will be wild enough in here without the truly weird stuff.

Oh, and buckle up, kiddies. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

🔴 Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 28 January 2062 at 03:31:49 (EST)

// BEGIN FILE //

Transcript 62-014A, raw footage from the 27 January 2062 Denver joint press conference

Michelle Carson, reporting

Lew Forrester, camera

//FRAMING: MICHELLE IN WINTER CLOTHES, STANDING IN A SPORTS ARENA, DRINKING A CUP OF COFFEE//

MICHELLE CARSON: Are we rolling?

LEW FORRESTER: *{Off-camera, in a distinct Texas twang}* Yeah, but we don't go live for a few more minutes.

CARSON: This stuff is awful. I mean, it's *really* terrible.

FORRESTER: You ain't just whistling "Dixie," Mitch.

CARSON: *{After a long pause.}* Where are all these people coming from?

FORRESTER: You got me....

//CAMERA PANS AROUND STADIUM, REVEALING SEVERAL REPORTER/CAMERA TEAMS CLUSTERED AROUND A STAGE. CIVILIANS ARE STARTING TO STRAGGLE INTO THE STANDS. MICHELLE AND LEW CONTINUE SPEAKING OFFSCREEN; CAMERA SETTLES ON THE STAGE//

//INTERNAL EDIT MEMO: Be *sure* to get rid of the shot where the cameraman from KSAF gave us the finger. We really don't want a repeat of the last time//

CARSON: *{Sound of liquid being poured into the snow.}* Who made this crap?

FORRESTER: Ute press corps, I think. Wish the CAS boys had done it; they make much better coffee.

🔴 Is there a point to all this?

🔴 Indignant

🔴 Show the slightest bit of patience, *omae*. The point's coming pretty damn quick.

🔴 Carillon

//MICHELLE ENTERS THE FRAME, WITH THE STAGE VISIBLE BEHIND HER//

CARSON: Whose bright idea was it to call a press conference *outside* in fraggin' *January*?!

FORRESTER: With barely any kind of notice. We've been through this, Michelle.

CARSON: I know, but I'm gonna bitch about it anyway.

FORRESTER: I'm going to keep it as a medium shot for intro, so that they can see the...that's weird.

CARSON: What's weird?

FORRESTER: How many chunks did they carve this town into?

CARSON: Six, once CAS split from the UCAS.

FORRESTER: So how come there's only five flags on stage?

CARSON: *{Looks over her shoulder for a moment.}* Oh, this stinks, Lew. Where are the Azzies? You think those reports about troops heading into their sector are true?

FORRESTER: Hard to say. Jimmy's supposed to be following up on that one for us, but he hasn't said a word yet.

CARSON: How are we for time?

FORRESTER: Ninety seconds.

CARSON: *{Closes her eyes, crosses herself, mouths a prayer, crosses again, then opens her eyes.}* I hate this, Lew; the whole thing just stinks to high heaven. The city spends nearly three weeks getting trashed by a dragon no one's ever seen or heard of before, and then the council calls a press conference. Outside, in the snow, with no notice. They don't do press conferences in January. Jesus, this stinks.

FORRESTER: That it does, m'dear. Twenty seconds. Fifteen. Ten. Five four three....

CARSON: *{Mouths "Three, two" and takes a deep breath.}* Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Michelle Carson, reporting for NewsNet. We are in Broncomania Stadium, in the UCAS Sector of Denver, awaiting the arrival of the Council of Denver for this very rare joint press conference. *{Motions behind her to the stage, where dignitaries are beginning to take their seats.}* No one knows why they've gathered here in the chill of Denver's winter, but considering the tumult of the past

three weeks, we can only presume that they are here to discuss the great dragon Ghostwalker. For those of you unaware of all that has transpired here in the past three weeks, we have this brief recap. *{Holds pose for a moment.}*

FORRESTER: Okay, we're out; the tape should take four minutes.

//MICHELLE WALKS OFF CAMERA, WHICH ZOOMS TO A CLOSE SHOT OF THE STAGE TO GET CLEAR SHOTS OF DIGNITARIES//

CARSON: We still want to do straight voice-over for the rest of this?

FORRESTER: Yeah, I think that would be the best way.

CARSON: Works for me. I look like crap anyway. *{There is a low murmur from the crowd around the stage.}* Wait, Lew, zoom in on the staircase. Is that who I think it is?

//ZOOM IN ON TWO WOMEN ASCENDING STAIRCASE. FIRST IS A SMALL NATIVE AMERICAN WOMAN IN CEREMONIAL GARB, CARRYING A LARGE GRAY CAT. SECOND IS A TALL, STRIKING ELVEN WOMAN//

FORRESTER: Only if you think that's Nadja Daviar. *{The elven woman takes a seat in front of the UCAS flag, next to a tall blond man; the Native American woman takes a seat in front of the Sioux flag.}*

CARSON: How come no one told us that the **Vice-President of the fragging UCAS** was going to be here?!

//INTERNAL MEMO: Remember to check the local news next time, even if the *Rocky Mountain Post* is so much biased schlock//

FORRESTER: You know just as much as I do, sweetheart. From the sound of things, they're just as surprised as we are. Back from the clip in twenty seconds.

CARSON: She sure doesn't look happy, does she?

FORRESTER: Nope. Ten seconds. Five, four, three, two....

CARSON: Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. Once again, we're live in Broncomania Stadium. The members of the Council of Denver have all arrived now, so the press conference should begin at any...oh, dear God!

//CAMERA IS ABRUPTLY PULLED OFF TRIPOD AND POINTED TOWARD THE FAR LIP OF THE STADIUM. A HUGE WHITE DRAGON IS FLYING DIRECTLY TOWARDS THE STAGE. THERE IS A SOUND OF POTENTIAL PANIC IN THE CROWD//

- "Oh, dear God" is right! Look at the size of that fragger!
- Windchime

• They've got a good aerial shot later on that lets you see how big Ghostwalker really is. You can't really judge the scale accurately with this shot.

Oh, and for the curious, the Native lady preceding Daviar up the steps to the podium is Lucinda Gray Arrow, the new Sioux Council representative. She takes the place of Mary Cat-Dancing, who stepped down because of her fight with cancer.

- Broncomaniac

CARSON: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, blessed is....

FORRESTER: Mitch, I don't think he's attacking! He's coming in for a landing!

CARSON: *{After a long pause}* Lew, look at the stage! They act like they're expecting this. Ladies and gentlemen, it appears that the dragon is approaching not to attack the Council, but to join them in this press conference. This truly is unprecedented; just days ago, he was all but at war with the occupants of Denver. Now, it appears that he may wish to address them.

//GHOSTWALKER LANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIELD, SETTLING IN BEHIND THE STAGE AND THE DELEGATES, EYING THE PRESS AND THE CROWD MAJESTICALLY//

//INTERNAL EDIT MEMO: He really is that big and that white, guys; there was nothing wrong with Lew's camera, or the drone's for that matter, so don't go jacking around with things//

FORRESTER: Jimmy, do we have *anything* in the air right now for an overhead shot? *{Pause.}* Well, get it *up there*, man!! No one else has anything!! Every newsfeed on the Matrix will pay us a fraggin' fortune for this!

CARSON: Zoom in on the stage, Lew! They're starting!

//CAMERA ZOOMS ON PODIUM AS A BLOND MAN, JEREMY FALLOON, THE UCAS COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE, APPROACHES THE MICROPHONE//

FALLOON: If I could have your attention, please? Ladies and gentlemen, please, I know that this is all quite overwhelming; you're not the only ones who are nervous, I can assure you. We're ready to begin, now that all the representatives have arrived. Much has happened here in the last few hours. To tell you about it, ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Vice-President of the United Canadian and American States, Ms. Nadja Daviar.

//FALLOON STEPS AWAY FROM THE PODIUM, AND DAVIAR APPROACHES. SHE HAS AN APPREHENSIVE EXPRESSION ON HER FACE//

DAVIAR: Thank you, Jeremy. Ladies and gentlemen of the world's press, thank you for coming on such short notice. The initial conflict with Ghostwalker was a mistake, a terrible misunderstanding that, before we were able to contact this Great

Dragon and bring an end to the hostilities, took a tragic toll in human life. In a joint effort, the Sioux Nation and the UCAS were able to initiate contact with the Great Dragon and arrange negotiations with all the other sector representatives. He accepted our petition, with certain conditions, and so we are here today.

He wishes to address the world now. Rather than take a human form to do so, he has asked to use a human translator, as Dunkelzahn and many other dragons before him have done. His choice was Lucinda Gray Arrow, of the Sioux Council. I now yield the stage to her.

//CUT AWAY TO AERIAL VIEW OF THE PROCEEDINGS. GHOSTWALKER TAKES UP THE MAJORITY OF THE FOOTBALL FIELD. AERIAL VIEW SHOWS A GREAT DEAL OF ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THE STADIUM, AND UNEXPECTED NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE ENTERED THE STANDS//

- He was sure right about this aerial shot. Holy drek, he's fraggin' gigantic!! His tail alone is covering nearly 35 yards!
- Windchime

• I put his overall length at around 70 meters, 32 of that tail, as Windchime noted. His wingspan is around 65 meters, give or take. For the dimensionally challenged out there, that's around twice the size of your everyday, garden-variety western dragon, which is typically about 35-40 meters or so. It also puts him a good deal larger than Lofwyr, who's one of the largest of the Great Dragons at just over 60 meters long himself, which is pretty damn impressive.

- WyrnWatcher
You are crunchy, and taste good with ketchup

- Look at all the people in the stands. That's what I don't get; with all the carnage from the attacks, I'd think that people would want to get away from the dragon, not so close he could slap them with a wing.
- Lorax

- They're there for the same reason people crowd around car accidents and burning buildings, I think. Humanity has a penchant for turning up and watching disasters in the making...and this looks like it could be a real lulu....
- Crystal

GRAY ARROW: Thank you, Ms. Daviar. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the press. I will now speak for Ghostwalker.

{Gray Arrow's voice changes considerably at this point, becoming deeper and harsher. There is a collective gasp from the crowd.} This realm, which you mortals call Denver, has traditionally been my domain. From this day forward, it shall be so again. *{Another gasp is heard from the crowd.}*

//CUT TO MEDIUM SHOT OF STAGE, SHOWING GRAY ARROW AT THE PODIUM AND GHOSTWALKER DOMINATING THE SCENE BEHIND THE STAGE. THE RED EYES OF THE DRAGON ARE GLOWING BRIGHTLY//

- Good night, look at his eyes! They were ice blue just a second ago! Dunkie's eyes never did that when he was doing *Wyrn Talk*.
- Lady Jestyr

- Wait a few ticks, and you'll *really* see something that never happened on *Wyrn Talk*.
- WyrnWatcher
You are crunchy, and taste good with ketchup

GRAY ARROW: *{In Ghostwalker's voice.}* The region is now under my guardianship, and the body you call the Council of Denver answers to me. For now, the five nations that reside in the city will continue to administer their sectors as they see fit; however, final decisions regarding the region as a whole shall rest with me, and me alone.

//CUT TO CLOSE-UP OF GRAY ARROW; HER FACE HAS TAKEN ON A REPTILIAN CAST, AND HER EYES ARE GLOWING THE SAME FIERY RED AS GHOSTWALKER'S. HER CAT IS SITTING ON HER SHOULDER, AND APPEARS COMPLETELY UNDISTURBED//

- Mother of God....
- Lady Jestyr

- Yeah. This was what the initial gasp was about, at the beginning of her announcement.
- WyrnWatcher
You are crunchy, and taste good with ketchup

- Interesting; it's almost like a shamanic mask. I'm surprised they could capture it on camera at all. This isn't like classical draconian translation, by the way; it's more like full-on possession. I can see what Cap meant when he said things were going to get weird.
- Magister

- You should have seen it from the astral. His aura got so bright it was hard to look at, and then...and then *her* aura started to change. It started out as a pretty strong human aura, and then flared as bright as the sun for a second. Then it wasn't human-looking at all anymore; it was like a miniature dragon standing there at the podium. I left about then; it was starting to get spooky.
- Fuzzdog

- *Starting* to get spooky? You've apparently got a much higher threshold than I do. What about her cat? What was it doing during all this?
- Hairy Harry

👉 It was glowing brightly, too. Other than that, it seemed to be a perfectly content little kitty-cat, and sat there on her shoulder and bathed itself the whole time.

👉 Fuzzdog

GRAY ARROW: *{In Ghostwalker's voice.}* This includes decisions of who will be allowed to enter, and who will not.

The nation you call Aztlan has been expelled from my domain; they are not welcome here. Their exodus has begun. Their remaining subjects have until sunset a week from now to leave this place or be destroyed. Furthermore, the nations you call Tir Tairngire and Tir na nÓg are forbidden from this place; subjects of these nations that enter my domain without my permission will likewise be destroyed. *Ozidanosa a daronosa, si-versakhanitish.*

To my brethren, I say this: My mission on the other side has ended; that hunt is nearly over. Soon, a new one shall begin.

This audience is at an end.

//GRAY ARROW'S EYES STOP GLOWING; HER FACE SLOWLY RETURNS TO ITS NORMAL APPEARANCE, AND SHE RETURNS SLOWLY TO HER SEAT. CUT TO A CLOSE-UP OF GHOSTWALKER AS HIS EYES STOP GLOWING AND RESUME THEIR NORMAL COLOR//

👉 Okay...*that* was weird.

👉 SocioPat

👉 So that's why the Azzies aren't up on stage; the wym tossed them out on their hoops. Damn, that's gonna leave a mark....

👉 Tango

👉 You think that's going to leave a mark, just wait 'til you hear the bruised egos from the Tirs.

👉 Lord of the Morning

//A HARD-FACED AMERIND ORK WITH LONG WHITE HAIR PAUSES BY GRAY ARROW'S SEAT. WORDS ARE EXCHANGED AND LUCINDA ALLOWS HER BODYGUARD TO ESCORT HER AWAY. NADJA DAVIAR APPROACHES THE PODIUM AS GHOSTWALKER STARES AT THE ORK, AND THEN FLIES AWAY. HER EXPRESSION IS MILDLY STUNNED. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE UNREST IN THE CROWD; AN ALMOST UNINTELLIGIBLE BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS BEGINS//

DAVIAR: Ladies and... ladies and gentlemen, please. If you'll allow us to continue...please. *{The crowd calms down somewhat.}* Thank you. As you've just been told, there have been some...significant changes made to Denver's status, and to the composition of the Council. I would like to introduce a gentleman who will be able to answer any questions you might have. Please welcome Ghostwalker's appointed representative to the Council, Mr. Nicholas Whitebird.

//TENTATIVE APPLAUSE AS THE ORK APPROACHES THE PODIUM. DAVIAR GIVES HIM A "GOOD LUCK" EXPRESSION AS SHE WALKS AWAY. BEFORE HE GETS TO THE PODIUM, THE BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS BEGINS AGAIN//

👉 Now why didn't Ghostwalker just use ol' Nicky to make that little speech?

👉 CASper

👉 That is what's commonly referred to as a "demonstration." It seems he wants to make a distinct point about who's in charge now...as if his rampage the last couple weeks hasn't been distinct enough.

👉 Argent

WHITEBIRD: Thank you, Ms. Daviar. Please, one at a time. I am happy to be here speaking on Ghostwalker's behalf, but I must ask some patience of you. I know what questions you must have, and they will be answered in due time.

👉 I'll cut this off here; we've got all of this covered elsewhere, in a great deal of detail.

If you thought the bit with the glowing eyes was weird, though, I'm going to leave you with the most recent episode of *Beyond the Veil*, brought to us, apparently, by the same fine folks who "enhanced" the Aztlan compilation back in 2056, and Dunkelzahn's will in 2057. I've given up trying to trace them or figure out who they are (for now, at least). The conspiracy buffs amongst you, though, are gonna have a field day.

👉 Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 28 January 2062 at 23:49:18 (EST)

:::::[HECATE] All right...*what* the frag just happened...?

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Don't look at me. It wasn't my fault.

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] How novel. I'd like to know: Did anybody here see *this* coming?

:::::[UMSONDO] Not I.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] Oh, now *there's* a great comfort. Aren't you supposed to be *watching*?

:::::[WORDSMYTH] This is getting us nowhere, ladies and gentlemen. I suggest we proceed to the matter at hand.

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] And that would be...*what*, exactly?

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] I should think that would be obvious, even to you. Is this the Hunter, or isn't it?

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Oh. *That*.

:::::[GUARDIAN] Obviously, the Great One has returned, at last.

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] Well! Another country heard from. What took you so long?

:::::[GUARDIAN] Some wounds take longer to heal than others, my Queen.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] It isn't him. The Hunter is a myth, a story used to frighten misbehaving children. A fable, that's all.

:::::[GUARDIAN] And I say, Lady, that it is him. And he's quite real. Just ask the Aztlaners.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] That *cannot* be him. I've read the histories, I've heard the tales. It can't be the Hunter.

:::::[GUARDIAN] And I tell you, as one who has served him before, and who now serves him again, that it *is* him. Surely we cannot both be right.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] *It isn't him!* It *can't* be him.... I refuse to believe this...this...nonsense!

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] I can't quite believe I'm the one saying this, but...would you two *please* knock it off? I swear, kids these days....

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] ????? I can't quite believe it, either. Next thing we know, you'll be telling us how you wish it were more like the old days at the Lake.

:::::[HECATE] What kind of ghost stories, you'll pardon the pun, are they telling you, anyway, child? They're apparently working quite well.

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Quiet. The Laughing Man is right; this is getting us nowhere.

Of course it *can* be the Hunter, my dear; unlike our colleague here, however, I'm not quite ready to say that it *is* the Hunter with any degree of certainty. After all, Ghostwalker's appearance is nothing like the Hunter's was before he began his quest. But how are we to know what millennia away in the metaplanes could do to one of his kind? I fear he's not been hibernating all that time, as perhaps he should have.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] Assuming it is him, old man...what did he mean by "A new hunt begins"?

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Well, I'm no psychic, of course, but one can logically presume, among many different interpretations, that he means to hunt those of us who carried out the downtime hunts on his brethren. His parting comments would certainly seem to indicate that.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] Do you have any idea of what you're implying? Does he not realize what would happen if he carried out such a vendetta?

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Oh, I'm quite sure he does, my dear. I'm quite sure he does, indeed....

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] He would be within his rights, however. You, of all, should know.

:::::[HECATE] We aren't going to start that tired business again, are we? Times being what they are, it's long past when we should let go of who did what to whom first.

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] How is your flower garden?

:::::[HECATE] ... Point taken. Still, if he is the Hunter, times are indeed different. *Someone* needs to let him know. Someone with experience at this sort of thing.

:::::[GUARDIAN] She tasks me...but I will have none of it. Even if I was so inclined, and I'm not, I'm certainly not the right one to ask.

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Of course not. The sleep is still fresh in your eyes and your master won't take kindly to it.

:::::[GUARDIAN] Also, the times aren't as different as you might wish them to be.

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] So...who will bell the cat?

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] We are not mice.

:::::[GUARDIAN] As you say.

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] And yet the analogy holds. Will *you* do it? I think not. Nor will anyone else here. Begging your pardon, Orange Queen, but you have less reason to bell this particular cat than we do, should you even want to. And I've done my share.

:::::[HECATE] What about your pet Cassandra?

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Where's your 'let bygones be bygones' attitude run off to, hmm? Enough; she's busy with Dunkelzahn's work, and perhaps that's as it should be. Face it...we made this bed. All we can do is hope that our worst nightmares don't become realized in it.

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Keep this up and I will have to pass along my title. Unfortunately, I agree. By all the powers, I wish it weren't so.

:::::[UMSONDO] Perhaps it isn't.

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Aiiiiieeee! He speaks! <g>

:::::[UMSONDO] <untranslatable>

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] No, really, tell us how you feel. Don't hold back.

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Oh, stop baiting. Umsondo, what do you mean?

:::::[UMSONDO] There is an assumption about that which the Hunter hunts. It could be that he has other plans, which he will reveal in the fullness of time.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] If this is meant to reassure, it doesn't.

:::::[UMSONDO] I assure you, such was not my intent. I was merely trying to present another possibility that could realistically either fuel your fears, or provide you hope.

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] Or both.

:::::[UMSONDO] Yes.

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] This resolves nothing, you know.

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Of course! And that's the beauty of it. But I must adjourn our little meeting, for I have prior engagements.

:::::[WORDSMYTH] Behave yourself, or....

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Posh, when have I not?

:::::[ORANGE QUEEN] Well, there was the time when....

:::::[HECATE] I recall a certain incident where you....

:::::[LADY OF THE COURT] May I remind you of....

:::::[THE LAUGHING MAN] Besieged on all sides! Time to make my exit.

::::> CARRIER LOST: THE LAUGHING MAN

::::[ORANGE QUEEN] It would seem that we all have something to think about.

::::[LADY OF THE COURT] And preparations to make.

::::> LADY OF THE COURT HAS LOGGED OFF

::::> HECATE HAS LOGGED OFF

::::> UMSONDO HAS LOGGED OFF

::::[ORANGE QUEEN] Yes, that, too.

::::[WORDSMYTH] Guardian, a moment of your time, if I may.

::::> ORANGE QUEEN HAS LOGGED OFF

::::[GUARDIAN] Of course, young one. How may I be of service?

::::[WORDSMYTH] Has he found what he was hunting for?

::::[GUARDIAN] I can't tell you that. Even if I knew the answer, and even if he *wasn't*...how do the humans put it again? Oh, yes. Even if he *wasn't* extremely put out with me for my recent failings, you know I couldn't tell you.

::::[WORDSMYTH] You could at least let *me* know. You owe me that much. The things he could do with it once he has recovered....

::::[GUARDIAN] You least of all, young one. Any debt I might have owed you is long since paid. But for old time's sake, as it were: The truth, as I said before, is that I don't know.

::::[WORDSMYTH] I disagree on your accounting, but that will wait for another time.

::::[GUARDIAN] That it will.

::::> GUARDIAN HAS LOGGED OFF

::::> WORDSMYTH HAS LOGGED OFF

🕒 All right, the previous stuff was kinda spooky. This was just plain weird. Where do you get this drek, Cap? *The Young and the Awakened*?

🕒 Bung

🕒 Speak for yourself, Bung old man. This whole *Beyond the Veil* business scares me.

🕒 Aegis

🕒 What's scary? That regular posters to Shadowland have some uber-secret cabal? Don't make me laugh.

🕒 D. Bunker

🕒 No. What scares me is that some of them appear to be running scared...and these people don't scare easily. The Crash of '29 would have been just another bad day for people like this. Ghostwalker has them scared, though, which in turn has me scared. Think on that for a while, friend, and keep your ears open.

🕒 Aegis