

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO



STEVEN S. LONG

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO

A Genre Book For The *HERO* System

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INTRODUCTION



OTHER RESOURCES

In addition to *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, Hero Games publishes many other books Post-Apocalyptic gamers may find useful. These include:

The HERO System Bestiary, a collection of 180 monsters and animals that will provide any GM with plenty of adversaries for the PCs — all you have to do is convert them from mystic monsters to mutated animals or the like.

The Ultimate Vehicle and *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook*, two invaluable resources if you're running a Road Wars campaign or other game that features a lot of vehicle use and combat.

The HERO System Equipment Guide, a compendium of gear covering all time periods and genres, supplements the equipment section in Chapter Two nicely, particularly if you're running a game where the apocalypse occurs in the future and Science Fiction-style technology can be salvaged.

The end of the world — and, paradoxically, what happens after that — has always fascinated writers and readers alike. Some of mankind's earliest myths and tales described world-destroying catastrophes and wars, such as the Greek myth of Deucalion or the Norse story of Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods. With the rise of Science Fiction in the twentieth century, some authors and filmmakers turned their talents to modern versions of these legends — ones in which plague, comet or asteroid impact, natural disasters, or nuclear war brought human civilization to an end, leaving the survivors to eke out a living among the ruins... and perhaps start on the long road back to an advanced society.

Post-Apocalyptic Hero is your guide to this genre (or perhaps more accurately, subgenre of Science Fiction) for gaming. It provides all the resources you need to use the *HERO System* to create Post-Apocalyptic characters and adventures every bit as exciting as those you read or watch. Like Hero's other genre books, you can think of it as a sort of "instruction manual" that shows you how to use the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* "toolkit" to create the best, most interesting characters and campaigns possible.

Chapter One, *Ruins, Wastelands, And Mutants: The Post-Apocalyptic Genre*, reviews the genre as a whole, including its subgenres (such as Low and High Post-Apocalyptic, Road Wars, and Zombie Apocalypse), major elements and themes, and how it interacts with other genres and metagenres. If you don't know much about the genre, or you're looking for some inspiration for a character or campaign, this is the place to start.

Chapter Two, *Building A Better Mutant: Post-Apocalyptic Character Creation*, covers the topic of creating characters for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games. It has three main sections. The first includes Package Deals that cover the wide range of characters in the genre. The second reviews the *HERO System* character creation elements like Skill and Powers, discussing how best to use them in the genre and providing expanded or optional rules for elements like the *Survival Skill* and the *Money Perk*. The third and final section covers Post-Apocalyptic equipment, ranging from swords and shields to laser pistols, Geiger counters, and decontamination foam.

Chapter Three, *Adventure Among The Devastation: Gamemastering Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, is for the GM's eyes only. It provides general guidelines and advice for running Post-Apocalyptic games, ranging from what type of apocalypse the GM

wants to use to destroy the world (and the implications of each one), to the timeframe of the campaign in relation to the apocalypse, the campaign's technology level, campaign style and tone, and how best to use villains and NPCs. It includes advanced rules for genre-appropriate subjects like scavenging, the condition of ruined buildings and equipment, radiation, and starvation.

Chapter Four *After The Apocalypse: A Post-Apocalyptic Sourcebook*, provides settings, scenarios, and other resources GMs and players can use in their Post-Apocalyptic games. The settings include:

- *Amrica*, a Low Post-Apocalyptic setting centuries after a devastating series of wars and catastrophes
- *After The Blast*, a High Post-Apocalyptic setting that includes dozens of example mutant powers (both beneficial and disadvantageous) and character sheets for mutated animals and similar threats
- *The Moonshattered Earth*, a High Post-Apocalyptic setting in which magic has returned to a world where near-miss by an asteroid breaks Earth's continents apart and moves the Moon closer to the planet
- *Zombie World*, in which the dead have arisen to feast on the living
- *Revelations 1001*, in which the events prophesied in the Book of Revelation come to pass in the year 1001
- *Destinations*, a Low Post-Apocalyptic game in which the characters struggle to reach a safe haven and find enough to eat in a world virtually stripped bare by a solar flare
- *Mechanon Triumphant*, in which your *Champions* heroes travel to an alternate Earth to see what happens when the master villain wins
- *Tobacco Road*, a "Road Wars" Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign set in central North Carolina

The settings also include example characters, maps and detailed descriptions of specific areas the GM can use in his game.

Lastly, the book concludes with a Bibliography of Post-Apocalyptic literature and movies. It offers plenty of sources of inspiration for players and GMs alike.

So, get your supplies ready, make sure you have a few bullets for that gun you found in the abandoned armory, and strap on your wrist crossbow — it's time to brave the mutant-filled wastelands of *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*!

c h a p t e r o n e

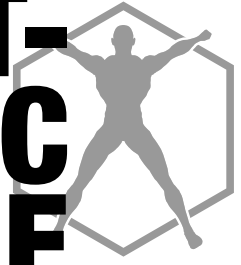


RUINS, WASTELANDS, AND MUTANTS

How can a great and wise civilization have
destroyed itself so completely?

— *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

THE POST-APOCALYPTIC GENRE



Before you conceive and design Post-Apocalyptic characters and campaigns, you should consider what Post-Apocalyptic is — what makes it a genre.

Compared to genres such as Fantasy and Pulp, Post-Apocalyptic really only has one unifying element, but it's a crucial one: the apocalypse itself. You can't have a Post-Apocalyptic story without an apocalypse to give you a "post-" era. Whether the story starts before/during the catastrophic event itself (as in the Niven and Pournelle novel *Lucifer's Hammer*) or takes place so many centuries later that the apocalypse becomes the subject of myth and legend (as in Paul Williams's *Pelbar Cycle* novels, Piers Anthony's *Battle Circle*, or Walter Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz*), there's an apocalypse involved. Modern (or sometimes future) civilization has collapsed or been destroyed somehow, whether through physical destruction or because something has caused the near-extinction of humanity, and Our Heroes are left to survive amid the ruins... and, perhaps, rebuild.

OTHER POST-APOCALYPTIC ELEMENTS

But just saying "there was an apocalypse" isn't the end of the analysis. Many other elements, themes, tropes, and "bits" weave in and out of Post-Apocalyptic stories, making them a distinct genre (or in some respects a major subgenre of Science Fiction). They include:

THE ANCIENTS

What would it mean to find a history of the Roadmakers, to learn something about the race that had built the great cities and highways, what they had dreamed of. And perhaps even to recover an account of the Plague days.

—Silas ponders the gaps in his knowledge in *Eternity Road*

If [the Blast] had been unleashed somehow by man himself, as the crazies claimed, why had the ancients chosen to do it?

—Sos ponders the cause of the apocalypse in *Battle Circle*

How can a great and wise civilization have destroyed itself so completely?

—Walter Miller, *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

In Post-Apocalyptic stories that take place so long after the apocalypse that pre-apocalypse civilization is a mystery, "the Ancients" — the creators and inhabitants of the pre-apocalypse society — are often mentioned. In some cases they're regarded as almost mythological — gods or near-gods capable of feats (like building skyscrapers) that Post-Apocalyptic people cannot even conceive of undertaking. In other stories, where characters are more aware of the course of history and the nature of their own society, the Ancients are the subject of scientific and practical speculation: how did they do what they did, how can we discover their secrets, how can we use their technology? It's a paradox that gnaws at the minds of thinking characters... and can make them question their own actions.

APOCALYPSE ANEW

Listen, are we helpless? Are we doomed to do it again and again and again? Have we no choice but to play the Phoenix in an unending sequence of rise and fall?

—Walter Miller, *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

That The Death must never be allowed to come again was the basic reason for all scientific training.

—Sterling Lanier, *Hiero's Journey*

In many Post-Apocalyptic settings, the characters are aware, dimly or precisely, that their civilization comes after one (often a much more advanced one) that destroyed itself. The question then arises, and becomes a theme in the genre, of whether the apocalypse can happen again. Most thoroughly (and disturbingly) explored in Walter Miller's novel *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, this theme also resonates at some level in many other Post-Apocalyptic stories. For example, over the course of the *Pelbar Cycle* novels, the characters and their civilization rediscover many technologies and make significant cultural advancement... but they wonder, and worry, about whether they may not be on the road to another "Time of Fire," and they do their best to structure and manage their civilization to prevent that. Some radicals among them question whether progress, discovery, and advancement are even desirable — if progress leads to Destruction, why not remain primitive? Your PCs may find themselves wrestling with the same question.

CORRUPTED NAMES

"I was taking [the Black Pearl] to the humans who dwell in the ruins of Manhat, beyond this forest."

—Tyrron the Courier explains his mission to Thundarr in Episode 1, "Secret of the Black Pearl," of *Thundarr the Barbarian*

Many Post-Apocalyptic settings feature place-names and personal names that are corruptions of modern ones known to the reader/viewer. For example, the Atlantic Ocean might become the Lantic Sea, New York transliterates into N'Yok, a man who would once have been named Kenneth is now K'neth, and so forth. This provides the reader (and in an RPG, the player) with a sense of familiarity—that's-not-familiarity and a glimpse into how the world has changed. It's also an easy tool for the GM to use, allowing him to quickly create a lot of names without much effort.

THE FAMILIAR MADE STRANGE

It was easy enough to see: a ribbon of white light moved through the night on the far side. ... It was traveling in a straight line. And coming quickly. Not like something passing through woods. More like a spirit gliding above the trees.

"The thing's airborne," said Silas. ...

"It's Arin's dragon," said Chaka. ...

It broke apart, separated into distinct glowing segments. Four. One behind the other. It was curving eastward now, moving as if it were going to pass across their front, parallel to the river. They held their breath. It began to slow down. ...

"It's stopping," said Silas in a hushed voice.

Each of the Four illuminated segments had now become rows of individual lights. Eyes, thought Chaka. It had a thousand eyes.

—the heroes of *Eternity Road* are baffled by the appearance of a maglev train

Similarly, many things that would seem perfectly ordinary and explainable to early twenty-first century humans are presented as weird, strange, or dangerous in the eyes of Post-Apocalyptic characters, because they're ignorant of what they are. A train might be described as a "gigantic metal serpent with a deafening roar," a skyscraper as a "glass tower," and a road as a "black path." Part of the fun of GMing a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign is coming up with descriptions like this, and part of the fun of playing in one is figuring out what they refer to.

THE GENE POOL

Post-Apocalyptic societies with some knowledge of genetics, or at least animal husbandry, worrying about the dangers the apocalypse poses to the gene pool. If only a handful of humans survive Armageddon, can humanity *really* survive, or will inbreeding just become the long, slow coda to extinction? For an isolated tribe or community,

finding a way to reach other groups of people to broaden the gene pool might become a paramount concern. Similarly, if only a few cattle remain, they may not form a good long-term "breeding stock," requiring supplementation from outside sources (if any exist). And of course, if the apocalypse was caused by nuclear war, genetic damage can lead to mutations (see below).

HATRED AND FEAR OF TECHNOLOGY

"Why did they [stone Soames to death]?"

"Because they're afraid."

"Of what?"

"Of yesterday," said Mr. Hostetter. "Of tomorrow." ...

"Because they're afraid he might bring all that back again — the cities, and all?"

—Len discusses fear of technology and what it can make men do with his grandmother and Mr. Hostetter in *The Long Tomorrow*

In Post-Apocalyptic settings where people remember, either directly or through legends, an apocalypse caused by bombs, machines, or other devices, hatred and fear of technology often becomes the norm. Any advanced technology may be seen as a tool of the Devil, or simply feared on the grounds that it could cause another apocalypse. Characters in such a campaign may have to make EGO Rolls to overcome their nigh-instinctual fear of technology the first few times they encounter it.

INEVITABLE DECAY

In some Post-Apocalyptic stories, the decline of civilization, society, culture, and morals after the apocalypse is portrayed as very likely, if not inevitable. Humanity reverts to a state of near-barbarism, losing what technology and knowledge it retained in the immediate post-apocalypse period during the struggle for survival. Robbery, murder, kidnapping, rape, and perhaps even cannibalism become widespread, and it falls to good men — such as your PCs — to try to stem this tide of evil and cruelty.

INSULAR SOCIETIES

Again, in that day each little tribe will live by itself and to itself and go its own way, and their differences will soon be more than they were even in the first days of Man, according to the accidents of survival and of place....

—George Stewart, *Earth Abides*

In many Post-Apocalyptic settings, the apocalypse and the times that come after lead to a fracturing of human society. Without access to easy means of communication and travel (and perhaps even incentives not to travel, like bandits, mutant gangs, and radiation zones), each pocket of surviving humans develops its own ways, customs, and means. At best, the end result may be a patchwork of cultures and languages that make it harder for a traveling group of PCs to communicate effectively, make friends, and convince people they intend no



harm. At worst it may lead to societies that want to kill and eat the PCs, enslave them, sacrifice them to the Radiation God, or punish them as heretics. A society that's so isolated it believes itself to be the only one left may not take kindly to being disabused of its notions by the arrival of the PCs... or it may hail them as saviors.

KNOWLEDGE: LOSING IT, PRESERVING IT

Scientists, both Abbey and laymen, however, never stopped searching for more data on the lost ages in an effort to help shape the future.

—Sterling Lanier, *Hiero's Journey*

One almost inevitable result of the apocalypse is a loss of knowledge. An apocalypse means the death of millions (if not billions), and often the destruction of databases and libraries, and that can only mean one thing: some of what modern man knows will be lost to the survivors of Armageddon. In some cases Post-Apocalyptic characters know they've lost much of humanity's former knowledge, and it causes them anguish on some level; in other cases, ignorance of the loss is an aspect of that loss.

Of course, the loss of knowledge may be somewhat inconsistent. Knowledge of some subjects (agriculture or flying, for example) may have almost faded away (at least in some areas), while

other subjects more important to the action-adventure side of the genre (automobile repair, gunsmithing, demolitions) remain well-known. Some areas may have lost virtually all knowledge of pre-apocalypse civilization and arts, while others still remember or have records of most things. If the needs of the story demand it, some knowledge may be lost within less than a generation, while other knowledge lingers on for millennia (perhaps becoming fragmented or altered over time).

In settings where the characters know there was an apocalypse and that knowledge was lost, or where the story involves discovery of lost knowledge as a plot device, recovering and preserving the lost knowledge becomes an important element and theme of the story. There may even be entire (formal or informal) organizations devoted to the practice — the Knights Librarian, if you will, or the Church of the Scripture Preserved. (The *Preserver* Package Deal in Chapter Two represents a character devoted to this pursuit.) Obviously recovered knowledge can have practical applications (the PCs might learn how to work a device that makes their lives more comfortable, or discover weapons that let them defeat a powerful enemy), but in some senses regaining lost knowledge is a noble end in and of itself, even if the data helps the heroes not at all.

MUTANTS

He had no illusions about the dangers involved in what he was doing. The world was full of savage beasts and more savage men, those who lived beyond any law and made pacts with darkness and the Leemutes. And the Leemutes themselves, what of them? Twice he had fought for his life against them, the last time two years back. A pack of filthy hideous ape-like creatures, hitherto unknown, riding bareback on giant, brindled dog-things....

—Sterling Lanier, *Hiero's Journey*

The pilot was looking at the calf. Its legs were half the normal length.

"Mutant," said the general. "You find a lot of such animals. Radiation from bombed or dusted areas. There are even a lot of human abnormal births."

—Poul Anderson, *"Tomorrow's Children"*

The most popular form of cataclysm for Post-Apocalyptic stories is nuclear war... and nuclear bombs mean radiation, which wreaks havoc with flesh and genes. "Realistically" this means death for those intensely exposed, and defects in later generations born to the survivors, but Post-Apocalyptic writers and filmmakers are rarely content with reality. Thus, in the Post-Apocalyptic genre as in comic books, radiation often has bizarre mutative effects. It transforms ordinary animals into hideous monsters, and makes of men inhuman creatures with all variety of strange aberrations and deformities. In more "realistic" settings these alterations are rarely (if ever) pleasant, and those who possess them tend to live apart, often in the wastelands, either alone or in small cults and communities. (Sometimes the mutants are the only ones who can survive in the wastelands — their mutations allow them to withstand radiation, plague, or whatever cause the apocalypse.) In more fantastic or cinematic settings, mutants may gain all sorts of strange, superhuman powers.

See Chapter Two for a *Mutant Package Deal*, Chapter Three for more information on mutants as Post-Apocalyptic villains, and the *After The Blast* setting in Chapter Four for example mutations and mutant beasts.

NATURE AFTER MAN

...5 billion people will die from a deadly virus in 1997...

...The survivors will abandon the surface of the planet...

...Once again the animals will rule the world...

—from the introduction to the movie *12 Monkeys*

Dimly Hiero could see, the scientist still operating in his mind, a frog or three-quarter grown tadpole might have provided a possible remote progenitor. The great opalescent eyes were set ten feet apart on the blunt, slimy head. It

squatted many yards off the mud on monstrous bowed forelegs, and horny claws tipped the giant toes. And the incredible gape of the jaws now gleamed with lines of giant fangs, teeth such as no frog ever had, like a forest of ivory needles, each a foot long, glistening in the moonlight.

—Sterling Lanier, *Hiero's Journey*

Post-Apocalyptic stories often speculate about what life on Earth will be like after humanity has largely been wiped out. On the more "realistic" end of the spectrum come questions about the fate of domesticated species and discussion of how wild animals will spread into territories once controlled solely by men, such as cities. On the more fantastic there's *Planet Of The Apes* (where apes evolve into sentience and enslave the surviving humans) and mutant animals of every monstrous variety.

POWER

"No energy, no town!"

—Master Blaster, from the movie *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*

The survivors of the apocalypse are often as concerned about power as they are about food — whether that's electricity to run lights and other intact machines, gasoline for cars, battery packs for laser rifles, or something else. The collapse of civilization usually means that few (if any) means of producing power exist, so scavenging for power resources becomes a major preoccupation, and any production facility is a treasure beyond price. Entire towns or city-states might grow up around a functioning power plant or oil refinery... but even with all the defenses they can muster, they'd still be the targets of biker gangs, packs of mutants, enemy tribes, and the like. The need to obtain more fuel or power could lead to many an adventure for the PCs.

QUEST FOR SAFETY

When we've got to high ground, when we know what's happening, we can start thinking civilization again," Eileen said. "Until then, we survive."

—Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *Lucifer's Hammer*

One of the classic forms of Post-Apocalyptic story, discussed as a campaign model in Chapter Three, is the "quest for safety." The characters are people, usually more or less ordinary ones, trapped by the collapse of society (which occurs during or immediately before the story) in a dangerous or untenable location. Personal knowledge or rumor informs them of a place where they can be safe: an old rural retreat they remember from childhood; a relative's isolated, well-stocked home; a new community founded by a man strong enough to maintain order and ensure safety. Through perils of every variety — from hostile peoples, to environmental hazards, to starvation — they have to make their way there.

RELIGION

¹²When the Lamb broke open the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun grew black as sackcloth, and the full moon became like blood, ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; ¹⁴the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and everyone, slave or free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains[.]

—Revelation 6:12-15

'Neath sea the land sinketh,
the sun dimmeth,
from the heavens fall
the fair bright stars;
gusheth forth steam
and gutting fire,
to very heaven
soar the hurtling flames.

—from the *Voluspá* of the *Elder Edda*,
describing Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods

Thoughts of the destruction of the world and the casting-down of mankind's civilization naturally relate to religious themes, since it is in trouble times that men turn to religion for solace — and what time could be more troubling than the Apocalypse? Religious themes, beliefs, and doctrines consciously or subconsciously form a current (or undercurrent) through most Post-Apocalyptic stories. In some cases religion becomes a prominent element: in *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, the main characters are members of a religious order; in the Pelbar Cycle novels, the discovery of an intact Bible causes problems in a society whose religion was consciously tailored in centuries past to control men; in Stephen King's *The Stand*, the heroes' adversary Randall Flagg, the "Walkin' Dude," is possibly the Devil or the Anti-Christ. In other cases it's more of a background aspect of the story, as characters wonder why God would destroy the world, why they survived, and what it all means in a larger, meta-physical sense.

In the genre's most stark use of the subject, religion is the *cause* of the apocalypse. In stories such as the *Left Behind* novels, the End Times arrive, Judgment Day occurs, and human civilization is destroyed.... yet for some reason people remain on Earth in a post-apocalyptic world. The reasons for this vary based on interpretation of religious doctrine and the dramatic needs of the story. Perhaps the "survivors" are sinners who do not get to go to Heaven and are instead condemned to live their lives in a literal Hell on Earth. Perhaps demons "snared" some people, preventing them from receiving the benefits of Judgment Day so they (the demons) could toy with them. Whatever the reason, religious doctrine and meaning suffuse the story, and the resolution to the problems facing the heroes may involve solving a religious mystery, cleansing themselves of sin, or doing penance of some sort.

RUINED LANDMARKS

"Oh my God. I'm back. I'm home. All the time, it was.... We finally really did it. You maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! God damn you all to hell!"

—George Taylor realizes he's on a post-apocalyptic Earth when he sees the shattered remains of the Statue of Liberty at the end of *Planet of the Apes*

A favorite device used by Post-Apocalyptic storytellers to bring home to the reader/viewer the extent of the apocalypse and its sheer impact is to show them some well-known site or landmark that's been destroyed... but not so badly destroyed that it's unrecognizable. The Eiffel Tower broken off halfway down, the Capitol Dome with an enormous hole in one side, the Golden Gate Bridge cast down into rubble, the faces on Mount Rushmore battered and broken — these are just a few possible examples. In a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign that takes place in a future version of a fictional setting, like the GM's own campaign world for a Champions campaign, the shattered landmarks might even include fictional ones beloved by the other campaign's PCs, such as a hero team's headquarters.

RUINS

Mr. Wayne left the shop and hurried down to the end of the lane of gray rubble. Beyond it, as far as he could see, lay flat fields of rubble, brown and gray and black. Those fields, stretching to every horizon, were made of the twisted corpses of buildings, the shattered remnants of trees, and the fine white ash that once was human flesh and bone.

—Robert Sheckley, *"The Store of the Worlds"*

Nor are landmarks the only things that get ruined. Damaged structures of all sorts are commonplace in Post-Apocalyptic fiction. They're a place for characters to take shelter in, to scavenge for supplies in, and to lament or ponder the passing of the Ancients. And in many cases they're home to bands of mutants, mutated creatures, or other horrors of the wastelands, all eager for a taste of human flesh....

SCAVENGING

You're a scavenger, Max. You're a maggot. Did you know that? You're living off the corpse of the old world.

—Pappagallo to Max in *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*

Lacking the means to produce what they need, Post-Apocalyptic characters have to search through the ruins to find it. In short, they have to live by scavenging. In books and movies this is often a simple matter of survival, but in a gaming context it's also the Post-Apocalyptic equivalent of finding a dragon's hoard in a Fantasy game. Scavenged and salvaged goods are loot, in other words — a reward to the heroes for their cleverness, bravery, and perseverance.



See Chapter Two under *Concealment: Scavenging*, and Chapter Four under *Scavenging And Salvaging*, for more information on scavenging in game terms.

THE SHOPPING TRIP

In stories that take place immediately after the apocalypse, particularly those in which most people simply “vanish” and leave buildings and worldly possessions behind, the characters get to take advantage of all the “freebies.” At first they can amuse themselves taking luxury items from stores they could never have afforded to shop at before the apocalypse, but later on “shopping trips” tend to become more serious and concern themselves with practicalities like tools and food.

STRANGE NEW WORLD

In Post-Apocalyptic stories set relatively soon after the apocalypse, whatever destroyed civilization may also have remade the world. Earthquakes, floods, meteor impacts, tsunamis, and large-scale nuclear exchanges can literally change the landscape, bringing low the highlands and raising up the valleys. The heroes are then confronted with a world that doesn’t match their maps, their prior knowledge, or their expectations. Finding their way through it, and dealing with the implications of the changes, is as much a part of their overall adventure as fighting mutants and fending off marauding biker gangs.

Similarly, the societies that arise in the wake of the apocalypse may be strange indeed. In the period right after the apocalypse, humanity may descend quickly into barbarism as panicked or desperate people fight for any little scrap of anything they think they can use. In later centuries, dimly-remembered legends of the Ancients, and now-primitive peoples’ misinterpretation of pre-apocalypse artifacts, may lead to the creation of bizarre social structures, weird customs, and aberrant religions.

SURVIVAL

In most adventure fiction and movies, the goals are external to the character: capture the bad guy; get rich; solve the mystery; protect the fort from hostile Indians, win the love of a beautiful woman. Some of those goals may be present in Post-Apocalyptic stories as well, but in virtually all Post-Apocalyptic settings the heroes have an overarching goal, the most simple and profound one of all: survive. In the wastelands of the post-apocalyptic, food is scarce and danger is not. The struggle to obtain enough calories, to make it to safety without going through the Place of Glowing Death, and to find the weapons needed to fight off the mutants affects every hero, every day. It’s a genre where the *Survival Skill* is as important a part of the character’s arsenal as *Stealth* or *Weapon Familiarity*.



WASTELANDS AND RAD ZONES

“Where would be a suitable place for such training, where others would not spy or interfere?”

“In the badlands.”

“The badlands! No one goes there!”

“Precisely[.]”

“But it is death!” the girl said, forgetting her place.

“Not necessarily. I have learned that the kill-spirits of the Blast are retreating. The old books call it “radiation,” and it fades in time. The intensity is measured in Roentgen, and is strongest in the center. It should be possible to tell by the plants and animals whether a given area within the markers has become safe. You would have to be very careful about penetrating too far inside, but near the edge...”

—Sol, Sos, and Sola discuss the wastelands and radiation in Piers Anthony’s *Battle Circle*

[T]here came a second donkey train — with a full complement of clerks and armed guards for defense against highwaymen, mutant maniacs, and rumored dragons — to the abbey from New Rome.

—radiation isn’t the only danger of the wastelands in *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

In many Post-Apocalyptic settings, whatever caused the apocalypse continues to make its presence felt in the form of areas that suffered so much

devastation that they’ve become deserts — wastelands, in other words. Besides presenting a danger of death by starvation or dehydration, wastelands are often home to cannibalistic mutants who can somehow survive there, biker gangs hiding out from their enemies, mutant animal monsters, and other perils.

If the apocalypse resulted from nuclear war, wastelands are even more dangerous because they’re “hot” — dangerously radioactive. Any sort of society nearby will know well to avoid a “rad zone,” but heroes passing through might not be so lucky. Without Geiger counters or some other means to detect the radiation, they may condemn themselves to a slow, painful death out of ignorance. On the other hand, if radiation causes noticeable mutations, seeing mutant plants and animals on the fringes of the rad zone will probably warn them off.

WHITE LINE FEVER

One of the most memorable, exciting, and gameable elements of many Post-Apocalyptic settings is driving. Cars, motorcycles, the freedom of the road, and the quest for ever more gasoline so you can keep driving are the central themes of the story, and biker gangs and renegade drivers the villains. As the characters journey down the ruined highways and byways, they encounter people both good and bad, and get into all sorts of adventures. In fact, this type of Post-Apocalyptic story is so popular it essentially forms its own subgenre; see *Road Wars*, below, for more information.

POST-APOCALYPTIC SUBGENRES



Like Fantasy, Science Fiction, and other major genres, Post-Apocalyptic isn't a single type of storytelling. It has many "subgenres," each sharing the common features of the overall genre (see above), but focusing on (or allowing for) different types of adventure.

LOW POST-APOCALYPTIC

The most popular Post-Apocalyptic subgenre for novelists, if perhaps not for gamers, is *Low Post-Apocalyptic*. In a Low Post-Apocalyptic game, the emphasis is on a more "realistic" setting. There are few if any mutants, and if they do exist they're horrific, almost inhuman, monsters, not beings with weird powers. There aren't any mutant superhuman abilities, or magic, or other fantastic elements. Depending on how far civilization has fallen and how long it's been since the apocalypse, the technology might involve guns and vehicles salvaged from the ruins of society (the "Road Wars" campaign below being essentially just a specialized sub-type of Low Post-Apocalyptic), or mankind may have regressed to Fantasy-era technology (bows, horses, swords, windmills, and so on).

LOW POST-APOCALYPTIC ELEMENTS

Besides the lack of weird powers and similar trappings, some of the elements that tend to define the Low Post-Apocalyptic sub-genre include:

Witness To Apocalypse: In most Low Post-Apocalyptic settings, the apocalypse either occurs during the story itself, or the story picks up soon after civilization falls. The characters typically remember what happened and what life was like before the apocalypse; they often retain valuable knowledge and skills that have become lost in Low Post-Apocalyptic settings that take place centuries or millennia after the fall (such as in Paul Williams's "Pelbar Cycle" novels).

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Times: The heroes in most Low Post-Apocalyptic stories aren't military personnel, superhumanly-powerful mutants, or anything of the sort — they're ordinary people thrust into a chaotic situation where they often have to fight to survive. They used to be accountants, sanitation workers, professors, housewives, businessmen, you name it. Now they have to band together to try to reach safety, rebuild their civilization, or whatever else the goal of the campaign might be. They soon find themselves doing things they'd never have considered in their old lives: hunting and butchering their own meat; shooting people; building campfires. It's a spiritual journey as much as a physical one, as they adapt themselves to the new reality.

LOW POST-APOCALYPTIC CAMPAIGNS

At best, Low Post-Apocalyptic characters are Standard Heroic characters, with 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages. But it's entirely possible that the GM will want to emphasize the "average joes struggling to survive" aspect of the subgenre and mandate lower point totals — perhaps even as low as Skilled Normal (25 Base Points plus up to 25 points from Disadvantages) or Standard Normal (0 + 25 points).

Regardless of the starting point total, Low Post-Apocalyptic characters must follow Normal Characteristic Guidelines as a campaign ground rule (*i.e.*, they don't get any Disadvantage points because of this). They get their equipment (or at least standard equipment) for "free," without paying Character Points for it. If they want a unique piece of equipment — such as an experimental motorcycle that runs on solar power — they may have to pay Character Points for it.

HIGH POST-APOCALYPTIC

The year: 1994. From out of space comes a runaway planet, hurtling between the Earth and the Moon, unleashing cosmic destruction! Man's civilization is cast in ruin!

Two thousand years later, Earth is reborn....

A strange new world rises from the old: a world of savagery, super-science, and sorcery. But one man bursts his bonds to fight for justice! With his companions Ookla the Mok and Princess Ariel, he pits his strength, his courage, and his fabulous Sunsword against the forces of evil.

He is Thundarr, the Barbarian!

—from the introduction to the *Thundarr the Barbarian* cartoon

In contrast to Low Post-Apocalyptic, the High Post-Apocalyptic subgenre is *filled* with unrealistic, even fantastic, elements — in fact, their presence is what defines the subgenre. Also unlike Low Post-Apocalyptic, High Post-Apocalyptic stories usually take place centuries, or even millennia, after the apocalypse itself, since it takes time for mutations to rise to the level of superhuman powers or for magic to return to the world. In most cases the apocalypse and the world before it occurred are at best dimly remembered in legends, though some organizations may struggle to preserve the old knowledge and recover more whenever possible.



HIGH POST-APOCALYPTIC ELEMENTS

Some of the weird or fantastic elements that tend to define the High Post-Apocalyptic sub-genre include:

High Technology: The apocalypse in High Post-Apocalyptic settings often occurs decades or centuries beyond the present day. That means Science Fiction-style technology — artificially intelligent computers, laser rifles, force-swords, powered armor, and just about anything else the GM's fiendish mind can think up that fits the conception of his campaign. When the heroes explore the ruins that dot their world, they may find working versions of some of these super-science devices... and of course they may encounter enemies who are armed with scavenged pre-apocalypse weaponry.

Mutants, Mutants Everywhere: The apocalypse (typically a nuclear one, but possibly involving chemical and/or biological weapons instead) had a profound effect on the very flesh of many survivors (or, more accurately, their distant descendants). Their genes transformed in bizarre, unpredictable ways by radiation and germs, they've become *mutants*, possessed of strange powers. Depending on the setting, their mutations may be relatively low-key, or they may be little different from comic book superpowers. Nor are humans the only beings who were mutated; mutant animals, and even plants and trees, make venturing into the wilderness a dangerous proposition for even the most experienced traveler or adventurer.

The Power Of The Mind: In some High Post-Apocalyptic settings, mutations involving psionic powers are particularly common. Adventurers often have their own mental powers, and it's a good thing, because the odds are the cannibal mutant cultists and mutated animals they encounter will use psionic abilities both subtle and gross to try to capture or destroy them!

Wizardry: Sometimes whatever caused the apocalypse somehow causes magic to "return" to the world, as in Fred Saberhagen's novel *Empire of the East* or the *Thundarr the Barbarian* cartoon. In the centuries since civilization collapsed, some people have become aware of this and learned to manipulate magic for their own benefit; similarly, mystic monsters like dragons and trolls may have arisen (or resulted from the mutation process influenced by magic).

HIGH POST-APOCALYPTIC CAMPAIGNS

The GM determines how High Post-Apocalyptic characters are built. Typically they're built as Low Superheroic characters with 150 Base Points plus up to 100 Character Points from Disadvantages — that provides enough points to give the characters decent Characteristics, an acceptable selection of Skills, and some of the mutant powers, spells, or high tech the PCs will undoubtedly want to have. The GM might even make them Standard Superheroic characters (200 Base Points + up to 150 points in Disadvantages) if he wants a particularly high-powered, fantastic game. Alternately, the GM can require players to build Standard Heroic characters (75 Base Points + up to 75 points in Disadvantages), and then when they're done give them another 100 (or more) points to spend on mutations.

Regardless of the starting point total, High Post-Apocalyptic characters usually must follow Normal Characteristic Guidelines as a campaign ground rule (*i.e.*, they don't get any Disadvantage points because of this). They get their equipment (or at least standard equipment) for "free," without paying Character Points for it. If they want a unique piece of equipment — such as a laser rifle and a whole box full of power crystals for it — they may have to pay Character Points for it.

ROAD WARS

In the future, cities will become deserts, roads will become battlefields, and the hope of mankind will appear as a stranger.

—tagline from the movie *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*

One popular form of Low Post-Apocalyptic setting is *Road Wars*, which focuses on conflicts that take place on the roads of the post-apocalyptic world. Whatever brought about the downfall of society has largely left the roads and many vehicles intact, giving rise to a whole nomadic civilization based on driving. The chief predators in this commuter wasteland are biker gangs who often dress bizarrely and commit the most brutal, savage acts for fun.

The main commodities in a *Road Wars* setting are fuel and food, and to a lesser extent ammunition. Every now and then something else becomes important for a while (like medicine), but ultimately hero and villain alike need gasoline to keep moving... and there are few, if any, refineries left. Unable to buy what they need, they salvage it from wrecked vehicles, steal it from one another, and casually murder people for the contents of their gas tanks. In this sort of setting, the PCs take on the role of heroes of the road, brave men and women who battle the biker gangs to keep innocent people safe and trade routes (if any exist) open.

ROAD WARS CAMPAIGNS

Road Wars PCs are typically Standard Heroic characters, with 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages — that's enough to make them the tough, competent fighters they need to be without letting them roll right over the opposition. Each of them probably has his own car or motorcycle; to make things simple, the GM might give each PC a vehicle built on up to a defined amount of points for free (sort of "Everyman Equipment"). Combat Driving and appropriate Transport Familiarities are a must for nearly every PC, but the GM should try to encourage some differentiation so the characters don't seem like carbon copies of one another. For example, one character might be an expert gunner instead of a driver, while another might be great on a motorcycle but only an average driver behind the wheel of a car.

Road Wars characters usually must follow Normal Characteristic Guidelines as a campaign ground rule (*i.e.*, they don't get any Disadvantage points because of this). They get their equipment (or at least standard equipment) for "free," without paying Character Points for it. If they want a unique piece of equipment — such as an ultralight plane — they may have to pay Character Points for it.

THE SLEEPERS AWAKEN

Five years ago, one of our scientists perfected the technique of suspended animation. ... I am going to use this discovery to escape from the present into a future which will have forgotten me. There I can begin the struggle again, this time with the help of certain devices that might yet have won this war had we been granted more time.

—a Hitlerian leader known as "the Master" plots to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat by means of cryogenic suspension in "*Exile Of The Eons*," by Arthur C. Clarke

A second form of specialized Low Post-Apocalyptic game is the *Sleepers Awaken* campaign. In this sort of story, the heroes are people — usually military personnel, but possibly scientists or others with practical skills — who are cryogenically frozen (or otherwise preserved) because their superiors fear that the apocalypse is about to occur. It turns out their superiors were right. At the predetermined time, or when their cryo-equipment fails or is shut off, the "sleepers" come out of their induced comas to confront a strange Post-Apocalyptic world.

SLEEPERS AWAKEN ELEMENTS

Besides the defining element of "preserved" people from pre-apocalypse times awakening after the collapse of civilization, some other common tropes in *Sleepers Awaken* stories include:

The Business Of Politics/War: In most cases the heroes were put into cryogenic suspension by their military or their government for the specific purpose of either (a) re-establishing that government (and by extension, that nation's culture and form of civilization) after the apocalypse, and/or (b) continuing to fight the war that eventually led to the apocalypse.

Tools Of The Trade: And to ensure that they can accomplish this goal, the sleepers are usually put to sleep with all the supplies they could need. At the very least this means food, water, medical supplies, fuel, and ammunition, but it could also include vehicles, the raw materials needed to rebuild power stations, or even the entire high-tech base in which they go to sleep. Unlike most Post-Apocalyptic characters they don't have to do much scrounging... unless, of course, something went wrong while they were asleep....

Did The Alarm Not Go Off?: In *Sleepers Awaken* stories, it's not uncommon for the sleepers to spend a lot more time dreaming than they planned for. What might have been a sleep of a decade or two lasts centuries or millennia because of an equipment malfunction, sabotage, or some similar reason. This heightens the culture shock they experience but may make them even more of a force to be reckoned with than they'd expect because civilization has fallen so far in the interim.

THE LAST MAN ON EARTH

One interesting variant on the typical Post-Apocalyptic subtypes is the "last man on Earth" story, showcased in movies like *The Quiet Earth* and *Night Of The Comet*. The main character goes to sleep one night, and when he wakes up... he's the only person left on Earth. There may be signs that people vanished in the blink of an eye (like wrecked vehicles all over the roads), or maybe something disintegrated everyone, or perhaps he was somehow spared from an instantly-lethal virus that swept the globe overnight. Whatever the cause, it left him as master of all the world.

After a period during which the character takes whatever he wants from stores, lives wherever he feels like, drives sports cars at high speed the wrong way on downtown streets, and otherwise enjoys having the world to himself... another person appears. This person may be helpful or dangerous, but either way it's proof that there were more survivors than just him. Now finding them, and/or figuring out what caused the mass disappearance, becomes important.

In a gaming context, the last *man* on Earth has to change to the last *men*, since gaming involves groups of heroes. That means the GM has to come up with a plausible reason why the heroes were all spared whatever took everyone else away... but that, after all, is just what GMs are for.

SLEEPERS AWAKEN CAMPAIGNS

Sleepers Awaken PCs are typically Standard Heroic characters, with 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages — they're tough, competent, and trained, or they wouldn't have been selected for the cryogenic suspension project in the first place. They could even be built on 100 + 100 points, if desired. Alternately, the PCs might have been frozen *by accident*, in which case they could be ordinary people (built on 50 + 50 points, or fewer) with no useful training to speak of and no gear.

Sleepers Awaken characters usually must follow Normal Characteristic Guidelines as a campaign ground rule (*i.e.*, they don't get any Disadvantage points because of this). They get their starting equipment for “free,” without paying Character Points for it. However, the GM chooses the equipment, since it's up to him to determine what the people in charge of the “long sleep” project gave them.



ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

It started off as rioting. But right from the beginning you knew this was different, because it was happening in small villages, market towns... and then it wasn't on TV anymore. It was on the street outside. It was coming through your windows.

—28 Days Later

Another popular form of Low Apocalypse campaign, and the only one where the PCs typically get to see the apocalypse happening and perhaps even have a chance to stop it, is the *Zombie Apocalypse*. The dead are rising from their graves, and they hunger for the blood, brains, and flesh of the living!

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE ELEMENTS

Besides all those dead people shambling around trying to eat you, some of the elements that tend to define the *Zombie Apocalypse* sub-genre include:

Just Ordinary Folks: *Zombie Apocalypse* heroes tend to be average, ordinary people driven to extremes by their circumstances. They may have a few useful skills, but they're usually not Special Forces soldiers (or soldiers at all), spies, martial arts masters, or anything like that.

Safe... For Now: Typically *Zombie Apocalypse* characters find a safe place where they can take refuge temporarily: a house they can board up; a room in an office complex with a sturdy door; or the like. (If the zombies are the result of necromancy, then holy ground, such as a church, may become a particularly important type of sanctuary.) Trapped inside, they have to cope with the tension, personal differences, opportunities to escape, and the demands of the situation as best they can... and all the while, the zombie hordes outside are coming closer and closer to figuring out a way to get at them. In a sense, this element is something like a “Quest For Safety” story (page 72) in miniature: the heroes search for a haven and find one, but once they find it have to defend it before they can truly relax and feel safe.

Brains...: Zombies want to eat fresh human flesh, particularly brains and blood. On the upside, any human they capture is so thoroughly torn apart and devoured that he can't become a zombie himself.

They Just Keep Coming: No matter how many zombies the heroes kill, there always seem to be more... and more... and more. Until the PCs find a way to stop the zombie outbreak or destroy all the zombies at once, they're not going to get much respite (which in game terms may call for using the Long-Term Endurance rules to keep track of their fatigue).

Head Shots: The only reliable way to stop a zombie is a head injury. Shoot it in the head, smash its skull in, decapitate it... otherwise it just keeps coming (even if other injuries or loss of limbs slow it down).



A Reflection Of Your Fate: In a Zombie Apocalypse film, the heroes are constantly reminded of the fate in store for them: zombification. Any old zombie conveys that message, but it comes across even more starkly when the zombie trying to eat a hero is a friend or loved one....

We Don't Like Strangers Around Here: In a world where the zombie plague has been going on for a long time, traveling PCs will soon find that most towns and villages that are still inhabited are fortified and as well-protected as possible. Inhabitants will go armed all the time, and they don't necessarily like the idea of letting wanderers in....

Revisiting Cherished Places: During some long-term Zombie Apocalypse stories, the heroes have the chance to return to favored old haunts, gain access to fun (but ultimately useless) technology, go on "shopping sprees" in deserted stores, and so forth. These bursts of joyful humanity, of *normality*, provide relief from the otherwise constant stress and danger, and in a gaming context allow for role-playing and character development.

Zombie As Metaphor: In the better Zombie Apocalypse films, the zombies are more than just ravaging monsters — they're metaphors of some sort. They might represent the dangers of mindless conformity, suppression of individualism, the problems of the pursuit of science without ethics, the blind unthinking masses, bureaucracy, fear of death/decay/corruption, the horror of war, overpopulation, consumerism, apathy, or similar ills. The monster *is* us, and it's the similarities to us that are much much worse than the differences.

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE CAMPAIGNS

Zombie Apocalypse PCs are typically Skilled Normal characters, with 25 Base Points plus up to 25 Character Points from Disadvantages — or at most, 50 + 50 points. Make them much more competent than that, and zombies may not seem like much of a threat. In a few variations of the genre, the heroes are elite soldiers specifically trained or prepared to fight the zombies; build characters like that on 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages.

Zombie Apocalypse characters must follow Normal Characteristic Guidelines as a campaign ground rule (*i.e.*, they don't get any Disadvantage points because of this). They get their equipment (or at least standard equipment) for "free," without paying Character Points for it, but the way most Zombie Apocalypse stories start they're not likely to have much of anything useful with them — the best they can hope for is to find some useful weapons wherever they have to hole up.

BEYOND THE UNDEAD

While zombies are far and away the most popular adversary in this sort of campaign, you can use other monsters if you want. The key element of an outside force trying to destroy humanity for its own purposes works just as well if you replace the zombies with:

- robots and other machines
- vampires
- rabid or feral animals
- alien invaders
- mole people

MIXING GENRES



OTHER SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Pages 35-43 of *Champions* contain advice on applying meta-genres to superhero campaigns. Much of that advice is general, and could certainly work in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaigns as well. You might also want to look at pages 17-19 of *Star Hero*, pages 17-19 of *Ninja Hero*, and pages 19-22 of *Fantasy Hero*, pages 17-19 of *Dark Champions*, and pages 28-32 of *Pulp Hero*.

Beyond “pure” expressions of the Post-Apocalyptic genre there are many types of stories (and game campaigns) involving the use of meta-genres, or which combine *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* and some other genre.

META-GENRES

A *meta-genre* is a style or theme of storytelling/game play/campaign conception that could apply to any genre. Comedy, horror, romance, and tragedy are all meta-genres, whereas Post-Apocalyptic, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Western are genres. Thus, you could have a horror Western, or horror Post-Apocalyptic, or horror Fantasy — horror isn’t a genre, it’s a *meta-genre*. A meta-genre can apply to an entire campaign, or just to specific adventures or story arcs within an otherwise normal *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* game.

In most cases, a campaign’s or scenario’s meta-genre evokes (or is intended to evoke) a particular mood in the characters: dread, compassion, suspense, humor. The GM should do his best to enhance the mood by encouraging players to have their characters engage in *dramatically appropriate actions* — such as deliberately putting them in situations where they’ll look ridiculous in a Comedic Action campaign. In some cases, this may involve granting Skill Roll bonuses (or the like) for actions that suit or improve the mood; in others it may mean giving the players advance warning about what’s expected and letting them concoct a proper response.

Comedy

Comedy and whimsy are rarely found in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, except in the form of wisecracks, glib comments, and occasional parodies of the genre. Most Post-Apocalyptic settings are bleak and grim on some level, and even those which are not usually involve enough danger and struggles to survive that Comedy just doesn’t fit.

Horror

Horror and Post-Apocalyptic fit together well. The bleak despair of seeing civilization destroyed and a way of life swept away overnight lends itself well to Horror stories, and of course Zombie Apocalypse stories are a classic of Horror — normal humans pitted against an unstoppable, ravenous horde of monsters intent on eating them.

Horror stories take place in the “real world,” but often involve dark secrets, hidden terrors, and lurking evils the average person knows nothing of. (In a Post-Apocalyptic setting, this often means hidden cults of cannibalistic mutants, radiation-spawned monsters lying in wait for the heroes, and the like.) In most of them, ordinary, and usually sympathetic, protagonists begin investigating some strange situation, only to discover the true horror behind it. One by one, the main characters die, go insane, become corrupt, lose loved ones and possessions, and suffer other disasters and terrors as the story wends its way to a conclusion (usually, but not always, a happy or hopeful ending, as the heroes stop the threat and restore normalcy).

Most Horror stories use one or more of several mechanisms to create suspense, fear, and dread in the characters (and thus, in the readers/players as well). The first is *isolation*. If characters can radio for help, or escape, that lessens their feelings of terror. A proper Horror story traps them somewhere — a deserted island, in the middle of a wasteland with no way out, a prison — and keeps them there until they resolve the situation. The second is *ignorance*. People tend to fear the unknown, so Horror stories often place characters in situations where they’re unaware of the true facts. As the story unfolds, the characters slowly learn what’s going on... often to their own detriment. The third is *powerlessness*. Characters who have the ability to cope with adversity often also have the confidence to confront that which scares them. It creates a better Horror effect if they have to struggle against the lurking terrors instead of just attacking them as if they were any other adversary.

It’s difficult to achieve Horror effects in a gaming context, with the lights on and plenty of snacks at hand, but it is possible. Even the toughest of *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* characters becomes less cocksure when stripped of his weapons and put in a deadly situation he cannot control. Just about any type of character is appropriate, though the characters should never have the power to confront the lurking horrors effectively (at least, not at first).

Mystery

Mystery and Post-Apocalyptic generally don't mix, at least not in the classic sense of the Mystery story. If Post-Apocalyptic heroes get involved in a mystery, it's almost always the mystery of *what happened*. They know (or believe) that an apocalypse occurred, prior to which the Ancients had a vast and powerful civilization. What was that civilization like, and how did it fall? Will that affect us today? Could it happen again? What are the meanings, purposes, and workings of all these ruins and artifacts we find? These are the "mysteries" that confront some Post-Apocalyptic characters.

Romance

Romance as a meta-genre refers to campaigns or storylines involving, or focusing on, the romantic attachments, entanglements, and relationships of the main characters. Most *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaigns are "romantic" in the broad, dramatic sense of that term — they're filled with adventure, excitement, and in some cases appropriate but unlikely actions — but that's not quite the same thing. While Romance is certainly possible in a Post-Apocalyptic setting, it's rarely the focus of the story; at best it's an incidental thing between the hero and heroine. Post-Apocalyptic characters are generally too worried about survival, reaching a long-sought haven, or figuring out the mystery of what a particular ruin is for to get involved in romance subplots.

Tragedy

In a broad sense, Tragedy lies at the heart of the Post-Apocalyptic genre. The very foundation of the genre is a tragedy the likes of which mankind will hopefully only have to imagine — the total collapse of human civilization, typically attended by the death of nearly everyone on Earth. Because of that, and the fact that ruins and other elements of the genre serve as a constant reminder of what happened, consciously or subconsciously a pall of tragedy and despair tends to overlay many Post-Apocalyptic stories. A GM who wanted to emphasize this element could easily do so, perhaps by layering on top a standard Tragedy plot that tells the story of a hero doomed by some personal flaw or circumstance to loss, diminishment, or death. His fall would mirror the fall of humanity before him.

OTHER GENRES

The tropes, themes, and character types of Post-Apocalyptic stories easily mingle with those of other genres. Combining them can create fascinating campaigns and stories.

Champions

At first blush, comic books superheroes and the Post-Apocalyptic wouldn't seem to have much in common. Superheroes are there to prevent the end of the world, and very rarely fail. Not only that, but most superhero stories are fairly upbeat — even tremendous hardship is followed by success and a feeling of accomplishment, while after the fall of civilization the only accomplishment is survival. Still, the heroes only have to fail once, and the world, or even the universe, becomes a place just as terrible as any other Post-Apocalyptic setting.

However, there are some links that a GM running a *Champions* campaign or planning a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign can work with. First, it's not unheard of for superheroes to travel (or be sent to) alternate Earths or "dark futures" where their activities have caused the apocalypse. (The alternate setting allows the GM to show consequences of certain actions without demolishing the regular storyline and killing or irrevocably changing major characters.) There they have to try to set the world to rights (as best they can), in the process learning important lessons about abuse of power and taking their "job" for granted, so they can make sure not to create the same problems in their own world. But what if they *don't* come to save the alternate Earth? That would make for an intriguing Post-Apocalyptic setting, one where superpowers take the place of mutant powers and the heroes' goal isn't crimefighting but establishing a "safe haven" where innocent people can survive and thrive.

Second, in a more traditional High Post-Apocalyptic setting, you could equate mutant powers with superpowers. While superpowers are usually more spectacular than mutant powers, and in some settings more reliable, ultimately there can be a lot of similarities. Suppose that a band of noble-minded mutants, inspired perhaps by a comic book found in a ruined building, decide to put on costumes and use their mutant powers to fight for Truth, Justice, and the Post-Apocalyptic Way?

Dark Champions

Some Low Post-Apocalyptic games, particularly the "Road Wars" variety, tend to have a lot in common with Dark Champions campaigns. Both emphasize (often violent) action, involve a lot of guns and weapons, and tend to pit the right-thinking PCs against brutal, vicious enemies who want to hurt and exploit others for their own amusement. You could easily adapt a lot of the gunfighting rules from *Dark Champions* for a campaign like that. The main points of departure between the two genres in this situation are (a) Dark Champions

characters are rarely worried about day-to-day survival, maintaining supplies of fuel and ammo, and the like, and (b) most Post-Apocalyptic campaigns don't take place in urban areas the way Dark Champions campaigns tend to.

You can easily create a campaign to compensate for the latter point if you want. Imagine, for example, a Post-Apocalyptic setting taking place in the ruins of a metropolis like New York City, San Francisco, or Hudson City. Most of the city lies in ruins, parts of it are radioactive, and here and there pitiful pockets of survivors try to eke out a living scavenging among the ruins. Now mutant biker gangs have moved in to try to take whatever the survivors have, turn them into a slave labor force, or perhaps even eat them. Standing against the gangs to defend the innocent is a group of heroes — your PCs, the vigilantes of the new urban wasteland.

Fantasy Hero

Elephant was legless[. He] rested on two endless belts of heavy, studded metal plates[.] On the dull metal of each flank, painted small in size but with Old World precision, was the familiar sign — the animal shape, gray and powerful, some trick of the painter's art telling the viewer that what it represented was gigantic. In its monstrous gripping nose the creature in the painting brandished a sharp-pointed spear, jagged all along its length. Under its feet it trod the symbols:

426TH ARMORED DIVISION

— whose meaning, and even language, were strange to Rolf. ...

On sudden impulse Rolf spoke soft words aloud. "Ardneh? You were a god in the Old World, where this Elephant was made. I know that much. I don't know any spells to call you up. Since you're not a demon maybe spells aren't needed — I don't know."

—Rolf interprets pre-apocalypse technology in light of his mystic beliefs and knowledge of sorcery in *Empire of the East*

Fantasy has several possible connections with the Post-Apocalyptic genre. First, many Post-Apocalyptic settings, particularly those featured in Low Post-Apocalyptic stories, involve technology similar to that of Fantasy worlds. Characters ride horses, wield swords and bows, and wear whatever armor they can make or scavenge. Except for the absence of magic and the fact that they're not literally taking place on alternate worlds, such Post-Apocalyptic settings could easily be Fantasy settings, with remnants of pre-apocalypse technology being taken for enchanted items.

Second, some High Post-Apocalyptic settings actually feature magic. Somehow the apocalypse itself unleashed the forces of magic, or caused them to return to the world, and some of the survivors learned how to manipulate them. Now magic exists in the world alongside (or perhaps instead of)

mutations, and a group of heroes in this setting is likely to have at least one wizard among its members. The *Moonshattered Earth* setting described in Chapter Four is an example of this sort of Post-Apocalyptic/Fantasy mix.

Third, many of the world's bodies of myth and legend refer to the end (or near-end) of mankind or his civilization — for example, the Fimbulwinter and Ragnarok of Norse mythology, the Book of Revelation in the Bible, or many stories of world-wide floods. Any of these could serve as inspiration for a Fantasy-tinged Post-Apocalyptic campaign. See *Revelations 1001* in Chapter Four for an example of such a setting.

Fourth, while modern societies depend on technology and resources like oil, and may collapse when they disappear or stop functioning, Fantasy societies may similarly require magic to maintain themselves. Novels like Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* explore the Fantasy apocalypse of magic disappearing from the world, and you could do the same thing in a gaming campaign.

Star Hero

Technically speaking, Post-Apocalyptic can be considered a subgenre of the broader field of Science Fiction, though it's distinct enough to have its own common story types and definitive elements. Post-Apocalyptic and "pure" Science Fiction meet and mingle in High Post-Apocalyptic settings in which the apocalypse occurs decades or centuries after the "modern day." That means characters can find Science Fiction-level technology amid the ruins of their world — laser rifles, powered armor, jetpacks, and the like. The ruins they explore might include space stations that fell to Earth after their crews succumbed to the virulent plague that killed 97% of humanity, crashed starships, broadcast power facilities, and similar Science Fiction locales.

Similarly, there's no reason that a Post-Apocalyptic campaign has to limit itself to Earth. It's possible that an entire interstellar civilization could collapse, cutting the component planets off and perhaps causing their inhabitants to revert to savagery when their pampered high-tech life comes to a sudden halt.

Western Hero

Westerns and Post-Apocalyptic stories have so much in common that they're virtually indistinguishable in many cases. For example, in the Post-Apocalyptic movie *Mad Max*, replace the police station with a sheriff's office, the cars with horses, the biker gang with a band of desperadoes, and the modern guns with Colt Peacemakers, and you've got a Western story pure and simple. (Max is even referred to as "the Man with No Name" in the second sequel, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*.) Nearly any story type or theme found in a Western can easily be transported into a Post-Apocalyptic setting by changing the window dressing in similar fashion.

c h a p t e r t w o



BUILDING A BETTER MUTANT

He's just a country vet and he's scared
*%&!ess he's going to kill someone.

— *The Stand*

PACKAGE DEALS



The following Package Deals represent common professions, occupations, backgrounds, or careers for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* characters. In addition to the listed Skills and abilities, each Package Deal includes suggestions on several related subjects: the goals and motivations of characters who belong to that profession; improved Characteristics and other abilities members of that profession might have; Disadvantages appropriate to the profession; and how the character might advance and progress during the campaign. But these are only suggestions — ignore them and choose something else if that suits the character you have in mind.

Package Deals are just organizational tools. They group together Characteristics, Skills, and abilities commonly associated with a given background or type of training to make the creation process quicker, easier, and more “realistic.” Unless the GM requires them, you don’t have to use one. You can instead buy all of a character’s abilities separately, or “customize” the Package Deal by taking only the parts of it you want and discarding the rest. Package Deals should enhance your creativity, not stifle it.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PACKAGE DEALS

Some of these Package Deals include additions to Characteristics. This reflects common levels of STR or other Characteristics found among characters of a specific background or who practice a particular profession. However, with the GM’s permission, a player may change or eliminate that part of the Package Deal if he has an idea for a character who defies or transcends the general stereotype.

If the campaign uses the Normal Characteristic Maxima rules, those rules apply to Characteristics gained from Package Deals. This may in some instances require a character to spend additional points to buy a Characteristic affected by the Package Deal up to a proper level. For example, imagine a Package Deal that provides +15 CON, for 30 points. The first 20 points of effect increase the character’s CON to 20. After that the Normal Characteristic Maxima doubling applies, so the next 10 points only add 2.5 points’ worth of CON. Since a character can’t have a 22.5 CON, the character has to spend 2 more Character Points to increase his CON to 23. Alternately, with the GM’s permission a character can reduce the points a Package Deal adds to a Characteristic to avoid this problem.

ACADEMIC

A man, failed and unfit, moved west and north. ... He had no instinctive courage, only what was left of a sense of duty, a duty to a fledgling science, which had barely managed to be born before the world had fallen apart.

And a desperate, instinctive need to survive.

All around the world now there would be forty, perhaps as many as sixty, men and women... sufficiently expert in the complexities of quantitative sociodynamics to have come independently to the same conclusion as he had. For a second the elegant mathematical notations danced before his mind’s eye, spelling out the unarguable truth about the human race in this spring of dissolution and disaster. ... [T]he knowledge of QSD must be protected, taken somplace safe, and hidden against the time — fifty or a thousand years from now — when the majority of the race would begin to change back again toward civilized patterns.

—Gordon R. Dickson, *Wolf And Iron*

In Low Post-Apocalyptic settings, it’s not uncommon to find characters of academic bent. In stories where the apocalypse occurs during the narrative, or happened immediately before, the Academic is usually a professor or scientist who saw the cataclysm coming and prepared for it as best he could — but who still finds himself woefully unprepared to deal with the harsh realities of post-apocalyptic life outside the ivory tower. In stories where the apocalypse happened decades, centuries, or millennia ago, the Academic is usually concerned with preserving or re-discovering the ancient knowledge... and may find out, to his shock, that some of the pre-apocalypse lore he so treasures has become distorted over the years.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Typically an Academic has one or both of two motivations. First, he may want to reach a place of safety where the knowledge he carries (either in the form of books in his traveling pack, or the facts and memories in his brain) can be archived and saved for future generations in the hopes of restoring civilization. Second, he wants to preserve knowledge in general, which may mean leading archaeological expeditions into ruins, traveling to distant areas to seek out the truth of rumors of great libraries that still exist, and so on.

Typical Abilities: In many cases, the Academic's problem is that he doesn't *have* many abilities. He's full of knowledge, often about obscure, scholarly topics, but that doesn't do much to help him when he needs to build a campfire or hunt for food.

Suggested Disadvantages: Academics commonly have Psychological Limitations like *Must Preserve Knowledge* which drive them to take foolish risks to keep or obtain information that typically has no practical value in the post-apocalyptic world. They also tend to be more likely than most Post-Apocalyptic characters to pine for the pre-apocalypse world and suffer for the lack of it.

Progression: The Academic's journey over the course of the campaign is usually one of broadening his horizons. He doesn't necessarily become a Gunslinger or Survivalist, but the necessities of keeping himself alive mean he has to learn how to shoot, live in the wilderness, fend off mutant hordes, and so on. If he survives, he soon has a suite of practical skills to complement his book learning.

ACADEMIC PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
3	+3 INT
5	One KS, SS, or similar Background Skill (INT Roll +2)
8	Additional KSs, SSs, or similar Background Skills
3	Persuasion

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 19

Disadvantages

Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options

Value	Ability
1	<i>I Saw It Coming I:</i> Add Survival (one environment of choice) 8-
var	<i>I Saw It Coming II:</i> piece of equipment specially designed for post-apocalypse survival and/or comfort
1	<i>Skilled Barterer:</i> Trading 8-
var	<i>You've Got To Pull Your Weight:</i> Add Reputation: Parasite (for Academics living in a post-apocalypse society that doesn't appreciate them)
1	Literacy (if not standard for setting)

CRYO

"Lords of light! Humans, encased in ice!"

"Frozen alive, probably for a space travel experiment."

"Alive? So this is what Zoa was after."

—Thundarr, Princess Ariel, and
Ookla free three cryogenically-frozen
scientists in Episode 3, "Mindok the Mind
Master," of *Thundarr the Barbarian*

Sometimes humanity sees the apocalypse coming and can prepare for it. It's not possible to save the entire species, but a few select individuals can be cryogenically frozen in underground vaults or other protected facilities. There they'll ride out the storm, awakening when it seems most likely they can survive and rebuild civilization.

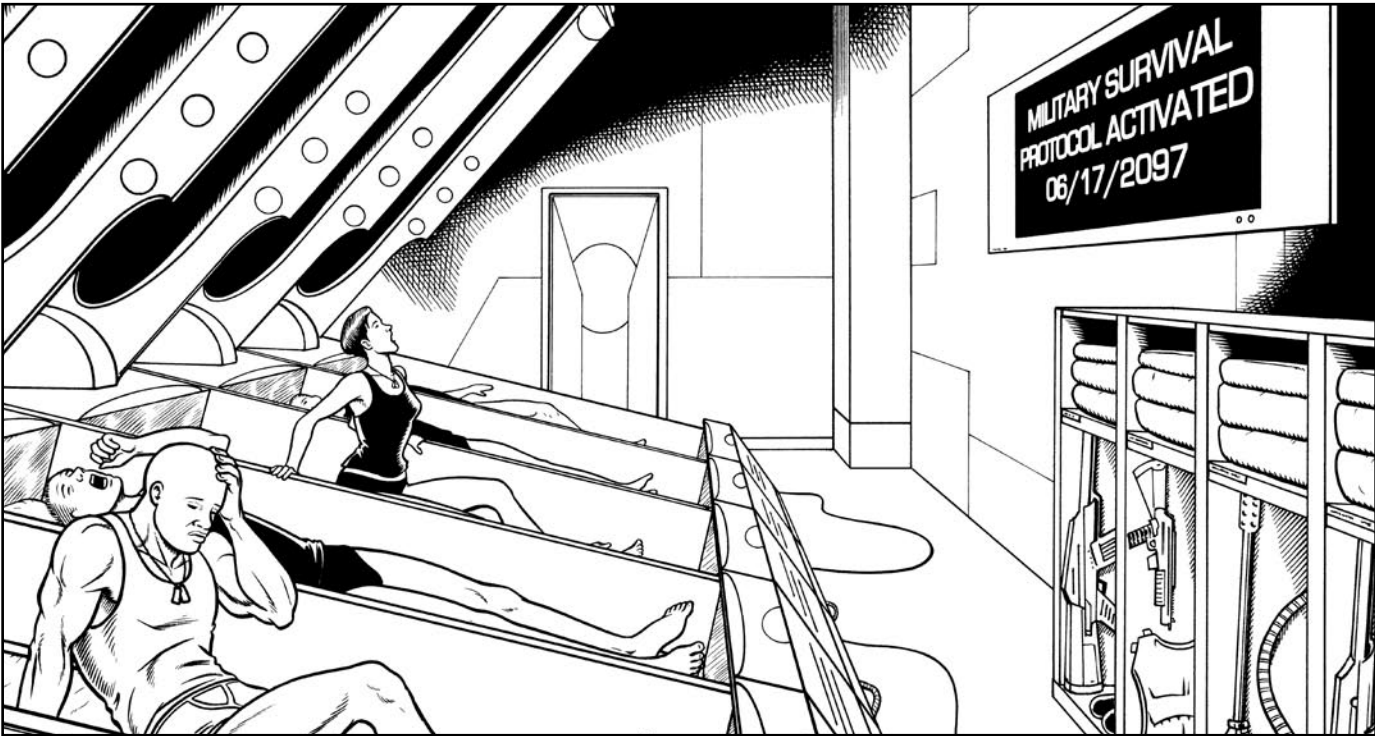
Just what kind of people become Cryos depends on who's funding the project that puts them in suspension. If it's the government, usually the subjects are soldiers and other individuals who have special training that (in theory) will help them cope with the post-holocaust world. (The Package Deal below assumes this sort of background.) If an extremely wealthy person funds the project, the odds are either it's a similar group (if he's an altruistic person) or himself along with his family, friends, and servants (if not). Depending on the backstory the GM devises to explain the cryogenic preservation project (or the random event that somehow froze the PCs), nearly anyone could find himself thawing out in the Post-Apocalyptic future.

Typical Goals And Motivations: The Cryo's goals vary depending on who froze him, and why. If he volunteered for the project, his training and attitude probably motivate him to try to restore civilization. If he had himself frozen, or was frozen accidentally, he probably just wants to make sense of things and build as comfortable a life for himself as he can... which may mean journeying to a distant place of safety.

Typical Abilities: A Cryo could have just about any skills or abilities you want, based on how much time he had to prepare before being frozen and what he did before that. This Package Deal assumes the Cryo had a military background and received special training to prepare him to live in the post-apocalypse world.

Suggested Disadvantages: Cryogenics isn't necessarily a perfect science — things can go wrong. Even if the machinery works properly, an external event or mutant monster might damage it, causing the whole project to go awry. Improper preservation or thawing might cause physical problems (loss of STR, fewer inches of Running, withered limbs...) or mental ones (forgetfulness, insanity, dementia...).

Progression: In many cases the Cryo comes equipped with the skills and gear he needs to survive and thrive in the Post-Apocalyptic world — that's why he was frozen in the first place. If he was frozen by accident, then he may need to pick up some of the skills of the Gunslinger, Road Warrior, Survivalist, or Warrior if he wants to keep himself alive.



CRYO PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
2	Running +1"
1	Swimming +1"
1	Electronics 8-
2	KS: [Military Force] History And Customs 11-
2	PS: [member of military; e.g., "Sailor"] 11-
1	Mechanics 8-
1	Navigation (Land) 8-
3	Stealth (DEX Roll)
2	Survival (one environment) (INT Roll)
1	Tactics 8-
6	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms
1	Weaponsmith (one category) 8-
8	8 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Autofire Skills, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Cryptography, Demolitions, Fast Draw, Interrogation, Martial Arts, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Stealth, Survival, Systems Operation, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 31

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options	
Value	Ability
var	Something Went Wrong: character takes one or more Disadvantages to represent flaws in the freezing, preservation, or thawing process (typically he sells back Characteristics or movement, or takes a relevant Physical Limitation or Psychological Limitation)

GANGER

In Road Wars settings in particular, biker gangs and other gangs are a constant menace to good people trying to rebuild civilization (or simply survive). Gangers as villains are discussed on page 85; this Package Deal assumes that a character was once a part of a gang but got out somehow. Perhaps he met someone who made him have a change of heart and become a hero. Maybe his gang turned on him and left him for dead, and now he's out for revenge. Whatever the motivation, it's enough to make him a hero... for now.

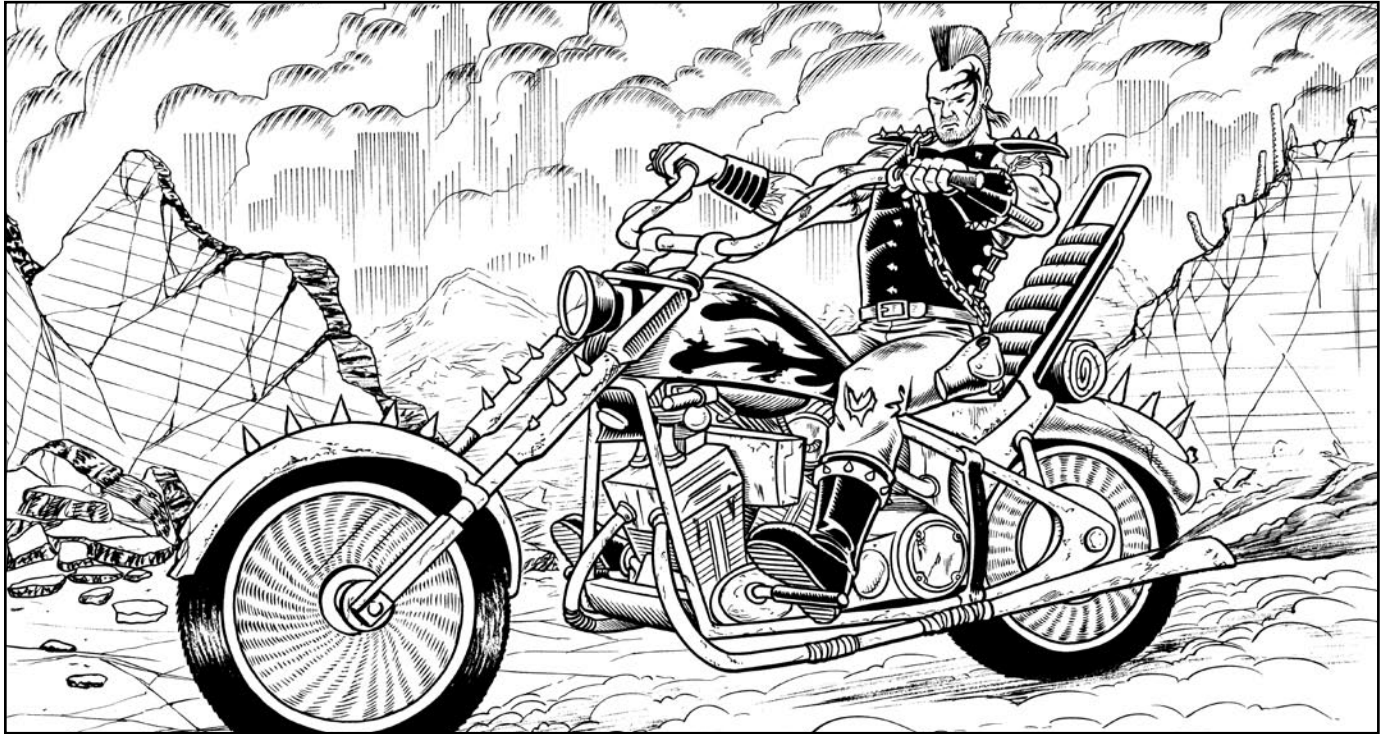
GANGER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
3	+3 STR
6	+2 DEX
3	+3 PD
3	Combat Driving (DEX Roll)
2	AK of character's choice 11-
3	Streetwise (PRE Roll)
3	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
3	WF: Small Arms, Knives
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Autofire Skills, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment: Scavenging, Demolitions, Fast Draw, Interrogation, Martial Arts, Paramedics, Persuasion, Skill Levels, Stealth, Survival, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 32

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0



Typical Goals And Motivations: Depending on how far he's come from his Ganger background, a character may only be a few steps up from barbarian or criminal: selfish, petty, mean, violent. If he's had time to mature and develop heroic attitudes, he may be particularly devoted to protecting people from gangers like his former self — having been there, he knows how dangerous and brutal they can be.

Typical Abilities: Gangers tend to be strong, tough, and quick — they have to be, to survive the gang lifestyle. And of course they're skilled drivers, usually favoring motorcycles over cars.

Suggested Disadvantages: A Ganger might still carry a Reputation from his former life that keeps people from trusting him until he proves himself. He might "owe one" to old friends who'll try to turn him back to gang life. An old wound might have left him scarred or partially crippled.

Progression: In and of itself the Ganger archetype is fairly limited; there's not much he can do well beyond the roads. To become a truly well-rounded hero, he'll probably have to transition to Road Warrior, Gunslinger, Warrior, or perhaps even Technologist.

GUNSLINGER

Finishing he tapped the revolver in his belt, to emphasize his words. As he did so, Pirrie raised his rifle. The man, in earnest now, began to pull the revolver out. But the muzzle was still inside his belt when Pirrie fired. From that short range, the bullet lifted him and crashed him backward on the road. Pirrie stood in silence, his rifle at the ready.

—John Christopher, *No Blade Of Grass*

He walks the wastelands, garbed in leathers and a longcoat, carrying his most precious possessions — a firearm (perhaps two or three...) and enough salvaged ammo to last for a little while. Be he a savior who protects the innocent from the desperate and wicked, or one of the desperate and wicked himself, he's set apart by his matchless skill with a gun — and his willingness to use one.

Typical Goals And Motivations: A PC gunslinger is typically a sort of nomadic hero, wandering from place to place in search of what he needs to survive... and, of course, getting into adventures along the way as he helps good people with their troubles. He claims he wants to be left alone, but ultimately he doesn't seem to mind that events keep throwing him together with his fellow man. But his altruism, however strong it may be, doesn't prevent him from somehow making a "profit" (if only in fresh supplies) during his escapades.

Typical Abilities: First and foremost, a Gunslinger is a master of firearms. No matter what type of gun he finds, he knows how to use it (or can, instinctively, figure it out). His aim is true and deadly. He usually carries at least two or three guns (one concealed) at all times... though depending on the nature of the setting, finding working ammo for them may be a

constant struggle. Beyond that, Gunslingers tend to be tough, fast, good with their hands, and unflinchingly brave.

Suggested Disadvantages: A Gunslinger often has Hunteds, since any enemy he leaves alive is almost certain to seek revenge. He may be searching for something — a lost loved one, a place where he can finally lay down his guns and rest, the man who shot his dog, a treasure — which you can represent with a Psychological Limitation.

Progression: A Gunslinger is often content to remain a Gunslinger; it's a fairly well-rounded profession well-suited to the brutal post-apocalyptic life. Depending on his experiences and the demands of the setting, he may learn some of the Road Warrior's abilities, take up melee weapons and become a Warrior as well as a Gunslinger, or expand his skill at tinkering with firearms into the broader skills of the Technologist.

GUNSLINGER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
9	+3 DEX
3	+3 PRE
9	+3 with Firearms
8	+4 versus Range Modifier with all Firearms
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) (DEX Roll)
3	Stealth (DEX Roll)
2	Survival (one environment) (INT Roll)
2	WF: Small Arms
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Autofire Skills, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment: Scavenging, Demolitions, Interrogation, Martial Arts, Paramedics, Persuasion, Skill Levels, Sleight Of Hand, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith (Firearms), any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 45

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options	
Value	Ability
var	One or more gunfighting Super-Skills from <i>Dark Champions</i>

PRESERVER

[The task of St. Leibowitz's order] was to preserve human history for the great-great-great-grandchildren of the children of the simpletons who wanted it destroyed. Its earliest habit was burlap rags and bindlestiffs — the uniform of the simpleton mob. Its members were either "bookleggers" or "memorizers," according to the tasks assigned.

—A Canticle For Leibowitz

The Post-Apocalyptic world is littered with ruins — wrecked cars, shattered buildings, fields of rubble that were once cities. Combing through these desolate places in search of books, datacards, and any other means of storing information, the Preserver seeks to recover, safeguard, understand, and disseminate the knowledge of the pre-apocalypse world.

Typical Goals And Motivations: The Preserver archetype is essentially defined by a motivation: the drive to obtain and maintain the knowledge possessed by the civilization that fell. He may not know much about "the Ancients," or he may have learned a great deal about what once was and how the world got to its present state. Whether he genuinely believes that knowledge for knowledge's sake is good, thinks he can find the key to restoring mankind's glory, is following the orders of a superior for some reason, or expects to profit from his quest somehow, the Preserver wants all the data he can get.

PRESERVER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
3	+3 INT
2	+1 to PER Rolls with Sight Group
5	Concealment: Scavenging (INT Roll +1)
4	Two KSs at 11- each
2	Survival (Ruins) (INT Roll)
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Skill Levels, Conversation, Cryptography, Electronics, Lockpicking, Mechanics, Navigation, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 22

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
15	Psychological Limitation: Seeks The Knowledge And Lore Of The Pre-Apocalypse World (Common, Strong)

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 15

Options	
Value	Ability
2	<i>Historian:</i> Add KS: Pre-Apocalypse Civilization 11- (the GM may also require the character to buy Cryptography or Languages, if post-apocalypse tongues have diverged significantly from pre-apocalypse ones)
1	Literacy (if not standard for setting)



Typical Abilities: Although not as skilled at combing through ruins as Scavengers (see below), Preservers are experts at exploring them. They know the best methods of approach, the potential dangers, and the most likely places to find what they're looking for. If he's of scholarly bent, a Preserver's probably read much of what he's recovered, in the process learning about pre-apocalypse civilization.

Suggested Disadvantages: A Preserver's life can be a dangerous one, and it may show. He could have scars or crippling injuries as a result of attacks by mutants, parts of ruined buildings collapsing on him, or similar encounters. He may have a Rivalry with other Preservers to see who can make the most discoveries, or who'll be the first to find a long-rumored intact library. Similarly, he might be Hunted by people who want to take what he finds and use it for their own purposes.

Progression: Depending on the nature of the setting and how dangerous his job gets, a Preserver may need Gunslinger, Road Warrior, or Warrior skills to survive. His exposure to the knowledge of the pre-apocalypse world may make him a good candidate to become a Technologist at some point.

ROAD WARRIOR

He comes in the roar of an automobile engine and the stench of gasoline fumes — the Road Warrior, the knight of the post-apocalyptic wasteland. Constantly on the move, ever in search of both gas and some meaning or purpose for his life, the Road Warrior inevitably finds himself swept up in adventure when he encounters biker gangs on the prowl or a town in desperate need of his help.

Typical Goals And Motivations: While he often comes across as selfish or greedy, particularly when he's in desperate need of gas and oil for his car, at heart the Road Warrior is a good man who's willing to do the Right Thing. If necessary he'll put his life on the line to protect innocent people or preserve a valuable resource. But he may also have a mean streak to him — a desire to defend himself and get back at his enemies that makes him go far out of his way to get revenge on his enemies.

Typical Abilities: First and foremost a Road Warrior can drive, and drive well. Whether it's his custom-designed car, a motorcycle stolen from a ganger, a wrecked truck he's trying to salvage, or something else, he can motorvate it down the road with an ease born of experience and skill. (This Package Deal assumes the character gets a Vehicle in the campaign without having to spend Character Points on it.) Beyond that, he's usually tough, a good shot with a gun (or perhaps a crossbow), and possesses a lot of other skills necessary for survival in the post-apocalyptic world.

Suggested Disadvantages: As he travels and gets involved in adventures, a Road Warrior tends to accumulate enemies (Hunted). Some of these remain in one area that he sometimes revisits (Limited Geographical Area), but plenty of them are biker gangs or other mobile foes who could show up just about anywhere. He might have a Rivalry with another Road Warrior to prove who's the better driver or who can find the most fuel. It's possible that he has a Psychological Limitation representing a secret goal of his, like finding his family (if he's not sure they died in the apocalypse), reaching a safe area, or the like.

Progression: Early on in a Road Warrior's career, his standard Skills and abilities are enough to keep him alive and moving. But as he gets involved in more and more adventures, he may find it necessary to broaden his abilities a little. A touch of Scavenger or Technologist works well, or he might become more of a Gunslinger or Warrior.

ROAD WARRIOR
PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
9	+3 DEX
4	+2 CON
2	+2 PD
7	Combat Driving (DEX Roll +2)
2	AK of character's choice 11-
2	KS: Road Vehicles 11-
1	Mechanics 8-
1	Navigation (Land) 8-
3	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
1	Survival (one Environment) 8-
2	WF: Small Arms
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Autofire Skills, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment: Scavenging, Demolitions, Fast Draw, Interrogation, Martial Arts, Paramedics, Persuasion, Skill Levels, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Streetwise, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 40

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options	
Value	Ability
var	Car: one Vehicle
var	Faithful Companion: a pet of some sort bought as a Follower

SCAVENGER

Also known as a Scrounger, Salvager, or Junkman, the Scavenger specializes in exploring ruins for usable or sellable items. He knows the most likely places to find useful goods, how to get at those goods, and most importantly how to avoid the dangers that lurk among the broken buildings and shattered roads.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Scavengers are basically treasure hunters. Some are in it out of greed (they want to make money selling what they find), some for practical reasons (they want to keep themselves supplied with food, bullets, fuel, and other necessities), and some out of the sheer joy of exploration and discovery. Curiosity is often a strong motivation for them; they can't resist the urge to find out what's behind that door, what's in that cabinet, what a particular piece of salvage is used for... and, perhaps, what caused the mighty civilization of the Ancients to collapse.

Typical Abilities: Scavengers have a selection of Skills that help them explore ruins and find valuable items, such as high Concealment and Survival rolls. This includes basic knowledge of how to examine, evaluate, and operate working devices (*i.e.*, Familiarity with Electronics and Mechanics). A few are well-versed in knowledge of pre-apocalypse civilization and culture, while others could care less as long as they make good

SCAVENGER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
2	+1 to PER Rolls with Sight Group
7	Concealment: Scavenging (INT Roll +2)
1	Electronics 8-
2	AK of character's choice 11-
1	Lockpicking 8-
1	Mechanics 8-
4	Survival (Ruins) (INT Roll +1)
2	WF: Small Arms
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Skill Levels, Cryptography, Demolitions, Navigation, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 26

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0



money off what they find. Some Scavengers are also restorers — they have Professional Skills suited to repairing, refinishing, or refurbishing the items they find.

Suggested Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Greedy is an obvious choice for many Scavengers; so is Psychological Limitation: Curiosity. A Rivalry with another Scavenger, if one frequently shows up in the campaign, can be a lot of fun and provide some humor value. And if a Scavenger finds something *really* valuable (or is just rumored to have), he may find himself Hunted by all sorts of unpleasant people.

Progression: Compared to many archetypes, the Scavenger is fairly limited; it usually doesn't take too many adventures before he wants to branch out a little. Depending on personality he usually angles toward Technologist or Gunslinger — the former being a natural extension of his work finding and restoring pre-apocalypse devices, the latter of his need to defend himself against mutants, monsters, and similar perils.

SOLDIER

In some types of Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, one or more characters are current or former members of the military. This Package Deal represents the sort of “generic” military training that's appropriate to such a character. For more detailed Military Package Deals, including ones for special forces and elite units, see *Dark Champions*.

Typical Goals And Motivations: A Soldier's goals and motivations usually depend on the campaign. If the apocalypse occurs and he's stuck behind enemy lines, he wants to get home. If he's already back at home, he and his friends may want to restore law and order and help their community to survive (or, less charitably, they may decide that their weapons and training give them the edge they need to take over the region). If there's no hope of either of these things, then his goal is usually survival in as much comfort as he can manage.

Typical Abilities: A Soldier's military training makes him well-suited to the post-apocalyptic life. He's in decent shape, knows how to use weapons (and probably has some already), how to work in a group (and perhaps lead one), and so on. Depending on his specialty, he may know how to maintain and use vehicles, work with explosives, operate sensors, defeat security systems, or other useful skills.

Suggested Disadvantages: Technically a Soldier comes with the standard military Disadvantages: he's Subject To Orders, wears a uniform, and is Hunted by the enemy. However, these may not apply in some Post-Apocalyptic settings, in which

case the GM should remove them from the Package Deal, or replace them with more appropriate ones.

Progression: Military training may be enough to see a character through many adventures in a Post-Apocalyptic campaign; the character simply spends his Experience Points on improving and broadening his military skills. If he wants to expand beyond that, Gunslinger, Road Warrior, Scavenger, or Technologist would all be good choices.

SOLDIER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
2	Running +1”
2	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
2	KS: [Military Force] History And Customs 11-
2	PS: [member of military; e.g., “Sailor”] 11-
3	Tactics
3	WF: Small Arms, Knives
0	Fringe Benefit: Military Rank
6	6 points’ worth of Skills from the following list: Autofire Skills, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Concealment: Scavenging, Cryptography, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Interrogation, Martial Arts, Mechanics, Navigation, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Stealth, Survival, Systems Operation, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill, Contacts

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 20

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
5	Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed)
10	Hunted: military force character belongs to 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 35

Options	
Value	Ability
0	Combat Engineer: Choose SS: Civil Engineering and at least one other engineering-oriented Skill
0	Information Warfare Specialist: Choose Computer Programming and Systems Operation
0	Pilot: Choose Combat Piloting
0	Tank Driver: Choose TF: Tracked Military Vehicles

SURVIVALIST

In Post-Apocalyptic campaigns set during or immediately after the apocalypse, Survivalists — people who’ve specially prepared for a life in the wilderness, without modern comforts or technology — may suddenly become everyone’s best friend. With their honed survival skills and caches of supplies, they’re an excellent addition to, or perhaps target for, a group of PCs.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Survivalists tend to be tightly focused on surviving the apocalypse, and then building a (relatively) comfortable life thereafter. They’re often isolationist and paranoid, concerned that everyone wants to take their food and gear (though to be fair, this may not be paranoia so much as an accurate assessment of the situation). A Survivalist who’s part of a group of PCs is likely to be more outgoing and noble-minded; perhaps he wants to help rebuild civilization, or at least make the world a slightly better place.

SURVIVALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
2	+2 STR
4	+2 CON
3	Concealment: Scavenging (INT Roll)
3	Paramedics (INT Roll)
3	Stealth (DEX Roll)
8	Survival (two environments) (INT Roll +2)
1	Tracking 8-
2	WF: Small Arms
6	6 points’ worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Skill Levels, Demolitions, Electronics, Mechanics, Mimicry, Navigation, Persuasion, Security Systems, Skill Levels, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 32

Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options	
Value	Ability
var	Hideout: the character has a Base, usually in an isolated area and set up with concealment, defense, and ensuring access to necessities in mind
var	Cache Of Goods: The character buys the Supplies form of the Money Perk (see the Perks section of this chapter)
-15	Psychological Limitation: Possessive And Paranoid (Common, Strong)



Typical Abilities: In addition to the *Survival Skill* (at which they excel), Survivalists have a lot of other abilities related to wilderness living. They can conceal themselves (or find hidden things), track game or humans, move stealthfully, and provide basic medical care for themselves and others. Depending on his background, a Survivalist could have all sorts of odd Skills.

Suggested Disadvantages: Psychological Limitations relating to the Survivalist's fear of others and preference for isolation, or brought on because he's isolated himself for too long, are very appropriate. In some types of campaigns, so are Hunteds — people who want to get rid of him so they can take his possessions.

Progression: Survivalists are often content to remain as they are, but if the campaign takes them away from the environments they're most comfortable in, they may have to develop other abilities. Becoming a Gunslinger, Road Warrior, or even Technologist are all possibilities.

TECHNOLOGIST

In some Post-Apocalyptic settings, the electronics and devices of the Ancients still work... sometimes. A Technologist is a person who understands (as best anyone in the post-apocalyptic world can) how those machines work, how to repair them, and how to use them. He's the gadgeteer of the Post-Apocalyptic world, trying to take advantage of what little remains of pre-collapse technology, and perhaps even advance Science a little here and there to boot.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Like other types of gadgeteers, Technologists are often obsessed with technology — they'll go out of their way to follow up rumors about caches of technology or long-lost labs, spend hours working on a new device, and put themselves in danger to test out their "inventions."

Typical Abilities: Most of a Technologist's abilities relate to gadgets and technology — Electronics, Inventor, and so on. He may supplement that with Scavenger-like skills for finding lost tech, fighting abilities to protect himself from mutants and other perils, or craft skills so he can build and repair all sorts of items.

Suggested Disadvantages: Besides the strong possibility that he's obsessed with technology (and/or gets along better with machines than people), Technologists often seem to have physical infirmities that they overcome with jury-rigged tech — goggles or weird-looking glasses to correct weak eyesight, a high-tech leg brace to compensate for lameness, and so forth. In game terms, you can represent this with an appropriate Disadvantage, then a gadget that partially or wholly makes up for what the character loses via the Disadvantage.

Progression: Because so many long-lost technological wonders remain to be discovered and plumbed, many Technologists stick with their favored pursuit for their entire adventuring career. Others find that a touch of Gunslinger, Warrior, Scavenger, or Road Warrior helps them immensely as they wander the wastelands in search of circuitry.

TECHNOLOGIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
3	Analyze Technology (INT Roll)
3	Electronics (INT Roll)
3	Inventor (INT Roll)
3	Mechanics (INT Roll)
1	Security Systems 8-
3	Systems Operation (INT Roll)
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment: Scavenging, Cryptography, Demolitions, Navigation, Paramedics, Persuasion, Skill Levels, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill
Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 22	
Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None
Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0	
Options	
Value	Ability
-15	Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Tech (Common, Strong)

WARRIOR PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities	
Cost	Ability
5	+5 STR
9	+3 DEX
10	+5 CON
12	12 points' worth of Combat/Penalty Skill Levels
1	Riding 8-
1	Tactics 8-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Expand any Familiarity listed above to a full Skill, Analyze, Armorsmith, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment: Scavenging, Navigation, Paramedics, Penalty Skill Levels, Survival, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill
Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 48	
Disadvantages	
Value	Disadvantage
	None
Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0	

WARRIOR

Not every Post-Apocalyptic setting features leftover guns, missiles, and blasters. In some, civilization has fallen so far, or fell so long ago, that humanity's been reduced to a more or less medieval level of technology. A person who wants to fight for survival can't be a Gunslinger — he becomes a Warrior.

This Package Deal represents a more or less "generic" Warrior. For more detailed options for this type of character, see *Fantasy Hero*.

Typical Goals And Motivations: In a Post-Apocalyptic campaign, a heroic Warrior (such as most PCs who choose this archetype) typically takes up the profession of arms to defend himself, his home, and his loved ones from the many threats facing them: nomad tribes, bandits, mutant monsters, and the like. Less noble-minded Warriors may use their strength and skill to force others to do their bidding, obtain what they want without working for it, bully people, and so on.

Typical Abilities: Physical Characteristics, such as STR and STUN, are the Warrior's meat and drink. Some Warriors favor DEX and SPD more, reducing the amount of armor they wear and relying on agility and skill to protect themselves. Combat Skill Levels are a must for this archetype.

Suggested Disadvantages: Enraged/Berserk is an obvious choice for bloodthirsty Warriors. A fighting man often makes enemies, so he could have a Hunted or two pursuing him (or, if he stays in one location, a Rivalry). Oaths of loyalty count as Psychological Limitations, as do *Loves To Fight*, *Overconfidence*, and *Code Of Honor*.

Progression: Warriors start out with a lot of combat effectiveness, so they don't necessarily need to get a lot more to remain competitive as the PCs gain experience and power. An occasional additional Combat Skill Level or two may do the trick; more than that, and the Warrior may unbalance the campaign. Instead, he should consider branching out, developing other Skills and interests. For example, if he comes from a noble family, or has the local leader's favor, he might serve as a diplomat or ambassador, learning some Interaction Skills in the process. Or he might focus on some intellectual pursuits and hobbies.

CULTURAL PACKAGE DEALS

In addition to the “Professional” Package Deals provided above, you can also take a Cultural Package Deal for a character if you want to. In Post-Apocalyptic literature, certain broadly-defined cultures or cultural stereotypes tend to show up repeatedly, and in some cases, it may be appropriate to represent this with Cultural Package Deals. However, Cultural Package Deals are *optional*; the GM should approve their use, and may prefer to adjust them slightly to better portray the cultures specific to his world. And of course, even where well-defined cultures exist, many heroes flout the sort of traditions they represent, making a Cultural Package Deal inappropriate for them.

DOME-DWELLER

“The dome has lasted and will last. It must last. We may be the last men on the planet. The last life. We must outlast the radiation.”

—Paul Williams, *The Dome In The Forest*

Some Post-Apocalyptic settings feature isolated enclaves of surviving groups from pre-apocalypse times. In many cases these people live in sealed, self-sufficient domes that protect them from the dangers of the Post-Apocalyptic world, hence “Dome-Dwellers” as a term for this sort of culture. Like Cryos, Dome-Dwellers preserve the knowledge, devices, and customs of the pre-apocalypse world, though much may have broken down or become “warped” with the passage of time; inbreeding can also become a problem as the centuries pass. Typically Dome-Dwellers have scientific or technical training as well.

DOME-DWELLER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
3	One or more science- or technology-oriented Skills of the character's choice.
2	KS: Pre-Apocalypse History

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 5

Disadvantages

Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options

Value	Ability
var	<i>Inbreeding</i> : choose one or more Disadvantageous Mutations

MUTANT

Grotesque creatures who prowled the fringes of the desert often wore hoods, masks, or voluminous robes to hide deformity. Among them were those whose deformity was not limited to the body, those who sometimes looked on travelers as a dependable source of venison.

—Walter Miller, *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

“Mutant” isn’t exactly a culture (though in some respects it may be, in some settings), but it’s more of a culture than a profession. Its members have one thing in common: they’ve been mutated by radiation or some other after-effect of the apocalypse. See pages 112-28 for further information and example Mutations characters can buy.

NOMAD

Some Post-Apocalyptic stories feature peoples who wander over the landscape rather than remaining in one fixed location. Sometimes these are tribes similar to the Plains Indians of North America or the Mongols of Asia. In other cases the Nomads have a more distinctive Post-Apocalyptic feel — they use caravans of salvaged vehicles to roam the land, or ride mutated beasts. Typically Nomads can only carry a few goods, so what they have is particularly valuable to them and they fight hard (and well) to protect it.

NOMAD PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
3	+1 DEX
3	Combat Driving or Riding
2	WFs (2 points' worth)

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 8

Disadvantages

Value	Disadvantage
	None

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 0

Options

Value	Ability
+2	<i>Wandering Traders/Entertainers</i> : Replace Riding with TF: Equines, Carts & Carriages and Trading

CHARACTERISTICS



Most *HERO System* gamers start designing their characters by purchasing Characteristics. Several Characteristic-related issues have implications for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games.

Normal Characteristic Maxima

Post-Apocalyptic Hero campaigns typically impose Normal Characteristic Maxima as a default for the campaign; characters must abide by the restrictions without getting any Disadvantage points for doing so. But in some cases the GM may want to reconsider that decision. For some High *Post-Apocalyptic* games in particular — ones where all the PCs have powerful mutations, wield magic, or the like — the Normal Characteristic Maxima rules may not make much sense, and may even inhibit the “feel” the GM wants to create. In campaigns like that, allowing characters to buy high Characteristics without any cost doubling may work well.

Characteristic Ranges

Post-Apocalyptic Hero is a Heroic genre, and therefore most characters will have most of their Primary Characteristics in the 10-20 range. This can cause problems of uniformity, with most characters having Characteristics that are in very similar ranges, if not identical. Furthermore, because some Characteristics cost relatively few points to increase, it's not uncommon to see characters with unusually high ratings in Characteristics not associated with that character type — such as technologists with STR 15-20.

This potential uniformity is an important feature of the *HERO System*, one that allows players to build whatever characters they want. But it may cause problems in some campaigns, particularly those where GMs and players want to emphasize the differences between the various major archetypal characters. If “Characteristic uniformity” causes a problem in your game, here are some possible solutions:

- Lower the Normal Characteristic Maxima breakpoint. If characters have to start paying double at 15 instead of 20, Characteristics in the 18-20 range become rarer. For a Low *Post-Apocalyptic* campaign featuring characters who are “just ordinary folks” coping with the apocalypse and its immediate aftermath, a doubling point of 13 might even be appropriate. However, if you do this the PCs may end up with fewer points to spend on Skills and abilities, which causes problems of its own.

- Lower the Normal Characteristic Maxima breakpoint selectively by character type. Choose one Characteristic that's important for each character archetype (typically DEX for road warriors and gunslingers, STR for warriors, and so on). That archetype can buy that Characteristic up to 20 for the normal cost, but must pay double at a lower breakpoint (such as 15) for all other Characteristics. For example, maybe warriors can buy STR 20, but all other character types must pay double for each point of STR above 15. This heightens each archetype's natural strengths, but may cause difficulties when you try to build some character concepts.

- Sever the relationship between a Primary Characteristic and one or more of the Figured Characteristics it affects. If characters only get ED and REC from CON, and not END or STUN, they may be more likely to keep CON at a lower level than they otherwise would so they can put points into END and STUN. Again, this may lead to characters spending too many of their points on Characteristics.

- Assign a useful bonus to a Characteristic that makes characters want to buy it in unusual amounts, instead of amounts ending in 0, 3, 5, and 8. For example, suppose you establish a house rule saying that if two characters have the same DEX (a not uncommon occurrence in a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign), the character with the highest INT gets to act first in a Phase. This prompts at least some characters to spend a little more on INT, since an INT of 16 is better than one of 15 even though they both generate the same INT Roll and PER Roll. Proceed with caution, however; most such changes indirectly benefit some character type more (technologists and scavengers, in this case, since they already want to have a high INT), and you may accidentally create a game balance problem. Similarly, you could rule that in Skill Versus Skill Contests involving Skills based on the same Characteristic, ties go to the character with the highest Characteristic.

- Forbid some archetypes to buy Characteristics beyond a defined maximum (or at least, not without special permission). For example, maybe the GM decides technologists cannot buy STR above 15, and warriors can't buy INT above 15. This may significantly inhibit the creative freedom that is a hallmark of the *HERO System*, but it can really distinguish the archetypes from each other.

SKILLS



As in other Heroic genres, Skills play an important part in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*. In many ways, a character's Skills define him (in game terms) more than any other game element. This section contains both general Skill rules for the Post-Apocalyptic genre, and specific notes on how various Skills function in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*.

See *The Ultimate Skill* for advanced rules for all Skills, many of which are appropriate for Skill-heavy Post-Apocalyptic campaigns.

EXTENT OF KNOWLEDGE

In some cases, it may be important to remember that the extent of knowledge encompassed by a Skill in a Post-Apocalyptic setting is typically less than that possessed by a modern-day character with the same Skill because so much information was lost during the collapse of civilization. But this may vary from Skill to Skill. For example, a Post-Apocalyptic technologist might have Electronics 18-, indicating that he's just about as well-versed on the subject of Electronics as it's possible for anyone in his setting to be. But the Post-Apocalyptic world's knowledge of electronic technology and engineering is spotty at best compared to the modern day. A technologist with a roll of 18- knows far less about electronic devices than a modern-day scientist or engineer with Electronics 11-. On the other hand, Survival is Survival — a Post-Apocalyptic character might not have access to as many tools or resources for outdoor living as a modern-day person, but his knowledge of how to start a fire, find/build shelter, or locate food in the wilderness is just as complete and valid as that of a modern-day person (and might even be better, since it's based on a lot of practical experience).

For the most part, this has no real game effect. After all, it's not as if Post-Apocalyptic characters are likely to meet time travelers from other eras on a regular basis. But you should keep it in mind when evaluating a character's capabilities; just because he has a high roll in a Skill doesn't mean he knows everything there is to know about a subject — just everything that his culture and society happen to know.

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Ordinarily, Skills like Computer Programming, Electronics, Mechanics, and Systems Operation include knowledge of how to figure out what a strange device does. This doesn't hold true in many Post-Apocalyptic settings, where questions like "What is this?" "What does this thing do?" and "How do we make this work?" are

an important part of the genre and an element of its overall appeal. Instead, use Inventor (see below) to figure out how strange technologies work, with other related Skills (like Electronics) as Complementary Skills.

In campaigns set long after the apocalypse, when the principles of science and technology have long been forgotten (in general, if not totally), the GM may impose a standard Skill Roll penalty on any attempt to understand or use the devices of the Ancients. Typically the penalty is at least -3, and may be more for particularly complex devices. As a character gets used to working with a specific device (or category of devices), this penalty gradually diminishes to 0.

COMBAT DRIVING

"You're a very good driver," said Denton after a time. "You've driven just about every vehicle there is to drive. You've even raced. Back when you were smuggling, you used to make a monthly run to Salt Lake City. There are very few drivers who'll try that, even today. ... What I'm trying to say is that, of anybody we could pick, you've probably got the best chance of getting through."

—Secretary Denton tries to persuade Hell Tanner to undertake a cross-country mission through post-apocalyptic America in *Damnation Alley*

This is *the* Skill for characters in Road Wars campaigns — in fact, the odds are nearly every character in a campaign like that will have it. If the GM wants to differentiate characters a little, he can make them buy Combat Driving by categories. The categories are based on Transport Familiarity categories, and to buy one the character must first purchase (or otherwise know) the TF of the same name. Each category listed below costs 2 Character Points for a DEX-based roll (or only 1 Character Point if a character wants the Skill for a single type of vehicle in a category, like "all V8 Interceptors" instead of "Small Motorized Ground Vehicles"). Improving the character's roll with all categories he knows costs +2 Character Points for each +1 to the roll.

The categories are:

- Small Motorized Ground Vehicles (cars, pickups, jeeps, ambulances, taxis...)
- Large Motorized Ground Vehicles (trucks, tractor-trailers, buses...)
- Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles (motorcycles, motoscooters, and the like)



■ Construction & Agricultural Vehicles (wheeled steamrollers, tractors, and the like)

■ Wheeled Military Vehicles (reconnaissance vehicles, some APCs)

Note that these categories all involve wheeled vehicles; tracked vehicles like bulldozers and tanks are excluded. Vehicles like that aren't often found in Road Wars campaigns, and generally can't move as fast or far as typical Road Wars cars. If appropriate, the GM can include them in the relevant categories, or create new categories for them.

For expanded rules on vehicle use and combat, see *The Ultimate Vehicle*.

COMBAT PILOTING

Combat Piloting may be rare or even non-existent in Post-Apocalyptic campaigns — the knowledge of how to fly isn't as common as the knowledge of how to drive, after all, and fewer planes and helicopters are likely to survive than cars and motorcycles. It occasionally crops up in Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns that take place right after the collapse when an overlord (see Chapter Four) recruits ex-Air Force personnel and gets ahold of some military base's contingent of jets, or unusual characters who remember how to build and fly their own small aircraft.

CONCEALMENT: SCAVENGING

Even sifting through the downtown ruins of Boise, the gleaners before him had missed a small treasure trove of canned food in a loft behind a shoe store... some hoarder's stash, long untouched. There was a pattern to such things, worked out over the years. He had his own methods for conducting a search.

—David Brin, *The Postman*

If appropriate you can recharacterize Concealment as *Scavenging* for Post-Apocalyptic campaigns. Scavenging works just like Concealment for the most part, but also includes knowledge of where useful or valuable salvage is likely to be found, what sort of salvage one can reasonably expect in a given facility, and even evaluating/appraising the value of salvage.

When characters decide to search an area, they should indicate how thoroughly they want to search it. Area searches fall into four categories: Perfunctory; Average; Thorough; and Very Thorough. As indicated in the Salvage Search Times table, these four categories govern how long a search takes and what modifiers apply. Similarly, how badly ruined an area is (see page 78 for more information on the four categories) affects search times.

See page 80 for rules regarding what characters find while Scavenging.

CRYPTOGRAPHY

If languages have changed and Post-Apocalyptic characters don't have the appropriate Language that lets them read pre-apocalypse writing (see below), the *Translation Only* function of Cryptography may help them puzzle out old world signs, maps, and books.

INVENTOR

Inventor functions in Post-Apocalyptic campaigns in two ways. First, as in other campaigns, it allows a character to create new devices. The GM may restrict this somewhat, since it spoils some of the fun of the Post-Apocalyptic genre to just let characters invent new technologies instead of discovering them by exploring ruins and the like. Second, characters use Inventor to figure out the purpose and operation of strange pre-apocalypse devices they find. Skills related to the technology in question (Electronics for general devices, Computer Programming for computers, Mechanics for mechanical systems, Systems Operation for sensors and communications equipment, Weaponsmith for weapons, and so forth) function as Complementary Skills. See page 82 for more information and rules.

LANGUAGE

Sometimes so much time has passed between the apocalypse and the time a Post-Apocalyptic campaign begins that the language has changed significantly. There may be similarities that modern-day players can recognize and have fun with (like renaming Delaware "Del'war"), but to the inhabitants of the Post-Apocalyptic world, surviving text from pre-apocalypse times may be mysterious.

In game terms, the GM should establish a degree of similarity between a pre-apocalypse language (usually English, but it depends on where the campaign takes place) and the language spoken by the Post-Apocalyptic characters. Typically post-apocalypse and pre-apocalypse English have 3 points of similarity, thus allowing Post-Apocalyptic characters to make INT Rolls to puzzle out the meaning of pre-apocalypse text. In harsher settings, they may only have 2 points of similarity so that characters can't understand pre-apocalypse English at all unless they pay Character Points for the privilege.

PARAMEDICS

*"Dick Ellis came by today and said he wanted off the committee. ... He said he'd be glad to serve in any capacity as soon as we get ourselves a real doctor, but just now he can't. We had another twenty-five come in today, and one of them had a gangrenous leg. Came from a scratch she got crawling under a rusty bobwire fence, apparently. ... He's just a country vet and he's scared *%&!less he's going to kill someone."*

—Stu Redman worries about the state of medical care in post-apocalypse Denver in Stephen King's *The Stand*

SALVAGE SEARCH TIMES

Location	Perfunctory Search	Average Search	Thorough Search	Very Thorough Search
One hex	1 Segment	1 Phase	1 Turn	1 Minute
Apartment	1 Minute	10 Minutes	30 Minutes	1 Hour
Car	1 Turn	1 Minute	10 Minutes	20+ Minutes
House, Large	1 Hour	6 Hours	1 Day	2+ Days
House, Medium	30 Minutes	1 Hour	6 Hours	1 Day
House, Small	10 Minutes	30 Minutes	1 Hour	6 Hours
Motorcycle	1 Turn	1 Minute	5 Minutes	10 Minutes
Tractor-Trailer	5 Minutes	20 Minutes	1 Hour	6 Hours
Thoroughness Of Search		Skill Roll Modifier	Base Time Modifier	
Perfunctory		-2 or -3	x0.25 to x0.50	
Average		+0	x1	
Thorough		+1	x2	
Very Thorough		+2	x3	
Extent Of Ruin		Skill Roll Modifier	Base Time Modifier	
Minor Damage		+1	x0.50	
Major Damage		+0	x1	
Severe Damage		-1 to -2	x2	
Collapsed (or nearly so)		-3 or more	x3	

For other areas, the GM can use the listed examples as guidelines. For example, searching the interior of a merchant's starship might be the equivalent of searching a Large House (or maybe several Large Houses).

The Base Time Modifier does not apply to the locations listed in the Search Times table, since they already factor into the listed times; they're provided as a guideline for the GM if necessary. The Base Time required to search other locations depends on (a) the size of the location, and (b) how thorough the searchers want to be; the GM should use the listed times as guidelines, then apply the Base Time Modifier. If a location has two Base Time Modifiers, add them together before multiplying the Base Time.

In a world where modern medical advances and drugs are things of the distant (or not-so-distant) past, characters with even the rudimentary medical knowledge of Paramedics may be invaluable. Lack of medicines and standard medical tools may impose penalties on characters accustomed to working with such things, but in time societies that survive the apocalypse will develop their own medical practices and toolkits from what they have to work with.

Characters may have a difficult time treating mutants, whose physiology is as radically changed as their external appearance. See the *Mutant Physiology* Physical Limitation on page 44 for details.

PROFESSIONAL SKILL

The practical knowledge provided by Professional Skills may be a lot more important to characters in some Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, particularly Low Post-Apocalyptic games, than more esoteric KSs or various Combat Skills. Here's a short list of PSs that characters don't necessarily think about in most games but which may be crucial in Post-Apocalyptic settings:

- Brewing
- Butchering
- Carpentry
- Cobblery
- Cooking
- Leatherworking
- Mining
- Tailoring
- Tanning

RIDING

In Post-Apocalyptic settings where motorized vehicles no longer exist in usable condition (or there's no fuel for them), civilization reverts to riding animals — be they ordinary horses or mutant beasts of burden — for long-range transportation and load-hauling. Thus, Riding may become as important to characters as Combat Driving is in Road Wars campaigns.

STREETWISE

In many Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, there really won't be much of a "street" for characters with Streetwise to be a part of and know about. In that case, you can think of this Skill as more like "Wastelands Etiquette" — it lets the character know who's who among the biker gangs and mutant cults, which territories those groups claim, their customs and habits, and so on.

SURVIVAL

Survival is a key Skill in many Post-Apocalyptic campaigns — in fact, in the harshest Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, it may be *the* Skill to have, more important to a character's continued existence than Stealth or Combat Skill Levels. Here are some expanded rules for it; for even more, see *The Ultimate Skill*.

New Survival Categories

Depending on what the environment is like in his campaign, the GM may want to create one or more new 2-point Survival categories. Possible examples include:

- Post-Apocalyptic Wastelands
- Rad Zones
- Ruins

See below for more information about these categories.

General Rules And Guidelines

A character should make Survival rolls primarily when he's underequipped for a particular area — if he's marooned, has lost his survival gear or food stores (or had them stolen), and so forth. If a character has the proper equipment for sustained wilderness living (a tent or like form of shelter, proper clothing, food and water supplies, and the like), generally he doesn't need to make Survival rolls, though the GM may require them if appropriate (such as when weather conditions are particularly severe).

MULTIPLE-PERSON SURVIVAL

Number Of Persons	Survival Modifier
1 (the character himself)	-0
2	-1
3-4	-2
5-8	-3
9-16	-4

...and so on

In most situations, a character should make his Survival roll on a daily basis to see if he's found food, shelter, and other necessities. The GM might require him to make more frequent rolls in particularly harsh or dangerous environment (when he's in the heart of a rad zone or deep in the post-apocalyptic wastelands, for instance), or if the character uses Survival to help other people survive as well.

As general modifiers, lack of available resources like tools, food, water, and clothing impose a -1 to -5 modifier to the Survival roll, while very benign conditions (good equipment, plentiful game, lots of water) could mean a +1 to +3 modifier. (See the sections below for environment- and task-specific modifiers that can replace or supplement these general modifiers as the GM sees fit.) Knowledge Skills relating to the creatures and plants in the area are Complementary to Survival; so are PSs related to Survival tasks. In particularly hazardous environs, appropriate KSs might even be necessary to use Survival (it doesn't matter how many fish a hero catches if he can't tell the poisonous ones from the edible ones).

A successful Survival roll usually means the character has found enough food, shelter, and other necessities to keep himself alive and moving (though maybe just barely). Failure can be damaging to the character; failing the roll several days in a row could be fatal (see *Environmental Effects* on pages 438-43 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, or Chapter Four of this book).

The sections below detail several common uses of Survival, along with specific modifiers for them (usually based on environment, since some types of terrain are easier to survive in than others).

Of course, regardless of how high a character's Survival roll is, he cannot overcome the absolute limits imposed by the environment. For example, if there's no water to find (such as on the Moon), he can't locate any with Survival no matter how well he rolls (even a 3).

The rules for Survival generally assume a character's only trying to keep himself alive and healthy. But sometimes a character has to forage for or protect a group of people (such as his adventuring comrades, or a group of rescued campers). The more people he tries to help with his Survival abilities, the harder it becomes, as indicated on the accompanying table.

Fire

In most situations where a character needs to use Survival, it's important for him to have access to fire. With fire he can cook food, purify water, signal for help, and keep himself warm. Even deserts can become cold enough at night for a character to suffer from exposure.

First a character has to have something to burn. Usually this means wood, but he could use the wreckage of his plane, dried leaves or dung, or the like. If appropriate, the GM may require the character to make a Survival roll to gather enough fuel for a fire that will last through the night (12 hours); the character receives a +3 bonus in any type of forest, and no modifier in other environments (except for marine, where kindling a fire is usually impossible).

FIRESTARTING TABLE

Number Of Persons	Survival Modifier
Firestarting Method	Modifier
Match, flint and steel	No roll necessary*
Firebow	-0
Firesaw (rubbing sticks together)	-1
Convex lens and sunlight	-1
Conditions	Modifier
Windy or snowy weather	-2
Rainy weather	-4
Wet wood	-2
Kindling	
No kindling	-3
Little kindling	-1

* in normal conditions

Before lighting a fire, a character may wish to take measures to prevent it from being seen, protect it from the wind or water, and so forth. This may involve digging a firepit, erecting a simple “firewall” of sticks or stones, or the like. This requires an unmodified Survival roll, if the GM decides rolling is even necessary.

Once the character has enough fuel and a proper place to build his fire, he has to light it. If he has appropriate equipment — flint and steel, matches, or the like — this probably doesn’t even require a roll in normal conditions. He must make a roll if he lacks the appropriate equipment and has to make firestarting tools (such as a firebow). The accompanying table lists modifiers for various firestarting methods, and modifiers for other possible conditions that may force a character to make a roll to start a fire.

Food: Foraging

The first thing on many characters’ minds when they’re stranded in the wilderness is food. Survival allows a character to find or obtain food, and to prepare it in basic ways so it’s safe and palatable to eat.

The first way to find food is to forage for it and gather it up. This includes looking for, finding, and identifying nuts, fruits, roots and tubers, carrion, mushrooms, insects, and so forth. The accompanying table lists the modifiers for foraging in various environments; characters should roll once per hour. Success indicates enough safe food to feed one person for one meal (if the GM uses the degree of success rules, higher degrees of success mean the character found more food). If the character made the roll despite the multiple-person penalty, then he finds enough food to feed that many people for one meal — but he may prefer to forage without the penalty for multiple hours, hoping for enough successes to feed two or more people.

The ability to forage also includes the ability to identify edible foodstuffs. Once a character finds food, he may make another Survival roll (usually unmodified for any environment category he knows) to determine if said food is edible, inedible, or (worst of all) poisonous. (He can use this aspect of the Skill with captured or killed game as well.) Food taken from an irradiated area will almost certainly be radioactive itself... but that may not matter to a character who’s starving.

FORAGING TABLE

Type Of Environment	Climatic Zone		
	Arctic	Temperate/Subtropical	Tropical
Coast	-2	-1	-0
Desert*, sand dune	—	—	-5
Desert, scrub or salt marsh	—	—	-3
Forest	-0	+2	+4
Marine	-0	+1	+2
Mountains	-4	-2	-1
Plains	-2	-0	+1
Swamp/Marsh	—	+2	+4
Urban	+2	+2	+2

*: Deserts have only one modifier, since they’re effectively a climatic zone of their own; this is listed under “Tropical” for convenience.

Rad Zones: Irradiated areas suffer a -4 or greater penalty to foraging rolls in addition to the penalties listed above.

Food: Hunting, Trapping, And Fishing

Instead of just trying to find food, the character can actively try to catch it or kill it. Survival includes the ability to make snares to catch small game (rabbits, quail, fish, and the like), though not the ability to build deadfalls, pit traps, and other devices for catching or injuring large animals or humans (that requires Security Systems). It also includes the ability to drive animals into an ambush or dead end (but not to lure them with false calls; that’s Mimicry). And it includes the ability to fashion crude fishhooks and lines, and with the GM’s permission even simple hunting weapons (sharp-pointed spear-like sticks for gigging fish and frogs, stones for throwing [and perhaps crude slings as well], and so forth). Creating true weapons that can stand up to actual combat or use against large animals requires Weaponsmith (page 41).

In most cases, a successful Survival roll indicates the character found an appropriate food animal and caught or killed it somehow; it’s not necessary to make Attack Rolls or damage rolls. But the GM can turn hunting into more of a combat-like affair if he feels it would add drama to the game or give characters the chance to use other Skills (such as Stealth or Combat Skill Levels) to improve their odds of obtaining food.

The accompanying table lists the modifiers for hunting, trapping, fishing, and similar activities in various environments; these modifiers apply both to the actual attempt to obtain food and to the effort to make the proper tools (if the GM requires a roll for the latter). How often characters get to roll depends on the GM’s judgment on how common the type of game they’re searching for is; once per hour would be the maximum in most cases, but once per three to six hours may be more appropriate for most environments.

Food Preparation

Once a character obtains food, he has to prepare it for eating. While a lot of foraged food can be consumed as-is, most people don’t enjoy raw meat. Preparing a game animal, scavenged carrion, or the like to eat usually requires a fire (see below) and an unmodified Survival roll; if the character has PS: Cooking he may use that instead, with Survival as a Complementary Skill.

HUNTING/TRAPPING/FISHING TABLE

Type Of Environment	Climatic Zone		
	Arctic	Temperate/Subtropical	Tropical
Coast	-0	+1	+2
Desert*, sand dune	—	—	-5
Desert, scrub or salt marsh	—	—	-3
Forest	+1	+2	+4
Marine	-0	+1	+3
Mountains	-3	-2	-0
Plains	-1	+1	+2
Swamp/Marsh	—	+2	+4
Urban	-0	-0	-0

*: Deserts have only one modifier, since they’re effectively a climatic zone of their own; this is listed under “Tropical” for convenience.

Rad Zones: Irradiated areas suffer a -4 or greater penalty to hunting, trapping, and fish-ing rolls in addition to the penalties listed above.

FINDING SHELTER TABLE

Type Of Environment	Climatic Zone		
	Arctic	Temperate/Subtropical	Tropical
Coast	-4	-2	-1
Desert*, sand dune	—	—	-6
Desert, scrub or salt marsh	—	—	-4
Forest	-3	-1	-1
Marine	-5	-5	-5
Mountains	-4	-2	-2
Plains	-4	-3	-3
Swamp/Marsh	—	-2	-2
Urban	+3	+3	+3

*: Deserts have only one modifier, since they’re effectively a climatic zone of their own; this is listed under “Tropical” for convenience.

Rad Zones: Irradiated areas suffer a -2 or greater penalty to finding shelter rolls in addi-tion to the penalties listed above.

BUILDING SHELTER TABLE

Type Of Environment	Climatic Zone		
	Arctic	Temperate/Subtropical	Tropical
Coast	-4	-2	-1
Desert*, sand dune	—	—	-5
Desert, scrub or salt marsh	—	—	-4
Forest	+2	+3	+3
Marine	-5	-5	-5
Mountains	-3	-3	-3
Plains	-2	-1	-1
Swamp/Marsh	—	+2	+2
Urban	+3	+3	+3

*: Deserts have only one modifier, since they’re effectively a climatic zone of their own; this is listed under “Tropical” for convenience.

(In any event, Survival isn’t as good as PS: Cook-ing.) The character should roll once per animal carcass butchered and dressed, or once per meal prepared, as the GM sees fit.

Characters can also use Survival to prepare food for long-term storage so they can carry it with them as they travel. This requires a Survival roll at -1. Success preserves the food for 1d6+1 days; fail-ure by 1-3 leaves only 1d6 x 10% of the food edible within the next day, and failure by 4 or more ruins the food altogether.

Post-Apocalyptic Wastelands
Survival (Post-Apocalyptic Wastelands) is a

special 2-point category of Survival for Post-Apoc-alyptic games. It represents a character’s ability to find food, water, shelter, and whatever other neces-sities are available in the wasted, blasted, and often radioactive areas of the Post-Apocalyptic World. It shares certain abilities in common with the *Deserts* category in most cases, though not all wastelands are desert-like.

Radiation

A character with Survival (Rad Zones) (or in some cases Post-Apocalyptic Wastelands) knows how to minimize his exposure to harmful radia-tion. He can never *totally* protect himself from it once he’s exposed to it, but he can reduce the effects through proper procedures. When a character with an appropriate form of Survival is exposed to radia-tion, he makes a Survival roll at -3. If he succeeds, reduce the rads of exposure he suffers (see page 74) by 25%. For every additional -3 the roll suc-ceeds by, reduce the exposure by another 25%, to a maximum reduction of 25% (one-fourth) of the total rads. If the character remains in an irradiated area for an extended period of time, he should have to make this roll on a regular basis determined by the GM — once per hour, once per day, or whatever seems appropriate.

Ruins

Survival (Ruins) is a special 2-point category of Survival for Post-Apocalyptic games. It repre-sents a character’s ability to find needed resources in ruined areas (primarily the remains of cities, towns, and buildings). A character with this Skill knows that certain markings (*i.e.*, grocery store chains’ logos) identify buildings where canned food might be found, that you can sometimes siphon gas from the tanks of ruined cars (and which ones are the best candidates for this), and so on. To a lesser extent he’s also aware of the dangers of exploring ruined structures (collapse, wild animals lairing in them, trapped fumes and gases, security devices, and so forth), though Survival (Ruins) does not substitute for Security Systems, SS: Structural Engi-neering, or similar Skills.

See page 77 for more information on ruins.

Shelter

In addition to dealing with recurring needs such as food and water, characters in wilderness areas have to find or build shelter from the ele-ments. Otherwise they risk the effects of exposure, which can sometimes be fatal.

The easiest way to obtain shelter is to find it. Naturally-occurring forms of shelter include caves, hollow trees/logs, and the like. The accom-panying table lists the modifiers for finding appropriate shelter based on the type of envi-ronment; the more severe the environment, the harder it is to find shelter.

If a character can’t find shelter, he may have to build one. This includes things like digging snow caves, making crude lean-tos with branches, build-ing simple treehouses, and so forth. The accompa-nying table lists the modifiers for building shelter, based primarily on the availability of appropriate materials or the like. If the character has useful

tools (hammer and nails, a shovel, and so forth), the GM may add positive modifiers of +1 or more as well and decrease the time needed.

Water

Even more important than food in many cases is water. Without water, a character can quickly dehydrate, which may kill him in and of itself but also exposes him to problems like heat exhaustion and heat stroke. The accompanying table lists the modifiers for finding water in various environments. This includes not only locating bodies of water (lakes, streams, and the like) but gathering rainwater, digging for water, and obtaining water from plants like cacti, palms, and bamboo.

Sometimes a character can find water, but it's not drinkable. This is particularly common in salt marshes, some types of swamp/marsh terrain, and along sea and ocean coasts where the water is too salty to drink. Even seemingly safe water probably needs treatment to remove harmful bacteria and the like, or to strain out mud and other contaminants. Drinking nonpotable water may expose a character to disease (especially cholera, dysentery, and typhoid) or to the ingestion of flukes or leeches.

Removing dirt and the like from water requires a filtering system. This may be as simple as letting the water sit still so particles settle to the bottom, or it may require filtration through a pants leg, hollow log, or other container filled with a filtering material (such as sand, crushed rock, or charcoal). This requires an unmodified Survival roll; success means the water is ready for purification, failure that it remains contaminated (but the character can try again).

After a character filters out contaminants, he has to purify the water. The easiest ways to purify water are to boil it, or to use water purification tablets or iodine if they're available. If the GM requires a Survival roll for this, it's at +3 (assuming the character has fire and/or the right equipment) or -0 (if not). Failure indicates the water remains undrinkable.

TRADING

In a Post-Apocalyptic campaign where society's devolved to primitive or medieval levels, the economy may depend on barter as much as (or more than) it does on money. In that situation, Trading becomes an invaluable Skill. In campaigns featuring a lot of this sort of wheeling and dealing, the GM may want to use the expanded rules from *The Ultimate Skill* to resolve characters' efforts at bargaining.

FINDING WATER TABLE

Type Of Environment	Climatic Zone		
	Arctic	Temperate/Subtropical	Tropical
Coast†	N/A	N/A	N/A
Desert*, sand dune	—	—	-8
Desert, scrub or salt marsh	—	—	-4
Forest	+2	+3	+4
Marine†	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mountains	+2	-0	+1
Plains	+2	+1	+2
Swamp/Marsh†	—	N/A	N/A
Urban	+5	+5	+5

*: Deserts have only one modifier, since they're effectively a climatic zone of their own; this is listed under "Tropical" for convenience.

†: Water is always present in these environments; the issue is not finding it, but making it potable.

‡: Arctic environments usually have snow or ice available, thus providing a ready source of water if the character has the means to melt and purify it.

TRANSPORT FAMILIARITY; WEAPON FAMILIARITY

In some Post-Apocalyptic games, particularly ones set centuries or millennia after the apocalypse, it's much less likely that character can buy entire categories of TF or WF at once. After all, if there aren't very many guns left, the odds of a character learning how to fire every type of gun competently (i.e., to buy WF: Small Arms) are slim. Instead, characters should focus on the 1-point subcategories covering a single type of device. In some cases the GM may even forbid characters to buy any 2-point "group" categories.

WEAPONSMITH

When he was finished, he had a wooden stock about six inches wide at the butt and curving up underneath to its narrowest point. The material for the bowstring he had already obtained, the brake cable from one of the cars, the loop of it at each end of the bow — a leaf from one of the automobile springs[.]

—Jeebee builds himself a crossbow out of parts salvaged from a ruined car and a ruined house in *Wolf And Iron*, by Gordon R. Dickson

In Post-Apocalyptic games that feature mostly medieval-level technology, GMs may wish to adopt the expanded version of this Skill (and its brother, Armorsmith) from *Fantasy Hero* (also found in *The Ultimate Skill*). Otherwise it becomes too easy for one talented PC to keep an entire town supplied with swords and arrows.

OTHER GAME ELEMENTS



Here’s some information on how Perks, Talents, Powers, and Disadvantages function in the Post-Apocalyptic genre.

PERKS

Many Perks are appropriate for Post-Apocalyptic characters, but others are not. For example, Bases, Contacts, Followers, and Vehicles all work pretty much the same as in any other genre, but other Perks may be unavailable or rare. Anonymity and Computer Link are generally meaningless in Post-Apocalyptic societies, and the same may be true of Fringe Benefits like Police Powers or Diplomatic Immunity.

MONEY

Unless your Post-Apocalyptic setting has a sustainable economy and a civilization that’s rebuilt itself to at least medieval levels, the GM should be very wary of letting characters buy this Perk. Money represents a sustainable level of annual income, and that’s rarely possible in a Post-Apocalyptic story.

Instead, with the GM’s permission characters can take a variant of this Perk, *Supplies*. Supplies is to Money what a Favor is to a Contact — basically the same thing, but finite and expendable. A character who buys Supplies gets a defined amount of a single type of resource (typically food, ammunition, or fuel). Once he uses that resource up the Character Points spent on Supplies are lost *permanently*. The character cannot re-spend them on anything, not even more supplies. The accompanying Supplies Table lists suggested amounts of items based

on how many points a character spends, but the final decision on what a character gets when he buys Supplies is up to the GM.

REPUTATION

In many Post-Apocalyptic settings it’s not appropriate for a character to take this Perk at a level greater than that of his local town or region. The sort of widespread communications and travel that would allow a Reputation to spread throughout an entire large nation, much less the world, just don’t exist in such settings. The GM has the final say on what levels of Reputation are appropriate for his campaign.

VEHICLES

“Look, we had a deal. I show you the gas, and you let me go, right?”

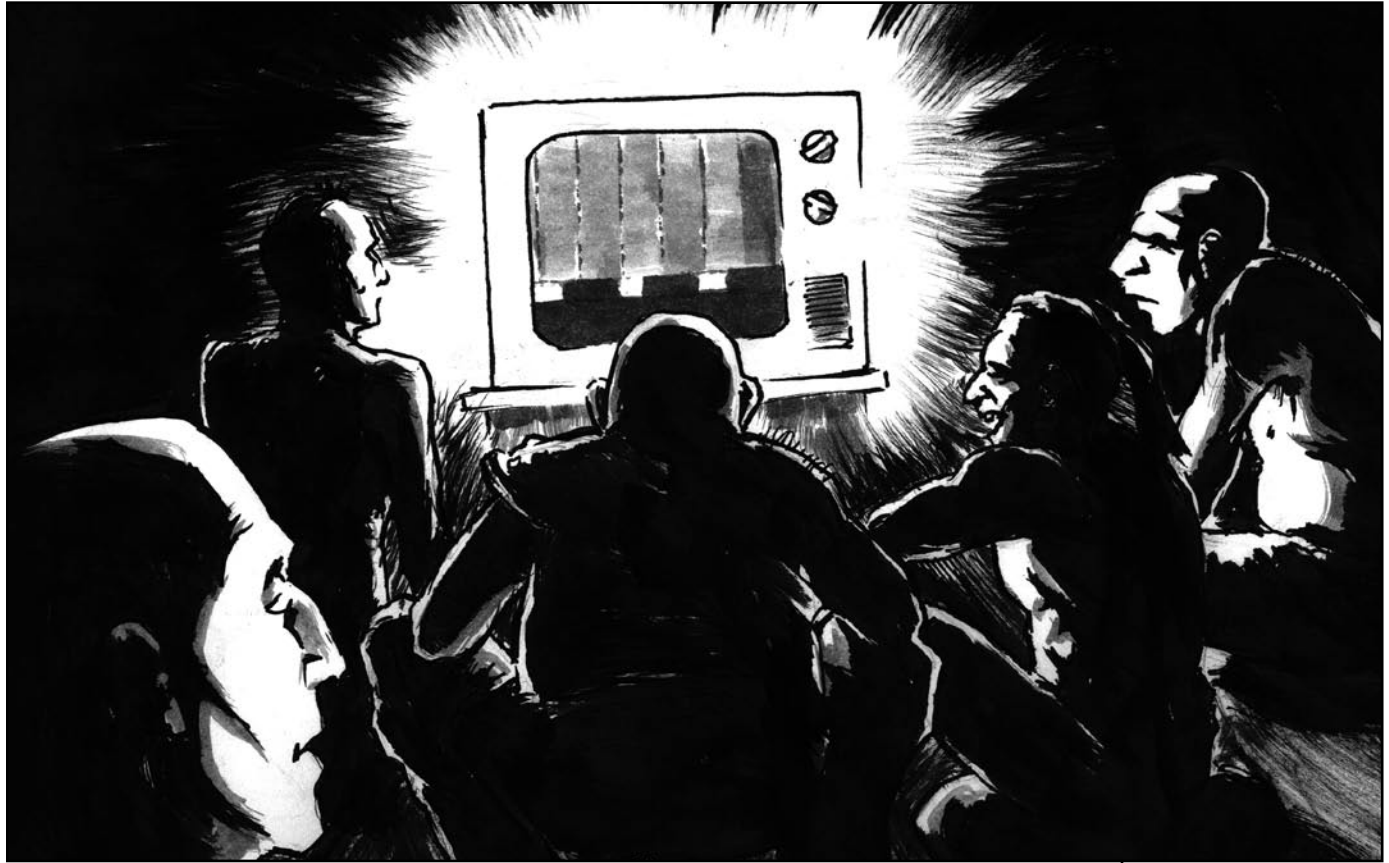
—the Gyro Captain pleads for his freedom in *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*

Vehicles are defining feature of the *Road Wars* subgenre described in Chapters One and Four — but to most characters, what’s just as important as the type of vehicle they drive is how much fuel they have. The best vehicle in the world is useless without enough gas to keep it running. In most cases the GM can handle issues of fuel consumption from a dramatic perspective — in other words, the heroes have plenty of fuel when that’s necessary to keep the story moving forward properly, and are low on fuel when the GM wants to motivate them to get some more or make the issue of “can we do this before the gas tank runs dry?” a part of the adventure. For GMs who want more “realistic” information about fuel consumption for game purposes, use the following rules:

1. Determine the vehicle’s weight; see the accompanying table for guidelines. The table lists curb weight (the weight of the vehicle with a full load of fuel); if the vehicle carries passengers, cargo, or the like, add that in to determine the vehicle’s overall weight. The table also indicates average gas tank size.
2. To move 100 kg of vehicle weight a distance of 1 kilometer takes 0.0075 liters of gasoline at an assumed average speed of 72 kilometers per hour (45 miles per hour).
3. For every 8 kph (5 mph) or fraction thereof above 72 kph (45 mph), increase fuel consumption by 0.001 liter.
4. For every 16 kph (10 mph) or fraction thereof below 72 kph (45 mph), decrease fuel consumption by 0.0025 liter (to an absolute minimum of 0.001 liters).

SUPPLIES TABLE

Cost	Amount Of Supplies
1	10 rounds of ammunition for a personal firearm Enough food and water to feed a man well for a week 25 liters of gasoline
2	25 rounds of ammunition for a personal firearm Enough food and water to feed a man well for a month 50 liters of gasoline
3	50 rounds of ammunition for a personal firearm Enough food and water to feed a man well for a season (three months) 100 liters of gasoline
4	100 rounds of ammunition for a personal firearm Enough food and water to feed a man well for six months 250 liters of gasoline
5	200 rounds of ammunition for a personal firearm Enough food and water to feed a man well for a year 500 liters of gasoline



VEHICLE WEIGHT TABLE

Vehicle Type	Weight (kg)	Weight (lbs)	Gas Tank Size (liters)
Motorcycle	182-272	400-600	25 (6.5 gal)
Compact	1,363	3,000	45 (12 gal)
Midsized	1,591	3,500	65 (17.1 gal)
Full Size	1,818	4,000	75 (20 gal)
SUV, Pickup Truck, Van	2,045	4,500	95 (25 gal)
Large Truck	2,046+	4,501+	115+ (30+ gal)

Example: *Mad Man Muntz is a biker ganger with a pretty standard motorcycle — it weighs 200 kg and has a 25 liter gas tank. When Muntz zips around the wasteland highways he usually drives about 96 kph (60 mph), which means it takes $((0.0075 + 0.003) \times 2)$ 0.021 liters of fuel per kilometer. At that rate he can travel 1,190 km (740 miles) before he needs to refuel. If he slows down to 72 kph (45 mph), he uses $0.0075 \times 2 = 0.015$ liters per kilometer, he can travel 1,667 km before he has to steal more gas from some innocent victim.*

Muntz's archenemy, the road warrior Harrison, drives a custom-made midsized vehicle that weighs 1,600 kg and has a 70 liter gas tank. Moving his car 1 km at a speed of 72 kph takes 0.12 liters of gas. That means he can only travel 583 miles before he needs more gas.

The GM can alter these rules as he sees fit to suit the dramatic needs of his game. For example, maybe the PCs find a cache of high-grade fuel that's twice as powerful as normal. On a tank of that stuff, they can move 100 kg of vehicle 1 km for only 0.0025 liters of fuel.

TALENTS

Besides their usual uses, Talents are a good way to simulate all sorts of minor mutations that might crop up in Post-Apocalyptic games. For example, a mutant with a fish-like body might have Environmental Movement: Aquatic Movement, while one with mental powers might possess an Eidetic Memory or be a Lightning Calculator.

POWERS

Other than the ones commonly used to simulate abilities common to Heroic characters (Hand-To-Hand Attack, Running, and so on), Powers usually appear in the Post-Apocalyptic genre as mutations possessed by characters. For example, a mutant with a tail or two tentacles in addition to his arms buys Extra Limbs; one who can fire beams of radiation from his eyes buys Energy Blast or RKA; one who can sense heat differentials buys Infrared Perception. See page 112 for dozens of example mutations.

MENTAL POWERS

In Post-Apocalyptic settings, mental powers usually result from mutations spawned by the nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare that caused the apocalypse — settings where the cataclysm resulted from other events, such as environmental

collapse or a meteor impact, usually don't feature psionic abilities. Depending on how fantastic the mutations are, mental powers may be highly restricted (requiring Concentration, Extra Time, Increased Endurance Cost, and the like) or barely any different from Comic Book superpowers.

LIFE SUPPORT

The GM should be wary of allowing characters to buy some forms of this Power, specifically Diminished Eating and Safe Environment (High Radiation). In both cases they offer full or partial protection against major dangers common to the Post-Apocalyptic genre — starvation and radiation, respectively — which removes some of the fun of the game. If one of the GM's primary motivational tools is "the characters need to find enough food to keep from starving," the story breaks down if the PCs don't care because they don't have to eat.

Expanding Safe Environment (High Radiation)

Since radiation is such an important element of many Post-Apocalyptic settings, the GM may wish to expand the cost of and rules for Safe Environment (High Radiation) to make it more flexible, as follows:

- 1 Character Point: character suffers only 75% of the effects of exposure to radiation
- 2 Character Points: character suffers only 50% of the effects of exposure to radiation
- 3 Character Points: character suffers only 25% of the effects of exposure to radiation
- 4 Character Points: character suffers only 10% of the effects of exposure to radiation
- 5 Character Points: character is totally immune to the effects of radiation

For example, a character with 2 Character Points in Safe Environment (High Radiation) who was exposed to 200 rads of radiation would only suffer the effects of exposure to 100 rads; if he's in a rad zone that features 1 rad of exposure per day, he has to stay there two days to suffer the same effect most people get after just one day. This reduction applies *before* the GM determines what the radiation does to the character and before any defenses are applied, not after as with Damage Reduction.

POWER DEFENSE

In campaigns where Power Defense is defined as one of the defenses against radiation damage, the GM should carefully review any purchase of it by a PC. Like starvation, radiation is an important element of danger in many Post-Apocalyptic settings, so player characters shouldn't be allowed to immunize themselves against it cheaply and easily.

DISADVANTAGES

Other than the typical ones characters take to define themselves (such as Psychological Limitations), Disadvantages usually crop up in the Post-Apocalyptic genre as harmful or hindering mutations. Typically these are Physical Limitations — a withered or missing limb, a hunchback, being prone to seizures, and so on — but there are other possibilities. For example, a character's mutations may make him unusually strong, but also affect his brain chemistry so he's prone to fits of temper (Enraged); another mutant's metabolism might require him to ingest some sort of unusual substance for nutrition or become weak and sickly (Dependence).

PHYSICAL LIMITATION

Besides the types of Physical Limitations described above, some mutants may suffer from *Mutant Physiology*. This means their internal organs, body chemistry, and the like are so different from those of a normal human that they have difficulty getting proper medical attention. The value of the *Mutant Physiology* Physical Limitation depends on two factors: how unusual the character's physiology is; and how often this causes him difficulty (*i.e.*, how often he tends to need medical care). The first factor is reflected by the penalty characters suffer to Paramedics, SS: Medicine, and any similar rolls when treating the character. If they suffer Skill Roll penalties of -3 to all rolls, the Limitation is Slightly Impairing. For each additional -3, the Impairment increases one step (-6 for Greatly Impairing, -9 for Fully Impairing).

The second factor varies from campaign to campaign; discuss the situation with your GM before determining a value. Typically *Mutant Physiology* affects a character Infrequently, but in games where characters are often exposed to injury, it may be more frequent.

PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

In some Post-Apocalyptic settings, people regard the structures and technologies of the Ancients with superstitious dread. Player characters don't necessarily suffer from this, but if they do you could represent it with a Psychological Limitation so that they have to succeed with an EGO Roll to enter a ruin, pick up a scavenged artifact, or the like.

VULNERABILITY

Characters may take a Vulnerability to ordinary radiation. Multiply the rads of exposure by the Vulnerability multiplier. For example, if a character has a $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$ Vulnerability to radiation and is exposed to 60 rads, he suffers the effects as if he'd been exposed to 90 rads.

EQUIPMENT



In a Post-Apocalyptic setting, what a character *has* is often every bit as important as who he is and what he can do. The biggest, toughest character in the world can't do much if he's starving from lack of food, is unarmed, and doesn't have even simple tools like a hammer or crowbar. In the Post-Apocalyptic wasteland, men kill one another for everyday items like that, which characters in most RPG campaigns never even bother to think about.

This section primarily provides descriptions and game information about various devices that might be found in Post-Apocalyptic games. For rules about finding, salvaging, and figuring out how to use technology, see Chapter Three.

ACQUIRING GEAR

Since *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games tend to be Heroic campaigns, characters generally don't pay Character Points for their equipment; they obtain it in other ways during the course of the game. However, it's not like most campaigns where they can go down to the local department store or gun shop, plunk down a few bucks, and buy whatever they need. In many Post-Apocalyptic settings, any sort of useful, usable gear is a precious commodity, and characters only acquire it through effort and luck. Some of the ways they might get their hands on the equipment they need include:

- **Build it.** If the characters have the appropriate skills and raw materials, they can make all kinds of things. This may depend on how much knowledge of manufacturing techniques remains in the world, however. For example, in some settings characters can use blacksmithing and bowyerling to make swords and bows — but no one remembers how to make guns or bullets anymore. The only firearms and ammo still available are ones that are found in ruins and the like.
- **Buy it or barter for it.** If enough of society remains (or has arisen from the ashes) for primitive economies to get started, useful equipment may be sold, or obtained by trading other things for it. Competent adventurers may even be able to trade their skills and services, rather than other goods.
- **Find it.** There are plenty of ruins out there, jam-packed with all sorts of treasures... provided you get lucky and look in the right place, and don't get eaten by cannibal mutant cultists or radioactive badgers....
- **Steal it.** In some Post-Apocalyptic settings, biker gangs, mutant hordes, and adventurers constantly fight for resources, raid one another's strongholds, and otherwise take what they want or need through violence, deceit, and treachery.

SALVAGED GEAR

In many Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, the primary source of equipment for PCs will be salvage — whether they find it themselves in some ruin, or buy it from a scavenger who dug it up. Chapter Four has rules for scavenging, including the condition of scavenged equipment and how to represent that in game terms.

WEAPONS

The accompanying weapons tables — one for HTH Combat weapons and one for Ranged Combat weapons — provide *HERO System* statistics, write-ups, and notes for dozens of weapons that might appear in Post-Apocalyptic campaigns. Since the genre can encompass everything from primitive Fantasy-era societies to advanced Science Fiction-style technology, these tables are by no means complete; see similar tables in *Fantasy Hero*, *Dark Champions*, and *Star Hero* for many other weapons that might show up in your campaign. For detailed explanations of how various weapons work (in some cases including full *HERO System* writeups), please refer to those books as well.

MAKING WEAPONS FROM SALVAGE

One of the most picturesque ways to emphasize the realities of a Post-Apocalyptic setting to the players is to give them weapons (or other gear) made from bits and pieces of pre-apocalypse technology that their characters don't necessarily recognize, but which the players themselves will. Examples include:

Anchoring Post Maul: A length of metal pole with a cylindrical mass of concrete on one end; it once held a swingset, sign, mailbox, or other object firmly in the ground. Only large, strong characters can wield this unbalanced weapon. (This weapon is the equivalent of a maul from *Fantasy Hero*, page 164, but with a -1 OCV.)

Parking Meter Mace: The pole and coin receptacle of a standard parking meter make an excellent mace. (This weapon does the same damage as a standard mace.)

Sharpened Hubcap: This disk of thin metal has carefully-sharpened edges so that it can be used as a throwing weapon. (The hubcap does damage equivalent to a dagger, but can only be thrown — if wielded hand-to-hand it becomes bent and useless after one good hit.)

Signpole Sword: A three foot-long length of the standard metal “pole” used to hold stop signs and other street signs in many places could have its edges sharpened to make a crude but effective slashing sword. (Treat this weapon as a longsword with -1 OCV.)

BOWS AND CROSSBOWS

In campaigns that involve extensive use of bows and crossbows — which replace firearms in many Post-Apocalyptic settings because they're easier to make and to obtain ammunition for — the GM may want to consult the advanced descriptions of and rules for these weapons on pages 170-72 of *Fantasy Hero*.

The *pistol crossbow* is a crossbow small enough for a character to hold and fire easily with one hand. Loading it takes time but doesn't require the focused effort that loading an ordinary crossbow does (*i.e.*, it doesn't have the *Concentration* Limitation). Some models include special locking devices that hold the bolt in place even if the crossbow is turned on its side or upside down; pulling the trigger automatically disengages the lock.

A *wrist crossbow* is a pistol crossbow mounted on a large bracer worn on the character's lower arm. It's basically the same as a wrist crossbow, though it has a shorter range and always has a bolt-locking device so the wearer can load it and then wave his arm around freely if necessary.

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	BODY	DEF	Mass	A/R Cost	Length	Notes
Axe, Battle	0	2d6	0	13	6	4	1.6	45/15	M	1½H
Axe, Hand (Hatchet)#	0	1d6	0	6	3	4	0.6	26/9	S	Can Be Thrown
Club	0	4d6 N	—	10	5	3	1.5	30/9	M	
Dagger/Dirk#	0	1d6-1	0	6	3	5	0.8	21/8	S	Can Be Thrown
Javelin#	0	1d6+1	0	8	4	3	0.8	35/13	L	Can Be Thrown
Mace	0	1d6+1	0	10	5	5	1.5	30/11	M	
Morningstar	0	1½d6	0	15	4	4	1.5	46/15	M	Flail
Quarterstaff	+1	4d6 N	—	10	4	3	1.0	35/11	M	2H
Spear#	0	1½d6	0	10	5	3	2.0	51/18	L	Set, Can Be Thrown
Sword, Broad/Long	0	1d6+1	0	12	5	5	1.2	30/11	M	
Sword, Short	0	1d6	0	10	5	5	1.1	22/8	M	
Whip	0	½d6	0	5 †	2	2	0.3	15/9	3"	3" Range, can Grab

KEY

#: Add +1 DC of damage per full +6.25 points of STR used above the STR Minimum.

1½H: One-And-A-Half-Handed Weapon

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

AP: Armor Piercing

Can Be Thrown: The weapon has the Range Based On STR (+¼) Advantage.

Flail: Can perform the Flail Combat Maneuver (see *Fantasy Hero*) (i.e., it has Indirect (+¼))

N: Normal Damage (all other weapons do Killing Damage), bought as a Hand-To-Hand Attack (but to which characters add damage only by exceeding the STR Minimum)

Set: Characters can use this weapon to perform the Set Versus Charge Combat Maneuver (see *Fantasy Hero*)

Text: Refer to the text for information.

†: STR Minimum Doesn't Add To Damage

All HTH Combat weapons are built as HKAs (or HAs) with the Advantage Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) and the Limitations OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), and Strength Minimum (varies). Many also have the Required Hands Limitation.

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon. OCV bonuses are bought as 5-point Combat Skill Levels with the OAF, Required Hands, and Real Weapon Limitations. OCV penalties are a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½) for the weapon.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a 0 means "no modification"; use the standard 1d6-1 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a War Flail (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See pages 478-80 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for rules. Remember to apply the rules in *Adding Damage*, page 405, when using STR to increase the damage of a weapon bought with Advantages.

BODY: The weapon's BODY.

DEF: The weapon's DEF.

Mass: The weight of the weapon in kilograms.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Length: The weapon's length — Short, Medium, or Long. L2 indicates a weapon with 2" Stretching that a character can use to strike from the second rank.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.



POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	BODY	DEF	Mass	Shots	Max Range	A/R Cost	Notes
Bows And Crossbows												
Bow	0	0	1½d6	0	10 †	2	3	1.1	10 RC	155"	31/72	H, Conc
Crossbow	0	+1	1d6+1	0	12 †	4	4	1.6	10 RC	140"	28/62	H, Conc, ‡1
Crossbow, Pistol	0	0	1d6-1	0	8 †	2	2	0.5	10 RC	45"	15/4	‡1
Crossbow, Wrist	0	0	1d6-1	0	8 †	2	2	0.4	6 RC	30"	12/3	‡1
Thrown Weapons												
Darts	0	0	½d6	0	5	1	5	0.4	9 RC	RBS	12/4	
Frag Grenade	+0	+0	1d6X	0	RBS	2	5	0.40	1	RBS	22/5	
Gunpowder Weapons												
Matchlock Pistol	0	-4	1d6 AP*	0	12 †	4	3	1.0	6	160"	22/3	Act 11-, Conc, ‡T
.38 Revolver	+0	+0	1d6	0	7 †	4	5	0.86	6	180"	15/3	
.45 Semiautomatic	+1	+0	2d6-1	0	9 †	5	5	1.10	7	180"	39/10	
9mm Submachine Gun	+1	+0	1d6+1	0	12 †	6	5	3.60	40	180"	45/13	AF5
Rifle, Hunting	+1	+2	2d6	0	12 †	5	5	3.40	30	240"	56/15	2H
Rifle, Military	+0	+1	2d6+1	0	15 †	5	5	4.40	8	240"	47/10	2H
Rifle, Sniper	+1	+1	2d6+1	0	13 †	5	5	6.40	25	300"	60/16	2H
Assault Rifle	+1	+1	2d6	0	13 †	6	5	3.18	30	260"	71/19	2H, AF5, FS
Shotgun	+0	+0	2½d6	0	12 †	5	5	3.00	5	20"	70/13	2H, AE1, LR(20"), RR, RP
Shotgun, Sawed-Off	+0	+0	2½d6	0	12 †	4	5	2.25	2	NR	140/22	2H, AEC, AF2, RR, RP
Energy Weapons												
Ion Pistol	+1	+1	3d6/10d6 N	0	9 †	3	6	1.00	30	60"	62/29	AF2
Laser Pistol	+1	+2	2½d6	0	8 †	3	6	1.00	16	200"	51/16	
Laser Rifle	+2	+2	3½d6	+1	12 †	6	6	4.00	64	3,775"	18¼/45	AF5, AP, 2H

KEY

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

Act: Activation Roll

AE1: Area of Effect (One Hex)

AEC: Area Of Effect (Cone)

AF: Autofire; the number after the letters indicates the maximum number of shots.

AP: Armor Piercing

AP*: The weapon has a naked Advantage, Armor Piercing, with the Limitations OAF, Real Weapon, Required Hands, Concentration, Extra Time, and Only Works Against Low-Tech Armors (-¼)

Conc: Concentration (½ DCV "throughout" the loading and/or firing process, see text; -½)

FS: Flash Suppressor (see page 232 of *Dark Champions* for details)

LR: Limited Range (the number in parentheses indicates the range)

N: Normal Damage (all other weapons do Killing Damage)

NR: No Range

RBS: Range Based On STR

RC: Recoverable Charge

RP: Reduced Penetration

RR: Reduced By Range

X: Explosion

†: STR Minimum Doesn't Add Damage

‡: Extra Time (Full Phase to use; -½)

‡1: Extra Time (1 Phase to reload between shots; -¾)

‡2: Extra Time (2 Phases to reload between shots; -¾)

‡T: Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼)

Ranged weapons are built as RKAs with some or all of the following Limitations: Focus (OAF; -1), STR Minimum, Required Hands, Real Weapon, Beam, and Charges (indicating the number of rounds of ammunition the average user carries).

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon; see the Hand-To-Hand Weapons Table for more information.

RMod: This represents a modifier to the weapon's accuracy at Range. Positive values (bought as 3-point Penalty Skill Levels versus the Range Group with the Focus and Required Hands Limitations) help to offset the standard Range Modifier; negative values (a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½)) add to it. RMod can never raise a character's base OCV, it can only negate penalties.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a 0 means "no modification"; use the standard 1d6-1 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a Sling (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See pages 478-80 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for rules. Most ranged weapons do not allow characters to add damage from STR; for such weapons, the STR Minimum indicates the STR needed to hold, draw, and/or cock the weapon.

BODY: The weapon's BODY.

DEF: The weapon's DEF.

Mass: The weight of the weapon in kilograms.

Shots: The standard amount of ammunition carried by a user of the weapon. Typically a character can only fire/throw/shoot one round of ammunition in a Phase; thereafter he must reload his weapon (or ready a new one). Reloading/readying may or may not take time; see the text. In a Post-Apocalyptic setting, weapons may not come with any ammunition at all; the characters may have to find or make it.

Max Range: The weapon's maximum Range in game inches (hexes). Of course, its effective range — the range over which it's likely to hit a target — is much less, thanks to the Range Modifier.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO ARMOR TABLE

Armor Type	DEF	A/R Cost	Weight Of A Full Suit	Notes
Primitive Armors				
Heavy Cloth	1	3/1	3.5 kg	
Leather, Heavy Furs	2	6/2	5 kg	
Cuir-Bouilli (Boiled Leather)	3	9/3	7 kg	
Brigandine	4	12/4	10 kg	
Studded/Scaled Cuir-Bouilli	5	15/5	14 kg	
Chainmail	6	18/6	20 kg	
Modern Body Armors				
Sports Padding	3	3/1	1.5 kg	Nonresistant PD
Basic Body Armor	3-8	9-24/3-8	3.0-17.5 kg	
Advanced Body Armor	4-10	12-30/4-11	4.4-35.0 kg	
Science Fiction Armors				
Battle Armor	15	45/20	30 kg	LS
Powered Battlesuit	20	60/34	50 kg	Weapons, LS
Personal Force Field Belt	10	30/17	0.5 kg	CFC
Force Shield Projector	6 FW	30/11	0.3 kg	CFC, Self Only
Force Dome Projector Belt	8 FW	62/19	1.0 kg	CFC, DOME

DEF: The Defense the armor provides, equivalent to PD and ED Armor of the same amount.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the armor.

Key

CFC: Item has 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (refueled by electricity, lasts 20 Minutes)

DOME: Forms 12” circumference dome around wearer

FW: Force Wall

LS: Armor provides Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environment: High Radiation) (cost not included in A/R Cost listing)

Weapons: Armor comes equipped with built-in weapons, sensors, and other useful devices; the type and power of these weapons is up to the GM (see *Star Hero* or *Gadgets And Gear* for plenty of examples)

POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO SHIELD TABLE

Type Of Shield	DCV	HA	Min	STR BODY	Total DEF	Mass	Cost
Buckler	+1*	1d6 N	4	2	5	2 kg	4
Small	+1	1d6 N	6	3	5	3 kg	4
Medium	+2	2d6 N	13	4	5	5 kg	6
Large	+3	3d6 N	18	6	5	7 kg	7

DCV: The DCV bonus provided by the shield. Bonuses marked with an asterisk (*) require the character to make a DEX Roll to obtain them (this is an Action that takes no time).

HA: The HA damage the shield does with a shield bash maneuver; this is Normal Damage.

STR Min: STR Minimum.

BODY, DEF: The BODY and DEF of the shield.

Mass: The shield’s weight in kilograms.

Total Cost: The total cost of the shield as a Multipower.

ARMOR

The accompanying tables provide *HERO System* statistics, write-ups, and notes for armor and shields that characters in Post-Apocalyptic campaigns might wear. In many games characters won’t wear anything more than heavy cloth or furs for protection; in others a full-blown military culture able to make chainmail may exist; in ones with a Science Fiction background salvaged force-field technology may exist.

As with weapons, Post-Apocalyptic characters may have to craft armor from whatever materials are available. For example, the metal “scales” used to create brigandine or studded/scaled leather armor might be cut from an old street sign or sheets of metal peeled from the side of a wrecked car.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

Here are a few other examples of equipment that might appear in Post-Apocalyptic campaigns. Of course, this section can’t cover *everything* that a Post-Apocalyptic character might want or need gear-wise. In a campaign that focuses (at least in part) on gritty issues of survival, everyday objects and tools — boltcutters, flashlights, crowbars, sledgehammers, compasses, wire, roadmaps, cold-weather clothes, cigarette lighters, luggage, tool kits — may become valuable “treasure” or important barter items for Post-Apocalyptic heroes.

Items with (SF) after their names are only appropriate for Post-Apocalyptic campaigns that take place after the collapse of a Science Fiction sort of setting — one with technology far more advanced than that of early twenty-first century human society.

Medical Gear

FIRST AID KIT

Effect: +2 with Paramedics rolls
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0 (see text)
Breakability: 1 DEF

Description: In a Post-Apocalyptic setting, even the most basic of medical equipment may be a treasure beyond price. This item is a standard paramedic's first aid kit, well-stocked with expendable supplies (bandages, gauze, some types of drugs, and so on) plus reusable supplies (small scissors, scalpel, thermometer, and the like).

Although the Kit itself costs no END to use and doesn't have Charges, some of its supplies — drugs, gauze, and so on — are finite. Once they run out, characters have to obtain more, and the GM may reduce the Kit's bonus to +1 (or even +0 in some circumstances) due to the lack of supplies.

Game Information: +2 with Paramedics rolls (4 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 2 points.

UNIVERSAL MEDICINE (SF)

Effect: Major Transform 7d6 (sick person into well person)
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
Charges: 4 Charges
Breakability: 1 DEF

Description: This wonder drug can cure virtually any disease a character contracts and has a shelf life measured in centuries.

In game terms, the Universal Medicine is a Major Transform, "sick person to well person," that stops the course of a disease — once the character applies the drug, the disease inflicts no further damage (loss of CON, for example) on the victim. However, the drug does not automatically heal any STUN, BODY, CON, or other Characteristics lost to the disease prior to its use. Those the character must heal normally (however "normally" is defined for the disease, usually via the passage of time and the application of appropriate treatments).

You can use this writeup as a template for creating other drugs that only cure a single disease or category of diseases — just change the definition of what the Transform affects.

Game Information: Major Transform 7d6 (sick person into well person, heals back through any normal means that would cause character to contract the same disease) (105 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), No Range (-½). Total cost: 38 points.

Sensory And Communications Gear

BINOCULARS

Effect: +6 versus the Range Modifier for Sight Group
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability: 2 DEF

Description: Binoculars increase a character's ability to see over a distance by magnifying the subject viewed. They range from small versions (including monoculars) that provide only slight amplification, to larger military and hunting models that also have electronic readouts on distance, direction, and the like.

Game Information: +6 versus the Range Modifier for Sight Group (9 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 4 points.

Options:

1) **Large Binoculars:** Increase to +10 versus the Range Modifier for Sight Group (15 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** Absolute Range Sense (3 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 1 point) **plus** Bump Of Direction (3 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 9 points.

GEIGER COUNTER

Effect: Detect Radiation (INT Roll +8) (no Sense Group)
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability: 4 DEF

Description: One of the most sought-after devices in Post-Apocalyptic settings where the holocaust that ended society involved nuclear war, a Geiger counter can detect ionizing radiation. A particle of radiation causes the inert gas in the device to become conductive, creating an electrical signal that indicates the presence of radiation. Some Geiger counters use the electrical signal to move a needle, some to light an indicator, but most indicate the presence and intensity of radiation with a distinctive "clicking" sound that becomes faster and more intense the stronger and closer the source of radiation is.

Game Information: Detect Radiation (INT Roll +8) (no Sense Group), Range (18 Active Points); OAF (-1), Nonpersistent (-¼). Total cost: 8 points.

Survival And Protective Gear

In addition to the gear listed here, one of the most sought-after types of “survival” gear in many Post-Apocalyptic settings is food. Canned foods, preserves, or best of all “ration packs” (such as the US Army’s Meals Ready to Eat [MREs]) are as good as gold in some cases — particularly ration packs, which contain a balanced meal with enough calories to keep a person alert and active for at least a day (if not longer). There’s no particular need to write these up in game terms; the GM just needs to determine how many man-days’ worth of food a character finds... and, of course, whether it’s still safe to eat....

DECONTAMINATION FOAM (SF)

Effect: Major Transform 7d6 (radioactive person or object into non-radioactive one)
Target: One character or object
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
Charges: 4 Charges
Breakability:21 DEF

Description: This yellowish foam, which comes in sturdy cannisters about the size of a 12 ounce beverage can that contain four doses, can totally remove radiation from a single person or object. It can’t correct the effects of exposure to radiation that someone’s already suffered, but it can prevent him from getting any worse going forward, and it can make irradiated objects safe to handle.

This item also comes in pill/powder form so it can be mixed with radioactive food to render it safely edible.

Game Information: Major Transform 7d6 (radioactive person or object into non-radioactive one, heals back through further exposure to radiation) (105 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 30 points.

GAS MASK

Effect: Life Support: Self-Contained Breathing plus Sight Group Flash Defense, Only Protects Against Tear Gas-Type Flashes
Target: Self
Duration: Constant/Persistent
Range: Self
Charges: 1 Continuing Fuel Charge/0 END
Breakability:4 DEF

Description: A gas mask covers the entire head and either screens out harmful gases or gives the wearer his own self-contained air supply for a short time. This protection extends to tear gas.

Game Information: Life Support: Self-Contained Breathing (10 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easy to replenish, 1 Hour; -0) (total cost: costs 7 points) **plus** Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½), Only Protects Against Tear Gas-Type Flashes (-1) (total cost: 4 points). Total cost: 11 points.

SURVIVAL KIT

Effect: +2 to Survival rolls
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability:1 DEF

Description: This incredibly useful package of items and materials make it a lot easier for someone to survive in the wild. It includes a tent made of material that reflects heat internally to keep most of the user’s body heat inside, water purification tablets, a selection of fishhooks and line, a survival knife, handy waterproof reference materials, and the like.

Game Information: +2 with Survival rolls (4 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 2 points.

Miscellaneous Gear

UNIVERSAL BATTERY (SF)

Effect: Endurance Reserve (100 END) plus Endurance Reserve (10 REC), Slow Recovery (1 Hour)
Target: One electricity-powered device
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Breakability:2 DEF

Description: This amazing item is a small, portable battery that can provide power to virtually any device that uses electricity. It’s about six inches wide, six inches tall, and three inches deep. Using a broadcast power system it can provide power (in game terms, END) to electrical devices within roughly two feet of itself; it can power more than one device at once if set up to do so. Once its power reserves run out it slowly “regenerates” its power (at the GM’s option it has small solar panels and if exposed to direct sunlight it Recovers on a once per 5 Minutes basis instead of its usual once per Hour).

Game Information: Endurance Reserve (100 END) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Restricted Use (electrical devices only; -0) (total cost 5 points) **plus** Endurance Reserve (10 REC) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Slow Recovery (1 Hour; -¾) (total cost: 4 points). Total cost: 9 points.

c h a p t e r t h r e e



ADVENTURE AMONG THE DEVASTATION

Radiation has made me an enemy of civilization.

— *Strange Brew*

CREATING A CAMPAIGN



Chapter One reviewed the major Post-Apocalyptic subgenres, discussing how to establish Post-Apocalyptic Hero campaigns to emulate them and how to introduce the elements and features of the genre into your games. This chapter delves into more detail on the subject of GMing Post-Apocalyptic Hero — everything from how to set up and manage a campaign to how to create enjoyable and memorable adversaries and NPCs. Gamemasters interested in further advice about GMing in general can also consult the GMing sections of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised, Champions*, other *HERO System* genre books, and plenty of generic references on the art and science of GMing roleplaying games. Even though those sources aren't specific to *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, many of the suggestions and ideas they contain apply to any *HERO System* campaign.

BRINGING DOWN THE DESTRUCTION

I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.

—Albert Einstein

Before you can plan the specifics of a Post-Apocalyptic campaign, you have to consider a few preliminary issues that will influence your entire setting and campaign. First and foremost among them is: *what caused the apocalypse?*

The potential causes of the end of civilization as modern humans know it are many and varied, and with a little thought you can no doubt come up with dozens of them with varying degrees of “realism.” Some of the ones most commonly found in Post-Apocalyptic literature and movies, the world of scientific speculation, and other sources include:

NUCLEAR WAR

Within weeks — some said days — it had ended, after the first unleashing of the hell-fire. Cities had become puddles of glass, surrounded by vast acres of broken stone. While nations had vanished from the earth, the lands littered with bodies, both men and cattle, and all manner of beasts[.] And yet where the demons of the Fallout covered the countryside, the bodies for a time would not decay[.] The great clouds of wrath engulfed the forests and the fields, withering trees and causing crops to die. [W]hile some escaped death, none was left untouched; and many died even in those lands where the weapons had not struck, because of the poisoned air.

—Walter Miller, *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

“It came on for a long time, I guess,” Gran continued. “I remember on the teevee they talked about it a lot, and they showed pictures of the bombs that made clouds just like a tremendous mushroom, and each one could wipe out a city, all by itself.”

—Gran remembers the pre-apocalypse world in *The Long Tomorrow*

By far the most common form of apocalypse found in Post-Apocalyptic literature is *nuclear war* — a great cause for fear during the Cold War when many classics of the genre were written, and a threat not to be discounted even in the twenty-first century. Typically the details of the nuclear war are left vague — in most cases, the story takes place centuries or millennia later, so the inhabitants of the Post-Apocalyptic world don't really know what happened. But what's hinted at is a wide-scale nuclear exchange between great powers that tends to leave most major urban areas (including most of the northeastern United States) a radioactive wasteland where few structures remain and it's deadly for people or animals to venture. In some cases the exchange was so enormous that it actually changes the coastlines and landscapes (or perhaps triggers earthquakes that accomplish this). Presumably the loss of all the most important cities then leads to a general collapse of civilization and loss of knowledge. In some cases a “nuclear winter” (a long period of cold caused by the nuclear exchange propelling enormous amounts of dust and dirt into the air) exacerbates the problem by affecting crop yields and other aspects of modern civilization.

From a GMing perspective, the main advantages of using nuclear war for your apocalypse are twofold. First, it's such a staple of the genre that most players expect it, at least on some level. Second, the radiation from the nuclear exchange is what gives rise to mutations among animals and humans. On the other hand, “realistically” a nuclear war might not leave as many ruins for your heroes to explore... but a clever GM can easily come up with a way around that particular difficulty.

Other Wars

Nuclear wars aren't necessarily the only wars that could lead to apocalypse, nor nuclear bombs the only weapons that a mega-war might involve. Biological and chemical warfare could devastate the population just as easily as nuclear warfare while still leaving structures intact to become explorable ruins in the time of the campaign. Nanotechnology weapons (“grey goo”) might destroy everything in their path, then go dormant and wait for “the enemy” (*i.e.*, anything living) to enter their zone of control before re-activating, thus creating the



equivalent of “rad zones” without any radiation. And if the nanoweapons have malfunctioned, they might “remake” people instead of breaking them down, causing mutations.

PLAGUE

The headlines told him what was most essential. The United States from coast to coast was overwhelmed by the attack of some new and unknown disease of unparalleled rapidity of spread, and fatality.

—Ish comes home from a camping trip to learn that 99.99% of humanity has been wiped out by an epidemic in *Earth Abides*

Number Two on the Human Holocaust Hit Parade is disease. Plagues have long been feared for their potential to ravage the human species. To name just two of the best-known, the “Black Death” killed 75 million people worldwide in the fourteenth century (including as much as two-thirds of the population of Europe, according to some estimates), and the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918 resulted in the deaths of as many as a hundred million people (in the United States alone, it killed more people than World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined). Modern transportation systems, coupled with the overuse of antibiotics, make plague an all-too-likely candidate for harbinger of the apocalypse — and in a fictional setting, you can add chemical warfare, genetic manipulation, and other factors into the mix to make things even worse.

For *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* purposes, plague has a lot to recommend it. Most importantly, it kills

people while leaving structures intact, resulting in lots of ruins the PCs can explore that are potentially filled with all sorts of goodies left undisturbed for centuries. With a little bit of GM’s fiat the plague could affect human DNA in ways that cause mutations (if you want them in your campaign), and could remain “hot” in some areas to create danger zones. However, not all GMs may want to leave so much of civilization intact, since it can give the PCs too easy access to too much technology and supplies; in that case, perhaps the epidemic caused rioting or wars that wrecked the cities and buildings the virus couldn’t touch.

ALIEN INVASION

Rather than humanity bringing the apocalypse on itself, armageddon might be imposed on Earth by an outside agency — an alien civilization bent on conquest. Armed with Science Fiction-style weapons of great destruction, the aliens can ravage human society before finally being driven off by plucky men and women armed with crude human weapons and unquenchable human bravery. Or perhaps the aliens *haven’t* been driven off, and the Post-Apocalyptic campaign takes more of the form of “the French Resistance, but with aliens” instead of exploring ruins and fighting cannibal biker gangs.

An alien invasion apocalypse may appeal to gaming groups that like Science Fiction, or which can’t “realistically” buy into the concept of a human-caused apocalypse but can easily suspend their disbelief when aliens are involved. It gives you broad scope to create adversaries and threats, since the aliens could have nearly any type of technol-

ogy or weapon you want them to. But a campaign like this often has a very different “feel” from most *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games and thus may not sit well with some gamers. You might get around this by setting the campaign hundreds or thousands of years after a devastating alien invasion, when humanity has dragged itself back to a medieval level of society and tells stories of the horrific “sky-demons” whose cursed enchantments still affect the land.

ARMAGEDDON

The Rapture had taken place. Jesus Christ had returned for his people, and that boy was not one of them.

—God takes the nice people to Heaven and leaves everyone else to suffer in *Left Behind*

As discussed in Chapter One, religious themes and issues often make their way into Post-Apocalyptic stories, but sometimes they can get involved more directly. Many religions have stories or predictions about the End Of The World... so what if one, or all, of them come true? Angels and devils fight a war on Earth that devastates human civilization, the gods come down from on high to punish man for his sins, the Rapture literally creates Hell on Earth, Ragnarok occurs — just review the apocalyptic legends and myths of a religion that interests you and bring that cataclysm to life in a gaming campaign.

Since religious Armageddon is in at least some respects a mystic disaster, it could have nearly any effect you want, up to and including bringing magic back into the world for the survivors to study and use. However, it lacks the “realism” of many other apocalypse scenarios, and may offend religious players, so tread carefully.

December 20, 2012

In the modern day, one of the most captivating theories of religious apocalypse is that the Mayan “Long Count” calendar predicts the end of creation on December 20, 2012 AD, and the start of a new creation on December 21. This is based on a misinterpretation of the complex Mayan calendar and the way its dates are written; an accurate interpretation dates the end of creation to October 21, 4772 AD. But there’s no reason to let accuracy get in the way of a good gaming campaign. If you want to use the 2012 date as a “plot seed” to explain the apocalypse and start your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign, go for it!

COMET IMPACT

“Hammerlab, this is Houston, we do not copy[.]”

“Jesus, it’s coming close!” Johnny Baker’s voice shouted. “Like it’s going to hit...”

...The comet grew and grew.... And flaming spots appeared on the Earth. ... Flashes in the Atlantic, Europe dotted with bright smears, all over, with a big one in the Mediterranean. A bright flash in the Gulf of Mexico. ...

“Houston, HOUSTON, THERE IS A LARGE STRIKE IN THE GULF OF MEXICO; I SAY

AGAIN, LARGE STRIKE THREE HUNDRED MILES SOUTHEAST OF YOU. REQUEST YOU SEND A HELICOPTER FOR OUR FAMILIES.”

—astronauts in orbit watch as the Hamner-Brown comet hits Earth in *Lucifer’s Hammer*

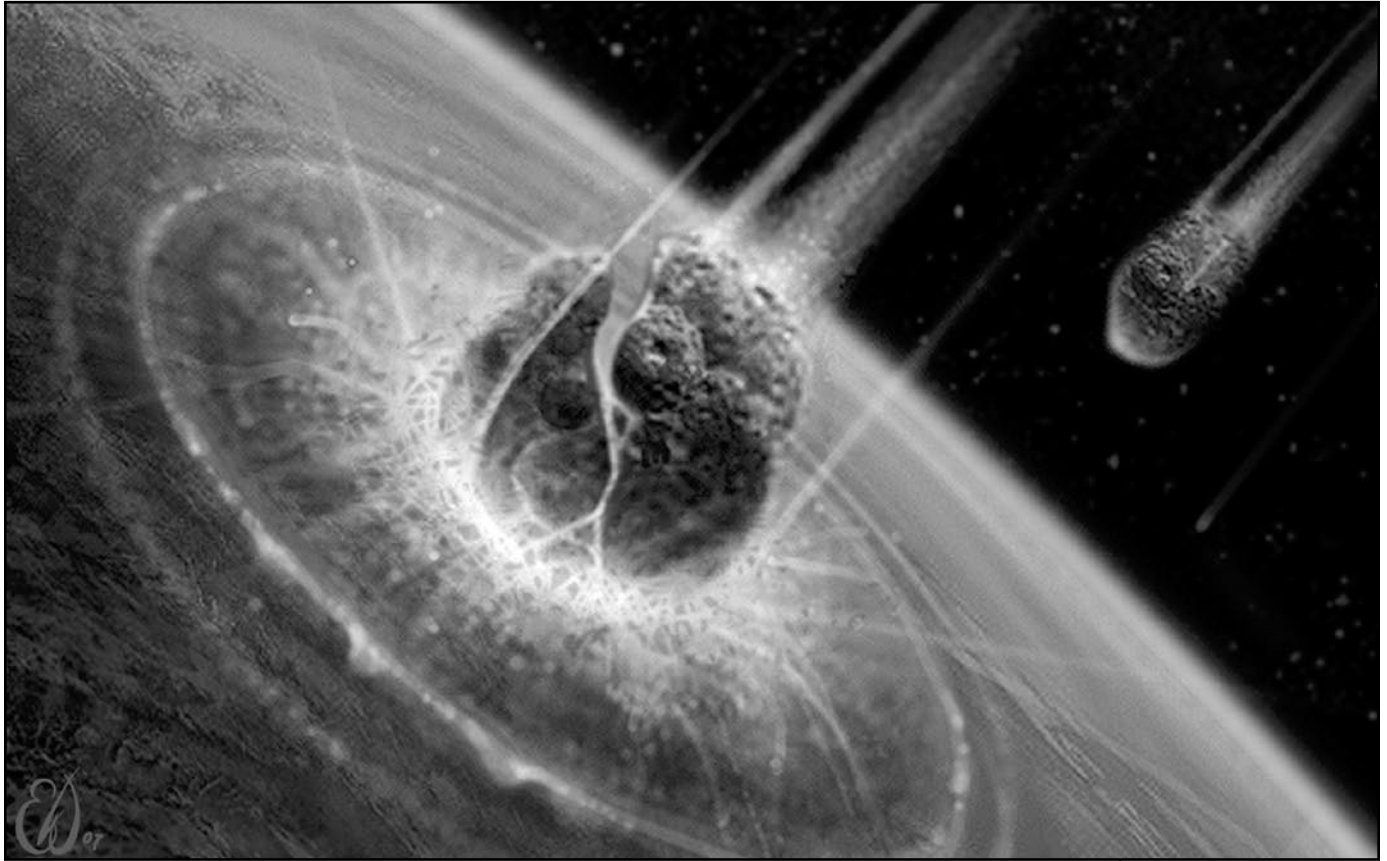
Other than plague, perhaps the most plausible scenario for the widespread destruction of human civilization is a comet, asteroid, or meteor hitting the Earth. Modern research has shown that this is not as uncommon a phenomena as one might hope. According to current theories, a 10 kilometer-wide meteor known as “the Great Exterminator” struck Earth at the end of the Cretaceous Period (about 65 million years ago) in what’s now the Yucatan Peninsula. It hit with a force equal to 100 megatons of TNT, causing the extinction of the dinosaurs and virtually all other life on Earth. And that was just the latest in a string of major impacts: collisions 590 million years ago and 360 million years ago in Australia both had similar effects on the planet and its lifeforms; the same happened 150 million years ago in Norway. The most amazing fact about this may be that *anything* survived these impacts.

More recently, on June 30, 1908 an asteroid the size of a twelve-story building exploded in the atmosphere over Tunguska, Siberia, releasing energy equal to 15 megatons of TNT and destroying two thousand square miles of forest. In July, 1994 mankind witnessed the impact of the comet Shoemaker Levy with the planet Jupiter; one part of it, the Hale-Bopp meteor, created an impact crater bigger than Earth! Comet and asteroid impacts aren’t just things Science Fiction writers make up; they’re a real danger to humanity... one humanity has no real defense against.

From a gaming perspective, comet impact is an intriguing apocalypse scenario because it can unleash such utter devastation. The impact itself obliterates everything in its area, but the aftereffects may be even worse: major earthquakes; devastating tidal waves; weather changes brought about by all the dust and dirt blown into the atmosphere. That makes it easy for you to alter coastlines and other geographical features to suit, to wipe out some areas while leaving others largely intact, and otherwise tailor things to suit your ideas for the campaign. On the other hand, it doesn’t necessarily allow much scope for mutations or other weirdness; comet impact works best for Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, particularly those taking place during or immediately after the apocalypse.

Other Impacts

If a comet, meteor, or asteroid’s not to your taste, there are plenty of other things out there in space that you can use to jump-start your apocalypse. Some people believe there’s a “Planet X” on an extremely long elliptical orbit around the Sun whose return to the central solar system could have devastating effects on Earth. Similarly, astronomers say that on September 11, 2040 all five visible planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) will perfectly align with Earth, the Sun, and the Moon. Some theorists claim this will tilt Earth



on its axis, causing untold devastation... though a similar alignment on May 5, 2000, which inspired the Post-Apocalyptic novel *The New Madrid Run*, had no such effect. Lastly, the star Gliese 710, in the constellation Ophiuchus, is moving in the direction of Earth's solar system at 50,400 kilometers per minute... meaning it might arrive here and impact with the Sun or Earth in about 1.4 million years. But of course, in a fictional setting something might speed it up, and there are other stars (including the relatively nearby Barnard's Star) that might also come a little too close for comfort.

Moon Go Bye-Bye

Nor does an asteroid or comet have to hit the Earth to cause an apocalypse. A near miss that hits the Moon instead, or somehow moves the Moon away from Earth, would destabilize the planet. Without the Moon, tides would diminish, drying up some areas and flooding others, and Earth's axis of rotation would drift (possibly causing severe climate shifts, at least in the long term). Debris from an asteroid-Moon impact could rain down on Earth for years, causing all sorts of problems up to the ones described above. In the worst case scenario, lack of a Moon could eventually stop the Earth from rotating for millions of years, creating a blisteringly hot "sunny side" and a freezing cold "dark side" with a storm-wracked zone of (comparatively) mild temperatures in between.

DEATH FROM THE SUN

"First the sun explodes. That heats the air and the oceans, all in a flash, all across the day side. The steam and superheated air expand fast. A flaming shockwave comes roaring over into the night side. It's closing on us right now. Like a noose."

—Larry Niven, *"Inconstant Moon"*

Solar flares that interfere with modern communications are a well-known, if fortunately infrequent, phenomenon. But as far as Earth's concerned, those are relatively trivial flares. Imagine one much bigger and more powerful — strong enough not just to disrupt radio waves but to wreak death and destruction on the planet. Since you want to keep enough of the world and humanity intact to create a Post-Apocalyptic setting, the flare can't be enough to flash-fry all life on Earth, boil away the oceans, or the like; it has to be just strong enough to devastate the planet and kill off the vast majority of humanity, leaving the survivors to eke out a living among the burnt ruins... and, perhaps, rebuild civilization.

A solar flare apocalypse works well for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* gaming campaigns. It allows for many of the effects of both nuclear war and asteroid impact — widespread geographical changes brought about by stresses on the planet, radioactive areas (and thus perhaps mutations), destruction to whatever degree you deem appropriate. And since it may take centuries for humanity to recover to even a medieval level of technology, you can start the campaign whenever you want in relation to the apocalypse.

Gamma Ray Bursts

When a large, dying star gets suddenly eaten up from inside by a black hole, it causes a *gamma ray burst* — an explosion of gamma rays and x-rays containing as much energy as Earth's sun emits in its entire life. A gamma ray burst within about a thousand light-years would be enough to destroy nearly all life on Earth; one further out might simply destroy Earth's atmosphere, leaving life on the planet exposed to the sun's ultraviolet radiation. In either case a clever GM can concoct many possible Post-Apocalyptic campaign settings out of such an event.

DIRTY ATMOSPHERE

Earth's atmosphere contains particles known as hydroxyls — highly reactive substances that oxidize pollutant gases like carbon dioxide, in effect “cleansing” the air of pollutants. According to some scientists, the amount of hydroxyl in the air has dropped significantly, and is continuing to drop. When it gets too low, the atmosphere will no longer be able to clean itself effectively, and clouds of dangerous, even deadly, pollution will become permanent, with potentially devastating results: sickness among humans and animals; destruction of crops and forests; reduced sunlight; perpetual acid rain.

A clever GM could use this scenario to create a bleak Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign in which the PCs attempt to survive in a darkened world ravaged by airborne pollutants. Food would become the top priority, and fighting over even the smallest edible scraps commonplace. The heroes' task? Find a way to clean the atmosphere and make Earth liveable again.

FAMINE

“For the last month,” Roger said, “[England] has been living on current supplies of food, with less than half a week's stock behind us. In fact, we've been relying absolutely on the food ships from America and the Commonwealth. [But now it] doesn't matter whether they do succeed in [breeding a counter-virus to stop the Chung-Li virus before it wipes out all grass species on Earth]. The fact is that the people who've got the food don't believe they will. And as a result, they want to make sure they aren't giving away stuff they will need themselves next winter. ... About forty-five million [people] live in England. If a third of that number could be supported on a diet of roots, we should be doing well. The only difficulty is — how do you select the survivors?”

—John Christopher, *No Blade Of Grass*

Without enough food, no one can live — and without enough food on Earth, mankind itself will die off. Possible causes of worldwide famine include:

- an unstoppable virus of some sort kills off all or most of the crops (and/or other vegetation)
- a single type of plant (perhaps one genetically engineered for resistance to disease and pollution...) overruns Earth, driving other plants to extinction and thus wrecking the food chain

■ a virus or infection of some sort interferes with human digestion, making it difficult or impossible to derive nutrition from food

Like the Comet Impact scenario, famine works best as the prelude to a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign that takes place during or shortly after the collapse of society. People will see the famine coming and take appropriate steps. Some will hoard as much food as they can and turn their homes into armed fortresses to protect it. Some will do nothing, then riot or attack their neighbors when hunger grips them. Some will see the collapse coming and try to preserve knowledge and culture through it. And in the end most people, including your PCs, will spend their days desperately searching for enough food to keep themselves alive. And in their hunt for sustenance, the PCs just might come across secret information that they can use to restart agriculture... or tantalizing hints of a land where mankind still grows crops and lives in peace.

FLOODING

According to many scientists, among the many potentially catastrophic effects of global warming (see below) is the melting of the polar ice caps, glaciers, and other major sources of ice, with a resulting rise in world sea levels. Some estimates predict a rise of as much as 80-100 meters, which would inundate most coastal areas entirely. Paris would become a seaside city, the East Coast of the United States would be drowned, and the entire map of the world would change. Ninety percent of humanity lives near oceans, so a massive shift in population would take place, stressing the smaller amount of land available to humanity.

From a gaming perspective, flooding of this sort makes for a poor apocalypse — it happens too slowly, giving people too much time to prepare and plan. However, a clever GM might find ways around this. For example, suppose that belligerent aliens use some sort of “heat bomb” to nigh-instantaneously melt the ice caps, the glaciers, and the permafrost. Even if humanity survives the heat explosion, the tidal waves and flooding over the next few days would kill millions and collapse civilization. Time for a bold and resourceful group of heroes to come to the rescue....

ICE AGE ANEW

“Where are you from?”

“The south.”

“The south? They say there are still fields in the south. Is it true?”

“If it were, I'd still be there.”

—Essex makes his way in the frozen world of *Quintet*

Contrary to predictions of global warming, some scientists are concerned about an impending global ice age — or more accurately, a return to a glacial ice age period, since technically speaking Earth is currently in an ice age, just during an interglacial period. According to some theories, a glacial period could start very quickly. Worldwide

average declines of as much as 40° Celsius (104° Fahrenheit) are possible, with devastating effects on agriculture and thus on human civilization. Other possible causes of global freezing include: global warming-spawned algae and other plants consuming most of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; the sun being dimmed by debris from a cometary impact; sunlight being blocked from Earth by debris kicked into the atmosphere via nuclear war, volcanic eruptions, a meteor collision, or the like; a widening of Earth's orbit around the sun; or a tilting of Earth's axis.

Like flooding, global freezing poses problems for Post-Apocalyptic gaming because it tends to happen relatively slowly. However, you could easily create a Post-Apocalyptic setting in which the game takes place long after the “big freeze,” with the characters living in a world of constant ice and snow. Islands of civilization would form around underground greenhouses and power plants, with people supplementing their diets by scavenging cold-preserved food from ruins, hunting seals, and the like.

MAGNETIC FIELD SHIFT

The Earth, like other planets, is sort of a giant magnet, with its own magnetic field that protects the surface (and its inhabitants) from space radiation and similar threats. But it's possible for that field to fail... or even to suddenly shift polarity, with north becoming south and vice-versa. Scientists estimate that these flips occur on average once every 250,000 years... and the last one was about 780,000 years ago.

A magnetic field collapse/shift would pose all sorts of problems for humanity. During the period of shifting (which can last thousands of years) there would probably be multiple or mobile north and south poles, making the use of compasses and similar technology difficult if not impossible. Solar radiation would wreak havoc with communications technology and expose people on the surface to dangerous levels of rads. None of these effects would necessarily be catastrophic, or even as bad as some doomsayers predict — but they could lead to warfare and other difficulties that an enterprising GM can weave together to create his Post-Apocalyptic world.

MEGATSUNAMI

There on the horizon, barely distinguishable at that distance, was a wall of water — a tidal wave at least a hundred feet high and running the entire length of his vision. This colossal wall containing thousands of tons of water was bearing down on the Keys with the speed and intensity of a runaway freight train.

—Travis Christian witnesses an incoming tidal wave in *The New Madrid Run*

It came in a rush, a towering wall of water higher than the highest buildings, an onrushing juggernaut of water foaming gray and white at the base, rising as a green curtain.

—Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *Lucifer's Hammer*

On December 26, 2004 a magnitude 9+ earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered a massive tidal wave, or *tsunami*, that hit India, Indonesia, Thailand, and other parts of southern Asia, killing over 300,000 people and totally wrecking coastal areas in the region. Much smaller tidal waves hit beaches as far away as Mexico. As devastating as that tsunami was, think of one that dwarfs it, wrecking coastal areas around the world. For example, a large-scale collapse into the ocean of part of a volcanic island could trigger a megatsunami. In one imagined scenario, half of La Palma, one of the Canary Islands, could plunge into the ocean. The result could be a wave twice as tall as the Empire State Building that moves at 700 kilometers per hour. It hits the East Coast of the United States, wiping it out entirely — what the impact of the wave doesn't destroy, the receding waters suck back out into the ocean. Europe and other nearby parts of the world would also be affected. Enough waves like that, and human civilization would be washed away.

The megatsunami scenario offers some intriguing possibilities for Post-Apocalyptic games, primarily Low PA games set during and immediately after the wave hits. First the heroes have to survive the impact of all that water, then they have to adjust to a world in which much of civilization has literally been swept out to sea (remember — 90% of humanity lives in coastal regions). As they search for a safe haven to live in, they have to cope with an altered landscape, looters, scavengers, and people trying to seize power.

NO MORE BABIES

“Then... they will recover. But be infertile. ... My God... There will be no children.”

Todd shook his head. “About fifteen percent of the time [the virus we released] doesn't work through all the ovarian follicles. The next generation will drop in population almost an order of magnitude... [t]o rescue the environment... To stop the madness of more and more people.”

—Ecoterrorists virtually destroy mankind by rendering the world's women infertile in “*A Desperate Calculus*,” by Gregory Benford

Universal infertility could destroy human civilization in a matter of decades. Whatever the mechanism — a “superflu” virus targeted at the female reproductive organs (as in the story quoted above), alien spores designed to drastically reduce the human male sperm count, a DDT-like chemical weapon crafted to make human children too fragile to survive — a species that cannot reproduce cannot survive. But if you assume that a tiny percentage of men or women retain the ability to breed, you have a good set-up for a Post-Apocalyptic campaign. Many generations later the PCs find themselves wandering a world inhabited by, say, 5% of the current human population. Most of mankind's structures have fallen into disuse and ruin, and the simple struggle to keep humanity alive has led to drastic changes in society and the loss of much knowledge. In effect, this is much the same as the *Plague* apocalypse described above, but with a disease focused on a specific effect rather than simply killing everyone it infects.

TRUE POST-APOCALYPTIC VERSUS APOCALYPSE AS BACKGROUND

Many stories feature an apocalypse as some element of their background, but that doesn't make them *Post-Apocalyptic* stories as *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* uses that term. A Post-Apocalyptic story has to have the apocalypse itself and/or the state of the post-apocalypse world as important elements, along with themes such as the quest for personal survival and/or refuge, exploring the ruins, and wondering who the Ancients were and how they destroyed their civilization.

In light of that definition, you can see that movies like the *Terminator* series and *Planet Of The Apes*, while they involve an apocalypse and are worth watching for ideas, aren't really Post-Apocalyptic stories. They just use the fact that an apocalypse occurred as a springboard to create a situation in which to tell the story the author has in mind. They might inspire fascinating gaming campaigns, but they themselves aren't really Post-Apocalyptic.

REVOLT OF THE MACHINES

"There was a nuclear war. A few years from now, all this, this whole place, everything, it's gone. Just gone. There were survivors. Here, there. Nobody even knew who started it. It was the machine, Sarah."

"I don't understand."

"Defense network computers. New... powerful... hooked into everything, trusted to run it all. They say it got smart, a new order of intelligence. Then it saw all people as a threat, not just the ones on the other side. Decided our fate in a microsecond: extermination."

"Did you see this war?"

"No. I grew up after. In the ruins... starving... hiding from H-Ks."

"H-Ks?"

"Hunter-Killers — patrol machines built in automated factories. Most of us were rounded up, put in camps for orderly disposal."

—Reese describes the future for Sarah Connor in *The Terminator*

So much of the modern world is so dependent on technology that some Science Fiction writers have wondered: what were to happen if technology turned on its creators? This assumes an advance that, as of 2007, hasn't yet come to pass — true artificial intelligence. From there it's a simple step to imagining that an intelligent machine would decide it's better than humans and "lead" its technological brethren in a crusade to cleanse the world of mankind. Two of the most popular Science Fiction movie series of recent years, the "Terminator" and "Matrix" franchises, are based on this premise.

As a Post-Apocalyptic campaign premise, Revolt of the Machines has a lot to offer. It's got an implacable enemy that the PCs don't have to feel one shred of guilt about killing because it's not even alive. It's got a heavy emphasis on military-style action, since the PCs have to actively fight the killer robots sent to destroy them. Handled properly, it can even have a touch of the traditional "explore the ruins" style of Post-Apocalyptic play, as the heroes poke through the rubble of human society to try to find the information and weapons needed to defeat the machine intelligence at last.

Nanotech Amok

For a more "traditional" apocalypse and Post-Apocalyptic setting involving machines, consider nanotechnology. Suppose a "grey goo" nanoweapon, designed to break down matter and use that matter to make more nanoweapons, got out of control and ravaged Earth, turning organic and inorganic matter alike into more tiny devices. The few human survivors would have to hide in remote regions, praying that flying nanobot surveillance devices never found them, until the nanomachines somehow "died off" and the humans could try to reclaim the planet. In a few areas, the nanoweapons might never entirely die off, creating rad zone-like areas where only the boldest would dare to go.

Technological Failure

As an alternative to machinery actually attacking people, suppose it just stops working. Perhaps an alien virus released by extraterrestrial invaders destroys it, but whatever the reason, suddenly there are no more devices. You determine the extent of the loss — is it just electronics (leaving engines and such in working condition), or is everything more advanced than, say, Renaissance-level technology affected? In either case, a humanity depending on technology would soon find itself in desperate straits. War, famine, plague, and rioting would probably occur. The PCs in such a campaign might try to find the reasons for the collapse and reverse them so machinery can work again, or if the game takes place centuries later might have to re-discover technology somehow.

VOLCANIC DOOM

According to some scientists, the Permian-Triassic extinction, which ended 90-95% of life on Earth at the time, was caused by a volcano — or more precisely a supervolcano, one whose eruption makes that of an ordinary volcano look minuscule. A supervolcanic eruption could threaten human civilization in several ways. First there's the lava, which burns and crushes anything near the volcano. Second, there's the clouds of ash, which can darken regions and lower temperatures by blocking out the sun. Third, volcanoes emit toxic gasses: sulphurous compounds that would lead to rains of sulphuric acid; chlorine compounds to break down the ozone layer; carbon dioxide to hasten the greenhouse effect; and more.

If this idea appeals to you as the premise for a Post-Apocalyptic campaign, consider this: there's a supervolcano underneath Yellowstone National Park. It erupts an average of once every 600,000 years... and the last one was 640,000 years ago.

WARMING

Many scientists now accept that Earth is experiencing global warming caused, most believe, by human activities and humanity's general impact on the atmosphere. The gradual warming studied or predicted by most of them is no apocalypse, but some have made more dire forecasts: as early as 2015, they say, the warming of Earth's climate could pass a tipping point. What happens then is the rising heat melts ice (releasing trapped carbon dioxide from ancient times) and increases evaporation. Increased evaporation and carbon dioxide in the air increase the so-called "greenhouse effect" until you get a runaway greenhouse effect that feeds on itself. At that point it's too late to stop it... and in time Earth ends up like Venus, with an atmosphere so thick that heat cannot escape and metals like lead and tin melt at surface temperatures.

Long before that point, of course, humanity would have died out or had to make radical changes in the name of survival. The tattered remnants of the human race might be reduced to living in super-sturdy climate-controlled domes, venturing outside only in special protection suits. A Post-Apocalyptic Hero campaign in a such a setting might focus on the heroes' attempts to find the long-lost technological secrets that would allow humanity to reverse the process... or build spacecraft to take it to another, habitable, planet.

CAMPAIGN TIMEFRAME

Deciding how civilization collapses is only part of your task as GM. You also have to consider *when* to set your campaign in relation to the apocalypse. There are several options, each with its benefits and drawbacks.

DURING THE APOCALYPSE

There will be legends, he thought, of broad avenues celestially lit, of the hurrying millions who lived together without plotting each other's deaths, of railway trains and airplanes and motorcars, of food in all its diversity. Most of all, perhaps, of policemen — custodians, without anger or malice, of a law that stretched to the ends of the earth.

—John Custance contemplates the coming apocalypse in *No Blade Of Grass*

Some GMs want to start their campaigns in the heart of the action: the apocalypse itself. In this case, the PCs are usually everyday people going about their everyday lives... when disaster strikes. Cut off from their loved ones and/or safety, they must band together to brave the dangers of the new post-apocalypse world and either (a) reach safety, or (b) start to rebuild civilization, or (c) both.

The advantage of this type of campaign is that the PCs are immediately spurred to action, and it's usually pretty obvious what they need to do. It's a tense, dangerous time, leading to exciting action scenes and intense roleplaying. However, some players may feel a little “railroaded” by being thrust right into the middle of things. You can get around this by giving them a little advance notice — by starting the campaign before the apocalypse and hinting at what's to come. This may cause problems of its own, though; clever PCs who realize what's about to happen may start stockpiling weapons, food, and other supplies in a way that derails your plans for later in the campaign (since lack of those resources is an excellent motivating factor). Furthermore, in this timeframe you can't have any mutants or other strange opponents; there simply hasn't been time for them to arise or evolve.

A FEW YEARS LATER

Prewar! A word like a sword, cutting across history with a brutality of murder, hazing everything in the past until it was a vague golden glow[.] And — only two years. Only two years! ... Why, he could barely remember Barbara and the kids. Their faces were blotted out in a tide of other visages — starved faces, dead faces, human faces become beastformed with want and pain and eating throttled hate.

—Poul Anderson, “*Tomorrow's Children*”

Starting a campaign a few years after the apocalypse avoids some of the problems described above. At this stage you can dictate how many resources the PCs have; none of them can claim to have “seen it coming” and prepared (unless they're willing to pay Character Points for things like the

Supplies Perk) and arrange the current state of civilization to suit yourself. This is an ideal timeframe for a “Quest to Safety” campaign: the PCs realize their current situation is untenable due to an encroaching warlord, the aftereffects of the collapse, or dwindling resources and that they have to head for safer ground.

The drawback to this timeframe tends to be the retention of knowledge and availability of supplies. If only a few years have passed, people still remember the pre-apocalypse world and may still possess vast stores of knowledge about subjects like technology. Furthermore, scavengeable goods are probably still widely available (unless the apocalypse utterly destroyed them), so motivating the PCs through lack of resources is tougher.

GENERATIONS LATER

Within a few generations — say, no more than about a hundred years or so — the story may be different. By that point the dangers of the Post-Apocalyptic world have taken their toll. People who personally remember the pre-apocalypse world are all dead, and with their passing much of their knowledge has been lost forever, since the needs of day-to-day survival make people forget things like teaching their children all about chemistry and physics. Legends about the pre-apocalypse world may have already arisen, setting the stage for even more extreme tales in centuries to come. And scavengeable resources may no longer be so readily available — either someone's already found and taken them, or they've become rotten, spoiled, or otherwise useless.

CENTURIES OR MILLENNIA LATER

Eleven hundred years had passed since the Time of Fire, and civilization was slowly returning to what had been the Mississippi Valley.

—from the back cover of
The Dome In The Forest

Last but not least, you can set a Post-Apocalyptic campaign centuries, or even millennia, after the collapse of civilization. This is the standard method for High Post-Apocalyptic campaigns — ones featuring mutants, magic, and/or other weird powers. The first three choices are appropriate primarily for Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, and you can even have a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign in this timeframe (see, for example, the “Pelbar Cycle” novels of Paul Williams). But typically it takes hundreds or thousands of years for mutants to “realistically” become a standard part of the population and for other changes conducive to High Post-Apocalyptic gaming to occur.

Beyond that, setting your campaign long after the apocalypse raises all the tantalizing possibilities of exploring ruins and recovering long-lost knowledge and technology. The thrill of that sort of discovery is a major part of the Post-Apocalyptic fun for many gamers, and it's available in its purest form only in this timeframe.



Things Fall Apart

“I’ve been thinking — how long do you think railway lines will be recognizable as railway lines? Twenty years — thirty? And how long will people remember that there were such things, once upon a time? Shall we tell fairy stories to our great-grandchildren about the metal monsters that ate coal and breathed out smoke?”

—Roger contemplates an unpleasant future in *No Blade Of Grass*

When you’re choosing a timeframe, you should give some thought to the level of ruin and collapse you want in society’s infrastructure. Fortunately, modern humanity’s never suffered through anything even close to the sort of total societal cataclysm depicted in most Post-Apocalyptic stories, so it’s difficult to say with any accuracy how long roads, buildings, and other features of modern life might “realistically” last. What’s provided here are some tentative benchmarks the GM can use if he wants to, and ignore otherwise. It’s an easy enough matter to provide a dramatically appropriate “explanation” to keep things around just as long as you want them to.

In evaluating this “timeline,” you should keep many factors in mind. Modern materials may not break down as fast as some people estimate; after all, the Egyptian pyramids were built thousands of years ago and remain basically intact. (On the other hand, they don’t require much maintenance.) Infrastructure in coastal and temperate areas will be exposed to more weathering and other forms

of degradation than infrastructure in less volatile climates. Items that are properly stored (which usually means “in a well-sealed container in cool, dry conditions”) last longer, and remain in usable condition longer, than ones that are improperly stored, exposed to heat or wetness, or the like. Well-made items, or items made of sturdier materials, last longer than shoddy or poorly-made ones. Attacks or sabotage by crazed cannibal mutants may bring an end to many facilities that would otherwise survive for a long time.

Keeping all that in mind, assuming humanity completely vanished and stopped maintaining its infrastructure in a day, here’s how long it takes things to break down:

Within 24 hours: most coal-fired power plants shut down due to lack of fuel or lack of operator response; due to cascading failures in national power systems, most nations would have lost power in most areas; wildlife begins to thrive

Within a week: most nuclear power plants shut down due to lack of operator response (they typically have enough “fuel” to last 500 days or so); the same applies to natural gas power plants

3 months: air pollution lessens; hydroelectric power plants shut down due to lack of operator response (with many aftereffects, such as underground tunnels flooding when pumps stop working); most fields become overgrown

18 months: properly-stored flour goes bad; properly-stored spices go bad

2 years: properly-stored grains go bad

3.5 years: minimum storage duration for US Army MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) at an average temperature of 27° C (80° F).

2-8 years: most properly-stored canned foods go bad (typically within four years; soups and the like last longer); many roads become blocked by fallen trees and the like; cracks in cement and roads caused by freezing and plant roots proliferate and widen; small wild animals return to urban areas

10 years: methane is gone from the atmosphere; most properly-stored gasoline has become inert (improperly-stored gasoline can become inert in as little as a month); animals largely dependent on urban humanity (such as rats and roaches) decline significantly

20 years: rural roads and buildings become overgrown by vegetation; subway tunnels decay and collapse; large wild animals return to urban areas

50-100 years: urban roads and buildings become overgrown by vegetation

100 years: wooden buildings decay and collapse; reforestation is complete in many areas; most human-bred plant and animal species now wiped out by natural competitors

100-200 years: modern bridges decay and collapse

200 years: metal buildings decay and collapse; properly-stored ammunition becomes unusable

250 years: modern dams decay and collapse

1,000 years: brick, stone, and concrete buildings have mostly decayed and collapsed by this time; carbon dioxide in the atmosphere returns to pre-human levels

50,000 years: glass and plastics degrade; only archaeological traces of human existence remain

Of course, if you want to set your game centuries or millennia in the future and still have ruins for your PCs to explore, you'll have to forget some of these "realistic" predictions. If you plan for your heroes to discover a valuable trove of rare canned food 500 years after the bombs fell, forget "the facts" and let them do it because it's fun. If you want their enemies to ride working motorcycles with intact tires and usable gasoline, go right ahead. Never let reality, or predictions about reality, interfere with your enjoyment of the genre and the game.

Technology Level

Besides the basic issue of the campaign timeframe in relation to the apocalypse, you should also consider when it occurs in time — in other words, does your campaign's apocalypse occur in what you would term "the modern day" or "the future"? (Or possibly even "the past.") This mainly matters because it defines the sort of technology the PCs may find amidst the ruins.

Typically Post-Apocalyptic stories don't feature futuristic technology. If the characters find any devices amid the ruins, they're items of technology easily recognized by the modern reader: radios, televisions, computers, firearms. At most the background history of the setting might feature one or two notable "Science Fiction"-level pieces of tech. That one piece is crucial to the story (typically it starts the apocalypse, somehow), but otherwise the technology remains ordinary.

In a few Post-Apocalyptic settings, including many created for gaming purposes, things go further. The apocalypse itself takes place decades or centuries after the present day, when mankind has developed amazing devices that are still the province of Science Fiction: laser and energy weapons; robots; antigravity cars; powered armor. Thus you may end up with a group of Post-Apocalyptic characters carrying everything from swords and axes forged from salvaged metal to an XR-73 Plasma Assault Rifle scavenged from a ruined armory and a Universal Medkit able to cure any disease or heal any injury. This offers you a lot more scope of creativity when planning adventures and offering the PCs "treasure," but may also spoil some of the fun of the genre by making some tasks too easy for the heroes or minimizing the dangers they have to face.

CAMPAIGN TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

After you decide how advanced pre-apocalypse society was, you should consider the current state of affairs in the post-apocalypse world as of the time the campaign begins. Typically this depends on (a) the extent of the destruction, (b) how long after the apocalypse the campaign begins, and (c) the type of campaign you want to run.

First, the more destruction that takes place, the further civilization is likely to fall. If nuclear bombs have wiped out all the major cities and scientific/industrial facilities, the survivors may lack the resources to rebuild to the same level; similarly, a plague that kills off 98% of humanity doesn't leave enough survivors behind to preserve the knowledge base. This is the usual state of affairs in most *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* gaming campaigns. It tends to make for better gaming if the fall has been far and the heroes have relatively few technological resources to call upon, particularly in High Post-Apocalyptic games.

But this may depend on the nature of the campaign you want to run and the timeframe you've chosen. If you're planning a Road Wars game, enough technology and technological know-how has to remain to use, build, and tinker with cars, and that implies at least some reten-

APOCALYPSING AN EXISTING CAMPAIGN

Sometimes you don't want to create a Post-Apocalyptic campaign from scratch — instead you want to take an existing campaign of some sort and put it through the apocalypse wringer. This has several benefits. First, it saves you some work. Second, it lets you incorporate places (and perhaps certain items) from the campaign into the Post-Apocalyptic setting to help convey the nature of the setting to the players. It will have a real impact on them when their Post-Apocalyptic characters come across what (to the players) are obviously the ruins of their superhero team's high-tech headquarters.

Apocalypsing an existing campaign isn't that different from creating an all-new Post-Apocalyptic campaign in many respects. You still need to consider the same fundamental questions: what caused the apocalypse; how long ago was it; how thorough was the destruction; what's society like now. You just have to do it with an eye toward what made your former campaign cool, fun, and noteworthy. If it featured a particular style of architecture, you need to include that in your description of ruins. If characters in it had superpowers or weird powers of some sort, you have to decide if characters can still have them, or if the apocalypse somehow changed whatever made them possible.

As you run an apocalypsed campaign, you have to be careful not to let the players exploit knowledge they have, but which their characters should not. The *players* know that the majestic but ruined building in the center of the city used to be the headquarters of the Justice Patrol, but their *player characters* probably do not. At most they might have heard legends about the "great wizards who lived in the shattered tower," or they might recognize from the building's size, appearance, and location that it was once something important. Once the PCs get inside, they shouldn't be allowed to head right for the areas the players know are most likely to contain valuable salvage; there's no way the PCs could know what's where. If you can't restrain the players by appeals to their common and dramatic sense, use harsher methods — like destroying or utterly blocking access to anything you don't want them to have.

tion of related processes and devices. If your campaign takes place during or immediately after the apocalypse, just about anyone still alive will remember pre-apocalypse technology and culture... and perhaps how to re-create it.

After you take those considerations into account you can set a campaign technology level. Typical Post-Apocalyptic tech levels include:

■ *Medieval technology:* Civilizations has fallen so far that people have been reduced to pre-industrial technology. Transportation involves riding animals or wind-powered ships, and most people don't travel far from where they were born. Labor involves draft animals or human muscle power. Trade mainly takes the form of barter or involves metallic money. Warriors wield swords, shields, and bows, and wear armor made of leather or metal.

■ *Nineteenth century technology:* In this case society fell, but not as far as in the above setting. Humans retain some technological knowledge and advances, but comparable to those found in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. For example they might have a few steamships or steam-powered locomotives, and they have Victorian-era firearms, but little or no electrical power or gasoline engines.

■ *Pockets of high technology:* Most humans live in a world of medieval technology. But a few lucky groups have settled around a technological resource that still works. For example, they might still have electricity and running water in the village, or maybe their "town hall" is a former National Guard armory whose contents (submachine guns, small tanks, and so on) are used by the town guard to keep everyone safe. This level of technology implies either that (a) some people have learned to work with and repair pre-apocalypse devices, or (b) those devices are so advanced they continue to work without significant human input or maintenance decades or centuries later.

■ *Salvaged high technology:* Most humans live in a world of medieval technology. But working high-tech devices are sometimes salvaged from the ruins and used by their lucky finders (or purchasers). So in an otherwise medieval town, you might encounter a prosperous merchant who has a grav-cart to move trade goods with, a hard-bitten warrior who wears a pistol (ordinary or laser) on his hip, or a traveler with a working automobile.

■ *Selective high technology:* Most of society has been reduced to a pre-modern level of technology, but some specific types of technology remain in existence. This is common in Road Wars campaigns, for example, which by definition need cars and motorcycles even if other types of devices no longer work.

CHARACTER GUIDELINES

Even before you set pen to paper to create your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* world, you should consider the nature and power of the PCs. As the protagonists of the campaign, the characters who occupy center stage all the time, the PCs have a greater effect on the game than any other factor.

The player characters' level of power, and thus the type of characters you can expect players to create, depends largely on how many Character Points the players build them on. A game where you allow players to build 200- or 250-point characters provides you with a wider range of PC types and abilities than one with 100- or 150-point characters — but it's also likely to increase any problems you may have challenging the PCs and maintaining game balance. When deciding how many points PCs can start with, you should consider the following issues:

SUBGENRE

First, what subgenre(s) does your campaign emulate? Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, including Road Wars and Zombie Apocalypse games, almost always feature lower-powered characters (ones built on no more than 150 Character Points total, and possibly much less), while High Post-Apocalyptic games and some cinematic Low PA campaigns use higher point totals so the PCs can afford mutant powers and other unusual abilities. These are just guidelines, though — there's no reason you can't have high-powered PCs in an otherwise "realistic" campaign.

HEROES VERSUS THE WORLD

How do you want the PCs to compare to the world around them? Low-powered heroes may have trouble dealing with biker gangs, cannibal mutants, and similar adversaries. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some powerful heroes may be able to affect the course of entire nations or regions. If the PCs can easily dispense with everyday opposition, that colors their perception of the world and influences their role within it.

Think about the types of adventures you want to run and what you expect the PCs to do over the course of the campaign. That tells you a lot about the type of PCs that best fit your game. For example, if you plan for a mostly Road Wars-style campaign focusing on travel from one adventure location to another, vehicular combat, and some exploration of the ruins, you want your PCs to regard the average biker gang member as a threat — if the heroes are significantly more powerful than that, your scenarios won't pose much of a challenge to them. While any one PC should be more powerful and skilled than any one typical ganger (they are the heroes of the story, after all!), two or three gangers should probably be a match for a PC. On the other hand, a campaign of more epic scope or fantastic adventure may require PCs of greater competence and ability.

POWER LEVELS AND EFFECTIVENESS CEILINGS

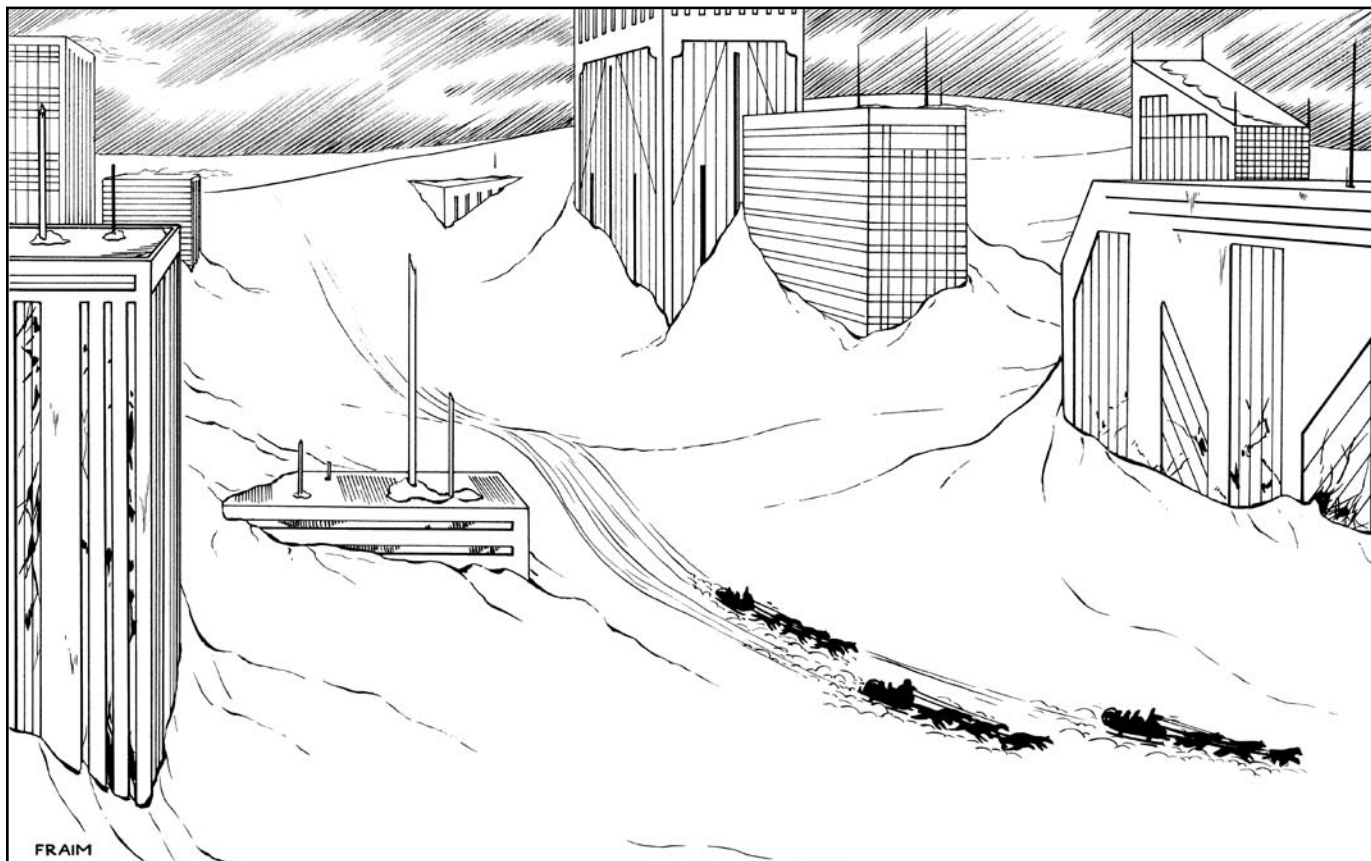
You should decide whether you want to impose restrictions on the amount of power, CV, Skills, and the like that characters can have. Characters built on large numbers of points may not be nearly as powerful as those points imply if you limit what they can spend points on.

In a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* context, point ceilings — restrictions on how many Active Points a power or ability can have — usually aren't appropriate. While it's possible to restrict the Active Points in weapons or characters' skills, in most cases that's neither necessary nor "realistic." Powerful weapons may be available to most *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* PCs through scavenging, so imposing artificial restrictions on the "power" of weapons usually harms the campaign's "feel." A better solution is to find plausible in-game reasons to restrict characters' access to equipment, such as the apocalypse having destroyed it. Similarly, many mutant powers and like abilities, while powerful, also tend to be heavily Limited, making them less problematic than their Active Points might otherwise indicate.

Effectiveness ceilings — restrictions on characters' CVs, DEXs, Skill rolls, Combat Skill Levels, DCs, or the like — are more common in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games than point ceilings. An effectiveness ceiling helps you control the PCs' overall power, making it easy for you to know what can challenge them and what can't. It also encourages characters to broaden and diversify their abilities, since the ceiling stops them from spending all their Experience Points on the same things game after game. But effectiveness ceilings can lead to problems of their own. First, they may restrict the types of weapons characters can use (since simulating some weapons properly requires a lot of DCs), and that may not make sense, "realistically." Second, over the course of a long campaign, you may soon wind up with a lot of characters who look identical to each other, or who try to find ways around the effectiveness ceiling even when those ways make no sense given their character concepts. You may need to increase the ceiling slowly over the course of the campaign, at least in one or two areas for each character type (for example, maybe you allow road warriors to buy more DEX and SPD than other characters can, and gunslingers more Range Skill Levels).

Normal Characteristic Maxima

Intertwined with the concept of effectiveness ceilings are the Normal Characteristic Maxima rules, which impose a sort of ceiling on how many points characters can spend on Characteristics. Typically *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games feature NCM as a campaign default, for no Character Points, but the GM might choose not to use that rule in some High Post-Apocalyptic games. See the *Characteristics* section of Chapter Two for more information on using Normal Characteristic Maxima.



The Arms Race

Weapons and fighting skills are a prominent part of the *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* genre. It's not uncommon for an "arms race" to develop in the campaign sooner or later. The players start trying to get more and bigger weapons for their characters, and they cry foul when the GM doesn't reward them with "treasure" in the form of salvaged assault weapons, APCs, grenades, or maybe even laser rifles. Some of them even spend a lot of Character Points on Skills related to building, finding, or repairing weapons just to ensure they've got as much access as possible to the maximum firepower.

There isn't necessarily anything wrong with this — after all, finding "toys" amidst the ruins is one of the fun aspects of the *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* genre. But the arms race becomes a problem if the PCs acquire so much military hardware that they have little difficulty defeating their opposition. All good stories involve a challenge of some kind that the main characters have to overcome. If your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* PCs can cut through legions of mutant creatures and vicious biker gangs without breaking a sweat because they've got a minor arsenal's worth of weaponry, there's no challenge for them, and therefore everyone has less fun. Dealing with this conflict — wanting to give the characters more "toys," but not so many that they wreck the game — is one of the hardest things for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* GMs to do.

Some suggestions to help you reduce or eliminate this problem:

- *Give the characters "toys" with limited uses:* Giving the characters an unlimited supply of grenades can easily unbalance a campaign. Giving them half a dozen grenades that they have to save for only the most crucial situations is fun. Fortunately, it's usually easy to restrict *Post-Apocalyptic* characters' access to such weapons, since they can only have whatever they're lucky enough to salvage or steal.

- *Give them "toys," but don't let them use them for very long:* Just because the heroes find weapons doesn't mean they get to use them forever. They may have a limited supply of ammunition (a common occurrence in the *Post-Apocalyptic* genre), or the weapon may be on the verge of breaking down after just a few shots. And of course an enemy can always steal the PCs' gear.

- *Substitute equipment damage for character damage:* When a character takes major damage from an enemy's attack, have that attack damage or destroy a weapon or other piece of equipment, rather than the character. You might even give the player a choice between character damage and equipment damage — a player who doesn't want to give up his character's gear can always opt to have his character take the actual damage. Similarly, you can have NPC attackers target the PCs' weapons.

And don't forget — the bad guys can have powerful "toys," too. Anything the PCs use against their enemies, their enemies can use against them (though this also gives the PCs an opportunity to get those weapons by defeating their foes). Pointing this out to the PCs may cause them to rein themselves in voluntarily.

EXPERIENCE POINTS AND CHARACTER GROWTH

You should also consider how, and how fast, you want the characters to grow in competence and power. If you're planning a long-term campaign with frequent game sessions and generous Experience Point awards, building PCs with a relatively small amount of Character Points doesn't cause as many problems, since the players know their characters will become more powerful at a fairly steady pace. On the other hand, if you can't run game sessions on a regular basis, or you prefer to control character growth by minimizing the number of Experience Points you award, it may work better if the PCs start out fairly powerful. Otherwise they're likely to become aggravated when they constantly run up against situations their characters *should* be able to cope with, but can't because they don't yet have the points to buy all the Knowledge Skills, Talents, and abilities they should have based on character conception.

Generally speaking, a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* character built on, say, 150 Character Points plus 150 Experience Points tends to be better developed than a starting character built on 300 Character Points. The latter character probably has a larger attack, or more attacks, but the experienced character is more well-rounded as a person. The gradual acquisition of Experience Points leads to different spending patterns than giving a player a large lump of Character Points to spend all at once. Starting at relatively lower power levels, but building over the course of the campaign, may be the best approach for many *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games.

CAMPAIGN TONE

A campaign's *tone* refers to its morality, realism, and outlook, and the importance of the player characters.

MORALITY

Establishing the proper moral tone for your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign may be the single most important thing you can do to define the game for your players. The moral tone of the setting should strongly influence how the PCs conduct themselves.

The typical Post-Apocalyptic paradigm tends to be "every man for himself." It's a harsh, brutal world out there, one where every man has to do whatever he can to survive. But of course that doesn't make for enjoyable heroes. A hero has to have something more going for him than, "I'm going to survive until tomorrow." When push comes to shove, he's got to be willing to lay his life on the line for something he believes in, even if that something is getting revenge on a villain who's hurt him (and thus saving the region from that villain's depredations). A character who won't risk his life to save someone (or something) worth saving — such as a precious pre-apocalypse resource or a peaceful village threatened by cannibal mutants — is a character you don't want in your campaign. Getting

him to truly participate in the stories your group is telling will be like pulling eyeteeth. Characters who can't see beyond themselves, beyond their own thoughts and desires, are death to any vibrant, active *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign.

Hope In The Face Of Apocalypse

One of the central themes of *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* is brave men of insight attempting to hold back the darkness — to prevent the collapse of society from destroying *everything* of value, to resurrect society from the ashes, to create a haven of safety for themselves and their loved ones, to recover long-lost knowledge or technology, or to prevent the apocalypse from happening again. In other words, the PCs should be a force for hope, standing firm in the face of despair and evil. They shouldn't be glorified thugs with greater firepower, crushing anyone who gets in the way of their "fun."

You should convey to the PCs that they can and do make a difference. They need to have long-lasting or permanent triumphs, both with individuals and with organizations (and/or society as a whole) to validate their existence as heroes. Not every game will involve a permanent solution to some problem, but at least some games should. *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games shouldn't descend into simple struggles for survival, where morality is meaningless and there's no real purpose to the characters' actions beyond getting enough calories for the day or enough gas to keep driving.

REALISM

The issue of how "realistic" a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign should be is one of the trickiest you'll grapple with as a GM. On the one hand, the Post-Apocalyptic takes place more or less in the "real world" — not in a Fantasy realm, on some distant planet, or in a world where superhumans are commonplace (unless mutants fill that role). That creates certain expectations of "realism" that you have to maintain. Guns and gear have to behave like we expect them to behave. Biker gangs stick to relatively plausible schemes. Cars need fuel if you want to head on down the road.

But at the same time, the action-adventure genre is often "romantic" in the dramatic sense of the term: unrealistic, given to the outrageous and improbable in the name of storytelling, excitement, and fun. While practical issues pertaining to food, ammunition, and fuel are a part of nearly every *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* game, you don't want to go too far lest you turn the game into Mercantile Accounting 101. There are times when it's more fun to "wing it" and not worry too much about whether the PCs are going to run out of shotgun shells, or whether they can "realistically" leap from one speeding vehicle to another safely.

OUTLOOK

What sort of overall perspective does your campaign have — optimistic or pessimistic? In the former, the PCs can generally expect things to turn out right, and they know there's always *some* hope for victory or success even when things seem darkest. In the latter, the PCs have to face up to the

cold, hard realities of life: things don't always go their way, they can't always overcome the odds, and whether they succeed or fail is entirely up to them (and, perhaps, luck).

In *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, a campaign's outlook usually depends on its subgenre — the more “cinematic” the game, the brighter the outlook for the PCs. In some ultra-“realistic” Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, PCs can rarely expect things to go their way 100%, but in cinematic games usually everything turns out all right in the end — and the hero gets the girl to boot!

IMPORTANCE OF THE HEROES

Last, but perhaps most crucially, how important are the PCs? Obviously in any campaign the characters are the focus of the story, but how important are they *within the campaign world*? Can they affect the outcome of major events, such as wars? Does the fate of the world rest on their shoulders? In part, this may relate to the subgenre of the campaign, or the characters' level of power or backgrounds — a mutant who can fire laser beams from his eyes is more likely to find himself in a position to save the world than a scruffy road warrior.



CAMPAIGN THEME

The *theme* of a campaign is the underlying subject or focus of all the adventures. It isn't strictly necessary to have one, but a campaign without a theme may seem disconnected and unfocused. For example, a High Post-Apocalyptic campaign may focus on the theme of the value of knowledge. Over the course of the campaign, the PCs may encounter many different characters and situations, triumph over adversity, suffer setbacks. But regardless of the type of adventures they or the outcome of those adventures, the underlying theme remains the same: the heroes have to keep striving to attain or regain knowledge.

It's possible to have more than one theme in a campaign. Adventures can cycle among a couple of different underlying subjects — the exploits of a group of road warriors could alternate between the perils of technology and preserving civilization. You shouldn't get carried away with multiple themes, though, since having too many isn't much better than having none at all.

Be careful not to confuse theme with message. “Knowledge has value” is a theme; “people can do bad things with knowledge” is a message. You can return to a theme, look at it from various angles, and develop it in depth. But once you've stated a message, the only thing to do is state it again.

Common themes in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* include:

CIVILIZATION AS A VIRTUE

One of the strongest themes running through much Post-Apocalyptic literature is that civilization has value, and that men must be civilized beings or else they'll be little better than beasts. Even though people know that society once rose to such heights of power that its power destroyed it, they still want the benefits that civilization can bring. They attempt, in whatever crude ways they can, to rebuild what was lost and improve their lives. Even when perils aplenty confront them, they cling to their dream... though they may have to move to a safer place to keep pursuing it.

THE COST OF SURVIVAL

John said, “I think we might take [Davey's best friend with us].”

Something of Ann's expression reminded him of what he had seen in the headmaster's; not the fear, but the guilt.

She said, “No, it's ridiculous. ... When you told me — about Miss Errington, I thought it was dreadful. But I still hadn't realized what was happening. I do now. We've got to get to the valley, and get the children there as well. We can't afford any extras, even this boy.”

—John and Ann Custance debate the morality of charity in *No Blade Of Grass*

Survival is a major aspect of most Post-Apocalyptic stories — characters work hard to find enough food, fuel, and ammunition to



keep themselves alive. But beyond that practical, elemental issue lies the question of what a character will do to survive. Will he kill an innocent person to steal that person's food? Will he fall in with a group of cannibal mutants to share their repugnant feast rather than starve to death? Will he turn his back on people in need because he has a better chance of making it out alive on his own? In short — how much of his humanity is he willing to sacrifice just to stay alive?

THE PERILS OF TECHNOLOGY

"Yes," [Sherman] said. "Atomic power. That concrete wall is the outer face of the shield. Behind it is the reactor."

Silence again, except for the throbbing of that great voice that never stopped. The concrete wall loomed up like the wall of hell, and Len's heart slowed and the blood in him turned cold as snow water.

Behind it is the reactor.

Behind it is evil and night and terror and death.

...[H]e shouted at them, "Wasn't one burning of the world enough? Why did you have to keep this thing alive?"

—Len encounters the world's last working nuclear reactor in *The Long Tomorrow*

While they may seek it out because it's so useful, Post-Apocalyptic characters often realize (or

discover) that technology can be as perilous as it is beneficial. On a personal level, the technology they recover or learn to use may in turn be used against them, forcing them into an arms race where they have to find better and better technology to cope with the enemy. And looming over the setting like a dark cloud may be the question of whether developing or recovering too much technology could lead to another apocalypse....

THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

"You can't destroy knowledge. You can stamp it under and burn it up and forbid it to be, but somewhere it will survive."

—Sherman responds to Len in *The Long Tomorrow*

Underlying much of Post-Apocalyptic literature and film is the belief that knowledge has great value and must be preserved, whatever the cost. Characters go to great lengths and put themselves in mortal danger to learn what to the reader/viewer are trivial facts — because knowledge is a Good Thing in and of itself, whether it has practical value. They go on adventures to track down rumors of a surviving copy of a play by someone with the strange name of Vil Shaikspeer, fight their way into a cannibal cult's stronghold to steal the cult's obscure, water-damaged copies of old technical manuals, and explore dangerous ruins in the hope of finding readable books.

CAMPAIGN TYPES

After, or at the same time as, choosing a theme, you need to decide on the type of campaign you want to run. Often one decision leads to another; a game focused on exploring ruins probably emphasizes the Value of Knowledge much more than the Cost of Survival.

Subgenre

Chapter One describes the various Post-Apocalyptic Hero subgenres. Each subgenre has benefits and drawbacks from a gaming perspective; keeping these in mind as you create a campaign should let you maximize the former, and minimize the latter.

LOW POST-APOCALYPTIC

The Low Post-Apocalyptic subgenre is the most common one in literature and film, so it's likely to supply much of your (and your players') inspiration for a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign. It provides potentially the starkest sort of Post-Apocalyptic world, one in which the themes and elements of the genre are most intensely presented for your and your players' entertainment. There's little (if any) in the way of high technology, much less beneficial mutations, for the PCs to use; instead they've got to rely on their own smarts, strength, bravery, and luck to see them through to victory.

But what Low Post-Apocalyptic lacks — the weird mutations, the advanced technology, perhaps even magic — are just what many players may want or expect in a game. Without at least a few elements of the “fantastic,” a game can become a little *too* realistic, grim, and depressing. If you want to run a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign, plan in advance to address these problems and keep them from becoming too difficult to deal with.

ROAD WARRIORS; ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Men began to feed on men. On the roads it was a white line nightmare. Only those mobile enough to scavenge, brutal enough to pillage would survive. The gangs took over the highways, ready to wage war for a tank of juice.

—from the introductory narration of the movie *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*

Both of these limited types of Low Post-Apocalyptic games have essentially the same advantages and drawbacks. On the plus side they're fast-paced, action-packed, and have plenty of movie examples for you to draw on.

But they're also very one-dimensional — there's really just one sort of story being told and one type of action involved, and that's likely to get dull after a while. These subgenres may work better as isolated parts of a larger setting, or as single-session games, than as ongoing campaigns.

For more information on Zombie Apocalypse gaming, see the *Zombie World* setting in Chapter Four.

SLEEPERS AWAKEN

The Sleepers Awaken campaign has the advantage (and drawback) of turning many Post-Apocalyptic themes and tropes on their head. Instead of having little or imperfect knowledge of pre-apocalypse time, the sleepers remember it well. Instead of having to scavenge for food and gear, they (usually) have plenty of supplies — possibly even enough to establish themselves as a major political/military power in the post-apocalyptic world. Even if they lack supplies, their knowledge of modern-day science and techniques gives them an edge that natives of the post-apocalypse society typically lack.

If you prefer for the heroes not to start the game well-equipped, you have several options. First, the passage of time or some malfunction may have ruined the gear they were given. Second, if outsiders find their haven and awaken them, perhaps they steal the gear and flee before the heroes arrive. Second, the characters' fuel, ammunition, energy sources, or the like may have gone bad. In some cases, the heroes may know of a nearby supply depot (or the like) that they can raid to replace what they've lost — or to put it another way, you may make them work for their equipment rather than just giving it to them at the start of the game.

HIGH POST-APOCALYPTIC

High Post-Apocalyptic games break the Post-Apocalyptic genre and its possibilities wide open. In addition to standard Post-Apocalyptic fare exploring ruins and rebuilding civilization, they feature strange mutant powers, high technology, and possibly even magic in one delightful stew of gaming fun. But in so doing they may verge a little too far away from some of the central themes of the genre, such as survival — it's difficult to threaten characters whose mutations allow them to fly and make them immune to radiation, and who have scavenged technology that helps feed them and keep them warm. If you want to use some of those standard elements and tropes, you should plan for it as you determine what powers and technology the PCs have.

RUNNING THE GAME



By tale's end they would have peace — or once again, the Thousand-year Night...

—from the cover of *The Sword Of Forbearance*

Your job as GM doesn't end when you create the campaign and develop the setting. Quite the reverse: now you have to actually run the games while your players enjoy what you've created... and help you flesh out your quasi-fictional universe.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

There are two main approaches to adventure design: plotted and unplotted. In a plotted adventure, you have a specific story in mind, which the PCs follow to the climax. In an unplotted adventure, there is no plot, merely a situation; what happens depends entirely on the PCs' actions. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

PLOTTED ADVENTURES

Plotted adventures have the great advantage of a satisfying story structure. The action builds from the hook to the climax, encounters exist to provide tension or move the story along, and the heroes are at the center of events. You can use all the tricks developed by writers over the past three millennia: foreshadowing, suspense, conflict, jump cutting, catharsis. You can borrow plots and plot ideas from a vast array of sources, from Shakespeare to Stephen King. You can tailor the opposition to the characters' power level and personalities.

On the downside, plotted adventures can become too rigid in structure — you know where you want the story to go, so you force the heroes to go there. Players may feel you're railroading them, or that their actions don't really have an effect. If they suspect you'll let them succeed regardless of what they do (because story progression requires it), the story loses all suspense and drama — the players start to use “metagame thinking” to deduce the plot and figure out what their characters should do, rather than acting as their characters would behave in that situation.

To avoid the problem of “railroading,” plan out several possible resolutions for the adventure (and for each major scene within the adventure) depending on what the characters do. If the story involves discovering that a biker gang has discovered a source of advanced weapons it intends to use against the town the heroes want to protect, the climax might consist of a battle with the gang (after the PCs obtain equivalent weaponry, of course!) or infiltrating the gang in disguise to bring it down through engineered internal conflict. But

no matter how many options you prepare, be ready to abandon all of them when the players think up something you didn't. The most profound truth in gaming is “the players never do what you expect.”

UNPLOTTED ADVENTURES

Unplotted adventures, by contrast, have no set storyline. You merely establish a situation and let the players determine the action. The situation can be dynamic or passive. In a dynamic situation, things happen and it's up to the players to cope with them — the enemy is attacking, counterintelligence agents are closing in on the PCs, or the like. A passive situation is one in which things are stable (at least until the PCs show up) — the cannibal mutants are encroaching through the wastelands toward settled territory; an evil sorcerer-scientist is using his magically-animated robots to terrorize the tribe. In either case, if there are villains, they follow whatever motives you wish to give them, rather than filling the role of Antagonist in a story. The World exists, running along on its own, and the PCs must make their own decisions about what to do and how to do it.

Unplotted adventures have the advantage of feeling realistic — after all, the real world doesn't neatly follow classical dramatic structure, and every person is an NPC to other people. They give the players a great deal of influence over the course of the adventure, and let them choose to do what they enjoy. If you've prepared your campaign well, unplotted adventures are a good way to show off the scope and depth of your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* setting.

But unplotted adventures have their own disadvantages. Often the action becomes just a series of combats or short-term missions. In a dynamic situation, the players may find it frustrating to be at the mercy of events. The need to either create new encounters on the fly or prepare a vast amount of background and NPCs which you may never use might overwhelm you. Finally, the structure of unplotted adventures can be unsatisfying — the heroes may overcome the main opposition early and spend the rest of their time mopping up underlings, or they fail to acquire crucial information or gear and end up outclassed at the climax.

Plotted and unplotted adventures aren't completely incompatible. Characters may start out in a seemingly unplotted situation, but encounter various hooks for stories. Depending on which ones they follow up, they can get involved in plotted stories. In the course of going through those story plots, they exist in an unplotted environment, so if they diverge from the story they don't wander off into “blank hexes.”

Plotting

The most dependable basis for an adventure plot is the tried and true three-act structure, familiar from classic plays, comic books, films, and almost every other type of story. The first act is the adventure hook, in which the heroes become involved in the story and encounter initial obstacles. The second act presents more obstacles for the heroes to overcome (often with an intriguing twist or turn of events), and the third act is the climax and resolution of the story.

THE FIRST ACT: ADVENTURE HOOK

Adventure hooks come in various forms. The simplest is to have an NPC hire, order, or beg the heroes to do something — “After you arrive for the meeting, the village elders show up and ask you to do something for the village.” That’s a standard hook for all sorts of *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* stories; it’s quick and gets the story moving. Alternately, someone can beg the heroes for help — if they’re properly heroic, how can they resist? And of course, the actions of an enemy can draw the heroes into an adventure, the way they draw in Max during the course of *The Road Warrior*.

Some adventure hooks are situational; almost any circumstance the PCs find themselves in can draw them into an adventure. Being out of money means the heroes need to find a way to earn some cash, so they respond to a mysterious rumor of “help wanted.” The heroes are caught in the cross-fire when two rival biker gangs battle for “turf.” Ready, set, go!

Finally, objects often serve as adventure hooks. A cryptic clue or message can draw the heroes into danger; Alfred Hitchcock loved that method in his films. Another useful Hitchcock hook is “The MacGuffin.” A MacGuffin is an object of value or importance to someone. If the heroes have the MacGuffin (or if someone thinks they have it), then all sorts of trouble results from other people trying to buy, steal, or destroy it. Post-Apocalyptic stories are *full* of MacGuffins in the form of salvaged pieces of technology, rumors of hidden labs, and the like.

Sometimes the adventure hook is not the same as the ultimate goal of the adventure itself. Many times the heroes get involved because they think they understand what’s going on, and then learn better and must change their goals as a result of events in the story. As an example, suppose a town hires the PCs to protect it from a malevolent mutant cult leader. As they encounter the cult and learn more about the situation, the PCs discover that the town stole something that belonged to the cult, which is what made the cult turn hostile. But the town really needs whatever it is, forcing the PCs to go on a quest to find a replacement so the cult can have its sacred icon back... and so on.

THE SECOND ACT: OBSTACLES

The second act of an adventure focuses on obstacles the heroes must overcome. Obstacles are many and various, but fall into three main categories.

Foes

The first are actual *foes* — people or things specifically trying to make the heroes fail, or do them harm. If the foe wants to kill the heroes or stop them from accomplishing their goal, he’s a villain. If he just wants to beat them to the goal, or surpass their accomplishments, he’s a rival. Finally, there are adversaries — people whose goals are opposed to the PCs’ plans even if they aren’t aware of them. (In this context, *HERO System* Hunteds can qualify as either adversaries or villains, but Rivals are usually rivals.) For example, suppose the heroes in a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* game want to recover a relic they’ve heard rumors about: a portable “thinking machine” lost somewhere in the ruins of Shkago. Villains include people who want to stop the PCs from succeeding (the cannibal mutants who worship the thinking machine as a god, for example), rivals include people who want to find and recover the thinking machine first, and adversaries include the biker gang that doesn’t know anything about the current adventure but wants revenge on the PCs for past defeats.

At times friends can be foes, if they don’t agree with the goal the heroes are pursuing, or have been duped into believing the heroes are a danger. A friend may even betray the PCs. Sometimes friends are correct, and it’s the heroes who’ve been duped.

Features Of The Setting

The second type of obstacles the heroes must face are *features of the setting* which would exist regardless of the heroes’ actions, such as natural obstacles and mysteries. In *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, this is a particularly common and dangerous type of obstacle, much more so than in most adventure genres.

Natural obstacles include hostile weather, sheer distance, dangerous terrain, hungry animals, deadly security devices, rad zones, lack of food, and the like. Society’s impediments — laws, regulations, restrictions, social customs, prejudices, and the like — also qualify as natural obstacles. Obviously, natural obstacles arise primarily in uncivilized areas, while social barriers come into play in populated settings.

A mystery is either something the heroes must solve to continue toward the goal, or the key to the goal itself. Sometimes mysteries (or puzzles) are features of the setting, and sometimes they’re the work of the party’s opponents, but they all have a common feature: the characters must solve them by thinking rather than force (although sometimes the solution involves a particular use of force). In situations with changing goals, solving a mystery may finally point the heroes at their ultimate objective. Regardless of the type of puzzle, you should make it fair and logical, since the players have to solve it. An unfair puzzle just makes them angry.



Internal Obstacles

A final kind of obstacle lies within the heroes themselves — *internal obstacles*. Overcoming personal flaws, sacrificing something for the greater good, or learning a lesson are all obstacles, often more difficult to surmount than any street gang or enemy platoon. In game terms, Disadvantages such as Dependence, DNPC, Enraged/Berserk, Psychological Limitation, and perhaps Rivalry often represent internal obstacles. An honorable man who must break his word to achieve his goal faces an internal obstacle; so does a devious one who has to trust others to succeed. You should tailor the internal obstacles to the players: some players routinely sidestep their characters' Psychological Limitations if they can manage an EGO Roll, while others want to remain true to the characters they create.

THE THIRD ACT: CLIMAX AND CONCLUSION

Once the characters have surpassed or neutralized all the obstacles, the story proceeds to its *climax*, in which the heroes confront the main villain or surmount the ultimate barrier to reach their goal and win the reward. The goal may not be the one they originally signed up to accomplish, but it's the one that concludes this particular adventure.

Climaxes should be, well, climactic. This is the time for you to “blow the budget” and strive to make everything as tense and impressive as possible. If the heroes must foil the villain's plans, put a time limit on them and create all kinds of distractions. If they fight the villain directly, set the battle in an exotic or impressive location — a skyscraper rooftop, a cinematic mastermind's lair, or the like. Since this is a roleplaying game, an exciting setting is no more expensive or difficult to arrange than a boring one.

Even if it isn't full of physical action, try to make the climax tense and dramatic. If the heroes have to prevent a war or persuade someone, set the scene right on the edge of disaster — the rebel army is only minutes away from attacking the heroes' camp, and they have to convince the rebel commander right now that they aren't the ones who've been trapping and slaughtering rebel soldiers. If a judge is sentencing the PCs, crucial evidence should arrive after the opposition has presented seemingly iron-clad arguments against the heroes... and just in time to save them from prison.

Classic Post-Apocalyptic Plots

In Post-Apocalyptic literature and film there are several classic (one might even say “standard”) plots that you can easily adapt to your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* games:

QUEST FOR SAFETY

It had been fury over [the collapse of civilization] that had pushed him originally in the first few days of his escape from Stoketon. Without that, his spirits would have failed at the thought of the hundreds of unprotected miles between him and the safety of the Twin Peaks Ranch; where he could shelter behind a brother more adapted to these times.

—Gordon R. Dickson, *Wolf And Iron*

The world has changed — Survival is the only law — and home is 1,600 miles away.

—from the cover of *The New Madrid Run*

The most common plot in Low Post-Apocalyptic stories is the “quest for safety,” in which the characters try to reach a place where they can live in peace and (relative) security, protected against the havoc and dangers of the post-apocalypse world. Typically the story goes like this:

1. The story either begins with the characters witnessing and living through the apocalypse, or picks up so soon after it that the emotional and physical scars of living through it — and all the dangers it's created — are still very, very real.
2. The characters know or hear about a place of safety. This might be a remote wilderness area one of them once lived in where the apocalypse won't have reached and he's stockpiled plenty of supplies; a fortified area established by some good and decent leader, a rural area where some members of the character's family already live, or the like.
3. Knowing this haven is their best chance for surviving in the post-apocalypse world (and hopefully rebuilding civilization to some extent), the characters set out for it using the best transportation methods available to them. During the trip they face all sorts of dangers, ranging from the need for food and shelter to roving bands of raiders, rad zones, renegade military units, biker gangs, wild animals, and more.
4. Eventually the PCs fight, sneak, or otherwise make their way through perils aplenty and reach their sanctuary. Finally they can relax... for about two seconds. Because it turns out that there's one more threat to confront: someone with power (often a former military or government official trying to become undisputed ruler of the region) who wants to take over their haven, destroy it, or enslave them.
5. The heroes plan for, and then fight, a massive confrontation against this enemy, with the odds stacked against them, but somehow they fight their way through to victory! Now they can, at long last, rest... and prepare for the task of rebuilding civilization.

You can work slight variations on the plot, if necessary. Maybe the haven the PCs seek is not one so much of safety, but where they can learn about the technology of pre-apocalypse days and help to remake the world, for example. But the basics of having to fight through danger to reach a goal, then fight to protect that goal, remain the same.

Quest For Safety is an ideal framework for a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* gaming campaign. It gives the characters a goal, and the GM obstacles to confront them with along the way that make sense and add to the tension. Once the PCs secure their haven, the campaign ends... or shifts to another story arc, one where they have to expand their haven and bring civilization back to the world.

QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE

“I'm going after the prize, Silas,” Karik had said. “It's all out there. Shakespeare and Dante and the Roadmaker histories. And their mathematics and science. It's waiting for us.”

—Jack McDevitt, *Eternity Road*

Safety and security aren't the only things Post-Apocalyptic PCs go in search of. Some are motivated by the loftier, and in some cases also equally practical, concerns — specifically, the quest for knowledge. That might come in actual knowledge form (books, computer records, finding a long-lost library or archive), or it might be in the form of technologies and devices the PCs want or need for some reason. But in a world where so much has been lost, knowledge may be the most valuable treasure of all.

A Quest For Knowledge story usually starts in one of two ways. First, someone “requests” that the PCs go find some bit of information. This may actually come in the form of orders from a superior officer, a plea from a desperate village or tribe, or an appeal from a relative, but the central fact is that someone else motivates the PCs to track down the desired information. Second, the PCs hear a rumor about some trove of information or technology and decide to track it down out of greed, desire to learn, desire to preserve, or all of the above.

After equipping themselves as best they can, the heroes set out into the post-apocalyptic wastelands, braving mutated animals, rad zones, superstitious mobs who think any learning is the work of the Devil, cannibal mutants, and whatever else you, the GM, think to throw at them. Along the way they may have to gather (or interpret) clues that lead to the knowledge they seek, if they don't know exactly where it is. After much toil and danger, they make it to their goal: the source of knowledge.

Now a host of other difficulties confronts them. First, getting to the knowledge may not be easy. It might be guarded by mutated monstrosities, automated security systems, or cultists. Natural disasters might have blocked the entrance, forcing the heroes to find another way in. Second, once they get to the knowledge, what are they going to do with it? If it's just a few books or computer data-crystals they can easily carry it back out again... but if it's an entire library or museum full of valuable



information, they've got a logistical nightmare on their hands. To make matters worse, they may have arrived *just* in time for another natural disaster to begin — one that threatens to destroy the entire collection unless they stop it or rescue the objects. Assuming they accomplish that, then they have to make it safely home with their “loot”....

Quest For Knowledge isn't really the framework for an entire campaign like Quest For Safety is, but it makes an excellent basis for a single adventure or short story arc. The PCs might even be professional information-salvagers, hired on a routine basis to plumb the nooks and crannies of the post-apocalyptic world in search of valuable data or usable devices.

EXPLORING THE RUINS

The miraculous contraptions of the ancients were not to be carelessly tampered with, as many a dead excavator-of-the-past had testified with his dying gasp.

—Brother Francis contemplates opening a strange door in *A Canticle For Leibowitz*

Perhaps the simplest Post-Apocalyptic story type is *Exploring the Ruins*, in which a group of heroes ventures into some ruined area (often with both aboveground and underground components) in search of loot in the form of tech, spare parts, salvageable resources, and so on. Naturally, few of these valuables are just waiting around for them to pick up; they have to fight

tribes of evil mutants, mutated animals, and similar threats to get what they want. Essentially the same as a High Fantasy “dungeon delve,” Exploring the Ruins is a common story form in High Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, but also appears in other types of Post-Apocalyptic games.

REBUILDING CIVILIZATION

The longest-term and most noble Post-Apocalyptic plot is the effort to rebuild civilization. This isn't a one-shot game or even a story arc; essentially it forms the backbone of an entire campaign, and the PCs' adventures along the way are all aspects of their quest to pull humanity back up out of the pit into which it dropped itself (or was dropped). For example, in Paul Williams's “Pelbar Cycle” novels, the Pelbar people go from being a more or less medieval-level civilization in the first book to having radios, guns, steamships, and even primitive rockets by the end of the seventh book. During the course of this history they grapple with the sorts of issues that will also confront your PCs: how can we rebuild without creating the same sort of society that destroyed itself before? If we find artifacts and knowledge from the pre-apocalypse world, do we dare to use them, and to what extent? How can we improve our society without fundamentally changing it for the worse? And most importantly of all, is it better to be content with what you have, or to strive for something better even if that puts you at risk?

ENVIRONMENTAL

THREATS

In *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, the environment can be a major threat — after all, this is a genre in which starvation tends to be a danger heroes confront on a regular basis. Here are some rules for environmental threats and obstacles characters might encounter.

RADIATION

“This radiation — as nearly as I can make it, it was put here by the Blast, and it’s like fungus-light. You can’t see the fungus glow in the daytime, but you know that the light is still there. ... Just imagine that it is poisonous, that it will make you sick if it touches your skin.”

—Sos explains radiation in Piers Anthony’s *Battle Circle*

When many gamers think of Post-Apocalyptic stories, the first thing that comes to mind is radiation and mutants — both very important elements in a genre many of whose best works were written by authors living under the shadow of a Cold War nuclear holocaust. Here are some rules for dealing with the effects of radiation in your Post-Apocalyptic Hero games; for more information, see *The Ultimate Energy Projector*.

Technically speaking, “radiation” can be divided into two types: non-ionizing and ionizing. *Non-ionizing radiation* cannot damage organic molecules by impacting them and imparting energy to them. This includes microwaves, radio waves, and infrared radiation. Thus, a microwave oven or infrared-based remote control device cannot make someone “radioactive” or cause cancer. *Ionizing radiation* is much more dangerous, and *can* damage organic molecules by impacting them and imparting energy to them (which makes the target radioactive, can cause

cancer [or make it more likely to occur], and so forth). Solar and cosmic radiation in outer space, alpha and beta particles, some ultraviolet radiation, x-rays, and gamma rays are all ionizing forms of radiation. The rest of the discussion in this section generally refers to ionizing radiation, since that’s what PCs in a roleplaying game setting tend to be concerned about.

REALISTIC RADIATION

The following general rules explain how Radiation works “realistically” in game terms.

General Principles

Radiation harms living things as by delivering intense amounts of energy to a small area. It can damage individual cells’ DNA (which can lead to cancer); at higher doses it can cause cataracts, burns (either skin burns or deep tissue/organ burns), permanent sterility, and other effects.

Radiation exposure is measured in *Rads*, short for “Radiation Absorbed Dose.” One rad is defined as 100 ergs of energy per gram of material. The Radiation Level Table lists the radiation level of various sources of radioactivity; the Radiation Effects table describes the effects of exposure. Radiation, like all forms of energy, is subject to the inverse square rule — so divide the rad level given on the table by the square of the distance to the source to determine a character’s exposure.

Fallout And Half Life

She slipped [the ring] from her finger and handed it to Randy.

He took it automatically but he wasn’t looking at it. He was looking at her finger. Her finger was marred by a dark, almost black circle, as if the ring were tarnished brass, or its inside sooty. But the ring was clean bright gold. ...

“[T]he ring has been exposed to radioactivity and is now radioactive itself. ... This looks like a burn — a radium burn. How long have you been wearing that ring?”

“Off and on, for a month I guess.”

—Pat Frank, *Alas Babylon*

Fallout is radioactive material released by nuclear weapons explosions. Typically, a nuclear bomb going off scatters bits of radioactive material high into the atmosphere, creating a long plume, extending hundreds of miles, where the radiation levels are temporarily higher than normal. The radioactive material then settles onto the ground. The problem with fallout is that it affects an area — the radiation level rises over the whole region covered by the plume.

RADIATION LEVEL TABLE

Source	Rads
Occupational Safety Limit	5 per year
Medical X-Ray	0.01 to 0.05 per shot
X-Ray Laser	1 per die of Killing Damage
Cosmic Rays (in space)	30 per year
(Lunar surface)	15 per year
(Earth surface)	0.03 per year
Jovian Radiation Belt	1,000 per hour
Solar Flare (Earth orbit)	100-1,000 per event
Nuclear Fallout (within plume)	240 per year
Plutonium (1 gram)	1 per second
Reactor Core (unshielded)	7,000 per second

Some sources of radiation, like ongoing nuclear reactions, emit radiation at a constant rate. Others, like radioactive isotopes in fallout, have a *half life*. The half life is the amount of time it takes for half of the radioactive material to decay to a stable form. Because of the way radioactive decay works, this time is constant for each radioactive isotope, so the rad level drops by half for each half life increment. The process of decay is gradual — the radiation level doesn't suddenly drop when the half-life period is up.

Objects exposed to radiation (such as from fallout) do not themselves necessarily become “activated” (*i.e.*, radioactive). That only occurs when the atomic nuclei of a substance exposed to neutron radiation (ionizing radiation composed of neutrons) capture neutrons and transmute to new, radioactive isotopes. For example, hydrogen isn't radioactive — but if neutron radiation adds two neutrons to it, it becomes the hydrogen isotope tritium, which is radioactive. The more neutrons that are involved, the more likely it is that activation will take place. Thus, the type of substance involved, and the intensity of the radiation the substance is exposed to, are important variables. How long the substance remains radioactive depends on the half life of the isotope it transmuted into — it could be seconds, or it could be thousands of years. For gaming purposes, characters are most likely to be concerned with substances that can remain radioactive for long periods of time, such as metals.

Radiation Shielding

Radiation shielding absorbs high-energy particles. In practice, different materials stop different kinds of radiation better than others, but for the sake of simplicity you can lump them all together as “radiation shielding.” The Radiation Shielding table gives the amount of protection for different materials.

UNREALISTIC RADIATION

BOB: *Fleshy-headed mutant! — are you friendly?*

DOUG: *No way, eh. Radiation has made me an enemy of civilization.*

—Bob and Doug McKenzie discover the dangers of the wastelands in *Strange Brew*

But of course, not all Post-Apocalyptic settings treat radiation “realistically.” In High Post-Apocalyptic games, Radiation isn't necessarily the insidious, deadly thing it is in real life. It can be, but it can also cause fictional mutations both beneficial and hideous. See the *After The Bomb* section of Chapter Four for plenty of example mutations and mutated animals.

Implications And Secondary Effects

“Realistically” ionizing radiation strong enough to function as an attack is best represented in *HERO System* terms either as (a) an RKA, or (b)

RADIATION EFFECTS

Exposure (Rads) is...	Effect
Greater than 5 x CON	Radiation Sickness: Individual loses 1d6 CON. Victim loses 1 point of CON in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON per Hour. This loss of CON heals at the rate of REC per Month.
Greater than 10 x CON	Serious Sickness: Lose 2d6 CON. Victim loses 1-3 points of CON in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON per Hour. This loss of CON heals at the rate of REC per Month.
Greater than 20 x CON	Internal Damage: Lose 2d6 CON and 1d6 BODY. Victim loses 1 point each of CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per Hour. This loss of CON and BODY heals at the rate of REC in CON and BODY per Month.
Greater than 30 x CON	Lethal Threshold: Lose 3d6 CON and 2d6 BODY. Victim loses 1-3 points of both CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per 20 Minutes. This loss of CON and BODY heals at the rate of (REC/2) in CON and BODY per Month.
Greater than 50 x CON	Fatal Dose: Lose 4d6 CON and 3d6 BODY. Victim loses 1-6 points of both CON and BODY in the Segment when his exposure reaches this limit, and the rest (if any) at the rate of 1 point of CON and BODY per 20 Minutes. This loss of CON and BODY does not heal; if the character survives, both Characteristics are permanently reduced (though he may spend Character/Experience Points to buy them up from their new amounts).

Armor and other defenses do not reduce BODY damage from radiation; consider it as NND Does BODY damage, with the defense being Life Support: Safe Environment (High Radiation).

RADIATION SHIELDING

Substance	Radiation Multiplier
<i>Atmosphere</i>	
Standard (per meter)	.75
Thin (per meter)	.9
Trace (per meter)	.98
Dense (per meter)	.9
Brick (per cm)	.75
Lead (per mm)	.8
Radiation Suit	.7
Rock (per cm)	.75
Soil (per cm)	.75
Spacesuit	.9
Steel (per mm)	.9
Vehicle Hull (per point of DEF)	.9
Water (per cm)	.9
Wood or Plastic (per cm)	.95

Radiation protection is exponential. Steel plating reduces rad levels by .9 per millimeter, so a layer of steel 5 millimeters thick would reduce it by a factor of (.9 x .9 x .9 x .9 x .9), or about .59 overall.

a Drain CON and BODY (and possibly also STUN, END, and/or STR). In either form it should have the Advantages NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Radiation]) and Does BODY; the Limitation *No Knockback* is appropriate. (For greater “realism,” you can also apply the *Gradual*

Effect Limitation — the exposure happens instantaneously, but the full effects of exposure take time to build up and manifest.) The RKA method has the virtue of being highly fatal; the Drain method can be bought with the *Delayed Return Rate Advantage* to simulate how long Radiation damage takes to heal. (At the GM's option, even Normal or Killing Damage BODY caused by Radiation should heal only one-third as fast as other types of damage.) In more cinematic settings, Radiation could instead be an ordinary Energy Blast or RKA, a standard NND, or various Drains.

Radiation burns may cause scarring and hair loss (and thus permanently reduce a character's COM). See the *Acid* section, above, for rules you can apply, though you may want to reduce the effects slightly.

IRRADIATION

One significant downside of radiation is that it tends to irradiate people and objects around the character using them (not to mention the character himself, but the odds are he'll have Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation). (Technically speaking, the term "irradiate" simply means "to expose to radiation," but for ease of reference the text here uses it inaccurately to mean "to make radioactive.") "Realistically" a person exposed to ionizing rarely becomes radioactive, he simply suffers the burns and other effects of exposure, but for dramatic and cinematic purposes radiation attack can make someone radioactive.

Add up the Active Points of all the Radiation powers a character uses in a Phase, then divide by 15. That's the number of Rads of damage everyone and everything near him is subjected to. His hex receives the full dose; each 1" out from there receives half that much (the radiation stops radiating outward in the ring of hexes in which the damage drops to 5% of the full amount or less). If any of the character's powers are Constant, their Rads apply every Segment; if any of his powers cover an Area, their Rads apply to everything in that area in full, then expand outward from there as described above. At the GM's option, constant use of Radiation powers in the same area causes the irradiated zone to expand, increasing its radius to 2", 3", and so on.

For characters who have Radiation-based powers, irradiation of the surrounding area or the target occurs automatically and doesn't entitle a character to any Limitation or the like. In other campaigns, irradiation does not occur automatically (perhaps the character absorbs the radiation he emits, or his powers are somehow "clean"). In that case characters can take irradiation as a Side Effect. It's worth -¼ at its base level and always occurs, for a final value of -½.

Of course, in a cinematic campaign, irradiation may not cause problems — it might cause a character to spontaneously develop mutations!

CANCER

Exposure to radiation increases a person's chances of developing cancer. Generally this is

beyond the scope of a roleplaying game, since it takes years or decades to develop. (Though a villain might, for example, have an "inflict people with cancer immediately" power based on radiation.) However, GMs interested in greater "realism" might want to rule that exposure to any Radiation power has a Major Transform effect on any character who doesn't have Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation). The Transform accumulates slowly, perhaps only .3-1.0 points per exposure (or some rate based on the total Active Points in the Radiation powers the character's exposed to, such as .1 point per 10 Active Points)... but eventually enough exposure adds up to the point where the Transform occurs and the character develops cancer. The cancer grows normally from that point; the GM determines what type of cancer the character contracts.

DECONTAMINATION

A character or object who's been irradiated can undergo *decontamination* to prevent or reduce the effects. Decontaminating surface exposure to radiation is easier than decontaminating internal exposure (from, say, eating irradiated food). Typical procedures involve stripping off irradiated (or possibly irradiated) clothing, a full shower, and then dressing in clean clothes. Characters in High Post-Apocalyptic settings might have access to "decontamination foam" or "decon pills" that instantly remove all traces of radiation from them.

In game terms, a character who undergoes formal decontamination procedures within 1 hour of exposure to radiation reduces the damage he suffers (per the Radiation Effects table) by half. If he's already taken more damage than this, he doesn't get any CON and/or BODY back, but he takes no further damage. If a character undergoes informal decontamination, he reduces damage by one-quarter (25%).

RADS AND DAMAGE CLASSES

For GMs desiring maximum "realism," 1 Active Point in a Radiation attack equals 1 Rad of exposure. Instead of applying the damage in the usual fashion, convert it to Rads, use the Radiation Shielding table to determine how much the character's defenses reduce it, and then convert the final Rads back into damage and apply it to the character (he gets no further subtraction for his defenses, of course).

Other "Zones"

Second only to nuclear weapons and their radiation in their capacity for killing large numbers of people are chemical and biological weapons. Characters in Post-Apocalyptic settings might encounter "chem zones" or "biozones" that are just as dangerous as rad zones.

Biological weapons come in four basic types: bacterial infections (which cause plague, anthrax, brucellosis, and typhoid fever); fungal infections (which cause desert fever); ricketts infections (which cause typhus, purple fever, and



Queensland fever); and viral infections (which cause smallpox, yellow fever, and some of the deadlier kinds of flu). Discussing various types of diseases, and the biological mechanisms by which they infect people, is beyond the scope of this book. What you need to know to run Post-Apocalyptic games is that a disease — particularly one tailored by pre-apocalypse super-science, if that's appropriate to your campaign — can lie dormant for years waiting to infect a living creature. In a “realistic” Post-Apocalyptic setting, that typically means incapacitation or death for the victims; in a more cinematic one, diseases could cause mutations or other weirdness just like radiation can.

“Chemical weapons” refers to any sort of gas, lethal or otherwise, that’s used as a weapon (some are also used in liquid form). They range from simple irritating and incapacitating gases to gases so lethal that the merest whiff of them causes almost instant unconsciousness and death. They’re grouped into two different categories, incapacitating and lethal, based on their effect. While they typically don’t have the millennia-long lifespan of radiation, chemical weapons can linger in an area for a long time. Fortunately for Post-Apocalyptic PCs, there are usually signs of their presence: odd smells; discoloration of local objects and plants; a dearth of animal (and perhaps vegetable) life in the vicinity.

RUINS

These were the places of the cold Death, where the fires of the dreadful radiation of the last cataclysm still poisoned the air and water. Most of them had lost their once dreadful potency. Daring freebooters sometimes risked a horrible end to loot one of the Lost Cities which bordered the Inland Sea, and had been designated over five thousand years gone as First Strike targets. Some of these dreadful places were plague centers too, so that a man ran the risk of dying hideously of radiation poisoning or, if he missed that, of some fell sickness and of passing that on to his neighbors before he died himself.

—Sterling Lanier, *Hiero’s Journey*

At the base of the knob was a small ruin, fused and crumbled blocks of artificial stone from the former time, but blasted and puddled by the heat of death of the time of fire.

—Paul Williams, *The Breaking Of Northwall*

Most Post-Apocalyptic settings feature extensive ruins — cities and other areas men once lived and worked in that were destroyed in the apocalypse. In a post-apocalyptic world, ruins can be a source of supplies, shelter, and even wealth... but they can also harbor enemies and other dangers.

From a GMing perspective, what you need to know is (a) the condition of a ruin, (b) the dangers (if any) posed by that ruin, and (c) what the characters might find in that ruin. The rules for finding and salvaging items are below; this section only addresses the first two points.

CONDITION OF THE RUINS

Typically the easiest way to establish the condition of a ruin is for you to choose it yourself based on the dramatic needs of the adventure you're creating. In some cases, though, you might want to determine what state a ruin's in randomly using the accompanying table. It uses four basic timeframes — Immediately After, Years Later, Generations Later, and Centuries Later — to indicate when the characters explore the ruin (see *Campaign Timeframe*, above, for explanation of these periods). Then it establishes four states of ruination:

Pristine: The building is undamaged, or virtually so. This may mean no one's ever explored it, so it's filled with salvage... but security devices and other threats may remain intact and functional.

Minor Damage: The building has suffered minor damage — some cracks here and there, perhaps a few collapsed interior walls — but is basically intact and structurally safe to venture into.

Major Damage: The building's been damaged to the point where it's not entirely structurally safe to go into. Every character who ventures inside has to make a Survival (Ruins) roll (or if he doesn't have that Skill, a DEX Roll at -2). If he succeeds, nothing bad happens to him. If he fails, he suffers a mishap: a rotten floorboard breaks beneath him and he falls; a wall or ceiling collapses on him; or the like. See the *Dangers Amid The Ruins* section below for suggested rules.

Severe Damage: The building's been so badly damaged that going into it means taking your life in your hands. Use the rules for Major Damage, but the Survival (Ruins) roll is at -2 (and the DEX Roll

at -4). A failed roll is likely to be even more disadvantageous or dangerous.

Collapsed: The building has totally collapsed. Getting inside will probably involve using the *Contortionist* Skill, spelunking, or heavy labor. Once the characters do get "inside," it's probably fairly safe (roll as for Major Damage, if appropriate), but the odds of finding usable salvage are slim.

DANGER AMID THE RUINS

For Shannon and Avila, there was even more immediate danger. The interior had been blocked off from the outside world for centuries, and had filled with methane. While they worked on opening the door, the open flame of the oil lamp burned virtually at Shannon's feet.

Chaka was lying close to the campfire, deep in her own dark thoughts, when she heard the explosion.

—the dangers of the ruins claim an explorer in *Eternity Road*

Box: Regular storage procedure. The same as the other food. The other food stopped coming. And they started.

Logan 5: What other food?

Box: Fish, and plankton. And sea greens, and protein from the sea. It's all here, ready. Fresh as harvest day. Fish and sea greens, plankton and protein from the sea. And then it stopped coming. And they came instead. So I store them here. I'm ready. And you're ready. It's my job. To freeze you.

—a food processing robot malfunctions and becomes a deadly danger in *Logan's Run*

A creative GM can come up with all sorts of threats to put in a ruin. Some possibilities include:

Physical Dangers

First and foremost, the ruin itself may pose a danger if the structure's not safe (*i.e.*, it's suffered Major or greater damage). Some of the things that could happen to the character include:

Floor giving way: The floor beneath a character could break. Roll 2d6 and apply the Encumbrance modifier for DEX Rolls. On a 2-6, the character breaks entirely through the floor and falls down to the floor below (if that floor is rotten, he may break through and keep falling, and so on and so on until he reaches the ground). Use the rules for Falling damage, but with a minimum of 2d6 to represent the trauma of breaking through the floor. On a 7-12, the character's foot or leg simply breaks through the floor; he's trapped and at ½ DCV until he uses a Full Phase Action to free himself. At the GM's option, a character who may break through a floor can make a DEX Roll, for every point he succeeds by, add +1 to the roll.

Ceiling Collapse: Part or all of a ceiling collapses on the character. He takes 1d6 of d6 of Normal Damage from the impact, and on a 1 on 1d6 is pinned by the debris (he has to make a STR Roll or Contortionist roll [either modified by the GM as appropriate] to get free).

RUINS TABLE

Roll*	Immediately After	Years Later	Generations Later	Centuries Later
1-1	Pristine	Pristine	Minor	Minor
1-2	Pristine	Minor	Minor	Minor
1-3	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
1-4	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
1-5	Minor	Major	Major	Major
1-6	Major	Major	Major	Severe
2-1	Major	Major	Major	Severe
2-2	Major	Major	Severe	Severe
2-3	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
2-4	Severe	Severe	Severe	Collapsed
2-5	Severe	Severe	Collapsed	Collapsed
2-6	Collapsed	Collapsed	Collapsed	Collapsed

MODIFIERS*

Value	Circumstance
+2	Primarily wooden structure
-1	Primarily metal and steel structure
-2	Primarily brick or concrete structure
-1 or more	A particularly sturdy or well-protected structure
+1 or more	A structure that's flimsy, highly exposed to the elements, or the like

*: Roll two dice, counting one as 1 (1-3) or 2 (4-6), and the other as a 1-6 roll. Modifiers apply to the second die roll. "Negative" ones indicate a particularly sturdy or well-protected building; "positive" ones buildings that are more susceptible to being damaged or eroded.

Note that this table is "dramatically biased" toward leaving structures intact and explorable. "Realistically" there's a much greater chance that buildings would suffer Major, Severe, or Collapse damage, particularly over long periods of time.

Wall Collapse: Part or all of a ceiling collapses on the character. He takes 2d6 of d6 of Normal Damage from the impact, and on a 1-3 on 1d6 is pinned by debris as described above.

Building Collapse: An entire building might collapse on the PCs if they're not careful (this is most likely if the building's already suffered Severe Damage). Everyone in the building takes a minimum of 3d6 of d6 of Normal Damage, and in particularly grim campaigns the GM may simply rule there are no survivors. Anyone who does survive is almost certainly trapped, as described above.

Other Dangers

Inhabitants: Perhaps the ultimate danger is that an animal or human (either of them mutated or otherwise) lives in the ruin and will fight to protect its home (or perhaps sees the PCs as prey to be stalked). This implies that the ruins are physically safe, at least for that inhabitant (a small, agile predator may be able to live safely in a ruin that a big, lumbering human would quickly make collapse).

Berserk Machines: Security devices, cleaning-bots, and other highly-automated devices could continue functioning long after the apocalypse... though damage to their programming may affect them. They may regard PCs exploring "their" home as dangerous animals to be exterminated, or perhaps mistake them for their "creators" and get angry when it turns out they're not.

Live Wires: If the ruin still has electrical current, exposed wiring could deliver a nasty shock to the PCs... especially if their society has long since forgotten what electricity is.

Pockets Of Gas: Dangerous gasses such as methane can build up in ruins over the years and centuries. If exposed to open flames or other sources of heat they can ignite, causing deadly explosions. More insidiously, an odorless gas might cause the characters to suffocate if they get into an area that has too little oxygen and then can't get back out.

Trapping Barriers: Either by causing a collapse or accidentally activating a security device, the heroes may trap themselves inside a ruin! Suddenly thoroughly exploring the place and finding an exit becomes not a luxury or a treasure-hunt, but a desperate matter of survival...

STARVATION

Whole nations depend on technology. Stop the wheels for two days and you'd have riots. No place is more than two meals from a revolution.

—Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *Lucifer's Hammer*

The human race lives always eighty days from starvation. That is the sum of stored food, globe wide.

—Frederick Pohl, "Fermi And Frost"

It's hard to get much adventuring done when you're about to collapse from lack of food and water — and unlike heroes in nearly every other adventure genre, many Post-Apocalyptic characters face the danger of starvation every day. The rules for starvation and dehydration on pages 438-39 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* suffice most situations, even in the Post-Apocalyptic genre, but here are some additional details you can use if desired.

A person engaged in reasonably strenuous activity (*i.e.*, adventuring, or simply trying to survive in the wilderness) ideally should consume a minimum of 3,000 calories per day in warm weather, and 4,000 per day in cold weather (and more is better). The accompanying Food Table lists the calories of some common foods. If a person consumes less than this, he gradually begins to feel the effects of starvation. Compare the amount of calories he gets per day to the desired maximum amount. Add them up day by day until he accumulates "one day" worth of lost nutrition. (If he gets more than the minimum amount one day, subtract that from his "deficit"; if he overeats, he can build up a "reserve" against lack of nutrition the next day, but not any later days.)

Once he accumulates three days' worth of no nutrition, he suffers 1d6 Normal Damage (no defense). He Recovers the lost STUN normally, and heals the lost BODY normally as well (but he won't get his monthly BODY Recovery until the starvation ends). He also loses STR, DEX, and CON at the same rate as BODY (*i.e.*, if you roll 1 BODY damage, he also loses 1 STR, 1 DEX, and 1 CON), which he Recovers just like lost BODY. Each additional day is another 1d6 Normal Damage (plus loss of STR, DEX, and CON). Once a character reaches 0 BODY from starvation, he loses an additional 1 BODY per Hour until he dies.

Example: *Badlands Bob is a character in a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign, and he's running low on food. On Day 1, he only eats 2,000 calories, two-thirds of the minimum requirement, so he accumulates 8 hours (a third of a day) worth of starvation effect. The same thing happens for eight more days, so at the end of that time he's accumulated a total of 72 hours (3 days) of starvation and takes 1d6 Normal Damage. The GM rolls a 4, so he loses 4 STUN (which he Recovers normally), 1 BODY, 1 STR, 1 DEX, and 1 CON (all of which he Recovers as he does BODY, on a REC/month basis).*

Bob is rapidly running out of food. The fourth day he only eats 1,000 calories, so he accumulates 16 hours of starvation effect. But the next day he gets lucky and bags a deer with his crossbow. He feasts on venison that night, consuming 6,000 calories' worth. Since that's two days' worth of the minimum requirement, he feeds himself in full that day, wipes out the 16 hours of starvation effect, and builds up 8 hours of "reserve" pending lack of food the next day — he'll only need to consume 2,000 calories on the sixth day to get a full day's nutrition, but the "reserve" has no effect on the seventh or succeeding days.

Characters who aren't engaged in strenuous activity can get by on much less food — 1,000 calories a day. Adjust the rules accordingly if they begin to suffer from starvation.

WATER

Water is even more important than food — a person can live days or weeks without enough food, but dies of dehydration in about two to three days. At a minimum an active individual needs 2 liters of water per day, but that rises to as much as 3.5 liters per hour in hot areas such as deserts and tropical regions. The GM should set a daily water consumption requirement figure for the PCs based on temperature and activity level.

FOOD TABLE

Food	Calories
Bacon (1 slice)	35-50
Beef (4 oz.)	200-365
Beer (12 oz.)	72-190
Candy, candy bar (1)	240-280
Candy, hard (1 oz.)	20-120
Canned food, chili	380-700
Canned food, fruit	100-400
Canned food, soup	240-340
Canned food, vegetables	180-380
Clams (4-5)	88
Dog food (4 oz. dry)	375
Dog food (4 oz. can)	125-150
Duck (4 oz.)	230
Egg, chicken	75-100
Egg, duck	177
Fish, freshwater (3-4 oz.)	100-200
Fish, saltwater (3-4 oz.)	200-250
Fruit (1)	60-110
Fruit juice (6 oz.)	70-100
Ham (4 oz.)	210-310
Insects (4 oz.)	120-613
Liquor (1-2.5 oz.)	80-170
Mutton or lamb (4 oz.)	220-400
Opossum (4 oz.)	245
Pork (4 oz.)	140-200
Rabbit (4 oz.)	124
Ration pack*	1,200
Sausage (4 oz.)	320-480
Soft drink/soda (12 oz.)	155
Tuna (1 can)	150
Vegetable (1)	70-120
Venison (4 oz.)	128

*: A US Army MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) or similar pre-packaged, preserved meal.

The same rules apply for dehydration as for starvation (using the different figures for water consumption, of course), with some important exceptions. First, dehydration only does STUN and BODY damage. Second, after a character has had no water for one day (or has accumulated 24 hours' worth of dehydration effect), you roll the 1d6 Normal Damage. Thereafter, unless he drinks enough water to make up for the deficit, keep rolling 1d6 damage ever 6 Hours, not every day.

SCAVENGING

[The candle's] light shown ahead of him, down into an almost untouched basement garage[.] The place was a treasure trove. Plainly no one had set foot here since the moment in which the house had been destroyed, and nothing had been looted from this part of the building's original contents. ... When he left the place, ... he was rich. ... [H]e was wearing some other man's old but still solidly seamed leather jacket. His belt was tight with screwdrivers, pruning knives, and other simple hand tools.

Canned food from looted houses and small game had fed Jeebee on his trip so far. ... [I]n the cellar garage he had picked up a few canned goods, some of which might still be edible.

—Jeebee discovers some excellent salvage in Gordon R. Dickson's *Wolf And Iron*

One of the most intriguing aspects of *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* play is exploring ruined areas and similar locations for usable items — what's called *scavenging*. This is the Post-Apocalyptic equivalent of the Fantasy treasure hunt; it offers the promise of both wealth and power... with the attendant threat of danger.

In many cases the best way to deal with scavenging in your game is to determine in advance what the PCs can find in any given location, including its condition and how to use it. But that can be a lot of work, and gets tricky when a scenario goes in an unexpected direction. To make things easy on you, here are some rules that let you determine, either randomly or by guided choice, what a group of heroes on a salvage mission find.

To find out how successful characters are likely to be at scavenging, you need to determine four things: whether the heroes find something; if so, what they find; the condition of scavenged items; and whether the PCs can figure out how to use an item.

FINDING SALVAGE

The first issue to deal with is whether the heroes find anything at all. Many ruins will have nothing of value left intact, or will already have been picked over by other scavengers.

To determine if a character finds salvage, he must make a Scavenging (Concealment) roll (or, at the GM's option, an INT Roll at -3). The accompanying Finding Salvage table lists appropriate modifiers. If the roll succeeds, the character finds one



or more *usable* items of salvage as discussed in the next section (there might be plenty of junk in any given ruin; these rules only care about whether the character finds something of value). If the roll fails, he's found nothing of value.

If more than one character searches a ruin, designate one character as the lead scavenger. All the other characters' rolls are Complementary to his. Alternately, you can let each character roll separately and make his own finds.

WHAT'S FOUND

The next thing to determine is what the heroes found, and how much/many of it.

Usually the question of what the heroes find is one you should decide based on the circumstances, the type of building their searching, the dramatic needs of the story, game balance, and other factors. For example, characters much more likely to find weapons and ammo in a military facility than a residence, and more likely to find those things in a residence than an office building. If they search an abandoned gas station, the odds are good if they find anything it's going to be fuel, tools, car parts, or perhaps an intact auto-

mobile. But if you prefer to roll randomly, use the Found Salvage table.

If a character's Scavenging roll succeeded exactly, he finds one item of salvage. (In some cases, "one item" may be a container holding multiple objects of some sort; that's up to you.) For every 2 full points by which the Scavenging roll succeeds, the character finds another item (either multiples of the first thing he found, or a different item).

CONDITION OF THE SALVAGE

Just because the characters find some salvage doesn't mean it will be in good condition. A successful Scavenging roll means they've found something usable, but that doesn't mean it's easily used, safe to use, or is in perfect working condition. You can either roll on the accompanying Salvage Condition table, or determine the condition of the salvage based on the dramatic needs of the story. The table lists five condition categories for salvage:

FINDING SALVAGE

Circumstance	Scavenging Roll Modifier	
Condition of ruin		
Pristine	+3	
Minor Damage	+0	
Major Damage	-1 to -2	
Severe Damage	-3 to -4	
Collapsed	-5 to -8 (if scavenging is possible at all)	
Previous scavenging		
Never before scavenged	+3	
Rarely scavenged	+1	
Occasionally scavenged	+0	
Frequently scavenged	-1 to -3	
Thoroughly picked over	-4 or more	
Type Of Building	Modifier	Examples
Very Likely to have useful salvage	+2	Armory/military installation
Likely to have useful salvage	+1	Factory/industrial facility, retail store, warehouse
Average chance of useful salvage	+0	Government facility, residence, service business
Unlikely to have useful salvage	-1	Office

FOUND SALVAGE

Roll*	Found Item(s)
1-1	Ammunition
1-2-3	Food (canned food, dried food...)
1-4	Fuel (gasoline, batteries, power cells...)
1-5	Household Goods (clothes, shoes, bedding, dishware, cooking gear...)
1-6	Liquor/Recreational Drugs
2-1	Luxury Items/Valuables (jewelry, gold bullion, silver...)
2-2	Medical Supplies (bandages, first aid kit, medicinal drugs...)
2-3	Outdoor Gear (tents, camping clothes, rope, survival supplies...)
2-4	Tool (hammer, pliers, hatchet...)
2-5	Vehicle/Vehicle Parts (car, motorcycle, prop plane...)
2-6	Weapon (knife, pistol, rifle...)

*: Roll two dice, counting one as 1 (1-3) or 2 (4-6), and the other as a 1-6 roll.

Excellent Condition: The salvage is virtually undamaged; it works like normal.

Good Condition: The salvage is hardly damaged at all. If it's an item, it may have an Activation Roll of 14-; if it's a weapon, it may not have its usual OCV or Range Modifier bonuses (but suffers no further penalties); if it's food, it may not taste good; if it's fuel, it may only operate vehicles/equipment at no more than 90% effect.

Average Condition: The salvage is damaged, but not terribly so. If it's an item, it probably has an Activation Roll of 11-; if it's a weapon, it has no OCV or Range Modifier bonuses (and may suffer penalties of -1 in addition); if it's food, it may not provide the full nutrition value it would when fresh; if it's fuel, it may only operate vehicles/equipment at no more than three-quarters (75%) effect.

Poor Condition: The salvage is badly damaged. If it's an item, it probably has an Activation Roll of 8-; if it's a weapon, it has no OCV or Range Modifier bonuses (and may suffer penalties of -2 in addition); if it's food, eating it may make a character sick; if it's fuel, it may only operate vehicles/equipment at no more than half (50%) effect.

Very Poor Condition: The salvage is virtually unusable. If it's an item, it probably has an Activation Roll of 6-; if it's a weapon, it has no OCV or Range Modifier bonuses (and may suffer penalties of -3 or more in addition); if it's food, eating it will almost certainly make a character sick; if it's fuel, it may only operate vehicles/equipment at no more than one-third (33%) effect.

USING THE SALVAGE

Just because characters find some salvage doesn't mean they know what it's for or how to use it — after generations or centuries, much technical know-how may have been lost forever. If appropriate, the GM may require characters to make rolls to figure out what a device is intended to do, how to turn it on, how to operate it, and so forth. The Skill used for this is Inventor, though the GM can also allow characters without Inventor to make an INT Roll at -3. The roll is modified by the complexity and condition of the device, as detailed in the Analyzing Found Technology table.

SALVAGE CONDITION

Roll (2d6)	Condition
2-3	Excellent
4-6	Good
7-8	Average
9-10	Poor
11-12	Very Poor

Modifier	Circumstance
Passage of Time	
Immediately after apocalypse	-2
Years after apocalypse	+0
Generations after apocalypse	+1
Centuries after apocalypse	+2
Condition of ruin found in (if any)	
Pristine	-2
Minor Damage	+0
Major Damage	+1
Severe Damage	+2
Collapsed	+3

The base time required to make an Inventor roll to figure out a device (and, if appropriate, get it to work) depends on its complexity: for a Simple device, 1 Turn; for an Average device, 1 or 5 Minutes; for a Complex device, 20 Minutes; for a Very Complex device, 1 Hour; for a Devilishly Complex device, 1 Day. If a character has a related Skill (like Electronics when trying to figure out the workings of an electrical device), he can make it as a Complementary Skill Roll to his Inventor.

If the Inventor roll succeeds, the character has figured out how to operate the device, and understands at least a little something about what it was used for. If the roll fails, he can't start it and doesn't understand its purpose, though he can roll again. If the roll fails badly (by 4 or more), the character either (a) cannot understand or work it until he permanently increases his Inventor roll by at least 1 (no rerolls are possible at this time); (b) damages or destroys the device (but can reroll if desired); and/or (c) somehow hurts or harms himself or a companion (and can reroll if desired).

These rules typically apply to relatively complex technological devices. Characters generally don't have to make any rolls to figure out what a dish is for, how to use a simple hand tool (like a hammer or file), and so on.

Repairing Technology

If a salvaged device isn't in excellent condition, characters may want to try to repair it. That may not be possible; you may rule that they lack the spare parts, tools, and/or technical know-how to do the job. If it's possible at all, a character needs to have a relevant Skill (such as Electronics for an electrical device, Mechanics for a car, or Weapon-smith for a weapon). For each step up the "Item Condition" list (Poor to Average, for example, or Good to Excellent) requires one successful Skill Roll. The base time for the Skill Roll depends on the item's complexity (as indicated above for Inventor rolls to make an item work), and the "Item Complexity" and "Miscellaneous Modifiers" from the Analyzing Found Technology table also apply. If the roll succeeds, the character repairs the item,



making its condition one step up (better) on the table. If the roll fails, he can't repair it, though he can roll again. If the roll fails badly (by 4 or more), he either (a) cannot repair it until he permanently increases the Skill's roll by at least 1 (no rerolls are possible at this time); (b) damages or destroys the device (but can reroll if desired); and/or (c) somehow hurts or harms himself or a companion (and can reroll if desired).

Manufacturing Technology

Rather than spend time scavenging for salvaged tech which they may not find, may not be able to figure out, or may not be able to repair, some characters decide to try to manufacture their own devices. They buy the relevant Skills and then set out to remake the world... or at least to arm themselves more heavily.

In general, you should restrict or forbid this unless it's part of your overall plan for development of the story and the setting. Heroes in Post-Apocalyptic stories don't generally go into business running their own machine shops or factories (though some Low Post-Apocalyptic stories are an exception to this rule). If they have any technology at all, it's something they scavenged (and perhaps repaired). To the extent actual manufacturing or similar activities take place at all, they're background elements of society or the

ANALYZING FOUND TECHNOLOGY

Circumstance	Modifier	Examples
Item's Condition		
Excellent	+2	
Good	+1	
Average	+0	
Poor	-2	
Very Poor	-4	
Item's Complexity		
Simple	+1	Firearm, musical instrument
Average	+0	Compass, simple home electronics
Complex	-1	Most vehicles, complex home electronics
Very Complex	-2	Computer, laser weapon
Devilishly Complex	-4	Supercomputer, robot
Miscellaneous Modifiers		
Character has experience with this type of tech		+1 or more
Character's never seen anything like this before		-1 or more
Character has and can read labels/directions/manuals		+1 or more

province of master villains who intend to use what they make to conquer, enslave, and destroy. But as long as you keep things under control and the PCs don't get too ambitious with their building projects, there's no reason you can't let the heroes make a few things from whatever raw materials they have lying around, or "upgrade" devices they already possess.

VILLAINS AND NPCs



One of the most important aspects of any scenario is the villain(s) — the adversaries and enemies the characters encounter or pursue during the course of the game. Closely related to the villain are the NPCs: other characters the PCs encounter who may be helpful, hostile, or annoying. A good villain or NPC can make a lackluster scenario enjoyable, and a poor one can diminish the impact of an otherwise wonderful adventure.

VILLAINS

When you think of a Post-Apocalyptic story, often you think of the villains as much as you do the heroes — the vicious, almost inhuman mutants, the equally vicious biker gangs, the petty men who try to exploit the situation for their own gain. This isn't limited to *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*: Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is by far the most striking character in the whole epic poem.

In a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* game, the PCs' adversary often drives the plot, and consequently should be more than just some game stats on a sheet. What makes a good villain? What makes a good *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* villain?

Villain Qualities

In *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* (and other genres, for that matter), good villains have certain qualities that set them apart.

COMPETENCE

The best villains in fiction are competent, often extraordinary in their abilities. They're powerful, clever, and subtle; overcoming them is a worthwhile challenge for the good guys. A villain who isn't competent or powerful isn't very interesting. But of course, "power" doesn't necessarily mean sheer muscle or available firepower. A weak but clever opponent who can maneuver the heroes into a situation where they can't use their superior abilities is just as powerful as one who can bat them aside with casual ease.

Exactly how powerful the villain is depends on the campaign's scale and tone, the abilities of the PCs, and the role you intend for the villain. Role is perhaps most important. What part will the villain play in the campaign? Is he the Big Bad Guy behind all the heroes' problems? In that case he must be powerful indeed, with underlings and henchmen who can each serve as the main villain of adventures themselves. If he's one of those henchmen,

then the villain should be only slightly more powerful than the heroes. If he's only a one-shot opponent in a casual encounter, he can be the same level or even weaker than the PCs.

MENACE

Just being powerful doesn't make a good villain. Blue whales are immensely powerful animals, but nobody's afraid of them because they're shy and don't harm humans. A villain requires credible menace: the heroes must believe he's not only able, but willing, to cause harm.

The best way to create this sense of menace is to give the villain the chance to demonstrate his power without directly harming the PCs. This may involve nothing more than a visible demonstration of the villain's power — such as giving the characters a glimpse of his private army — or you could have him take action against someone other than the PCs. For example, he could harm a character's DNPC, kill a favorite NPC, or reveal information to the characters that makes it plain he could attack them at any time.

SYMPATHY

The best villains have a streak of humanity — or at least some admirable traits. They may be people the heroes might have been friends with in other circumstances, or at least enemies they can maintain a grudging respect for. Otherwise, they're just cardboard cutouts; it's not hard to hate, or oppose, someone who's unlikeable and villainous in all aspects. For example, the Lord Humungus, leader of the biker gang in *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*, was thoroughly selfish and cruel, but the viewer was also given glimpses of a man who'd suffered great losses and been badly affected by them. He has a lot more depth than his henchman Wez, who's basically just an amoral killing machine.

MOTIVATION

Hardly anyone gets up in the morning and says "How can I be evil today?" Even the worst villains justify their own actions to themselves. The motives of villains are the same as those of most people: they want things (desire); they fear things (fear); and they believe things (conviction).

Wanting something is easy to understand. Everyone wants something. Villains may be motivated by a desire for wealth, lust for the opposite sex, a simple urge to survive, or even love for another person or being. Sometimes a villain's desires aren't quite normal — twisted sexual urges, mad plans to conquer the world, or the obsessive pursuit of some object. But other villains can have

quite prosaic desires, such as revenge. In *Post-Apocalyptic Hero*, the motivation may be as simple as obtaining enough food, fuel, or ammunition to survive in comfort while others starve and suffer.

Fear is another powerful motive. Most living things fear death, most humans fear poverty and hardship, a ruler might fear losing power, a bigot fears and hates members of another race, an official in a tyrannical regime might fear the consequences of failure. Even the most powerful villain can still have fears: the evil wizard living in the ruins of Deecce fears the barbarian tribes living nearby, who possess lore that contains the secret of his one vulnerability. Often people (not just villains) take great risks to avoid or overcome the things they fear; as long as the consequences are not as bad (in their opinion) as the thing they fear, it's a rational choice.

Finally, most humans have beliefs about right and wrong. Even villains do, although their beliefs may not match everyone else's. People often endure great danger and make tremendous sacrifices in the name of what they believe in; villains may do the same.

These three motives can feed on and strengthen one another. A villain who's greedy for wealth may also fear losing his property and sources of income, and may believe he's doing the right thing by stimulating economic growth and providing employment.

The motives for villains are not necessarily different from those of heroes. What separates heroes from villains is how they try to achieve their goals. Bringing unity and peace to the world is a noble goal. Exterminating all other races is not a heroic way to accomplish it.

In some campaigns, the distinction between the heroes' motives and those of the villains is all but invisible. Post-Apocalyptic heroes may be so focused on surviving that they're little better than marauders themselves.



Villain Archetypes

Here are a few more examples of archetypical Post-Apocalyptic adversaries.

THE BIKER GANG AND ITS LEADER

"Greetings from the Humungus! The Lord Humungus! The Warrior of the Wasteland! The Ayatollah of Rock-and-Rollah!"

—Toady announces the arrival of Lord Humungus and his gang to Pappagallo and his people in *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*

Perhaps the most iconic Post-Apocalyptic villain is the biker gang and its leader. Technically the term "biker gang" isn't entirely accurate; while some gangers do ride motorcycles, just as many drive cars or trucks (often odd-looking ones built from salvaged pieces and parts). The defining feature here is not the vehicles driven, but the fact that the gang is mobile and wants to remain that way... which means it needs a constant supply of fuel and other necessities.

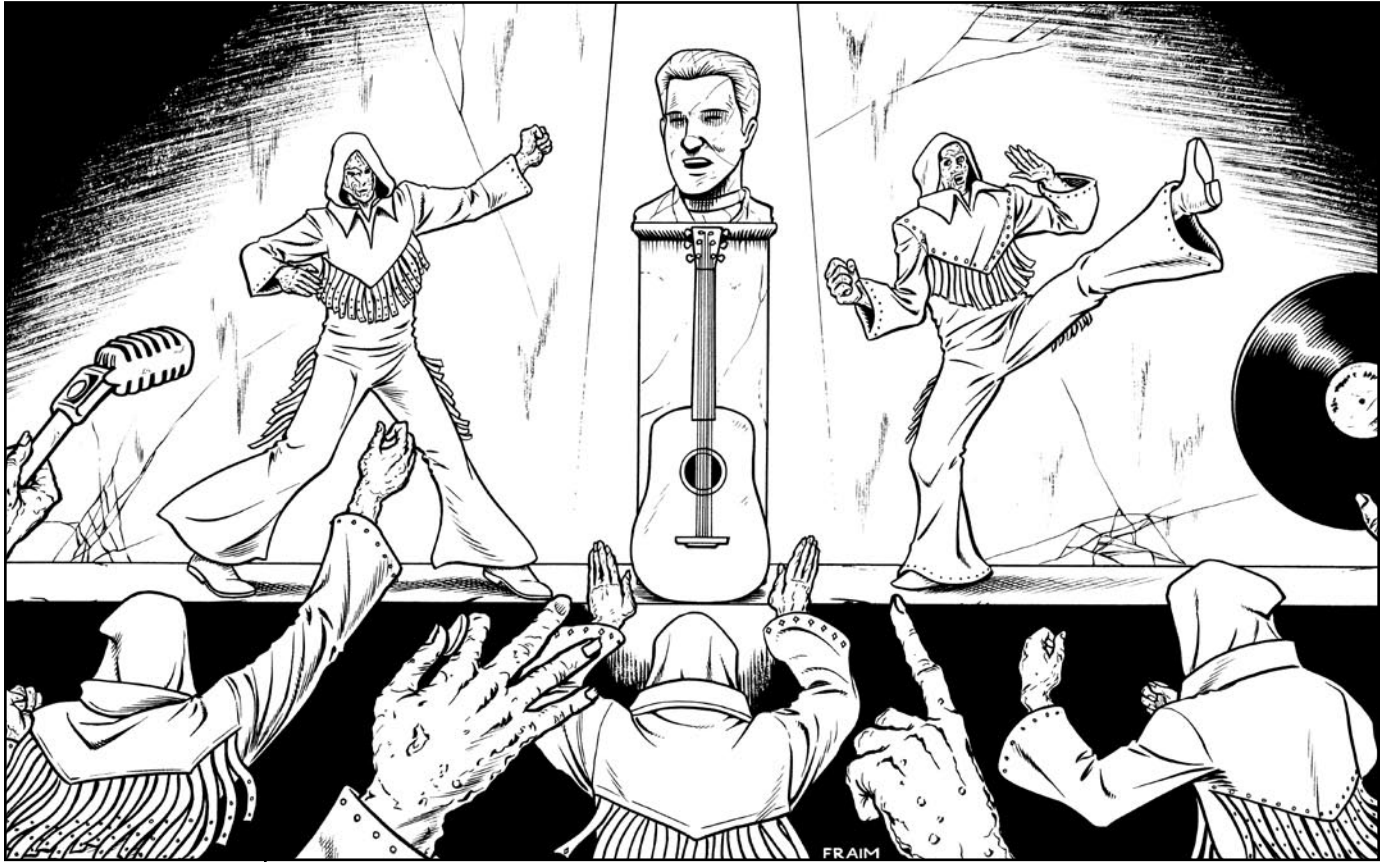
The gang itself typically consists of tough, hardbitten men with odd hairstyles (mohawks, partly or fully bald, dyed hair...) and a "wastelands chic" style of dress that emphasizes black leather and a mix of scavenged clothing. Most of the members are smart enough to operate and maintain their vehicles, but some are outright savages who live only to kill and harm anyone not strong enough to keep them in check. They're armed with whatever they can get their hands on — crossbows, pistols, shotguns, knives, chains, you name it.

Most powerful, and often the strangest, of all, is the Gang Leader. He tends to have a mix of brawn and brains that sets him apart from his followers, and may also possess mutations or gear that somehow help him keep control of them. While he may seem more self-controlled or reasonable than his gangers, in the end he can be every bit as depraved and cruel.

Serving the Gang Leader faithfully is the Gang Lieutenant — a ganger who doesn't have what it takes to lead the gang, but is somehow "better" (tougher, cleverer, stronger...) than the other gangers and thus has a favored position in the Gang Leader's eyes. Often he supplies the muscles and murderousness needed to spearhead the Gang Leader's plans.

Useful Features: In a Post-Apocalyptic world there are always men desperate and hopeless enough to become part of a biker gang. Even if the heroes score a major victory against the Gang Leader, if he (or some other sufficiently tough or charismatic ganger) is still alive the gang will quickly resurrect itself. And if the heroes destroy the gang completely, well, there's always another gang just like it waiting down the road....

Potential Problems: In a Road Wars campaign in particular, the Biker Gang and Gang Leader may become "old hat" because they're so commonplace. No matter how odd or eccentric you make them, after a while they're going to seem



like “just another gang.” Be sure to mix your opponents up and give your road warrior PCs something else to fight on occasion to keep the Biker Gang “fresh.”

Variations: In a setting involving a flood apocalypse, the Biker Gang might become a “Speedboat Gang” or “Jetski Gang.” If the technology to make ultralight planes and helicopters still exists (or can be salvaged), a Biker Gang might take from the air to firebomb its foes.

THE CULT LEADER

Post-Apocalyptic settings often feature weird cults and similar organizations — something about the apocalypse or the post-apocalypse world inspires strange religious ideas and leaders. Often, these cults are a haven for mutants or other societal rejects as well. But at the head of the cult stands the Cult Leader, a messianic or powerhungry figure who’s determined to control his “flock” and obey the tenets of his faith... which usually isn’t kindly-disposed toward Our Heroes.

Useful Features: The Cult Leader usually has fanaticism on his side, both his own and that of his followers. (Though a few might be charlatans who’ll bolt and run when the cozy situation they set up gets disrupted by the PCs.) The cultists will literally do anything, even put themselves in deadly danger, if the Cult Leader tells them to. Depending on the nature of the cult, the Cult Leader may also have seemingly normal minions hidden in local societies to spy for him, giving him a leg up on the PCs (at least at first).

Potential Problems: One Cult Leader can seem very much like the next, so use this archetype sparingly and make an effort to differentiate the cults and their commanders. A Cult Leader may also be a little too personally fragile to oppose the PCs directly, which makes him seem vulnerable.

Variations: Not all cults necessarily have to be violent or weird; some might be neutral toward the PCs, or even helpful. They could serve as a source of aid, hire the PCs to recover “sacred relics” from the nearby ruins, or the like.

THE EVIL SORCERER

In Post-Apocalyptic settings that feature magic, one of the main villains tends to be the evil wizard who wants to use his power (often both magical and technological) to take control of the region the PCs live in (or are traveling through). In most respects he’s no different from the evil wizards found in Fantasy fiction; he just has a different “flavor” to him, and possibly access to pre-apocalypse devices.

Useful Features: Between his magical powers and the resources they bring him, the Evil Sorcerer can be or do just about anything you need him to. Do you want your PCs to fight an army of pre-apocalypse soldier-bots? The Evil Sorcerer can bring them back to “life” with arcane energy. Would you rather they fight mutant alligator-men from the nearby swamp? Well, it just so happens that the Evil Sorcerer has recruited them as his followers (perhaps he even *made* them).

Potential Problems: The Evil Sorcerer may actually be *too* powerful for the PCs to tackle easily. If necessary, give him an “Achilles’s heel” for the PCs to hear rumors of, investigate, discover, and exploit. Just learning about it may require a session or two’s worth of adventure!

Variations: You can draw on Fantasy fiction for all sorts of ideas for tailoring the Evil Sorcerer to suit your needs. He might specialize in a particular type of magic (which could limit his powers and thus address the problem discussed above), or be a lich, for example.

THE MAD SCIENTIST

In some Post-Apocalyptic settings, enclaves linger on where pre-apocalypse tech is preserved and continues to function. Usually these enclaves are inhabited by scientists or other “elite” individuals chosen to live in them for various reasons (genetic compatibility, useful skills, important knowledge, or maybe just being lucky enough to be the person in charge of doing the choosing). But eventually something goes wrong. Whether it’s due to inbreeding, slowly-building claustrophobia, bitterness at his imposed lifestyle, or some other reason, one of the scientists snaps... and then he’s a danger not only to the other members of the enclave (if any are left alive) but to anyone nearby.

Useful Features: Sort of like the Evil Sorcerer, the Mad Scientist can have just about anything you need him to, since he’s still got access to pre-apocalypse technology. It can really change the balance of power in a region inhabited by people with mostly medieval or nineteenth-century technology when they all of a sudden have to confront an army of cloned soldiers armed with modern assault rifles!

Potential Problems: If the PCs defeat the Mad Scientist they could easily gain access to all of his technology, derailing the campaign. To prevent this, arrange things so the enclave and most of its tech will be destroyed somehow (say, by a self-destruct mechanism, or a nuclear reactor overload), so that the PCs only walk away with a few items of “treasure” that they personally obtain and carry.

Variations: Mad Scientists typically have robots and similar high-tech weapons at their disposal, but you could go a different route, such as biological. Or maybe a Mad Scientist has access to (or can build) a nuclear bomb and is prepared to create a new apocalypse....

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE OVERLORD

“The man isn’t interested in the due process of a democratic political system. He doesn’t want to run Arkansas — he wants to own it. ... Rockford... wants to be a new-world Ghengis Khan, and he wants to make Arkansas his own version of Little Mongolia.”

—Judge Harcourt describes the threat of an overlord in *The New Madrid Run*

In “Quest For Safety” Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns, the major villain for the latter half or third of the story is the Man Who Would Be

Overlord — a survivor of the apocalypse who has (or has found) stockpiles of military technology, recruited an army, and set himself up as king. He sees the PCs’ haven as a threat (or a source of slave labor) and will conquer or destroy it if the heroes don’t stop him.

Useful Features: The Man Who Would Be Overlord combines raw power (military rifles, tanks, jetfighters, whatever you want him to have) with the charisma to recruit and lead large groups of men — a potent combination indeed. While he may simply be powerhungry, he might also genuinely believe that he’s the best one to lead the region if it’s to be kept safe and civilization rebuilt, thus confronting the characters with a moral dilemma: what if he’s right?

Potential Problems: As with the Mad Scientist, the Man Who Would Be Overlord has technology you may not want to give the PCs access to. If you arrange events properly, he should lose most of his tech in the climactic battle with the heroes, leaving them only a few scraps to salvage.

Variations: The Man Who Would Be Overlord might actually be a woman, or his “female companion” might be the real genius behind his throne. Similarly, he might be a highly charismatic and recognizable figure who’s being virtually held prisoner and used by military leaders who lack his political appeal.

THE MUTANT LEADER

In most Post-Apocalyptic settings, the hostile (and often cannibalistic) mutants who wander the radioactive wastelands and nearby regions are leaderless. They might band together in small packs or tribes, but they don’t have any real “direction.” Sometimes that changes, and one mutant — stronger, more powerful, or more clever than the rest — rises up to unite his “brothers” into a mutant army that can threaten entire “norm” communities.

Useful Features: The Mutant Leader is usually a match for at least one hero, if not an entire group of heroes, in personal combat; that’s one of the things that makes him so scary. Even if he’s not physically their equal, he might have mental powers or other abilities with which to defeat them.

Potential Problems: None, really, aside from the potential “repetitiveness” mentioned under Biker Gangs, above. Who doesn’t love a good evil mutant?

Variations: The Mutant Leader doesn’t necessarily have to be a *human* mutant. A mutated, sentient animal or plant could become the ruler of a group of similar mutants and lead them on a quest to destroy humanity.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The world isn't divided evenly into heroes and villains. Most people in a campaign setting are simply non-player characters — NPCs.

In most cases what you need for a good, enjoyable NPC is a realistic, well-developed character. But that isn't always true. Realistic, well-developed NPCs tend to take over the story, leaving the heroes as spectators. It's actually more effective to keep many of your NPCs one-dimensional, but make them into memorable one-dimensional characters. Give them a distinctive habit or a manner of speaking for the heroes to remember. Players often forget NPC names, but they recall “the guy with the purple hair” or “the man with the bulging eyes.”

Nonplayer characters have the same motivations as villains — desires, fears, and beliefs — and these motives provide a good way to give them a little personality. The PCs can bribe a greedy security guard, but one who's scrupulously honest reacts poorly (to say the least) to bribe offers. Obviously, not every NPC needs to be this well-developed, but it's worth coming up with one or two motivations for any NPC the heroes directly interact with.

Important NPCs need as much care and feeding as villains — a hero's DNPC, Rival, or Hunter should have some independent goals and a recognizable identity. Dependent NPCs usually are nice people (though one can have a good deal of fun with a hero who feels protective of a cranky or irritating NPC). Rivals should have a mix of good and bad traits, and above all should be competent enough for the Rivalry to mean something — if the hero always wins, it's scarcely a Rivalry.

If a hero is Hunted, you should give some thought to the motives of the Hunter, even if it's a large organization. *Why* is the Cult of the Glowing Lands watching the character? What does it want to find out? Even when the Hunter is a group, it's useful to give that group a face in the form of a “case officer” or some other member of the group who is the one the heroes have the most dealings with. For example, every time the Cult confronts the heroes, its members are led by a weaselly, clever mutant named Driqez who has implied that he has mental powers. Other cultists may track the PCs, ambush them, or attack them, but it's Driqez who leads the attacks, who tries to capture the PCs and interrogate them, and so on.

NPC Archetypes

These are some standard character types who turn up again and again in *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* stories. You can use them as-is, or play against the stereotype by creating NPCs very different from these.

THE HELPFUL FELLOW TRAVELER

Post-Apocalyptic heroes on long journeys have a penchant for encountering someone who proves helpful in some way and ends up traveling with them, at least for a short while if not all the way to their goal. The simplest Helper is just a guide, someone who knows the local terrain and dangers and is glad to show the heroes the safe way through. Other Helpers might have important technical or combat Skills they can use on the PCs' behalf, know secrets the PCs would also like to know, or just have enough competence with gun or crossbow to lend a hand when enemies rear their ugly mutant heads.

Variations: The Helpful Fellow Traveler doesn't necessarily have to be human (mutant or otherwise). It could be an intelligent (or well-trained) animal, as in the novels *Hiero's Journey* and *Wolf And Iron*. Sometimes a helper appears in the form of a victim the heroes need to rescue, but turns out to have useful skills or knowledge and contributes to the success of their journey rather than just becoming a burden.

THE KID

During some Low Post-Apocalyptic stories that take place shortly or generations after the apocalypse, the hero encounters a kid — someone young enough not to remember pre-apocalypse society at all, and who's often half-wild, unable to speak, or has been raised by wolves. By rescuing the Kid or taking him under his wing, the hero not only helps to educate and “civilize” him (at least to some extent), but he himself regains some of his humanity by looking beyond his present state, to a future where the Kid will be an adult and maybe, just maybe, things will be a little better than they are now.

Variations: Rather than being a wild child, the Kid might be a miniature version of someone he knows and idolizes, such as an important adult within the community. He soon shifts his adoration to the hero, adopting his style of dress and mannerisms.

THE TINKERER

In Post-Apocalyptic stories where the hero lacks any real technical skills himself, or at least the specialized skills needed for a particular adventure, he usually encounters and somehow befriends the Tinkerer. The Tinkerer's primary role in the story is to make up for the skills the hero lacks, but as the story progresses he becomes a friend and companion to the hero. The Tinkerer's own personal problems or difficulties may become an element that pushes the story onward, as the hero comes to like his new companion and wants to help him rather than just exploit him.

Variations: Instead of having technological know-how for the hero to draw upon, an NPC might have just the right mutant abilities, mental powers, or spells for the hero to accomplish his goals.

c h a p t e r f o u r



AFTER THE APOCALYPSE

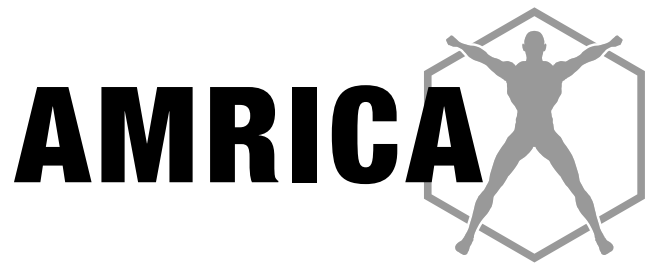
I suddenly find myself needing to know
the plural of Apocalypse.

— *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*

THE POST-APOCALYPTIC HERO SOURCEBOOK

This chapter provides a wealth of resources for the *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* GM. First, there are several “mini-settings”/scenarios described in enough detail to get a campaign going, but leaving plenty of room for the GM to define things as he likes and make the setting his own. Second, included as part of the *After The Blast* setting are example mutations and mutant creatures suitable for any High Post-Apocalyptic campaign. Third, several of the campaigns features one or more locations written up in greater detail for use in an adventure or as the starting-point for a long-term campaign.

This chapter does not have a GM's Vault, so GMs who don't want their players to know everything written here should forbid them to read it. If you plan to play in one of these settings, don't read this chapter until you get your GM's permission.



Hundreds of years ago, a nuclear holocaust triggered a chain of events that destroyed human civilization. Now, a thousand years later, humanity has rebuilt some of what it lost. Tales of “the Ancients” and an occasional relic from before the Collapse show that mankind was once much more advanced and more powerful, but few people know that, and even fewer care, since the thought of progress inevitably brings fears of another Collapse.

Amrica is a setting for Low Post-Apocalyptic campaigns featuring characters typically built on 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages. Normal Characteristic Maxima is imposed as a campaign ground rule. Characters may not buy mutations; aside from a few mutated animals in wild places like the Great Swamp, radiation doesn't have that effect in this setting — it's a deadly danger all but the most foolhardy avoid. Characters may start the game with pre-Apocalypse equipment if they pay Character Points for it, but this is discouraged; typically they should only acquire special gear through game play.

HISTORY

This history of *Amrica* before the present day is often shrouded in mystery, and pre-Collapse history is less well-known, even by scholars. What is known, or guessed at, by learned men with access to the few surviving records, is this:

In the early years of what men of that time called the twenty-first century, two great empires, *Amrica* and *Chi'n*, went to war. The causes of this war are uncertain, but it quickly spread to other kingdoms of the world, as they sided with one combatant or the other, or took advantage of the chaos to settle old grudges, grab land, or steal riches. The war dragged on and on until one side — no one knows which one — fired its most terrible weapons, the Great Nuclar Bombs, against the other. The other side retaliated, and within hours the major cities in both empires were radioactive wastelands. Other kingdoms, sometimes mistaking the attacks for weapons fired at them, launched their own Great Nuclar Bombs against their own enemies; no continent in the world was spared.

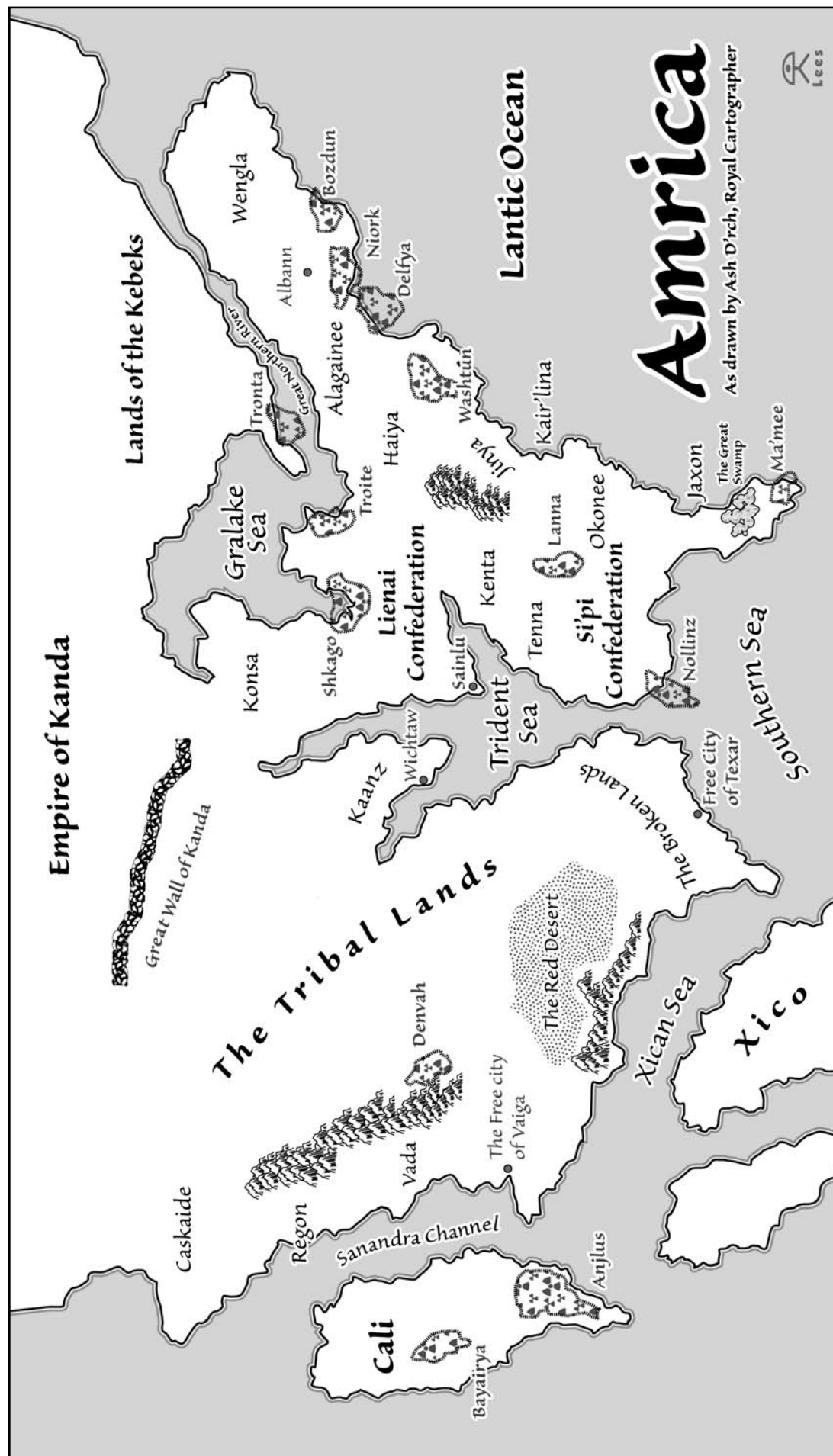
Unfortunately these weapons were so powerful, and struck so quickly, that they sometimes caused geological changes. Fragile places in the earth were damaged, and the very mountains shook. Coastlines were split, rivers widened, mountains tumbled to the ground or grew in places where they'd never existed before.

The war quickly ground to a halt; no one cared about fighting anymore now that his homeland was shattered. Unfortunately the attacks, calculated with such precision, had eliminated most of humanity's leaders and many of its resources of knowledge. Libraries and databases built up over centuries vanished in an instant in a flash of Great Nuclar fire, and most of the men who carried similar knowledge within their minds died during the war. Humanity's most precious resource, its learning, dwindled to almost nothing overnight.

Not that most people cared — their lives were occupied by the struggle for survival in a world with no more grocery stores or policemen. For years radiation, thick clouds, and natural disasters caused by a battered and angry climate ravaged the planet. In less than a quarter of a century since the war, over ninety percent of humanity was dead, and it seemed as if the human race might be headed for extinction.

But mercifully, such was not to be. Though it took centuries, humanity slowly but surely crawled back from the abyss. With the technology of the Ancients, and the knowledge and skills to re-create it, destroyed or lost, men returned to their roots: farming the land; hunting for game; simple barter trading. Eventually towns and kingdoms arose, and some of those kingdoms in turn became empires. A few technologies, such as the longbow and the sailing ship, were rediscovered, changing societies in ways both subtle and gross.

Today *Amrica* is a land of many peoples and kingdoms set amidst a backdrop of ruins-dotted wilderness. Most people remain content to live the same lives as their fathers, close to the land with hard labor the main source of income — but a few, tantalized by the ruins and rumors of the Ancients, seek a more exciting and unusual life as adventurers.



GEOGRAPHY

Broadly speaking, Amrica consists of three distinct regions: the East (lands east of the Trident Sea); the West (lands to the west of the Sea, a much larger region than the East); and the North, consisting of the Empire of Kanda and the Kebek lands. Off the coast of the West are several large islands, most particularly the strange land of Cali and the southlands of Xico. And scattered throughout all of them are “rad zones” (or as the common folk sometimes call them, “deathglow lands”) where the spirits of the Great Nuclar Bombs live and only fools hungry for death dare to venture.

The East

The most heavily-populated, technologically-advanced, and “civilized” part of Amrica is the East, a land of lush forests and fields with small mountain ranges and plentiful fresh water from lakes, streams, and rivers. Unfortunately it also has more rad zones than the other lands put together, leading those who speculate about such things to think it was a center of population for the Ancients as well.

Since the Collapse, many kingdoms have risen and fallen here as men fought for power, prestige, and riches. Currently two large kingdoms in the northwest vie for supremacy while nearly a dozen smaller realms fill the rest of the territory.

ALAGAINEE

A small kingdom between the Great Northern River and the Lantic Ocean, Alagaine is both helped and hindered by the two enormous rad zones that dominate its eastern side: Niork, the greatest ruin in the world and site of the fearsome Tilted Island of Man’hatta; and Delfya. On the one hand, adventurers stream into the kingdom to explore the ruins, and some even make it out alive with strange relics of the Ancients which they sell for good price. A visitor to Albann, the seat of the kingdom, will see more people there with artifacts from pre-Collapse times than anywhere else in Amrica. But on the other hand, so much of Alagaine’s coast is occupied by rad zones that it has only one poor outlet to the sea, just south of Delfya (and even that is avoided by many superstitious folk as being too close to the rad zone). Thus, most of Alagaine’s trade is overland, with Wengla, Haiya, Jinya, and the Lienai Confederation. More than one Alagaine king has coveted Jinya’s fine coastline.

The current ruler of the land, Kestar III, is a man of both learning and insight. While lacking the military skills and ambitions of many of his forefathers, his reign has seen an increase in cultural pursuits, with much public money going to patronize sculptors, painters, bards, and most especially architects. He’s practically transformed the royal palace from a staid yet serviceable defensework to a place of beauty and comfort that’s the envy of every other ruler in the land. But privately some of his dukes worry that his lack of attention to the army has left

the western and northern parts of the kingdom vulnerable to Kebek raiders, who cross the River in great longships to loot and pillage.

HAIYA

Alagaine’s neighbor to the west, Haiya, is a land of farmers and herdsman. “Fat as a Haiya farmer” is one old saying, referring to the rich crop yields and large herds they so often have; but so is “dumb as a Haiya farmer,” since the Haiyans often prefer to remain by themselves on their farms, scorn book learning, and often care little for the outside world.

Haiya does most of its trading with the Lienai Confederation and Alagaine. In the past few decades it has come under (often considerable) pressure to join the Confederation (which would in effect make it a province of the “Confederation’s” ruler. Alagaine would rather not have the Lienai as a neighbor, so it supports Haiya in various ways (mostly covert) to maintain its independence. On the other hand, some Haiyan nobles, particularly ones with lands in the western part of the kingdom, seem to favor the idea of merging with Lienai, which they believe would bring them wealth and power; there’s no telling how far some of them might go in pursuit of that goal.

King Wenzels of Haiya is an old man of moderate temper who’s ruled well for nearly half a century, largely because no major crises have arisen to tax his rather placid style of governance. His son, also named Wenzels, is somewhat more energetic than his father, given to precipitous action and clearly anxious to take the throne. Ugly rumors claim he’s secretly in league with the Lienai, but there’s no proof of anything of the sort and the last man who dared mention anything of the sort was beheaded for treason.

JAXON

The hot and humid land of Jaxon occupies the peninsula on the southeastern part of the continent — or at least, those parts north of the monster-infested Great Swamp and the deathglow lands of Ma’mee. Much of the land is low-lying and swampy, with plenty of streams and shallow lakes good for fishing and forests rich with game. Here and there large holes, mostly thought to be the work of pre-Collapse weapons and now often filled with water at the bottom, pockmark the land.

Rather than being a traditional kingdom, Jaxon is the land of the Five Civilized Tribes, natives who claim to have lived there as vassals of a great kingdom in pre-Collapse times but who survived the cataclysm to make their own way in the world. The chieftains of the tribes say they have precise oral records dating back to before the Collapse and chronicling the tribes’ lives since then, but northern scholars who’ve studied these records scoff at this notion.

The Five Tribes are: the Jaxa of the northeast, the largest tribe from whom the land as a whole takes its name; the Talasee of the northwest, who trade extensively with the Si’pi Confederation and often try to persuade the other Jaxon tribes that

they should all join with the Si'pi; the Mikmoze, also known as the Lando, who live in central Jaxon and worship as their god a strange-looking mouse about whom they tell many stories of clever and daring exploits; and the Eastern and Western Seminole, who live on the fringes of (and sometimes even within) the Great Swamp.

Based on where they live alone the Seminole have a great reputation for bravery, since the Great Swamp is one of the most dangerous places in all of Amrica. It's inhabited by strange, even monstrous wildlife of every variety: dozens of species of venomous serpent; crokaters (giant lizards) with leathery skin so tough it can bounce arrows; butterflies with wings as big as one's hand; swampcats with a taste for human flesh; and things stranger and deadlier still. The Seminole hunt there, using their matchless skill with stealth, tracking, and the bow to bring down monsters that gun-toting adventurers fear to tangle with.

JINYA

Next to Alagaine, Jinya is the richest kingdom on the eastern coast. Located in the middle of the continent (and thus serving as a crossroads for north-south trade) and blessed with a long coastline containing many harbors, it also includes the large ruins of Washtun. Its resources include mining in the mountains to the west, fish and shellfish taken from the ocean, and various crops farmed on the lands in between.

Jinya has traditionally been a mostly peaceful place, though not without its share of internal politicking and conflict (usually pitting coastal barons and their interests against nobles of the interior and west). But the current ruler, King Jammis, is a touchy, prideful, stubborn man. He knows that Alagaine, and perhaps even Haiya, casts covetous eyes at his northern territories, and that angers him deeply. Fearing war, and too stiff-necked to try to defuse the situation with diplomacy or trade, he's begun preparing the Jinyan army for war, increasing its size with the help of increased taxes (upsetting nearly all of his nobles and subjects) and drilling his soldiers constantly. (He fancies himself a skilled warrior and often joins them for military maneuvers; while he's not nearly as good a fighting man as he thinks, he's not nearly as bad as many of his generals and nobles mockingly claim behind his back.) But he's concerned that even that may not be enough. He's secretly begun sponsoring expeditions into the deadly ruins of Washtun, hoping against hope that the adventurers in his pay will find some secret or technology that can tip the balance in his favor should war break out.

KAIR'LINA

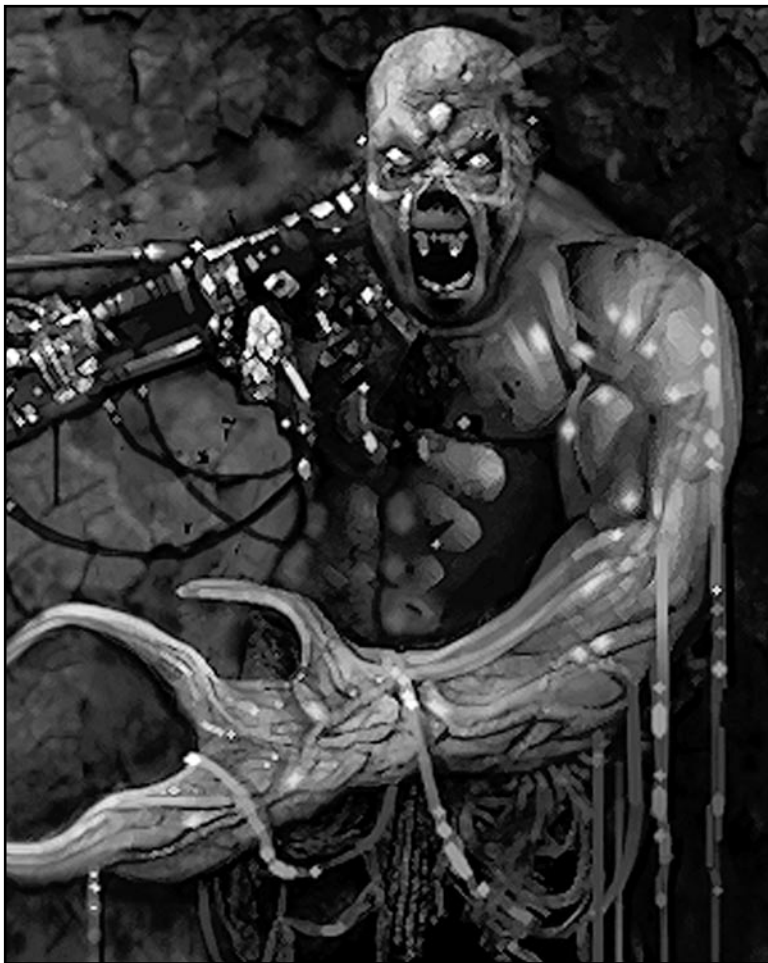
Just south of Jinya is Kair'lina, a peaceful kingdom whose subjects mainly farm, raise pigs and cattle, and hunt. Their chief crop is tabac, which the eastern peoples use both for smoking and medicinal purposes. (Dark rumors that tabac is poisonous, and that the kingdom has a secret corps of assassins that use it to slay the king's enemies, are scoffed at by Kair'linians.)

Those aren't the only rumors that swirl around "the Blue Kingdom" (so called because of its mostly dark blue coat of arms, which features a grinning demon's head much to the discomfiture of the Church). For generations, if not centuries, people have told stories about a "hidden fortress" from pre-Collapse times somewhere in the eastern part of the kingdom. According to the stories, this fortress is the home of a coven of sorcerers from before the Collapse who've used their strange magics to extend their lives. Anyone who finds the fortress gets to learn the strange secrets of the sorcerers' magic, a strange practice known as Syense, and receives gifts of pre-Collapse technology from them. More adventurers than one can count have searched high and low for the fortress... but so far none have found it.

KONSA

One of the largest and most powerful of the eastern kingdoms, Konsa finds itself in an unenviable position. Located in the north between the Lienai lands, the Kandan wall and largely impassable terrain to the east of it, the Gralake Sea, and the Tribal Lands, it has a growing population and little room to expand. On several occasions Konsan rulers have tried to conquer westward into the Tribal Lands, but the tribes, most particularly the fierce Sewa, have resisted Konsan efforts and driven the kingdom's armies back.

Two years ago the aged king Tonas died in his sleep, and his son Pettar ascended to the throne. King Pettar is clever, but inexperienced, and since his older brother Tonas (who was to have become king in time) was killed in a border skirmish in the south, he's had a deep and undying hatred of the Lienai. He has little interest in conquest to the west or north; his goal is to invade the Lienai Confederation and destroy it, or at least take as much of its lands as he can. Although his army is large and strong, many of his nobles privately doubt that Konsa can triumph in a war against the Lienai... though the prospect of the glory and riches such a war could bring them is enticing.



THE LIENAI CONFEDERATION

Konsa's only rival for the title of "most powerful kingdom in the East" is the Lienai Confederation — which isn't really a confederation at all. Centuries ago it began as one when several small kingdoms in the region banded together in the name of increased trade and prosperity. A group of ambassadors, one from each kingdom, formed a council to rule on matters of import. But in time some of the members of the Confederation became more and more powerful through political maneuvering and advantageous trade, while others weakened. Eventually one family, the Robson lords of Terraut, became predominant... and since then, that predominance has crystallized. While nominally the Council of Kings still rules the Lienai Confederation and each member kingdom controls its own affairs, in truth the head of House Robson — currently Stefos, known as "the Grey" for his somber, disciplined manner — effectively rules the Lienai Confederation as its king. Though many of the other members dislike the current state of affairs, the truth is that they lack the power to oppose the Robsons, so whatever Stefos Robson prefers is what the Council votes to do. Periodic attempts to change things over the years have only resulted in one noble or another being overthrown, his castle reduced to rubble, and his lands become direct fiefdoms of House Robson.

Rumors have long claimed that one of the secrets of House Robson's power is that its leaders and generals possess several powerful pre-Collapse weapons looted from the dangerous ruins of Shkago (and the only slightly safer ruins of Troite). If so they have done a superb job of keeping them secret, since no one's ever seen them use a super-weapon on the battlefield or display it in court.

The Lienai capital is Sainlu, a city on the shore of the Trident Sea. It's one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in Amrica, with many impressive buildings... though here and there it still shows traces of the ruins of the pre-Collapse city that preceded it. Most prominent of these are two mighty columns, both shattered near the top, that gently curve toward one another though they never meet. Their purpose or significance remain unknown, though they've become a symbol of the Robson dynasty and even appear on the House's coat of arms.

OKONEE

South of Kair'lina and north of Jaxon, the kingdom of Okonee is a sleepy backwater sort of place despite its size. Blessed with warm winters but cursed with swelteringly hot summers, it's a land of scrub and pine forests, marshy areas, and fewer rivers and lakes than its people would like. Drought is a frequent problem, particularly in the warmer months, which often makes for small crop yields despite the rich soil.

The current ruler, Queen Tacia, is a disturbing and mysterious woman. Although clearly very intelligent and insightful, she often does or says things that seem strange, and many of her courtiers and nobles privately wonder if she is mad. In her youth she was an adventurer who often explored the ruins of Lanna, and some people fear the Nuclar spirits touched her mind. But they also gave her power in the form of several pre-Collapse artifacts which she found and still uses. One is a large kill-stick that spews death with such force and noise that it can kill several people at once, and for which she seems to have an inexhaustible supply of seeds. She also has a small mechanical man which she sometimes makes walk and talk for the amusement of her courtiers, a wand that projects a beam of light bright enough to temporarily blind someone, and a "dragon's egg" she claims has the power to destroy her entire palace if broken open.

THE SI'PI CONFEDERATION

Occupying the southwestern territories along the Trident Sea and the Southern Ocean, the Si'pi Confederation *is* a true confederation. It's a strong alliance of several peoples who are slightly more advanced than the Jaxons, but not quite as much as the other eastern kingdoms. Some kings have wondered if it might be worth conquering for the trade opportunities its location could offer, but it's such a hot, humid place that's most consider it not worth the effort to invade. Besides that, the Si'pi have a reputation as skilled hunters and fierce fighters, so taking them on in their own territory is probably a bad idea.

Most of the Si'pi live in villages or towns of no more than a few thousand inhabitants; they have no cities to speak of. City-state-like regions of political control exist around the larger towns, and it's these entities that form the Confederation.

WENGLA

The northernmost of the eastern kingdoms, Wengla is a quiet land of farmers and fishermen. Its staple food is the lobz, a large shellfish that lives in abundance off the Wengla coast; elsewhere it's considered a delicacy and imported at great price from the Wenglans. Wengla is mostly rural, with little to attract adventurers. But every year the king, currently Payatuk IV, sponsors a competition in which the contestants must enter the ruins of Bozdun and bring back an artifact. The most wondrous or helpful artifact wins a price... but all entries become the property of the king.

THE EAST TRIDENT KINGDOMS

Occupying the eastern shore of the Trident Sea are two kingdoms, Tenna and Kenta. Both are fairly small and quiet, and similar to one another societally and culturally. Both rely on Trident trade as the mainstay of their economies, though they grow crops where they may in their hilly, sometimes even mountainous, lands. They're known primarily for two things: *moshin*, a strong alcoholic beverage made from corn; and their distinctive style of music, involving fast-paced playing on stringed instruments by bards who have a reputation for cleverness, telling witty stories, and tricking men out of their hard-earned money.

The West

Compared to the East, the western half of Amrica is much less populated. Its east and north are dominated by plains and prairies; its south and west mostly by deserts and mountainous territory. Water is a constant concern in many parts; any traveler there should be sure to keep a full waterskin (if not several) with him at all times.

THE BROKEN LANDS

The southeastern corner of the West is known as "the Broken Lands." This name comes not from geography but politics — a look at a detailed map of the area reveals literally dozens of tiny kingdoms, some little bigger than eastern towns. Any man with enough gumption and strength to carve out a kingdom (or, these days, take someone else's) can do it... though just calling himself a king doesn't mean he has any actual power or subjects. The folk of the Broken Lands tend to be fiercely independent and well-armed; they keep to themselves as long as no one bothers them, but are quick to respond to any provocation with anger and force.

The Free City of Texar, located on the coast, is just as rambunctious and uncontrollable as the people. No king or lord rules there, anything goes, you can buy practically any item you can think of, and a man has to protect himself

because there's no City Guard to do it for him. It's the sort of place some people never, ever want to go to — and others can't imagine living anywhere else.

THE TRIBAL LANDS

The vast majority of the West is *the Tribal Lands* — territory controlled by various tribes of semi-nomadic natives known for their horsemanship, marksmanship with the bow, and wilderness survival skills. No one's ever counted all the tribes who live there, but the major ones are well-known:

In the north: the Chaya; the Nessap; the Saka; the Sewa; the Yakam

In the south: the Arrap; the Havsu; the Jerron; the Kiwa; the Kreyak; the Navaa

Most of the tribes are peaceful unless provoked, though what constitutes "provocation" can vary from tribe to tribe. The Sewa and Jerron, and to a lesser extent the Yakam, are exceptions; they sometimes attack others for no good reason in search of slaves, loot, food, or power. In any case, among most of the tribes armament and tactics are the same: they open with arrows (they favor short bows that can be shot from horseback, instead of the longbows used by eastern armies); then charge forward to fight hand-to-hand with spears, short swords, daggers, and sometimes clubs and axes.

The Red Desert

Two tribes — the Havsu and the Navaa — actually live in parts of the Red Desert, a region so arid that only ugly, spindly, purple-green cacti and a few other plants can grow there. They're experts at finding hidden sources of water and seem to have adapted evolutionarily to drinking much less water per day than other peoples. (In *HERO System* terms, give them 1 point of Life Support (Diminished Drinking), defined as "only needs half as much water to survive as normal").

Outsiders who've visited the Red Desert report that there's nothing of interest there — no ruins, no artifacts, just some spectacular views and a lot of rocks and dirt.

CASKAIDE

One of the most beautiful regions of Amrica is the kingdom of Caskaide, a land of thick pine forests, hills, and morning mists. King Sarbok the Wise rules over a people known for their skill as carpenters and woodcarvers; most building in Caskaide is done with wood, so fire is a constant peril. The growing season is short, so seafood (both from the ocean and from the kingdom's many fast-rushing rivers) is a major component of the Caskaide diet; don't go there if you don't like fish!

North of central lands of Caskaide is a large bay; the Caskaidans have often thought about building a city there, but have never found a good location for one. In the deep waters off the shore lie a great ruin that few people, they say, have ever explored. If a group of adventurers could find a way to breathe underwater, who knows what they might find... and what strange fish the Nuclar spirits might have bred...

KAANZ

Several centuries ago the land now known as Kaanz was part of the Tribal Lands, ruled by the tribe of the same name. A discontented Lienai nobleman, Serevin, now known as “the Conqueror,” wanted more than life in the eastlands could offer him. He wanted wealth, and power, and the glory of battle. Calling to his side others who felt the same, he assembled a great army and sailed west from Sainlu. After it landed, his army of conquest made some initial progress against the Kaanz warriors, but soon unfamiliar territory, lack of supplies, and the enormous numbers of Kaanzans began to take their toll. Things were looking grim as the Kaanz warriors massed for one final battle... and then a terrible thunderstorm broke, causing the Kaanzans to call off the battle. Serevin struck hard that night, falling upon his foes when they didn’t expect it and weren’t organized. Despite being outnumbered almost five to one, he destroyed the Kaanz army, breaking the tribe’s power forever.

To consolidate his power, Serevin built a great fortress-city on the shores of the Trident at a place called Wichtaw, a (non-radioactive) ruin held sacred by the Kaanz. In tribute to his defeated foes he named his new kingdom after them. Though he and his descendants had to fight against one tribe or another for years, House Severin has for many generations been the unquestioned ruler of Kaanz, and its storm-cloud-topped coat of arms a sight to inspire fear in the tribes. But in recent times some tribes, particularly the Sewa and some branches of the Saka, have become more aggressive, raiding into western Kaanz frequently. King Hanok, more a scholar and a lover than a warrior, often wishes he had the money and manpower to build a great wall like the Kandans did to keep his hostile neighbors away.

REGON

A fairly small and sleepy kingdom that’s almost a vassal state of Caskaide, Regon is much like its neighbor to the north, though the terrain is rougher and the coastline less hospitable. No one can count the number of merchant ships that have wrecked on the Regon coast over the years due to strong currents, unpredictable winds, and frequent shoals. Some salvagers find as much work there as they do in various ruins, though getting to a sunken ship is often difficult.

VADA

In the south of Regon rises a region of steep hills that often prevent rainclouds from drifting south. As a result the kingdom of Vada is more like its southern companion, Zona, than Regon; it’s a relatively dry place, and in some areas becomes desert-like.

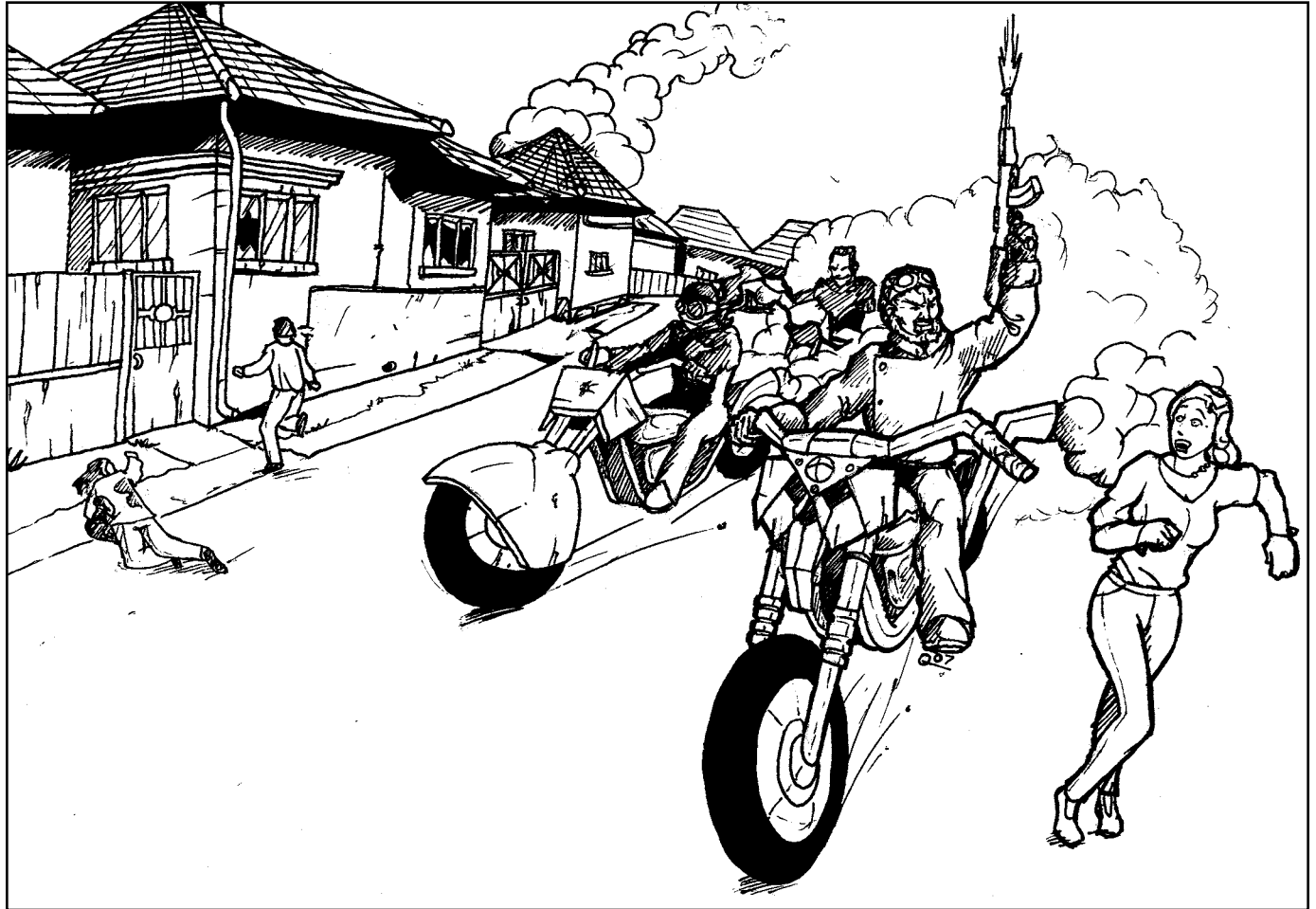
The rulers of Vada are the kings of House Waldurz (currently, King Kallaud), free-spirited, independent-minded royals who rule over a free-spirited, independent-minded people. Legend claims that after the Collapse, a rancher named Waldurz, aided by a mysterious stranger from the distant East, built a kingdom of peace and security amid the turmoil of the times, due largely to the fact that he’d armed himself and his family and friends to the teeth before the Collapse occurred. To this day, Vadans tend to be an armed... and thus polite... people, though their arms are swords and crossbows and not the fabled kill-sticks that Waldurz wielded.

The Free City Of Vaiga

For many years Vada’s chief city was a ruin called Vaiga, where people from all over Amrica had drifted in and in time built up a new city on the remains of the destroyed one. The place developed such a reputation for sin and debauchery that pious King Geddar came against it with fire and sword to “cleanse” it once and for all. But to his astonishment as well as their own, the seemingly-selfish Vaigans banded together to resist him and actually succeeded at driving his army away! They declared Vaiga a free city, and so it’s remained to this day. It still has a reputation — a well-deserved one — as a place of sin and debauchery where one can do or have whatever one can afford, but also as a center of trade and shipping. An Amrican who wants to go to Cali or Xico almost always leaves from Vaiga.

ZONA

The small kingdom of Zona is relatively young compared to most of the other “civilized” lands of Amrica — it arose barely 200 years ago when an adventurer named Kallivon led a ragtag army south from Vaiga to take the lands of one of the Havsu tribes. A peaceful people, the Havsu considered the land mostly useless and migrated east and north rather than fight. Kallivon soon began to conclude that they were right to leave, for the land held nothing of value... until one of his underlings discovered gold in the nearby hills. Soon many small towns rose up as people streamed in to hunt for mineral wealth. To this day Zona’s economy depends mostly on mining, though the merchants and water-sellers who’ve come to serve the miners often make more money than the miners themselves.



Beyond Amrica

Near Amrica proper are three other regions of note: the Kandans north; Cali; and Xico.

THE EMPIRE OF KANDA

During the wars that led to the Collapse, the peaceful land of Kanda was mostly spared. It launched no missiles, and few if any were launched against it. Later catastrophes and problems hit it just as hard as they hit the other kingdoms of the world, but the Kandans were better suited to withstand the blows and thus could be said not to have fallen as far as the other Amrican kingdoms. When humanity began to dig itself out from the rubble and slowly, but surely, rebuild something of its civilization, the Kandans had less work to do. As a result, Kanda became a political power early in Amrican history, dominating much of what's now the northern half of the eastlands and even some of the northern Tribal Lands. But the Kandans were not empire-builders at heart, and a succession of weak rulers, coupled with a rise in power of some tribes and Amrican kingdoms, put their hegemony in doubt.

Rather than fight for something he considered worthless, nearly 400 years ago Emperor Jakard of Kanda retreated northward, building the Great Wall of Kanda to keep the hostile tribes from threatening his subjects (and thus shifting much of their aggression eastward, to the eter-

nal anger of places like Konsa). Now protected by wall, terrain, and the strength of its armies, Kanda is a sleeping giant, content to trade as it sees fit and weathering its harsh winters with the help of the wealth that trade brings.

The current ruler of Kanda is the Emperor Janaf III, proud son of a proud line of rulers who don't concern themselves with the fact that their title of "Emperor" is no longer truly accurate. More headstrong and intelligent than most of his recent ancestors, Janaf harbors dreams of "returning Kanda to greatness" — though what exactly he means by that is unclear, leaving the Konsans, Lienai, and other northern kingdoms nervous.

The Kebeks

East of Kanda is a land that was once part of the Empire but which broke free centuries ago. The Kebeks are a disputatious, fractious people, quick to anger and quick to fight, who seem to prefer their own company to that of everyone else in the world. They don't even allow traders in, restricting them to tiny villages along the Gralake Sea and Great Northern River, so little is known about their lands. They speak their own strange language, forcing anyone who wants to trade with them to learn it as well.

CALI, THE WHITE LINE WASTELAND

The island of Cali was once a part of the Amrican mainland. During the collapse terrible earthquakes struck, breaking it off from the continent but also raising new lands to make it larger

than before. Accustomed to earthquakes, the Calans weathered it better than most would have, and a few large buildings even remained standing, but even so the devastation was enormous, particularly in the south and north, where Great Nuclar Bombs struck the cities of Anjlus and Bayairya.

But pre-Collapse Calan society had two qualities most parts of Amrica lacked. First, it was much more used to, and dependent on, high technology than the rest of Amrica; they had advances there that had yet to spread to the rest of the continent. Second, they had many roads and many cars, more than any other kingdom, and not even an apocalypse could make them give them up.

In the succeeding centuries a strange culture arose, one unlike any on the continent. Around Cala's natural sources of gas — native oil wells and such — protective city-states developed, becoming centers of trade and production. But on the roads between them, chaos raged. Gangs of men driving cars and motorcycles salvaged from the ruins, or built of salvaged parts, patrolled the cracked highways. If they met one another, they fought; if they disputed ownership of some stretch of road, they fought; if they were bored, they fought. By unspoken law none of them attacked the towns, for they quickly learned that any gang who attacked a town would not be sold gas by any other town. Travelers and trade caravans between the towns were fair game, but the towns themselves were totally off-limits. Anyone unlucky enough to be caught by them ended up enslaved, raped, or killed; rumors claimed some of the more savage gangs ate their captives.

This state of affairs persists, more or less unchanged, in the present day. There aren't quite as many vehicles anymore; an intact vehicle, particularly one in good condition, is as valuable as the gas needed to fuel it. The gangs trade salvage from the ruins and goods stolen from travelers to the towns for gas, or steal it from each other. It's a harsh and barbaric life, even for the townsfolk in many ways, but it never seems to go away.

XICO, THE MYSTERIOUS SOUTH

The kingdom or empire (reports differ) of Xico occupies two large islands separated from Amrica by a large channel. Very little is known about Xico and its people in the north. Some rumors claim the Xicans have descended into savagery and worship a pantheon of foul gods with human sacrifices, ripping the very hearts from their victims in an orgy of bloodlust. Others say the Church of the Divine Ascendance (see below) holds sway there so firmly that priests are like unto princes and the word of the Book governs every thought and deed of the people. Between these two extremes all sorts of other claims are made; apparently the only way for an adventurer to learn the truth would be to go there himself.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Characterizing the culture and customs of the Amricans is as difficult as it is with doing the same for any nation of modern-day Earth; sometimes it seems like every hamlet, village, town, and outpost has a different way of doing things. Still, a few generalizations can be made.

DAILY LIFE

Most people in the East live in small settlements of a few dozen people; towns of a few hundred or thousand are relatively rare, and cities of 10,000 or more rarer still. Most people are farmers, hunters, craftsmen, or tradesmen and have lived in the same community all their lives. Travel is usually uncommon and often difficult, and the arrival of strangers in town is simultaneously cause for celebration (they bring trade goods, news of the outside world, and other valuables) and suspicion. Communication between villages and towns is difficult and slow, though a few places do make use of signal-drums, carrier pigeons, trained runners, or similar methods to improve things in the region.

Communities located near large ruins may support themselves in part by scavenging. This works best in ruins that aren't still radioactive (as are most of the ones marked on the Amrica map), but even where the death-glow lingers some people are desperate, greedy, foolish, or curious enough to venture. Some of them even get lucky enough to find anti-radiation medicines that let them survive repeated exposure to rads.

Leadership And Law

Most regions of the "civilized" east are governed through some sort of feudal system. Villages and small towns are run by a headman or a council of elders, but they usually have to answer to some noble (even if infrequently), and he in turn is beholden to a higher-ranking noble or king. Larger towns and cities that aren't the seat of a king are usually ruled by a nobleman with a title such as "Count," "Baron," or "Duke."

The rule of law varies from region to region in the east. For the most part, the laws stay the same, with many common offenses such as murder, rape, theft, and adultery. What differs is the strength of

enforcement and the severity of punishment. Some nobles are harsh, using large bodies of guards to enforce the law strictly and punishing most crimes with death (with the execution often preceded by torture). Others are somewhat more forgiving — but even the most charitable of them looks cruel by modern-day standards.

The Tribal Lands use a different system. Each tribe has a chief whose word is law; in some cases he's also the tribe's shaman. If the tribe is part of a larger tribe there's a "high chief" who rules over all. Chieftainship is usually a matter of physical, moral, and intellectual fitness; any chief can be challenged on one of the bases at any time by a tribesman who thinks he's more deserving of the position; if the challenger wins, he becomes chief, and the former chief is often exiled or killed.

Language

The inhabitants of the East, Kanda, Cali, and the western coastal kingdoms speak English with various minor regional variations; someone from one area has no trouble understanding someone from another. The language of Jaxon and Si'pi, known as Soton, differs a little more; it has 4 points of similarity with English.

The Kebeks speak their own language. It has 1 point of similarity with English. They consider English the language of fools and dullards and insist that anyone who does business with them speak Kebek.

Each of the major tribes of the Tribal Lands speaks its own language, though all descend from English to one degree or another. They usually have 3 points of similarity with English, but in a few cases only 2 points.

The Xicans speak their own language, called Espan; it has 1 point of similarity with English.

RELIGION

The dominant religion of the East, Kanda, and the western coastal kingdoms (and Cali, to the extent anyone there bothers with religion) is the Church of the Divine Ascendance. Its worshippers are known as "followers of the Book" because its priests always carry a copy of the Holy Book with them (often one they inscribed by hand) and frequently read from it to instruct or admonish. The Church believes in one God, who sees all, knows all, and punishes sin. Worship services are held once or twice a week (depending on local custom) and on the high holy days (which include both solstices and both equinoxes). Adherents are expected to tithe at least 10% of their income to the Church. While the village priest might not have any actual legal authority over anything, his social influence is often so powerful that he has as much control over local matters as the headman, elders, or nobleman.

Members of the Church are often superstitious; they believe in evil magics, hauntings, and ill omens, and know various charms to ward them off. Using any magic more complex or powerful than that is a terrible sin, punishable by death. Artifacts recovered from ruins are sometimes regarded as arcane things to be destroyed or avoided, rather than desirable technological items.

The tribes of the Tribal Lands also mostly worship one god: Tonawak, the Great Spirit, who controls all of nature and permits man to make use of it. Most tribes also propitiate a host of lesser godlings and spirits. A tribal shaman sees to his fellows' religious needs, performs divinations, and intercedes with the divine and mystic on the tribe's behalf.

No one's quite sure what Kebek religion is like, though they're quick to say how stupid other religions are. The Xican religion, as mentioned above, is a mystery to most of Amrica.

TECHNOLOGY

For the most part the peoples of Amrica are at a medieval or pre-medieval level of technology. Most labor involves human or draft animal muscle, or simple tools like block-and-tackle or the pulley. They have mills for grain and lumber that are run by wind and water, and in coastal areas they know how to make fairly large sailing ships. They do not have electricity.

The pre-Collapse society was a few decades more advanced than that of 2007 Earth, but the GM can easily adjust things a little to suit the dramatic needs of the game (for example, to provide the PCs with some Decontamination Foam). Intact artifacts are sometimes recovered from ruins, though most buildings have suffered Major Damage, Severe Damage, or Collapse. Thus, one often sees bits and pieces of pre-Collapse materials (industrially-refined metals, plastics, and so on) in houses and shops, and sometimes a powerful warrior carries a "kill-stick" (a gun) and a few rounds of working ammunition. In Cali there are crude oil pumps and refineries, cars and motorcycles, and a few similar technologies; in Amrica proper engine-powered vehicles are extremely rare.

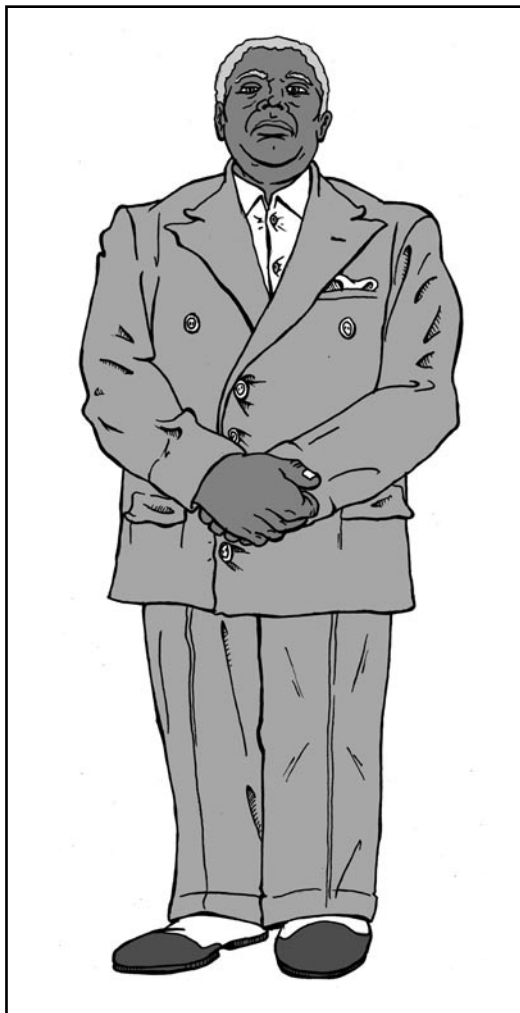
TRADE

The peoples of Amrica trade extensively with one another. Merchants use waterways, the remnants of pre-Collapse highways, and new roads to carry goods from one place to another, though most trade involves bartering among local producers and shopkeepers. Most kings mint coinage of some sort (usually from salvaged steel), though hard money is most often used in cities and is much less common in rural areas.

WARFARE

Most nobles and kings maintain small standing armies, which they supplement through common levies and the hiring of mercenaries. Local areas often have militias for defense, though they're much less well-armed and -trained than professional soldiers.

In the East, the typical weapons of war are the sword, spear, axe, crossbow, and longbow; soldiers protect themselves with leather, scale, or chain armors. (Plate armor does not exist). In many cases the metal for these things come from salvage; a shield might be an old street sign, while the disks of metal used to make a suit of scale mail were cut from some old license plates. The Tribal Land



peoples favor the spear, short sword, and short bow; Cali biker gangs often have wrist crossbows, pistol crossbows, and larger missile-firing weapons mounted on their vehicles.

Occasionally one encounters an adventurer or warrior armed with a salvaged pre-Collapse weapon, such as a pistol, rifle, shotgun, or K-bar knife. Guns are typically known as “kill-sticks,” and ammunition for them is rare indeed.

IN DETAIL: THE DOUBLE-S RANCH

Here's a look at an unusual place in Amrica for the GM to use as an adventure seed (if you're a player, please stop reading here). The GM determines its exact location and how the PCs first come to encounter it.

HISTORY

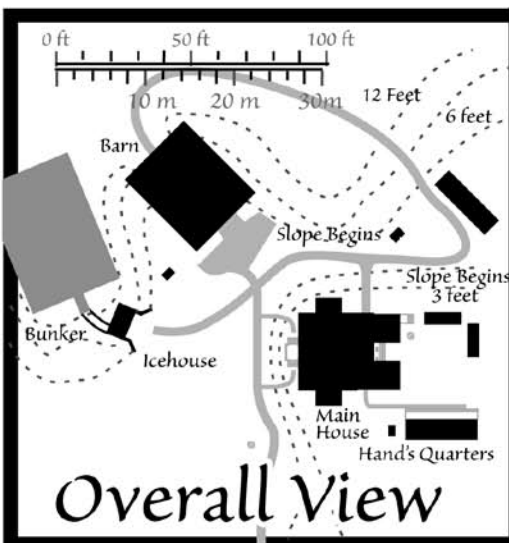
In the days before the Collapse, a group of survivalists, fearing the worst, built themselves a safe haven: a wilderness bunker of the latest modern design, filled with supplies and provisions and sealed against whatever nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons might come their way. It even had its own power source to recirculate and cleanse the air and provide for other necessities.

What it didn't have was truly smart users. The Collapse came, and everything went well for the survivalists at first. They congratulated themselves on their foresight and planning... and some even looked forward to the prospect of using their resources to conquer the surrounding countryside when it became safe enough to go outside. But then one of them left accidentally opened a seal. Unnoticed, the open seal let in first radiation, and later biowarfare agents. Already weakened by an unsuspected exposure to unhealthy levels of rads, the survivalists were easy prey for the viruses. They realized what happened, and the last few survivors tried to flee what had become a deathtrap, but it was too late — they only made it a few miles down the road before collapsing and dying.

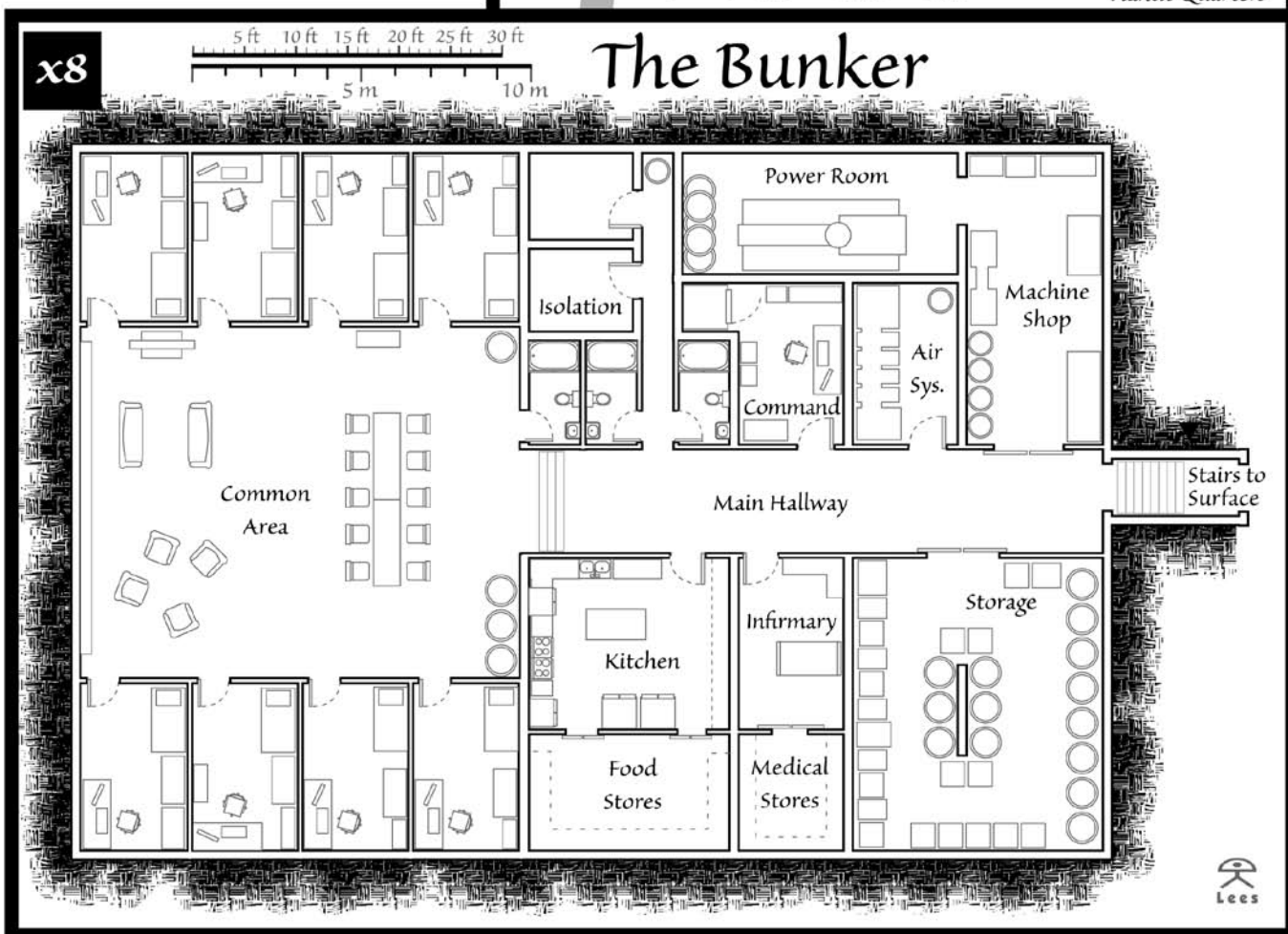
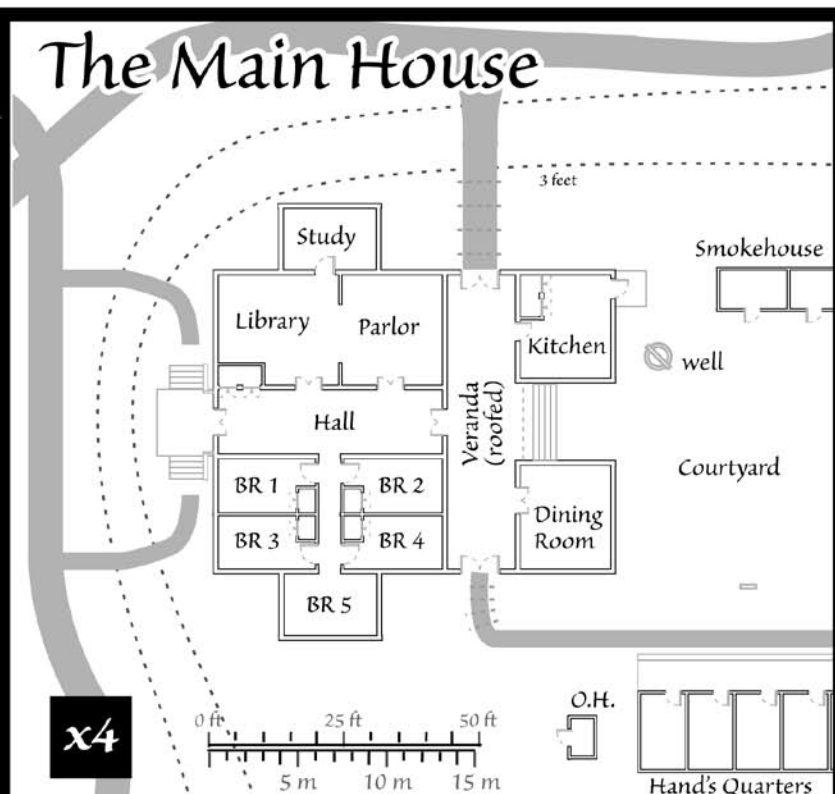
And so things remained for hundreds of years. Trees and shrubs grew over most of the survivalists' compound, and the bunker itself was somewhat exposed to the elements. But then a strange family, whose name has long since been forgotten, stumbled upon the place. The man, his wife, and their two sons had been exiled from their community partly for general disagreeability and partly because they were suspected of several crimes, including theft of food and the killing of a small girl. By sheer luck they recognized the ruined buildings as part of a former compound of some sort... and then they found the bunker, which was still filled with plenty of preserved food, weapons, fuel, and other necessities. It was the lucky break of a lifetime.

The family settled down there, putting in long hours of work to clean the compound, rebuild the house, and learn to use what they'd found. They discovered that the generator and ventilation system in the bunker had broken down beyond their ability to repair (since weathering and insects had long ago destroyed the manuals), and some supplies had rotted or spoiled, but for the most part the bunker and its contents were intact. In particular the machine shop, a treasure beyond price, still mostly worked, as did many of the guns they found.

Since that time, the family has grown and expanded, renaming itself Gorren after a weathered poster found in one of the bunker's rooms. With no neighbors nearby and no desire to



Double 'S' Ranch



mingle with the outside world, it preys on travelers, whom it uses as mates for its children and slave labor in its fields. Eventually a victim not broken and “adopted” into the family ends up dead, his body used for fertilizer. At least partly inbred and totally selfish and cruel, the Gorrens are a threat to anyone who comes near them.

LOCATION

The GM can locate the Double-S Ranch wherever it suits his campaign. The only requirement is that it's in a mostly wilderness area, off a secondary road that itself runs off a larger thoroughfare, and that it be fairly near some ruins the Gorrens can scavenge from time to time. It cannot be near any other human habitations; that spoils the isolation (and thus horror) associated with it as an adventure setting.

Structures

Since the early days, the Gorrens have turned the simple survivalist compound around the bunker into a large ranch with several buildings — a main house, a “hands’ quarters” (where slaves are kept chained up at night), a barn, an icehouse (that also conceals the entrance to the bunker), and various other small utility structures. The bunker remains the secret heart of the place, known only to the Gorrens themselves (most of their slaves and victims don't know about it, or know very little). The bunker is their last-ditch refuge and the place they store their most important supplies and treasures.

THE RANCH HOUSE

Although it's only one story tall, the ranch house is the centerpiece of the ranch, and by far the nicest building in the place — thanks to having the machine shop to work with, the Gorrens have over the years decorated it with carved wooden scrollwork and other touches that make it seem homey and inviting (which it is, to them... and to any PCs who haven't learned the truth about the place). A broad set of back stairs leads to a covered verandah designed to catch the local breezes; family members often sit and relax there after dinner. The kitchen and dining room are located off the verandah to the right and left, respectively, separate from the house proper to minimize the risk of fire damage.

The double doors on the back of the house open into a hallway that runs the length of the building to the front door, which has two sets of steps leading to a small uncovered porch. Off one side of the main hall is a small hallway with five bedrooms opening off it. Currently only some of the bedrooms are occupied; the others are closed up pending future need. On the other side of the main hall are three rooms: a parlor, a library, and a study. The parlor sees frequent use, but the library has few books and the study is dusty and mostly unused — no one in the current generation of Gorrens is of scholarly bent.

All of the furniture in the house is sturdy. Most of it has been handmade, but well made, by the Gorrens over the years; a few pieces, all obviously having undergone repairs at some point, are originals taken from the bunker.

The Bunker

The bunker itself is underground — it's built into a hill. The entrance is well-concealed in the icehouse (it requires a Concealment roll at -4 to find it, and another Concealment roll at -4, or an unmodified Lockpicking roll, to figure out how to open the door). It leads into a short corridor that turns into stairs going down. The stairs end at a metal door that's still sturdy if rather rusty in places; the lock is shiny and new, and all the Gorren men carry a key to it.

THE RIGHT SIDE

The door opens onto a main hallway with rooms on both sides. On the right are a machine shop, the power room, the ventilation room, a command center, several toilets, and two “isolation rooms.”

The machine shop is the real gem of the entire facility. It's intact and for the most part still works — the Gorrens have even rigged up muscle-power systems (like foot treadles) to run some tools that normally require electricity. Not everything's in perfect working order, but it may be the closest thing to a working machine shop in all of Amrica.

The power room and ventilation room, on the other hand, are complete losses. The equipment here doesn't work at all and hasn't for centuries, though it's possible that tech-savvy PCs could break it down for useful parts or materials. To keep the bunker ventilated the Gorrens have bored some carefully-concealed shafts up through the hill. (Finding a shaft's exit point requires 1d6 x 10 minutes of searching and a successful Concealment roll at -4, with Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) as a Complementary Skill; reduce the penalty to -2 if the PCs have been in the bunker and seen where the shafts start inside.)

The toilets lead to a large septic tank below the bunker, but don't work at all and cannot be repaired. The Gorrens have taken to using these rooms for additional storage. In the event of a siege, they'd have to rip out the toilets and install outside-house-like “holes” so they could use these rooms for their intended purpose.

The “isolation rooms” are jail cells, pure and simple. Gorren women who get “uppity” are often locked into one of them in total darkness for hours or days at a time.

THE LEFT SIDE

On the left side of the corridor are three areas: a large storage room; a medical infirmary and stores room; and a kitchen and pantry.

The storage room used to contain the survivors' supplies, and some of them — mainly heavy weapons and ammo that the Gorrens take loving care of — are still here. Otherwise the original supplies have long since gone bad or been used up. The Gorrens keep plenty of their own stuff here: raw materials for the machine shop; preserved food aplenty; and whatever else they think they might need during a “seige.”

The infirmary and medical supplies room has a few useful items, mainly durables like stethoscopes and scalpels. The only bandages here are simple ones the Gorrens have made and stored against future need. There are no drugs or anything like that (unless the GM wants there to be...).

The kitchen is more or less functional; the Gorrens have replaced non-working electrical appliances (long since cannibalized for parts and materials) with ones that use fire. They've tapped an artesian well to provide water here (they don't run it to the toilets at this time because they don't want to waste it; during a siege they might have to, to prevent health problems). The pantry holds more non-perishable foods.

THE COMMON ROOM

The hallway goes down a short stairway into a common room with a large table, chairs, and some "lounge" areas; nearly all the original furniture was ruined by time and weathering and has been replaced by hand-made Gorren versions. Lining the common room are eight bedrooms, each with a bed large enough for two people.

If they expect to be in the bunker for a long time, the Gorrens will bring all the books and other amusements they can down here to help pass the time. Right now there are only a couple of books and a few handmade decks of cards and game boards.

LIGHTING

The bunker used to have electrical lighting, but it hasn't worked for centuries. The Gorrens light it mainly with torches made to give off as little smoke as possible. They'd kill (literally) for some long-term, smokeless form of illumination.

The Gorrens

Currently three Gorren brothers and their families live at the ranch: Korl, the eldest, biggest, and *de facto* leader of the clan; Morg, the middle son and cleverest of the three; and Dren, a rather scrawny man with a rapier wit and the cruel streak of a torturer. All three of the brothers share enough features in common to make it obvious they're closely related... and that there's been more than a little incest in the family.

Each of the brothers has a wife and at least one child. Morg's and Dren's wives are travelers whom the brothers captured and beat/tortured/raped into submission; they have the hopeless, haunted look of concentration camp victims about them and are submissive and flinchy. Korl's wife is their sister Catha, who's

"in charge" of the other two women most of the time and usually has a sort of smug look about her. Usually at least one, if not all, of the women (and many of the children) sport bruises, mute evidence of times when one of the men got angry at her for something, or simply drank too much of the brothers' homemade liquor and thought it would be fun to hit her.

The children range in age from infants to the early teens. The older boys tend to be just as cruel as their fathers, the girls as submissive as their mothers.

In addition to the family, the Gorrens sometimes have slaves — captured male travelers — to help work the ranch. They keep them chained together when they're working, and chained up in the "hands' quarters" at night. Most slaves last only a few months before dying and being buried in one of the fields. Whether the Gorrens have any slaves when the PCs arrive is up to the GM; typically they don't, since the presence of slaves gives the ranch's secret away too fast.

For the Gorrens, use the "Competent Normal" character sheet from page 346 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, giving each of them Skill choices pertinent to the genre and setting (including Survival on at least an 8- and enough WFs to handle melee weapons, crossbows, and firearms)

Using The Double-S Ranch

The Double-S Ranch is primarily intended as a horror-style encounter for your *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign (whether it's based in America or not). When the PCs stumble upon the place during their wanderings, it may seem like the perfect haven for rest and recuperation. The Gorrens will be suspicious and protective at first, especially if the PCs are well-armed, but if they think they can trick them and capture them, they'll try to act friendly and help the PCs. Eventually, of course, the PCs learn the secret of the place and a fight ensues — preferably one in which at least some of the Gorrens get to the bunker and the PCs have to "besiege" the place.

Once the PCs defeat the Gorrens, perhaps they can adopt the place as their own base of operations. Some of the stuff at the Ranch is quite valuable or useful — it's just a question of limiting their access to firepower if you don't want them to get their hands on some functional assault weapons and the like. You just have to anticipate the course of the conflict a little and take away anything you don't want the PCs to end up with. Or you could simply restrict the Gorrens' supply of ammunition; the biggest gun in the world is useless without bullets to shoot.

CAPTAIN KRISTOF MAKA PLOT SEEDS

While carrying the PCs as passengers, Maka trades for several crates of bulk foodstuffs that he can sell down the coast for a good price. But one of the crates seems oddly heavy, so he can't resist opening it to find out what's inside. It turns out to be a strange pre-Collapse relic that puts everyone on the ship, and perhaps all the Eastlands, in terrible danger....

Maka's ship hits a shoal and needs major repairs he can't afford. He hires himself out to the PCs as a "guide" to a nearby ruin he knows about. But of course, he doesn't know nearly as much as he thinks he does....

After being victimized by pirates while on the Trident Sea, the PCs are eager for revenge. But they need someone to help them find the pirates who attacked them — and no one knows the Trident pirates like Captain Maka.

USING AMRICA

As presented, Amrica is intended as a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign setting of broad scope for the PCs to adventure in, with a touch of Road Wars on the island of Cali. Some liberties have been taken to allow things like some pre-Collapse technologies to remain intact and usable, but otherwise it's relatively "realistic" — there aren't any mutants or other High Post-Apocalyptic weirdness. (Or at least if there are any, they're hideous throwbacks lurking in the rad zones hoping to feast on the PCs, not four-armed people with superpower-like abilities.)

Campaigns in Amrica usually fall into one of three categories:

- politically-oriented games in which the PCs get involved in one of the internal or international conflicts brewing among the various kingdoms of the East;
- military-oriented campaigns in which the PCs fight for Konsa, Kaanz, or some other kingdom against one or more native tribes; or
- "explore the ruins" games in which the PCs make money and have adventure scavenging among various ruins for loot... and perhaps find something so important that it will affect all of Amrica.

AMRICA AS A HIGH POST-APOCALYPTIC SETTING

There are other ways to use Amrica than for Low Post-Apocalyptic games. For example, if you like the general layout of the setting but prefer a more fantastic feel for your campaigns, you can easily make it a *High* Post-Apocalyptic game instead. Just use the mutations and mutant creatures describes for the *After The Bomb* setting later in this chapter, adjust the politics of the various kingdoms to allow for the occasional crazed mutant ruler or "benevolent" mentalist, and you're set!

AMRICA AS A ROAD WARS SETTING

Another way to tweak Amrica to taste is to forget about Cali and make the whole setting a Road Wars campaign. Roll back the clock so that it's only a few decades (at most) after the Collapse. That means several things. First, there's a lot more surviving workable tech, so heroes will probably have guns and the like, and they'll certainly have to confront enemies who do. Second, the geographic and climatic changes wrought by the Collapse won't have settled out yet, so the odds are they'll encounter some mighty strange weather, unexpected earthquakes, and similar phenomena along the road. Third, the population patterns are different; a lot more people will be clustered on the edges of major ruins, where they're not inside an irradiated area but are close to something "familiar." That may make them easy pickings for rampaging biker gangs, or give the PCs a better chance to recruit allies and sell loot.

You should also consider restricting the scope of the campaign. Unless you want the heroes to run intracontinental courier missions a la *Damnation Alley*, or you're willing to hand-wave a lot of what happens on long car trips, the PCs will probably have to restrict themselves to a few hundred square miles of territory... preferably territory with plenty of surviving roads and sources of scavengeable gasoline.

Sample Characters

Here's a sample character you can use in your Amrica games. He's primarily intended for campaigns set around the Trident Sea, but you can move him to any coastal area if you need to.

CAPTAIN KRISTOF MAKA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
12	STR	2	11-	Lift 133 kg; 2d6 [2]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
14	CON	8	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
6	PD	4		Total: 6 PD (0 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	2		
28	END	0		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 62

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 3"/6"

Cost Powers **END**
1 *Strong Swimmer:* Swimming +1" (3" total) 1

Perks

20 Vehicle: the *Cocola*, his sailing ship (see text)

Skills

1 Bribery 8-
1 Bureaucratics 8-
3 Climbing 12-
3 Combat Sailing 12-
2 Gambling (Card Games) 12-
5 AK: The Trident Sea 14-
3 KS: Pirates Of The Trident Sea 12-
2 Navigation (Marine) 12-
2 PS: Sailor 11-
3 Stealth 12-
1 Streetwise 8-
4 Survival (Marine; Temperate/Subtropical) 12-
7 Trading 14-
3 TF: Small Rowed Boats, Small Wind-Powered Boats, Equines
4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Crossbows, Shotguns

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 65

Total Cost: 127

75+ Disadvantages

15 Hunted: various pirates 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
15 Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
10 Psychological Limitation: Mild Alcoholism (Common, Moderate)
5 Rivalry: Professional, with other Trident Sea traders
7 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 127

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
Sawed-Off Shotgun	+0	+0	2½d6	0	12	4	
Combat Knife	+0	—	+0	1d6	1d6-1	8	Can Be Thrown; carries two

Armor

Heavy Leather Coat (1 DEF)

Gear: Compass, telescope (+8 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group, Concentration (0 DCV))

Background/History: No one seems to know where Kristof Maka grew up or came from, and he ain't tellin'. For a couple decades now he's been sailing the Trident Sea, mainly along the eastern coast, in his small ship the *Cocola*, whose distinctive red "flag" (actually a sheet of metal he found somewhere and tacked to the main mast) is recognized in villages and towns all along the water. He trades for and transports nearly anything he thinks he can make money on at the next stop. He'll even take passengers if the price is right, though the "accommodations" on the *Cocola* aren't exactly luxurious.

Personality/Motivation: Maka's defining characteristic is his greed. It's not an over-the-top evil greed that would make him slit someone's throat just to steal his coin-purse, but it does motivate a lot of his actions, not all of which are particularly honorable. The only thing that comes close to being as important to him is a good drink — he's got mild alcoholism. Usually he can keep it under control, particularly when he's sailing or in another situation where he knows he has to remain alert, but sometimes he can't hold out and goes on a bender for several days. He spends far more money on drink than he should, and he knows it... but he can't make himself stop.

Maka has a sort of fascination with the past. He's intrigued by the pre-Collapse world and enjoys studying its artifacts. If he learns a group of adventurers (*i.e.*, the PCs) is about to go explore some ruins, he might cut them a deal on passenger fees if they let him go along with them.

Quote: "Come aboard! You'll find no finer ship on all the Trident than the *Cocola*."

Powers/Tactics: Maka's not much of a fighter; he prefers to avoid combat as much as possible. It's not that he's a coward — far from it; he'll sail into dangerous waters most captains avoid if he has good reason — but he doesn't see any upside to violence. The best he can hope for is to walk away with only a minor injury, and that's not much of a deal at all.

Through his travels and trades Maka has acquired three precious working ancient artifacts, and he'd risk just about anything short of his life to keep them. The most dangerous is a sawed-off shotgun for which he has four shells (the gun has an Activation Roll 14- to represent the chances of a misfire, of a shell being a dud, and so on). The most useful are a plastic-cased, waterproof compass and a small telescope. He keeps all three objects on his person at all times. He's also usually got one or two knives with him as well.

For Maka's ship, use the Cog character sheet on page 112 of *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook*. It's shaped a little differently (it's not as

"round"), but in game terms it's the same.

Campaign Use: You can use Captain Maka as either a good guy or a bad guy, depending on the needs of your story. As a good guy, Maka is still greedy, but good-hearted, helpful, and friendly most of the time. He can be kind of irascible and curmudgeonly, but that's just a front. As a bad guy, Maka *would* slit someone's throat just to steal his coin-purse; passengers aboard his ship don't usually make it to their destinations because he kills them, robs them, and then dumps the bodies overboard.

If you want Maka to be tougher, increase his STR, DEX, and CON a little and give him some combat skills. In that case he's likely to be a lot more aggressive, even belligerent, when dealing with people he doesn't know. If he's too tough already, take away his shotgun.

Maka doesn't Hunt people; there's no profit in it.

Appearance: Maka is a tall man, ruggedly handsome, though the mileage shows in the wrinkles on his face and scars on his body. He's got long hair he ties back in a ponytail, and wears sturdy leather clothing.



AFTER THE BLAST



Nearly a thousand years ago, the world was plunged into a terrible war that destroyed mankind's civilization, plunging him into centuries of darkness from which he has still not fully recovered. The aftereffects of the war — radiation, plagues, mutagenic chemicals, uncontrolled nanotech — have worked profound changes but on life itself, mutating people and animals in ways that are sometimes benign, sometimes horrific. It's a strange new world... one rife with danger and adventure!

After The Blast is a setting for High Post-Apocalyptic campaigns featuring characters typically built on 150 Base Points plus up to 100 Character Points from Disadvantages. Normal Characteristic Maxima is imposed as a campaign ground rule, but the breakpoint for Primary Characteristic cost doubling is 25, not 20 (increase the breakpoint for Figured Characteristics proportionately). Characters can buy mutations (see below for examples), and while there's no requirement that they take any negative or harmful mutations to balance the ones that help them, it's suggested that characters have at least one negative mutation for every three positive ones. Characters may start the game with pre-Apocalypse equipment if they pay Character Points for it, and will probably obtain more during game play.

HISTORY

In the year 2286, a conflict whose causes have been lost to the ravages of war and time engulfed the globe. The North American Republic, the East Asian Hegemony, and the Pan-African Union were the major combatants, but the United States of Europe, the Indian Empire, and various other nations were involved to one degree or another. What started as a relatively minor conflict quickly grew to the point where the worst weapons humanity had ever conceived of were unleashed: "grey grenades" filled with nanobots that could literally eat people and objects to death in microseconds; biological and chemical agents that could kill millions but leave buildings intact; and worst of all the dreaded cobalt bomb, the most destructive device ever created. Humans today refer to it simply as "the Blast."

Within a scant few months, a global civilization that had taken ten thousand years to build was destroyed. Every major city was hit by at least one strong attack, if not more, and few minor cities were spared. Pitiful handfuls of survivors fled the ruins into the countryside, but the collapse of

economies and governments combined with fallout and radiation, lingering viruses and nanobots, and climatic changes wrought by the war spelled the end for most of them.

Those who made it through the hellish decades immediately following the Blast did not escape it untouched. Besides the outward physical scars and the emotional turmoil, unbeknownst to them the radiation and other weapons were changing them inside, affecting their DNA. Soon babies were born with hideous deformities, and few of them survived. It's a miracle humanity didn't become extinct in the next century or two...

...but somehow, due to the strength of the human spirit or simple stubborn will to survive, it did not. Eventually the ravaged human genome stabilized... sort of. Most babies born were now normal, at least outwardly, but some were... different. They were *mutants*, gifted or cursed with changes to their bodies. From that day to this they've been a part of the tapestry of human life.

In the centuries since the blast, civilization has finally begun to arise again. Men have come together to build villages and towns, and in a few places even cities, though wilderness prevails across most of the globe. Most people live a hardscrabble life of farming, hunting, or heavy labor, but some have found wondrous weapons or amazing labor-saving devices amidst the pre-Blast ruins that make their lives easier and more exciting. It's a strange new world, filled with perils of every sort — but one in which a brave, resourceful, and determined individual can make his fortune.

GEOGRAPHY

Unlike the world of *Amrica* or *The Moon-shattered Earth*, the geography of the After The Blast setting is not markedly different from that of modern Earth. The Blast certainly devastated many cities, and caused climatic changes (most short-term, some of longer duration), but it didn't remake the continents in any real way. Coastlines have changed a little here and there, some rivers have dried up (or sprung up in new places), many once-fertile areas are now Blast wastelands, and wilderness has overgrown much of what pre-Blast humanity built, but for the most part the world is physically the same. So to run an *After The Blast* game, get a good atlas or download some maps from the World Wide Web, and you'll be set to go...

...though you will need to adjust those maps slightly. First and foremost you need to eliminate

CITY DESTRUCTION TABLE

Roll	Method Of Destruction
1	Bioweapon
2	Chemical Weapon
3	Cobalt Bomb
4-5	Conventional weapons
6	Nanoweapon

Bioweapon: The city was largely depopulated by a laboratory-tailored plague, like, and later fell into ruin due to neglect, weather, raiding/warfare, or similar reasons. The current ruins are *probably* safe from any lingering effects, but some of the viruses were engineered to survive for decades, if not centuries, in a sort of self-induced “stasis,” so beware....

Chemical Weapon: The city was largely depopulated by a chemical weapon. Some of these were merely deadly to anything living, and thus left the structures mostly intact to fall into ruin later; others were acidic or corrosive and weakened buildings as well as killing people. Typically chemical weapons have long since decayed or been neutralized, leaving no lingering danger, but you never know....

Cobalt Bomb: These immensely powerful nuclear bombs of the pre-Blast era were used to destroy most metropolises, including places like New York, London, Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, Chicago, Paris, Moscow, Lagos, and Delhi. If you roll this result for a smaller city, assume a less powerful nuclear device was used. In any event, the ruins left behind tend to be intensely radioactive even today, and thus immensely dangerous to most people (though they're often home to vicious human mutants and various mutated animals). In some cases the “rad zones” are patchy and parts of the ruins are safe to live in.

Conventional Weapon: The city was destroyed by conventional bombing, firebombing, rioting and looting in the immediate post-Blast era, or the like. There are no lingering dangers like radiation or disease, though that doesn't mean the ruins are safe.

Nanoweapon: The city's inhabitants, and often its buildings, were destroyed by nanobots that broke them down into raw materials used to build more nanobots. In many such ruins the devastation is even more complete than that caused by nuclear bombs, but it depends on many factors. In some cases pockets of nanobots went “dormant” for one reason or another and remain there, ready to awaken and attack explorers unlucky enough to venture too close.

Typically ruins created by bioweapons or chemical weapons are the most intact; those created by nuclear bombs or nanoweapons are the least intact. The GM should keep this in mind when evaluating the characters' chance to find usable salvage.

cities. Any city with a population of one million or more is a ruin; it's just a question of what destroyed it (see the accompanying City Destruction Table). Most cities with populations of 500,000 or more were also attacked and at least partially (if not fully) destroyed. Smaller cities may have been spared, but were often effectively destroyed by looting, raiders, extreme weather, or neglect. Still, their ruins tend to be safer than most others, and may still be inhabited by ragtag communities.

Second, you need to replace most areas which are heavily built up on modern maps with wilderness. The population of Earth during After The Blast is a tiny fraction of what it is in the early twenty-first century, and in most places Mother Nature has reclaimed what humanity long ago conquered. Forests cover what used to be farms and golf courses; animals have moved back into the ruins of cities; rivers run undammed to the sea. Game and fish are plentiful and provide much-needed food (and other resources) for many people... though mutant species are often a danger.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

In the *After The Blast* world, Earth is not very densely populated at all. Humans tend to live in small communities clustered around some useful resource: a supply of fresh water, good farming land, a forest filled with game, a ruin to explore, easy access to a trade route. Communication between settlements is difficult, as is travel. Travelers face many dangers along the road, ranging from bands of cannibalistic mutants, to mutated animals and plants, to groups of bandits, to the impersonal effects of weather.

As a result, large political entities and long-distance trade are both rare. Most towns and villages are ruled by a single leader or a governing council and don't have to answer to a king, president, or anyone like that. Sometimes a particularly powerful person, often a mutant or someone with a pre-Blast technological item or two, consolidates power over a small area and rules it as an overlord.

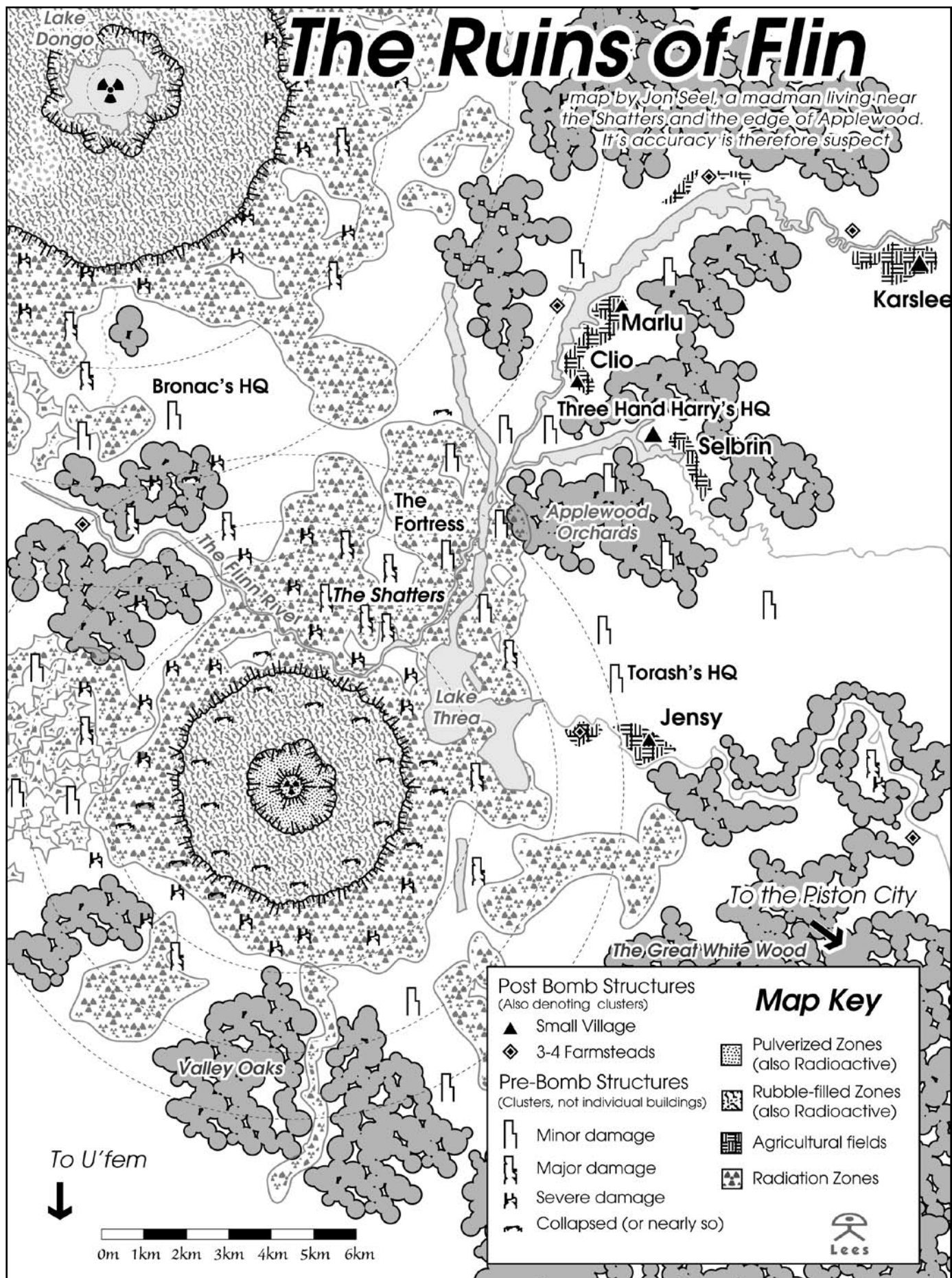
Language

The relative lack of communication between settled areas has led to some language drift in the time since the Blast. Characters who travel more than a few hundred miles from where they were born are likely to discover that the local language has only 3 points of similarity to the language they grew up speaking. Further away, this may even drop to 2 points of similarity, but usually any regional variation of English has 3 points of similarity to any other.

TRUES AND MUTIES

In the world of *After The Blast*, perhaps one person in five is a mutant, and in some areas the percentage rises to as many as one in three. Among mutants at least half have only Disadvantageous Mutations (see below), or at most only one minor beneficial mutation among the harmful ones; the luckier other half have more, or better, positive mutations. A few mutants have been blessed with powerful mutations, including mental abilities, that make their lives easier and often allow them to ascend to positions of power... or become successful adventurers.

To some extent everyone in the *After The Blast* world works together for mutual survival, but there's a subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) undercurrent of social tension between “true humans” (or *Trues*) and mutated humans (or



Muties). Trues (who aren't necessarily not mutants, but just don't possess any visible mutations and keep the fact that they have non-visible ones a secret) tend to regard themselves as "better" than Muties, even Muties whose powers make them physically superior to Trues. Some merchants and innkeepers refuse to serve Muties, or treat them poorly compared to Trues... though few are stupid enough to do this to an obviously powerful or well-armed Mutie.

In game terms, characters with obvious physical mutations, or who are known mutants, should take the Disadvantage *Social Limitation: Mutie* (Occasionally, Minor; 5 points).

RELIGION

Strange and bizarre religions have proliferated in the *After The Blast* world, and a stranger entering a new community had best take care that the locals don't look on him as a potential scapegoat, human sacrifice, or prophet. Many are warped descendants of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or other pre-Blast religions based on misinterpretations or surviving fragments of holy texts, but many are totally new. For example, there are villages in what used to be South Dakota that worship the Four Great Gods whose weathered faces peer down from Mount Rushmore. Religions centered around various nature spirits or local gods are also commonplace.

TECHNOLOGY

Before the Blast, mankind had reached unprecedented heights of technological achievement. Laser, ion, plasma, and gauss weapons (both personal and mounted) were available; elite soldiers wore powerful battle armors; small but permanent colonies existed on the Moon, on Mars, and in the enormous Goddard Space Station (all are now defunct, filled with the frozen corpses of people who couldn't survive without regular supplies from Earth, but automated systems continue to function...); anti-grav "hover" vehicles were available (though they were rare and extremely expensive), and an endless array of luxury devices was available to the consumer. Most devices were incredibly sturdy and could run off of disc-shaped batteries ("power discs") about the size of a modern quarter as well as standard broadcast power.

The extent of mankind's fall can be seen in the fact that he now has a mostly medieval level of technology. People use riding animals and carts to get around, labor involves muscle power or simple devices, there's no electricity, and warriors use armor, shields, swords, and crossbows. But sometimes the technology of the pre-Blast world reappears. Pre-Blast ruins often contain fragments of old technology, and sometimes a scavenger gets lucky and comes across an intact device and a few power discs. More than one adventurer or mercenary has a precious laser rifle or ion pistol to draw when a fight turns ugly or he needs extra firepower, and some bandit gangs ride solar-powered one-man "motorcycles" instead of horses. Pre-Blast technology isn't powerful enough to change society

as a whole, but it can sometimes affect the balance of power in a region or tip the odds in a fight.

WARFARE

As mentioned above, warfare tends to involve medieval-style weapons, though occasionally a few pre-Blast weapons make their way into the fray. Large-scale fighting is mostly unheard of due to the difficulties and dangers of travel, but sometimes two local "noblemen" will each put a few dozen soldiers into the field to contest a border or control of an important resource. For ranged combat and sieges the crossbow, arbalest, ballista, and catapult are the chief weapons; for melee a host of medieval weapons like swords, hammers, maces, and axes is used. Materials salvaged from ruins are often used to make weapons and armor.

IN DETAIL: THE RUINS OF FLIN

To help the GM start the campaign, here's an example of a ruined area for the PCs to live near and/or explore. Flin (as the locals call the area) was once a prosperous, mid-sized pre-Blast city with over three quarters of a million people in the greater metropolitan area. It escaped the initial effects of Blast warfare, but as the war dragged on was seen as a viable target. Two small nuclear devices struck it, creating enormous blast craters and leaving most of the city in ruins. The survivors retreated to the wilderness, but in succeeding centuries have returned to the area as radiation zones have shrunk. Many ruins exist to be explored, though the ones outside irradiated areas have mostly been picked clean. Flin is also the site of a power struggle between three leaders, each of whom is determined to rule the entire area.

THE BLAST ZONES

Despite centuries of weathering, two areas in Flin are obviously the result of Blast explosions, and both craters and their surroundings remain highly radioactive. The very centers of each crater, where everything is pulverized and no ruins remain, expose characters to 2 rads per day; the larger, rubble-filled, areas surrounding the centers, where one can see a few collapsed buildings, expose characters to 1 rad per day. Beyond the rims of the craters are buildings in various stages of decay (from Minor to Severe, as discussed in Chapter Three); radiation still lingers in spots, usually strong enough to expose characters to anywhere from .5 rad per day to 1 rad per week. The locals know which areas are radioactive and which aren't, and they avoid the rad zones as much as they can.

The Shatters And The Fortress

North of the smaller, southern, Blast crater is an area with several large, still mostly intact, ruined buildings that locals call "the Shatters." It's been a fertile area for scavenging in the past, productive enough that people were willing to venture into it despite the radioactivity. Most Flinans don't go there much anymore, partly because they think the area's been played out and



partly because it's become infested with dangerous mutated animals such as korbas.

On the northeastern edge of the Shatters proper stands a five-story building known as "the Fortress." It's remarkably well-preserved, and the locals superstitiously believe that it's the dwelling-place of some spirit or god and rarely go anywhere near it. It might be a good place for adventurers to search for salvage — though it might also contain hidden dangers that have lain dormant since the Blast, and it's hard to predict how the Flinans might react to anyone who goes there and returns....

Lake Threa

Lake Threa, a large body of water in the middle of one of the rad zones, remains highly radioactive and is filled with *rippers*, mutated fish large and fierce enough to be dangerous to humans (should any choose to enter the radioactive waters). The rivers and streams feeding the lake (including a rocky, fast-moving river that emerges from underground a few miles north of the lake) are not radioactive outside of the rad zones, but sometimes rippers swim up them to attack unwary bathers. (See the *Mutant Creatures* section, below, for a Ripper character sheet.)

THE VILLAGES

Humans both True and Mutie live in the Flin area, mostly on isolated farmsteads or clusters of two to four farms typically run by the members of an extended family. But several villages have formed where farmers can take produce and livestock on market day, travelers may be able to find lodging and food, and services such as blacksmiths are available. None of the villages have "city guards" *per se*, but the residents are quick to take up farm implements, the occasional sword or crossbow, and

perhaps even a scavenged pre-Blast weapon or two in defense of their homes and livelihoods.

Clio

Clio is a small farming village on the southern end of a narrow, shallow lake that feeds into Lake Threa via a stream that leads into the river. Several of its inhabitants are fishermen who help support the village by venturing out onto the lake every day despite the threat of rippers; they (and to a certain extent the other Clian) dislike the Marlunes, whom they regard as competitors and rivals. Clio is firmly in the camp of Three-Handed Harry, one of the region's would-be rulers, and several of his men live in the village as its *de facto* "deputies."

Jensy

Jensy is the heart of a small farming region on a stream that flows westward into Lake Threa. The village itself grew up around a small, sturdy brick building with a heavily-weathered statue of an unrecognizable man out front (the main building of a former National Guard armory). It's part of Torash's claimed territory; his headquarters is in a ruined building about a kilometer north and west of Jensy.

Karslee

The easternmost and northernmost village of the Flin area, Karslee is a relatively peaceful place that isn't affected much by the conflict between the area's three would-be warlords — and that's just how the Karsleens like it. They'll be happy to welcome travelers with trade-goods at first, but if those travelers start to stir up trouble the odds are the Karsleens will drive them out... or even capture them and turn them over to the warlords as a sort of peace offering.

The “mayor” of Karslee is Dhom Terras, a big bull of a farmer who’s usually pleasant-tempered but quick to anger at times. He has the *Brawny Mutation* (see below) but not to the extent that he’s obviously abnormal; most people just think he’s one of those people blessed with both muscles and brains. He’s very protective of his home and won’t let outsiders cause any problems if he can help it. He doesn’t like the Three-Hand, Bronac, Torash, or the problems they’ve brought to the valley, but for now at least he sees more value in laying low and hoping they go away than trying to fight them.

Marlu

Marlu occupies a broad meadow on the eastern shore of the shallow lake. During the spring rains it often floods a little, so the buildings are built on small “pillars” of rock that elevate them about a foot off the ground. Like their rivals the Clians, the Marlunes make their living through both fishing and farming; their women even has a special fish pie they can make from rippers!

Selbrin

The largest village in Flin, Selbrin is almost big enough to qualify as a small town. It even has an “inn” — a tavern with a few squalid rooms to rent (for exorbitant prices) to passers-through who seem reasonably trustworthy.

Three-Hand Harry has laid claim to Selbrin, but most of the people in town don’t much care for him or his two adversaries — they want to be free to live their lives as they see fit, not beholden to some petty tyrant. Their leaders, including the tavernkeeper Vetts Par and a prosperous pigherder named Ober Naff, often try to play one “warlord” off against another, diverting their attentions from Selbrin to each other or some other village. If the Selbrins encounter some adventurers they thought could get rid of Bronac, Harry, and Torash, they’ll try to find a way to get the adventurers to take care of the problem (preferably through some sort of trickery or manipulation, but if necessary they’ll hire them).

THE WOODS

Extensive forests cover much of Flin and the surrounding region, including one large forest in the south (that’s split by an irradiated strip of land) and one in the north. Small tribes of cervine live in several of the forests; they permit the humans to hunt there, provided they don’t overhunt the area or set foot in certain sacred groves. Recently there have been some reports of urzogs migrating into the area, so Flin hunters are being extra cautious. (See the *Mutant Creatures* section, below, for Cervine and Urzog character sheets.)

THE MEN OF POWER

In recent years three men have been competing with one another to take control of the Flin area. Most of the time their struggle stays fairly peaceful (though there’s always tension). But more and more frequently violence has broken out: groups of men working for the rivals get into fights; the homes and shops of people who won’t “be friendly” with one warlord or another are vandalized; women are harrassed; and the like. It won’t be long before matters come to a head, and the odds are when that happens the real losers will be the Flinans.

See the *Example Characters* section, below, for character sheets for Three-Hand Harry, Bronac, and Gronk.

Three-Hand Harry

The leading contender among the three warlords at this time is Three-Hand Harry, a mutant with two right arms and one left. He and his men live in an old ruin south and west of Clio; he claims authority over the three central villages (though only Clio directly acknowledges this claim). He’s a slender, slightly anemic-looking fellow that most people wouldn’t think anything about — but he’s got a mind that’s as sharp as a razor and a heart as cruel as a serpent. His favored weapons are the pistol crossbow and the knife, and he doesn’t hesitate to use either if someone upsets him. He’s accompanied everywhere he goes by his lover and lieutenant Marlee, a tattered-haired, plain-looking blonde with the *Premonitions Mutation*.

Torash

Harry’s chief rival is Torash, a True who lives in a ruin several kilometers to the south near Jency. Torash is a handsome, soft-spoken man who prefers to get what he wants through negotiation, dealmaking, trickery, and deceit... but who has no objections to violence if that’s what’s called for. He usually delegates such unpleasant tasks to his brother Gronk, who’s his polar opposite: a big, strong, stupid, ugly Mutie who’s barely able to talk at all. If he has to fight himself, Torash uses two pre-Blast weapon, a steel knife and a laser pistol (for which he has four more power discs, one with only two shots’ worth of energy left and the other three fully-charged with 16 shots’ worth).

Bronac

The least powerful of the three would-be kings is Bronac, who lives with his men in a ruin several kilometers to the west of the three central villages. He’s a powerful mutant who can project deadly blasts of radiation from his eyes; he actually glows with radioactivity that can be seen in dim light or darkness. Several of his men also have strong Mutations. For now Bronac seems to be content with keeping an eye on his two rivals and occasionally disrupting their operations; he seems to be waiting for one of them to weaken the other enough for him to swoop in and pick up the pieces. In the meantime, he and his men often scavenge through the Flin ruins in search of valuables.

MUTATIONS

Here are some example mutations that characters might possess in an *After The Blast* campaign (or any similar High Post-Apocalyptic game). They're divided into seven categories: Offensive; Mental; Defensive; Movement; Sensory; Miscellaneous; and Disadvantageous. See below for suggestions about how characters can choose which mutations they have.

Offensive Mutations

ACIDIC SPITTLE

Effect: RKA 1d6, Penetrating
Target: One character
Duration: Uncontrolled
Range: 8"
END Cost: 4

Description: The character's saliva is so acidic that it can inflict serious harm when he spits it on someone.

Game Information: RKA 1d6, Continuous (+1), Penetrating (+½), Uncontrolled (see The UNTIL Superpowers Database or The Ultimate Energy Projector for more information; +½) (45 Active Points); Limited Range (8"; -¼). Total cost: 36 points.

BRAWNY

Effect: +5 STR, +5 CON, +2 PD
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: Mutant genes or exposure to radiation has made the character much bigger, stronger, and tougher than normal.

Game Information: +5 STR, +5 CON, +2 PD. Total cost: 17 points.

CHOKING CLOUD

Effect: Energy Blast 4d6, NND
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 4"
END Cost: 6

Description: The character can emit or project a small cloud of gas, spores, pheromones, or the like that make the target cough, choke, and feel ill. The power only has a range of about 26 feet (4"), and won't work at all in windy, rainy, or underwater conditions.

Game Information: Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1) (40 Active Points); Limited Range (4"; -¼), Not In High Winds, Rain, Or Water (-¼). Total cost: 27 points.

CLAWS

Effect: HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR), Reduced Penetration
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 1

Description: The character has claws, or can grow claws, making him a lethal hand-to-hand combatant. If he has claws on his feet, he may call this power Talons instead.

Game Information: HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR) (15 Active Points), Reduced Penetration (-¼). Total cost: 12 points.

CONTROLLING CLOUD

Effect: Mind Control 8d6 (Human class of minds)
Target: One character
Duration: Constant
Range: 4"
END Cost: 8

Description: The character can attack a target with a tiny cloud of gas, spores, pheromones, or the like that filters into the brain and takes control of the person's mind. If the target cannot breathe the spores in, or ambient conditions aren't right, the power is useless.

Game Information: Mind Control 8d6 (Human class of minds) (40 Active Points); Based On CON (-1), Limited Range (4"; -¼), Does Not Work Versus Targets with Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) (-¼), Not In High Winds, Rain, Or Water (-¼). Total cost: 14 points.

ELECTRIFIED TOUCH

Effect: Energy Blast 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 4

Description: The character can "zap" his enemies by touching them, similar to an electric eel's attack.

Game Information: Energy Blast 8d6 (40 Active Points); No Range (-½). Total cost: 27 points.

FANGS

Effect: HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR)
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 1

Description: The character's mouth contains sharp teeth, or he can grow sharp teeth at will.

Game Information: HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR). Total cost: 15 points.

GIGANTISM

Effect: Character takes the Large Size Template
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character is as much as twice as tall as an ordinary human, making him proportionately stronger and tougher as well, but also easier to see and hit.

Game Information: *Character takes the Large Size Template (The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised, page 575), though the GM may permit him not to take all of it if desired. Cost: varies.*

HORNS

Effect: HA +4d6, Only With Move Throughs
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 2

Description: The character has large horns on his head that allow him to smash into things and cause great damage. They could look like a rhino's horn, ram's horns, heavy bull's horns, or the like.

Game Information: *HA +4d6 (20 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Only With Move Throughs (-1). Total cost: 8 points*

Options:

1) Sharp Horns: Instead of relatively blunt horns, the character's horns are pointed and sharp. Change to HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR). Total cost: 10 points.

IRRADIATED BODY

Effect: RKA ½d6, NND, Does BODY, Continuous, Damage Shield
Target: One Hex
Duration: Constant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's body is so intensely radioactive that he can harm anyone who stands near him.

Game Information: *RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Radiation]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (55 Active Points); Only Works On Living Beings (-½), Side Effects (irradiates environment, always occurs; -0). Total cost: 37 points.*

QUILLS

Effect: HKA ½d6, Damage Shield
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: Parts of the character's body — typically his back and the backs of his upper arms — is covered with spines or quills that injure anyone who touches him there.

Game Information: *HKA ½d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (35 Active Points); Always On (-½), Activation Roll 11-(-1), No STR Bonus (-½). Total cost: 12 points.*

RADIATION BLAST

Effect: Energy Blast 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 200"
END Cost: 4

Description: The character can fire a bolt of radiation so intense that it can inflict serious physical injury.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6. Total cost: 40 points.*

Options:

1) Deadly Radiation Blast: The character can project a blast of radiation that's so intense it can kill living beings instantly through cellular disruption and decay. It has no effect on non-living material. Change to: RKA 3d6 (45 Active Points); Only Works On Living Beings (-½). Total cost: 30 points.

2) Radiation Sickness: The character can project a blast of withering radiation that makes living beings sicken. Change to: Drain CON 4d6, Ranged (+½). Total cost: 60 points.

RAD ZONE GENERATION

Effect: Change Environment (create radiation)
Target: 16" radius
Duration: Constant
Range: 225"
END Cost: 4

Description: The character can create a field of intense radiation equal to 300 rads — about one-twentieth of the radiation emitted by an unshielded nuclear reactor core. Characters exposed to such intense radiation often sicken, and may die.

For purposes of this power, every 50 rads of radiation beyond the initial, free, 50 rads costs 4 Character Points as a combat effect (see the Combat Effects Costs table on page 136 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for the cost of other effects). Compare the rads received to the character's CON and consult the table on page 75 to determine the effect. The GM may, if necessary, adjust the results of the table to keep this power from unbalancing or hindering the game, since its effects can be somewhat more extreme than a typical damaging Change Environment power.

For more information on "realistic" radiation effects, see page 74.

Game Information: *Change Environment 16" radius, create radiation of 300 rads. Total cost: 45 points.*

SHORT OUT

Effect: Dispel 20d6, any Electrical Device power one at a time
Target: One machine
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
END Cost: 7

Description: This mutation gives a character the power to shut down electronic devices by making them short out. Once this Dispel works, getting the affected power functioning again typically requires a Full Phase and succeeding with a roll using Electronics (or another appropriate Skill); the roll suffers a -1 penalty for every 5 point by which the Dispel roll exceeded the power's Active Points. Any other powers built into the same device remain unaffected.

Game Information: *Dispel 20d6, any Electrical Device power one at a time (+¼) (75 Active Points); No Range (-½). Total cost: 50 points.*

Options:

1) **Pauli Mutation:** The character often makes electronic devices stop working without intending to, which can cause him real problems. Add No Conscious Control (-2). 75 Active Points; total cost 21 points.

SHRIEK

Effect: Energy Blast 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 200"
END Cost: 4

Description: The character's shout can become a beam of sound so intense that it inflicts serious injury, shatters solid objects, and the like.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6 (40 Active Points); Does Not Work In A Vacuum (-¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

SPITTING BLINDNESS

Effect: Sight Group Flash 8d6, NND
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 12"
END Cost: 6

Description: The character can spit a foul substance into the eyes of his enemies, blinding them.

Game Information: *Sight Group Flash 8d6, NND (defense is solid covering over the eyes; +½) (60 Active Points); Limited Range (12"; -¼). Total cost: 48 points.*

STINGER

Effect: HKA ½d6, Armor Piercing
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 1

Description: The character has an animal-like stinger, pincer, or similar natural weapon. Typically a Sting doesn't do much damage itself, but can inject a venom (see below).

Game Information: *HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½). Total cost: 15 points.*

VENOM

Effect: Drain CON 3d6, NND plus RKA 2d6, NND
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
END Cost: 4 Charges

Description: The character's mutated body produces a poison he can inject into his opponents (usually by means of a Sting, Claws, or Fangs; see above).

This writeup uses a typical lethal poison such as the ones described on pages 28-30 of *The HERO System Bestiary*. You can use the other write-ups there to increase or decrease the damage. The writeup assumes the character has an HKA (claws, fangs, or a sting) with which to deliver the venom into a target's body.

Game Information: Drain CON 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1) (90 Active Points); 4 Charges (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (15 Minutes; 1d6/5 Minutes; -¾) (total cost: 17 points) **plus** RKA 2d6, NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (10 Minutes; 1d6/5 minutes; -¾), Linked (-½) (total cost: 14 points). Total cost: 31 points.

Options:

1) Venomous Secretions: The character's body oozes a venomous substance of some sort. Instead of needing to inject his poison via claws, fangs, or a stinger, all he has to do is touch someone. Remove HKA Must Do BODY (-½) from both powers. 90 + 90 = 180 Active Points; total cost 19 + 16 = 35 points.

WEBS

Effect: Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 250"
END Cost: 5

Description: The character has the ability to shoot, spit, or otherwise project webbing or other sticky, insectile stuff that's strong enough to keep an opponent from moving.

Game Information: Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF. Total cost: 50 points.

Mental Mutations

In many High Post-Apocalyptic settings, mutations that result in mental/psionic powers are among the most common. Mental powers have lots of story potential and are at least faintly sinister, giving them great dramatic impact. Characters with mental mutations often have physical features that give away their powers. Examples include: a bald head with visible veins that throb or glow when he uses his powers; an enlarged cranium; and having two heads.

The mental mutations listed below typically have Limitations like *Concentration* or *Extra Time* to indicate that they're difficult to use compared to making ordinary physical attacks. Depending on how the GM wants psionics to work in his campaign, these Limitations may not be required, or the powers may need many more Limitations (such as Requires A Skill Roll).

For hundreds more example mental/psionic powers, see *The Ultimate Mentalist*.

BRAINBURNING

Effect: RKA 2d6, BOECV, Does BODY
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 9
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -9

Description: By turning his telepathic powers on a target full-force, the character can literally fry the target's brain, killing him without leaving any outward trace. The target may bleed from his nose, mouth, ears, or forehead veins when attacked this way due to the brain hemorrhage the attack causes.

Game Information: RKA 2d6, BOECV (Mental Defense applies; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV throughout use; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 45 points.

BRAIN DRAIN

Effect: Drain EGO 2d6, BOECV
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 5
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -5

Description: The character can psionically attack other people to reduce their general willpower and resistance to other Mental Powers. This version applies against Mental Defense; the character can change that to Power Defense when he buys the ability if he prefers.

Game Information: Drain EGO 2d6, BOECV (Mental Defense applies; +1), Ranged (+½) (50 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 33 points.

DETECT MINDS

Effect: Detect Minds
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -1

Description: The character can sense the presence of other minds near his, making it easy to, among other things, track targets in combat when the character cannot use his eyesight. The character can also tell if the minds he perceives have any mental or psionic powers, including the type of power (or its typical effects) and its rough power level (“much stronger than mine,” “about the same as mine,” and so forth). He can make the same determinations about the target’s INT and EGO. He does not, however, know what the target’s Psychological Limitations are; that requires Telepathy.

Game Information: *Detect Minds (INT Roll) (Mental Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Sense, Targeting.* Total cost: 27 points.

FEAR CONTROL

Effect: Drain PRE 3d6
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 185”
END Cost: 5
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -5

Description: The character can psionically instill intense fear in another person or animal. (In game terms, he reduces the victim’s PRE, making him far more susceptible to fear-based Presence Attacks.)

At the GM’s option, characters could build other emotion-affecting powers with this model. For example, Drain EGO might represent the ability to inflict despair and hopelessness.

Game Information: *Drain PRE 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼), Ranged (+½) (52 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 35 points.*

ILLUSIONS

Effect: Sight, Hearing, and Smell/Taste Group Images, -3 to PER Rolls
Target: 8” Radius
Duration: Constant
Range: 255”
END Cost: 5
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -5

Description: The character can psionically generate highly believable illusions that look, sound, and even smell like the real thing. Unfortunately, touching them reveals that they’re mere phantasms.

Game Information: *Sight, Hearing, and Smell/Taste Group Images, -3 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8” radius; +¾) (51 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV throughout use; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 25 points.*

MENTAL CONTROL

Effect: Mind Control 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Constant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 8
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -4

Description: The character has the ability to take control of another person’s mind. The more extreme or dangerous the commands he gives, the more likely it is that his attempt to control another person will fail.

Game Information: *Mind Control 8d6 (40 Active Points); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½). Total cost: 27 points.*

MENTAL INVULNERABILITY

Effect: Mental Damage Reduction, 75%
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Mentalism Roll Penalty: N/A

Description: The character possesses a high degree of protection against mental and psionic powers. Even those that manage to hit him rarely have much, if any, effect.

Game Information: *Mental Damage Reduction, 75%. Total cost: 60 points.*

MENTAL LINK

Effect: Mind Link, one specific mind
Target: One character
Duration: Persistent
Range: LOS
END Cost: 0
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -1

Description: The character can establish a limited form of telepathic contact — a mental communications link — between himself and one other person, whom he must define when he purchases the power. Typically this person is a spouse, trusted friend, faithful animal companion, or the like.

Game Information: *Mind Link, one specific mind. Total cost: 5 points.*

Options:

1) **Group Mental Link I:** The character can establish a Mental Link with any one member of a specific group of persons (such as his family or his teammates). Increase to Mind Link, one specific person within a defined group. Total cost: 10 points.

2) **Group Mental Link II:** The character can establish a Mental Link with any eight members of a specific group of persons. Increase to Mind Link, up to eight persons within a defined group. Total cost: 25 points.

MENTAL SCANNING

Effect: Mind Scan 10d6
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Special
END Cost: 5 to activate
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -5

Description: The character can scan for specific minds, and even establish a “mental lock-on” that enables him to target the subject mind with Mental Powers.

Game Information: *Mind Scan 10d6. Total cost: 50 points.*

MIND BLAST

Effect: Ego Attack 4d6
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 4
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -4

Description: The most basic form of psionic attack is simply to assault another person’s mind with mental energy. This could represent mentally lulling the victim to sleep, inflicting torturous headaches, or a painful mental overload.

Game Information: *Ego Attack 4d6 (40 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

MINDSCAPES

Effect: Mental Illusions 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Constant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 4
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -4

Description: The character can project vivid, believable images directly into another character’s mind.

Game Information: *Mental Illusions 8d6 (40 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

MIND SHIELD

Effect: Mental Defense (20 points plus EGO/5)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0
Mentalism Roll Penalty: N/A

Description: The character possesses strong mental “shields” that make it difficult for other people to affect him with mental and psionic powers.

Game Information: *Mental Defense (20 points plus EGO/5). Total cost: 20 points.*

PREMONITIONS

Effect: Danger Sense (immediate vicinity, any danger, sense)
Target: Immediate vicinity
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Mentalism Roll Penalty: -3

Description: The character can foresee threats that exist and dangers that are about to arise near him.

Game Information: *Danger Sense (immediate vicinity, any danger, sense) (INT Roll). Total cost: 32 points.*

PSIONIC PALSY

Effect: Drain DEX, BOECV
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 5
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -5

Description: The character projects a pulse of psionic energy into the victim’s mind that interferes with his brain’s ability to send nerve impulses to the rest of his body. This makes him clumsy and his attacks less accurate. This version applies against Mental Defense; the character can change that to Power Defense when he buys the ability if he prefers.

Game Information: *Drain DEX 2d6, BOECV (Mental Defense applies; +1), Ranged (+½) (50 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½). Total cost: 33 points.*

PSYCHIC DIAGNOSIS

Effect: Detect Disease
Target: One character
Duration: Persistent
Range: No Range
END Cost: 2
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -2

Description: The character can send his mind into a person’s body to discern whether he has an illness, and if so what kind.

Game Information: *Detect Disease (INT Roll) (Mental Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Sense (22 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), No Range (-½), Requires An SS: Medicine Roll (-¼). Total cost: 10 points.*

PSYCHIC VAMPIRISM

Effect: Transfer 3d6 (target's EGO to character's EGO)
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: 335"
END Cost: 7
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -7

Description: The character can leech psionic energy from another person's mind for his own use — he strengthens his willpower while weakening the other person's. Many mentalists use this attack to "soften up" a target before applying continuing-effect Mental Powers like Mind Control.

You can create a similar power by substituting INT for EGO. This creates the ability to leech intelligence, making the character smarter while his victim becomes dumber.

Game Information: *Transfer 3d6 (target's EGO to character's EGO), Ranged (+½) (67 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Requires An EGO Roll (assumes an EGO Roll of 14; -½). Total cost: 38 points.*

TELEKINESIS

Effect: Telekinesis (20 STR), Fine Manipulation
Target: One character or object
Duration: Constant
Range: 200"
END Cost: 4
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -4

Description: The character can move, damage, and otherwise manipulate objects without having to physically touch them. He can even perform fine work, like typing or playing the piano (assuming he knows how to do those things).

Game Information: *Telekinesis (20 STR), Fine Manipulation (40 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

TELEPATHY

Effect: Telepathy 8d6
Target: One character
Duration: Constant
Range: LOS
END Cost: 4
Mentalism Roll Penalty: -4

Description: The character has the ability to read the thoughts in another person's mind, or to communicate with another person mentally by projecting his own thoughts into that person's mind. The deeper the character wants to delve into another person's mind, the more likely it is that his attempt to find information will fail.

Game Information: *Telepathy 8d6 (40 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼). Total cost: 32 points.*

Defensive Mutations

ACIDIC BLOOD

Effect: RKA 1d6, Penetrating, Damage Shield, potentially Autofire
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has acidic blood (or like bodily fluids). Objects that penetrate his flesh (*i.e.*, which do BODY damage to him) take damage from it; if something spills it, it harms whatever it hits. For every point of BODY damage the character takes, one Charge affects the physical object injuring him. If he wants to spill his own blood onto something to damage it, he has to inflict an injury on himself (the GM may require the character to succeed with an EGO Roll to do this).

Because a character has a finite supply of blood, his Acidic Blood powers have Charges — 2 Charges per point of BODY he has (representing the fact that he dies when he loses all of his blood, *i.e.*, reaches negative his starting BODY). This writ-up assumes a character with 10 BODY.

Game Information: *RKA 1d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (64 Active Points); Always On (-½), Only Works Against Objects Which Cause Character BODY Damage Or On Which Character's Blood Is Spilled (-1), 20 Charges which Recover by healing (character can only recover Charges by healing BODY damage; -¼) (total cost: 23 points) **plus** Autofire (20 shots; +1½) for this power (22 Active Points); No Conscious Control (number of shots used depends on BODY damage taken; -1) (total cost: 11 points). Total cost: 34 points.*

NICTITATING MEMBRANE

Effect: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has a special second eyelid that protects his eyes from blinding light, dust, and the like.

Game Information: *Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points). Total cost: 10 points.*

PLAGUE RESISTANCE

Effect: Life Support (Immunity)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's metabolism is so powerful that he can withstand the effects of one or more diseases or biowarfare agents without suffering any ill effects.

Game Information: *Life Support (Immunity).*
Cost varies.

PROTECTIVE SKIN

Effect: Damage Resistance (4 PD/4 ED)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's skin is unusually leathery and tough — strong enough to resist knives and even bullets sometimes. It may be reptilian (similar to a crocodile's or a snake's), bark-like,

Game Information: *Damage Resistance (4 PD/4 ED).* *Total cost: 4 points.*

RADIATION RESISTANCE

Effect: Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character is naturally immune to the effects of ordinary radiation... a nigh-invaluable ability in some areas, since it lets him live and scavenge in rad zones without fear.

Game Information: *Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation).* *Total cost: 2 points.*

Options:

1) Radiation Immunity: The character's also protected against radiation-based powers. Change to: *Armor (12 ED) (18 Active Points); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (radiation; -¼) (total cost: 14 points) plus Power Defense (20 points) (20 Active Points); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (radiation; -¼) (total cost: 16 points).* *Total cost: 30 points.*

RAPID HEALING

Effect: Healing BODY 1d6, Regeneration
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's metabolism and healing processes are so advanced that his wounds heal and close almost instantly. Characters with this mutation also often have the Heightened Metabolism mutation (see below).

Game Information: *Healing BODY 1d6 (Regeneration, 1 BODY/Turn), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (20 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Turn [Post-Segment 12]; -1¼), Self Only (-½).* *Total cost: 7 points.*

REPTILIAN REGROWTH

Effect: Healing 2d6 Regeneration, Can Heal Limbs
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: Just like a lizard, the character heals with great speed, and can even regrow lost limbs.

Game Information: *Healing 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Hour), Can Heal Limbs, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (50 Active Points); Extra Time + Increased Time Increment (2 BODY/Hour; -2¼), Self Only (-½).* *Total cost: 13 points.*

TOUGH BONES

Effect: Armor to protect the bones, HA +1d6
Target: Self/One character
Duration: Persistent/Instant
Range: Self/Touch
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's mutation makes his bones unusually hard and tough. Besides making it harder to break them, this means his knuckles hurt someone more when he punches, and he weighs more than you'd expect based on his height and build.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 3 *Tough Bones: Armor (1 PD/1 ED)*
- 3 *Tough Bones: Armor (4 PD/4 ED) (12 Active Points); Only Works Against BODY Damage (-1), Only To Protect Against Breaking Bones (-2)*
- 5 *Tough Knuckles: HA +1d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (7 Active Points); Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)*

Total cost: 11 points.

VENOM RESISTANCE

Effect: Life Support (Immunity)
 Target: Self
 Duration: Persistent
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 0

Description: The character's metabolism is so powerful that he can withstand the effects of one or more poisons without suffering any ill effects.

Game Information: *Life Support (Immunity).*
Cost varies.

Movement Mutations

ADHESIVE HANDS

Effect: Clinging (normal STR)
 Target: Self
 Duration: Constant
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 0

Description: The character's hand (and perhaps other parts of his body) exude a strong, sticky substance that lets him climb walls effortlessly, cling to ceilings, and so forth.

Game Information: *Clinging (normal STR).*
Total cost: 10 points.

LEAPFROG

Effect: Leaping +8"
 Target: Self
 Duration: Constant
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 1

Description: The character has strong legs specially adapted for long leaps.

Game Information: *Leaping +8". Total cost: 8 points.*

WEBBED HANDS AND FEET

Effect: Swimming +6"
 Target: Self
 Duration: Constant
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 1

Description: The character has webbing between his fingers and his toes, allowing him to swim much faster than normal. At the GM's option, the webbing may interfere with his ability to use his fingers in some situations or with some equipment, resulting in minor DEX Roll or OCV penalties.

Game Information: *Swimming +6" (8" total).*
Total cost: 6 points.

WINGS

Effect: Flight 12", Restrainable
 Target: Self
 Duration: Constant
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 2

Description: One of the most spectacular known mutations is this one — wings that sprout from the character's shoulderblades, allowing him to fly twice as fast as a man can run! Typically the wings have a bat-like appearance, but sometimes they're feathered, or even more rarely insect-like.

Game Information: *Flight 12" (24 Active Points); Restrainable (-½). Total cost: 16 points.*

Sensory Mutations

DELPHINE SONAR

Effect: Active Sonar
 Target: Self
 Duration: Persistent
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 0

Description: The character has sonar like that of a dolphin (or many other sea creatures).

Game Information: *Active Sonar and Ultra-sonic Perception (both for Hearing Group).*
Total cost: 18 points.

EAGLE EYES

Effect: +16 versus Range for Normal Sight
 Target: Self
 Duration: Persistent
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 0

Description: The character's eyes have been strengthened and improved, giving him the ability to see clearly over great distances.

Game Information: *+16 versus Range for Normal Sight. Total cost: 8 points.*

HEATSENSE

Effect: Infrared Perception (Touch Group)
 Target: Self
 Duration: Persistent
 Range: Self
 END Cost: 0

Description: Like a pit viper, the character can sense the heat differentials in objects near him.

Game Information: *Infrared Perception (Touch Group). Total cost: 5 points.*

HEIGHTENED HEARING

Effect: Various Enhanced Senses
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has one or more abilities reflecting his heightened sense of hearing. He can buy as many or as few of these Senses as he wishes, based on his character conception.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 10 *Enhanced Hearing:* +5 PER with Hearing Sense Group
- 18 *Parabolic Hearing:* +12 versus Range for Hearing Group
- 10 *Combat Hearing I:* Targeting for Normal Hearing
- 20 *Combat Hearing II:* Targeting for Hearing Group
- 3 *Ultrasonic Hearing:* Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)

HEIGHTENED SENSES

Effect: Various Enhanced Senses
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's natural senses are far more acute than those of normal people. He can buy as many or as few of these Senses as he wishes, based on his character conception.

Game Information:

Cost Value

- 15 *Heightened Senses:* +5 PER with all Sense Groups
- 18 *Precise Focusing:* +12 versus Range Modifier for any one Sense Group (chosen when the character purchases the power)

Options:

1) Tiring Senses: The character can only heighten his senses by force of effort. Add Costs Endurance (-½). Total cost: 10 points for Heightened Senses; 12 points for Precise Focusing.

HEIGHTENED SIGHT

Effect: Various Enhanced Senses
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has one or more abilities reflecting his heightened sense of sight. He can buy as many or as few of these Senses as he wishes, based on his character conception.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 10 *Enhanced Sight:* +5 PER with Sight Sense Group
- 15 *Far Seeing:* +10 versus Range for Sight Sense Group
- 5 *Thermalvision:* Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
- 5 *Ultravision:* Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)
- 5 *Nightsight:* Nightvision
- 5 *Heat Trace Reading:* Tracking for Infrared Perception
- 15 *Microsight:* Microscopic (x1000) for Sight Group

HEIGHTENED SMELL

Effect: Various Enhanced Senses
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has one or more abilities reflecting his heightened senses of smell and taste. He can buy as many or as few of these Senses as he wishes, based on his character conception.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 10 *Enhanced Smell:* +5 PER with Smell/Taste Sense Group
- 15 *Far Smell:* +10 versus Range for Smell/Taste Sense Group
- 10 *Combat Smell:* Targeting for Normal Smell
- 10 *Tracking Smell:* Tracking for Smell/Taste Group
- 15 *Trace Odor Detection:* Microscopic (x1000) for Smell/Taste Group

HEIGHTENED TOUCH

Effect: Various Enhanced Senses
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has one or more abilities reflecting his heightened sense of touch. He can buy as many or as few of these Senses as he wishes, based on his character conception.

Game Information:

Cost Power

- 10 *Enhanced Touch:* +5 PER with Touch Sense Group
- 10 *Reading By Touch:* A character with this power has such sensitive fingertips that he can read printed words by brushing his fingers across them. Discriminatory and Analyze for Normal Touch.

MULTIFACETED EYES

Effect: Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has the faceted eyes of an insect, giving him a much wider angle of view than a normal human.

Game Information: *Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group. Total cost: 10 points.*

RADIATION SENSE

Effect: Detect Radiation
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character is a human Geiger counter — he can perceive radiation, a very handy ability for avoiding rad zones and other dangerous areas. Perhaps his skin tingles in a particular way when he comes close to radiation, or he can “see” patterns of radiation in the air.

Game Information: *Detect Radiation (INT Roll) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range. Total cost: 13 points.*

Options:

- 1) **True Radiation Sense:** The character can perceive radiation without having to concentrate. Add Sense. Total cost: 15 points.

Miscellaneous Mutations**BRAINY**

Effect: +5 INT, +3 EGO, +3 PRE
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: Mutant genes or exposure to radiation has made the character much smarter and stronger-willed than normal.

Game Information: +5 INT, +3 EGO, +3 PRE.
Total cost: 14 points.

CHAMELEON CAMOUFLAGE

Effect: +4 to Concealment and +2 to Stealth
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character can alter his coloration to match that of his background, making it much harder for others to see him.

Game Information: +4 to *Concealment* (8 Active Points); *Self Only* (-½), *Costs Endurance To Activate* (-¼) (total cost: 5 points) and +2 to *Stealth* (4 Active Points); *Costs Endurance To Activate* (-¼) (total cost: 3 points). Total cost: 8 points.

EXPANDED LUNG CAPACITY

Effect: Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has unusually large or efficient lungs, or one or more extra lungs, allowing him to hold his breath far longer than normal.

Game Information: *Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn). Total cost: 1 point.*

EXTRA FINGERS

Effect: +1 with DEX-based Rolls involving manual dexterity
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has one or more extra fingers on each hand. This sometimes makes it a little difficult for him to use standard gear (since his hands won't fit in/around it), but usually his extra digit(s) allow him to manipulate things with greater than normal dexterity.

Game Information: +1 with DEX-based Rolls involving manual dexterity. Total cost: 5 points.

FUR

Effect: Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's body is covered in thick, shaggy fur that insulates him against even the most intense cold. On the other hand, it makes him pretty miserable in the summertime, and he sheds all over the furniture.

Game Information: *Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)*. Total cost: 2 points.

GILLS

Effect: Life Support (Expanded Breathing)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character can breathe underwater as easily as he can in air because he has gills like those of a fish in the side of his neck.

Game Information: *Life Support (Expanded Breathing: breathe underwater)*. Total cost: 5 points.

LIGHTBENDING SKIN

Effect: Invisibility to Sight Group
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 2

Description: The character's skin can bend light waves around him, effectively making him invisible (though someone who gets close enough and is observant can see where the light "bends").

Game Information: *Invisibility to Sight Group*. Total cost: 20 points.

MULTIPLE ARMS

Effect: Extra Limbs (number varies)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: Instead of the usual two, the character has three, four, six, or some other number of extra arms.

Game Information: *Extra Limbs (number varies)*. Total cost: 5 points.

PHOTOGENESIS

Effect: Images to Sight Group, +4 to PER Rolls, Only To Create Light
Target: 1" Radius
Duration: Constant
Range: No Range
END Cost: 2

Description: The character's skin can emit light. He can vary the intensity of the light (in game terms, from providing +1 to PER Rolls, all the way up to +4).

Game Information: *Images to Sight Group, +4 to PER Rolls (22 Active Points); Only To Create Light (-1), No Range (-½)*. Total cost: 9 points.

PHOTOSYNTHETIC SKIN

Effect: Life Support (Diminished Eating: once per week), Requires Direct Sunlight
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's skin (which has a distinctive green coloration) can perform photosynthesis: in other words, it converts sunlight into nutrition. This can't fulfill all the character's dietary needs, but it makes up for most of them. The downside is that he needs sustained, direct exposure to sunlight on a regular basis. He has to spend a minimum of one hour per day sunbathing, or a minimum of three hours working or traveling while exposed to direct sunlight. If he misses even a day of exposure to sunlight (which also includes rainy or heavily overcast days with little sunshine), he can't use the power that week and has to eat normally.

Game Information: *Life Support (Diminished Eating: once per week) (1 Active Point); Requires Direct Sunlight (see text; -½), Nonpersistent (-¼)*. Total cost: 1 point.

SERPENTINE BODY

Effect: Stretching 1"
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 1

Description: The character has the sinuous body of a serpent, and can stretch and contort his form in ways normal people cannot.

Game Information: *Stretching 1"*. Total cost: 5 points.

TAIL

Effect: Extra Limb (1)
Target: Self
Duration: Inherent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has a long, prehensile tail.

Game Information: *Extra Limb (1), Inherent (+¼) (6 Active Points); Limited Manipulation (-¼). Total cost: 5 points.*

TWO-HEADED

Effect: +1 PER with all Sense Groups except Touch; Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group; Extra Limbs (1 more head)
Target: Self
Duration: Constant/Constant/Inherent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has two complete, functioning heads. This may also mean he has mental powers or Disputatious Dicephalism (see above).

Game Information:

- Cost Power**
- 3 *More Heads Better:* +1 PER with all Sense Groups except Touch
 - 10 *More Eyes Better:* Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group
 - 5 *Extra Heads:* Extra Limbs (1 more head), Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)

Disadvantageous Mutations

Not all mutations are beneficial. Indeed, in a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign or other game that emphasizes “realism,” most or all mutations will be harmful. Here’s a sample of disadvantageous mutations characters might develop.

ALBINISM

Effect: **Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight** (suffers -4 to all Sight PER Rolls in sunlight or bright light, and -2 at other times)
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character is an albino — he has no pigment in his skin, eyes, or hair. Besides making him visually noticeable (which may qualify as a Distinctive Feature in some campaigns), this leads to a variety of conditions that interfere with his vision, particularly in bright light. He’s also more susceptible to skin cancer caused by exposure to sunlight.

In addition to the listed Physical Limitation, characters with this mutation often take a Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Light-based Sight Group Flashes (Common) (value: 20 points).

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight (suffers -4 to all Sight PER Rolls in sunlight or bright light, and -2 at other times) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing). Value: 15 points.*

ALLERGY

Effect: **Susceptibility: character takes 2d6 per Phase from contact with defined substance or phenomena**
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character’s flawed genetics make him violently allergic to some substance or phenomenon that is harmless to most people. The player and GM should decide together what qualifies for this Disadvantageous Mutation.

Game Information: *Susceptibility: character takes 2d6 per Phase from contact with defined substance or phenomenon. Value: 20 points for Uncommon, 25 for Common, 30 for Very Common.*

BRITTLE BONES

Effect: Physical Limitation (bones break easily)
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's bones are unusually brittle. Perhaps they're hollow like a bird's so he can use his Wings (see above), or maybe they're just not well-formed. Whatever the reason, they have a considerably greater chance to break. Anytime the character suffers blunt trauma or an impact that does 2 or more BODY (before defenses are applied), the GM rolls 3d6, subtracting 2 from the roll for each BODY done above 2. If he rolls 11-, the character suffers one or more broken bones, usually resulting in taking 1 BODY damage minimum. The GM determines any other effects (such as a reduction in Running and Swimming due to a broken leg).

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Bones Break Easily (Frequently, Greatly Impairing).*
Value: 15 points.

COLD-BLOODED

Effect: Physical Limitation (Cold-Blooded)
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: A character with this mutation is cold-blooded, like a reptile. This means he lacks a standard internal body temperature — instead, his body temperature depends on his surroundings. If it gets too cold, he can't move or function; thus, he prefers deserts, the tropics, and other warm regions.

In game terms, if the Temperature Level (see pages 441-42 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*) is above +3 or below 0, a cold-blooded creature's movement and DEX are halved. At Temperature Level -2 and below, a cold-blooded creature cannot move at all, and will likely die (or be eaten) if not safely sheltered somewhere.

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Cold-Blooded (Frequently, Greatly Impairing).* *Value: 15 points.*

DIMINISHED CAPACITY

Effect: -3 INT (or more)
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: Among the most common negative mutations is reduced mental capacity. Exposure to radiation, bacteria, or something similar long ago affected the genes of the character or his ancestors, resulting in his not being able to think as clearly as most people, remember things as well, or observe things as closely.

Characters with this Disadvantageous Mutation often sell back their EGO and PRE as well as INT.

Game Information: *-3 INT (or more). Value: 3 (or more) points.*

DIMINISHED SENSE

Effect: Penalties to PER Rolls with one or more Sense Groups
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's mutation impairs one or more of his senses. The listed penalties may also apply, in whole or in part, to Skills dependent on the affected Senses.

Game Information:

Value Disadvantage

- 5 Physical Limitation: Colorblind (character sees reds as greens, and vice-versa) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Missing One Eye (lacks depth perception (½ OCV with all Ranged Attacks), no peripheral vision on one side) (Infrequently, Greatly Limiting)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight (character suffers a -1 on all Sight Group PER Rolls) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight (character suffers a -3 on all Sight Group PER Rolls) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Poor Hearing (character suffers a -1 on all Hearing Group PER Rolls) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Poor Hearing (character suffers a -3 on all Hearing Group PER Rolls) (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Poor Smell/Taste (character suffers a -3 on all Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)

DISPUTATIOUS DICEPHALISM

Effect: Psychological Limitation: Disputatious Dicephalism; Rivalry
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character has two heads... and they don't get along. Whenever he's confronted with a significant decision — who to attack in combat, what approach to take to investigating a mystery, whether to cut the red wire or the green wire — he has to make an EGO Roll. If he fails, he loses one Phase while his heads argue about the matter, and at the end of that Phase may take rash action based on one head deciding to go ahead and make the body do what it wants. If he succeeds, his heads agree, but then their Rivalry kicks in and they both try to out-do the other (usually through how they talk or present themselves).

The GM should encourage a character with this mutation to roleplay it; it's a lot of fun.

Game Information:**Value Disadvantage**

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Disputatious Dicephalism (Common, Strong)
- 10 Rivalry: Personal and Professional, each head with the other

Total value: 25 points.

DWARFISM

Effect: Character takes the Small Size Template
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character's long bones didn't grow properly, resulting in his being only about half as tall as an ordinary human.

Game Information: *Character takes the Small Size Template (The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised, page 575), though the GM may permit him not to take all of it if desired. Cost: varies.*

EPILEPSY

Effect: Physical Limitation: Epilepsy
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: When the character is subjected to stress (including most instances of combat or other high-pressure situations), he may suffer seizures. Seizures may also occur when he's particularly tired or sleepy, or while he's sleeping.

In game terms, whenever the GM believes the character is under stress or tired (*i.e.*, has used half or more of his Long-Term END), there's an 11- chance that he'll have a seizure. While seizing he falls to the ground, can take no Actions, and is DCV 0. This condition persists for 2d6 Segments. In the Segment after the seizure ends, the character can take Actions (if he has a Phase), but is at half DCV and suffers a -2 penalty on all Attack, Skill, Perception, and Characteristic Rolls. Typically a character should only suffer from a seizure once during an adventure; if he wants to be subject to the effects more often, increase the frequency of the Disadvantage.

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Epilepsy (see text) (Frequently, Fully Impairing). Value: 20 points.*

HEIGHTENED METABOLISM

Effect: Dependence on eating large amounts of food
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's metabolism is in a constant state of "overdrive." He has to eat tremendous amounts of food to keep his metabolism fueled. Instead of the normal three square meals a day most people need, he has to consume food almost continuously when he's using his powers (*i.e.*, during most adventures) — a significant restriction in Post-Apocalyptic settings where starvation is a constant concern (adjust the commonality of food as a Dependence if necessary). You can represent this as a Dependence that affects the character's powers or Characteristics, with the value depending on just how much food the speedster has to eat.

Game Information:**Value Description**

Character must consume at least 100-1,999 calories per Hour (Very Common/Easy to obtain) when using powers:

- or suffer Weakness: 5 points
- or suffer Incompetence: 5 points
- or suffer Activation Roll 14- for powers: 5 points
- or suffer Activation Roll 11- for powers: 10 points

Character must consume at least 2,000 or more calories per Hour (Common/Difficult to obtain) when using powers:

—or suffer Weakness: 10 points

—or suffer Incompetence: 10 points

—or suffer Activation Roll 14- for powers: 10 points

—or suffer Activation Roll 11- for powers: 15 points

HEMIHYPERTROPHY

Effect: -3 DEX; -2 COM; sell back part of the character's Running and Leaping

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: The character's body has an unusually significant lack of symmetry between his right and left sides. His left arm and leg are considerably smaller and less well-formed than his right ones, making it harder than normal for him to walk and perform tasks requiring manual dexterity.

Game Information:

Value Disadvantage

-9 -3 DEX

-1 -2 COM

Var Sell back part of the character's Running and Leaping

HIDEOUS

Effect: -4 COM (or more)

Target: Self

Duration: N/A

Range: N/A

END Cost: N/A

Description: One of the most common negative mutations is hideousness. Exposure to radiation, chemical or biological warfare agents, disease, or the like has made the character incredibly ugly. His skin may be blackened, warty, pustulent, or oddly colored; his limbs spindly; his facial features mongoloid, partly rearranged, or "melted"; his skin may have bubbled up with pustulent sores; or the like.

Game Information: -4 COM (or more). Value: 2 (or more) points.

HUNCHBACK

Effect: Running -2"

Target: Self

Duration: N/A

Range: N/A

END Cost: N/A

Description: The character has a large hump on his back that distorts his posture, making it difficult for him to walk or run normally.

Game Information: Running -2". Value: 4 points.

LIGHT SENSITIVITY

Effect: **Physical Limitation:** Poor Eyesight (suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls in sunlight or bright light)

Target: Self

Duration: N/A

Range: N/A

END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's eyes are unusually sensitive to bright light. In normal sunlight or equivalently intense artificial light he suffers a -2 to Sight PER Rolls (though the GM may reduce this to -1 if the character wears sunglasses or similar eye protection). In some cases the GM may require the character to make PER Rolls to see targets in combat clearly.

In addition to the listed Physical Limitation, characters with this mutation often take a Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Light-based Sight Group Flashes (Common) (value: 20 points).

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight (suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls in sunlight or bright light) (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing). Value: 10 points.*

MISSING LIMB

Effect: **Physical Limitation:** Missing One Arm or Leg

Target: Self

Duration: N/A

Range: N/A

END Cost: N/A

Description: The character was born without one of his arms or legs, or with one so withered that it's useless.

If the character takes *Missing One Leg*, he typically also sells back at least half his inches of Running.

Game Information:

Value Disadvantage

15 Physical Limitation: Missing One Arm (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

10 Physical Limitation: Missing One Leg (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)

STENCH

Effect: **Physical Limitation:** Stench

Target: Self

Duration: N/A

Range: N/A

END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's body emits an intense, unpleasant odor. It provides a +2 bonus to all Smell/Taste PER Rolls to perceive him, and imposes a -2 to his own Smell/Taste PER Rolls. If he tries to use Stealth to avoid the notice of someone who has a sense of smell, he suffers a -3 to his roll (this is not cumulative with the PER Roll bonus others have to perceive him; it takes the place of that). He also suffers a -2 on most Interaction Skill rolls involving friendly interaction.

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Stench (see text) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing). Value: 15 points.*

STERILITY

Effect: Physical Limitation: Sterile
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character is sterile, unable to reproduce at all (except perhaps through cloning, if that's even possible in the setting).

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: Sterile (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing). Value: 5 points.*

TENTACLES

Effect: Physical Limitation: tentacles instead of arms/hands
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: Instead of normal arms and hands, the character has two tentacles. While not as bad as lacking arms altogether, the tentacles are a far cry from standard human limbs. The character has a reduced ability to manipulate things; any roll requiring manual dexterity (which includes most Attack Rolls involving weapons that haven't been specifically adapted to his use) suffers a -3 (or greater) penalty.

Game Information: *Physical Limitation: tentacles instead of arms/hands (see text) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing). Value: 15 points.*

WEAK LEGS

Effect: Sell back part of the character's Running and Leaping
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character's legs are for some reason unusually weak and/or spindly.

Game Information: *Sell back part of the character's Running and Leaping. Value: varies.*

WEAKNESS

Effect: Sell back some of the character's CON and/or STR
Target: Self
Duration: N/A
Range: N/A
END Cost: N/A

Description: The character is cursed with an unusually weak body. He's not as resistant to injury or disease as most characters, and may also be able to lift and carry less weight.

Game Information: *Sell back some of the character's CON and/or STR. Value: varies.*

Selecting Mutations

There are several ways you can select mutations. The simplest, and the one most in tune with standard *HERO System* character creation principles, is that characters buy any mutations they want with Character Points, and can (but don't have to) take negative mutations defined as Disadvantages or selling back Characteristics.

However, that may not be suitable for some campaigns, where GMs want to emphasize the unusual and uncontrollable nature of mutations. In that case you can use the accompanying Mutations Tables to randomly select one or more mutations. Using this system, the GM typically requires each character to roll a defined number of times and then gives him the rolled mutations "for free" (without charging him any Character Points).

Two tables are given for randomly rolling mutations. One does not include Disadvantageous Mutations, and the other does. When you use the first table, the GM has to decide whether characters are required to take any harmful or negative mutations. Some GMs do this as a way of (a) balancing the usefulness of positive mutations, and/or (b) to emphasize the fact that mutating the human body is rarely, if ever, a totally beneficial thing to do. Usually one of the following methods is used:

- a character must take one Disadvantageous Mutation for every X positive mutations he has (in "realistic" campaigns X may equal 1, but typically 2-4 is the number used)
- a character must take X value worth of Disadvantageous Mutations for every Y Active Points' worth of positive mutations he has.
- a character must take X value worth of Disadvantageous Mutations for every Y Real Points' worth of positive mutations he has.

MUTATIONS TABLE I

Roll (1d6)	Mutation Category
1	Offensive
2	Mental
3	Defensive
4	Movement
5	Sensory
6	Miscellaneous
Roll (2d6)	Mutation Category
1-1	Offensive
1-2	Mental
1-3	Defensive
1-4	Movement
1-5	Sensory
1-6	Miscellaneous
2-1	Disadvantageous
2-2 to 6-6	Ignore; roll again

MUTATIONS TABLE II

Roll*	Offensive Mutation	Roll	Movement Mutation
1-1	Acidic Spittle	1	Adhesive Hangs
1-2	Brawny	2	Leapfrog
1-3	Choking Cloud	3	Webbed Hands And Feet
1-4	Claws	4	Wings
1-5	Controlling Cloud	5-6	Ignore; roll again
1-6	Electrified Touch	Roll	Sensory Mutation
2-1	Fangs	1-1	Delphine Sonar
2-2	Gigantism	1-2	Eagle Eyes
2-3	Horns	1-3	Heat Sense
2-4	Irradiated Body	1-4	Heightened Hearing
2-5	Quills	1-5	Heightened Senses
2-6	Radiation Blast	1-6	Heightened Sight
3-1	Rad Zone Generation	2-1	Heightened Smell
3-2	Short Out	2-2	Heightened Touch
3-3	Shriek	2-3	Multifaceted Eyes
3-4	Spitting Blindness	2-4	Radiation Sense
3-5	Stinger	2-5 to 6-6	Ignore; roll again
3-6	Venom	Roll	Miscellaneous Mutation
4-1	Webs	1-1	Brainy
4-2 to 6-6	Ignore; roll again	1-2	Chameleon Camouflage
Roll	Mental Mutation	1-3	Extra Fingers
1-1	Brainburning	1-4	Fur
1-2	Brain Drain	1-5	Gills
1-3	Detect Minds	1-6	Lightbending Skin
1-4	Fear Control	2-1	Multiple Arms
1-5	Illusions	2-2	Photogenesis
1-6	Mental Control	2-3	Photosynthetic Skin
2-1	Mental Invulnerability	2-4	Serpentine Body
2-2	Mental Link	2-5	Tail
2-3	Mental Scanning	2-6	Two-Headed
2-4	Mind Blast	Roll	Disadvantageous Mutation
2-5	Mindscapes	1-1	Albinism
2-6	Mind Shield	1-2	Brittle Bones
3-1	Premonitions	1-3	Cold-Blooded
3-2	Psionic Palsy	1-4	Diminished Capacity
3-3	Psychic Diagnosis	1-5	Diminished Sense
3-4	Psychic Vampirism	1-6	Disputatious Dicephalism
3-5	Telekinesis	2-1	Dwarfism
3-6	Telepathy	2-2	Epilepsy
Roll	Defensive Mutation	2-3	Heightened Metabolism
1-1	Acidic Blood	2-4	Hemihypertrophy
1-2	Nictitating Membrane	2-5	Hideous
1-3	Plague Resistance	2-6	Hunchback
1-4	Protective Skin	3-1	Light Sensitivity
1-5	Radiation Resistance	3-2	Missing Limb
1-6	Rapid Healing	3-3	Stench
2-1	Reptilian Regrowth	3-4	Sterility
2-2	Tough Bones	3-5	Tentacles
2-3	Venom Resistance	3-6	Weak Legs
2-4 to 6-6	Ignore; roll again	4-1	Weakness
		4-2 to 6-6	Ignore; roll again

*: To determine these numbers randomly, roll two dice, reading the first one as the first digit and the second one as the second digit. Ignore and reroll any results not covered by a particular table.

MUTANT CREATURES

Exposure to the radiation, biochemical weapons, nanobots, or other aftereffects of the apocalypse often mutates animals as well as humans in High Post-Apocalyptic settings like *After The Blast*. Typically animal mutations take one (or more) of five forms:

- the animal becomes larger, fiercer, and/or deadlier (and usually correspondingly more hideous or dangerous-looking, with outsized fangs/claws, patches of fur missing, fiendish red eyes, and so forth)
- the animal gains mental/psionic powers that help it hunt prey and make it dangerous to humans even if it wouldn't otherwise be
- the animal gains mutations similar to those that PCs can have (you can use the same example mutations on pages 112-28, and the Mutations Tables if desired, to determine these; just adjust them for animal forms)
- the animal gains sentience and manipulatory limbs (thus making it a competitor for or rival of humanity, at least in some places)
- the animal becomes radioactive, so that exposure to it is dangerous even if it's not a physical threat

Described below are several example mutant creatures from the *After The Blast* campaign setting, as well as a character sheet for a typical Wastelands Mutant. You can use them as-is in your own campaign, or adapt them to fit your vision of the Post-Apocalyptic world.

CERVINE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
11	STR	1	11-	Lift 117 kg; 2d6 [2]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
14	CON	8	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
12	PRE	2	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (1 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 4 ED (1 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	0		
28	END	0		
25	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 35

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Leaping: 5"/10"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Antlers:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR)	1
1	<i>Tough Fur/Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED)	0
6	<i>Cervine Legs:</i> Running +3" (9" total)	1
3	<i>Cervine Legs:</i> Leaping +3" (5" forward, 3" upward)	1

Skills	
5	+1 HTH
2	AK of local area 11-
3	Stealth 12-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 11-
3	Tracking 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 39
Total Cost: 74

75+ Disadvantages
0 Physical Limitation: Human Size

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Ecology: In the centuries since the Great Blast, many lands formerly controlled and shaped by humans have returned to field and forest... and in some of those places, animal-men created by the radiation of the Blast have arisen, or come to live. One of the most successful of these "neo-species" is the cervine, or "deer-men." Various sub-types of cervine are found throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere. They typically live in tribes of several dozen in woodland areas, where they hunt game, gather food, and scavenge in ruins.

Personality/Motivation: Normal sentient humanoid motivations. Cervine (the word is singular and plural) tend to be very protective of their tribe and chosen home territory, and will fight fiercely to protect either if need be. However, they prefer to live in harmony with their human neighbors (if any), since that lets them trade for things they cannot make or find.

Powers/Tactics: Cervine use the full range of tactics available to sentient humanoids. They typically use primitive weapons like spears, bows, and axes, though they can learn to use more modern weapons salvaged from the ruins of the Ancients. They tend to dislike technology such as cars and computers, happily trading it to other peoples.

Campaign Use: This character sheet represents a typical competent cervine the PCs might encounter in a situation where you need a character sheet (*i.e.*, combat or the like). You can customize it to create cervine chieftains, cervine shamans (in campaigns featuring magic), and so on. Lesser cervines — the young, most females, the elderly — have slightly lower Characteristics, no WFs, and so forth.

Appearance: A cervine is a deer-man, a mutant race created by the aftereffects of the Great Blast. He's got a human-like body with a deer-like head and antlers, plus satyr-like legs. He wears furs and leathers over his own hairy skin, and carries weapons such as spears, bows, and axes. If prepared for battle he may have on leather or metal armor.



FANGRABBIT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
3	STR	-7	10-	Lift 37.5 kg; ½d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
12	CON	4	11-	
7	BODY	-6	10-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
4	PD	3		Total: 4 PD (1 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 2 ED (1 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	2		
24	END	0		
20	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 6

Movement: Running: 7"/14"
Leaping: 4"/8"
Swimming: 1"/2"

Cost	Powers	END
12	<i>Bite:</i> HKA 1d6 (1d6 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼)	1
5	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1 point (1 point with STR)	1
1	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (1 PD/1 ED)	0
2	<i>Rabbit's Legs:</i> Running +1" (7" total)	1
4	<i>Rabbit's Legs:</i> Leaping +4" (4" forward, 2" upward)	1
-1	<i>Short Legs:</i> Swimming -1"	
6	<i>Rabbit Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>Rabbit Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
4	<i>Rabbit's Ears:</i> +2 PER with Hearing Group	0

Skills

20	<i>Hard To Hit:</i> +4 DCV
7	Concealment 15-; Self Only (-½)
11	Stealth 16-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 76

Total Cost: 82

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Diminutive (typically no larger than about .5m; +6" KB) (Fre- quently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipula- tion (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Aggressive (Common, Moderate)

Total Disadvantage Points: 125

Ecology: Fangrabbits prefer the same habitats as non-mutated rabbits do — grasslands, plains, and meadows — though some subspecies live in light forests as well. But instead of contentedly eating grass and leaves, they're carnivores, hungry for the taste of flesh!

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations, though they're somewhat more intelligent than a non-mutated lapine. They tend to be aggressive, and prefer to fight rather than flee from danger if they think the odds are in their favor.

Powers/Tactics: Fangrabbits attack with their fangs, usually leaping for the target's throat. In some cases the fangrabbit first tries to hamstring its prey so the prey can't escape.

Campaign Use: Fangrabbits are mostly a nuisance threat — except in enormous numbers they shouldn't pose a threat to a group of PCs, unless the heroes have been weakened somehow.

Some people claim fangrabbit flesh makes for good eatin'. Others are too squeamish to eat the things.

Appearance: A fangrabbit is a mutated rabbit — it's slightly larger than its mundane cousin, and usually has piebald or patchy fur. Instead of a rabbit's grazing teeth it has prominent fangs and claws that help it hunt for meat. Its eyes seem to gleam with a devilish malevolence instead of the bucolic placidity of the ordinary rabbit.

KORBA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
5	STR	-5	10-	Lift 8 kg; 0d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	CON	0	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
8	PD	7		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	REC	4		
22	END	1		
20	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 24

Movement: Running: 6"/12
Leaping: 1"/2"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Bite:</i> HKA ½d6 point (1d6+1 with STR)	1
42	<i>Venom:</i> Drain CON 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼); 4 Charges (-1), Bite Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (15 Minutes; 1d6/5 Minutes; -¾), Linked (to RKA; -½) plus RKA 3d6, NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1), Bite Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (15 Minutes; 1d6/5 Minutes; -¾)	[4]
3	<i>Scaly Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
2	<i>Not Much Appetite:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: only needs to eat once every few months)	0
5	<i>Burst Of Speed:</i> Running +5" (11" total); Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	3
6	<i>Serpent's Tongue:</i> +3 PER with Smell/Taste Group	0
10	<i>Korban Sense:</i> Infrared Perception (no Sense Group), Range	0
3	<i>Korban Ears:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0

Skills

5	<i>Hard To Hit:</i> +1 DCV
4	+2 OCV with Bite
5	Climbing 13-
5	Concealment 13-; Self Only (-½)
5	Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 105

Total Cost: 129

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Physical Limitation: Near-Human Intelligence (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Cold-Blooded (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 0 Physical Limitation: Human Size
- 15 Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight, suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Disadvantage Points: 135

Ecology: Korbas are mutant serpents, much larger, tougher, and stronger than the venomous serpents from which they arose. It remains unclear which species was their original stock. It may be that korbas in different parts of the world come from various types of snakes, but the end result is so alike that most people can't tell the difference. Korbas are carnivores.

Like their ancestors, korbas favor warm regions. In many desert and tropical regions they're one of the chief dangers.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations... maybe. Some people believe that korbas are intelligent, and in fact their tactics do seem unusually well-developed for an animal. According to these theories, the korba speak to one another through scents and ultrasonic sounds humans can't perceive, and only the lack of manipulatory limbs has kept them from developing a civilization. However, there's no actual proof that they're sentient.

Powers/Tactics: Korbas prefer to ambush their prey and bite it, then keep near it until the poison kills it and they can feed, but if necessary they can chase some types of animals down and kill them. They have no fear of humans (mutant or otherwise), regarding them as just another source of food.

Campaign Use: The most intriguing question about korbas that might arise in the campaign is whether they're just highly dangerous animals, or actually sentient. Resolving this issue could be a subplot or story arc within a larger campaign, or it might hold the key to other secrets — perhaps the korba possess hidden knowledge of great value.

Appearance: A korba looks like an enlarged, mutated version of a common venomous serpent. Its body can be up to 10 feet long, though 5-6 feet is more typical, with a thickness similar to a human arm or leg (depending on the creature's size). Its head seems slightly outsized for its body, and its mouth is filled with large fangs.

RATTAC

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
5	STR	-5	10-	Lift 50 kg; 1d6 [1]
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
8	CON	-4	11-	
5	BODY	-10	10-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
8	PRE	-2	11-	PRE Attack: 1½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
2	PD	1		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
3	REC	0		
16	END	0		
12	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: -15

Movement: Running: 3"/6"

Cost Powers**END**

-6 *Short Legs:* Running -3" (3" total)

Skills

- 20 *Hard To Hit:* +4 DCV
- 7 Climbing 13-
- 11 Concealment 15-
- 11 Stealth 15-
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 47

Total Cost: 32

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Physical Limitation: Diminutive (.5m; +6" KB) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)

Total Disadvantage Points: 75

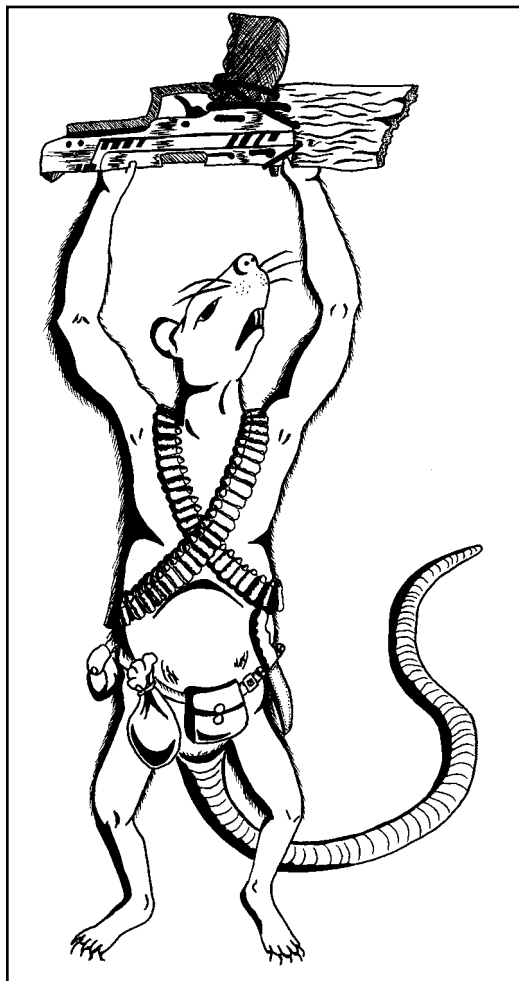
Ecology: Rattacs are, like rats, omnivores who'll eat just about anything. They prefer fresh meat if possible, but prefer to steal it rather than hunt for it. They mostly live in ruins, but sometimes in underground areas around human habitations. A typical rattac warren contains from three dozen to about a hundred rattacs, though a few are much larger.

Personality/Motivation: Normal sentient humanoid motivations. Rattacs regard "large folk," such as humans, as big, clumsy, stupid beings to be manipulated, tricked, and exploited. They may even view humans as prey.

Powers/Tactics: Rattacs use the full range of tactics available to sentient humanoids. Since they're poor combatants, they usually try to flee confrontations so they can plan ambushes later, or gather information with which to blackmail their enemies. Stealth, sneakiness, and cunning, not brawn, are their forté.

Campaign Use: This character sheet represents a typical competent rattac the PCs might encounter in a situation where you need a character sheet (*i.e.*, combat or the like). You can customize it to create rattac chieftains, rattac shamans (in campaigns featuring magic), and so on. Lesser rattacs — the young, most females, the elderly — have slightly lower Characteristics, no WFs, and so forth.

Appearance: A rattac is a rat-man, a mutant race created by the aftereffects of the Great Blast. He stands 1-2 feet tall and has paws nimble enough to function as hands. He typically carries weapons made to suit his size, be they spears or Human pistols converted to rifle-like firearms; he usually has a belt on which he carries sheaths, pouches, and the like to hold his possessions.



RIPPER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
5	STR	-5	10-	Lift 50 kg; 1d6 [1]
16	DEX	18	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	CON	0	11-	
8	BODY	-4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
3	PD	2		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	4		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	REC	0		
20	END	0		
16	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 7 (+9 with NCM)

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Leaping: 1"/2"
Swimming: 14"/28"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Bite:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6 with STR)	0
12	<i>Fast Swimmer:</i> Swimming +12" (14" total)	1
-12	<i>Only Swims:</i> Running -6"	
6	<i>Sharp Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>Keen Nose:</i> Tracking for Normal Smell	0

Skills

2	+1 OCV with Bite
5	+1 DCV
3	Tactics 11-
3	Teamwork 12-
3	Stealth 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 37

Total Cost: 44

75+ Disadvantages

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Diminutive (.5m; +6" KB) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Disadvantage Points: 115

Ecology: Rippers are carnivorous mutant fish that probably originally came from pike, piranha, barracuda, or muskellunge stock. Usually found in small schools of no more than two dozen, they prey mostly on other fish and aquatic creatures... but anything that enters the water is fair game, and they sometimes seem to take a devilish delight in attacking anyone or anything that enters "their" waters.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: Rippers prefer to attack in numbers. Typically they fight by performing Move Bys with their bite, focusing on a single target at a time — two or three members of the school will attack each Segment, leading to a quick and painful death for any target that can't find a way to stop them or to get out of the water.

Appearance: Rippers are thick-bodied silvery-colored fish usually about two feet long. They have oddly prognathous jaws filled with needle-sharp teeth.

URZOG

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [6]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
23	CON	26	14-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
5	COM	-2	10-	
10	PD	4		Total: 10 PD (5 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 10 ED (5 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
11	REC	0		
46	END	0		
45	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 90 (+20 with NCM)

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 1"/2"

Cost Powers**END**

37	<i>Radioactive:</i> RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Radiation]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Only Works On Living Beings (-½), Side Effects (irradiates environment, always occurs; -0)	0
15	<i>Bite:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
16	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼)	2
4	<i>Growl:</i> +10 PRE; Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1), Incantations (must growl or roar; -¼)	0
5	<i>Tough Skin/Fat:</i> Damage Resistance (5 PD/5 ED)	0
6	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -3"	0
5	<i>Irradiated:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: immune to the effects of High Radiation)	0
4	<i>Bear's Nose:</i> +2 PER with Smell/Taste Group	0

Talents

3	Lightsleep
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Skills

10	+2 HTH
0	ES: Climbing 8-
2	Concealment 11-; Self Only (-½)
3	Stealth 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 110

Total Cost: 200

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Large (up to 3m and 450 kg; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, can only leap 1" (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
85	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 200

Ecology: The urzog is a mutant bear. A denizen of radioactive wastelands and similar areas, it can (and will) eat nearly anything organic, though it prefers meat and will spend days stalking prey if it must.

Most urzogs are solitary, except during mating season when a female can usually be found in the company of at least three males who vie for her affections in various ways (including fighting each other). However, some explorers of the wastelands have reported encountering "packs" of urzogs at other times, and speculate that the creatures may be intelligent enough to learn to hunt together like wolves.

Urzogs don't hibernate like normal bears; they're active and dangerous all year round.

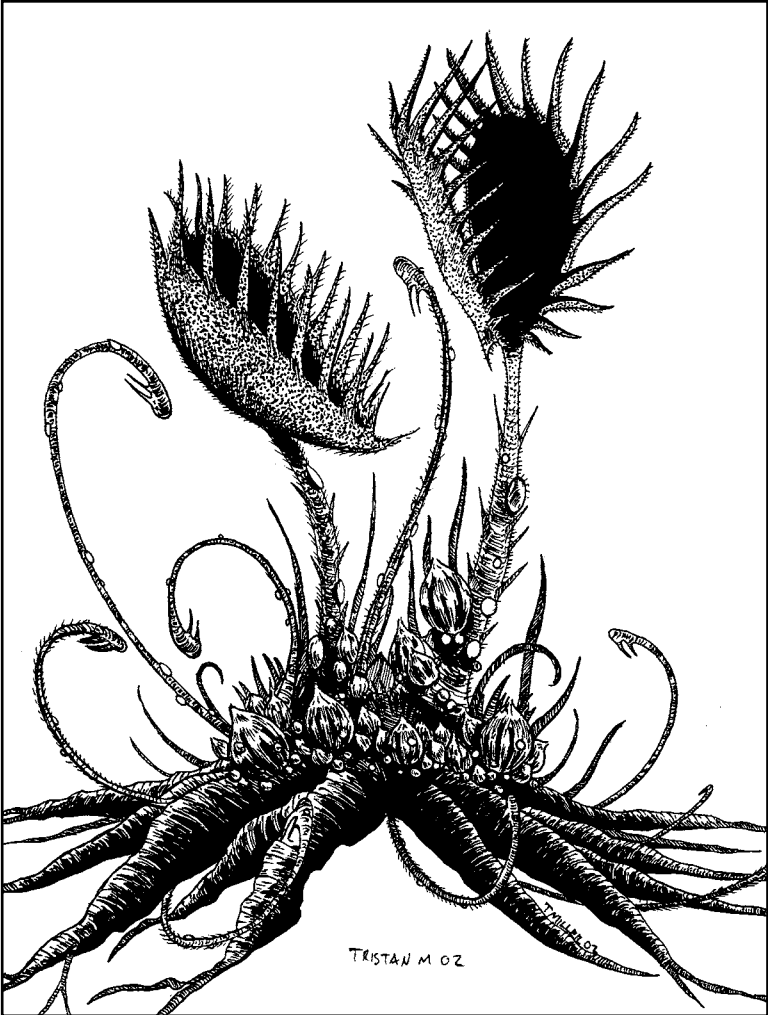
Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: An urzog has the size, strength, and natural weapons of a bear, but what makes it more dangerous still is that its habitat, diet, and mutant nature have rendered it highly radioactive. Anyone coming close to it (including anyone fighting it) is exposed to doses of radiation that can quickly prove lethal.

Campaign Use: Since urzogs live in the wastelands, it's possible that some members of the species are even more mutated than the one depicted in this character sheet. They may have become venomous, grown tentacles in addition to their four legs, or have mental powers.

Appearance: Urzogs look sort of like sickly versions of ordinary bears, with patchy and somewhat faded brown or grey fur and a slender (for a bear) body. In dark conditions they glow slightly with radioactivity.

VENUS MANTRAP				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
12	PD	6		Total: 12 PD (6 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 8 ED (2 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
10	REC	0		
40	END	0		
45	STUN	0		
				Total Characteristics Cost: 85 (+14 with NCM)
Movement: Running: 0"/0" Leaping: 0"/0" Swimming: 0"/0"				
Cost Powers END				
15	<i>Flytrap Mouth:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)			1
15	<i>Thorny Tendrils:</i> HKA ½d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Inherent (+¼), Persistent (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always On (-½), No STR Bonus (-½), Only Applies To Two Tendrils (-½)			0



30	<i>Seductive Bouquet:</i> Mind Control 8d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Set Effect (come within range of plant's attacks; -½), Limited Normal Range (range of smell, typically about 20"; -½)	0
45	<i>Slave Spores:</i> Major Transform 5d6 (humans into plant's slaves, heals at the normal rate for healing BODY), BOECV (Power Defense applies; +1), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+¼); Based On CON (-1), Limited Target (humans; -½), Limited Normal Range (10"; -½), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
25	<i>Slave Spores Mind Bond:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to 6 minds	0
4	<i>Tough Fibers:</i> Damage Resistance (6 PD/2 ED)	0
24	<i>Rooted:</i> Knockback Resistance -12"	0
-12	<i>Rooted:</i> Running -6"	
-2	<i>Rooted:</i> Swimming -0"	
38	<i>Sense Vibrations:</i> Detect Physical Vibrations 13- (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Targeting	0
5	<i>Tendrils:</i> Extra Limbs (2d6 worth), Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)	0
13	<i>Long Tendrils:</i> Stretching 3", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), Limited Body Parts (tendrils; -0), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Skills

4	+2 OCV with Grab
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Total Powers & Skills Cost: 167

Total Cost: 251

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Large (4m; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight, suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Poor Hearing, suffers -2 to all Hearing PER Rolls (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
6	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
115	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 251

Ecology: The Venus mantrap is a carnivorous plant that lives in jungles and forests in tropical and subtropical regions (or anywhere with a similar climate). It doesn't tolerate cold weather well and enters a hibernation-like state if it lives somewhere with a noticeable winter.

Because it cannot leave the spot it's rooted to, a Venus mantrap has to either lure prey to it with its Seductive Bouquet, or wait patiently until food comes within reach of its tendrils. It often takes pains to disguise itself by encouraging other plants to grow around it by leaving the inedible portions of its victims on the ground to become fertilizer.

The Venus mantrap reproduces via spores. Once it reaches adulthood (which takes five years), every two years it shoots a cloud of spores into the air during windy weather. The breeze carries the spores far enough away that the child won't compete with the parent.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: Venus mantraps look like ordinary (albeit large) plants... until prey gets close enough, either by accident or because it's responded to the plant's Seductive Bouquet. If the plant is hungry enough, it captures the victim with its tendrils, bites it to death, and feeds. If it's not particularly hungry, the Venus mantrap uses its "slave spores" to control the victim and get him to lure other victims within range, thus ensuring a long-term supply of food and/or giving it a means to protect itself.

Campaign Use: A Venus mantrap is more than just a monster for the PCs to fight and kill. Its "mental" powers give it the capacity to become more of a master villain. Perhaps "families" of Venus mantraps could work together to take over an entire village and turn it into a sort of "human farm." The PCs wander into what looks like an ordinary settlement, only to soon discover that all is not what it seems....

Appearance: The Venus mantrap is one of the most horrifying mutant creatures created by the Great Blast — an ordinary Venus flytrap, grown to human size with a malevolent sentience, several tentacle-like thorny tendrils, and a toothy maw strong enough to bite through armor.

VULCHON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	CON	0	11-	
6	BODY	-8	10-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
4	PD	4		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	REC	2		
20	END	0		
18	STUN	7		Total Characteristics Cost: 9

Movement: Running: 1"/2"
Leaping: 0"/0"
Swimming: 0"/0"
Flight: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
37	<i>Radioactive:</i> RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Radiation]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Works On Living Beings (-½), Side Effects (irradiates environment, always occurs; -0)	0
15	<i>Talons:</i> HKA 1d6 (1d6 with STR)	1
5	<i>Beak:</i> HKA 1 point (1 point with STR)	1
5	<i>Irradiated:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: immune to the effects of High Radiation)	0
33	<i>Wings:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Restrained (-½)	2
-10	<i>Short Legs:</i> Running -5"	
-2	<i>No Swimming:</i> Swimming -2"	
10	<i>Vulchon Eyes:</i> +5 PER with Sight Group	0
8	<i>Vulchon Eyes:</i> +16 versus Range for Normal Sight	0

Skills

8	+4 OCV with Talons
10	<i>Hard To Hit:</i> +2 DCV
3	<i>Easily Hidden:</i> +2 to Concealment; Self Only (-½)
4	<i>Hard To Perceive:</i> +2 to Stealth

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 126

Total Cost: 135

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Small (from about .4m to 1m long; +3" KB) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
25	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 135

Ecology: Vulchons are birds of prey who subsist both by pursuing and killing small game and by eating carrion. Typically they hunt by themselves or in mated pairs, but they have been known to team up in small “packs” to attack larger prey, including humans. They’re most common in lightly forested areas with plenty of game.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: Vulchons swoop down on their prey, performing a Move By with their Talons; they don’t hover in place to fight. A vulchon by itself won’t try to kill the same target more than twice without giving up (unless its target is obviously badly wounded), but a “pack” of them is often bold and daring, continuing the attack long after it would have been more practical to withdraw.

Campaign Use: Vulchons are mostly a nuisance animal, a temporary threat a group of PCs should be able to cope with fairly easily. But it’s possible a villain could find a way to train them and then use his skills in post-apocalyptic falconry to unleash fleets of deadly birds against his foes.

Appearance: Vulchons mutated from vulture or raptor stock, or perhaps both, somehow acquiring reptilian characteristics in the process. The scales on their upper body gradually transform into feathers lower down on their bodies, but they have leathery, almost vesperine tails and ears. Their coloration is usually brown, white, and/or grey, but odder hues have been seen.

WASTELANDS MUTANT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
14	CON	8	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
5	COM	-2	10-	
5	PD	2		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
28	END	0		
27	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 28

Movement: Running: 5/10”

Cost	Powers	END
3	<i>Used To The Rads:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: takes only 25% effect from High Radiation)	0
-2	<i>Shambling Gait:</i> Running -1” (5” total)	

Skills	
5	+1 HTH
3	Concealment 11-
2	AK: home wasteland or ruin 11-
3	Stealth 11-
2	Survival (Post-Apocalyptic Wastelands or Ruins) 11-
1	WF: choose one appropriate to the character

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 17
Total Cost: 45

75+	Disadvantages
30	Disadvantageous Mutations totalling 30 points (GM’s choice)
Total Disadvantage Points: 105	

OPTIONS

Cost	Value
var	One or more positive Mutations, determined randomly using the rules earlier in this section
var	Additional Disadvantageous Mutations, determined randomly using the rules earlier in this section



EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
Bludgeon	+0	—	1d6	1d6	10	—	
Crude Knife	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	—	6	Can Be Thrown
Crude Crossbow	+0	-1	1d6	1d6-1	10	5	Activation Roll 11-

Armor

Typically none, but possibly Heavy Cloth or Furs and Leathers (DEF 1-2, at best); more advanced mutant groups may attach salvaged bits of metal to leather garb (DEF 2-3)

Gear: Miscellaneous bits of generally useless junk scavenged from ruins

Description: This character sheet represents a “typical” Wastelands Mutant such as often dwells in the ruins and wasted areas of Post-Apocalyptic settings like After The Blast. They typically wear bulky robes (to hide their deformities), furs and untanned leathers, scraps of cast-off clothing, and the like.

For more “realistic” or weaker Mutants, the GM should reduce the character’s SPD to 2. At SPD 3 a Mutant is unusually fast, but a little better able to present a credible combat challenge to a PC.

A typical wastelands mutant is a hideous mockery of humanity, with mis-shapen face and body. In most cases he has no “fantastic” mutations like claws, scales, or the like, but in High Post-Apocalyptic settings that degree of mutation is appropriate (though not required). He typically lacks the intelligence to use weapons more sophisticated than clubs, knives, and the like, though some can master crossbows.



Example Characters

Here are character sheets for three example characters mentioned above: Three-Handed Harry; Gronk; and Bronac.

THREE-HANDED HARRY

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
14	CON	8	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
28	END	0		
30	STUN	6		Total Characteristics Cost: 75

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
6	<i>A Second Right Arm:</i> Extra Limb (1), Inherent (+¼)	0
10	<i>The Devil's Own Luck:</i> Luck 2d6	0

Perks

10	Follower: Marlee (lieutenant built on 50 Base Points + 50 Disadvantages)
30	Followers: 20 followers, thugs, hangers-on, and assorted sycophants (built on 25 Base Points + 25 Disadvantages)
3	Fringe Benefit: leader of a gang and potential ruler of Flin

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
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Skills

5	+1 with Agility Skills
5	+1 HTH
3	Fast Draw (Common Melee Weapons) 13-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 12-
2	AK: Flin 11-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Sleight Of Hand 13-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 12-
1	TF: Equines
10	Two-Weapon Fighting (Ranged)
2	WF: Blades, Crossbows

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 106

Total Cost: 181

75+ Disadvantages

15	Hunted: Torash 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
15	Hunted: Bronac 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy And Powerhungry; Can't Stand Not To Be In Charge And Obeyed (Common, Strong)
61	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 181

Background/History: Harry (no one knows his family name, if any) was born to two True parents who couldn't stand the thought of having a Mutie son. They abandoned him, leaving him on the doorstep of a Mutie family they thought would take care of him. They were right... but only to a point. Once Harry was old enough to do chores, he became a virtual slave, forced to work from morning to night and punished severely if anything went wrong.

When Harry was 13, the family's vigilance slipped one night and he was able to escape. He made his way into the wilds where, after narrowly escaping several dangers, he was lucky enough to fall in with a group of bandits (most of them Muties like himself). At first it wasn't much better than being his adoptive family's slave, but Harry was perceptive and smart. Soon he was working his way up the gang's ladder by subtly pitting one rival against another, finding a way to marginalize or kill people who might be competition for him, and so forth. Within five years he was the gang's unquestioned leader... and then he set his sights on bigger things. The Flin region looked ripe for the picking, so he decided to use his men to make himself its overlord. But he soon discovered that a couple of other men had the same idea....

Personality/Motivation: Harry tries to come across as polite, sophisticated, cultured, and reasonable. He uses a lot of big words (not always correctly), speaks in a much more refined way than his followers, and when possible talks his way around difficulties or out of problems instead of fighting. But he's no stranger to violence (and, secretly, actually likes it). That, combined with the fact that he won't tolerate any situation where he's not in charge and people are obeying him, makes him a dangerous man to cross.

Quote: "I'm pleased to meet you, despite the circumstances. I do hope you won't be difficult about this matter. Bloodshed is so unpleasant, don't you think?"

Powers/Tactics: Harry's three arms make him an unusually effective opponent, particularly in HTH Combat. He's dexterous and lithe, and having a third hand to wield weapons gives him an extra angle of attack that's hard to stop — and if he can't wield three weapons at once for some reason, he can make a Sleight Of Hand roll at -2 to cleverly switch a weapon from one hand to another and get a +1 OCV bonus that Phase (he can only do this once per opponent per combat, at the most).

Among Harry's most valued possessions is a functioning pre-Blast artifact called an "eyebot." It consists of a tiny camera (about the size of a pea) that can fly at 6" per Phase (assume it has SPD 4). It can transmit images and sound that it perceives back to a handheld unit that's the size of a deck of cards and has a maximum range of about two kilometers. Harry uses it to spy on his rivals and "subjects," which often gives him an edge in negotiations or avoiding ambushes.

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
Pistol Crossbow	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	8	10 RC	
Combat Knife	+0	+0	1d6	1d6-1	8	Can Be Thrown; carries three	

Armor

Leather Jacket (DEF 1, Activation Roll 11-)

Gear: Eyebot (see text), deck of cards, flask filled with good liquor

Campaign Use: If you prefer to use Three-Hand Harry as a neutral NPC or a good guy instead of a villain, change his personality to make him more of a happy-go-lucky wandering tale-teller type. He braves the rigors of the road to carry news, a few valuable trade goods, and his own services from village to village. He'd make an excellent guide for PCs venturing into strange territory.

To make Harry a tougher opponent, increase his HTH Combat Levels to +2, and also give him +1 OCV with Pistol Crossbows. To weaken him, remove all his (Combat) Skill Levels.

As a Hunter, Three-Hand Harry prefers to lull his adversary into thinking he's not a threat (at least as much as he can). All the while he uses his eyebot, paid spies, informants, and any other method he can to study the target, looking for weaknesses and vulnerabilities. When he thinks he's found some and is ready to strike, he attacks.

Appearance: Harry is a tall white man with a slender build. He's got two right arms and one left arm, so his shirt and leather jacket both have a "patchwork" sort of look from having to have another sleeve added. He's got long, shaggy hair, wears tattered jeans and leather boots, and carries several knives as well as two pistol crossbows.



Cost Powers

7	<i>Intimidation</i> : +15 PRE; Only For Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1)	0
20	<i>Won't Fall Easily</i> : Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%; Requires A CON Roll (-½)	0
10	<i>Won't Fall Easily</i> : Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; Requires A CON Roll (-½)	0

- 15 +3 HTH
- 4 +2 OCV with Sweep
- 1 Gambling (Dice Games) 8-
- 2 WF: Common Melee Weapons

15 Hunted: Three-Hand Harry 11-
(As Pow, Capture/Kill)

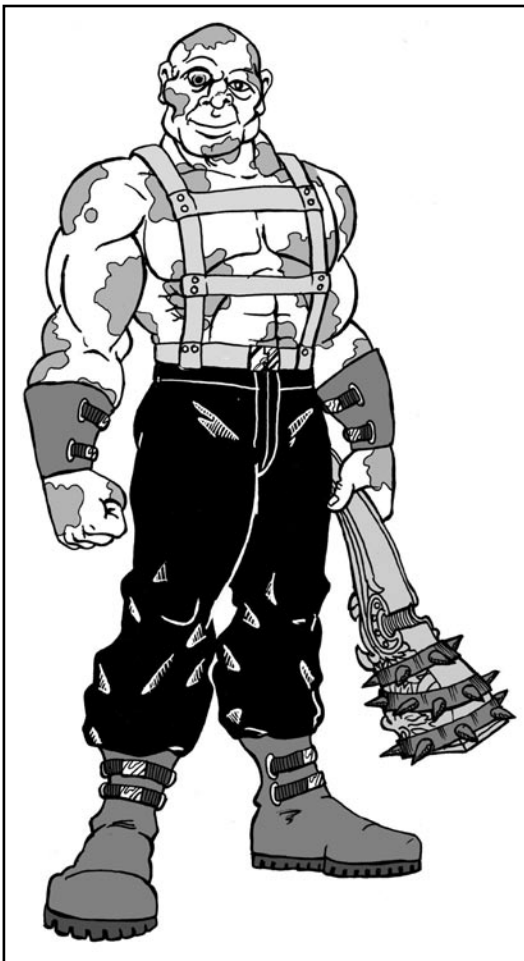
15 Hunted: Bronac 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)

20 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Loyal
to Torash; Does Whatever He Says
(Common, Total)

15 Psychological Limitation: Loves Fighting,
Violence, And Action (Common, Strong)

Background/History: Once upon a time, a family had two children: Torash, a small, handsome, clever True boy; and Garash, nicknamed “Gronk,” who was a big, ugly, tough, strong Mutie. Despite their differences, the two boys were best of friends and close companions, each providing the other with what he lacked. Gronk protected Torash from bullies, while Torash found ways to get back at anyone who picked on Gronk because he was “slow.”

The years passed and the boys grew up, but their friendship never changed. They struck out on their own, determined to make their fortune. Not being of particularly law-abiding bent, Torash drifted into some questionable activities in a town a few days' journey from where the brothers grew up, and he brought Gronk right along with him. Things went well for a while, but then Torash angered the wrong people and for once couldn't find a way out of the dilemma. He and Gronk fled one step ahead of some very dangerous enemies and hit the road.



Gear: None, except perhaps for a small toy, trinket, or other amusement he's found

In time, the two drifted into the Flin area. Torash decided the situation had possibilities. He soon had a group of followers who thought he had a shot at running the whole place — and standing at his right hand, faithfully protecting him every minute of the day, is Gronk.

Personality/Motivation: Gronk got a mixed result in the mutation lottery. The downside is that he's got a mind that's not much better developed than that of a young child. He knows, sort of subconsciously, that he's stupid, so he's learned to obey Torash implicitly. Torash uses him for all sorts of unpleasant, violent tasks... tasks that Gronk enjoys immensely.

Quote: "Gronk hurt now."

Powers/Tactics: Gronk's not one for sophisticated fighting — he picks a target, beats him to death, then moves on to the next target. His strength and toughness make it possible for him to take on several opponents at once and come out the victor. If hard-pressed by too many people at once, he'll Sweep with his club to try to hit them all. If he can't reach his opponent, he'll throw the biggest, heaviest things he can find, possibly (if he gets too frustrated) including Torash's other men.

Campaign Use: If you prefer to use Gronk as a neutral NPC or a possible ally of the PCs, increase his INT to 8- — in that case he's not suffering from borderline mental retardation, he's just a little slower than most. But he's got a good heart and makes a fine companion (though his love of fighting still gets him in trouble a lot).

If you want Gronk to be *really* tough, raise his Damage Reduction to 75% Physical and 50% Energy, or give him some Damage Resistance or Combat Luck. To weaken him, reduce his STR and CON to 20 and don't spend any points on additional STUN.

Gronk only Hunts people when Torash orders him to, in which case he follows orders.

Appearance: Gronk is a huge, heavily-muscled, totally bald man whose white skin is mottled with purple patches. He's got an ugly mutant sort of face, with the facial features slightly misplaced, but a friendly grin. Instead of a shirt he wears a leather harness, plus leather pants, boots, and bracers. His weapon is a club made from what used to be a heavy table leg with spikes and bands of metal attached to the top.

BRONAC				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
6	PD	3		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 9 ED (3 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
30	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 63
Movement: Running: 6"/12"				
Cost	Powers			END
45	<i>Radiation Eyebeams:</i> Multipower, 45-point reserve			
4u	1) <i>Standard Radiation Bolt:</i> Energy Blast 8d6			4
4u	2) <i>Sickening Radiation Bolt:</i> Drain CON 3d6, Ranged (+½)			4
45	<i>Radioactive:</i> Drain CON 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: High Radiation]; +1), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Side Effects (irradiates environment, always occurs; -0)			0
3	<i>Radiation Defenses:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: suffers only 25% of standard effect from High Radiation)			0
13	<i>Radiation Sense:</i> Detect Radiation 11- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range			0
Perks				
30	Followers: 8 followers (built on 75 Base Points + 75 Disadvantages)			
3	Fringe Benefit: leader of a gang and potential ruler of Flin			
Talents				
6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)			
Skills				
6	+2 with <i>Radiation Eyebeams</i> Multipower			
2	AK: Flin 11-			
3	Stealth 12-			
3	WF: Blades, Crossbows, Pistols			
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 167				
Total Cost: 230				
75+ Disadvantages				
15	Hunted: Three-Hand Harry 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)			
15	Hunted: Torash 11- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)			
15	Psychological Limitation: Believes Muties Are Superior And Should Rule Trues (Common, Strong)			
110	Experience Points			
Total Disadvantage Points: 230				

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
Pistol	+0	+0	1d6+1	1d6-1	8	4	
Combat Knife	+0	+0	1d6	1d6-1	—	8	Can Be Thrown
Armor							
None							
Gear: Pocketknife							



Background/History: Bronac is a Mutie born into a family of Muties... but whereas his parents and siblings all had minor (and generally Disadvantageous) Mutations, his gave him radiation powers! Angry at the way people in his hometown looked down on Muties, as a teenager he often used his powers destructively, getting into a lot of trouble and just making things worse for his family.

Then one day he *really* lost control and killed the town's "constable" during a quarrel. Rather than face the consequences he ran away. He spent several years on the road, drifting from place to place, often escaping from mutated animals and other wilderness dangers by the skin of his teeth. Over time he met others like himself, Muties who were alone in a cold, harsh world that didn't want them.

He decided that just wasn't right. Muties were powerful; *they* should be running things, not the Trues! He began to band some of the Muties he met together, creating a sort of gang in search of a home.

Then they found the Flin region. It looked perfect — enough people to make it worth taking over, but not enough to make the takeover a problem. The only thorn in Bronac's side was that some other strongmen were already competing for power there. But no worries — he can wait patiently until it's time to strike.

Personality/Motivation: Bronac claims he's acting in support of Muties, an underclass that's discriminated against everywhere and deserves to have power too. While he does believe that on some level, he's really just using his "crusade" as an excuse to grab power, hurt people, and have fun — all things he enjoys. He's not exactly a full-blown sadist, but he never shed any tears over someone else's pain.

Quote: "Rads in here a little too much for you?"

Powers/Tactics: Bronac's Mutations give him the ability to project damaging beams of radiation from his eyes. In fact, his whole muscular body is radioactive; people who stand near him too long soon feel weak and sick. He sometimes uses this in combat, fighting defensively until his radiation field has weakened his foe. He can also sense radiation fields and suffers much less effect than normal people do from radiation, so if he has to run and hide he usually picks an irradiated area where people without his special gifts fear to go.

Bronac's followers are almost all Muties like himself, though none of them have his level of offensive power. Most of them believe his "message" (at least a little) and support him; others are just in it for the power trip. Typically they have no problem obeying him, but he doesn't enjoy quite the degree of loyalty Three-Hand Harry and Torash do from their people.

Campaign Use: If you want to make Bronac something other than a villain, there are a couple of options. First, he could be a peaceful and sincere crusader for "Mutie rights." He'll be a definite pain in everyone's neck whenever he thinks Muties are being "abused and degraded," but he's not a real threat and may even be helpful from time to time due to his contacts in the "Mutie World." Second, you could make him a solo adventurer of more-or-less heroic disposition, the sort of guy a hero could team up with to explore a ruin that's too dangerous for either of them.

To make Bronac tougher, give him more Mutations, perhaps including a deadly radiation blast (RKA, NND Does BODY) or some animal-like traits (fur, claws, fangs). To weaken him, remove his Energy Blast and reduce his SPD to 3.

Bronac doesn't usually Hunt people, but when he does he prefers to watch and wait for a good opportunity. When he thinks he has one, he hits the target with everything he's got.

Appearance: Bronac is a slender man about 5'8" tall and of at least partly Asian ancestry. His eyes are unusually large; his mohawk-like hair is combed to that it sweeps down his back in a ponytail-like arrangement. He's got a radioactive sort of glow around him; his hands and eyes glow more intensely. He wears whatever clothes he can scrounge, usually tattered tee-shirts and jeans.

MOONSHATTERED EARTH



Hundreds of years ago a near-miss by an asteroid fundamentally altered the Earth, breaking up the continents and dragging the Moon closer to the planet. Besides nearly driving humanity to extinction, this brought magic back to the world, giving men a new tool to help them survive... and their oppressors a new weapon to wield.

The Moonshattered Earth is a setting for High Post-Apocalyptic campaigns featuring characters typically built on 75 Base Points plus up to 75 Character Points from Disadvantages. Normal Characteristic Maxima is imposed as a campaign ground rule. Characters can buy mutations (see the *After The Blast* setting for examples) and spells (see below), though mutations aren't nearly as common as they are in *After The Blast* and tend to be lower-key (minor body modifications, for example, rather than radiation attacks or the like). Characters may start the game with pre-Apocalypse equipment if they pay Character Points for it, and will probably obtain more during game play.

HISTORY

In the year 2207, an event long-feared came to pass: scientists detected an asteroid on a collision course with Earth. Worldwide panic ensued as people frantically sought ways to avoid the inevitable... when a miracle occurred. The asteroid *didn't* hit the Earth, but it was a very near miss — it passed directly between Earth and the Moon. And that, unfortunately, turned out to be nearly as bad as a direct hit.

The “wake” of the asteroid did two things. First, it roiled Earth's atmosphere, playing havoc with the weather. Second, it drew the Moon closer to Earth, nearly halving the distance between the two bodies. And that had far worse effects than just intensifying the weather. The increased gravitic pull strained the Earth. Tidal waves and flooding affected nearly every coastal region and rerouted rivers. Tectonic plates shifted, causing earthquakes throughout the globe. Volcanoes sprouted in dozens of places, and ones that already existed blew for the first time in centuries or millennia. The entire planet was engulfed in a cataclysm the likes of which not even ancient myths had ever contemplated, and man's civilization was cast down in ruins.

Centuries later, when the aftereffects of the asteroid had finally died down and the planet had “settled,” it's a new world. The Moon in the sky at night is twice as big as it was in 2207. Gone are the continents that once covered the planet,

replaced by broad archipelagoes of islands and subcontinents separated by shallow seas. The ruins of mankind's buildings and works dot the landscape, providing both mute testimony to humanity's former greatness and shelter for pitiful tribes and clans. Nations and kingdoms are gone, replaced by warlords and tyrants who rule whatever they can take and hold. And many of them use magic, mighty magic, to reshape the land and their subjects to suit their whims.

GEOGRAPHY

The Moonshattered Earth takes its name from the fact that the planet no longer has continents. The convulsions brought about by the asteroid near-miss shifted tectonic plates, breaking up large bodies of land into smaller ones (and sometimes forming new islands with lava). A modern human looking at a map of the Moonshattered Earth would recognize nothing... though a few place-names, dim, warped memories of an earlier world, might seem familiar.

The accompanying map and text describe the regions of the Moonshattered Earth that used to be North America. The rest of the world is left for the GM to detail as he sees fit.

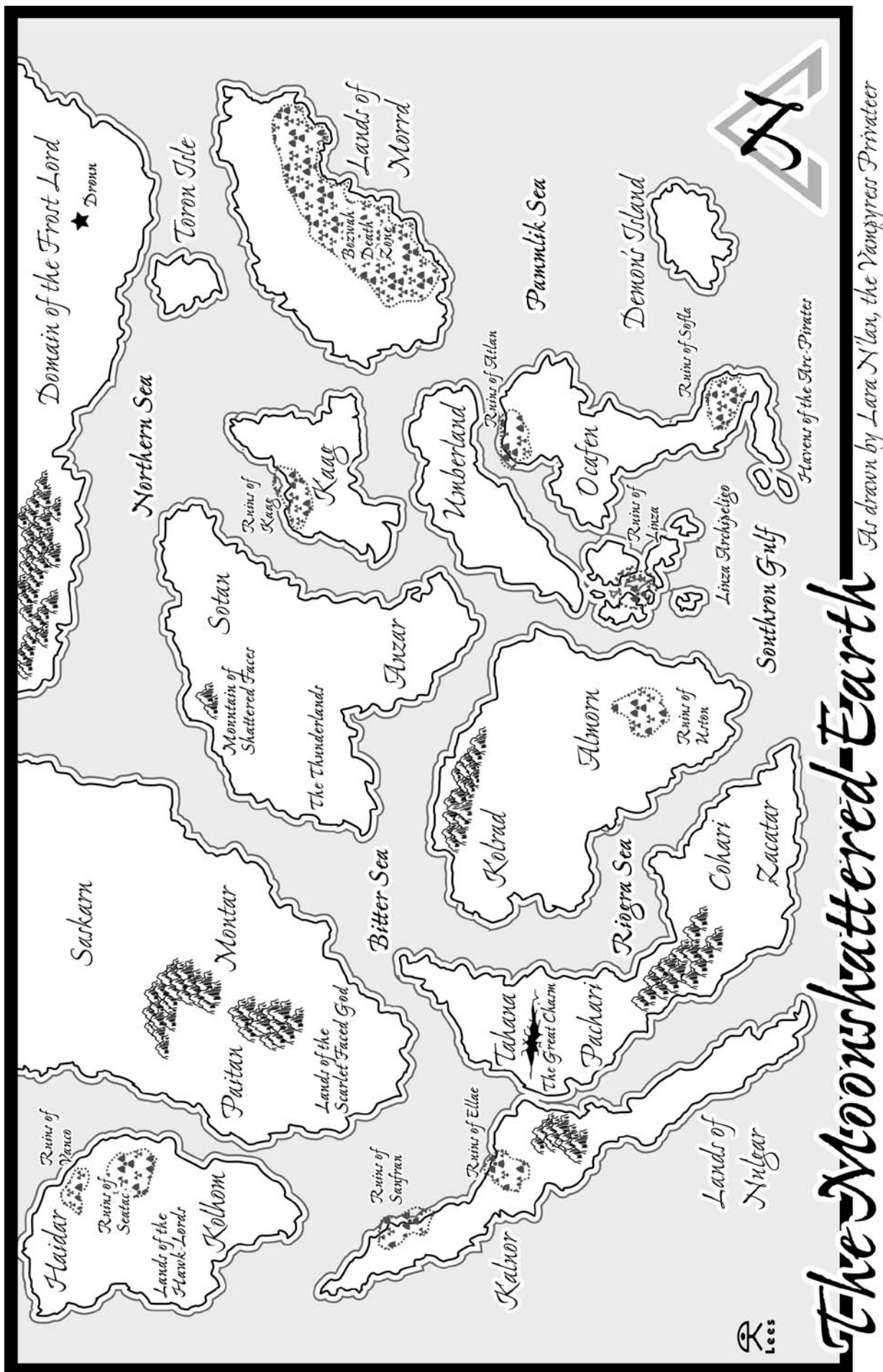
ALMORN

The lands around the vast and chaotic ruins of Uston are known as Almorn. The weather tends to be hot and dry, and the people have a lanky, raw-boned sort of look to them that comes from living in such an environment. Most of them belong to extended families that work (and fiercely defend) patches of land and scavenge in Uston for valuable salvage. A man without such family ties, including any strangers who pass through, is automatically regarded with suspicion and distrust; he may have trouble getting things done.

ANZAR

Anzar is a lush land of interspersed prairie-like areas and heavy forests. The prairies are the domain of human farming villages, but most of the forests are controlled by the Atosk — small, fur-covered, fanged humanoids who dislike all other peoples. Their spears are sharp and their arrows swift, so anyone who ventures beneath the trees had best make plans to protect himself.

The nominal ruler of the humans of Anzar is the warlord Korgon, a huge brute of a man who augments his warrior's prowess with potent spells. His sword Soulbitter is one of the largest, deadliest



blades in the Moonshattered Earth, and his Unstoppable Legion of bodyguards/elite troops are said to be relics taken from the ruins of Kaag. Members of the Legion are always armored; no one has ever seen their faces, not even in death.

The Thunderlands

The Anzarians and Sotanese alike both send hunting expeditions into the Thunderlands, a peninsula on the western side of their subcontinent. Huge herds of cattle-like animals known as *sibons* live there, and their meat, hides, and bones are an important part of the local economy. The name “Thunderlands” comes from the way a running herd of sibon shakes the land with the force of its passage. During years of drought sibon herds sometimes run out of food on their peninsula and boil out into Anzar and Sotan, running roughshod over human villages and crops in their desperate quest for sustenance.

COHARI

One of the southernmost lands of Moonshattered North America, Cohari is a strange realm ruled by sorcerer-priests. They hold the entire populace in their foul grip thanks to their blood magics. By sacrificing a victim, or slaying him in battle, they gain the power to cast awesome, deadly spells — a power they attribute to the strange gods they worship. Naturally, a stranger from another land makes a far better sacrifice than a native worker....

For years Cohari has been at war with its neighbor to the south, Zacatar (see below). The sorcerer-priests regard the Zacatarans as pagans and infidels and are determined to destroy them. The average Coharian doesn't really care about the war, but fighting on behalf of the priests is better than angering them.

DEMON'S ISLAND

Perhaps the most aptly-named place on the Moonshattered Earth, Demon's Island is home to infernal beings of every stripe. Some wizards claim that an open portal to Hell exists in a cave in the very center of the land, but for whatever reason demons, devils, and their kin infest the entire island. Fortunately for the rest of the world, some spell or binding holds them there — a demon who so much as sets foot in the waters surrounding the island is boiled alive by his own ichor. Only if a wizard summons a demon, or comes to the island and pacts with one, can that demon safely venture out into the wide world.

DOMAIN OF THE FROST LORD

North of the Northern Sea is a bleak and desolate land named for its ruler: the Domain of the Frost Lord. A cruel wizard with powers of Ice Magic, the Frost Lord holds all the people of the land in his frigid grip. His castle, Dronn, is a vast spire of solid ice nearly 200 feet tall and populated by frost-gargoyles, mechano-men, and ice golems.

The Frost Lord's subjects are a quiet people who dress in heavy furs to stave off the perpetual cold. They reside in strange, round houses made of ice and live by hunting seals, tundra deer, and other animals.

HAIDAR

Haidar is a cool, rainy land inhabited by small tribes. Each tribe is led by a shaman, and its said that the shamans' ritual magic is powerful enough to have kept evil wizards from trying to take over the land. The people have many stories of shamans thwarting evil wizards and monsters, though it's unclear which of these are ancient myths retold and which recount recent historical events.

Salvage from the ruins of Vanco and Seatac helps the people of Haidar live relatively comfortable lives. It's not unknown for a Haidar village to have lights at night thanks to a salvaged power-stone, and some Haidar fishermen have roar-motors to move their boats through the water at great speed.

KAAG

Kaag is a strange and lawless place where no man is king and every day brings turmoil and danger. Most Kaagans make their living scavenging in the vast ruins from which their island takes its name... or by robbing those who do, or robbing the robbers, or robbing the robbers' robbers. If you want to protect your life and your property when you're on Kaag, you need a strong arm and an accurate eye.

Periodically someone tries to conquer Kaag or band the robbers together, but nothing ever comes of it; the people of Kaag are just too selfish and fractious to suffer the yoke. Still, leaders who control small gangs of salvagers or robbers do arise from time to time. Currently the most powerful or well-known of these men include Sorgon the Black (a second-rate sorcerer skilled at summoning demons), Hrog the Axe (a fearsome mutant who can cleave a foe in two with a single blow), Holdar Crohn (patriarch of the Crohn family of scavengers), and Pirrus the Fire-Blade (an elemental wizard).

KALNOR

Kalnor, like Kaag, is a land where scavenging is important, since the ruins of both Ellae and Sanfran provide rich troves of potential loot. But unlike Kaag, Kalnor has a ruler: the mad scientist who calls himself Haight. Scorning sorcery, he uses robots, vehicles, weapons, and other devices scavenged from the ruins to fill his armies and protect his people. His subjects now that he'll pay good money for any valuable salvage they build him. But he *is* mad, and sometimes takes offense at the oddest things much to the regret of whoever offended him, so dealing with him requires a quick wit and deft diplomacy.

KOLHOM

Occupying the same island as Haidar, Kolhom enjoys the same weather, though it's not quite as cool and rainy as in the north. Kolhom's many forests and streams provide plenty of food for her people to supplement what they can grow during the relatively short growing season.

Kolhom is ruled by a triumvirate of nobles: Jennik the Shard, a master of metal-magics and pre-Cataclysm technology; Duke Grogarth, a war-

rior who owns several of the Ancients' "armored carts"; and the Faceless One, a wizard who keeps his face concealed with a deep hood. For years they've been at war with their neighbors to the northwest, the Hawk-Lords, hoping to seize their rich and fertile lands. They have also threatened Paitan, but so far have made no move against that realm.

KOLRAD

North and west of Almorn lies the mountainous land of Kolrad, whose people are farmers, herders, and miners. Their ruler calls himself Midas after the hero of an ancient story, and like that hero he has the power to turn anyone who offends him to solid gold with but the touch of his hand. His other spells are of just average power, but the Touch of Midas is feared throughout all the lands of the Moonshattered Earth. Midas's palace is a building atop a mountain made of solid gold strengthened and polished with spells; sunlight or moonlight can be seen glinting off it for hundreds of miles.

THE LANDS OF MORRD

Of all the wizards in the world, few are as powerful as the terrible Morrd, the Scarred Sorcerer, the Master of Demons. Few subjects live in his land, but he doesn't need them, for he has one of the greatest ruins in the world, the Bozwah Death Zone. Long ago during the Cataclysm, something came upon the people of Bozwah suddenly, slaying them in the blink of an eye. Their skeletons still lie scattered throughout the Death Zone, ready for Morrd's necromantic powers to animate them as unstoppable soldiers armed with the fabulous high-tech weapons Morrd's servitors salvage from throughout the Zone.

Many an adventurer and explorer has sought to sneak into the Death Zone and salvage some of its treasures and items of power for himself... but almost all have failed. It's said that Morrd can sense whenever someone sets foot in his domain and responds in a most unpleasant fashion to anyone who tries to "rob" him.

THE LANDS OF NULGAR

The long, slender, rocky peninsula south of Kalnor is ruled by Nulgar, a being who appears to be human but is made out of obsidian. He wields vast powers of magic but doesn't seem to be a wizard *per se*; he might be a demon, a godling, or something else.

Nulgar rules his subjects, known as the Anic or Anico, with an iron fist, demanding harsh tribute from them every year. Their land is dry and has no large ruins, so finding appropriate items to give him is often a major problem. The Anics are known as skilled jewelry-makers, so often the tribute ends up being necklaces, rings, and other items made from the silver they mine in the hills.

THE LANDS OF THE CHASM

The northern half of the subcontinent east of Kalnor and Nulgar's realm is dominated by a vast chasm, dozens of miles long and at least two deep, that splits the land like a wound. The lands north of the Great Chasm are home to the

Tahana people, and those to the south of the Pachari. Despite their different names, they're largely the same, though the Pachari have noticeably duskier skin. Both peoples worship a pantheon of underworld gods said to live in the very bottom of the Chasm, and to appease these gods they sacrifice valuable objects by throwing them into the Chasm. They do not sacrifice people, but some of them have no qualms about robbing strangers and giving their goods to the gods.

THE LANDS OF THE HAWK-LORDS

North and west of Kolhom, and south of Haidar, lie the lands of the Hawk-Lords — powerful, handsome nobles known for their skill at falconry, who have even trained raptors to fight for them in battle. But their mastery of the air involves more than birds. Their armies possess strange flying craft from which their soldiers can shoot at land-bound enemies. It is said that they Hawk-Lords rule their people nobly and well, and that their subjects love and revere them.

THE LANDS OF THE SCARLET-FACED GOD

The southern tip of the large northwestern subcontinent is the territory of a wizard so powerful that people worship him as a god — or he might *be* a god, some divinity fallen to Earth or a deity of pre-Cataclysm society whose powers have been weakened by madness. Dressed in sumptuous blue robes, his face ever concealed behind a vermillion mask said to contain much of his power and whose appearance subtly shifts to match his mood, the Scarlet-Faced God rules his lands with harsh power, but also caprice. Sometimes he forces all of them to stop their daily work to explore one of the minor ruins in his lands, or to build some strange structure. Whispered rumors say he's seeking some artifact of great power, or casting an elaborate spell that takes years to prepare, but the truth of the matter is known only to the Scarlet-Faced God himself.

THE LINZA ARCHIPELAGO

A collection of a dozen or so small islands (and countless smaller spits of land) west of Ocafen and south of Umlerland, the Linza Archipelago is home to fishermen, swamp farmers, and other peasants who can find a way to make a living in its marshy lands. The interiors of many of the islands are covered with thick forests where it's said moving trees hold sway and kill any humans they can find.

Linza is a relatively poor land where village elders and tribal chieftains tend to be the only sources of authority; no wizard or warlord has ever claimed it for his own. Sometimes adventurers or wizards come to scavenge the ruins of Linza, which lie partly underwater... but they must be very dangerous, for few such explorers ever return.

MONTAR

Montar is a land of great natural wealth — fine coastlines whose seas teem with fish, fertile fields, thick forests, and mountains where minerals are mined and fragrant redpine lumber is harvested.

Its ruler, King Yorgan the Just, is considered one of the fairest and kindest rulers in the Moonshattered Earth; he doesn't even use his people as test subjects for his experiments involving ancient thinking-machines or as fodder for his conjured elemental demons. Despite this, the land is tense, for the Montarans ever fear the Scarlet-Faced God who lives to the south. Though he's never made any move against King Yorgan, the Montarans assume that sooner or later he will decide to claim their green and pleasant land as his own, and war will descend upon them....

OCAFEN

The subcontinent of Ocafen is a patchwork land of small "kingdoms" and "duchies" that constantly seem to war with one another. Artifacts from the ruins of Lanna to the north and Sofla to the south often make these battles devastating and bloody; a Tech-Knight in service to one of the warring nobles (many of whom are wizards of average power) is as likely to have an energy-rifle and magically-enhanced armor as a crossbow and simple suit of chainmail. In between battles, the people grow crops, herd animals, and try not to attract the attention of their overlords.

The Havens Of The Arc-Pirates

The southern tip of Ocafen is a low-lying peninsula too swampy to be fit for most people to live. In recent years it's become a hiding-place for bands of *arc-pirates* — vicious men who have boats that ride on lightning over the water (and, more slowly, even over land!) and use them to rob ships around Ocafen, the Linza Archipelago, Umberland, and sometimes even as far north as Kaag. Arc-pirates are cruel, scarred men who often have weapons or cybernetic body part replacements scavenged from ruins, and who don't hesitate to kill and maim their victims just for fun.

PAITAN

Paitan is a peaceful land of farmers, miners, herders, and huntsmen who trade with Montar through the mountain pass that connects the two lands. In recent years Paitan's peace has been shattered by disputes between the children of its late ruler, Doharn the Mighty. His two sons, Polekos (a wizard of some skill) and Teimon (a wizard of much less power, but also a gifted technologist), maneuver and struggle to obtain control of the realm, while their beautiful, seductive sister Arisa plays them off against each other (and various noblemen) in the hopes of grabbing power herself. This weakness has attracted the attention of the Kolhom triumvirs, who may decide that Paitan makes a more attractive target for their armies than the Lands of the Hawk-Lords.

SASKARN

The largest realm in what used to be North America is Saskarn, a steppe-like land of grassy plains, warm summers, and bitter winters. The Karn, a fierce tribe of nomads who ride everything from horses to pre-Cataclysm air-cars, migrate across the grasslands in the warmer

months. They herd animals, hunt, and as mood and other circumstances dictate sometimes raid down into Montar or go to war with one another. In the wintertime they settle, building simple but sturdy structures of turf.

On several occasions wizards have tried to conquer the Karn, eager to turn them into an army and to explore the largely-pristine ruins that appear here and there on the Saskarn landscape. But their unbreakable will to remain free and the countermagics of their shamans have staved off all such invaders... for now. Nor are the Karn particularly friendly toward strangers; as far as they're concerned, no one has any reason to visit them, and therefore anyone who does has evil motives.

SOTAN

Sotan, the land north of Anzar, is almost unique among human lands for being a place where some of the strange intelligent creatures that have arisen on the Moonshattered Earth mingle freely with ordinary humans. Not only mutated humans, but sentient, bipedal species like the vulpine Vhixeth or the brutish Tyakk live side-by-side with humans in Sotan in a (usually) peaceful coexistence. Legend says that many years ago, long before the time of your grandfather's grandfather's grandfather, humans lived by themselves in Sotan. But a sorcerer named Xothan came to conquer them, and the humans were hard-pressed to defend themselves. All would have been lost but for the timely arrival of a small army of Tyakk who were able to turn the tide and keep Sotan free. In gratitude, Rikken, leader of the humans, swore a pact with the Tyakk that they and all such folk could live in Sotan as long as they wished.

The Mountain Of Shattered Faces

In western Sotan, not far from the sea, stands a mighty mountain carved with four faces. The first and third from the right are badly damaged, with at least a third of each one missing, and the other two have suffered significant scarring as well, but all four are clearly the faces of four distinct beings, probably gods. The Sotanese worship them as the four major Manifestations of the Divine One: Limban, god of the sky; Telvor, god of storms and snow; Fensor, god of protection and good fortune; and Yngash, god of the land.

TORON ISLE

Toron Isle, between the Domain of the Frost Lord and the Lands of Morrd, is the largest generally uninhabited body of land in former North America. It's a sort of "neutral ground" between the two arch-wizards, one their respective armies have contested from time to time and where they meet whenever it's necessary for a face-to-face discussion. Legend has it that the Isle contains some extensive, little-explored ruins, but even among the bold ranks of adventurers few are willing to set foot on an island claimed by two mighty wizards.

UMBERLAND

Umlerland, the kingdom of the lords of House Umler, is one of the most strictly-controlled realms in the land. Over two centuries ago King Rorrik Umler commissioned a detailed survey of his realm, and on that basis apportioned its lands with great precision among various villages and towns ruled by councils of elders (the Umler kings do not permit anyone in their realm to have any noble title, or to build any structure larger or better-defended than a medieval manor-house). Viewed from the air, Umlerland's farming regions look like a well-made quilt, whereas other realms by comparison are chaotic and inefficient.

Outside of its farmland, Umlerland is hilly, even mountainous, and often forested. Vicious beings called *brakkor*, which look like humans with shiny black carapace-like skin and crab-like claws instead of hands, live in the forests and prey on men. They're particularly common around ruins and similar areas.

ZACATAR

Zacatar, the land south of Cohari, is almost the mirror opposite of its northern neighbor, with whom it's warred for many years. The Zacatarans are generally free villagers, farmers, and hunters who have little truck with kings, priests, or anyone else who tries to tell them what to do. They rule themselves through a sort of rigid social code, in which anyone who defies the will of the community or common morality is shunned. Most Zacatarans consider shunning a great shame and do their best to avoid it.

To fight effectively against the sorcerer-priests of Cohari and their blood magic, the Zacatarans have taken to exploring their land's ruins extensively in search of long-lost superweapons and secrets of magic. As a result their ragtag militia-like armies tend to be better equipped, in general, than many a "professional" fighting force.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Generalizing about the society and culture of the Moonshattered Earth is difficult at best, even if one limits the discussion to the areas that encompass the former continent of North America. The physical separation of peoples, combined with the fact that travel is strenuous and dangerous and the rise of magic in the world, has created many strange customs. A few examples reported in adventurers' chronicles include:

- a village where a pre-Cataclysm metal statue had come to life and was worshipped as a god
- several villages where ancient "thinking machines" rule the people (usually with the help of mechano-men or remote-controlled weaponry); sometimes these thinking machines have gone bad over the centuries, and many of them are fearful of strangers (whom they think will disrupt the societies they've built)
- a town where one's status, social influence, and usually wealth depend upon the type and quality of scavenged motor vehicle one has, how well it runs, and how well the owner does in races
- a village where everyone pretends to be mechano-men, even wearing armor-like clothing made from old mechano-men parts
- a village where a pre-Cataclysm fountain continues to operate; its waters are said to bring strange visions to those who drink them, so a cult of prophetesses controls access to the fountain
- a village built in a series of tunnels lying underneath a ruined city; the inhabitants are pale and dislike bright light, so they scavenge through the ruins on overcast days and at night

Compared to the inhabitants of the *Amrica* and *After The Blast* settings, the peoples of the Moonshattered Earth are much more aware that they're living in a post-apocalyptic world. The evidence of it is all around them in the form of ruins and relics, and many legends tell about "the day the star fell from the sky" or "the days of the great flood" and how the Ancients' civilization was ruined. However, few people have any desire to restore the old human society; to them, science and technology are the tools of wizards, things typically used to harm and oppress, so a world based on science would be a terrible place.

Most people in the Moonshattered Earth live in a more or less medieval society and support themselves by farming, herding, and similar hard labor pursuits. In some cases their burdens are eased with the help of salvaged pre-Cataclysm technology (see below)... though the best items are usually taken away from them by raiders, robbers, or their rulers.

The lucky inhabitants of the Moonshattered Earth live in villages or towns ruled by a council of elders, a single village leader, or something similar; even rarer are lands governed by benevolent nobles and kings. Many peoples' lives are controlled by a wizard who's claimed a particular region as his



own and enforces his rule with power, terror, and violence, or (only slightly better) by a tyrannical “nobleman” who maintains his rule through brute force. Generally speaking, the “rule of law” extends only as far as the arm of a person with the strength to enforce it; most parts of the Moonshattered Earth are lawless and wild, where a man’s ability to protect himself is the only thing that counts.

Ruins And Scavenging

Ruins are a common sight throughout the Moonshattered Earth, and even beneath the waves. The Cataclysm left almost no buildings or structures untouched, and today the remains of the great civilization of the Ancients can be seen in many places. Many people make a living scavenging in these ruins for raw materials or actual working technological devices they can sell or use, and some have even established villages or towns within a particular ruin or building. But ruins aren’t necessarily safe places; many a scavenger has fallen victim to a monster using a ruin as its lair, an ancient security system that’s still working, strange mystical curses, or the more mundane (but no less deadly) peril of collapsing buildings.

“Mutants”

Because the Cataclysm wasn’t caused by nuclear bombs, biochemical weapons, or other possible mutagenic agents, the Moonshattered Earth doesn’t have “mutants” in the sense that settings like *After The Blast* do. But that’s not to say that ordinary humans and animals are the only inhabitants of the islands and subcontinents. The return of magic to the world has had some “mutating” effects in some places, leading to the creation of animal-

men species such as the Atosk and the Tyakk, or to the physical alteration of humans. Many of these “mutants” are ferocious and dangerous, but some can be reasoned with, captured and trained to work as draft animals, or the like.

Language

Due to geographic and social barriers, the languages of the Moonshattered Earth have become as fragmented as the continents. Each region or “kingdom” seems to have its own tongue, and rarely do those languages have more than 2 points of similarity with any other language. Characters who want to travel long distances had best prepare themselves for some “communications breakdowns”... or perhaps scavenge one of the old handheld “talk-boxes” that can translate what someone says so that anyone can understand it.

Religion

The religions of the Moonshattered Earth are just as diverse as the social customs or the language. Most people worship a god or gods who make themselves known through shamans, priests, oracles, or whatever other method they deem acceptable. Some religions are kind and uplifting, others harsh and oppressive (and possibly even involve human sacrifice). More than a few revolve around some structure or artifact of the Ancients that still exists in the area.

TECHNOLOGY

Before the Cataclysm, mankind had developed highly advanced technology. Artificially intelligent computers, robots designed for everything from housecleaning to combat, energy weapons, cyber-

netic replacements for missing limbs and other body parts, hovercraft-like flying vehicles (most of which create a harmless electrical discharge beneath them so they look like they're riding on a cushion of lightning), ultra-efficient cars and other ground vehicles, and even regular spaceflights to permanently-manned orbitals stations and lunar colonies were all a part of life on 2207 Earth. (The lunar colonies and space stations were all totally destroyed by the asteroid near-miss.)

Many technological items ran on built-in power sources that often still function even after centuries; others required broadcast power (which no longer exists in most places) or outside fuels. Compared to early twenty-first century technology, the devices of 2207 tend to be extremely durable, which is why so many of them can still be found in ruins.

WARFARE

Personal combat and weapons skills are fairly common in the Moonshattered Earth, since a person (particularly one who travels or scavenges ruins) never knows when he might be attacked by a *kheglar* (a sort of gigantic centipede), a group of bandits, a wizard's conjured demon, or a berserk mechano-man he's accidentally activated. Most people fight with primitive melee weapons like hammers and swords (often made from scavenged artifacts), but some, especially professional soldiers and adventurers, often have advanced pre-Cataclysm weapons such as blaster pistols and rifles. Most coveted of all are pre-Cataclysm "battle armors" that protect the wearer from nearly anything and have numerous built-in weapons. Anyone who finds and uses one of these suits is certain to become a target for many other people who want to take it from him.

MAGIC

Because the Moon has mystic significance, moving it closer to Earth re-awakened magic, which had lain dormant in human reality ever since the scientific method and view of the world began to take hold on the human mind. Here's how magic works in the world of *The Moonshattered Earth*.

SPELLS

The spells used in the Moonshattered Earth setting are taken from *The Fantasy Hero Grimoire* and *Grimoire II*, but not all spells from those books are available. Some additional setting-specific spells are presented below. See below regarding the *Magic Perk* for how characters buy spells.

MAGIC ROLL AND PERK; BUYING SPELLS

All spells are cast with a single type of *Power Skill*, called *Magic*. Characters do not have to buy a separate *Magic* roll for each type of spell they can cast. However, characters do have to buy a *Magic Perk* to define which arcana they can buy spells from. The cost for the *Perk* depends on the commonality of that arcana in the setting:

Common Arcanae (5 points): Arcanomancy; Black Magic; Conjuraction; Elemental Magic; Necromancy; Science-Sorcery (see below); Shamanism; Sorcery; Wizardry

Uncommon Arcanae (10 points): Alchemy; Divination; Enchantment

Rare Arcanae (15 points): Chaos Magic; Druidry; Rune Magic

Characters cannot buy spells from arcanae not listed above; they simply don't exist in the Moonshattered Earth.

After purchasing a *Magic Perk*, characters may purchase spells from that arcana. Each spell costs 3 Character Points or its Real Point cost, whichever is less.

Casting Spells

All spells suffer a -1 per 20 Active Points penalty to the *Magic* roll, regardless of what's listed in the spell's writeup in the *Grimoires*.

All spells take either a Full Phase to cast, or a longer time as indicated by an *Extra Time* Limitation. The standard rule that spells require only a Half Phase to cast does not apply.

Even if a *Focus* is listed for a spell in the *Grimoires*, few spells in the Moonshattered Earth require such trappings. Wizards are men of learning and power who can reshape the world to suit themselves through pure will; they don't need to wave a wand or crush a handful of leaves to cast their spells.

THE WIZARD SOCIAL LIMITATION

While there are kindly wizards in the Moonshattered Earth, they're few and far between. Most spellcasters are powerhungry and evil, or at best simply selfish and callous. People tend to automatically be suspicious and distrustful of spellcasters, and may react with hostility in some

cases. In game terms, any character who can cast spells must take the *Wizard Social Limitation* (Occasionally, Minor; 5 points). Some also take a *Reputation* or other *Disadvantages* based on their spellcasting, but this isn't required.

Science-Sorcery Spells

The *Grimoires* provide most of the spells you need for the *Moonshattered Earth* setting, but they don't cover the specialized arcana of *Science-Sorcery*. This category of spells allows a wizard to activate, use, and manipulate the technologies of the Ancients, even when they don't entirely understand them. To most peoples of the Moonshattered Earth (including most wizards), technology is in effect just another form of magic, something esoteric and strange that mages use to enforce their will upon the world.

ACTIVATE DEVICE

Effect:	Make Magic roll to turn on a device (see text)
Target:	One device
Casting Time:	Full Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Instant
Range:	5"
Magic Roll Penalty:	See text
END Cost:	1

Description: The simplest spell of Science-Sorcery is one that allows a wizard to turn on a device. To activate a machine, the wizard simply has to succeed with a Magic roll and spend 1 END. The roll is modified by the complexity of the device: Simple devices (most household appliances and such) are -2; Complex devices (energy weapons, most vehicles) are at -4; and Very Complex devices (robots, computers, automated security systems...) are at -8.

Game Information: See text.

ASSEMBLE MECHANO-MAN

Effect:	Summon one mechano-man built on up to 600 points
Target:	Special
Casting Time:	1 Minute
Casting Procedures:	Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Instant
Range:	No Range
Magic Roll Penalty:	-9
END Cost:	7

Description: With this spell a wizard can take bits and pieces of technology and form them into a working mechano-man (a robot). Mechano-men built this way can be quite powerful... if the wizard has the right parts. The GM has the final say on what a mechano-man created with this spell can do.

Contrary to the standard rule for *Summon*, a wizard using this spell can have Summoned at any one time as many mechano-men as he wants — he just has to create them one at a time. See *The HERO System Bestiary*, *Star Hero*, *The Spacer's Toolkit*, and other Hero Games products for example robots you could use with this spell.

Game Information: *Summon one mechano-man built on up to 600 points, Expanded Class (any mechano-man; +¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (180 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV throughout casting; -½), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Requires Appropriate Spare Parts (see text; -1). Total cost: 34 points.*

CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Effect:	Mind Control 12d6 (Machine class of minds)
Target:	One device
Casting Time:	Full Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Instant
Range:	LOS
Magic Roll Penalty:	-3
END Cost:	6

Description: When he encounters machines that "think" (such as mechano-men or the aptly-named "thinking machines" [computers]) that he doesn't already control, a wizard can use this spell to force his will upon them and make them do his bidding.

Game Information: *Mind Control 12d6 (Machine class of minds) (60 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 27 points.*

DEACTIVATE

Effect: Dispel 20d6, all Electrical/Mechanical Device powers simultaneously

Target: One machine

Casting Time: Full Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Instant

Range: 50"

Magic Roll Penalty: -10

END Cost: 9

Description: Even a wizard can't always rely on technology to function properly, and sometimes it's necessary to shut the device off quickly lest it harm the wizard. That's when this spell, which can deactivate any device, comes in handy.

Game Information: *Dispel 20d6, all Electrical/Mechanical Device powers simultaneously (+2), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (total cost: 195 points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Limited Range (50"; -¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 78 points.*

DRAIN POWER

Effect: Suppress 4d6, all Electrical/Mechanical Device powers simultaneously

Target: One device

Casting Time: Full Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Constant

Range: 50"

Magic Roll Penalty: -3

END Cost: 6

Description: Even in the world of 2207, most devices require some sort of power, whether it comes from a broadcast station, a battery, or fuel. This spell saps that power, making it harder (or impossible) for a device to function.

Game Information: *Suppress 4d6, all Electrical/Mechanical Device powers simultaneously (+2) (60 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Limited Range (50"; -¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 24 points.*

MACHINE SPEECH

Effect: Telepathy 12d6 (Machine class of minds)

Target: One device

Casting Time: Full Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Instant

Range: LOS

Magic Roll Penalty: -3

END Cost: 6

Description: The wizards of the Moonshattered Earth are aware that thinking machines (computers and AIs) and many similar devices can "talk" — in other words, that a wizard can communicate with them to learn what they know and perhaps persuade them to take a particular course of action. This is the spell used for such communication.

Game Information: *Telepathy 12d6 (Machine class of minds) (60 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 27 points.*

MANIPULATE MACHINE

Effect: Telekinesis (10 STR), Fine Manipulation, Only Versus Machines

Target: One machine

Casting Time: Full Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Constant

Range: 125"

Magic Roll Penalty: -1

END Cost: 2

Description: Wizards use this common Science-Sorcery spell to move machines, control the moving parts in machines, flip switches, and so forth.

Game Information: *Telekinesis (10 STR), Fine Manipulation (25 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only To Control Machines And Machine Parts (-1), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 8 points.*

REPAIR

Effect: Healing BODY 4d6, Machines Only

Target: One machine

Casting Time: Full Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

Magic Roll Penalty: -2

END Cost: 4

Description: By touching a damaged machine, a wizard can repair it with this spell. The spell cannot replace missing parts or the like, it can only repair existing, damaged parts.

Game Information: *Healing BODY 4d6 (40 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only Versus Machines (-1), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Spell (-½). Total cost: 12 points.*

IN DETAIL: THE VILLAGE OF USAIR

Located in the land of Anzar, the village of Usair sits near the crossroads of two minor trade routes. Its people find themselves caught up in a power struggle that may spell doom for all of them.

History

No one remembers exactly when Usair was founded, or by whom. The first inhabitants were probably wanderers fleeing some war or plague who chanced upon a mostly intact structure of the Ancients — a compound of four oddly-arranged cylindrical metal halls. After taking shelter in one of the halls one night, these people decided to make the compound their home. They cleared the forest as best they could, built a small village that they named after a word written on one of the halls, and started farming the land.

Troubles arose sometime after that (again, the tales are unclear) when a tribe of atosk migrated into the nearby forests. The villagers tried to protect themselves at first, but soon found themselves out-matched and had to seek help. A group of adventurers beat back the atosk threat for a time, and one of the adventurers stayed on and became the leader of Usair. Since that day the atosk have remained a threat, but a minor one; villagers can go safely to the fields to work provided they remain alert and carry a weapon (or a farming implement that doubles as a weapon).

In recent years, another threat has emerged to disturb the tranquility of daily life. A powerful wizard named Azethkar the Mad took up residence in a tower in the ruins several miles away and seems to be making a bid for power at the expense of Korgon, ruler of Anzar. Azethkar's servants — hideous best-men and various mechano-men animated by his sorcery — have raided throughout the area, sometimes attacking Usair as well as other villages and robbing traders on the roads. Everyone, including Usair's leader Lord Borgart, believes that Korgon will soon arrive to teach the impudent wizard a lesson in manners... but they've seen no sign of Korgon's forces so far.

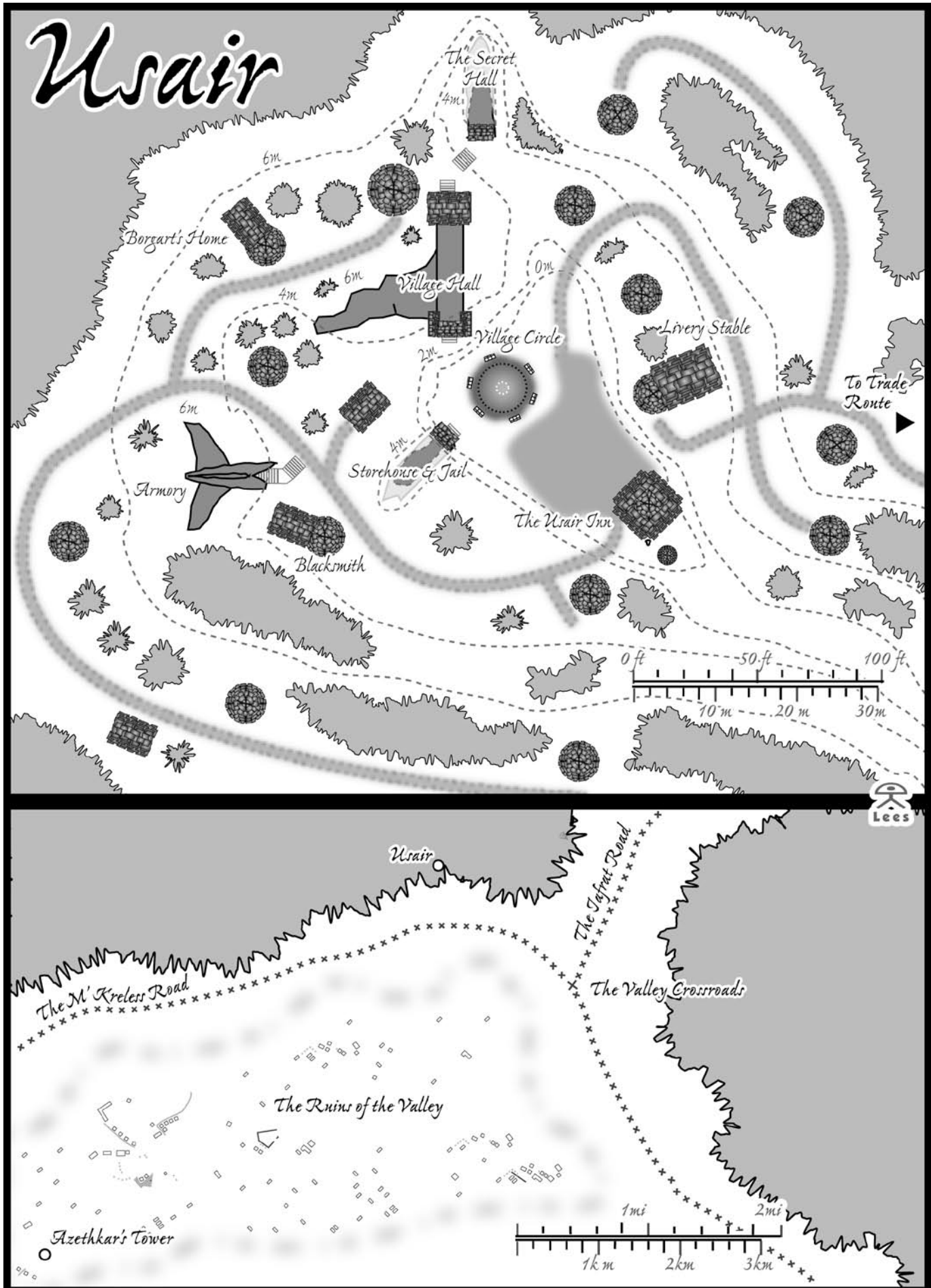
The Village And Its People

Usair is a small village of simple wood and thatch buildings constructed in the vicinity of four sturdy metallic halls of the Ancients. Most of its people are farmers, pigherders, or hunters, though some make a living serving travelers who come to the village because of its proximity to a minor trade crossroads.

THE VILLAGE HALL

The main building in Usair is the "village hall," the largest of the four Ancient halls. It's a long, roughly cylindrical metal building with entrances at both ends that the villagers have protected with wooden porches and roofs. Projecting from the western side is a metallic walkway where the village leader stands to give speeches. The interior of the building is a little cramped, but still very functional.





Over the years the villagers have divided it into several rooms with wooden partitions. The largest of these are the village leader's "office" (where he meets with people who need to see him about something) and the village court, where the leader rules on legal disputes.

THE VILLAGE CIRCLE

The center of the village, and in many ways its "heart," is the village circle. A large, flat, circular area lined with benches (once seats taken from inside the Village Hall; now simple wooden seats), this is where people can rest at the end of a long day, socialize with their neighbors, talk about the weather, and debate what the village should do about its current problems. Visitors to Usair often come out here to hear the local news and be entertained by the gossip.

STOREHOUSE AND JAIL

The smallest of the four Ancient halls has one end partly buried in a hillock. It typically serves as a storehouse for surplus food and other important village supplies, but if necessary can be used as a jail to hold criminals pending Lord Borgart's judgment.

ARMORY

This Ancient hall is the strangest-looking of the four. At its back end, which has no door, a large metal fin projects upward, and two fins just out from the top of it to north and south. The villagers believe it's some sort of "crest of power" and have informally adopted it as Usair's symbol, often carving it into amulets, lintels, and the like.

The villagers use this building as their armory since it only has one entrance. They store what swords, crossbows, and armor they have. Every day and every night one village man is assigned to stand guard at the entrance; all males over age 14 have to take their fair turn. If Lord Borgart expects trouble or there are a lot of visitors in town, he doubles the guard.

BLACKSMITH

Big Jarrell, the village blacksmith, has his shop and home here. He makes a good living forging farm implements for the villagers, shoeing visitors' horses, and so forth. He can make a passable blade, but is no swordsmith. His name is something of a joke; he's an average-sized individual, though by far the strongest man in Usair.

6. THE USAIR INN

A large wooden sign showing the symbol of Usair flanked by two foaming mugs of beer advertises the presence of the Usair Inn, where travelers can find a room for the night (there are four for rent) and villager and visitor alike can enjoy a mug of crisp ale. Sammal the Innkeeper (which is how everyone refers to him, even in casual conversation, as a sort of group joke) is a curmudgeonly sort who seems able to find the cloud behind every silver lining, but he provides excellent customer service and brews fine ale.

BORGART'S HOME

The home of the village leader is the nicest residence in town, with sturdy wooden construction throughout and an actual slate roof. Lord Borgart lives there with his wife, three children, and two servants.

Borgart is a large, corpulent black man. As one can tell from his looks, he was once a big, strong brute of a warrior but has since gone a little soft. He's got a stern, unforgiving look to him that he emphasizes when ruling in court or trying to intimidate someone. He wears a somewhat threadbare men's suit salvaged from the nearby ruins during his adventuring days.

THE SECRET HALL

No one in Usair goes into this Ancient hall, which like the storehouse is partly buried in a hillside and like the armory has only one entrance. There's a heavy wooden wall with no door built over this entrance. Legend has it that the first inhabitants of the village had to partly dig this hall out of the ground, and after they did and went inside, they found strange, mystic objects that caused several of them to fall over dead. The survivors fled the place, sealed it up, and put a taboo on entering it.

LIVERY STABLE

One of the most prosperous men in town is Kenderb, who runs the livery stable. He doesn't sell or rent too many of his horses to villagers, but he does a fairly steady business with merchants and other travelers who pass through Usair. Besides regular horses he also has some *alcors*, animals like heavyset percherons with short fur, no manes or tails, and small ram-like horns on either side of their heads.

Using Usair

Usair is intended first and foremost as the starting point for a campaign story arc centered around the village's current troubles. The heroes are either natives about to find their first taste of adventure, or seasoned adventurers who get caught up in local events while passing through.

To get the characters up to speed, start with something simple: the atosk. The local atosk tribes have become restless recently and are attacking the villagers more often. The PCs have to find their forest lairs and teach them a lesson. In doing so they discover that someone has promised the atosk money and power if they help to drive the villagers away.

That someone is Azethkar the Mad, who's trying to conquer all of Anzar. As the heroes try to learn more about Azethkar (see below), they'll come into contact with his forces, and perhaps scavenge in the nearby ruins for the better weapons they need to take him on directly. Eventually the time comes when they assault his tower and, hopefully, destroy him... though wizards are notoriously hard to kill.

Beyond that, you can use Usair as a model for many villages your heroes might pass through (though not every village needs an inn). Just change the names and the purposes of a few locations and you can re-use the map again and again.

IN DETAIL: AZETHKAR'S SANCTUM

A powerful wizard of sometimes capricious bent, Azethkar the Mad desires nothing less than the conquest of the world... starting with the land of Anzar. To that end he has established a sanctum in a tower of the Ancients in a ruin in southern Anzar. (For Azethkar's character sheet, see *Example Characters*, below.)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Azethkar's Sanctum occupies the top three floors of what was once a twenty-two story office building. The curtain walls (exterior glass walls) have mostly fallen off of the first eighteen stories or so, leaving many of the girders on those floors bare and the floors themselves exposed to the elements. (As can be seen on the map, those floors tend to be bare; either Azethkar or earlier explorers stripped them bare of anything useful, and time and weather took care of the rest.) Similarly, the larger ground structure at the base of the tower is largely open to the elements and holds nothing of interest, though if he's expecting trouble Azethkar may send some of his monsters or minions to lair there and ambush invaders.

The top few floors still have their curtain walls, shielding Azethkar's home from prying eyes. But their interiors haven't entirely been spared the ravages of time and climate. The walls are often warped or partially collapsed (though Azethkar's since shored them up); the floors buckle and warp a little in places; and the whole place has a faintly moldy smell overlaid by cooking odors, the scent of Azethkar's mystic incenses, and so forth.

Access

There are two ways to get up to Azethkar's Sanctum: a central staircase and a back staircase, both of which he monitors with familiars, guards, and perhaps other means if necessary. Additionally, there are three enclosed shafts that run the length of the building (they used to hold elevators, centuries ago). The back shaft (formerly the supply elevator) is empty; fit, determined PCs could theoretically climb 20 stories up its interior ladder to the Sanctum... if they somehow realize the shaft's there and can break into it.

The other two former elevators have open doors at ground level, so it's not hard to realize what they are. However, Azethkar has filled them up with *blackcreeper vines*, a sort of semi-sentient plant he bred in his laboratories. Blackcreeper vines seem like ordinary (if disgustingly purple-black), thick vines... but they capture anyone who comes too close! If a character gets within 1" of them, they lash out, trying to Grab him (they have SPD 3, OCV 5, and DCV 3 for these purposes, and can hold their victims with STR 20). After it Grabs a victim and ascertains that it cannot escape, the vines puncture his skin with tiny thorns and suck out all his blood at the rate of 1 BODY per Phase. Anyone who actually enters one of the elevator shafts gets hit automatically by ½d6 separate vine plants.

THE TWENTIETH FLOOR

The lowest floor of Azethkar's Sanctum is mainly given over to his underlings and storage rooms.

Servants' Quarters: Most of Azethkar's mundane servants live here — the ones who cook, clean, wash, lift heavy loads, and perform other menial labor. Most are wretched humans he's enslaved; a few are sentient humanoid species or the victims of his experiments.

Bravo's Quarters: This room is reserved for Azethkar's "bravos," or guards (whose loyalty he has made permanent with Sorcery). Most of them are humans or humanoids who are a little tougher than normal and equipped with swords, shields, leather or chain armor, and laser pistols; you can use the Competent Normal character sheet from the main rulebook or the City Guard character sheet from *Monsters, Minions, And Marauders* for them. Typically 2d6 bravos are relaxing here at any given time, while another 2d6 are scattered around the Sanctum and/or surrounding territories performing duties for their master.

Infirmary: This is where Azethkar's followers receive medical treatment, if they need it. There's a recovery ward and room for supplies attached. Characters attacking Azethkar's Sanctum might find needed bandages and other supplies here, though the drugs are mostly Azethkar's own concoctions and therefore perhaps not entirely trustworthy.

Boiler Fires: This room is where servants keep the boiler, which Azethkar restored to working order with his skills and magic, working in cold weather.

Storage, Refuse: These rooms are used to store supplies and useless junk, respectively. The Storage room doesn't have anything really valuable, but PCs could find all sorts of useful things here (or just bring the supplies back to Usair as a gesture of goodwill).

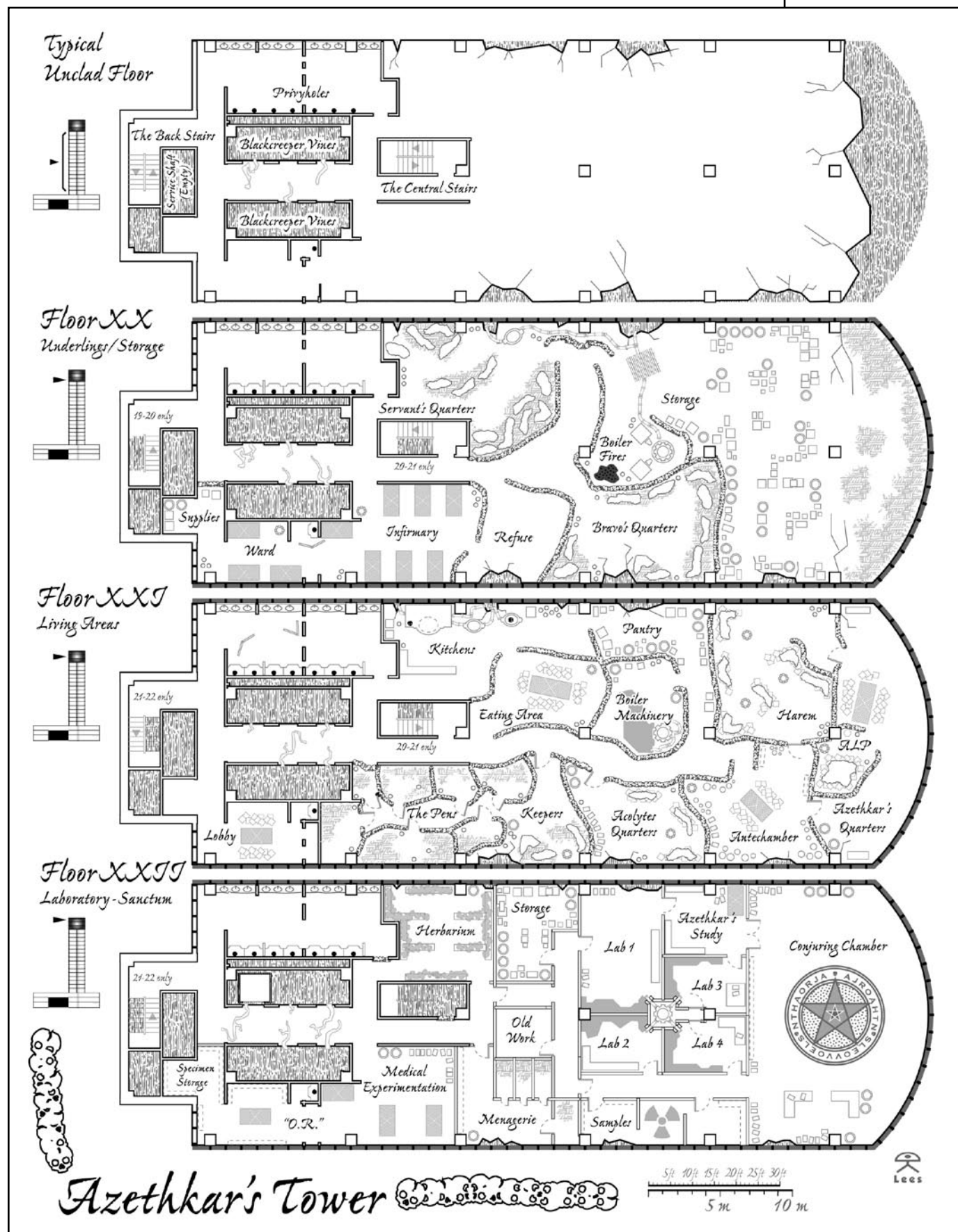
THE TWENTY-FIRST FLOOR

The next floor up is in slightly better shape than the "servants' floor," and contains several important areas.

Kitchen, Pantry, Eating Area: This is where food is prepared for and served to Azethkar and his people. Adventurers looking for some impromptu weapons might find much to work with in here.

Boiler Machinery: The main machinery for the boiler is located here. If any of the PCs know Mechanics, with a minimum of 5 Minutes' work and a successful roll they can set the boiler to explode, causing an RKA 5d6 Explosion sometime within the next hour. The catch is that they can't precisely time it, so it might hit them, too, if they're not careful....

The Pens: When Azethkar deems one of his biological experiments a success, he keeps the results here in special pens (the walls look shaky, but he's reinforced them with magic). Next to the pens is a room where several keepers — servants trained in Animal Handler — stay; they're take care of the beasts and bring them to Azethkar if he calls for one.



If Azethkar takes the PCs or anyone else prisoner, he keeps them imprisoned here in one of the cages. If he feels charitable, he'll take any other occupants out of the cell before putting his captive in there.

To populate this room, select a few unusual creatures from *The HERO System Bestiary* and *Monsters, Minions, and Marauders*, then perhaps alter them a bit here and there to give them more of a Post-Apocalyptic "feel."

Acolyte's Quarters: Azethkar has three apprentices who stay here. In terms of skill they're all about 10-25% as powerful as he is. They spend about half their time assisting their master with his work, and the other half studying or being tutored.

Azethkar's Quarters: The master himself resides in these three rooms, which are in much better repair and much more lavishly appointed than the rest of this floor. There's an antechamber where he can meet with favored visitors, his quarters proper where he sleeps and reads, and a harem room where three kidnapped and sorcerously enslaved local women wait to serve his pleasure. Adventurers raiding the Sanctum will find many small, valuable items here.

THE TWENTY-SECOND FLOOR

The top floor of Azethkar's Sanctum is a sharp contrast to the rest of the tower. Thanks to Azethkar's repair work and spells, it's in immaculate condition. The floors and walls are all sturdy and straight, the doors and furniture are all top-notch, and the magically-enhanced climate control systems keep it cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Azethkar spends most of his time here doing research and performing experiments.

Herbarium: Azethkar's successful and in-progress botanical experiments live here; the room has the heady scent of loam and vegetative life. Currently most of the plants in here are unusual but harmless. The exception are several beds of *deathbloom poppies*, which respond to excessive noise or motion by releasing a 1" radius cloud of spores. Anyone in the cloud takes RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]), Does BODY. Anyone who takes at least 2 BODY from the spores is infected and has a deathbloom poppy growing inside him. He'll begin to feel internal pain from it within about a week; the pain increases over the next three weeks until the full-grown plant bursts forth from his torso, killing him.

Medical Experimentation: One of Azethkar's fondest pursuits is biological experimentation on humans and animals to create "new breeds." Most of that work takes place here, in a large room equipped with biological experimentation tables, a well-equipped "Operating Room" where he performs surgeries and grafts, and a small specimen storage room. Just like in the Infirmary two stories below, PCs may find all sorts of useful medical supplies here... as well as bizarre surgical tools whose meaning is unclear, but no doubt both unpleasant and macabre.

Menagerie: Azethkar keeps numerous small animals, some of which he created with his experiments, in this room as "pets." The keepers from the Pens downstairs see to this room and its occupants as well. Azethkar's current favorite is a two-headed rattlesnake he bred.

Old Work: The results of old experiments and projects that Azethkar doesn't consider fit for use but is unwilling to throw out are kept here.

Storage: In contrast to the Storage room on the 20th Floor, this one is much smaller, much more tightly packed, and filled with more valuable things. The door is made of stout wood and has an equally stout lock.

The Labs And Study: Azethkar's four laboratories are a curious mix of the scientific and the sorcerous — pre-Cataclysm bunsen burners and oscillators sit on tables next to leather-covered grimoires and enchanted crystals. This is where Azethkar does his non-biological work, including experiments with building mechano-men, controlling artificially intelligent computers, magically enhancing energy weapons, and the like. The study is more "traditional," in that it's mostly books on wooden shelves, but even here there are a few touches of pre-Cataclysm tech.

Samples: Azethkar stores the raw materials for his experiments and projects here; many of them are valuable, if only to another wizard. One room is dedicated to storing radioactive materials and similarly dangerous things in special containers.

Conjuring Chamber: Some of Azethkar's most dangerous experiments, involving summoned demons and spirits, take place in this room, which has a finely-made summoning circle built right into the floor for extra safety. While most of what used to be in the room has been cleared away, pre-Cataclysm computers and other such devices still line the walls, providing a sharp contrast to the mystical paraphernalia.

EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

TROBOR THE CLEVER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [2]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
25	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 67

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Spells

Elemental Magic

3	Fiery Arrow (FHG 89)
3	Fiery Aura (FHG 90)
3	Fiery Orbs (FHG 91)
3	Fireball (FHG 91)
3	Fireshaping (FHG 92)
3	Hands Of Stone (FHG 75)
3	Khelred's Flammifer (FHG 94)
3	Mage's Wind (FHG 66)
3	Protection From Fire (FHG 965)
3	Quench Flame (FHG 94)
3	Spell Of The Dancing Blade (FHG 86)
3	Wall Of Earth (FHG 80)
<i>Wizardry</i>	
2	Detect Magic (FHG 221)
3	The First Spell Of The Crimson Ring (FHG 232)
3	Levitation (FHG 233)
3	Mystic Dart (FHG 225)
3	The Spell Of Locking And Opening (FHG 243)
3	Stelrane's Spell Of Dispersion (FHG 223)
3	Wizard's Bastion (FHG 229)
3	Wizard's Power (FHG 228)
3	Wizard's Shield (FHG 231)

Perks

5	Magic: Elemental Magic
5	Magic: Wizardry

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
Magesword	+2	—	1d6+1	1d6	—	5	
Staff	+0	—	3d6 N	—	—	8	
Armor							
None							
Gear: Binoculars							

Skills

6	+2 with Magic Spells
3	Conversation 12-
1	Inventor 8-
2	AK: Moonshattered North America 11-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 12-
2	KS: Demons 11-
2	KS: Legends And Lore 11-
2	KS: Pre-Cataclysm History 11-
2	KS: Renowned Wizards 11-
2	KS: Technology Of The Ancients 11-
3	Persuasion 12-
27	Power: Magic 24-
3	Sleight Of Hand 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Trading 12-
2	WF: Blades, Staffs

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 138

Total Cost: 205

75+ Disadvantages

20	Hunted: The Scarlet-Faced God 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15	Hunted: Azethkar The Mad 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Heroic; Must Fight For That Which Is Good And True (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of Wizards Who Abuse Their Powers (Common, Moderate)
70	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 205

Background/History: Born the son of a Montaran craftsman, Trobor showed the spark of genius early on, when he began speaking clear sentences at age 2. His incessant questioning drove his parents to distraction, and finally they apprenticed him to a local hedge-wizard. Though often harsh and demanding, the man was a good teacher. When Trobor had learned all he could teach, he apprenticed himself to a more powerful wizard... and then another... and another.

During his time as an apprentice, Trobor witnessed first-hand how cruel most wizards were. Not only did he often experience their wrath first-hand when he made some trivial error in his work, he sometimes had to watch as they enslaved villages, punished underlings, and even killed people for no good reason.

TROBOR THE CLEVER PLOT SEEDS

The classic Trobor plot #1: Trobor has found a wizard that's too powerful for him to tackle on his own. He seeks the PCs' help, but has nothing to offer then in exchange except his friendship and the chance to do a good deed.

The classic Trobor plot #2: Trobor gets in over his head fighting an evil wizard and ends up captured. Somehow he gets a message requesting help to his friends, the PCs.

Azethkar decides he's had enough of the troublesome Trobor, but that he'd like to toy with him a little before destroying him. He sets the PCs up as his cat's-paws, convincing them Trobor is evil and then setting them loose to kill him.



Eventually Trobor had enough of it. Although his apprenticeship wasn't complete, he struck out on his own, determined to use his spells and wits to do what good he could in the world, and perhaps make up for some of the evil caused by his arcane brethren. Since then he's wandered all over Moon-shattered North America, sometimes in search of greater knowledge and mystic power, sometimes helping a friend, and sometimes simply for the joy of seeing a new and different place.

Personality/Motivation: Trobor is a kindhearted soul determined to make the world a better place. As he sees it, the gifts of wizardry should be used to help people, not to oppress them. He hates the way people shy away from him when they hear he's a wizard, and by opposing evil wizards he hopes to prove that not all spellcasters are cruel, capricious, and vicious.

Trobor's never had the chance to study true Science-Sorcery, though he knows a good bit more about the devices of the Ancients than a layman does. He'd love the opportunity to learn such magic, and might sacrifice much to take advantage of it.

Quote: "Why don't you pick on someone as powerful as yourself, wizard?"

Powers/Tactics: Trobor is a wizard of incomplete training whose studies to date have focused on Elemental Magic (primarily Fire-spells) and Wizardry. In battle he usually uses his Wizard's Shield for protection, then attacks with Fire spells or a Mystic Dart. If he needs more protection, he erects a Wizard's Bastion or Wall Of Earth. He also has an enchanted blade known as a Magesword and often enjoys using it even though it's not as efficient a way of dispatching his foes as his spells.

Campaign Use: If you prefer, you can make Trobor an adversary of your PCs rather than a potential ally. In that case he's a journeyman in the service of a more powerful evil wizard, such as Azethkar or the Scarlet-Faced God. He may pretend to be the PCs' friend at first, but ultimately his goal is to destroy them.

To make Trobor more powerful, expand the scope of his magic. Give him the Perks for, and spells from, the Sorcery and Science-Sorcery arcana. To weaken him, reduce his SPD to 3 and remove a few spells.

Trobor doesn't Hunt people; that's not in his nature. He opposes the evil he encounters, he doesn't seek it out to fight it.

Appearance: Trobor is a fairly handsome man in his mid-20s with shoulder-length brown hair and dark eyes; he's 5'10" tall with an almost athletic build. He wears a soft leather tunic with long sleeves loose at the wrist, linen pants, sturdy leather boots, and bracers. In his right hand he carries a gnarled-wood staff nearly as tall as he is; on his right hip he wears a finely-made (i.e., enchanted) sword in a scabbard.

AZETHKAR THE MAD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
25	PRE	20	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 8 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	REC	6		
66	END	23		
40	STUN	8		Total Characteristics Cost: 159

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Spells*Black Magic*

- 3 Agony (FHG2 40)
- 3 The Evil Eye (FHG2 44)
- 3 Hex (FHG2 45)
- 3 Paths Of The Unseen (FHG2 52)
- 3 Pestilence (FHG2 46)
- 3 Scrying (FHG2 54)
- 3 Steal The Will (FHG2 49)
- 3 Stormcalling (FHG2 49)
- 3 Vile Summoning (FHG2 56)

Conjuration

- 3 Banishment (FHG 27)
- 3 Conjuror's Chains (FHG 28)
- 3 The Call To The Elemental Realms (FHG 25)
- 3 The Greater Wardings (FHG 30)
- 3 To My Hand (FHG 31)
- 3 Vashtori's Invocation Of The Demon Horde (FHG 26)
- 3 Vashtori's Third Spell Of Beast-Calling (FHG 23)
- 3 Vashtori's Third Spell Of Monster Summoning (FHG 24)

Elemental Magic

- 3 Calm The Winds (FHG 64)
- 3 D'Ansif's Invocation Of The Ice (FHG 108)
- 3 Dereketh's Catapult (FHG 74)
- 3 Donver's Whirlwind (FHG 65)
- 3 Earthenroad (FHG 81)
- 3 Enflame (FHG 89)
- 3 Everburning Flame (FHG 99)
- 3 Fiery Arrow (FHG 89)
- 3 Fiery Aura (FHG 90)
- 3 Fiery Orbs (FHG 91)
- 3 Fireball (FHG 91)
- 3 Fireshaping (FHG 92)
- 3 Firestorm (FHG 93)
- 3 Fogbreaking (FHG 65)
- 3 Hailstorm (FHG 108)
- 3 Hands Of Stone (FHG 75)
- 3 Icy Ground (FHG 109)
- 3 Jelzuraath's First Wintry Assault (FHG 109)
- 3 Khelred's Flammifer (FHG 94)
- 3 Mage's Wind (FHG 66)

- 3 Meldana's Spell Of The Shaking Earth (FHG 76)
- 3 Protection From Fire (FHG 96)
- 3 Protection From Ice (FHG 110)
- 3 Quench Flame (FHG 95)
- 3 Roddik's Blizzard (FHG 110)
- 3 Stelrane's Second Spell Of The Slumbrous Vapors (FHG 68)
- 3 Stone Into Mud (FHG 77)
- 3 Stoneshaping (FHG 82)
- 3 Stonyskin (FHG 79)
- 3 Wall Of Ice (FHG 111)
- 3 Wall Of Stone (FHG 81)

Necromancy

- 3 Create Skeleton (FHG 141)
- 3 Create Zombie (FHG 145)
- 3 Druathek's Necromantic Fetters (FHG 146)
- 3 Druathek's Osseous Malady (FHG 147)
- 3 Sa'akiv's Soulripping (FHG 149)
- 3 Sargath's Premonitions Of Death (FHG 148-49)
- 3 Soul Feeding (FHG 165)
- 3 The Spell Of True Necromancy (FHG 162)
- 3 Veltharex's Spell Of Torment (FHG 153)

Science-Sorcery

- 3 Activate Device
- 3 Assemble Mechano-Man
- 3 Control Technology
- 3 Deactivate
- 3 Drain Power
- 3 Machine Speech
- 3 Manipulate Machine
- 3 Repair

Sorcery

- 3 Alzamar's Cloak Of The Unseen (FHG 182)
- 3 Belzorath's Dominion Of The Mind (FHG 167)
- 3 Belzorath's Spell Of Waking Dreams (FHG 176)
- 3 Darthuva's Affliction Of The Confused Mind (FHG 170)
- 3 Detect Illusion (FHG 184)
- 3 Detect Invisibility (FHG 185)
- 3 Mindreading (FHG 172)
- 3 Mindseeking (FHG 186)
- 3 Prismatic Blast (FHG 177)
- 3 Simbalon's Fifth Spell Of Illusion (FHG 178)
- 3 Torment Of The Mind (FHG 174)
- 3 Wizard's Hand (FHG 180)

Wizardry

- 2 Detect Magic (FHG 221)
- 3 The First Spell Of The Crimson Ring (FHG 232)
- 3 Levitation (FHG 233)
- 3 Mystic Bolt (FHG 224)
- 3 Mystic Dart (FHG 225)
- 3 Mystic Wall (FHG 229)
- 3 Serten's Spell Of The Quiet Moment (FHG 227)
- 3 Stelrane's Spell Of Dispersion (FHG 223)
- 3 Wizard's Bulwark (FHG 230)
- 3 Wizard's Eye (FHG 235)
- 3 Wizard's Power (FHG 228)
- 3 Wizard's Scribe (FHG 244)
- 3 Wizard's Shield (FHG 231)
- 3 Wizard's Steed (FHG 234)

AZETHKAR THE MAD PLOT SEEDS

The classic Azethkar plot #1: Azethkar has something — a captive villager, a crucial piece of technology, the plans for a super-weapon, the mystic materials needed for a ritual — and the PCs have to get it (either to deprive him of it, or to it them against him).

One of Azethkar's wizardly rivals, or perhaps Overlord Korgon, hires the PCs to sneak into the Sanctum and subtly deface Azethkar's summoning circle. But no one can know they were there, so they must plan the mission for maximum stealth.

Azethkar becomes obsessed with the idea of spreading magical knowledge. He offers to tutor one of the PCs in the Arts Arcane. Does the PC dare accept the capricious conjuror's "gift"?

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Dam	STUN	Shots	STR Min	Notes
None							
Armor							
None							
Gear: Sci-Goggles (Infrared and Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group))							

Perks

- 5 Magic: Black Magic
- 5 Magic: Conjuration
- 5 Magic: Elemental Magic
- 5 Magic: Necromancy
- 5 Magic: Science-Sorcery
- 5 Magic: Sorcery
- 5 Magic: Wizardry

Talents

- 20 *Prescience:* Danger Sense (self only, out of combat) 13-
- 5 Magesight

Skills

- 12 +4 with Magic Spells
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 1 Electronics 8-
- 3 Interrogation 14-
- 3 Inventor 13-
- 1 Mechanics 8-
- 37 Power: Magic 30-
- 1 Security Systems 8-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 1 Systems Operation 8-
- 3 Scholar
- 2 1) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
- 2 2) KS: Demons 13-
- 2 3) KS: Legends And Lore 13-
- 2 4) KS: Pre-Cataclysm History 13-
- 2 5) KS: Renowned Wizards 13-
- 2 6) KS: Technology Of The Ancients 13-
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Astrology 13-
- 2 2) SS: Biology 13-
- 1 3) SS: Chemistry 11-
- 1 4) SS: Electronic Engineering 11-
- 1 5) SS: Physics 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 420**Total Cost: 579****75+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Hunted: Overlord Korgon 11- (As Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Determined To Rule First Anzar, Then The World (Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Obsessive Personality (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Intellectual Vanity (Common, Strong)
- 434 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 579

Background/History: Whence comes Azethkar the Mad? No one can say for sure save Azethkar himself. His place of birth, early years, and training in the Arcane Arts remain shrouded in mystery, perhaps (some speculate) because he killed anyone who knew him then to conceal some dread secret or weakness his enemies could exploit. All that is known for certain is that he recently appeared in the land of Anzar, determined to conquer it, and then to spread his rule throughout the world. And with the mystical and technological resources at his command, he just might be able to do it....

Personality/Motivation: Azethkar's sobriquet "the Mad" was not applied by accident. First, he's a full-blown megalomaniac. Convinced that he's the most powerful wizard in the world, he unquestioningly believes that it's his destiny to rule the world. Anyone who would stand against him is a fool who deserves nothing but death. Second, aside from his general obsession with conquest, Azethkar has a tendency to become fascinated by new subjects or activities and to fixate on them for weeks or months at a time. Today it might be breeding a new, stronger species of horse, tomorrow it's the planet Mars, the day after that it's the habits of social insects. And whatever his current obsession tends to be, he'll undoubtedly find a way to use it against the PCs... or at least bore them to death talking about it after he's captured them.

On top of all that, Azethkar has a strong streak of intellectual vanity. As far as he's concerned, no one knows as much as he does or could possibly be as clever. He has a hard time resisting intellectual challenges such as riddle-contests, puzzles, and the like.

AZETHKAR'S ENCHANTED ITEMS

Azethkar can have pretty much any enchanted item you want him to (some of which are just technological devices, not actually "enchanted" items at all). A few that he commonly has with him include:

Arc-Ring: This ring, which can fire deadly bolts of lightning, is nearly out of arcane energy, so Azethkar only uses it in emergencies. (RKA 2d6, +2 STUN Multiplier; OIF, 3 Charges)

Heisenberg Ring: This enchanted ring warps probability around the wearer, making fortune favor him. (Luck 3d6; OIF)

Talisman Of Displacement: The wearer of this talisman can teleport instantly upon mental command. (Teleportation 20", Position Shift, No Relative Velocity, Trigger; OAF)

Quote: “You can no more oppose me than you can forestall destiny! Stand aside, or be destroyed!”

Powers/Tactics: Azethkar is one of the mightiest wizards on the Moonshattered Earth, with dozens of spells at his command, legions of followers (should he choose to call them up), and extensive technological resources (though like nearly every other wizard, he understands the “magic” of his technology incompletely). He prefers to spend the first few Segments of a combat with his defenses at full so he can casually ignore the heroes’ attacks. When the time is right he uses Wizard’s Power and a Presence Attack to try to cow them into submission. If that fails, he unleashes the full power at his command, attacking the most powerful PC with the best spell from his arsenal. When that hero falls, he moves on to the next one, and so on. If he can get two or more PCs at once, he will.

If spells fail, Azethkar has as many followers as you need him to. Besides human slaves, he breeds all sorts of monsters, horrors, and subhumans in his labs, can use his *Assemble Mechano-Men* to augment the ranks of his existing robots, or can Summon demons and elementals to serve him. Similarly, you can assume he’s scavenged any sort of technology the story requires from the ruins.

Campaign Use: If you prefer not to cast Azethkar in the roll of master villain, make him an elderly, crotchety, but kindly wizard whose problem isn’t obsession but forgetfulness (often with humorous consequences). He can serve as a patron, mentor, or helper for the PCs, but his physical weakness and poor memory prevent him from taking to the field with them.

If for some reason you need Azethkar to be more powerful, increase his Primary Characteristics and give him more magical items. To weaken him, remove a third to half of his spells, reduce his SPD to 3, and/or decrease his Magic roll.

As a Hunter, Azethkar is determined... up to a point. The odds are he will soon become obsessed with something other than capturing the heroes (and performing twisted experiments on them) and leave them in peace. But he may eventually remember them....



Appearance: Azethkar is a sorcerer-scientist of great power and malice. He’s six feet tall and slender; he’s bald and has inhuman red eyes. He wears a flowing purple robe with wide sleeves, odd super-science goggles, and has enchanted rings on several of his fingers.

ZOMBIE WORLD



"It has been established that persons who have recently died have been returning to life and committing acts of murder."

—the radio announcer describes the zombie crisis in Night Of The Living Dead (1968)

By the time things had quieted down a little a few weeks later, it was pretty clear (to me, at least) that the crisis had actually started well before any of us really noticed it. There were scattered news stories, most of them reflecting either government cover-ups (depending on your sense of paranoia) or, what seemed more likely to me, just the complete inability of most people to grasp what the hell was going on. Weird murders by completely deranged people, missing hikers, a couple of "massive rabies outbreaks" in backwater towns. Tabloid fodder, mostly. The kind of stuff you read every day, shake your head and dismiss as "just part of this crazy world we live in." Like you had any idea how crazy, right?

When things got bad that first awful night a few weeks ago, the news reporters on TV (before the power went out entirely), the radio and the Internet bloggers, began to fill their reports and columns with stories of local mob riots and mysterious deaths. Then they gradually began to figure out that the whole world had gone to hell, so they started fitting in a few stories about what was going on everywhere else. India and Pakistan were threatening each other with nukes, blaming each other for attacks with biological weapons of some sort or another, all very vague. Then there were some reports of missiles actually flying, cities being destroyed. One story about a nuclear attack in Russia somewhere was revised about ten minutes later to say that actually it was a reactor that melted down somehow. Never heard about that one

again, and I still wonder what happened there. Every so often I remember to ask somebody, but nobody knows the real story.

Us? Well, I was a cop here in Silver Lake, a pretty quiet little town without a whole lot of crime. So most of the job was making sure the fishermen and pleasure boaters had all their licenses in order, confiscating beer from teenagers, escorting Rudy Packer home after he'd had a few too many down at Penny's Bar, occasionally dealing with tourist jerks, that sort of thing. The night of the outbreak, my partner Dave and I responded to a call about a traffic accident on the old Highland Road near the Meacham farm. Sounded like a nasty one. When we got there, three or four guys had surrounded a car that had wrapped its front end around a tree, banging on the door and windows, while a woman inside was screaming and crying. It was Holly Peterson, who's sitting right over there now. Several of the guys had bloodstains on them — looked a mess, man.

Dave and I drew our guns and ordered them

to step away from the car. None of them paid us any mind, so I fired a round into the air to get their attention. When they turned to look at us, I could see there was something really wrong. Their skin was all kind of gray, and their eyes were yellow and bugged-out. Dave recognized one of them as Bobby Ray, who worked down at the maintenance shack on the South Dock. He started swearing and yelling at Bobby to back off from the car, and slowly walked up to him with his gun out. All of a sudden, Bobby leapt at Dave and the two went to the ground. I swore and started to move to help him, when I saw Bobby bite Dave, right on the neck. Blood spurted out everywhere, and Dave was scream-



ing and yelling and kicking at him, while his gun went flying somewhere. I admit, I was stunned, just for a second. I couldn't believe what I had just seen. Finally I got my legs started again, moving towards them while shouting for Bobby to get his goddamned hands off of him, when one of the others jumped on me.

We both kind of fell back into the woods, and I hit him in the face with my pistol, which got him off me for a second. I took aim, and shot him in the chest. He jerked for a second, but it didn't slow him down. At this point, I still figured he was on drugs or something, you know? Like I heard that some druggies don't even feel pain when they're hopped up. He coiled a bit, getting ready to jump at me again, and I shot him again, right above his right eye. This time he went down and stayed there.

I looked over at Dave, but the third guy had also fallen on him, and there was a lot of blood everywhere. Dave had stopped screaming, and Bobby and the other guy were now sort of fighting over him. I fought off the urge to retch for a second, long enough to shoot both of them in the head as well. Then I lost my dinner, crouching next to the patrol car in the mud. Holly'd gotten out of the car by now, and she was borderline hysterical, pulling at my arm and telling me we needed to get out of there before the rest of them came. I let her kind of steer me into the car, and we took off down the road back to the station. The rest, well, you pretty much saw all of that. We stocked up on what guns and ammo there was left in the building and headed out to the docks, where Mr. Dannon was kind enough to let us jump onto his boat just as he was pulling away from the docks, only a few steps ahead of a crowd of the dead.

Those of us here on the boat have all pretty much shared our stories and pooled our information, all of us except for the teenage girl whose name we still don't know after two days because she won't stop crying, and Jimmy Broxton, who hasn't said a word since he shot his wife in the forehead early Wednesday morning. As for me, well, I only wish I'd thought to shoot Dave in the head back there. It kind of gets to me that he's probably still walking around Silver Lake right now... maybe looking for me.

THE DEAD WALK: AN APOCALYPTIC HORROR GENRE AND SETTING

Zombie World is a setting for a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* game with a Horror bent. While some specifics of the world are detailed, for the most part the setting is simple: the real world, identical to modern Earth until a few weeks ago, when the dead began to rise again and walk, consumed with a terrible hunger for the living. See page 16 and below for more information on the Zombie Apocalypse subgenre.

When The Dead Rose Up

Norma: We just came from there.

Kenneth: Is everyone there dead?

Steve: Or... dead-ish.

Kenneth: Is. Everyone. There. Dead?

Steve: Yeah, in the sense that they all sort of, uh, fell down, and then... got up, and... started eating each other."

—*Dawn Of The Dead* (2004)

In *Zombie World*, the nature of the apocalypse is immediate and obvious to all: the dead have risen from their graves in horrific multitudes, all with a craving for live human flesh! The scope of the campaign can be adjusted to the GM's and players' tastes, anywhere from simple tales of basic survival against the ravaging hordes, to a desperate search for a cure to the madness engulfing the world, to the PCs participating in or even leading the rebuilding of society after a terrible war against the legions of the undead.

ZOMBIEISM

Zombieism in *Zombie World* is caused by an virus-like life form that animates recently-dead bodies. The exact source of the virus is unspecified here so the GM can tailor it to suit his own preferences and campaign plans. Some possibilities include:

- it's an alien weapon, spread on Earth by evil extraterrestrials who plan to move in once humanity is gone
- it comes from illegal experiments performed on prisoners by doctors involved in a secret government germ warfare program
- it somehow comes from or relates to mystic rituals performed by a secret cabal of sorcerers bent on world domination
- it's the start of Biblical Armageddon, or something like it
- it's a Communist plot (cue ominous theme music)

MEDIA RESPONSE

During the initial outbreak of zombification, TV stations will mostly broadcast news and reports featuring talking heads debating what exactly is happening. As time passes and media personnel and infrastructure fall victim to zombie attacks, many stations go off the air, while others only show automated emergency messages. Crackpots of various sorts hold out the longest, announcing the pending arrival of Jesus Christ or explaining how their conspiracy theory of choice totally predicted this event. Radio lasts a bit longer — for example, the PCs might monitor a station (or private short-wave broadcasts) that holds out for several days, only to hear the final broadcast as the rampaging undead break in, followed only by silence, static hiss, or, worst of all, a few screams, occasional crunching sounds, slow walking and a low moan....

Exactly where the first outbreak occurs, and thus the pattern of the spread of the virus and other factors, is also left up to the GM. Perhaps the first zombies arose during a secret government experiment, forcing the military to send in a “black ops” team to totally “clean” the facility... but they didn’t stop some of the virus from escaping through the ventilation system, and over the past couple years it’s slowly spread around the world, infecting everyone.

In any case, at the start of the campaign *everyone* in the world is already infected by the virus (known as “the z-factor”). It lives harmlessly in humans (like intestinal flora) until two things occur: (a) it breeds enough to establish a sufficient number of virus organisms in the body; and (b) bodily death (or contact with the fluids from an already “z-active” zombie) causes it to mutate and take over. These “z-factor microflora,” which need oxygenated blood to survive, transform the host body and make it walk around looking for human blood, brains, and tissues to feed on. In most cases the transformation takes hours, and sometimes days. The resulting zombies are “slow” (see page 174) thanks to the partial degeneration of the brain before the transformation is complete and the rigor mortis that sets in during the transformation.

However, if a person comes in contact with the “bodily fluids” of an already active zombie (and its microorganisms), the infection “jump-starts” and the victim’s own z-factor “flora” mutate immediately. This kills the victim rapidly (usually in a matter of minutes) and the zombie reanimation happens much more quickly (minutes to hours rather than hours to days). Since there’s been no degradation in the mind or body during this short period, zombies created this way are “fast” and in many cases retain more of their original intelligence.

The only way to stop a corpse from resuscitating is to destroy a significant portion of its brain; without it, the z-factor microorganisms cannot control or motivate the body. As long as the brain is intact, anything still connected to it through the nervous system, no matter how tenuously, continues to function and hunger. Limbs that are cut off continue to act on their own for up to several minutes, but eventually “die” and begin to rot, and an entire body may keep moving for several seconds after decapitation. A head that’s intact after decapitation can remain alive indefinitely, though if deprived of sustenance it eventually goes “torpid.” It seems to be asleep until the presence of nearby living human flesh wakes it again. Whole zombies deprived of sustenance also go torpid after an uncertain length of time (weeks to months are typical ranges).

All these facts, while irrelevant for characters’ short-term survival, are important in the long run. They give the hard science types something to research, thus providing a possible avenue for finding a cure or figuring out a way to temporarily thwart the zombie hordes. Some scientist might even find a “vaccine” that involves a long, complicated medical procedure; that way a select group of heroes (your PCs) can become immune to zombification while the rest of the world still needs rescuing.

HISTORY OF THE OUTBREAK

On February 17, 2007, enough of the virus had bred in enough people for a zombie awakening to become inevitable. In the opening hours of the outbreak, over a dozen states requested FEMA assistance before regular communication lines were broken. Both the President and his Cabinet were whisked off to one secure location (in Maryland) and the Vice President to another (probably Mount Weather in Bluemont, Virginia) as part of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COP). FEMA did coordinate responses in several states, while in others FEMA was ignored and a more confused but speedier response was seen from local agencies. The National Disaster Medical System units in many states were the earliest on the scene, but they were frequently overwhelmed by the size of the outbreak and the ferocity of the newly-risen dead. National Guard and regular military units were also very quickly stretched thin by the sheer size of the problem, not to mention all of the early video that quickly hit TV and the Internet of heavily armed soldiers firing into what seemed at first to be unarmed crowds.

People at first were warned to stay in their homes or to make their way to emergency response shelters identified in local broadcasts. Those were all quickly overwhelmed both by the sheer number of panicked refugees and the increasing size of the zombie horde. In some places the Army moved in to fortify hospitals, government buildings, and police stations; sometimes this helped, at other times the soldiers were themselves overwhelmed and destroyed by the surging tide of the unliving. Whole cities burned, and afterwards survivors would, almost to a man, remember the weird red glow in the sky at sunsets, as the conflagration released God knows what toxins into the air. Panic and rioting killed at least as many as the zombies did in the early days.

The government declared martial law around the fourth day of the outbreak. (Characters with government connections might know, or learn, that the President’s team unfortunately included a couple of Secret Service bodyguards who were infected by bites during the mad rush to get the Prez to Air Force One. They died in the bunkers, which included only a small number of doctors, and when they turned they overwhelmed the others inside. The entire group, zombie president and all, are still in their bunker today, having consumed all of the food and gone torpid. Rumors persist that the Vice-President and several other Cabinet members are still alive in another bunker, but no one’s heard from them in quite some time.) Other rumors claimed the American government’s still functioning from NORAD or similar bases deep inside the Rocky Mountains, or fled to northern Canada or Hawaii.

A collection of military ships, decommissioned hulks, fishing boats, and pleasure cruisers — the most ragtag collection of barely seaworthy vessels since the Dunkirk Evacuation — left the West Coast for Hawaii and other Pacific islands in the early weeks. By that time a lot of people had



figured out the survival basics, and even though they knew the zombies were walking on the sea bottoms, they realized that (a) they weren't fast, and (b) the Pacific Ocean is a big place and the zombies roam more or less at random. They arrived at Hawaii, Midway, Wake Island. Hawaii hadn't been spared the plague by any stretch, but with a population of only a million their zombies appeared at the rate of about twenty a day. Thus, military forces quickly seized control of Honolulu and other cities, eliminating the zombie population with admirable efficiency and speed and immediately establishing protocols for disposal of the newly deceased. With time and a comparative lack of panicking citizenry (thanks to the large military presence already there combined with the arriving forces), the military established a temporary government outpost. But Hawaii was not without its tragedies. Refugees continued to pour into the coastal cities, and in time the harbors were choked with both the dead and undead. For a while, remaining National Guard units has used anti-riot firehoses to blast the dead into the water, until the pressure died.

Nor did the rest of the world fare any better. NATO headquarters relocated to Iceland. Various minor wars broke out in Oceania as one force or another tried to seize islands with no or few zombies for use as refuges. India and Pakistan, each claiming the other had engaged in biological warfare, finally launched nuclear weapons against each other, turning New Delhi, Bombay, Karachi, and Islamabad into radioactive wastelands, in the process killing millions... many of whom joined the zombie horde. A similar war broke out in the Middle East, pitting several Arab states against Israel, but the highly disciplined and well-equipped Israeli military was able to hold them off for a while, until zombies overwhelmed all the forces and the entire region was left vulnerable to the undead hordes. Two nuclear reactors melted down in Russia after their skeleton crews were slaughtered. Above Earth in the International Space Station astronauts watched helplessly as their world destroyed itself, knowing suffocation or starvation would soon be their lot.

Enter your heroes.

Adventure Seeds

You can start your *Zombie World* campaign at whatever point you want during the history described above. Perhaps the PCs figure out what's going on early and move fast to stop the crisis, or they might gather together *in media res*, when the world has largely fallen to the zombies, and try to save it or go down fighting. Here are some ideas for scenarios:

BIKER ZOMBIES WANT A NEW DRUG

The PCs happen to be on hand at the original creation of a zombie horde; they're law enforcement officers and other locals in an otherwise quiet Western town. Suddenly, biker gang members experimenting with a new version of methamphetamine accidentally transform themselves into *real* Hell's Angels. If you prefer a crazy B-movie atmosphere to any sort of plausibility, perhaps the one useful skill the zombie mind can retain is motorcycle riding....

OLD MAN RIVER

The PCs live on or near a river and survive the initial local zombie outbreak by fleeing on boats (after all, zombies can walk on the riverbed but can't effectively swim). Adapting to the circumstances, the group survives by making periodic raids on land to get supplies, all the while coping with intra-party conflicts exacerbated by the constant tension and periodic zombie attacks whenever the boat reaches shallow water. Eventually they learn of a secret government project (perhaps through a scientist NPC or even a PC) that accidentally started the outbreak... and that surviving scientists have fled to an offshore oil-drilling facility not far from the mouth of their river to work on a cure. But of course, the solution can't be that simple, can it?

IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND

The wandering PCs encounter a small community of religious believers holed up in a particularly defensible church, waiting for the Rapture to take them away from the Hell that the zombie-infested Earth has become. Eventually the group turns away from ordinary Christianity and starts to listen to a traveling priest, who has remarkable charismatic powers and tells the true believers that human sacrifices are needed to end the plague of the undead. Fortunately, this band of outsiders just arrived....

CLEAN UP

Once some sort of second government has formed, the PCs can join the cause to take back the cities from the undead alongside the military or militia, using newly-developed specific anti-zombie techniques and equipment. Remember, you can't miss *any* of them; leaving just one zombie alive can cause outbreaks to flare up again!

ZOMBIE GAMING

Games set in *Zombie World* or similar settings can be a lot of fun, but getting the maximum enjoyment, tension, and dread out of a zombie scenario can be difficult. Here are some guidelines for GMs.

ZOMBIES AS ANTAGONISTS

In many of the best zombie stories, the zombies themselves are, if not incidental to the story, certainly less central to the narrative thrust than the opposition in other horror subgenres. Indeed, they frequently serve a story role as simply a dangerous part of the environment, like a storm or other force of nature. At least part of this is because of the nature of zombies themselves; in most cases they are simply us, transformed and mutilated and then turned against us, with most of what made them human (like intelligence and personality) removed. What makes them frightening, their relentlessness and sheer weight of numbers, is the same thing that can make them somewhat dull as adversarial monsters. Without plans, without desires any more complicated than hunger, and without personalities to interact with, they cannot provide many of the more entertaining aspects of truly interesting villains like vampires or invading aliens. Instead, once the first few encounters have established their nature and the best means of fighting them (either fleeing or killing them), they seem to sort of just settle into the background of the setting.

Now, whether that's a bug or a feature in your game is largely a matter of taste for a GM. This book details a great many ways to add spice to a straightforward (as if!) story of post-apocalyptic survival no matter the nature of the apocalypse in question, and zombies serve just as well as a root cause for the destruction of society as nuclear war or ecological collapse. One way to run a zombie P-A game, then, is to focus on the survival and rebuilding aspects; the stories generated by simply having a group of survivors try to make their way in this new world, and avoid getting eaten. Perhaps a more confrontational and task-oriented campaign might have the PCs stumble upon clues leading to the secret story of how the zombies were created in the first place, and the tantalizing possibility therefore that the process could be reversed.

It is almost a truism in the zombie horror genre that the worst and most frightening acts are committed by the living under the terrible, degenerative pressure that comes with the emergence of the undead and the constant state of siege survivors frequently find themselves under. Humans pushed to the edge, whether trying to take advantage of the chaos to seize power, make profit, or simply fight to survive, are capable of horrifying behavior that dwarfs the simple ravening destruction of the zombie horde. This ranges from the callous profiteering of the Umbrella Corporation in the *Resident Evil* movies and games, to the military scientists performing unspeakable experiments in *Day Of The Dead* to Major West in *28 Days Later* luring survivors to the isolated military base with his radio broadcasts in order to provide women for his soldiers. How PCs react to the

crumbling sense of morality of those around them, especially those NPCs in positions of power and authority, will be a recurring theme of almost any long-term Zombie World campaign, as it might in any Post-Apocalyptic scenario.

Of course, if horror remains the goal for the players and GMs and slaving hordes of zombies just aren't exciting you any more, then the zombies themselves can change. Perhaps only the first few generations of zombies are mindless, but after a while, every so often, a few are created with their intelligences intact (or even fiendishly enhanced!). These super-zombies might begin to take control of their mindless brethren, providing PCs with more variation in their menaces. Or the zombies as a group might begin to manifest mutations and variations; see below for some common possibilities, but there's no reason to restrict yourself to that list.

If you truly want to raise the ante on a zombie campaign, perhaps the zombies aren't the only horrible monsters out there. What would, say, a small group of vampires do in a world overrun by zombies, as their own main food supply begins to dwindle? Maybe they would begin rescuing humans themselves, only to keep them in pens and protected underground bunkers to preserve that all-important supply of fresh, living blood!

INFECTION AND OUTBREAK

The first question Zombie World GM must resolve for his setting is precisely how zombies are created. In some stories, only direct contact with a zombie creates new ones — wounds caused by their teeth or fingernails become infected with the zombie agent, which usually kills the unfortunate victim within a relatively short period of time (hours to days). If the victim's corpse is not properly treated (burning, decapitation or destroying the brain are the usual methods), then after some period of time (once again, from minutes to days) the body reanimates as a zombie.

In these cases, zombieism can be treated like a particularly nasty and communicable disease, no matter what the specific initiating agent might be. As long as the infected are effectively isolated from potential victims, the outbreak can be contained within a certain area (though, of course, this always turns out to be much harder than Clueless Government Officials (TM) think it will be). If infected victims are reached in time, it may be possible to either cure the infection entirely (perhaps with a viral antidote), or to prevent the infection from becoming terminal; for example, by amputating an infected limb before the toxin can reach the brain.

A few versions of viral zombieism are not limited solely to human beings, but instead can reanimate dead animals in monstrous form as well. Player characters who have grown accustomed to the sight of the walking dead might find a new sense of horror when dogs, birds, or cows also return from the other side with a ravenous hunger for flesh. Even if they don't themselves become zombies, perhaps some animals

are carriers of the condition, in the same manner that vermin and insects have spread plagues throughout human history.

In other situations, the prospect can be much bleaker. Perhaps anyone who dies in a certain period of time or physical area is resurrected as a zombie, or even everyone on Earth; this usually implies a metaphysical or mystical origin for zombies, such as the notion that "Hell is full," or some other curse or plague from a Supreme Being (though not in the default Zombie World setting). If this is the case, the prospects for long-term survival of the human race drop to nearly zero, and the only chance to reverse the situation is to figure out and fix whatever has angered the Gods to curse humanity so. GMs who intend to tell a story of smaller scope might limit the "revival factor" in some way; perhaps only the dead buried in a certain graveyard come back (as in *Pet Sematary* or *Dellamorte Dellamore*), or perhaps the curse of returning is limited to a certain bloodline.

CAN ZOMBIEISM BE CURED?

This is another fundamental question for the GM to answer. If zombieism is curable, then presumably the search for such a cure will eventually become the driving force for a long-term campaign. PCs need not even be aware that a cure exists at first, and even if the GM decides there isn't one, they may (in classic proactive Player Character style) expend a great deal of time and energy searching for one. At the very least, then, this can be used as motivation for periodic missions to various locations where a hint or cryptic clue has suggested the existence of such a cure.

Zombie Campaigning

Cooper: That's my point! There's not going to be five, or even ten! There's going to be twenty, thirty, maybe a hundred of those things, and as soon as they find out we're here, this place'll be crawling with them!

Ben: Well, if there's that much, they'll probably get us wherever we are.

—*Night Of The Living Dead* (1968)

Characters in a Zombie World game can be built on whatever point level the GM deems appropriate, depending on what the focus of the scenario or campaign will be. If the PCs are expected to be heroic, with at least the possibility of thwarting the zombies or reversing the plague, or if the zombies themselves will be powerful individual monsters on their own, then Heroic campaign guidelines are probably appropriate, with PCs being at least Standard (75 Points plus 75 Maximum Points in Disadvantages) or even Powerful (100 Points plus 100 Maximum Points in Disadvantages).

On the other hand, if the desired effect is horror, particularly Survival Horror, and the PCs will simply be trying to stay alive long enough to find some sort of haven and build a new life for themselves, then the campaign guidelines should

COMMON FICTIONAL CAUSES OF ZOMBIEISM

Medical experimentation (virii/bacteria, tri-oxin gas, nanobots...)

Toxic waste

Alien influence (from an actual species)

Alien energies or substances (radiation from meteors, comets...)

Magical curses (perhaps Mother Gaia is angry, or God is tired of sinners and chose zombies instead of a flood this time)

Opening of Hell or other Afterworld as appropriate (or simply, "Hell Was Full")

Bite of the Sumatran Rat-Monkey

Magical interment grounds (haunted cemeteries, evil mausoleums...)

be set at Normal with PCs playing at best Skilled (25 + 25) or Competent (50+50) Normals. In either case, GM should be fairly generous with experience points for characters who survive multiple early encounters, allowing them to become hardened veterans of the zombie wars and take on leadership roles as the adventures continue.

It's entirely in-genre for some characters to have little to no truly useful "PC-type" skills at first, especially those designed as "ordinary people thrust into extraordinary circumstances." These characters should instead buy copious amounts of Luck, Combat Luck, and the like to reflect their remarkable good fortune in surviving several dangerous situations despite their apparent ordinariness. Other good "everyday people" skills for players who want their PCs to begin the game as "ordinary people" include: a couple of slots of Cramming (to cover unexpected situations or "you know, I used to do this when I was a kid" skills); large amounts of Presence that only protects against Presence Attacks (perhaps only for specific situations — people who have encountered zombies many times may eventually become inured to them, but still be susceptible to Presence Attacks from, say, chainsaw-wielding maniacs who aren't undead); or limited charges of particular abilities (extra Strength, Hand-To-Hand Attack dice, or Running, for example) that are only accessible to the PC in hysterical "life or death" situations (defined as such by the GM, of course).

THE STANDARD HERO SYSTEM ZOMBIE

20 STR	10 DEX	10 CON	10 BOD
5 INT	0 EGO	13 PRE	6 COM
4 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	6 REC
0 END	0 STUN		

Abilities: Automaton (Does Not Bleed, No Hit Locations, Takes No STUN); -4" Running; 0 END on STR, Running, Leaping and Swimming; +2 PD (Only vs. Slashing or Piercing Attacks); +2 PD (Only vs. Piercing Attacks); Damage Resistance (8 PD/2ED); Total Life Support (Including Immortal); IR Vision; Climbing 11-; Stealth 11-; WF: Common Melee, Common Missile

75+ Disadvantages: Affected By Necromancy; Machine Intelligence; Reduced Running (2"); Reduced Leap (1")



Zombies In The Hero System

The accompanying text box has the basic character sheet for a typical zombie in *HERO System* terms (for a full, detailed character sheet, see page 127 of *The HERO System Bestiary*). While it works fine for most settings and scenarios, GMs who plan to use zombies as the primary threat in a Post-Apocalyptic Horror campaign may want to consider the following variations.

ZOMBIE POWERS

Here are some additional powers zombies may have.

Barrier Breaking

Zombies are tireless and persistent, and some can contort their bodies or otherwise manipulate themselves to fit through small cracks, spaces, and passages. Others are adept at simply battering down doors and other obstacles. In game terms, zombies with these abilities might have the *Contortionist* Skill or a Limited form of Tunneling that requires Extra Time.

Climbing

In many settings, zombies are insufficiently coordinated to climb at all, and might have a Physical Limitation to reflect this. In others, however, they're remarkably good climbers who can scale walls with ease (they have the *Climbing* Skill, or perhaps a Limited form of Clinging).

Contagion

In some stories (particularly Post-Apocalyptic ones), zombies create more zombies by infecting the living with their bites, scratches, or other unpleasantness. In many campaigns the GM can just handwave this effect; after all, it's not very horrifying if it's possible to survive the zombie's bite just because it rolled badly. However, others may want to list the following power on the zombie's character sheet:

Zombie's Bite: *Major Transform 7d6 (human into zombie; heals in manner specified by GM), Trigger (when zombie bites victim; activating Trigger takes no time, Trigger immediately automatically resets; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (262 Active Points); All Or Nothing (-½), Limited Target (humans; -½), Only When Bite or Similar Attack Does BODY (-½). Total cost: 105 points.*

Continuing Function

Zombies are able to continue functioning despite injuries that would kill an ordinary person, and this ability is reflected in their *Takes No STUN* Power. Some zombies continue functioning even beyond the point where they could be reasonably considered "destroyed" — for example, a zombie's head might continue to "live" after its decapitation as long as the brain itself remained intact, snapping at passersby and trying to moan and growl (though much more quietly without lungs attached).

Disconcerting Moan

Zombies occasionally give off a terrible, low moaning sound that terrifies humans or drives them to distraction or madness. You can simulate this ability by giving the zombies a Drain PRE power that affects anyone close enough to hear them. Battle-hardened zombie fighters usually develop an immunity to this effect (Power Defense with a Limitation).

Group Mind

In some zombie stories zombies that join forces with other zombies become smarter. They're never going to win any Nobel Prizes, but they're a lot cleverer than they are on their own — and what's worse, sometimes if one of them learns something, they all learn it as long as they remain together. In *HERO System* terms you can build this sort of "group mind" as extra INT that only works when near a defined number of other zombies, plus a Variable Power Pool to buy Skills in Limited circumstances.

Hiding

In some stories zombies can be as quiet as the grave and conceal themselves in hiding places they seem to have an instinctual knack for finding. Then they wait for living prey to come by and fall victim to their undead ambush. In *HERO System* terms they buy up their Stealth roll and/or buy Concealment, or may even have abilities based on Limited Invisibility.

Regeneration

Some zombies are not only hard to hurt, they heal a lot faster than the living do. You can buy this as Healing Regeneration, or in some settings Healing BODY that's Triggered by consuming human flesh.

Retained Intelligence

Although most zombies are mindless, subhuman creatures, there are those who have retained some or all of the intelligence and skills they had while alive. In most cases of this sort, they also retain their own free will (in game terms, their original EGO and INT) while gaining the other superhuman traits of the undead. In some instances this is only true of one zombie, or a small percentage of the population, who lead the terrifying hordes. These Leader Zombies may also be able to mentally control the rest of their companions.

Smell Of The Dead

The putrid bodies of the undead in some versions give off an overpowering stench, which you can represent this way:

Disgusting Stench: *Change Environment* 2" radius (stench), -4 to CON Rolls, -6 to Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls, Multiple Combat Effects, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (84 Active Points); Always On (-½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 42 points.

Disgusting Stench: Add to *Change Environment* -2 CV, -2 to DEX-based Rolls, -2 to INT-based Rolls, and -2 to PRE-based Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½) (68 Active Points); Always On (-½), No Range (-½) Only Applies If Victim Fails CON Roll (-½). Total cost: 27 points.



THEY'RE JUST ANIMALS, FOR GOD'S SAKE

In some zombie stories, zombies are unintelligent, operating on pure instinct and mindlessly seeking to quench their terrible hunger; they learn little or nothing from their encounters with humans. In others they may start out as mindless but seem to learn from their experiences, perhaps utilizing intelligence on levels similar to bright animals like dogs or monkeys. A more horrifying variation is one where individual zombies are sub-sentient automata, but when they gather in groups a sort of collective mind develops that allows the mob to act with greater intelligence.

Another spooky variation on the group mind concept allows zombies in one area to learn from an encounter *and pass that knowledge on to the entire zombie population*, even those not present at the time the lesson was learned. Perhaps their uncanny moans are in fact a form of pseudo-telepathic communication. Zombies that get smarter with each successive encounter or by succeeding generations help keep PCs on their toes and avoid complacency.

Superhuman Senses

Zombies often have senses beyond normal human ranges. Some that might be appropriate include Nightvision, Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Enhanced Perception with some or all of their Senses, and various Detects bought as part of the Smell/Taste Group (such as Detect Living Beings, Detect Blood, or even Detect Fear). These might even have the *Tracking* Sense Modifier to make them even more dangerous.

Combat Skills

Some zombies gain remarkable hand-to-hand fighting abilities as part of their creation process, especially in somewhat-sillier games where they're expected to serve as minions or agents. Mexican zombies frequently have considerable wrestling skills, and it's said that some zombies in the Far East are also masters of esoteric forms of kung fu.

ZOMBIE WEAKNESSES

Here are some additional vulnerabilities zombies may have.

Physical Limitation: even 1 BODY damage to the brain (Hit Location 3) instantly kills the zombie (Frequently, Fully Impairing): 20 points.

Physical Limitation: Mute (Frequently, Slightly Impairing): 10 points.

Physical Limitation: Cannot Climb (even ladders) (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing): 10 points.

Psychological Limitation: Pyrophobia (fear of fire) (Common, Strong [assume the zombie has an 11-roll to overcome this, but it has to roll each Phase it's in the presence of fire]): 15 points.

Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire attacks (Common): 20 points.

THE ETERNAL DEBATE: FAST OR SLOW

The stereotypical zombie of Hollywood until the last decade or so was a slow-moving, ponderous creature. The zombies of *White Zombie* (1932), the first movie to feature them, moved slowly because they'd been hypnotized into near-catatonia by Bela Lugosi so they'd work unceasingly in the cane fields, and this became more or less the standard for the genre. The classic *Night Of The Living Dead*, godfather of the modern

zombie genre, underlined this particular feature with its columns of lurching, rigor-mortis-ridden corpses creeping up on the hapless humans hiding out in their boarded-up house.

While Romero-style zombies remain the stereotypical norm in most moviegoers' minds, in recent years modern young directors have decided to increase the terror by ramping up the physical abilities of the undead hordes, from the raging infected of *28 Days Later* to the hyperactive corpses of the 2004 remake of *Dawn Of The Dead*. While some argue that it's tough to be frightened by creatures who can be escaped at a leisurely trot, others decry the loss of the cool visuals of armies of lurching, limb-dragging monsters slowly but unceasingly spreading like a living disease.

The standard *HERO System* zombie is undeniably slow by player characters' standards, with a 2 SPD and only 2" of base running. A GM who prefers a more sprightly corpse can raise either or both of those numbers to his taste.

Large groups of slow zombies can of course always be made somewhat more dangerous by improving their Stealth and/or Concealment rolls, allowing them to attack from surprise more frequently, or by assuming that zombies always have a Held Action available. Groups of zombies who individually only have SPD 2 can also be made more unpredictable and deadly by varying their active Phases — have 1/6 of the zombie horde act on *each* Segment and then again six Segments later (so a group of six zombies would individually go on Segments 1 and 7, 2 and 8, and so forth). Similarly, when dealing with small numbers of zombies, GMs can increase the uncertainty (and therefore the ease of frightening the PCs) by rolling a d6 for every zombie each Turn, using that Segment and six Segments later as that zombie's SPD. Each Turn the zombie's Phases would be in different Segments, making for a very unpredictable combat.

In the default *Zombie World* setting, zombies who are created by infection from other zombies are *fast*, with a full Running 6" and the same SPD and DEX they had pre-mortem. Zombies who rise after death by other means are limited to the standard Running 2" and a maximum of DEX 10 no matter how agile they were before dying.

REVELATIONS 1001



“And I saw the beast and the kings of the Earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army.”

—Revelation 19:19

By the year 1001 AD, as Europe slowly recovered from what historians would call the Dark Ages, the fragments of what had once been the Roman Empire had coalesced into two rival empires that each claimed to be its direct and worthy descendants. Of course, the true power in Europe of the time was the Christian Church, itself divided primarily into two sects, Catholic and Orthodox, that maintained a careful and tenuous peace. At the same time, the Muslim states had expanded to connect the Atlantic and Indian Oceans in a massively powerful, wealthy, and scientifically-advanced empire, while in far-off lands other empires controlled vast swaths of territory of which the Western world had only the barest hints. Few suspected the world itself would soon be turned upside-down by the rising of a powerful prince among the tribes of the Caspian valleys, one who claimed miraculous powers and divine inspiration while bending all in his path to his demonic will. But there are signs, for those who know how to read them. After all, *Mundus Senescit*, as the monks say — “the world grows tired.”

Revelations 1001 is a Post-Apocalyptic mini-setting/scenario featuring the “real world” of 1001 AD, but a version of the real world that presumes the events described in the Book of Revelation are more or less literally coming true approximately one thousand years after the birth of Jesus Christ. Players will be put to the test against a man who may or may not be the genuine Anti-Christ, who commands forces of Satanic darkness and evil as they try to survive the End Times, the Biblically-prophecied end of the world. As opposed to most of the settings described in this book, *Revelations 1001* is less Post-Apocalyptic than *Mid-Apocalyptic*; the PCs are thrust into the events surrounding the end of the world, where only their courage and faith can help save all of humanity.

Player characters in *Revelations 1001* are built on the Standard Heroic point total of 75 Base Points + 75 Character Points from Disadvantages. Normal Characteristic Maxima apply by default, and in fact the GM might even increase the odds against the PCs by making them start with 8s in their Primary Characteristics instead of 10s.

BACKGROUND

The rise of Prince Kor in the east, and the armies he raises with his powerful and charismatic speeches (and those of Radhames, his prophet who goes before him), signal the beginning of the end times. Everywhere he speaks of his desire for peace and his intentions of raising up the common man, overthrowing the kings and the bishops who have so terribly misruled the world and ignored the suffering of the poor. Thousands upon thousands flock to his banner, few noticing that not all of the soldiers who ride under his colors are precisely human.

Most people finally become aware of the impending cataclysm with the awful arrival of Kor’s armies. Few knew of the Biblical prophesy that the Anti-Christ would come after Christ had reigned for a thousand years, and fewer still knew that the coming year was supposedly the thousandth since Christ’s time on Earth. After all, use of *Anno Domini* as a timekeeping system was largely confined to Christian monks in France and Europe, who followed the tradition of writers like the Venerable Bede in dating from the birth of Christ (a date that had been worked out by Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century). Monks and some churches had largely settled on *Anno Domini* by the ninth century, but outside of the church most people counted time in Regnal Years (the xth year of the reign of King Whoever).

The GM should always keep in mind that this is an apocalyptic story — alongside all the political maneuvering, the sweep of armies, and the forces of darkness gathering, he should never let the players forget that *the world is apparently coming to an end*. As the campaign progresses, they should see ever-increasing signs that the old order is falling apart. The weather should get progressively crazier, starting with unseasonable temperatures and storms, then gradually building to floods, earthquakes, meteor showers, and pretty much whatever else the GM thinks works well — with no particular explanation. Governments should collapse, cities be swallowed up by sandstorms or rising waters, plagues should strike randomly. Wild animals should lose their natural fear of man, and beasts thought by the learned to be mythical should turn out to be horribly real. Everywhere the PCs should see lines or small camps of refugees seeking safe harbor.

A BRIEF DISCLAIMER

Revelations 1001 is designed to be an entertaining and thought-provoking fantasy setting for *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* players, nothing more. Every effort has been made to treat Christianity and the other religions portrayed in this setting with the utmost respect, and no offense is intended towards anyone’s individual beliefs.

Furthermore, though many of the events of the setting are at least somewhat consistent with the prophecies of the Book of Revelation, the setting does not require GMs or players to make any particular assumptions about the nature of the universe or the reality of any particular religious beliefs. In every case, decisions about what’s really going on in *Revelations 1001* are entirely up to the individual GM, who should not feel constrained by any particular outside belief system. Perhaps God is on the side of righteous PCs and their eventual victory is predetermined, or perhaps not. Magic or miracles that are specifically Christian in nature might be more effective than those from other cultures against demonic beings or powers, or they may not, according to the GM’s desires.

THE WORLD OF 1001 AD: A GAZETTEER

Here's a brief summary of the major world powers in 1001 AD. Obviously, a full treatise on the period is outside the scope of this book, but GMs and players can easily do as much research as they like on these times.

WESTERN EUROPE

This is the most likely location for Revelations 1001 campaigns, since it's the primary center for Christianity in the period and the locations and history are most likely to be at least somewhat familiar to most players.

The Holy Roman Empire

This gigantic state currently consists of most of the lands conquered by Charlemagne in the ninth century, ruled by the Emperor Otto III (b. 980) from Rome and supported through the Catholic Church by the Pope. The Empire currently spans most of modern-day Italy (except for Sicily, which is under Arab control), Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia, as well as parts of modern Poland and France.

The Empire considers itself the direct heir of the original Roman Empire that largely dissipated by the fifth century, and in many ways venerates the old Empire as a Golden Age it tries to duplicate. After the Roman Empire came to an

end, the Catholic Church remained as the primary binding force for the various successor states in Germany, Italy, and France, and the Church supported Charlemagne's efforts to reunify Europe. To maintain its favor, after Charlemagne's death the ability to choose the Holy Roman Emperor from the various kings of the smaller states was given to the Pope, beginning a long and tortured history of political machinations. The first several Emperors were chosen from Charlemagne's direct line of descent until 962, when Otto I, king of the Franks, was selected from several contentious candidates. Otto I signed an agreement, the Diploma Ottonianum, which guaranteed the Papal States' continuing independence, and together the two institutions set about restoring Roman glory.

Otto III had been King of Germany since the age of three, but had spent his childhood as the pawn of a number of quarreling dukes and his mother, who served him as regent until her death in 991 (and was then replaced by his grandmother until his majority in 994). Otto allied himself with Pope John XV and helped him put down a Roman rebellion, for which he was made King of the Lombards. After John's death, Otto made his cousin Bruno Pope Gregory V in 996 and planned to rule a greater Empire based from Rome while continuing to put down local rebellions and efforts to install a different pope. In 998 Otto returned from a trip to Germany to Rome, where Crescentius II had overthrown Gregory and installed a new Pope of his own choosing, John XVI. Otto had Crescentius killed and John blinded and mutilated, restoring his own cousin. Gregory died mysteriously in 999, and Otto installed his old tutor, Gerbert of Aurillac, as Pope Sylvester II.

The Holy Roman Empire is the most powerful state in Western Europe. It's locked in a rivalry with the Byzantine Empire to the east and is always concerned with the various encroaching Muslim empires scattered across its southern borders. The Catholic Church is the true power here, with a powerful and wealthy hierarchy of cardinals and comparatively full coffers thanks to the faithful across Europe. The relationship between Otto III (who considers himself a great warrior and faithful Catholic and prefers extended pilgrimages to various holy sites with his impressive armed retinue to sitting around administering his domain) and Sylvester (an intellectual who knows he owes his position to his student and carefully manipulates his authority to truly run the Empire) is a precarious one at best.

With Revelations 1001's divergence from actual history, Otto was on one of his frequent pilgrimages, visiting the tomb of Charlemagne in Aachen, when the initial attacks of the Anti-Christ's vanguard began to penetrate Western Europe overland through Poland in early 1001. Otto's party tried to return to Rome carrying relics from Charlemagne, but was overcome and cut down on the way. Otto's throne was contested by several of his relatives; as the campaign begins, Otto's cousin, Henry IV, Duke of Bavaria, has largely seized control, with the support of

WHERE'S THE RAPTURE?

Players and GMs may have noticed that there isn't a Rapture in the direct ascent into Heaven by living Christians before or during the "End Times," called by some denominations the Tribulation) in the Revelations 1001 setting. Neither the Catholic nor Orthodox Churches, which are the two main branches of Christianity extant in this time period, accept the Rapture as doctrine. The concept of the Rapture is largely a creation of the nineteenth century, and the term itself has only been used since 1909. Some Fundamentalist churches in the US have embraced the idea, which was truly popularized beginning in the 1970s with the publication of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and then even more so with the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.

Gamemasters who want to include the Rapture in their own versions of Revelations 1001 should do so. Perhaps the true believers in Christ are assumed physically into Heaven at midnight on December 31st, 1000 AD. The GM can decide which, if any, historical figures or NPCs go along with them. This, of course, creates some dramatic problems for the PCs — any character who consider himself a virtuous Christian has to wonder why his own faith wasn't strong enough for him to be Raptured. Or perhaps the Rapture left behind precisely the sort of true-hearted warriors the world needs to survive the Tribulation?

Keep in mind that belief in the Rapture is ahistorical for this time period. If it happens it no doubt comes as a great surprise to *everyone* involved....



Willigis, the Archbishop of Mainz and Otto's former Chancellor of the Empire. However, much of the army supports Ezzo, Count Palatine of Lotharingia and husband of Otto II's daughter Matilda. At the same time, a number of German dukes and margraves who'd been Otto's vassals began to press their own claims while simultaneously raising armies for their own defense. (Otto was fond of using foreign bishoprics as his temporary seats of government when he traveled, and therefore after his death a remarkable number of candidates believed they had legitimate claims to be his successor based on casual promises he made while in his cups.) Rome is already experiencing running pitched battles in the streets and hills even before the weather disasters begin, and the Empire is unable to mount any sort of united resistance.

Rome itself is the greatest city of Western Europe, with a population of about 35,000. (It's dwarfed by cities in other parts of the world at the time; Europe remains largely rural and underpopulated at the end of what some call the Dark Ages.) As the home to many historical sites, buildings and ruins dating back to the height of the original Empire, and the home of the Pope, it's the focus of many pilgrimages and quite wealthy as a result.

France

France, a conglomeration of smaller states ruled by lesser kings who had all owed fealty to another of the Carolingian dynasties started by Charlemagne, is currently ruled by Robert II (b.

972). Like Otto, Robert is a devout Roman Catholic (some would say "intolerant," even by the occasionally grim standards of the day) and was tutored as a child by Gerbert before he became Pope Sylvester. A talented musician, he longs for a quiet life of composing songs, hymns, and poetry; instead, the pressures of the throne weigh heavily on him and make him prone to melancholy. He was excommunicated by Pope Gregory for divorcing his first wife to marry his cousin, but after lengthy negotiations Sylvester had the first marriage annulled.

Because of this favor Robert tries very hard to keep the peace with his larger cousins — after all, France is "the Catholic Church's elder daughter," according to a saying of the day. Despite this, he's constantly pressured from below into conflicts with the Empire. Both states claim various parts of the other's lands and border disputes are common, but so far the tenuous peace has held. (In the real world, Robert would broker a successful peace with the Empire in 1023 that lasted for decades).

There are a great multitude of vassal dukes and counts below Robert II, most of whom have considerably greater temporal power and authority within their own domains, such as Mainz, Anjou, and Normandy. Indeed, there are many parts of his own country where Robert fears to travel lest he be captured and held for ransom by a duke in search of notoriety. France's domain includes the northern half of Spain and Portugal at this point, with an uneasy line of demarcation separating them from the Caliphate of Cordoba just south of Toledo and the Tagus River.

Paris, the capital of France since it was the home of the first Frankish King Clovis I in the fifth century, is growing once again in stature and importance since Robert's father Hugh Capet built his palace there. It's home to about 20,000 citizens.

England And The British Isles

The British Isles are far from the important European power they will become in the next couple of centuries. England is ruled by King Ethelred II the Unready (b. 968). (This doesn't mean "unprepared," but "without counsel," suggesting either that his advisors were inept or that he didn't listen to them.) England is currently being regularly raided by Danes and other Vikings, who have far superior ships and have taken to harassing English coastal towns for a mixture of profit and sport. Ethelred has had some success fighting them off, but has had even more buying them off with *danegeld*. He's an adequate king, good with finances, who has many enemies who are fond of spreading insulting rumors about him. Ethelred rules England from his capital of Winchester, not London (the last English king to do so), but the latter is by now the largest city in the British Isles with a population somewhere around 10,000.

Ireland's High King is Mael Sechnaill mac Domnaill, but he's only a sort of overlord, senior among the many tribal kings, in a similar fashion to the Holy Roman Empire on a much smaller scale. He's currently opposed by Brian Boru, King of Munster, who intends to join all the Irish tribes into a single nation (and then perhaps take Scotland as well), but Brian is two years away from defeating him in Real History. Boru is a clever and aggressive warlord who in another time would go on to be a fabled leader.

Scotland's king is Kenneth III. He killed his predecessor and cousin Constantine III in 997, and his comparatively poor kingdom continues to be preoccupied with battles between his various relatives.

Denmark And Norway

Both of these nations are currently ruled by Sweyn I "Forkbeard" (b. 960). His father had been the first of his line to adopt Christianity, but he himself has no fondness for the Church though he pays it lip service. He's known for his hot temper and ability to hold a grudge, and he's been harassing England with constant raids in search of *danegeld* (the money paid by the English to persuade the raiders to leave) for several years now. His navy's control of the North Seas is nearly absolute, and Sweyn is renowned throughout Northern Europe as a fierce and brilliant tactical leader. (In Real History Sweyn would succeed in conquering England in 1013 and die in battle there the next year.)

The Rest Of Western Europe

Sweden is a center of trade in the North, served by the Viking raiders and controlling most of modern Finland and the northern seas, while exploring deep into northeastern Russia. It's been partially Christianized thanks to extensive efforts by missionaries beginning in the ninth century, but the majority of the people still hold their pagan beliefs.

Iceland was settled by the Norse in the ninth century, and over the next century was populated largely by Norwegian fishermen and Irish slaves taken in Viking raids. The government, called the Icelandic Free State, converted formally and peacefully to Christianity just last year.

Greenland is home to a small number of settlers (maybe 3,000 in total), mostly Norwegian or Icelandic refugees. They're currently led by Erik the Red, father of Leif Ericsson. Leif himself left on his journey to the New World some months ago.

EASTERN EUROPE

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire was created by the partition of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, when Constantine the Great chose Byzantium as the new capital of his eastern half of the Empire, renaming it Constantinople. Constantine became a Christian in 313 AD, and the churches he sponsored and supported eventually grew into the Orthodox branch of Christianity. As the Roman Empire decayed, many of its traditions continued within Greek-speaking Byzantium, and gradually Constantinople became the center of a new empire spanning Greece, Turkey, and most of the Mediterranean coastline of North Africa. Its power waxed and waned over the centuries, but beginning in the ninth century the Macedonian line of emperors led a general renaissance in both military and economic might, as well as a conscious effort to preserve and restore the greatness of early Greece and Rome.

Since 976 the Byzantine Empire has been ruled by Basil II (b. 958), the ninth Emperor in the Macedonian line. A legendary warrior and horseman, Basil fought great campaigns against the Muslims in Syria, and is currently warring against the Bulgarians... until the forces of the Anti-Christ reach his eastern border and draw his attention.

Constantinople is the largest and mightiest city in all of Christendom, with over 300,000 inhabitants. It controls all the trade on the Black and Aegean Seas as well as the most commonly used land routes between Europe and Asia.

Kievan Rus

The nation of Rus, forerunner of modern Russia, is led by Vladimir I the Great (and later Saint), born 958. Vladimir is the younger and illegitimate son of Sviatoslov I, King of Kiev. On his father's death, his brother Yaropolk became King and began a war with his other brother Oleg. Vladimir fled the battle and moved to Scandinavia, where he raised an army largely comprised of Viking mercenaries. Between 978 and 980 he took all of Kiev by force while Yaropolk was killed by mercenaries on the road to Vladimir's castle to negotiate a peace treaty. Vladimir was at the time a pagan who worshipped Perun, god of thunder. He converted to Orthodox Christianity in 987 as part of his newly-created alliance with Basil II. He made peace with his neighbors and appointed the various princes around him to an advisory council while putting his sons in charge of each of his principalities.

ties. Before his conversion he was well known for having dozens of pagan wives and countless children, most of whom remained loyal to him for his kindnesses. Afterwards he became a great financial patron of the Church and enjoyed good relations with both the Byzantines and the Pope while building Kievan Rus into a major European power. If there is to be any sort of formal alliance between the two Christian Empires, Vladimir is perhaps the likeliest choice to broker it.

The Turks

While modern-day Turkey is still part of the Byzantine Empire at this time, the Turkic people are currently a loose collection of tribes to the north of the Black and Caspian Seas. The Seljuk Turks migrated south into Persia, where they became allies of the Samanids in the tenth century. However, they were conquered along with the Samanids and became part of both the Qarakhanid and Ghaznavid Empires. The Oguz Turks who did not migrate south and east but stayed in present-day western Kazakhstan are the people from whom the Anti-Christ, Prince Kor, rose.

Poland And The Baltics

Poland became Catholic in 966 with the baptism of Miesko I, the first Duke of Poland, who had recently united a number of Slavic and Baltic tribes there. It's currently ruled by Miesko's son, Boleslaw I. In the last few years Boleslaw has been extremely successful militarily, adding Pomerania and Silesia to his territory and expanding Poland's control down to the northern base of the Carpathian Mountains. In 1000, Otto III visited Boleslaw and formed an alliance with him, which still holds today. His forces are a key barrier to the Anti-Christ's onslaught, and will have to be dealt with by him early on.

Hungary

The Kingdom of Hungary is ruled by Stephen I (b. 975). Son of a Magyar prince, Stephen was baptized as a young boy by St. Adalbert of Prague, who foresaw great things from the child. Stephen is also a great supporter of the church and ally of Pope Sylvester, who sent to him a golden crown marked with an apostolic cross on Christmas Eve of the year 1000. (This might make a useful holy artifact; in Real History it was stored at Fort Knox for 35 years.) Stephen is beloved by his people and fond of going out among them in disguise to learn what they really think and need.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD

The Arab world of 1001 AD was ruled by a number of competing dynastic caliphates, each claiming to be the legitimate successor to Muhammad. There are five primary dynasties extant at this point and dozens of smaller ones, with many of the smaller owing fealty to one of the larger in a similar manner to the European duchies and minor kingdoms. For information about Cordoba and Moorish Spain, please see Al-Mansur under *Allies And Enemies*.

Ghaznavids

The Ghaznavid dynasty is led by Mahmud (b. 971) and is perhaps the most powerful single nation in the world at this time. His territory

includes Afghanistan as well as some of modern-day Iran and Pakistan. He's the first Moslem ruler to call himself Sultan, separating himself from the previous Caliphates. An aggressive religious zealot, he forced many Hindus to convert at swordpoint. Mahmud is a gifted general who greatly respected and supported both art and science when he could. He could make an outstanding potential ally, if Christian PCs can get past his natural mistrust of their religion (and his strong desire to convert them).

Fatimids

Led by the Caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, the Fatimid Dynasty controls northern Egypt and Tunisia. Precariously balanced between the Zirids to the west, the Qarmatians to the east, and the Byzantine Empire north across the Mediterranean, Al-Hakim is a practiced, cool-headed diplomat who at this time shows no signs of the madness that would later overtake him in the real world. The Fatimids are generally tolerant of other faiths, including the many Jews and Coptic Christians living within their territory.

Qarmatians

This caliphate split off from the Abbasids about a century ago, and though their influence has faded they still retain control of the majority of the Arabian Peninsula. Compared to the other caliphates, they are poor, have limited military resources, and spend a great deal of time on intrafamily struggles.

Buwayhids

A confederation of emirs who between them ruled some of modern Iran and Iraq south of the Caspian Sea; they control the city of Baghdad. A series of hereditary princes descended from landed mercenary lord, they have a complicated interlocking series of dynasties. Baghdad is a major cultural and trade center of the Middle East with a population over 125,000, but it's becoming stagnant after the golden ages of centuries before.

Ziyarids

This dynasty controls much of modern Iran and is led by Caliph Qabus, an ally of Mahmud. Though officially they acknowledge the Buwayhid Caliphs as their leaders, Qabus is known to be independent and stubborn. His court scientist is the brilliant mathematician, anthropologist and astronomer Al-Biruni, who at the young age of 27 has already written dozens of important scholarly works.

RUSSIA AND ASIA

Aside from Kiev (see above), most of the rest of modern Russia is still populated by Stone Age tribes of hunters and fishers, such as the Samoyeds, the Tungus, and other Paleo-Siberians. They are fierce and hardy warriors with shamanistic beliefs, but little else is known of them and their numbers are few. North of the Khitan Empire one can find various feuding Mongol tribes waiting for the unifying agent that forms them into a mighty army.



Khitan Empire

The Khitan Empire controls most of northern China, as well as Manchuria and much of Mongolia, and is ruled by Emperor Shengzong. A Buddhist and accomplished cavalry man, Shengzong has mostly been fighting campaigns against the Song Empire to the south, leaving the administration of the Empire to his mother, Empress Xiao (who is ancient at 68). The Khitan are master horsemen and hold sway over vast steppe territories inhabited by smaller and more primitive tribes that pay them tribute.

The Song Empire Of China

The Song Empire of southern China is ruled by Zhenzong, not to be confused with his bitter rival above. A pudgy but energetic man in his early thirties, and a Taoist who's dismissive of the shamanistic folk religion of his people, Zhenzong is methodical, even slow sometimes, but when he makes up his mind he doesn't change it easily. Under his rule (and that of his two immediate predecessors) the Song has introduced such advances as paper money, organized rice cultivation (necessary to feed his 100 million subjects), and incendiary explosive projectiles using gunpowder. The Song's capital city of Kaifeng is the second largest in the world at this time (next to Cordoba).

Tibet

The great Tibetan empires of the eighth and ninth centuries have fallen. Tibet is largely a land of small states and remote monasteries where monks study Buddhism in secret.

India

Under constant pressure from periodic invasions by Islamic caliphates, the Middle Kingdoms of India continue to hold fast throughout the Indian subcontinent, where different regions are ruled by various small dynasties and Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism jostle against each other. The most powerful and advanced of the Middle Kingdoms are the Chalukyas along the southwestern coast of the Arabian Sea. Chalukya is ruled from the capital city of Manyakheta by Satyasraya, whose father Tailapa led a great renaissance of the Chalukyas. Its primary rival is the Cholas to the south, who control the southern tip of modern India and Sri Lanka.

AFRICA

Africa is a land of mystery and romance for most of the Western world, and one largely outside the scope of this setting. The northern coast of Africa, which is most familiar to Christendom, is described above under the Islamic World, but there are a few other areas and cultures of note further south.

The Islamic Zirids are a Moslem Berber dynasty ruling modern-day Algeria, currently led by Badis ibn Mansur. He's a weak ruler constantly facing challenges from his own family and his army, many of whom move to Andalusia to launch their attacks. The Tuaregs, related by both history and language to the Berbers, are a trans-Saharan nomadic people whose caravans of camels trade from Saudi Arabia to Libya and then to points farther south.

According to legend (which has some apparent grounding in fact), Ethiopia is ruled by the evil queen Yodit at this time. Yodit, or Gudit in some accounts, is a warrior queen of an inner African tribe. She conquered Ethiopia, murdered the entire royal family of the ruling Axum tribe, and now persecutes the Christians who lived there. She might make an excellent ally to the Anti-Christ, giving him a strong foothold on the African continent.

The Bantus are a collection of tribes with common languages ranging from Zimbabwe down to South Africa. Little is known of them, but they do trade with Arabs of North Africa.

THE AMERICAS

For the most part, the Americas are also outside the scope of this setting — there's certainly plenty of crises going on between Europe, Asia, and northern Africa to keep players busy. However, an enterprising GM might want to include a transoceanic journey in search of some mystical macguffin as part of the campaign, and the native American cultures of the period have plenty of their own myths and legends worth exploring.

Various tribes under the umbrella term of Mississippian (because most of them are descended from earlier tribes that flourished in the Mississippi River Valley) live in the east and southeast of North America. Most are mound-builders and trade in networks that range as far west as the Rockies. They have no written language and are almost entirely pre-Bronze or Iron Ages in their technology, though they're skilled farmers who usually have complex centralized agricultural systems. The Ancient Pueblo people live in small villages from southern modern-day Utah down into northern Mexico, in dwellings ranging from pit houses in small valleys to sandstone dwellings built into the walls of cliffs and only accessible by rope ladders or dangerous climbs.

Far to the south in modern Central America, the once-great Mayan civilization is in a state of decay. It no longer builds the massive stone cities that marked its golden age several centuries earlier. However, sizable cities like Chichén Itzá, Mayapan, and Uxmal still thrive along the southern shores of the Caribbean and the Yucatan Peninsula. The Mayans have an elaborate writing system that they use to detail their myths and daily lives on massive stone stelae, and to record their trade in cacao, jade, and gold with other smaller tribes. To their west are the more primitive Toltec tribes of southern Mexico, who are some centuries away from organizing themselves into the Aztec Empire.

OCEANIA

It's unlikely that any stories in this setting will involve the aboriginal natives of Oceania, but GMs who are interested can investigate the historical pasts of the tribes of Australia, the brave canoe fishermen of the Polynesian islands, or the Maori of New Zealand.

The Anti-Christ

Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders...

—2 Thessalonians 2:9

Prince Kor born in a small town just north of the Caspian Sea, in modern-day Kazakhstan, the land which in Biblical times was called “Gog and Magog.” His father was Yugor, a chieftain in one of the smaller proto-Turkic tribes descended from the Khazars, and his mother was a slave woman named Yola. Kor's people were skilled horsemen and cattle farmers, and their culture glorified battle; they preyed on other tribes and warred periodically with the Bulgars and the more civilized Jewish Khazars to the west. Kor's people are generally shamanist and worship the sky-god Tengri, though in recent years many of them have adopted a religion that venerates Kor himself and claim that Kor has slain Tengri and taken his place.

Kor had a largely unremarkable childhood, but he showed interest and skill in administering his father's lands and was soon given responsibilities for overseeing the smaller outlying farms where cattle were raised. According to some stories, Kor was injured terribly when he and his horse were caught in a landslide, and he lay near death for many days, crying out frequently as he apparently hallucinated. Some suggest it was during this time that some sort of foreign spirit or devil entered into the young man. What is certainly true is that after his recovery from his terrible injuries, stories spread about the remarkable powers he began to show. He regularly predicted future events, and somehow knew many unspoken things about people around him. He was known to confront others with his knowledge of terrible things they'd done — infidelity to their wives, stealing, even murder — but told people that he forgave them for these things, and kept those secrets to himself. At the same time, he began to give speeches to the poor farmers, soldiers, and horsemen, describing their plights with perfect sympathy and promising that if they would follow him he'd lead them to great riches. Yugor grew angry at the attention his son was getting, and called on Kor to attend him at his home. But Yugor suddenly became greatly ill, and on his deathbed announced instead that he bequeathed all of his authority, wealth, and wives to Kor.

Over the next few months, Kor gathered an army, first drawing on the various smaller tribes of the Caspian valley and then extending his reach to the Bulgars, Goths, and Slavic tribes to his west and north. Two of his earliest followers were Radhames, a Bulgar with quick wits and a silver tongue who began to travel around Asia spreading the word of Kor's greatness and inevitable victory, and a mysterious being in robes known only as the Beast, who became the general of Kor's ever-increasing army. With their aid, Kor conquered every small nation in his path to the eastern edge of Europe, usually with minimal violence as his hypnotic calls for peace

caused many opposing soldiers to lay down their arms and join him of their own will. When he was opposed, observers of the battlefield noticed that the warriors he led were frequently joined by fighters of great savagery and strength whose appearance was only barely human. Descriptions of soldiers standing seven feet tall, with yellow eyes and grey, warty skin who fought like animals soon began to filter back to the halls of Byzantium.

Once his plans of conquest were truly in motion, Kor retired with his closest aides to a small temple consecrated to no known god in a dark Armenian wood. There Kor summoned forth four mysterious horsemen, skeletal riders with arcane weapons. These he sent out on secret missions to undermine his enemies' forces, and then he prepared himself for outright war against all of Christendom.

His army, which had grown to tremendous size, first faced the vanguard of the Byzantine army on the shores of the Black Sea. The Byzantines were understandably astonished at the appearance of their opponents — but their astonishment was nothing compared to their utter terror when great beasts suddenly appeared, climbing from the water or thundering across the hills and plains. The Byzantine forces were routed almost effortlessly; only a handful of survivors made it back to Constantinople to report the disastrous loss of so many men at the hands of a force apparently led by the Devil himself.

Prince Kor is not satisfied with simply defeating Constantinople, of course — he intends to rule the entire world. Ever since his recovery from his



injuries, there's been a force inside him pushing him ever onward to new heights of glory, a force he himself cannot quite put a name to. As the months and years of war pass and he piles up victories, this intangible pressure will push him towards the Middle East and his greatest victory: destroying the forces assembled against him in the mountains near Jerusalem. And then he'll raze the city, destroy every building standing in it, and force the world to acknowledge his superiority over the Abrahamic God and every other god that might exist. There are times when he feels he's only a tool of larger, invisible forces acting behind the scenes; but those times are rare, and usually swamped within his own mind by his own mad pride.

PRINCE KOR, THE ANTI-CHRIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
21	STR	11	13-	Lift 467 kg; 4d6 [2]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
21	CON	22	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
30	EGO	40	15-	ECV: 10
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
20	COM	5	13-	
10	PD	6		Total: 10 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 10 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	0		
42	END	0		
42	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 212

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers END

114	<i>He Doeth Great Wonders:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 50 base + 40 control cost, No Skill Roll Required (+1); all slots Limited Special Effect (cannot create "divine" effects or powers; -¼)	var
23	<i>Demonic Miracles:</i> Elemental Control, 70-point powers; all Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	
27	1) <i>He Maketh Fire Come Down From Heaven:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (8" Radius; +¼), Indirect (always from above; +¼); Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	7
35	2) <i>He Deceiveth Them That Dwell On The Earth:</i> Mind Control 7d6, Area Of Effect (19" Cone; +¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	4
31	3) <i>Shall Shew Great Signs And Wonders:</i> Healing BODY 4d6, Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	3
15	<i>Those Who Bear His Mark:</i> Mind Control +4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Limited Class Of Minds (only vs. Those wearing the Mark of the Beast; -1)	
10	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)	0
35	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat; Diminished Sleeping: no need to sleep; Immunity: all terrestrial diseases, biowarfare agents, poisons, and chemical warfare agents; Longevity: Immortality; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat)	0
10	<i>Powerful Mind:</i> Mental Defense (16 points total)	0
17	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Power Defense (17 points)	0

Perks

10	Fringe Benefit: Head of State of a single nation
15	Money: Filthy Rich
var	Followers (see text)

Talents

20	Universal Translator 15-
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Skills

20	+2 Overall
13	Animal Handler (Aquatic Animals, Birds, Bovines, Camels, Canines, Dragons, Equines, Felines, Insects And Anthropoids, Raptors, Reptiles And Amphibians, Ursine) 17-
3	Bribery 17-
3	Bureaucratics 17-
3	Concealment 15-
3	Conversation 17-
3	Disguise 15-
4	Gambling (Dice Games, Sports Betting) 15-
3	High Society 17-
3	Interrogation 17-
5	KS: Biblical Prophecy 17-
6	AK: The World 18-
3	Oratory 17-
3	Seduction 17-
3	Sleight Of Hand 13-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Tactics 15-
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Javelins and Thrown Spears, Staffs, Whips

Total Powers And Skills Cost: 454

Total Cost: 666

75+ Disadvantages

15	Distinctive Features: Infernal Aura (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Enraged: by truly good and faithful who resist him (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
15	Hunted: Forces Of Light 11- (Less Pow, Public ID, Harshly Punish)
25	Psychological Limitation: Utterly Evil And Opposed To All That Is Good (Very Common, Total)
20	Psychological Limitation: Arrogant (Very Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: The Anti-Christ, 14- (Extreme; Known Only To A Small Group)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
461	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 666

Description: Prince Kor is an intimidating man, tall and lean, slightly balding and with a thick beard and bushy black eyebrows that give his face a stern demeanor even when he's at rest. His pupils are nearly colorless, with only the faintest blue tint to distinguish them from the white. On the back of his left hand is a large wine-colored birthmark shaped vaguely like a goat's head, with two horns and a beard if looked at from the right angle.

Prince Kor frequently dresses all in white, with opulently-large earrings of gold and an inverted gold pentagram on a chain around his neck.

WHY 666?

Theories abound as to why the number "666" represents the Beast and the Anti-Christ, but two are most favored. Some Biblical scholars suggest that the number stands as a form of code that believers at the time would have recognized as referring to a specific figure as the Anti-Christ, one who it would have been politically unwise or dangerous to name (Nero is a popular choice, though a significant minority favor Domitian or other historical figures).

The second and perhaps more interesting explanation is this: 7 in Hebrew numerology symbolizes "completeness" or "wholeness" as a virtue, so 777 would represent the perfect Trinity, ideal and complete in itself. Thus, 666 is incomplete, trebly "imperfect" and blasphemous, or even mutated and hideous.

The Anti-Christ's Allies

RADHAMES, THE FALSE PROPHET				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
9	STR	-1	11-	Lift 88 kg; 1½d6 [2]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
11	CON	2	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
16	COM	3	12-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	REC	0		
22	END	0		
21	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 83

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
32	<i>Lying Words And False Tongue:</i> Mind Control 8d6, Area Of Effect (14" Radius; +1¼), Difficult To Dispel (x2 Active Points; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Incantations (complex; -½), Requires An Oratory Roll (subject to Skill Versus Skill contests; -¾), Does Not Provide Mental Awareness (-¼)	0

23	<i>Cannot Be Killed By Ordinary Means:</i> Healing BODY 1d6 (Regeneration: 1 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (stopped by burning the body), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn [Post-Segment 12]; -1¼), Self Only (-½), Does Not Work Against Damage Caused By Divine Magic (-¼)	0
10	<i>His Heart Is Hardened:</i> Mental Defense (15 points total)	0
10	<i>Infernal Luck:</i> Luck 2d6	0

Perks		
10	Money: Wealthy	
6	Reputation: Kor's Ambassador (known throughout Europe, western Asia, and surrounding regions) 11-, +3/+3d6	
Talents		
10	Fascination	
25	Universal Translator 18-	

Skills		
15	+3 with DCV	
3	Acting 15-	
3	Bribery 15-	
3	Concealment 13-	
3	Cryptography 13-	
3	Deduction 13-	
3	Disguise 13-	
3	KS: Kor And His Plans 13-	
6	KS: Political History 16-	



- 5 KS: Scripture 15-
- 13 Oratory 20-
- 13 Persuasion 20-
- 3 Riding 12-
- 9 Seduction 18-
- 3 Sleight Of Hand 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 15-
- 6 Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Desert, Urban) 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Trading 15-
- 1 WF: Blades
- 3 Traveler
- 2 1) AK: Africa 13-
- 2 2) AK: Asia 13-
- 2 3) AK: Europe 13-
- 4 4) AK: The Middle East 15-

Total Powers And Skills Cost: 246

Total Cost: 329

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Unholy Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed and Causes Major Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 20 Hunted: Forces Of Light 11- (As Pow, Public ID, Harshly Punish)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To/Afraid Of Kor (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Coward (Very Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Manipulative Opportunist (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 144 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 329

Description: Radhames is the diplomatic agent of the Anti-Christ — he who goes before his army and uses impressive oratorical Mind Control powers to lure in new followers and weaken the resolve of opposing armies. He has no offensive abilities beyond his Mind Control, but heals quickly from nearly any damage. If necessary he can summon either Behemoth or Leviathan to his aid. He is Bulgarian by birth, somewhat overweight and round-featured, with pale pink skin, and is fond of luxurious, brightly-colored robes, ostentatious jewelry, and other finery.

“Then the LORD said unto me: The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.”

—Jeremiah 14:14

THE BEAST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	STR	25	16-	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 [7]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack: 5½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
16	PD	9		Total: 16 PD (12 rPD)
16	ED	10		Total: 16 ED (12 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
13	REC	0		
60	END	0		
53	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 181

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
20	<i>Demonic Sword:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 w/STR); OIF (-½)	3
20	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 w/STR)	2
12	<i>Inhuman Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED)	
67	<i>Create The Mark:</i> Minor Transform 4d6 (target into target with beast's mark on hand or forehead, heals back via divine magic spells), Area Of Effect (9" Radius; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	0
5	<i>Demon's Eyes:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
11	<i>Demonic Mind:</i> Mental Defense (15 points total)	0
15	<i>Demonic Power:</i> Power Defense (15 points)	0
32	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Life Support (Diminished Sleeping: no need to sleep; Immunity: all terrestrial diseases, biowarfare agents, poisons, and chemical warfare agents; Longevity: Immortality; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat)	0

Perks

- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 5 Fringe Benefit: General Of Kor's Armies

Talents

- 25 Universal Translator 18-

Skills

- 20 +2 Overall
- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 9 Animal Handler (Aquatic Animals, Birds, Bovines, Camels, Canines, Dragons, Equines, Reptiles And Amphibians) 15-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bureaucrats 15-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 KS: Military History 13-
- 2 AK: Europe 11-
- 3 AK: The Middle East 13-
- 4 Navigation (Land) 14-
- 3 Oratory 15-
- 7 PS: General 17-



- 3 Riding 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 7 Tactics 15-
- 10 Two-Weapon Fighting (HTH)
- 8 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Siege Engines, Thrown Rocks, Lances, Whips

Total Powers And Skills Cost: 332

Total Cost: 513

75+ Disadvantages

- 20 Distinctive Features: Beast-Man (Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable By Commonly-Used Senses)
- 15 Distinctive Features: Unholy Aura (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 20 Hunted: Forces Of Light 11- (As Pow, Public ID, Harshly Punish)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Kor (Common, Strong)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Loves War And Battle In All Forms (Very Common, Total)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 323 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 513

Description: The Beast is a humanoid, probably at least half-demon by birth, covered with fur and with the legs of an animal (clawed and back-splayed). He's a general among the demons and commands the human forces working for Kor as well as his demonic armies. He's frequently accompanied by two gigantic hellhounds (see *The HERO System Bestiary*, page 62).

The Mark Of The Beast

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: If ANYONE worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.

—Revelation 14:9-11

The Mark of the Beast is a magical tattoo the Beast creates on followers of his master Prince Kor. The Beast can cause it to form on either the hand or forehead of anyone within 6" unless that person has some sort of divine protection. It appears differently to anyone who looks at it — it spells out the number "666" in whatever form of numeric notation the viewer is most familiar with. Thus, for Europeans who use Roman numerals, it appears as DCLXVI, while those more familiar with Greek numbers (as most Byzantines would be) or Arabic numerals see it in those forms.

The Mark serves several purposes for the Anti-Christ. First, anyone who wears it is automatically more susceptible to his own mind-controlling magics. Second, it allows for easy identification of those faithful to him, and makes disguising oneself in his ranks particularly difficult. And finally, it serves as a rallying symbol for Kor and figures heavily in his own propaganda; he enjoins his followers not to trust or believe in anyone who does not bear the Mark.

According to some Christian beliefs, anyone who bears the Mark will be denied entry to Heaven after the End Times. Others believe that if the Mark was forced upon a person against his will, he will be spared this fate as long as he never worshipped the Anti-Christ. The GM must decide which of these beliefs are true (if any).

BEHEMOTH

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
110	STR	100	31-	Lift 104.9ktons; 22d6 [11]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
28	CON	36	15-	
35	BODY	50	16-	
9	INT	-1	11-	PER Roll 11-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
22	PD	0		Total: 22 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
3	SPD	7		Phases: 4, 8, 12
28	REC	0		
56	END	0		
104	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 253

Movement: Running: 36"/72"

Cost Powers **END**

75	<i>Horns:</i> HKA 4d6 (8d6 w/STR), Area Of Effect Nonselective (One Hex; +¼)	7
20	<i>Bones As Hard As Bars Of Iron:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED)	
40	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -20"	
6	<i>Heightened Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	
40	<i>Long Reach:</i> Stretching 8"	4
5	<i>Undying:</i> Life Support (Longevity: Immortal)	

Skills

6	+3 with Move Through
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Total Powers And Skills Cost: 192

Total Cost: 445

75+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Features: Gigantic Ox (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable By Commonly-Used Senses)
10	Distinctive Features: Unholy Creature (Not Concealable; Always Noticed and Causes Major Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Enraged: In Presence of Powerful Holy Magic (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 8-
10	Hunted: Agents Of Light 11- (Less Pow, Harshly Punish)
15	Physical Limitation: Gargantuan (16" tall at shoulder, 18" long; -10 DCV, +10 to PER Rolls to perceive him) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
11	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap (11") (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Aggressive And Destructive (Common, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Kor, Rad-hames, And The Beast (Common, Total)
10	Psychological Limitation: Prone To Fighting With Leviathan (Uncommon, Strong)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
205	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 445



Description: Behemoth is a massive creature, described in the Book of Job thusly: “¹⁵Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. ¹⁶Lo now, his strength [is] in his loins, and his force [is] in the navel of his belly. ¹⁷He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his thighs are wrapped together. ¹⁸His bones [are as] strong pieces of brass; his bones [are] like bars of iron. ¹⁹He [is] the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach [unto him].”

Behemoth is one of the largest and most powerful creatures on Earth, and has been bound into service to the will of Kor, who has also given the power to command him to his agents Radhames and the Beast. The Beast frequently sends him at the head of his armies to terrify opponents, destroy fortifications, and wreak havoc before his soldiers have even closed for combat. According to legend (particularly Jewish traditions of the Midrash and Haggadah), Behemoth cannot be killed by anyone other than God or someone working directly on God's behalf, and the flesh of Behemoth will be served at a feast for the righteous after the end of the world.

Behemoth appears most like an ox, standing about thirty-five feet tall at the shoulder and about forty feet long from nose to buttocks. His tail is longer than an ordinary ox's and drags on the ground behind him. His horns span about eighteen feet across and gleam like polished steel. He's bright red in color.

LEVIATHAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
80	STR	70	25-	Lift 1.6ktons; 16d6 [8]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
28	CON	36	15-	
30	BODY	40	15-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
26	PD	10		Total: 26 PD (18 rPD)
18	ED	12		Total: 18 ED (18 rED)
3	SPD	0		Phases: 4, 8, 12
22	REC	0		
56	END	0		
84	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 242

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
Swimming: 20"/40"

Cost	Powers	END
67	<i>His Teeth Are Terrible Round About:</i> HKA 3d6 (6d6 w/STR), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½)	7
120	<i>Upon Earth There Is Not His Like:</i> Multipower, 120-point reserve	
8u	1) <i>A Flame Goeth Out Of His Mouth:</i> RKA 4d6, Area Of Effect (24" Line; +1); No Range (-½)	12
7u	2) <i>Out Of His Nostrils Goeth Smoke:</i> Darkness to Sight and Smell/Taste Groups 6" radius; No Range (-½) plus Energy Blast 3d6, Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1¼), No Normal Defense (+1), Personal Immunity (+¼); Linked (-½), No Range (-½)	11
8u	3) <i>He Maketh The Deep To Boil Like A Pot:</i> Telekinesis (55 STR), Affects Porous, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Limited Power (only versus water or objects on or in water; -½)	4
3u	4) <i>The Sea Like A Pot Of Ointment:</i> Change Environment 64" radius, -6 to Normal Sight PER Rolls, Long-Lasting (1 Day); Limited Power (only in water; -1)	6
11	<i>His Scales Cannot Be Sundered:</i> Hardened (+¼) for 26 PD/18 ED	0
22	<i>His Scales Cannot Be Sundered:</i> Damage Resistance (18 PD/18 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
30	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -15"	
6	<i>Heightened Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>His Eyes Are like The Eyelids Of The Morning:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	
13	<i>The Dragon That Is in The Sea:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing; Breathe Underwater; Longevity: Immortal; Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	0
17	<i>Long Reach:</i> Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Skills

8 +4 with Fire Breath

Total Powers And Skills Cost: 325

Total Cost: 567

75+ Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: Giant Sea Dragon (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable By Commonly-Used Senses)
- 10 Distinctive Features: Unholy Creature (Not Concealable; Always Noticed and Causes Major Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 10 Hunted: Agents Of Light 11- (Less Pow, Harshly Punish)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Gigantic (20" Long) (-10 DCV) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Cannot Leap On Land (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Aggressive And Destructive (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Kor, Radhames, And The Beast (Common, Total)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Prone To Fighting With Behemoth (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Particularly Hates Saint Peter And Anything Associated With Him (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 337 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 567

Description: Leviathan is the great beast of the sea, described most vividly in the Book of Job: ²⁵When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. ²⁶The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. ²⁷He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. ²⁸The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble. ²⁹Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. ³⁰Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. ³¹He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. ³²He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. ³³Upon Earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. ³⁴He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride."

Leviathan is a massive, wingless sea dragon, approximately fifty feet long, with scaly skin that shines in hues of green and purple. He (or, according to some legends, she) breathes fire and smoke from a vaguely crocodilian snout. Leviathan is under the mental domination of Kor, and through him can also be commanded by either the Beast, who uses him as a naval wrecking machine, or Radhames, who is fond of summoning the creature from the sea as a sign of his master's power. Levia-





than can also manipulate water around him, creating tidal whirlpools or massively destructive waves.

According to some stories in the Jewish Haggadah, Leviathan will be killed on the Day Of Reckoning and its flesh served to the righteous, while its “beautiful” skin will be stretched as a tent over the feast. Interestingly, Psalm 104:25 suggests that Leviathan is playful and friendly towards God, while Psalm 74:14 claims that God either has or will crush its head(s). (Note: In some stories Leviathan has multiple heads like a Hydra. See *The HERO System Bestiary* for the Extra Heads template if you want to add that to your campaign’s version.)

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The Book of Revelation in the Bible describes several visions of events surrounding the End Times by John of Patmos, who may or may not have been the Apostle John. Among the most notable of his visions is that of Jesus Christ opening seven “seals,” the first four of which reveal mysterious riders.

“¹And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. ²And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. ³And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. ⁴And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and

that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. ⁵And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and saw a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. ⁷And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. ⁸And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

In the Revelations 1001 setting, these four riders (who appear as skeletal figures wearing dark robes or armor, each with its own weapons and appropriately-colored horse) are servants commanded by Prince Kor. He sends them out on missions of evil to undermine the forces of his opponents and to strike at strategic defense points like major cities, armed camps, or notable churches or monasteries, as well as to gather powerful weapons and artifacts for their master. Each has unique powers, and a retinue of minor demonlings or human henchmen. They have little personality of their own; each is entirely devoted to their leader and his mission of spreading misery and death on the Earth.

The Four Horsemen ride Demon Steeds (see pages 63-64 of *The HERO System Bestiary*).

THE FOUR HORSEMEN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	STR	13	14-	Lift 600 kg; 4½d6 [5]
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
20	CON	20	13-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
15	PD	10		Total: 15 PD (12 rPD)
15	ED	11		Total: 15 ED (12 rED)
4	SPD	13		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
9	REC	0		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 139

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
30	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
12	<i>Demonic Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED)	0
45	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
7	<i>Terrifying Presence:</i> +15 PRE; Limited Power (Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks; -1)	0
6	<i>Powerful Mind:</i> Mental Defense (10 points total)	0
10	<i>Demonic Form:</i> Power Defense (10 points)	0
5	<i>Demonic Eyes:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0

Perks

- 34 *Demon Steed:* Follower built on 75 Base Points + 95 Experience Points

Skills

- 16 +2 with All Combat
- 2 Animal Handler (Equines) 14-
- 3 Breakfall 12-
- 3 AK: The World 13-
- 3 Navigation (Air, Land) 13-
- 13 Riding 17-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers And Skills Cost: 232

Total Cost: 371 (plus additional abilities listed below)

75+ Disadvantages

- 20 Distinctive Features: Horrifying Robed Skeletons (Concealable; Extreme Reaction; Detectable By Commonly-Used Senses)
- 10 Distinctive Features: Infernal Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed and Causes Major Reaction; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Loyal To Kor (Very Common, Total)

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Revel In Destruction, Chaos and Death (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: Horrifying Harbingers Of Apocalypse, 11- (Extreme)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Holy Magic (Uncommon)
- 186 Experience Points (plus additional points needed to cover unique abilities)

Total Disadvantage Points: 371 (plus additional abilities listed below)

UNIQUE POWERS

Each of the Four Horsemen share the above character sheet, but also has his own special abilities

PESTILENCE

Cost	Power
20	<i>Invisible Arrows:</i> RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Invisible Power Effects, SFX Only (Fully Invisible; +½); OIF: Magical Bow (-½)
6	<i>Bowmanship:</i> +3 OCV with <i>Invisible Arrows</i>
57	<i>Spread Disease:</i> Drain CON 2d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Ranged (+½), Sticky (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (5 Minutes, -2) plus Drain COM 1d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per 6 Hours; +1¼), No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Ranged (+½), Sticky (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (5 Minutes, -2), Linked (-½) plus RKA 1d6, No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Sticky (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (5 Minutes, -2), Linked (-½)

Total cost: +83 points.

WAR

Cost	Power
27	<i>Sword Of War:</i> HKA 2½d6 (4d6 w/STR); OIF (-½)
33	<i>Take Peace From The Earth:</i> Mind Control 10d6; Set Effect (only to provoke people to fight; -½)
9	<i>Skilled Swordsman:</i> +3 with Sword Of War

Total cost: +69 points.

FAMINE

Cost	Power
13	<i>Starvation:</i> Drain BODY, CON, DEX and STR 1d6, four Characteristics simultaneously (+1), Limited Range (6"; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (scales; -½), Can Only Be Used On A Given Target Once Per Day (-½)
6	+3 OCV with Starvation

Total cost: +19 points.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN'S POWER LEVELS

Experienced GMs may note that while powerful, the Four Horsemen are not precisely world-beaters as opponents. This is intentional; their role in the Revelations 1001 setting is to be powerful henchmen of Prince Kor, but not themselves to be unbeatable by a clever group of PCs, especially if the heroes can gang up on one or two of them. The Four Horsemen don't have to make it to the climactic battle that might signify the end of a Revelations 1001 campaign; after all, their eventual fate is not mentioned anywhere in the vague descriptions of the final confrontation at Megiddo. Their primary purpose in the story is to allow the characters to have some opportunities for incremental success along the way in thwarting the plans and activities of the Anti-Christ if the GM chooses to keep him in reserve until the story approaches its climax.

Of course, powering them up to make them still a challenge if you are running a higher-powered campaign is easy — just increase the DCs of their main attacks, their SPD, and OCV, then add additional Armor and/or Damage Reduction to taste.

DEATH

Cost Power

40 *Scythe*: Drain BODY 4d6, Limited Range (2"; +¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (-½)

9 +3 with *Scythe*

Total cost: +49 points.

The Church And Its Resources

The forces of Good aren't exactly helpless in the face of Prince Kor's attack. Here's some of what they can muster in defense/counterattack:

POPE SYLVESTER II

Gerbert of Aurillac (b. approximately 940) is one of the most fascinating real-life characters of the period. As a child he was educated at a French monastery near Avergne but was "adopted" by a mysterious Spanish count and spent many years traveling around Spain, learning mathematics from Arab teachers in Cordova, theology from various deacons in Barcelona, and (at least according to legend) black magic from wizards (or perhaps worse!) in Seville. He then traveled to Rome where he served Pope John XIII and made the acquaintance of Emperor Otto I, who had him installed as a teacher in the Cathedral School at Reims. There he instructed young royals and nobles from various Catholic states, including Robert II of France and Otto II, and supported the rise to power of Hugh Capet in France.

In 991 Gerbert became the Archbishop of Reims, but was caught up in political infighting between Rome and France and found himself deposed in 995. He returned to Rome and became the personal tutor of Otto III. When Otto became Emperor in 996 at the age of sixteen, Gerbert was one of his most trusted advisors. Otto installed Gregory V as pope in Rome, but while he was away on pilgrimage one of his enemies, Crescentius, led an uprising and forced Gregory to flee Rome. When Otto returned he put down the rebellion and reinstalled Gregory, but the exertions had proved too much for the aged Pope and he died in 999. Needing a trusted ally to become Pope and keep his own position secure, Otto made Gerbert the Pope (and the first Frenchman so elected) under the name of Sylvester II in February of 999.

Gerbert (who doesn't answer to his papal name in personal conversation) is one of the most learned and powerful men in Europe. In the Revelations 1001 setting, the time he spent in Spain mastering arcane lore makes him one of the few Westerners capable of mounting an active defense against Prince Kor and his forces. The people of Rome (and of Christendom in general) respect Gerbert, but fear him as well; rumors of his dabbling in various dark arts are common, and he personally does nothing to dissuade them. He has introduced many new ideas and sciences to Rome, including being the first there to use the Arabic numbering system. He's also fond of building and tinkering with various clockworks and devices,

including a pendulum clock of his own invention which sits in his study in the Vatican. He also was reputed to have built or acquired a "brazen head," a mysterious device in the shape of a human skull that combines magic and advanced clockworks and reputedly can give completely truthful answers of "yes" or "no" to any question put before it. The darkest rumors suggest that the skull was built around the actual skull of St. Peter, one of Christ's apostles and the first Pope; if asked about this, Gerbert only laughs and shake his head.

HOLY ARTIFACTS

Since Revelations 1001 is a Fantasy setting in some respects, it's only appropriate that the Church have access to powerful mystic artifacts associated with its history. Generally these artifacts' abilities are only obvious when used against the forces of pure evil, as opposed to ordinary humans no matter their intentions, religion, or philosophy.

The Holy Grail

The Holy Grail was the cup (or in some stories the serving dish or platter) used by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. In many versions of its legend, it was used by someone (frequently Joseph of Arimathea) to catch the blood that poured from Christ's wounds as he hung upon the cross. While the Grail has picked up any number of additional mythical overtones from the various works of fiction featuring it, GMs should note that the first recorded story of it, *Perceval, le Conte du Graal*, will not be written for another two centuries and for the most part those stories aren't known as of 1001 AD. Nevertheless, a cup that was used by Christ at such an important occasion and that may have contained his blood would likely have many magical properties; the ones commonly assigned including healing the sick and injured, granting eternal youth, and perhaps even creating extra-potent holy water useful against God's enemies.

Joyeuse

This magical sword was used by Charlemagne, and was considered the finest of its kind during the period. According to some, either the hilt or the intricate designwork at the base of pommel contained one of the nails used during the Crucifixion, while others say it held part of the Lance of Longinus (the spear that pierced Christ's side, sometimes called the Spear of Destiny) or other saintly or blessed materials. Whatever its origins, it was generally believed to be divinely blessed and utterly indestructible. It may have been interred with Charlemagne in his tomb at Aachen, though various other churches and museums also claim to have it — the most famous one is currently at the Louvre.

The Shroud

The cloth that may have covered the body of Jesus Christ as he lay in his tomb is better known today as the Shroud of Turin, though its actual provenance in the real world can't be established before the mid-fourteenth century and before that it was probably never in Turin. It's fourteen feet long and about three and a half feet wide, made of

woven twill, and displays the full-length image of a bearded man who seems to be suffering from various wounds, most notably to his wrists and side. If it is the genuine article, perhaps the act of Jesus's body passing through it upon his assumption into Heaven charged the cloth with holy energies, making it proof against the demonic magics of the Anti-Christ and his minions.

The Ark Of The Covenant

The Ark Of The Covenant was a large wooden chest, built by the followers of Moses to contain the two stone tablets that listed the Ten Commandments (as well as various other holy objects including Aaron's rod and a golden container of manna). It was carried by the Israelites at the head of their army by members of the Levite tribe, who were reputedly the only ones allowed to touch it without God striking them dead. Further, God spoke directly to Moses through the golden cherubim on the Ark's cover. According to the Book of Maccabees it was buried in a cave by Jeremiah, until such time as "God should gather His people again together." According to the stories, not only could select people talk directly to God through it, but it had the power to clear obstacles from the path of the army that carried it and inspired greatness in battle, such as at the fall of Jericho. When the Philistines captured it temporarily, it caused them nothing but trouble, knocking over statues of their own gods and inflicting plagues until they returned it.

Other Relics

Many other holy relics and artifacts are appropriate for a Revelations 1001 campaign. Early medieval Christians frequently venerated the body parts of deceased saints, keeping them in small reliquaries made of metal (preferably silver). Pieces of the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified were also considered to have divine power. Of course, trade in false relics was extremely common during the period. The PCs should rarely be sure if the relic they've just acquired is the real thing until they've had the chance to test it out against the forces of evil... and perhaps even then definitive answers may be hard to come by.

Allies And Enemies

Other historical figures alive in the year 1001 might become involved in a tale of this epic a scope, whether they're Christian or not. Here are some of the most fascinating potential NPCs, though as always additional research on the part of the GM is recommended.

AVICENNA

Avicenna is the Western version of the name of Abu Ibn Sina, one of the greatest scientists of the age and writer of *The Book Of Healing* and *The Canon of Medicine*, two of the most important medical texts in history that defined the state of the art in medicine for five more centuries. Avicenna is currently physician to the emir of the Samanids in modern-day Iran, Abul-Harith Mansur II, and keeper of the emir's royal library, reputed to be one of the most advanced and complete of its time. Avicenna is only twenty-one, but was a child prodigy who memorized the Koran by the age of seven and then turned his prodigious intellect to math, science, philosophy, theology, and alchemy. Other great Arab scientists of the day include al-Biruni (anthropologist, astronomer, and inventor of the modern astrolabe), Abulcasis (surgeon and court physician to Al-Mansur), and Alhacen (who invented the camera obscura and first described the "Scientific Method"). In a time of crisis, these learned men could come together to pit their combined intellects against the forces of evil.

AL-MANSUR

Al-Mansur bi Allah, formerly Muhammad Ibn Abi Aamir, has been the ruler of Al-Andalus, the Muslim portion of the Iberian Peninsula (including most of modern Spain and Portugal) since 981. Currently in his mid-sixties, he rules Al-Andalus from Cordoba, the largest and most advanced city in the world with over 450,000 inhabitants. Al-Mansur is a crafty and scheming man who began as Vizier to a young prince (Hisham II) but methodically stripped him of all power. He's a fervent Muslim and hates Christianity, though he's occasionally willing to put aside religious differences for the sake of political expediency. Convincing him to ally with Christians against Kor's forces might be a grand challenge for PCs (and that's after having to obtain an audience with him before being thrown in a dungeon or executed), but the vast armies he could bring to bear might be what's needed to stop the advance of the Demon Prince.

ABE NO SEIMEI

The semi-legendary advisor to the Hemei government in Japan, Abe holds a place in Japanese mythology similar to that of Merlin in the West. Popular myths portray him as only half human; his mother was a *kitsune*, or fox spirit, and this lineage gave him remarkable magical abilities, from divination to transmutation. The real Abe (who is nearly eighty at this time) might or might not have any occult powers, but if any part of the myths are true, Kor's plans to destroy the entire world would cause him to get involved personally.

REVELATIONS 1001 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here's a list of the books consulted while researching this setting/scenario:

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Clapson, Debra, ed. *Timelines Of World History*

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Kenyon, Sherrilyn. *The Writer's Guide To Everyday Life In The Middle Ages*

Man, John. *Atlas Of The Year 1000*

McGinn, Bernard, trans. *Apocalyptic Spirituality*

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SAINT SIGFRID

Sigfrid was an English monk who traveled through Sweden and Norway converting pagans with the assistance of his three nephews. His nephews were beheaded by a particularly nasty group of Vikings, but Sigfrid recovered their heads and continued his journeys with them. According to legends and accounts of the time, the three heads could still talk (terrifying the Vikings) and provided Sigfrid with useful assistance in battling devils.

EILMER OF MALMESBURY

Eilmer, also an English monk and mathematician, supposedly built a glider that carried him more than 200 meters in the air when he leapt from his monastery's tower, though it broke his legs when it finally landed, leaving him permanently crippled. He was forbidden to continue his experiments, but PCs might find that he's been working away in his private quarters on a superior design....

Player Characters

The GM can run adventures in Revelations 1001 at pretty much any power level. If the campaign is an open-ended one, it might be best to start the characters off at a low level (75 Base Points plus up to 75 points from Disadvantages, or some similar total) and increase the level of threats they face gradually, from humans serving Prince Kor

to minor demons to the Horsemen and the major monsters, with perhaps additional mythical beasts and adversaries from non-Christian traditions as well if the PCs travel outside Europe.

Perhaps a more satisfying way to run a Revelations 1001 campaign is to determine a set campaign length and design it so that the climax will most likely come with the great prophesied battle on the plains of Megiddo between the forces of Light and Darkness, with the sides more or less evenly matched and the actual outcome of the battle in the hands of the PCs as much as possible. This can be a little tougher to manage without having the players feel railroaded, though hopefully by keeping the major villains off stage at first and slowly increasing the heroes' contacts with them they'll feel sufficiently inspired to pursue the main plot to its climax. In this case, starting the PCs off at higher power levels might be appropriate, or perhaps starting low but being quite generous with the Experience Points over the course of the adventures so they can amass the skills and weapons needed for victory at the Final Hour.

The setting of Revelations 1001 does involve magic, sometimes extensively, but generally it's somewhat different in nature than more traditional Fantasy settings. There's very little "mid-level" magic. Beginning characters might reasonably have access to minor healing spells or divinations, and when a Biblical Epic story really gets roaring along, entire armies are swallowed up by the earth and the sun stands still in the sky... but there's little middle ground between the two. The GM may find it most useful to limit the amount of magic PCs have access to ordinarily so that visions, healings, and blessings retain their own sense of wonder. Reserve the major effects for moments of high drama (and they usually require powerful artifacts, extensive rituals and prayers, high END, costs and other penalties for using them except at the moments of greatest import).

Inspiration for character creation can come from just about anywhere. Eleventh century Earth was certainly home to plenty of doughty fighting men, crafty woodsmen, wise sages, sneaky rogues, and not a few characters who certainly claimed to be wizards of one stripe or another. Obviously, the traditional roles of "cleric" and "paladin" certainly come into their own in such a church-centered setting. It's important to remember that though the nature of the campaign's main threat comes from Christian symbology and mythology, there's still plenty of room for characters of other faiths or no faith at all; after all, if the Anti-Christ succeeds in destroying the world, the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and pagans are all going to die together, so there's plenty of motivation for anyone to get involved once they realize the extent of the threat, even if they don't believe in the stories surrounding it. A traveling monk from Japan, a Pictish warrior woman from Scotland, or a Mayan priest can all certainly be worked into the setting somewhere (okay, the last will take some work, but it's still doable!)

DESTINATIONS



Nobody *really* expected the Big Burnout to happen. Sure, a handful of scientists warned humanity of serious irregularities with the Sun's solar flares, but who could take yet another doomsday prediction seriously? So many frightening scientific prophecies had never come to pass. The seas hadn't risen significantly from global warming. A massive meteor hadn't struck the Earth. A "global super-storm" had never arisen in the Atlantic. The Iranians never developed an atomic bomb. Nothing had ever *actually* happened when distinguished scientists warned of impending doom.

So can you really blame people for not taking another forecast of global disaster seriously? Even when the Nobel Prize winning astrophysicist Hans Hertzsporg appeared on national television to warn of "a coming coronal mass ejection of catastrophic proportions," he was dismissed by nearly everyone as a crank. Late-night television hosts openly mocked his warning, while newspaper editorialists and online pundits questioned his sanity. Even serious scientists wondered if old Hans hadn't "spent too much time in front of his coronagraph." Disgusted, Hertzsporg issued a final warning: "Everyone in the world should get underground while they still can!" Then he vanished, never to be heard from again.

Very few people paid attention. Which is probably why very few people survived.

THE BIG BURNOUT

On December 21st, 2012 at 6:02 PM Greenwich Mean Time, the Sun disgorged an enormous tentacle of plasma the likes of which human science had never before observed. Generated by an explosion the equivalent of a trillion 100-megaton hydrogen bombs, the gargantuan solar flare was a sort of "soup" of loose electrons, protons, and small amounts of helium, oxygen, and iron held together by a robust magnetic field. Roughly 24 hours later it enveloped the Earth, providing any of her inhabitants who cared to watch with a spectacularly beautiful aurora borealis effect for several seconds... before permanently blinding them. A quintillion watts of power slammed into the Earth's upper atmosphere, destroying every unshielded electronic device on the planet as well as every satellite in orbit. The surface of the Earth quickly heated up to 200° Celsius, causing all of the world's forests to ignite simultaneously. The resulting planetary firestorm incinerated every living creature on the surface of the Earth down to a depth of three meters. Billions of tons of ash from this worldwide conflagration rose high into the upper atmosphere, blotting out the Sun and plunging the world into a perpetual frozen twilight.

One hour later the Big Burnout ended, leaving the Earth blackened and sterilized.



DESTINATIONS AS A “BEGINNER” SCENARIO

With characters built as 100-point Competent Normals and a “road trip” plot structure incumbent upon reaching a Final Destination, this setting/scenario works well as a kind of “starter adventure” for characters you intend to quickly grow into 150-point Heroic PCs. Used properly it can give a group of PCs the rigorous experiences necessary to transform them from Joe Six Packs into Road Warriors. For example, if the GM envisions a campaign in which a small group of Heroic level characters must protect a struggling string of farming communities from outside threats, the events in *Destinations* help to explain how they learned the skills to do that.

TODAY

Black and blue like an enormous spherical bruise, Earth spins in space as it always has. Gone are the numerous lights that once decorated its surface at night like so many Christmas ornaments. Gone are the continent-sized swaths of green that once covered most of its landmasses. Where once magnificent polar caps of white ice lay, vast stretches of black “snash” (mixed snow and ash) extend as far south as the ruins of Detroit and Kiev. The sparse clouds that once encircled the world like fluffy down have been replaced by an all-covering funereal shroud of fuzzy, gray ash.

It's uniformly cold down on the dead surface of the Earth. Most places have temperatures that range between seven and ten degrees Celsius, with the former tropical regions reaching 12 to 15 degrees Celsius. The air is breathable, though one must wear a filter or wet cloth to keep from inhaling choking dust and ash. Not that there are a lot of people around to breathe it: less than one percent of the Earth's human population survived the Big Burnout, and that number has dropped considerably since the event. The existence of post-Burnout humanity is a strictly Hobbesian affair: solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. Yet, somewhere down below on the charred surface of the ravaged world lies the one commodity necessary for its rebirth.

Hope.

THE WORLD OF DESTINATIONS

Picture the bleakest possible post-apocalyptic setting in which human life still exists... barely. For all intents and purposes Earth has been sterilized: not a single plant of any sort has grown anywhere on its surface since the Big Burnout. Its inhabitants are breathing the residual atmosphere left over from before the death of photosynthesis, and one day that too will run out. There's no terrestrial animal life left besides mankind. Those few unfortunate creatures that survived the Burnout were either eaten or starved to death.

The cities are all charred ruins filled with the bodies of men and machines. Still, most of the Earth's residual human inhabitants live in them because they contain the only reliable sources of food. On good days this means the remaining supplies of canned and dried goods left in buried warehouses and grocery stores. On bad ones, it means one another: cannibalism is widespread and constant. All people in the world of *Destinations* fall into one of two categories:

- Bad People are rapists, murderers, and cannibals (not necessarily in that order) who prey upon one another and Good People, generally working in packs, cults, or small “armies” to stay alive.
- Good People don't do these things. At great cost to themselves, they refrain from cannibalism and attempt to keep some semblance of their former civilization alive in their hearts.

The player characters are the only Good People they have ever met.

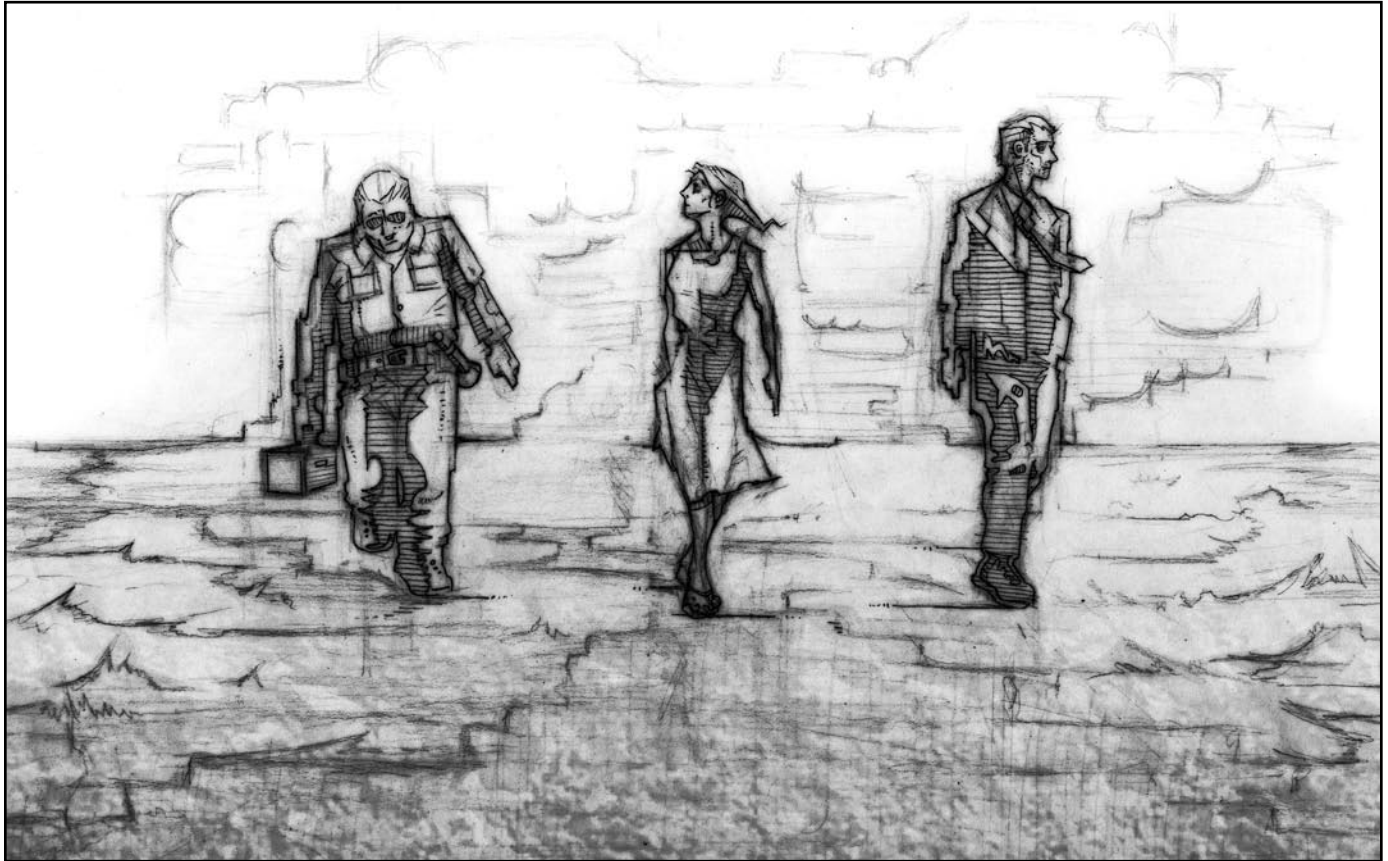
The vast wildernesses between urban areas are somewhat safer, though they do contain roving groups of Bad People who move from city to city. Unfortunately, they are also nearly devoid of food. Here and there abandoned farmhouses may still contain hidden caches of canned goods, but most of these have already been picked over. With their countless thousands of ruined private residences, the suburbs offer considerably better opportunities for scrounging, but they're a lot more dangerous. Packs of Bad People often retreat to the suburbs after they've been driven out of choicer inner city territory.

CHARACTER CREATION

In *Destinations*, the PCs begin as Competent Normals built on 50 base points plus up to 50 points' worth of Disadvantages. They should be constructed as Skill-oriented characters with fairly limited number of Talents or Powers (Perks are almost non-existent in the ultra-bleak world of *Destinations*) and moderate investments in Characteristics. What “moderate” means is up to the GM. Generally, players will find that Skills such as Combat Skill Levels, Stealth, Survival, and Weaponsmith are extremely valuable, while Skills like Animal Handler, Electronics, and High Society are close to useless.

As a general rule, the PCs in *Destinations* should be relatively normal people who had the good fortune to be employed in professions or to enjoy hobbies that placed them underground when the Big Burnout happened. They might have been subway repairmen working deep underground, warehousemen assigned to the bunker-like depths of an industrial storage facility, or even bureaucrats with offices in the steam pipe trunk distribution venue in the subbasement of some anonymous government office building. Or, if you prefer to create more exotic characters, perhaps the PCs were a group of spelunkers adventuring deep into the Earth when the Burnout struck, soldiers assigned to guard a nuke-proof subterranean supply depot, or even a group of scientists conducting a dangerous experiment behind thickly shielded walls. Any plausible group is acceptable — as long as they are *not* well prepared, highly-trained survivalists awaiting the end of civilization. Such a group is much more acceptable as a Final Destination (see below) or as a potential group of Bad People.

Mixed groups of characters are also possible, especially if the GM chooses to begin the scenario weeks, months, or even years after the Burnout. Given a bit of time it's possible different sorts of Good People could find one another and, with that strength that comes from numbers, hunker down together to protect a common home from groups of Bad People. Such a location is bound to have extremely limited resources, however, eventually forcing its inhabitants to move nomadically from place to place in search of food... an excellent excuse to begin a *Destinations*.



EQUIPMENT

Characters begin the scenario with whatever equipment they can convince the GM is appropriate for their character, based on the character's profession and starting location. For example, the likely equipment for a subway repair worker on the job is a flashlight, toolbox, hardhat, and underground map. It's also possible that the city maintains emergency food, water, and medical supplies at various subterranean depots that he knows about (this could also be his first Destination; see below). A subway repair worker will *not* have an AR-15, flash grenades, and a year's supply of dried food while on the job. The GM should forbid players to create hybrid "normal person by day, survivalist by night" characters.

Should play begin months or years after the Burnout, you can loosen this restriction on material resources somewhat. The PCs could very well have acquired any number of useful standard items, so long as those items were capable of surviving the Burnout. Given a year, our hypothetical subway worker could very well have salvaged a backpack, large knife, shotgun, coil of airplane cable, a Kevlar

motorcycle jacket, and a good supply of vitamin pills from the ruined city above his head. He may have had to use his tools to make crude repairs on several of the items (for example, the shotgun's stock will have burned or melted), but they will be serviceable. Perhaps he's even been using his airplane cable to snare rats that have survived in the depths of the sewer system.

The world of *Destinations* is a particularly dirty place. Although it rains, sleets, or snows fairly often in most places, dust and ash are a constant part of life whenever it's dry. Everyone is filthy, and most people wear gasmasks, surgical masks, or bits of ragged cloth over their mouths to prevent ash inhalation whenever they venture outside. Goggles, safety glasses, motorcycle helmets, and welding masks are commonly worn to protect the eyes from dust. In game terms, anyone venturing outside without mouth protection receives a -4 to CON Rolls, while anyone going outside without eye protection suffers a penalty of -2 to his PER Rolls (and must make a PER Roll each round he's in combat outside or suffer the usual penalties for lack of a Targeting Sense in combat).

SUBTERRANEAN ANIMALS, AQUATIC ANIMALS, AND THE REBIRTH OF LIFE

While the Burnout may have destroyed all animal life down to a depth of three meters, it may have had no effect on creatures dwelling further below the Earth's surface. Animals that live in deep caves or manmade tunnels may have survived the initial catastrophe, with some of them even thriving in its aftermath. With their ability to consume nearly any organic food source, sewer rats and cockroaches in particular seem well designed to survive and thrive in the world of *Destinations* — though whether or not they have done so is up to the GM. Both make perfectly serviceable (if unpleasant) sources of protein for PCs.

It's also possible some of the aquatic life forms found in oceans and deep lakes survived the Burnout. While the destruction of the world's plant life, including much of its seagoing blue green algae, is the inevitable result of both of the catastrophe and the ongoing global winter it spawned, carrion-eating fish such as catfish, flounder, and manta rays may survive for a time. If someone could catch them, they'd provide an excellent source of nutrition for the PCs. Once again it's up to the GM to decide whether or not such creatures exist.

Some types of plants have roots that reach down to a depth of more than three meters. Additionally, living seeds may still exist in the depths of the soil. If the Earth's catastrophe-spawned global winter ever ends, it is exceedingly likely that such plants would push their way up through the ash and charcoal toward the Sun, restarting life on Earth. While this shouldn't happen spontaneously during the course of *Destinations* (it would ruin the scenario's special feel), it could occur at the very end of a campaign. Enterprising PCs could also dig down into the depths of the Earth in search of such roots and seeds, transplanting them into greenhouses where they could be grown into adult plants.

STARVATION AND HOPE

The single most valuable tangible commodity in the resource-poor world of *Destinations* is food. Outside of cannibalism, there are absolutely no fresh sources of vegetables, fruit, or meat (though fish and other seafood may be available in coastal areas). The characters must rely upon supplies of canned and dried goods scavenged from the ruins of grocery stores, warehouses, institutions, and private homes to survive. It requires a certain level of expertise to accomplish this reliably: Survival (Urban) complemented by AK: Appropriate City effectively simulate this ability. Vitamin pills are also quite valuable, as they're easy to carry and help to supplement an otherwise inadequate diet. With 1,200 calories in each serving, military MREs are the holy grail of all food sources in this scenario. A single, easy-to-carry packet supplies all of the nutrition an extremely active character needs for a day.

VEHICLES

By 2012 most of the Earth's vehicles relied so extensively on computerization that the Big Burnout left them completely useless. In any case, the heat and resulting firestorms destroyed almost every ounce of fuel on the surface of the planet. All of the world's refineries, distilleries, and hydrogen production centers were likewise destroyed in the conflagration, putting the large-scale production of any sort of internal combustion fuel beyond human reach.

The one exception to this rule is older heavy diesel construction equipment like forklifts, tractors, and front-end loaders. These hardy, primitive vehicles generally lack electronic components and easily-melted rubber tires. They can be simply modified to use nearly anything as fuel: old motor oil, vegetable oil, and even rendered human fat. In many places enterprising Bad People have stripped them of their useful hydraulic components, armored them with wood and steel, and decorated them with human skulls, blood covered spikes, and the like. These "battlewagons" are used as slow-moving mobile fortresses in the many clashes between "armies" of Bad People.

Fortunately, characters wishing to travel along the highways and byways of North America have other options at their disposal. Many shopping carts seem to have survived the Big Burnout intact. They're plentiful, easy to maintain, hold a decent amount of cargo, and roll effortlessly along the road on their solid caster wheels. Similarly, characters can use hand trucks to move materials easily along the roads. When used in conjunction with bungee cords or tie-downs, they can hold up to five milk cartons of material. Similarly wheelbarrows, though more cumbersome than shopping carts and hand trucks, are quite easy to maintain and are also designed to carry up to 46 kilograms comfortably.

Perhaps the ultimate vehicle in the world of *Destinations* is the bicycle. Like shopping carts, they're relatively plentiful and easy to maintain. A healthy, well-fed person can travel up to 160 kilometers per day on a bicycle carrying 23 kilograms. By 2012 special trailers capable of comfortably pulling an additional 23 kilograms behind the bicycle were also fairly commonplace. Unfortunately, bicycle tires and inner tubes are particularly susceptible to melting; the Big Burnout destroyed most of them. In several places, however, large caches of tires and tubes may still exist, shielded from the heat by thick cement warehouse walls or stored in basements by cycling enthusiasts.

Hope is the most important emotional commodity in this setting — and in some ways it's far scarcer and more valuable than food. In *Destinations*, Hope Points are awarded in place of Experience Points, but function differently (see below). They also distinguish Good People from Bad People. Good People have Hope Points, while Bad People do not. Should a character lose all of his Hope Points he passes permanently out of the control of his player (and may even become a Bad Person). See below for more information.

GAMEMASTERING DESTINATIONS

There are two ways to begin a *Destinations* campaign. The first is to begin it right after the Burnout, which has the advantage of introducing PCs to the game world while they're still physically and emotionally at their peak state, but the disadvantage that they will lack most of the equipment needed to deal effectively with the changed environment. They'll also have to watch their world die and crumble about them as humanity descends into cannibalistic darkness. The second way to begin *Destinations* is at some point long after the Burnout. The PCs are correspondingly be physically weaker and more traumatized, but they have a clearer understanding of the world they live in (and most likely some of the equipment they need to deal with it). Both methods are equally valid; it's up to the GM to decide which one best suits his goals for the scenario.

As its name implies, the purpose of the PCs in a *Destinations* campaign is to go somewhere. It's a "road movie" in which the PCs move restlessly from place to place in search of various goals. In the short term, this means traveling to locations where they can scavenge the necessary resources to stay alive — food, ammunition, tools, and warm clothing — and have experiences that cause them to learn more about themselves and one another. In the long term, it means finding a location in which agriculture is possible, allowing them to restart both human civilization and Earth's biosphere.

The GM should constantly emphasize that the PCs simply *cannot* stay where they are. The reasons should change each game at the discretion of the GM — food supplies are running dangerously short, the Bad People are too numerous, and so forth — but they must not be allowed to "bunker down" until they reach their Final Destination. To do otherwise is to lose hope and become a Bad Person.

The ubiquitous symbol in *Destinations* is the vast, abandoned North American (or, if one prefers, the European) highway system. Though slightly melted by the Burnout and the firestorms it produced, the highways are generally intact and represent the best possible way to move from place to place. What was once the great icon of freedom, transportation, and fun is now a symbol of escape and redemption.

Each game in *Destinations* is known (reasonably enough) as a Destination: essentially it involves an objective that requires the PCs to reach a new physical location. To do this they must undertake a journey that contains opportunities to gain and lose Hope, gain or lose material possessions, and experience at least one moral challenge. Ultimately the PCs should follow a series of clues that lead them to their *Final Destination*: a place in which either agriculture has somehow survived, or from which they can restart it. At this point the *Destinations* campaign ends. The GM and players can choose to continue playing, in which case *Des-*

tinations becomes not a campaign but a story arc in a greater campaign. The characters are now in the business of nurturing and defending a new world, which is a very different undertaking from wandering across a blackened landscape in search of Food and Hope. All remaining Hope Points convert into standard Experience Points, and the GM may wish to consider giving the PCs enough Characters Points to bring them up to the standard Heroic 150-point level.

Some sample Destinations and Final Destinations have been included below for the GM's use and inspiration.

SAMPLE DESTINATIONS

One of the PCs remembers that there used to be a gun store just outside the city limits. If they can reach it, they might find the firearms and ammunition necessary to give them an edge over the local Bad People. Unfortunately, they have to go through Bad People territory to get there... and perhaps a PC, or prominent NPC, thinks this would be a good time to exterminate the Bad People once and for all.

While traveling through the wilderness, the PCs stumble across a "man farm" located in the basement of an abandoned farmhouse. A group of particularly brutal Bad People hold a dozen men and women in cages, amputating their limbs as necessary and keeping them alive on a thin gruel created from their own bodies. The caged amputees beg the PCs to kill them.

The PCs discover a community of nigh-feral children living inside the fortified ruins of an elementary school. They've mostly lost the power of speech and turned to ambushing travelers to obtain food. That, of course, would make them Bad People... if the oldest of them were more than eight years old.

From a safe position along the side of the road, the PCs observe a Bad People army moving past them. Its chugging battlewagon has a small fortune in food strapped to its back: canned goods, sacks of grain, crates of MREs, and other, less mentionable things. A chain gang of pregnant women and preteen catamites struggles miserably along behind it. The army is well-armed with axes, machetes, and the odd battered shotgun, but only outnumbers the PCs three to one....

SAMPLE FINAL DESTINATIONS

A rumor has reached the PCs that there's a group of Good People in a neighboring city that's set up a massive greenhouse on the top floor of a damaged skyscraper so it can grow food in a position of maximum security. If the PCs can locate this "farm in the sky" they can learn from its inhabitants how to establish a similar community in one of their own city's many abandoned buildings. If they can establish more than one such rooftop community they might be able to bring their city — and the world — back to life....

Through some judicious reading in an intact basement section of what was once a major college library, the PCs have uncovered the existence of

FAMILIAR LOCATIONS

One intriguing option for *Destinations* is to begin the campaign in an urban area the players know well — your hometown. That gives the game an added air of pathos, but also ensures the PCs have the best possible opportunity to make use of "their" knowledge of the area to locate and procure resources.

the Greenbrier Bunker, Site R, and Mount Weather: huge facilities in Virginia designed to house the federal government during and after a nuclear attack. According to the book, each contains a dormitory, kitchen, hospital, food, water, fuel, and even a broadcast center. Since it's unlikely anyone from the government survived long enough to reach them, perhaps these underground facilities are intact and unoccupied. It may be possible to restart America if one could only get inside....

A helpful NPC scientist has hypothesized that the world's oceans may not have been entirely decimated by the Big Burnout. Surely, if one could only make his way to the sea, he could construct a crude boat, cobble together some fishing tackle, and ply the waves for food. If this hypothesis is true, it's also possible the PCs will locate other Good People living on the seashore.

Word has reached the PCs that the prophetic Hans Hurtzsporg survived the Big Burnout. According to the rumor, he and a group of likeminded scientists are living in a well-stocked underground complex somewhere inside a nearby mountain range. Can they locate this underground refuge? If they do, will the scientists within allow the ragtag PCs to join them?

HOPE

Hope is the most noble of all emotions. Love, Hate, Wrath, and Sorrow are all more robust and powerful, but without fragile, weedy Hope they cannot function. It is the lubricant that permits the machinery of the human soul to function. The characters in *Destinations* would seem to be trapped in a hopeless situation. The world is dead, civilization has fallen, and mankind has been reduced to the lowest state in its history. Yet what separates the PCs (and any Good People they may encounter) from everyone else is the fact they still have Hope in their hearts. And when it comes to achieving the goals in *Destinations*, Hope is the most important weapon in any character's arsenal.

HOPE POINT TABLE

Situation	Hope
Characters survive a Destination	+1
Characters win a combat	+2
Characters discover useful resource(s)	+1
Characters discover evidence of Final Destination	+2
Characters find Final Destination	+10
Characters experience a profound, uplifting moment	+1
Characters run out of useful resource	-1
Characters lose a combat	-1
Characters stay in one place for too long	-2
Optional Guidelines	
Players were clever, inventive, or roleplayed well	+1
Players roleplayed poorly	-1

Each PC begins a *Destinations* campaign with 10 Hope, and that score goes either up or down depending on whether he spends any Hope, the GM awards him more Hope, or the GM takes Hope away.

Characters in *Destinations* receive Hope Points rather than Experience Points. They can use these points in various ways. Like Experience Points, a character can spend Hope Points as permanent Character Points whenever he wishes. Unlike Experience Points, Hope Points that aren't yet spent can also be taken away! Furthermore, during combat a character can choose to spend his Hope to create a temporary effect that lasts only as long as that combat does. If he chooses to do this he receives five (temporary) Character Points for each Hope point he (permanently) spends.

Example: *During a fierce combat between the PCs and some starving Bad People, Bill Parham decides he needs to spend some of his Hope if he's going to survive. He spends 2 Hope to increase his STR from 13 to 23, giving him two more dice of damage with his machete. He spends 2 more Hope to increase his SPD from 3 to 4, and finally spends 1 Hope to boost his PD from 6 to 11. Now he's ready to kick cannibal butt!*

Certain experiences the PC has should drain away his Hope Points. Before this can happen, however, the PC always gets to make an EGO Roll to determine whether his willpower is sufficient to resist the soul-wrenching effects of what he has seen. If the roll succeeds, the character retains his Hope; if the roll fails, he loses 1 Hope for each point the roll failed by. It's appropriate for the GM to briefly "seize control" of a PC in the event of a failed roll.

Example: *While exploring the basement of a seemingly abandoned farmhouse, Bill Parham finds what appears to be a functioning freezer! Near starvation from his travels, Bill eagerly yanks open the lip of the freezer... only to find it packed with the neatly-gutted corpses of infants. The GM orders him to make EGO Roll to avoid the Hope-draining effects of his discovery. He fails the roll by 2, so he loses 2 Hope. Bill screams, falls to his knees, and sobs uncontrollably.*

Any character whose Hope Points drop to zero or lower has become effectively "dead." This could mean he commits suicide, finally dies from starvation, or leaves the group to become a Bad Person. Since it's impossible to be a Good Person without Hope, his existence as a PC ends and he becomes the property of the GM.

MECHANON TRIUMPHANT



The room is in shambles, cracked machine parts strewn everywhere. But the monitors still work. They show scenes of normal life: communities farming, putting up buildings, meeting to determine policies. If there happen to be wolf-like, bipedal creatures working with the humans, what is that to the inhabitant of this room? Life is life.

A cold, mechanical voice speaks. "Repairs complete. Downtime: 47324562 seconds. Targets selected. Plan initiated."

The same voice continues, somehow not so cold, but still decidedly inhuman. "At last, organic life will cease, and not just on this world! All shall be finally cleansed and I shall usher in an age of perfection! None are left to stop me!"

A strange noise is heard then, a mechanical clicking. To the imaginative, it might seem be a mad robot's laughter.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Mechanon *Triumphant* starts with Millennium City under attack by a number of robots of unknown origins. After defeating them, the heroes discover that they seem to have been cobbled together with technology from several sources, but are primarily similar to designs of the evil Mechanon. Aside from the use of what appears to be super-technology salvage, these robots are also in great need of repair and maintenance. Why would Mechanon, with all of his resources, use such run-down servants?

In fact, while Mechanon is responsible for the attack, it is not the robot the PCs are familiar with. Instead, the attack has come from an alternate timeline in which he almost succeeded in destroying all life on Earth, and has now found a way to expand his war of extermination to new worlds. The heroes must travel to a world ravaged by nuclear attack, where humanity struggles to survive in the face of radiation, mutant creatures, killer robots, and more besides. There, they must track down Mechanon and end his threat once and for all.

BACKGROUND

In the year 1985, the mechanical menace Mechanon made his first appearance, attempting to end life in nuclear fire. In the normal course of events in the *Champions* Universe, he was stopped by the Sentinels — but there's at least one alternate universe in which this did not happen. Fortunately, the robot severely underestimated the power and

heroism of Earth's superhuman community, and pockets of life remained throughout the world. Humanity then warred not only against Mechanon's robotic hordes but for simple survival.

In the year 2007 in the *Mechanon Triumphant* Universe, life is as tenacious as ever, and new communities have formed. Most of these are protected, and often commanded, by the heroes and villains of the pre-Mechanon times, but even without such help it appears that life on Earth will continue. Unfortunately, after fifteen years, Mechanon is returning, and his plans for extinction extend beyond one world.

ADVENTURE INFORMATION

Mechanon Triumphant is an adventure for a group of four to six *Champions* player characters built according to the Standard Superheroic guidelines on page 28 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook. If the PCs fall outside of these guidelines, the GM should adjust the encounters accordingly. Mechanon certainly has the ability to create more servants given enough raw parts, and he could also equip one or more of them with higher-powered weaponry or defenses.

The adventure works well for many types of superhero groups, with plenty of innocents to rescue for the pure of heart and a dark, broken world for brooding vigilantes. It works best if at least one of the PCs is scientifically inclined and can reason out how to travel to and from the universe the attack came from, but this is not necessary. There are always those willing to lend a hand when it comes to robotic invasion from another universe!

INDEX OF VILLAINS

The villains who appear in *Mechanon Triumphant* and the book and page number where they appear are listed below.

Villain	Source
Ankylosaur	<i>Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks</i> , page 116
Armadillo	<i>Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks</i> , page 120
Defender	<i>Champions</i> , page 182
Devastator	<i>Champions</i> , page 196
Warbird	<i>Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks</i> , page 40
Last Of Mechanon	This scenario
Mechanon's Salvaged Servants	This scenario

Mechanon's greatest servants in this reality are animated suits of powered armor of the actual characters listed, or robots built to have similar abilities. They have been advanced to sentience, so they largely function as the originals, taking STUN and having similar Vulnerabilities. However, they do not have the original's Psychological or Social Limitations, and instead have the Psychological Limitation: Total Loyalty To Mechanon (Very Common, Total) and the Physical Limitation: Affected As Both A Human And A Machine Class Of Mind (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing). If more robots are needed, there are a number of other armored villain and robot write-ups in various books published for *Champions* that can be used.

MAPS

If you need a map of Memorial Park, use the one on page 15 of *Champions Battlegrounds*. A map of Millennium City is included in the book of the same name, along with a further description of ACI, the robots' target. The warehouse map on page 127 of *Champions Battlegrounds* can serve as the ACI storage facility the robots are raiding.

TROUBLE AT HOME

The nightlife in Millennium City resembles the nightlife anywhere. There may be computer-chip controlled cars for transport, but the restaurants, theaters, pubs, and other places of congregation are more or less the same as in other cities. If there's more of a possibility of an attack by one villain or another, well, the city also has powerful protectors. And they will be needed.

One evening at precisely 7:59 PM, a group of robots appears in Memorial Park. If the PCs talk to any witnesses, the witnesses report that the robots simply hovered there for several minutes, then flew off. While they did not seem interested in harming anyone, they did attack police officers who approached them.

MECHANON'S SALVAGED SERVANTS					
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes	
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1600 kg; 6d6 [3]	
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7	
0	CON	-20	9-		
10	BODY	0	11-		
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-	
0	EGO	—	9-	ECV: 0	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6	
0	COM	-5	9-		
6	PD	12		Total: 6 PD (6 rPD)	
5	ED	15		Total: 5 ED (5 rED)	
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	
6	REC	0			
0	END	-15			
0	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 67	

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/120"

Cost	Powers	END
67	Salvaged Equipment: Variable Power Pool, 60 base + 15 control cost; all slots OIF (-½), Only Changed In Lab (-½)	var
45	Takes No STUN (loses abilities when takes BODY)	
18	Robotic Construction: Damage Resistance (6 PD/6 ED)	
27	Jet Propulsion: Flight 15", x8 Noncombat, 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour (+0); OIF (-½)	[1cc]
18	Shielded Transdimensional Communication Link: Mind Link with Mechanon and/or up to 8 of his minions, any dimension, No LOS Needed; Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Does Not Provide Mental Awareness (-¼), Visible (-¼)	

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 175
Total Cost: 242

200+ Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: Mechanon-Like Killer Robot (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction (Terror))
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Total Loyalty To Mechanon (Very Common, Total)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Electrical Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 270

Background/History: Though the alternate-world version of Mechanon has spent fifteen years in repairs, his servants continued to gather salvageable technology for his use. These machines are the ultimate results of that scavenging — Mechanon's cobbled them together from a VIPER anti-gravity engine here, bits of Doctor Destroyer's robotic minions there, and whatever other super-technology he could salvage from the ruins of the world. They're not as sophisticated as Mechanon's personal guard, but are sufficient for many less important tasks. It's sent them to Millennium City to spy on this dimension and possibly acquire more technology.

Personality/Motivation: These robots exist only to serve Mechanon's whims, and have no motivation beyond that (other than the secondary concern of personal survival).

Quote: "Target locked."

Powers/Tactics: As salvaged devices, these robots use simple tactics. They have their orders and move in the shortest path to carry them out. If anything living gets in their way, they attempt to destroy it. They try to flee anything resilient enough to survive more than a few seconds against their weapons, as their orders do not contemplate extended combat.

TROUBLESHOOTING:
NOT FROM AROUND HERE

The adventure assumes that the PCs are residents of Millennium City, but that may not be the case. If they do not live close enough and have no transportation fast enough to reach the action, there are several ways to involve them. The easiest is to give them a reason to be there ahead of time. Heroes do tend to travel, especially to help out other heroes. Perhaps there was an emergency there and the PCs haven't returned home yet, or else they're attending some form of meeting or convention of superheroes.

Considering the possible stakes, an NPC may offer to help with transport. Maybe the Drifter (from *Champions Universe: News Of The World*) has had a vision of catastrophe and asks for help, or Captain Chronos (from *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*) appears and whisks them to Millennium City without explanation.

Perhaps the most satisfying solution, however, is to move the adventure to the PCs' city. In this case, the first wave of robots attacks a landmark there, instead of Memorial Park. If you do this, of course the city the PCs first travel to in the *Mechanon Triumphant* world should be theirs, saved by a major villain years ago and used as the base of the resistance against Mechanon.

Appearance: These robots have all have a “face” somewhere that looks a great deal like Mechanon’s, but otherwise vary widely in construction, as befits their salvaged nature.

ROBOT EQUIPMENT

Mechanon sends between six and twelve of his servants through, a minimum of one per PC. Each is equipped with a Dimensional Shunt (an Extra-Dimensional Movement device), and at least one will have a Target Acquisition Sensor (Detect High-Tech Devices 14-). The GM should determine what other equipment they buy through their VPPs (perhaps using *Gadgets And Gear* devices). Give the PCs a slight challenge, but don’t make this a difficult fight. Mechanon doesn’t have unlimited resources, so the robots won’t necessarily have the ideal equipment for their mission. Most of the robots have one or two weapons, including at least one with an Entangle or a similar non-lethal attack. If necessary, equip some with additional defenses as well as a weapon.

ROBOT PLANS

After the robots arrive, they seek out the best, nearest source of high-tech equipment. This happens to be an ACI warehouse. They head there as quickly as possible.

There are several ways the PCs might detect the invasion early and cut the robots off before they reach ACI. For instance, sensors that can detect the robots’ radio signals (the Mind Link is visible to the Radio Sense Group) or even the use of dimensional travel are not beyond the abilities of some hero teams. This isn’t a problem — the robots themselves are what’s needed to move the plot forward, not success at their mission.

ACI Warehouse

If not stopped, the robots head from Memorial Park to the Downtown area and a warehouse owned by Advanced Concepts Industries. Unless

TROUBLESHOOTING: NO TECHNICIANS

If none of the PCs have the appropriate scientific skills to figure out the robots’ Dimensional Shunt device, the easiest solution is to have them turn the equipment over to someone who does. The Goodman Institute (see *Champions Universe: News Of The World*) is an obvious choice, as this type of thing is the group’s primary function. An NPC hero also works well.

If that’s not acceptable, there could be an accident that activates one of the devices during the fight, especially if one of the PCs have either Luck or Unluck. Luck would tend to put them closer to their ultimate goal, while Unluck further away (or in immediate danger), of course.

you decide to equip all of them with Invisibility devices (which is not recommended), many people see them along the way. This gives the PCs a chance to catch up if they have no other way to find them.

The warehouse is mostly uninhabited at this time of the night. There’s one security guard, but he’s smart enough to call for help rather than get himself killed. The warehouse primarily contains equipment intended for use in upgrading Millennium City’s many computer-controlled installations. It’s up to the GM to decide if there’s anything of greater interest in the installation.

The Fight

Wherever it ultimately happens, a combat should occur between the PCs and Mechanon’s servants. It won’t last long; the robots aren’t powerful enough for a confrontation with actual superheroes. Once they’re disabled, the real investigation can begin.

INVESTIGATION

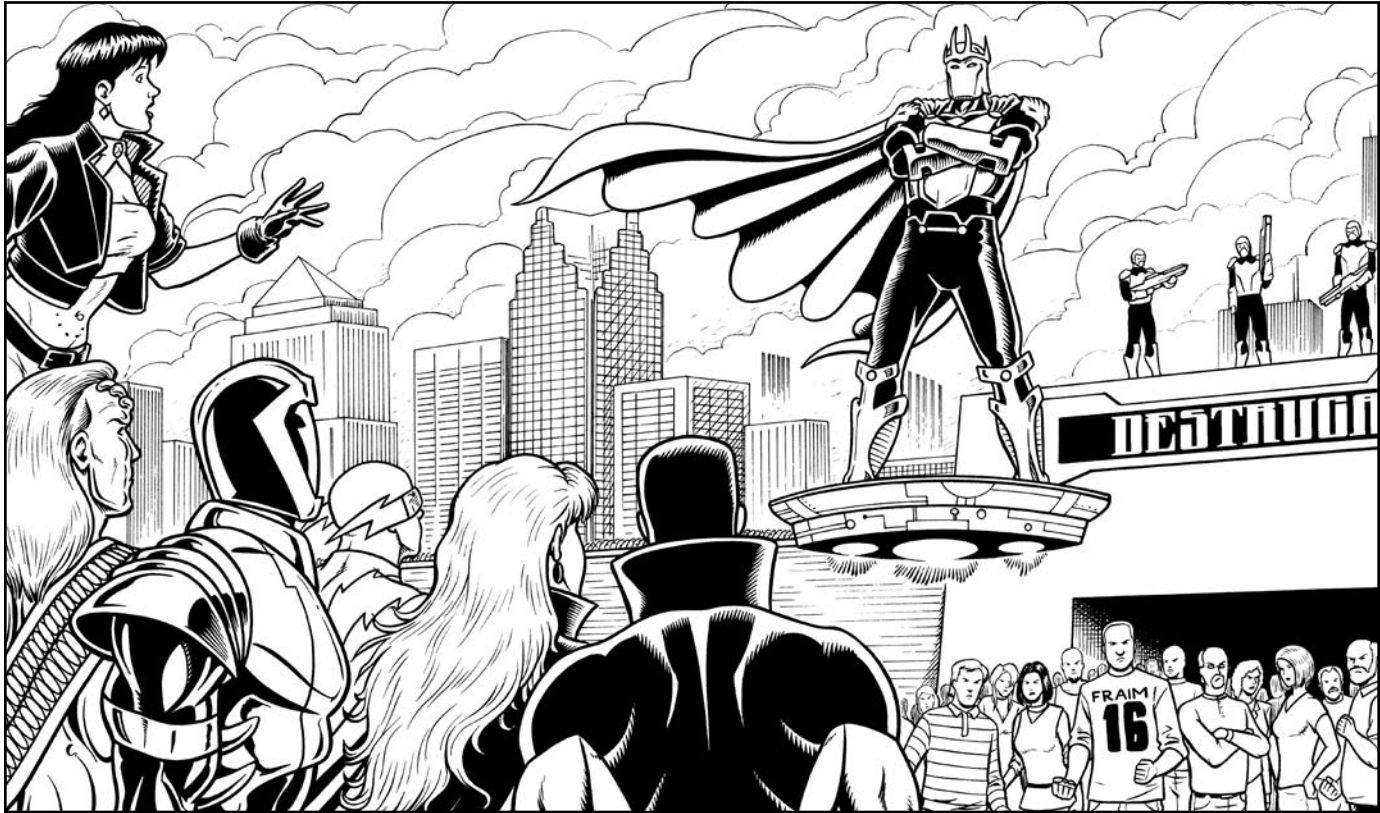
The PCs now need to find out what is going on. If a character has any robotics expertise or any detailed knowledge of Mechanon, it’s obvious these machines are related to him, though they’re more like what he creates with his Animate Technology power than to the master himself. However, it’s also clear that these machines are old and in poor repair — decidedly un-Mechanon qualities.

An examination of the invader’s equipment reveals that it is, mostly, of recognizable design. One weapon might be a primitive form of a VIPER blaster, while a propulsion unit relates to Defender’s boot jets. At least one object on each robot is of unknown purpose. It’s a cylinder about two feet long by half a foot thick that directly connects to each robot’s power system. This is the Dimensional Shunt that they use to travel from the Mechanon Triumphant world to Champions Universe’s Earth.

Anyone with Electronics can easily figure out how to activate this device by running a charge through it. This causes a brief shimmering around the unit. Characters looking into the shimmer can see a ruin that might be Millennium City, though the picture only lasts a few seconds.

If a PC has Science Skills related to dimensional travel, he can figure out what the machine does without activating it. A roll made by 2 reveals the device’s purpose; one made by 4 tells the character the “dimensional coordinates” of the universe the device opens a portal to. A failed roll doesn’t harm or activate the device unless it’s a natural 18, in which case the GM should determine the result based on what’s best for the game.

If the PCs don’t recover enough Shunts for each of them to use one, a character with an appropriate Skill (Inventor, or Electronics at -2) can “boost” one to carry more mass; impose a -1 penalty on the roll for each doubling of mass required.



NEW DETROIT AND BEYOND

Eventually, the heroes figure out how to activate the Dimensional Shunts or otherwise get transported to New Detroit in the Mechanon Triumphant universe. The city is disturbingly like Millennium City, but most of the buildings lie in ruins and the roads are in disorder. Hovels dot the roads, inhabited by people more primitive than the city would indicate. In Memorial Park, the statues of other heroes are dominated by one of Doctor Destroyer. Amid the ruins are also signs of a more recent conflict, including smashed robots and not a few injured or dead inhabitants.

Unless the PCs decide to entirely alienate the locals, it shouldn't take long to get the story of what happened from them. The city is desperate for help, and a group coming into town that look like the heroes of yesteryear will not be turned away.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Any local over the age of thirty remembers when things went wrong. A robotic menace calling itself Mechanon made its first appearance in Washington, DC. The Sentinels attempted to intervene, but were soundly defeated; no one living knows the details of that fight. The city was leveled, most of the country's leadership was killed, and the robot launched the nuclear arsenal of the United States in an attempt to destroy the world.

Fortunately, if Mechanon's purpose was the extermination of all life, he failed... though just barely. Heroes and villains throughout the world, through effort and sacrifice, stopped some of the bombs from finding their targets. Detroit was

saved by the intervention of Doctor Destroyer, who called down beams of light from the heavens and destroyed missiles for miles around. He then began gathering survivors to his side, his only demand for protection being service in his army in the upcoming war against Mechanon. Though there were misgivings about following the arch-villain, they were overcome to gain such a powerful leader in desperate times. Detroit, renamed Destruga, was the base of operations for this war effort.

The war lasted seven years and wreaked havoc around the world. The cities that weren't destroyed by the nuclear bombs were ravaged by Mechanon's robotic legions or the counterattacks of Destroyer's army. But in one final confrontation, known as the Battle of Destruga, it all came to an end. Mechanon was destroyed in all of its forms. Destroyer and many others fell. Statues were raised to the fallen, the city was renamed New Detroit, and a new leader was chosen — Joseph Greene, the hero once known as Shadowboxer.

MEETING THE MAYOR

Once the subject of the town leader comes up, if the PCs don't ask to meet him the locals will suggest it. Joseph Greene, formerly Shadowboxer, was a very popular local hero. In the Champions Universe he was killed when Doctor Destroyer's forces in the Battle of Detroit (see *Millennium City* for his character sheet, which you can update with a few Skills appropriate to the Mechanon Triumphant setting). In this universe he became one of Zerstoiten's most trusted lieutenants, though it could never be said that either man liked the other. He joined Destroyer's forces for Detroit and humanity in general, not because he thought the villain's motives were altruistic.

TRACKING DOWN MECHANON

Greene will fill in details about recent events that the locals either don't know or were reticent to tell. New Detroit was recently attacked by the same types of robots as came to the PCs' home. The remains of the attackers are being examined by Dennis Greene, Joseph's brother, along with any other people in the city with technical knowledge. He'll invite scientifically-inclined heroes to join the investigation.

Upon examining the robots (which are similar to the ones that came to Millennium City in some ways, but different in others), the most intriguing thing the PCs notice is that they lack long-range travel, reconnaissance, or attack capabilities. Therefore the staging area for the attack must be nearby. A character who succeeds with a KS: History, AK: Millennium City, or KS: The Superhuman World roll can recall the location of the base Destroyer used before the Battle of Detroit; that makes a reasonable place to start looking. Otherwise, either Mayor Greene might have an idea where it is (it was abandoned long before he joined Destroyer's forces, so his knowledge is sketchy), or they may have to take more time to find it. Witnesses did see which direction the robots came from, so the heroes can always try to "backtrack" and search the ruins of New Detroit until they find the base.

If you need a map of New Detroit and its surroundings, use the Millennium City map. However, the new town only occupies the area of Memorial Park and a little more, while the rest of the city and the Detroit Tunnel are in ruins.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

Mechanon is, in fact, using Destroyer's old base (unless you want to extend the scenario and keep the PCs in this universe longer... in which case he's left a trap for them there!). It's outside of New Detroit, in what would have been Downtown Millennium City. The evil robot has taken pains to hide the location of his base, but the heroes' other-worldly knowledge allows them to find it. Once this is done, the final battle can begin.

THE LAST OF MECHANON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25 kg; 0d6 [0]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
5	BODY	-10	10-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
20	PD	20		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
6	SPD	30		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
70	END	5		
40	STUN	20		Total Characteristic Cost: 172

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 20"/320"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Weapons Array:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Eyeblast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6	6
6u	2) <i>Micromissiles:</i> Killing Attack - Ranged 4d6, 16 Charges (+0)	[16]
6u	3) <i>Synaptic Scrambler:</i> Drain DEX 4d6, Ranged (+½)	6
6u	4) <i>Muscular Disruptor:</i> Drain STR 4d6, Ranged (+½)	6
4u	5) <i>Tangle-Cable:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF (60 Active Points); 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
4u	6) <i>Flare:</i> Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)	6
10	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Hardened (+¼) for 20 PD/20 ED	0
37	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD/30 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
5	<i>Psychic Shield:</i> Mental Defense (8 points total)	0
5	<i>Structural Support Field:</i> Power Defense (5 points)	0
5	<i>Hardened Visual Sensors:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0
45	<i>Robotic Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
82	<i>Neck-Jets:</i> Flight 20", x16 Noncombat, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
15	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	<i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>Radio Sensors:</i> High Range Radio Perception (Radio Group)	0

HE WASN'T AROUND IN 1985

The adventure assumes that after Mechanon's successful nuclear attack, some of the heroes, villains, and organizations that had not appeared at that point later did so in this world, perhaps in different form. For example, if Mechanon has animated Defender's armor to fight the PCs, maybe this universe's James Harmon cobbled together an armored suit to fight Mechanon's forces. After his death, Mechanon's forces scavenged the armor and adapted it to Mechanon's purposes.

15	<i>Radio Sensors: Radar (Radio Group)</i>	0
12	<i>Sensor Enhancements: +4 PER with All Sense Groups</i>	0
27	<i>Shielded Extradimensional Radio Link: Mind Link with up to 8 of any of his robotic servants, any dimension, No LOS Needed, Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +½); Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)</i>	0

Talents

3	Absolute Range Sense
3	Absolute Time Sense
3	Bump Of Direction
3	Lightning Calculator
20	Universal Translator 14-

Skills

20	+2 Overall
20	+4 DCV
13	AK: Earth 24-
3	Computer Programming 14-
3	Cryptography 14-
3	Deduction 14-
3	Demolitions 14-
3	Electronics 14-
3	Inventor 14-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Mechanics 14-
3	Security Systems 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Systems Operation 14-
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Astronomy 14-
2	2) SS: Biology 14-
2	3) SS: Chemistry 14-
2	4) SS: Genetics 14-
2	5) SS: Geology 14-
2	6) SS: Nuclear Physics 14-
2	7) SS: Physics 14-
2	8) SS: Robotics 14-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 502**Total Cost: 874****200+ Disadvantages**

20	Physical Limitation: No Manipulatory Limbs (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Diminutive (suffers +6" Knockback) (All The Time, Slightly Impairing)
25	Psychological Limitation: Must Destroy All Organic Life On Earth (Very Common, Total)
20	Reputation: supervillain of world-threatening power, 14- (Extreme)
20	Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Gravity, Magnetic Or Force Attacks (Common)
374	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 874

Background/History: After its success in 1985, Mechanon began building dozens of duplicates of itself to carry on the war to end all life, but was frequently hampered in these efforts by the various surviving heroes and villains throughout the world. Most vexing of all were the forces under the leadership of Doctor Destroyer, which included heroes and villains striving to put an end to Mechanon once and for all. These attempts finally succeeded in the former city of Detroit in 1992... or so it seemed at the time.

During the battle, Cybermind infected Mechanon's network of backups and factories a sort of computer virus that forced all of Mechanon's duplicate selves (regardless of their stage of completion) to self-destruct. The backlash damaged the active unit, making it impossible for it to transfer its mind out of that last body (though the virus didn't kill him as Cybermind hoped). Doctor Destroyer himself demolished most of Mechanon's sole remaining body. Unfortunately, both Cybermind and Destroyer fell before they could finish the job — but they did put the robot's plans on hold for a decade and a half while it repaired its now effectively mortal body.

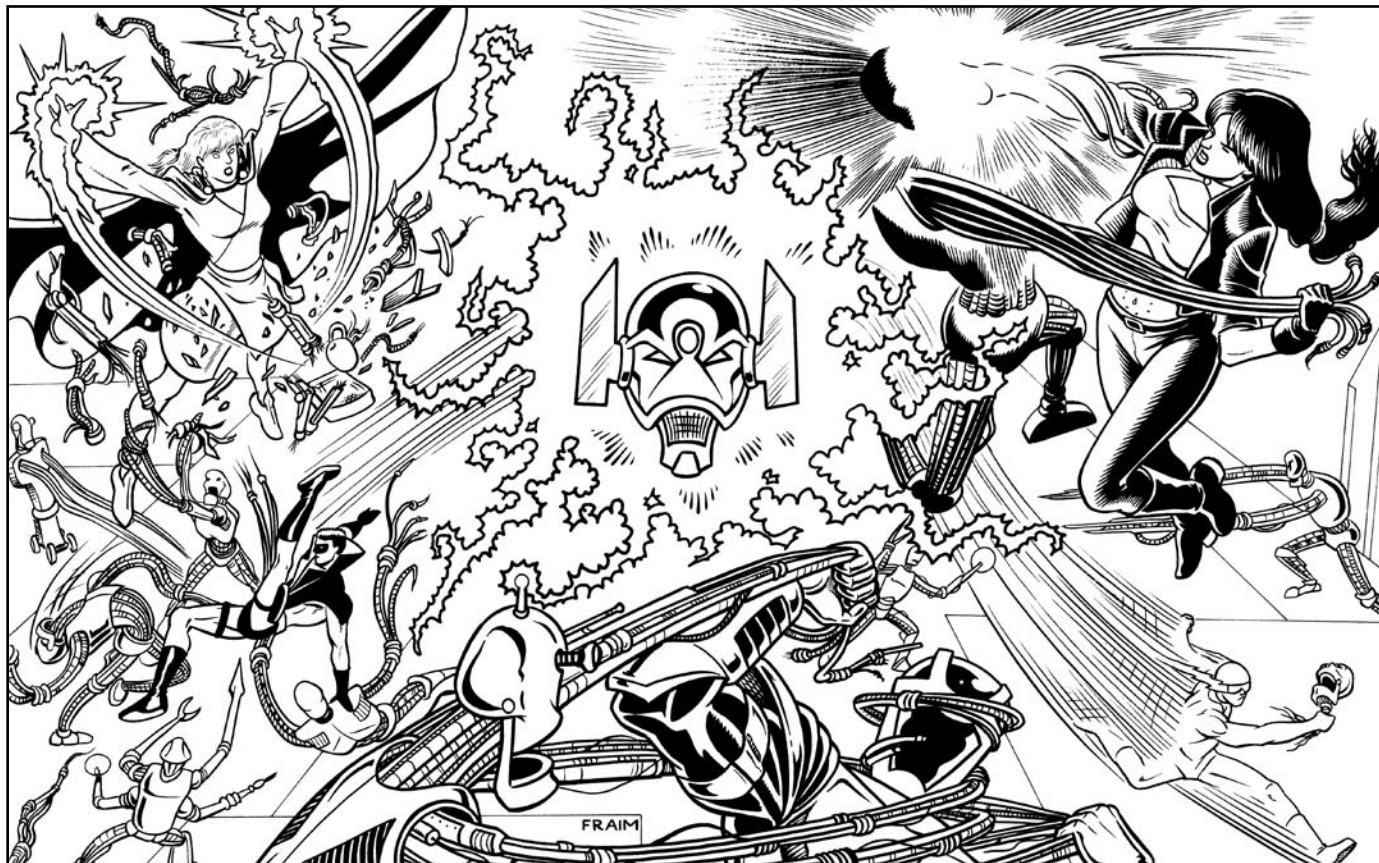
Personality/Motivation: Mechanon's personality is largely unchanged. Its only motivation is the extermination of all life, especially sentient life. Secondary to this is finding out how Cybermind crippled it so it can download its consciousness into a new body and resume its campaign at full strength... which, given the current state of the Mechanon Triumphant universe, would almost certainly mean achieving its goal.

Quote: "None are left that can stop me. Soon, life shall end."

Powers/Tactics: This version of Mechanon is a great deal more cautious than the original, because the next time it's destroyed will be its last. It functions through servant robots and attempts to flee any personal encounter. However, it's also, if anything, more mentally unbalanced than in the past, and thus prone to errors in judgment that go beyond its past need for grandiose plans. Though its mistakes could be due to faulty intelligence, it's concerned that the damage done by Cybermind may have other effects than trapping it in a crippled body.

If forced into combat, Mechanon leads off with a Flash to attempt to disorient many foes at once, then switches to the Entangle and the Drains to attempt to disable foes so it can get away. If those don't work, it uses the Killing Attack to bring down foes, only resorting to the Eye Blast if it runs out of other options.

Appearance: All that's left of Mechanon is its detached head, but the left side has been caved in by a powerful blow and later repaired. Its former body's secondary weapons array is mounted in the damaged left side in and around the eye socket, giving it the appearance of a green, glowing eye on that side.



MECHANON'S BASE

Mechanon's base is in shambles, with cables hanging everywhere and broken equipment laying about. Characters can use the wreckage as impromptu weaponry; it has 3-6 DEF and 3-10 BODY. The base is otherwise a large, empty space, except for the robot manufacturing equipment and systems. Those have 10 DEF, 50 BODY, and stop functioning after they take 25 BODY of damage.

Mechanon's remnant first sends its elite squad against the heroes. Several suggestions were made on page 201, but any hero or villain whose powers mostly come from technology could form the basis for a robot. You should have at least one opponent per PC. Heroes that have specific enemies or allies could end up fighting a robotic equivalent... or even themselves!

Mechanon won't get involved in the combat unless it believes two things. One, that the heroes are going to defeat its minions. Two, that they can stop it from escaping if they're not beaten here. Its "life" is now very precious to it, and it will not allow itself to be destroyed even to protect this factory. If it thinks it can outfly them or otherwise escape while they fight its minions, it flees.

AFTERMATH

It's up to the players and GM to decide what to do next. It is another universe, and if Mechanon is destroyed poses no immediate threat to their own. In fact, simply destroying the robot factory means Mechanon won't be a threat for some time. Nevertheless, the machinery that brought them over might be salvaged, creating a continuing relationship between the two worlds. The world Mechanon destroyed could certainly use the help.

There are also some mysteries not explored, perhaps the most important of which is, "Where did Mechanon get the dimensional transportation technology?" If it developed the Dimensional Shunt itself, the fight might be truly won, but otherwise, it may be necessary to track down the inventor and ask questions.

TOBACCO ROAD



AUTHOR'S NOTE

This mini-setting is a quick-and-dirty example of how to take an area in the real world that you and your gaming group know reasonably well — in this case, I chose my home region of central North Carolina — and “apocalyze” it to turn it into a setting suitable for a *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaign taking place during or shortly after the apocalypse. (Typically this is a Low Post-Apocalyptic campaign, such as this Road Wars setting, but it can be anything you want.) That way you and your players can take advantage of everyone’s knowledge of the area, helping to make the setting come alive. The ability to blow up that store where you get lousy customer service or destroy the road that makes your morning commute to work a daily hell is just icing on the cake.

Left me here to die or grow

In the middle of Tobacco Road

—*Tobacco Road, the Nashville Teens*

Ten years after a natural disaster that tears the United States in two and wrecks human civilization around the world, the Piedmont region of North Carolina becomes a lawless place, home to marauding biker gangs desperate for gasoline, farmers living in armed compounds, and ordinary people too frightened to hope. Into this maelstrom of danger and action come your heroes... and maybe they can even make a difference.

HISTORY

Ten years ago, the supervolcano under Yellowstone National Park erupted. The explosion destroyed a huge area of land in and around the park, but that was nothing compared to the aftereffects. Earthquakes occurred all over the world, toppling buildings and bridges; some caused tidal waves that swept coastal areas clean. Toxic chemicals spewed into the atmosphere by the volcano poisoned the air and caused storms of acid rain; the “death rains” still happen today, but thankfully much less frequently.

Perhaps worst of all was the ash, which covered over half of the United States. The weight of it collapsed roofs, the fineness of it clogged air intake systems (thus wrecking many vehicles), and millions died from inhaling enough of it to interfere with the working of their lungs. It blotted out the sun for months over much of the world, disrupting growing seasons and harvests (even today, a decade later, the world is still a darker, colder place than before the eruption). Food shortages and starvation set in, and that caused riots in every major city and most minor ones. Governments, including that of the shattered United States, fell and man’s civilization reverted to an anarchic Hobbesian state where it often seemed that every man’s hand was turned against his fellow men.

Ten years after the eruption, the world is a far different place. People live in small communities that they protect as best they can; almost everyone goes armed. Food remains scarce in many areas, but the most precious resource is often fuel. Improperly-stored gasoline went bad long ago, and what little remains (or can be produced) is eagerly hoarded or used by whoever gets his hands on it. Marauding gangs of bikers terrorize what’s left of the roads and obtain gas however they can, casually, even brutally, killing anyone who gets in their way. It’s a world in dire need of hope, and heroes.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The Piedmont region of central North Carolina has been inhabited for centuries, first by American Indians and later by European settlers who began large-scale farming and eventually built cities and towns. During the modern era it’s become a center of American trade and industry thanks to access from two major interstates: I-85 and I-40, which meet in Greensboro and run together nearly to Durham.

Unfortunately, the events of ten years ago have largely cut the Piedmont off from the outside world. The earthquakes and tectonic instability caused by the eruption destroyed the I-85 and I-40 bridges over the Yadkin River to the west and the conjoined highways’ bridges over the Haw River just east of Burlington. Highway 52 leading north from Winston-Salem to Mount Airy and Virginia was totally blocked by the collapse of Pilot Mountain, though some brave souls have forged paths through the wilderness around the rubble. Highway 29 remains relatively clear from Greensboro to the Virginia border; similarly, Highway 220 is in fairly good shape from Greensboro south to the Uwharrie National Forest (now a hunting ground for anyone who can get there). Many state roads and lesser roads have been blocked by fallen trees or the like, though some remain open.

But just because a road’s passable doesn’t mean it’s safe or easy to use. Even unblocked roads are often in poor condition, easily able to tear up the tires on a car if a driver’s skilled or unalert. Towns or large families have taken over stretches of some roads, charging tolls in food, fuel, or goods for their use. And nearly all roads, particularly the highways, are plagued at various times by biker gangs whose only rule is “to the strong go the spoils.” Few encounters with the gangs end pleasantly.

Thus, a person who wants to get to what’s now often referred to as “Tobacco Road” can... it just may take some effort, and means more than a little danger most of the time.

GREENSBORO

The largest city in Tobacco Road is Greensboro, located in the center of the region. By the luck of the draw it’s also remained the most intact city in the region, though even the “most intact” city is still largely ruined and mostly abandoned. Major roads through town, all still of Minor Damage quality, include Friendly Avenue, Market Street, Battleground Avenue, Bryan Boulevard, Lee Street/High Point Road, Elm-Eugene Street, Randleman Road, Benjamin Parkway, Cone Boulevard, and Wendover Avenue.

Three gangs control sections of Greensboro, exacting tribute from residents and fighting savagely with one another. The largest of these is run by a clever, chrome-domed man known only as “Legally Bald.” Thanks to his tactical savvy, his gang has come out on top in several recent clashes with the other two, giving it more power in the city. The gang’s headquarters is the ruins of Friendly Shopping Center, a major shopping area in the center of the city which the gang has plundered of most of its goods for use in trading; because of this they’re ironically known as the “Friendlies.” The gang’s biggest weakness is that it lacks the other two’s easy access to the interstates; it usually has to go down Wendover to I-40, which leaves it vulnerable to attack.

The Friendlies’ most powerful rival is an unnamed gang based out of the ruins of what used to be Four Seasons Town Center, an enormous mall with connecting hotel and convention center on the southwest side of town. This location gives the gang easy access to I-40 and Death Valley (see below); it often fights the Flyboys, which also uses that stretch of I-40 extensively. The gang recently experienced a change in leadership. The former leader, a huge, hulking black man with the totally inaccurate nickname of “EZ” was challenged and killed by one of his underlings, who calls himself Alpha Male. Under Alpha Male’s leadership the gang has become more aggressive, particularly about attacking the Friendlies.

The third gang, the Flyboys, occupies what used to be Piedmont Triad International Airport and the surrounding area on the northwest side of town. It can get to I-40 easily, or take Bryan

RULES OF THE ROAD

Since Tobacco Road is a “Mad Max” style setting where you can expect a lot of vehicle combat, the GM should know something about the state of the roads. All roads are rated in one of five conditions: Pristine; Minor Damage; Major Damage; Severe Damage; Impassable.

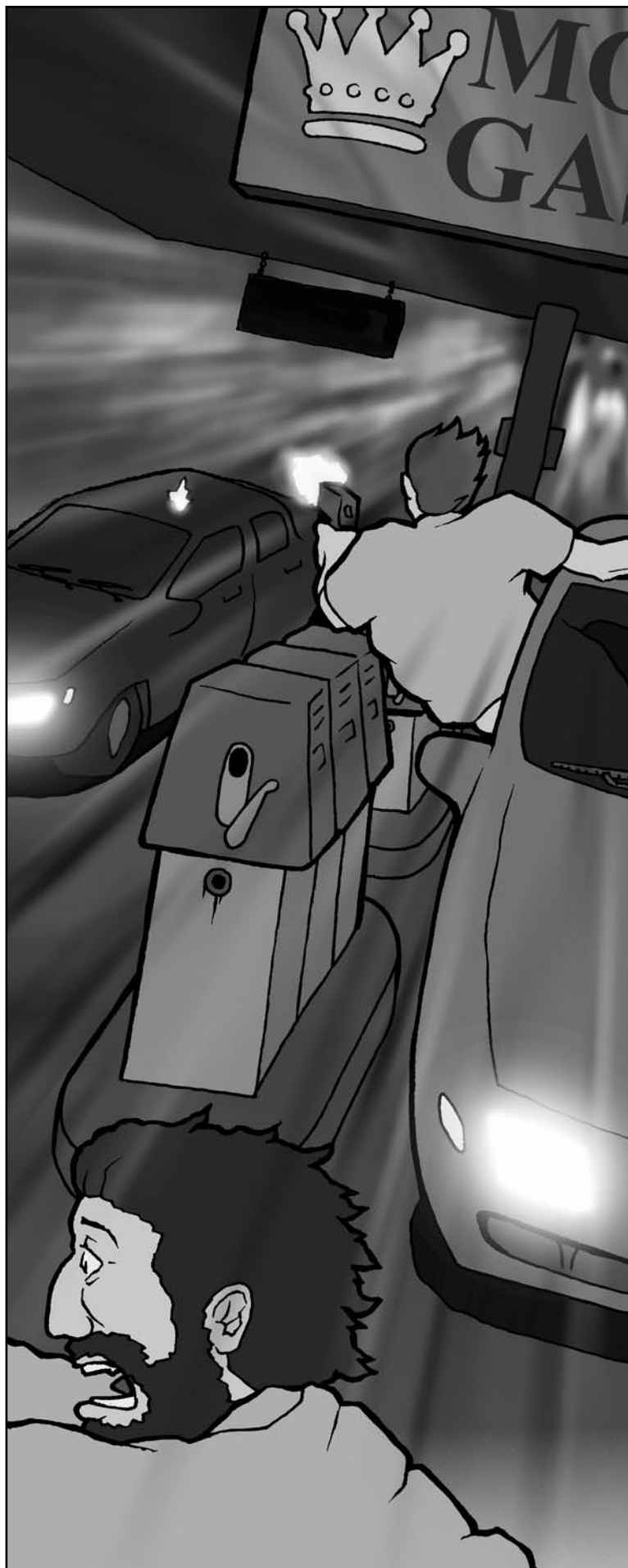
Pristine: The road has suffered almost no damage and can be driven on without penalty. Few Pristine roads exist, and most are in city neighborhoods.

Minor Damage: The road has suffered some minor damage or degradation — large cracks, potholes, subsidence. When a driver has to make a Combat Driving roll, the GM rolls 3d6; on an 11-, the Combat Driving roll suffers a -1 penalty due to the condition of the road.

Major Damage: As Minor Damage, but worse; the -1 penalty applies if the GM rolls a 14-.

Severe Damage: Roads like this are so badly broken up by cracks, potholes, tree roots, and other problems that driving on them automatically entails at least a -2 Combat Driving roll penalty for all actions (if not more). At the GM’s option, any failed Combat Driving roll inflicts 1 BODY damage to the vehicle’s tires (or some other appropriate component).

Impassable: Driving on these roads is usually impossible, and even if not the conditions slow a vehicle’s pace to no more than 5 miles per hour.



Boulevard into the center of town. Since a recent defeat by Alpha Male's gang, the Flyboys have been lying low and licking their wounds. Rumor has it that their leader, a skilled knife-fighter named Wayne Lee Ray, has big plans and doesn't intend to sit quietly for much longer. Since his gang can get to Winston-Salem quicker (and more safely) than the others due to the location of its territory, he may be trying to form alliances with one or more gangs there. The Flyboys already do a lot of business with the Nics, which makes the Flyboys the biggest sellers of cigarettes in Greensboro.

Death Valley

Where I-85, I-40, 220, and 29 come together in southern Greensboro is known as "Death Valley." It originally got that name because of all the traffic accidents there, but now it's even more appropos because of all the biker gang fights that take place there. Anyone traveling through the area takes his own life in his hands.

Big Pig

One of Greensboro's best-known post-apocalyptic attractions is Big Pig, an enormous barbecue restaurant on Battleground Avenue owned by a tough old man named Calloway. By common consent it's "neutral ground" among the gangs, and that includes the stretch of Battleground between Pisgah Church Road and Cone Boulevard — if a gang's fleeing from an enemy and makes it to that piece of asphalt, the fight ends. Anyone who breaks this rule, or starts a fight in Big Pig itself, becomes fair game for everyone. Hated rivals put aside their differences to hunt those people down, and a gang leader will toss his best friend to the wolves rather than try to defend him if he breaks the rule. To some extent the rule extends to farmers bringing pigs or other supplies to Big Pig; the gangs leave them alone.

Farmer's Market

The same courtesy does not always extend to farmers bringing their goods to trade at the Farmer's Market, just off I-40 near High Point and the airport. As a result, most farmers travel in well-armed, well-protected convoys.

OTHER CITIES

Greensboro isn't the only city in Tobacco Road, just the biggest. The next biggest is Winston-Salem, west of Greensboro down I-40. There the remnants of Wake Forest University try to remain a beacon of scholarly light amid the darkness, though in the winter it's a struggle just to keep students from taking books from the library to use as fuel for fires. The university's Baptist Medical Center near the center of town has been raided for drugs and supplies by more than one gang over the past decade, but a handful of doctors and nurses continue to provide the best medical care they can under the circumstances. The city's biggest resources is the

former RJ Reynolds cigarette manufacturing plant, "Tobaccoville," which is the domain of a large gang called the Nics. The Nics buy tobacco from farmers, process it into cigarettes (though the machines are now fire- and muscle-powered instead of run by electricity), and trade them for whatever else they need. The Nics don't go looking for fights, but they have the plant *very* well defended, as more than one gang passing through has discovered.

High Point, a much smaller city that was formerly a world furniture manufacturing and sales center, has largely collapsed and been left to its own devices. Every now and then a gang passes through and harasses the few remaining residents, or even takes over for a while. Burlington, the easternmost city in Tobacco Road, is largely the same, though its location on the Haw River makes it a center for ferry-carried trade from the Triangle region to the east. The taverns and casinos of Burlington are said to offer just about any pleasure a man could want (assuming he can afford it...) — but they're also full of dangerous, desperate men, so fighting and killing are every night occurrences.

Asheboro, to the south, was once the home of the North Carolina Zoo. More than a few of the animals have long since been slaughtered for food or let loose to run free, but it's not uncommon to see an Asheboro resident with an exotic pet.

BEYOND TOBACCO ROAD

To the east of the Tobacco Road is the Triangle region, consisting of the cities of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill, the home of the University of North Carolina, is largely a ghost town thanks to frequent attacks over the years by Durham-based biker gangs. Raleigh, like Greensboro, is home to four or five gangs that struggle for control of the area. Durham, on the other hand, is an almost schizophrenic city. Most of it has devolved into savagery, with over a dozen biker gangs fighting one another. But Duke University has largely walled itself off, establishing an enclave of civilization rarely seen these days. It remains mostly intact, and even has electricity for about half the day due to the efforts of clever engineers. It's built wood and stone walls to protect the campus (having denuded large parts of Duke Forest to do so), and the walls are patrolled constantly by heavily-armed guards. Duke Hospital remains the best hope for anyone in the region who's seriously ill or injured... assuming he can get there, and then convince the guards to let him in.

West of Tobacco Road the land soon turns hilly, and then mountainous. The mountain regions are largely cut off and isolated, and don't seem to have any desire to change that state of affairs. Biker gangs are generally safe passing through on I-40, but if they leave the main road may soon find themselves shot to pieces by self-reliant mountain folk.

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Here's a list of Post-Apocalyptic fiction, film, and games to help inspire you when creating *Post-Apocalyptic Hero* campaigns and characters. Not all of them are “mainstream” Post-Apocalyptic stories; some only use the apocalypse as a background element, but they're still worth watching for the ideas they generate. Items marked with an asterisk are especially recommended as being inspirational for Post-Apocalyptic gaming.

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