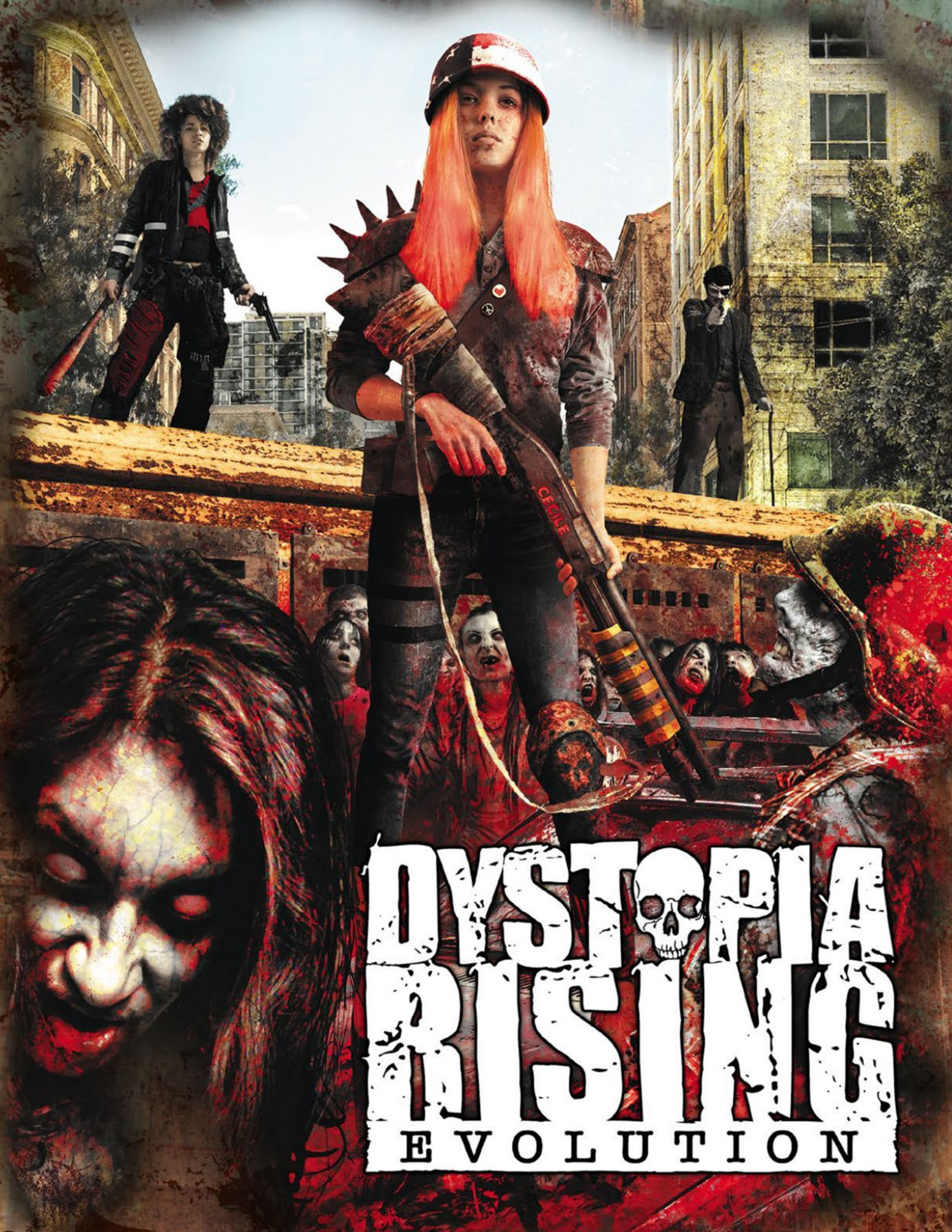
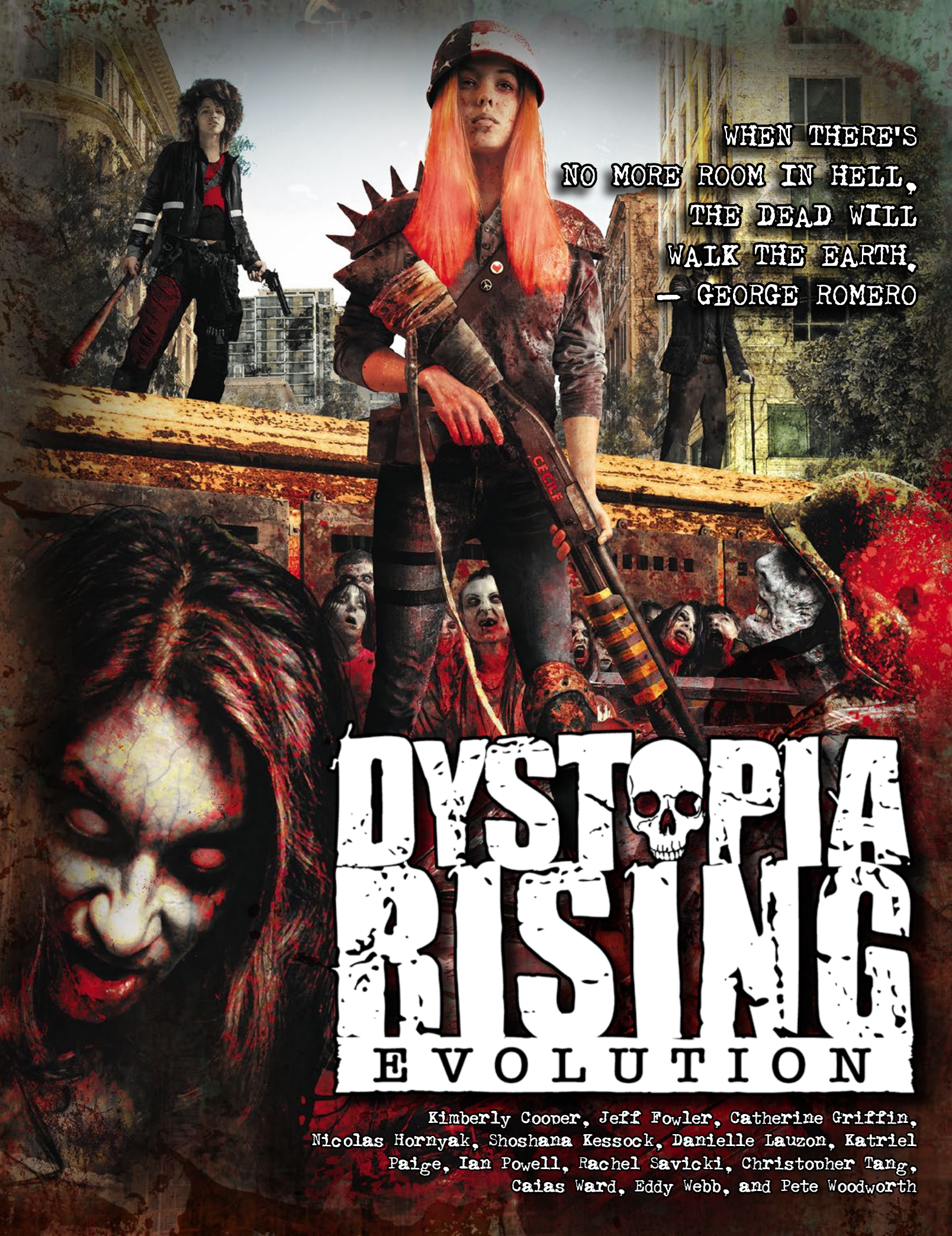

CECILE
DYSTOPIA
RISING
EVOLUTION



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From Everyone: Thank you for buying this book. If you found it through some illicit means online, we hope you like it well enough to purchase a copy.







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WELCOME TO THE EVOLUTION

It's been at least four generations since the Fall of humanity. No one knows the exact number of years since the world was blasted with nuclear radiation and became infected with fungus and the undead, so the best the survivors can do is count the number of generations before them. Oral tradition and crumbling documents detail the remaining history of those first few generations of survivors, and misinformation has clouded the tragic events around the original catastrophe.

Prior to the Fall, humanity did everything they could to record and share data across the world; unfortunately, as green movements and landfill concerns took the forefront of human focus, the shift from hard, sustainable technology to digital and virtual mediums caused a massive period of human growth to be lost. Music released on digital formats all but disappeared. Information shared via the internet and television was eradicated by electromagnetic pulses and low-level ground destruction. Generations of neglect, misunderstanding, and misuse caused localized electronic equipment to break or fall into disuse. Humanity lost most of the advancements from the mid-1990s forward, and comforts of the modern age were replaced with tools for survival.

The ancestors of today's survivors were the first deviations of the human condition — the initial contact with the mutating fungal infection — and were able to survive the rapidly spreading epidemic. Those ancestors then taught their children, born in a deadly world, how to survive. Those children, the first generation of the new "Strains" of humanity adapted to exist in this deadly new world, in turn taught their children how to live in the ruined world, and so on. History is a distant second to survival skills such as punching the undead and firearm maintenance.

Small communities come together in a world where concepts such as democracy, freedom, and government are newly reborn. Major cities have been all but destroyed; transit has been reduced to animals, wagons, and the occasional iron horse. Humanity has just started to rebuild the telegraph lines and the postmen have begun to ride from territory to territory, but large sections of the world are still irradiated or completely overrun by the undead. Steam trains become networks of travel for the affluent and industrialized territories, while small holdout communities hidden in the wastes worship strange cargo-cult gods scraped out of the irradiated soil. Finding a community of decent size in this world is rare; finding one that has any concept of equality or morality is rarer still.

Oh, and people have the unnerving ability to come back from the dead, regrown from the very virus that destroyed the world.

This is dystopia. The world is broken. It is up to you to pick up the pieces and make a new world from the remains of the old.

Welcome to the evolution.

What You Will See

Mutations: Animal and plant life has mutated drastically since the Fall. Thousands of strange plants and animals exist based on evolutions and mutations of real-world modern flora and fauna. But be wary — you may not be the one hunting those monster-like animals, strange mutant beasts, and deadly organic threats. They may be hunting *you*.

Psionic Illusions: Psionic manifestations can delude a person's visual perception; however, they cannot actually change reality. When such an illusion occurs, it is an individual (living or dead) exerting their will with limited scope and capacity. Such illusions, however, are rare, and thus can be confused for reality by the unknowing.

Pseudo-Science: We know that most forms of radiation don't manifest as green, glowing objects. We know that medical procedures require specific tools and medications to prevent the spread of infection. We know that you can't use random chunks of metal and bone to make a new, working piece of technology. We also know that a world such as **Dystopia Rising: Evolution** benefits from simplified concepts and narrative takes on science and medicine over "hard" scientific simulation. By keeping things streamlined, **Dystopia Rising: Evolution** can provide interesting concepts for player characters to engage with, without straying too far into the details of authentic reality.

What You Won't See

Lots of Supernatural Creatures: Ghosts, werewolves, creatures of fantasy, and other supernatural creatures might be

commonplace in novels, films, and television shows, but you won't see them in **Dystopia Rising**. While there are mutations that might *look* like one of those things, or even be mistaken for them, that's not an area we explore. There will always be a reasonable and rational (if pseudo-scientific) explanation for the undead you see within.

Magic: Similarly, you won't see magic, although you'll see stuff that looks a bit like it. Psionics and the miracles of religious faith are both a limited form of mental capacity to change the world. Beyond those, however, you won't see any other forms of paranormal activity within **Dystopia Rising**. Characters might *believe* specific abilities have a supernatural or religious explanation, but true world-changing supernatural effects don't exist.

Functioning High Technology: Most post-1990s technology didn't survive well in a dangerous and chaotic environment full of radiation and violence. Consider many of the technological items that you have currently, and how quickly the batteries run out or the components need replacing. Laptops won't do well in a world of dust and microwave-grade radiation, smartphones won't last a minute against the flailing of the undead, and most circuit boards were fried ages ago. In general, consider the technology of the Industrial Revolution (circa 1760 to 1840) as commonplace, while anything from the Second Industrial Revolution (circa 1860s to 1920s) as only existing in major settlements and other high technology areas.

Theme: Pros and Cons of Community

A lot of post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on the loneliness of being a survivor. **Dystopia Rising** goes in a different direction, exploring the benefits and drawbacks of rebuilding communities when the world has fallen apart. There's certainly plenty of inspiration for toxic and aggressive communities in post-apocalyptic fiction, but those aren't the only options. Is it possible to build something positive and productive when the world has gone to hell? Screwing people over and thinking of yourself is easier in the short term, but is the long game of rebuilding civilization worth the risk to you and your companions? Do zombies care about your ideological concerns?

This dilemma is explored on the micro scale as well as the macro. Teams of survivors struggle with similar questions. Who gets the rations, and who goes hungry? How is a crime against the group settled, and who determines the punishment? Do you run the settlement as a democracy or an autocracy? And what's more important: ideals or survival?

A second, more implicit theme is "what constitutes humanity?" The Strains of humanity are mutations of the body, and people coming back from death have a different mental and emotional connection with everyone around them. When your flesh and your soul are altered, is it only your morality that allows you to call yourself human?

Mood: Darkest Before the Dawn

Post-apocalypse as a genre is bleak. It's a way to showcase the worst of human nature and extrapolate where those urges will take us. But **Dystopia Rising** has something that most post-apocalyptic fiction lacks: hope. Yes, the word "dystopia" is in the title, but so is "rising." People can (and often do) succumb to their baser instincts, but some rise above them, seeking to create something better in the chaos and darkness. Further, the survivors you portray are a cut above the average person. They can be better, if they choose to.

Action: Reclamation

Theme and mood are all well and good, but what does a survivor do in a typical session? There are a lot of options, from fighting off zombies to negotiating with bandits to scavenging for fuel. But the reason characters thrust themselves into danger and moral dilemmas time and again is *reclamation*. This is both physical reclamation ("let's make this abandoned town habitable again") and spiritual reclamation ("now that I have come back from the dead, I need to rebuild my mind and soul"). In a world gone mad, reclaiming faith can be just as important as acquiring canned goods from a swarm of undead, and just as deadly.

What You'll Find Within

Welcome to the Evolution: An introduction into **Dystopia Rising**, which you're reading now.

Chapter One — A New Age: A look at the background of **Dystopia Rising**, including some insight into the people that live in this post-apocalyptic world.

Chapter Two — Your Brothers and Sisters: The survivors of the Fall can be categorized into eight *Lineages*, which each have a handful of *Strains* that fight to reclaim the world that was destroyed. Read this chapter if you want to know what kinds of people you can portray as a player.

Chapter Three — Knitting the Flesh: How to make a character for **Dystopia Rising**, as well as five pre-generated characters you can use to start playing right away. Read this chapter if you want to create your own survivor or learn how to play one that's been created for you.

Chapter Four — Rolling the Bones: The core rules of **Dystopia Rising**. Read this chapter if you want to learn the basics of how to play the game.

Chapter Five — Acts of Violence: How to hurt people and avoid being hurt. Read this chapter if you want to know how the rules for violent confrontations work, as well as injuries and stress.

A TATTERED MAP

While this book is the core rulebook for **Dystopia Rising: Evolution**, we're just focusing on one portion of the world — specifically, the northeastern region of the United States. We'll touch a bit about other areas, and we left areas open for existing and upcoming **Dystopia Rising** games to detail in their chronicles, both tabletop and live-action.

Chapter Six — Wild, Wild Wastes: How to survive in the wastelands. Read this chapter if you need to understand how to survive the variety of environmental dangers in **Dystopia Rising**, as well as rules for salvaging and scavenging items and gear.

Chapter Seven — Birds of a Feather: You can't survive without making friends, and several factions and groups have popped up all over the wastes. Read this chapter if you want to learn more about the various societies that populate the world of **Dystopia Rising**.

Chapter Eight — What You Believe: Faith in a higher power, or in something else entirely, helps many survivors get through the harsh days and long nights. Read this chapter if you want to learn about the religious creeds and choose powers of faith.

Chapter Nine — Brain Bleed: The Fall of humanity lead to a few benefits, including the discovery and cultivation of psychic potential. Read this chapter if you want to learn more about psionicists and choose your psi powers.

Chapter Ten — Campfire Stories: The Storyguide is the person who helps the players experience the world of **Dystopia Rising**. Read this chapter if you want to learn how to be a Storyguide, as well as the mysteries of how survivors can come back from the dead.

Chapter Eleven — Threats of the Wastes: Living in the wasteland is no picnic. If the weather and the lack of supplies won't kill you, the zombies and raiders will. Read this chapter if you want to learn more about the various threats and antagonists in **Dystopia Rising** or want to know how to make your own.

Chapter Twelve — The Wasteland: No one is quite sure how things got so bad. But at least the new settlement of Philly del Phia offers a new chance for people to start fresh. Read this chapter if you want to know about the secret history of the world, what's going on all over the planet, or the details of the Philly del Phia settlement.

Chapter Thirteen — Let the Dead Lie: Every story has a beginning. This might be yours. Read this chapter if you want



to read an example adventure in **Dystopia Rising**, either to run it as written or as inspiration for your own stories.

Lexicon

Bad Brain: A terrifying disease spread by *raiders*. Succumbing to the disease causes the survivor to be resurrected as a raider of the same clan.

Fall, the: The event where humanity was changed, and the world became populated with radiation and zombies.

Grave Mind, the: The collective hivemind of everyone affected by the fungal virus that destroyed the world. People who have come back from the dead end up having harrowing and deeply personal experiences within the Grave Mind. Also known as the *Sunless Garden*, the *Hell Between*, and the *Black Passage*.

Infection, the: The common (if slightly inaccurate) name given to the fungus that has infested every corner of the wastes.

leccy: Slang for electricity, which is rare in the wastelands.

Lineage: One of eight core variations of humanity after the Fall. As various *Strains* appear in the world, many of them can be said to derive from one of these Lineages.

Nor'East: One of the regions of the wastes of *Nor'Merica*. Formerly the northeastern United States.

morgue: A location within a settlement where the dead return to life with a reasonable chance of keeping their sanity.

oldcestor: The original humanity before the Fall. A portmanteau of "old one" and "ancestor."

raiders: Cannibalistic scavengers who act as if they've lost their sanity, due to *Bad Brain*. They congregate in groups called *clans*.

Scrap: Bits of old machines, hunks of metal, or other potentially useful materials for repairing devices. A catch-all term for useful barter materials.

INSPIRATIONAL MATERIALS

- The *Mad Max* movies
- The *Fallout* video game series
- *The Walking Dead*
- *The 100*
- The *Borderlands* franchise
- *Desert Punk*
- *Into the Badlands*
- *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*

settlement: A collection of *survivors* who have decided to work together in one location toward mutual survival.

Strain: A variation of humanity that has survived the Fall. Strains are specific subsections of *Lineages*.

turlet hooch: Homemade, low-quality alcohol.

UPP: Short for *Universal Price Point*, a common denominator for determining how currencies in different settlements convert with each other. Characters that stay in one area tend to default to the local monetary system — only travelers, merchants, and adventurers use UPPs regularly. Sometimes pronounced "ups."

wastes, the: General term for the world, although sometimes used to delineate anything that's not a settlement. Also: *the wastelands*.

zed: Shorthand for zombie.



BOOK ONE

FLESH

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

"Tell me about yourself."

The woman who spoke to Mila Tierney did not wear anything fancy. She did not have a private army. She did not have vast wealth. She certainly did not have a name known among the powerful Pure Bloods, except in whispers and curiosity.

What she did have was a means to get answers from the dead. Mila offered money, and of course the woman took it, but she placed other conditions on her assistance. Most were minor.

This request, however, was the most uncomfortable of all.

The woman peeled back the skin on the body resting on the table in front of her while her child apprentice took notes in the dim light. They did not speak to each other; the woman pointed and the girl wrote. The girl faded in and out of view on the edges of the operating theater, the sole lantern hanging above the table providing scant illumination. Occasionally, Mila heard others above and to the sides whom she could not see.

"Ms. Tierney, please tell me about yourself."

"You know who I am," Mila said, finally turning towards the woman rather than being transfixed by the body in various stages of skin and muscle.

The woman sighed and tilted her head. She wore a mask: a polished brass oval with a slit for a mouth and circles for eyes. All the better to conceal her Retrograde features. The edges of her skin were rotten and corpse pallor, but her eyes were the silky blue of a childhood sky. The woman blinked once, twice, and tilted her head again.

"But do you? I don't ask these questions for idle talk, Ms. Tierney. I am not one to climb your high towers and twirl with soft-handed boys and girls. We are in the middle of a procedure that will give you the answers you seek if you only follow the instructions I gave. And those were?"

Mila saw herself in the mask, a funhouse-mirror reflection of washed hair and exfoliated skin and painted lips. Her mouth twisted in brass as she answered.

"No matter what question you ask, I am to answer. No matter how simple the question, I am to answer truthfully. And I am not, under any circumstances, to step outside the light."

Mila watched herself nod in the reflection; she realized it was the woman nodding.

"Good. Tell me about yourself."

"Mila Tierney, of the Delphian Waste Tierneys. My family is acknowledged by the Lineage League—"

The mouth behind the brass mask hissed at Mila.

"Tell. Me. About. Yourself."

Mila paused, seeking words and failing to find them. The woman grumbled.

"You are only what others define you as, Ms. Tierney. What is your happiest childhood memory with Tobias?"

Mila braced for the cold that ran over her heart.

"We had a pool."

"A pool of water?" The woman in the brass mask carefully sawed at the top of the body's head, blade rasping at bone.

"Yes. Indoors, for swimming. It was ten feet wide by twenty feet long. A metal tank that used to hold oil from the time of the oldcestors. My father had the top cut off—"

"I asked about your brother, not your father."

Mila sighed.

"We weren't supposed to swim without our guards, but I loved it so much. I snuck away early in the morning to the pool."

"How old were you?"

The woman stopped sawing, put her tools down. Her apprentice faced Mila, taking notes.



"I was nine."

"What happened?" The woman stepped forward, uncomfortably close, blue eyes unblinking.

"The ladder broke free. I screamed, fell in the water."

"Then?"

Mila watched herself tell the tale in the mask.

"It hit me in the head. The ladder was on me. I couldn't move it."

"You were frightened?"

Mila lost track of the woman with the mask, turning and nearly colliding with her on the other side. Mila banged into the table.

"Yes..."

"Why?"

"I didn't want to die."

The brass mask shook her head. Mila's chest tightened.

"And?"

"And because my father would know I disobeyed him."

Her heart squeezed tighter.

"And?"

"And because…because I promised my brother I wouldn't swim without him."

Mila felt words pulled from her; they were not just hers any longer.

Mila's heart beat again, the tightness leaving it. The woman, in a blink, was on the other side of the table.

"My brother pulled me out and took me back to my room."

"Why was this your happiest memory?"

"Tobias didn't tell anyone. He was the little brother, but he promised he would always keep me safe and that we would rule the wastes. I was the brave one, everyone said, and he was the sensitive one, and he wasn't going to take that from me."

Those words were no longer hers either.

"If you had died, he would have been next in line. But he saved you."

"Yes."

"And you trusted him from that moment?"

"With my life. My heart."

"Good," the woman in the mask said.

Lights flared, the single lantern glow replaced by dim electric lights amplified with polished metal and mirrors. It was an operating theater, rows and rows of empty seats and broken tiles ringed with crystals and fungus. Mila Tierney was again the confident and powerful Pure Blood Mayor of Philly del Phia, not a scared drowning girl.

The Mütter, wrapped in robes, her rent and torn flesh covered and concealed, resumed her place in society as an oddity. A Graverobber, one who bridges life and death.

"I will have an answer in a day," the Mütter said. "He should trust me, now that you shared that moment no one else knows. Feel free to stop by the gift shop on your way out."

"Who are you going to ask?"

The Mütter paused, her eyes blinking abnormally long.

"Why, who else should I ask but your thrice-murdered brother?"



chapter one

A NEW AGE

"People don't need a reason to be awful to each other. They just need to survive. But people don't need a reason to survive, either. They just need each other. Figure that one out, you've got a shot at understanding why we're all still here."

- Tribeca Rockaway, sniper of the Dead Heroes gang

THE DOOMSDAY BOOK

Is that too dramatic? I'm not good with titles.

I always said I would write a book one day, collecting everything I've learned about the wastelands from growing up in Old York to joining the Federally Bonded Inquisition to married life in the Dead Heroes gang, and well, here we are. I know, it's stupid, right? People aren't exactly very literate these days, and besides, nobody has ever been a fan of bad news. Not that I see it that way, but then, that's me. I've always been one to look on the bright side. My curse, I suppose. To see a world this screwed up and think about trying to rebuild it instead of looting what's left like so many other people do.

I've probably collected a few hundred papers over the years as I gathered notes; I've tucked some of the most relevant ones in for the time being. And since Ex and Rock somehow traded for an old typewriter - one that's actually working - I really don't have any excuse anymore. (Love. What a pain in the ass.) Who knows? Maybe I'll even write down our life story sometime, see if anyone cares.

Until then, though, consider this a work-in-progress copy of my survivor's handbook. It's a sort of Nor'East travel guide, short history of the wastes, and "DON'T DO THIS OR YOU'LL DIE" advisory all rolled into one helpful package. With any luck, maybe it can be a guide to rebuild on, someday. Anyway, here goes.

THE WASTELANDS

Our world is broken.

I know it sounds obvious but let that sink in a minute. Whatever problems the world had before the Fall, it was still a world that WORKED. The water wasn't poison, the ground didn't grow stunted and toxic plants half the time, and the air didn't sear your throat if you couldn't get cover your mouth in time when the acid clouds rolled in. Not to mention things like radiation hot zones cooking your guts before you even know you're in trouble, or psychic crystals that can trap you in a maze of your own thoughts for days at a time.

That's not counting the animals, either. I can't say I've seen much about wildlife before the Fall, but I'm betting that it didn't look like what we have now. Even the best hunters and fisherfolk still need to toss a good portion of what they catch because it's too toxic or tumorous to eat, and while I can't swear to it, I'm pretty sure if animals used to breathe fire or shake off bullets, at least some reports of it would have survived.

Look at our settlements, too. Can you imagine what it was like when all those roads were smooth, all those bridges were whole, all those buildings had four walls and glass in the windows? I know Yorkers will hate me for saying this, but even our city is nothing like it used to be - we like to think of ourselves as its heirs, but we're more like the rats in its walls. Hell, we survivors are just the rats of the world, scratching out a living in structures we didn't build and can't maintain, snapping at each other when we get too crowded, and running from the predators we can't hope to fight.

Sorry, I guess I went a little too metaphorical there, but seriously - I don't think the world has ever been safe, but since the Fall and the fungal infection that came with it, it's actively hostile to us. Take your eye off that, even in an area you think you know well, and I guarantee it's just a matter of time before something blindsides you. Something nasty.

Now, I don't believe the world is trying to kill us - I mean with real intent, the way some crazy preachers tell it - but that doesn't mean you can really ever let your guard down. Sometimes I think people underestimate just what that does to you over time. That you never really feel safe, deep down where it counts. It wears on you, files down the good parts, makes you jagged and fierce.

No wonder we fight each other all the time.

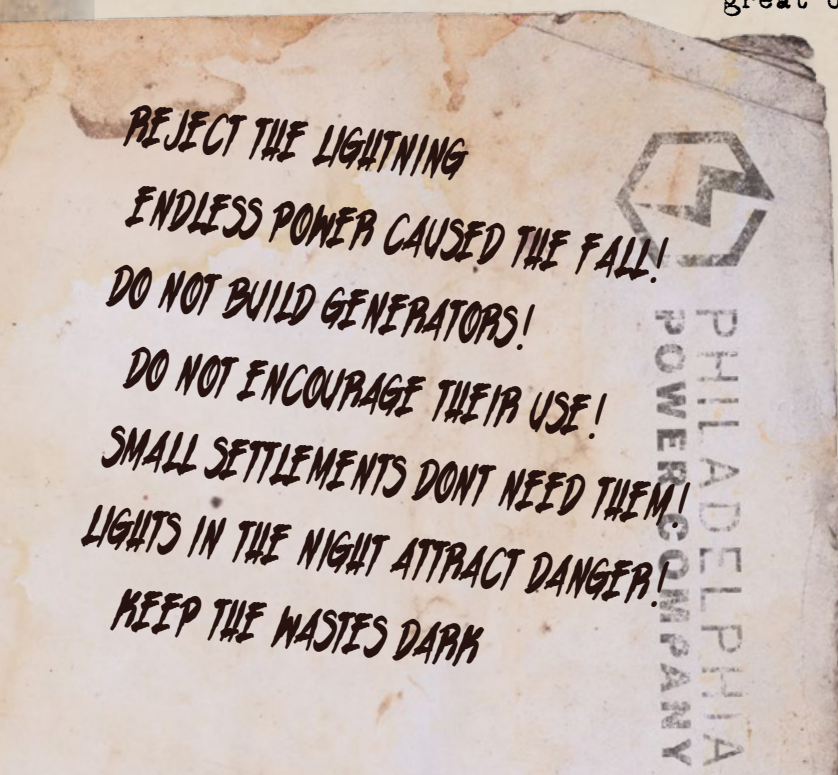
RING THE DINNER BELL

Growing up in Old York, you get used to the idea of giant settlements, even if a lot of the city is bombed-out, uninhabited, zed-haunted ruins. Leaving for the first time was a hell of a shock. I mean, you know that Old York is an exception to a lot of rules, but deep down you don't really believe it until you see what's out there. Or rather, what isn't.

Towns.

There just aren't that many left and most of the ones that are stick around because they're perched on one sort of ruin or another - an old city, military base, industrial plant, you name it. And while some of the great old cities still live on, after a fashion - Old York, the Aysea, that den of smug assholes up on the Bay - truth is they're the exception, not the rule. I've seen the maps. A lot of the old cities are either abandoned or might as well be, if they aren't plain overrun with zed or raiders, or so toxic not even the dead linger there very long.

Part of the reason we have so much empty territory, of course, is because there aren't nearly as many of us humans running around as there used to be. Forget the big cities; head out on a caravan and you'll see most of the small towns you pass are



ROGERS & ROSS
LAW FIRM GROUP

If you're new to the caravan, welcome aboard! Here are a few things you need to know before heading out into the wasteland with us. Remember, you may not be able to resupply in the wild, so bring everything you need!

Power – Most towns don't have leccy, or if they do, it's rationed closely. Oh, a lot of places go dark at sundown, for safety, so ask before lighting up at night.

Water – Towns without basic sanitation die fast, but beyond that, let's just say plumbing is erratic. Come prepared for nature calling.

Radio – Rare as hen's teeth, a town with a tower or a dish is bound to be heavily guarded. Access to news and maybe even pre-Fall music is pretty much priceless.

Medicine – Generally a town has some sort of doc, though whether they're properly trained or just an on-the-job sawbones is anyone's guess.

Walls – Get used to 'em. Towns that don't have defenses probably won't be there on our return trip. Don't mess with sentries, either. They will shoot.

empty ruins, too. The other reason for our population clusters, though, is what I call the Dinner Bell Effect. It's simple, really. Here's how it works.

Starting a settlement is like ringing a dinner bell for every zed, raider, and other species of predator in the area. If your town is small it's not a very big bell, so you're not likely to attract too many things, and only the ones right nearby. This is why lots of really small settlements hang on longer than you'd think. They get by because they're overlooked.

As the town grows, though, the dinner bell gets bigger and louder, and you know what that means. Now there's a race - a settlement either gets so big, armed, and well-defended that it can fend off unwanted attention, or the predators it draws will brutally pare it back down to a less-appetizing size (if they don't destroy it altogether). That's why there are so few "mid-sized" towns in the wasteland - you either stay small and unnoticed or become a hardened target too big to easily take out. Anything else just isn't good strategy.

And the bell never stops ringing.

STRAINS

Nobody really knows where the fungal infection came from; sure, there are theories, but I haven't seen anything close to definitive proof. I'm not sure it matters anymore, really. It's everywhere, it's changed everything, and it doesn't look like it's going anywhere any time soon.

So instead, let's talk about what it's done to us, the human race…or what's left of us anyway.

For starters, we should all be dead. And I don't mean in the live-die-return way, either. When I was learning medicine, we had a couple partial pre-Fall textbooks in the library, and while they were incomplete, there was still enough there to prove that none of us should be able to survive in this world - the radiation, the chemicals, the tainted water, the poisoned meat, and of course the fungal infection itself. Humanity should have died a hundred times over.

Yet here we are.

That's where the Strains come in. We're looking at hyper-evolution in action, changes taking place in real time across a few generations instead of so many hundreds of years. It's amazing, when you think about it. The world fell apart in a dozen ways, and yet we adapted fast enough to keep up - or at least enough of us did to keep the species going.

And from everything I've read, we're better than humanity 1.0 in just about every way. Funny how the old differences also fell away, too. Nothing like an apocalypse to make you realize that being an asshole to someone about their junk or the color of their skin is useless bullshit.

What's fascinating is how we've changed compared to what I've read of pre-Fall humans. I mean, all the Strains still have some things in common.

Don't Fuck with the Water

Even warring settlements don't taint water supplies.
Get caught and a naked bloody exile is your best-case scenario.

Don't Fuck with the Morgue

Messing with the place where survivors return from death is a quick way to never coming back yourself. Don't.

Pull Your Weight

Forget Strain, religion, profession, whatever.
There are only two types of people: those who carry their share, and everyone else.

Your Bed, Your Rules

So long as you're all consenting adults, no one gives a damn who you fuck.
So don't bother anyone else either.

Don't Help the Dead

Look, don't voluntarily help the zed horde.
You'd be surprised how often we have to spell that out.

You've done excellent work, Doomsday, but you fail to mention that many Strains are region-specific, some to the point of hardly ever being found outside their native range. While others are rare to the point of vanishing no matter where one looks.

There are all kinds of wild rumors, if one cares to dig through them and sort out the likely stories from the mistaken identities, tall tales, and other nonsense. Tales of amphibious people who haunt the coastlines, coming and going with the tides and living on islands or old oil rigs far offshore. Some exceptionally pious survivors who seemingly have miracles in their blood. Or strange paired Strains of workers and overseers who've evolved to symbiotic unity. There are even stories of sentient zed whose bodies have truly died but whose minds have somehow resisted the call of the Grave Mind, and now bridge the gap between fully alive and fully dead.

Truly, Strains are a fascinating field of study. Carry on, my friend, carry on. I'll add more when I can, after my next expedition. And I'll keep the kettle on for next time we chat.

Not only are we generally tougher, but we also heal fast, far faster than humans ever did in the past. I think we can also credit the Infection for that development - if it can rebuild us from nothing, knitting some broken bones or stopping internal bleeding doesn't seem so extreme. Plus, of course, we come back from dying, at least a few times.

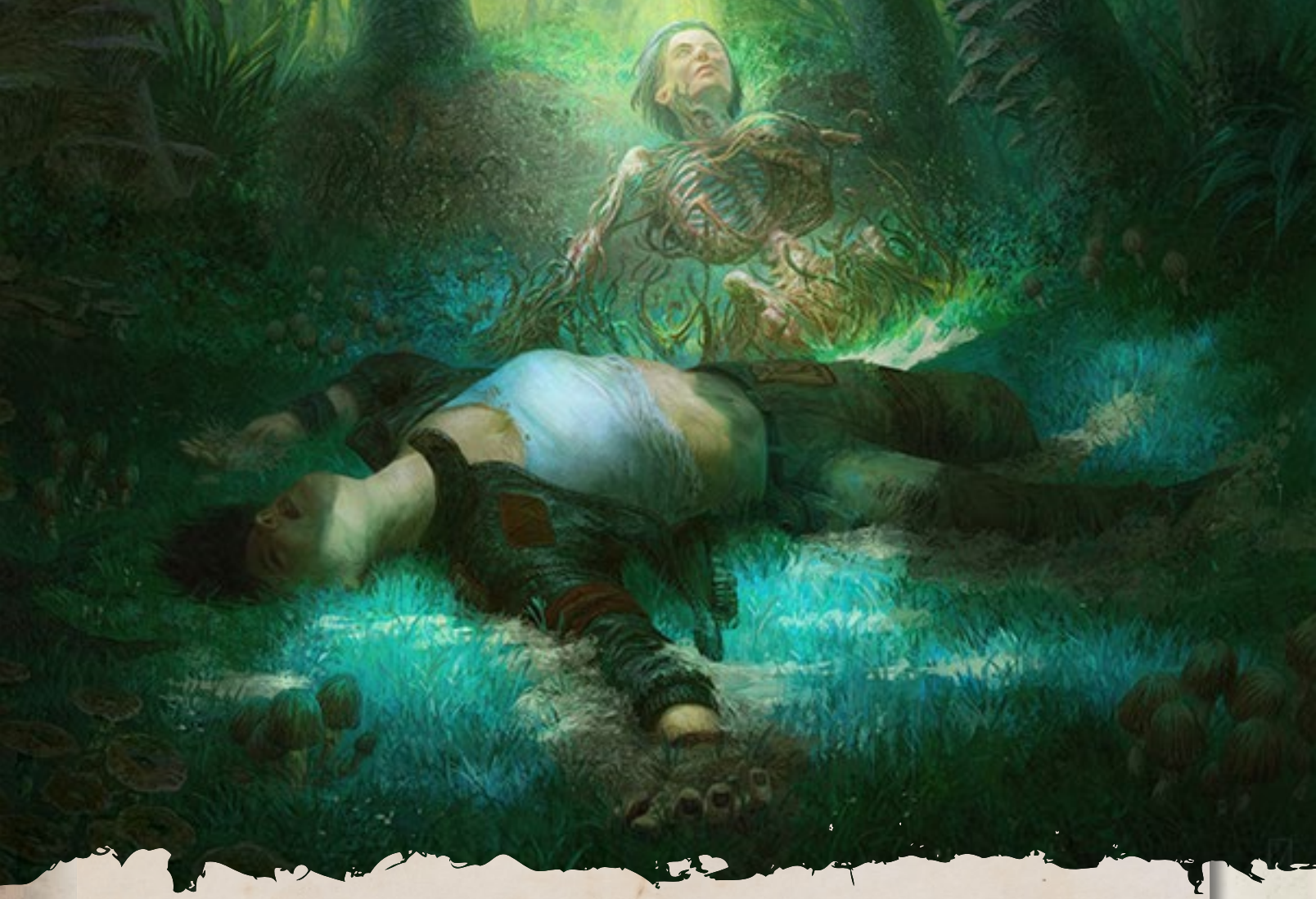
But then we diverge in ways that are just amazing, especially because it seems like something in the Infection passes on not just physical traits but natural talents and inclinations as well. I don't know how else to explain it. A Natural One I know compared these inborn affinities to how animals are born with certain knowledge and instincts already in place - how to hunt, where to find food, etc. Of course, he also thought it was more evidence that we should give up the ruins and go back to living as one with the wild, but still I think he might have hit on something there.

THE DEAD

Confession time? I'm actually not sure why we use the term zombies.

I mean, as best I learned from history, a zombie was supposed to be a dead person who got brought back to life, or at least back to moving around. I know we have those, sure. The dead are ever with us, and ever hungry - for our meat, first, and our bodies to join them after. Live long enough, you're also going to see someone you know who doesn't quite make it all the way back from death and must get put down for good. It's waiting for all of us, one day.

But that's only part of the equation. I remember my mother telling me one day that she'd done the math - even if the numbers we heard about the



population of the world before the Fall were true, there's just no way there should still be so many zed around this many generations later. I saw her equations, and while you might argue with her assumptions - she left out animals, for one thing, and we know they sometimes come back, too - the basic logic checks out. So where do all the dead keep coming from, if not from our fallen?

The Infection. Since it's a fungus and not some sort of illness that's not an accurate name, I guess, but I'll let the science types worry over stuff like that. It's the most common term for the fungus that seems to grow everywhere, and that seems to be what brings back the dead, creating the hordes that we live with every day. Some claim it also rebuilds things - buildings, trees, even twisted steel - which sounds crazy but fuck me if I have a better explanation. I don't know how it works, and while some people claim they do, it doesn't seem like anyone has the full picture yet. I don't know if we ever will.

Which brings us to what we call "zombies" or "zed," which actually have little to nothing to do with a corpse being reanimated in some spooky mystical sense. I mean, it makes sense, right? When we die, the fungus regrows us from nothing, or at least it seems that way. If it can do that, why can't it just create new zombies from scratch, too? I'm not saying the Infection makes a conscious choice - I'll leave that to priests and philosophers - but it certainly seems possible. Maybe it's a reaction

to our populations, the Infection creating zed to maintain some sort of balance, or maybe it's just absorbed so many of us since the Fall that it just makes bodies because it always has, like a sort of vestigial reflex.

Whatever the reason, it means that not only do you run into the dead when survivors fall, but sometimes there's no cause we can see - we just have to fight the results. It also means that zombies come in varieties that seem to have very little to do with "ordinary" human bodies. Some are positively gigantic, for example, while others exhibit almost human cunning while they hunt, and some really weird ones come with everything from acid spit to numbing pheromones or worse. Another reason not to take anything for granted when it comes to squaring off with the dead - you never know exactly what you're dealing with, so don't make assumptions. You'll live longer.

Interestingly enough, based on accounts I've read and people I've talked to, it seems like some zed "types" are more or less universal, while other varieties are specific to certain environments. For example, your basic shambler is found everywhere, and in the same numbers when it is, though in big cities and large ruins their numbers can positively skyrocket. By contrast, survivors from up in the Mass tell stories about specialized "river hunters" that go in search of prey whenever the waters rise, but I've found no evidence of them anywhere else.

RAIDER CLANS

Raiders are one of the most misunderstood threats of the wastelands. To those who've never encountered them before, they seem little different from regular bandits and scavengers, if even more cruel and bloodthirsty. And I suppose if you die it doesn't much matter how, so I can understand why a lot of survivors don't bother to learn much about the raider clans beyond which ones are in their area and how best to defend themselves.

Understandable, but still a serious mistake.

When I was in training with the Federally Bonded Inquisition, we spent a whole week on the raider clans - longer than almost any single topic. Eventually some bright spark raised her hand and asked why we bothered learning so much about them, when raiders were basically just scavenger gangs. Our instructor didn't raise his voice, didn't strike her, didn't even make her do extra stair runs like we usually got when we asked something deemed extra stupid. He just got this really cold smile and told us something I'll never forget:

"The raider clans are a measurement of just how broken our world is. The more numerous and active they are, the further humanity slides into the pit. Every time a new clan emerges, our species comes one step closer to devouring itself. Listen carefully, cadets: Raiders are not cruel or even insane as we know those terms. They're perfectly adapted to this world. We are the lunatics who can't accept the world has moved on. We're still trying to take a smashed bottle and put it back together so we can have a drink, while the raiders just lap straight from the stream."

Melodramatic, I guess, but it got the point across. Every time you call raiders crazy or imply they're little better than animals, you're making some dangerous mistakes. Their actions may seem bizarre, sure, but they always have predatory logic behind them. And calling them feral

Doomsday asked me to put down a few things about faith, me being a priest. I guess some people will tune me out, being part of the Court and all, but fuck it, I've seen enough to know that there's more truth out there than just the music. So listen up.

I guess the first question is why anyone believes anything, given how fucked up the world is these days. (Well, except the Final Knights, but fuck those nihilist assholes for enjoying this mess.) The easiest response is that we've got proof. Miracles, that is. Not everyone who takes the holy rites can perform miracles, it's true, but enough of us can that it's hard to argue there's something greater than us in the faiths we follow.

Now I know some smartasses out there are gonna say "bullshit, miracles are just psionicist tricks dressed up with faith" but answer me this, assholes — if that's true, how come psionicists can't seem to do the sort of miracles we do, and us priests don't get all that funky mind shit psionicists do? No answer? Thought so.

Sorry, that shit pisses me off. And anyway, miracles aren't the best answer for where our faiths come from, just the easiest to get. I've seen preachers without a spark of divine power who've got congregations lining up outside in the rain to hear them speak, and I've seen holy rollers with bona fide miracle hands go begging for a few UPPs. Because faith isn't about power, at least not that kind. It's about family, people who see things like you do and watch your back like it was their own.

Way I see it, that's the real heart of faith. It gives you a family if you haven't got one or binds them even tighter if you do. Not just that, but now you've got family anywhere your faith has put down roots, strangers who'll take you in and look after you when they might have stepped over you or even stripped your corpse otherwise. Sure, you might not always get along, but what family does? You'll still kill and die for each other if you gotta, and that's powerful stuff.

So yeah, we've got a lot of different kinds of truth. Some worship the seasons, follow nature. Others try to light a lantern to lead others to safety, while some agree with the fire but think it's better used to torch their enemies or maybe just burn the world all to hell. Family itself is everything to some faithful, while others celebrate themselves and their desires, and some turn to the old broadcast scriptures for answers. And of course there's us, the Kings and Queens, who pass on the songs of the past and the wisdom they contain to keep the world going.

That's just the big faiths. There's tons of little faiths, lost temples, and lunatic cults out there, too. I've heard it said there's a religion out there for everyone, and if there isn't, well, ain't nothing stopping you from starting one, now is there? No matter what you do, though, be careful with your new family in faith. That's powerful shit right there. Treat it right.

Doomsday tells me that before the Fall different religions used to argue about which one was "right." Can you believe it? How fucked up is that? I mean, don't get me wrong, some faiths really can't stand each other, and we'll rumble if we gotta, but it's pretty obvious there's not one true way, just the way that makes the most sense for you. If there was only one true way, how come so many different priests can call miracles?

Checkmate, assholes.

or subhuman implies that they can't reason or plan, which is even more dangerous. Even the ones that don't speak much still communicate, and the ones that do talk can be downright deceptive… at least so long as it takes to get you close enough to strike.

Don't get me wrong; I've seen the studies. I've done the dissection, I know they're different on a physical level. And I know better than to think they can be "redeemed" - hell, I watched a noble idiot try that with some Thrill Kills and get chopped up for parts for his trouble. I'm just saying, don't assume what they've become means they're lesser for it. They're efficient, they're focused, they have incredible loyalty to each other, and they're masters of their clan's chosen styles of hunting. Respect that. It might be what keeps you alive.

WHO WE ARE

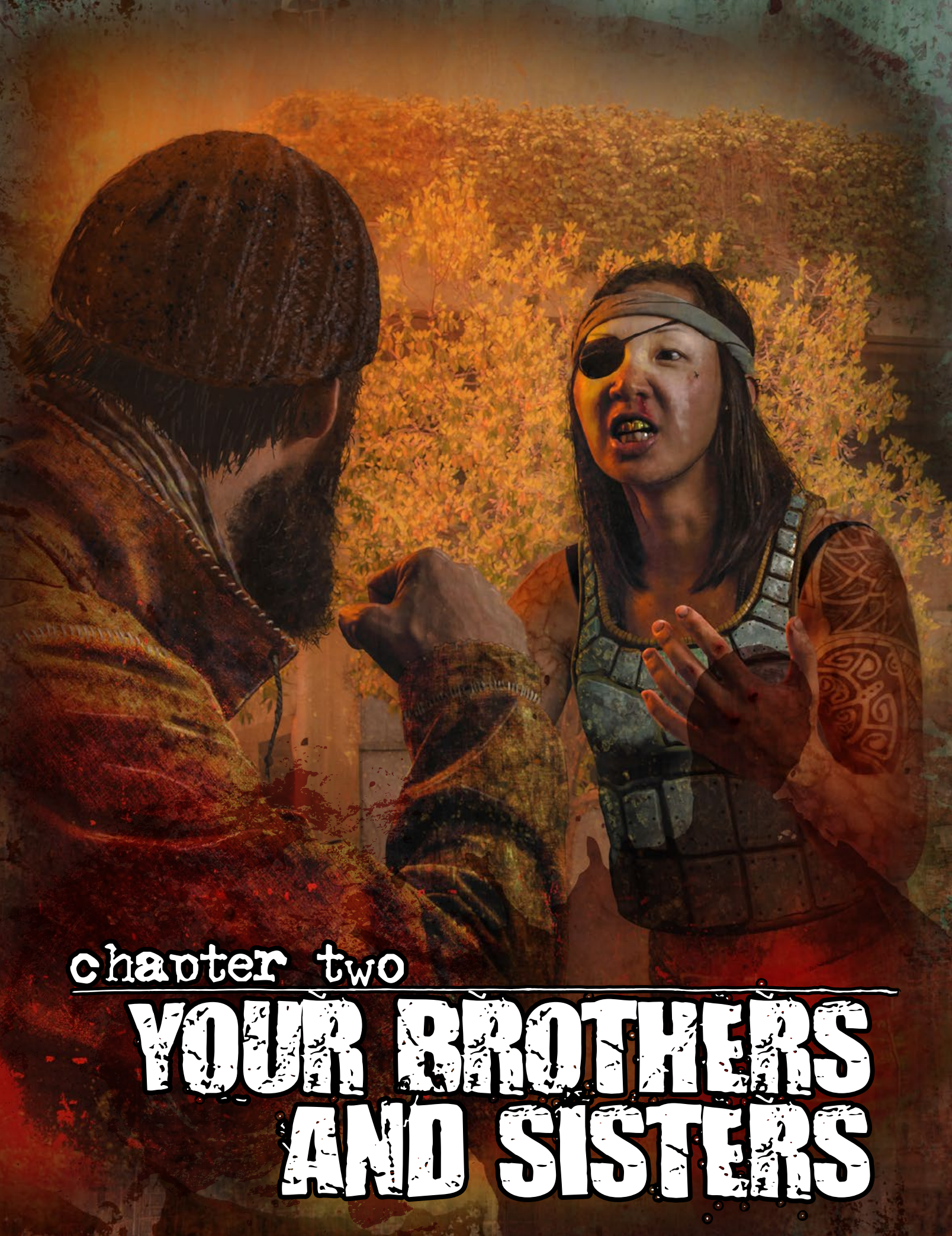
Given all the horrible things out there, it might be hard to see how we manage anything more than a slightly more civilized version of raider reaving. And I won't lie - take zed, raiders, and beasts out of the equation, and we're still capable of plenty of atrocities. Settlements go to war over everything from vital territory to ancestral grudges, criminal syndicates traffic in misery and violence, religious zealots persecute those they call heretics. On a personal level we're just as prone to greed and wrath and all the other indulgences the Hedonists talk about as we ever were in the past. Bloodshed and violence are part of us, but they don't define us.

Most of the time? We don't just fight, we BUILD. This world won't hand you a single solitary thing you don't earn, so we devote ourselves to dragging a living from the wasteland. Whether it's farming or scavenging or working a trade, everyone pulls their weight as soon as they're old enough to pick up a tool - or a weapon. Even the proudest Pure Blood can't afford to do nothing but sit back and count her money all day, and most everyone falls way below that level of luxury. But toil isn't the only thing that defines us either.

Though some of us put down strong roots, plenty of us explore, too. Whether it's to find better farmland, a safer place to hang our hats, or to dig through the ruins of what came before to see what we can learn from it - or sell to someone else who wants to know - there are plenty of us that never really settle down. The world is wild, deadly, and strange, but if you're clever, quick, tough, and a little bit lucky, it will show you wonders, too. But travel doesn't define us, either.

No, like any other humans in history, and perhaps especially now, there's more to us than our wars or our journeys. We love, we sing, we dance, we drink, we tell stories, we celebrate holidays, we rock our babies to sleep, we do stupid dares with our friends, we grieve our lost and our fallen, we hope our children will have it better, we wander out into the darkness and the wilderness just to see what we can find. Not even the end of the world can stop us from being human. The only thing that can take that away from us, is us.

Don't ever forget that.



chapter two

YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

"You may not know this, but a lot of the Strains are related. You'd think Baywalkers and Yorkers are completely different. Turns out, they're two sides of the same coin."

- Sierra Copenhagen, bandit and self-proclaimed "Texan"

When the world fell, men and women did what they had to in order to survive. They either fled to the wilderness or sheltered in large cities, hoping the worst would blow over and leave behind a new world.

In some respects, they were right. A new world did emerge from the death and destruction. However, it was not one they expected. There was no going back to the world that was once ruled by humanity.

Life will find a way. The human body is resilient and even during the initial outbreaks, a handful of the strongest or strangest humans were able to house the Infection without dying. These few were the first survivors. Some of them stayed in the hollowed out remains of cities. Others fled to the country. Still others gathered together in small groups as they learned how to survive together.

The Infection is also likely the reason why these individuals managed to survive at all. Radiation from nuclear bombs that were detonated during the worst of the outbreaks covered the country. The Infection these first people housed in their bodies was at least partially metabolized. Even so, these survivors lived short and bloody lives.

Over the next few generations, the combination of the radiation and environment caused the Infection to mutate into different Strains in different populations of people. Genetic differences caused physical mutations to form as people adapted to their environment. The first of the Strains of humanity were born, people that evolved to cope with the harsh environment in which they now found themselves.

Strains are unique in that they house the Infection, making them far superior to their counterparts before the Fall. The fungal material gives them the ability to regenerate faster than any human from before the Fall. They can survive bullets, blades, and more. The Infection also gives them the ability to completely regenerate if their body completely dies. The Strains may still be human in spirit, but they're far, far different in body.

This is the post-apocalyptic world that arose. The various Strains of humanity live across the world, creating settlements where they mingle and mix with one another. However, that world has been fractured. It's a wonder that there's any communication between settlements along what was once known as the "east coast," let alone the rest of the world. There are no more humans as we understand them; they would not be able to survive the harsh conditions that spread over the world. Instead, there are only your brothers and sisters: the Strains of humanity.

Depending on where you are in the wasteland, you may be more or less likely to encounter certain Strains. As an example, you will be more likely to encounter Saltwise and Baywalkers in a seaside port. If that port happens to be saturated with radiation, you may be more likely to encounter Retrogrades and Remnants.

Not all Strains get along with one another. Each possess their own flaws and stereotypes as well as their strengths. However, that doesn't make any Strain stronger or weaker than another. It simply means each has a niche into which they fit. Townies, as an example, are better at navigating large settlements. However, they have no idea how to properly survive in the wilderness or on the road.

With that said, there is a mutual understanding among Strains that you need to band together or die alone. When push comes to shove, Strains are more than willing to work together to survive. The world is dangerous and violent, which means that sticking with a team or a group is one of the best ways to stay alive.

One of the most important aspects of gameplay in **Dystopia Rising** is survival. Each Strain specifically states their form of survival in the apocalypse. It could be more social, or it could be more physical. This helps define how they relate to the rest of the wasteland and others that live within it.

STRAINS ARE NOT REAL-WORLD RACES

Strains are the evolution of humanity, borne out of where they sheltered and stayed during the outbreak. While these Strains evolved unique attributes and traits, they were not borne out of particular races of people.

When dealing with "strainism," make sure that you focus on the unique traits that each Strain possesses. Do not use real-world, racist remarks. Or, if the concept makes you uncomfortable, don't bother with strainism at your table at all.

LINEAGE OR STRAIN?

Like any family, people don't always line up into neat categories. In the world of **Dystopia Rising**, everyone belongs to a Strain, and that's the default term we stick with throughout the book. Lineages, then, are largely an organizational conceit — something that helps folks to understand how some Strains are more alike than different. Some characters struggle against the concept (you try telling Baywalkers and Yorkers they're related), but for the game's purposes, it allows us to give eight high-level groups of characters you can play, before you dig into which particular Strain of that concept you prefer.

Meet the Family

In the following pages, you will find information about each of the *Lineages* — a high-level collection of survival traits. Each Lineage branches out into three *Strains* that provide a unique flavor to the Lineage that you choose to play. These Strains may have unique mutations that can make them visually different, but they all come from the same source and thus have the same skills.

Below, you will see that each Lineage has *Skills* your character will receive, an *Edge* that your character will receive, and some example *Connections* you can take. Each Strain has an additional Edge your character will receive, along with a *Strain Condition* (p. XX).

Not all Strains get along. You'll find a guide in the following pages that shows why each Strain believes they are the best, and also why each Strain is sometimes looked down upon by others. Keep these points in mind, especially when designing your characters.

When choosing and creating characters, everyone should discuss what they want out of the game and what character dynamics each person desires. If two people pick Strains that normally don't get along with one another, it is not a bad thing. It could create interesting roleplay and dynamics that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Having similar *Aspirations* (p. XX) could help characters that may not normally get along have similar goals they are trying to reach together. Characters don't have to agree to be able to work together.



STRAINS

DEVOTED

- ACCENSORITES
- UNBORN
- RED STARS

ELITARIAT

- DIGITARIANS
- PURE BLOODS
- SOLESTROS

EVOLVED

- IRONS
- UNSTABLE
- RECLAIMERS

GORGERS

- FULL DEAD
- SEMPER MORT
- LASCARIANS

LANDSMEN

- MERICANS
- QUIET FOLK
- NATURAL ONES

MUTANTS

- REMNANTS
- TAINTED
- RETROGRADES

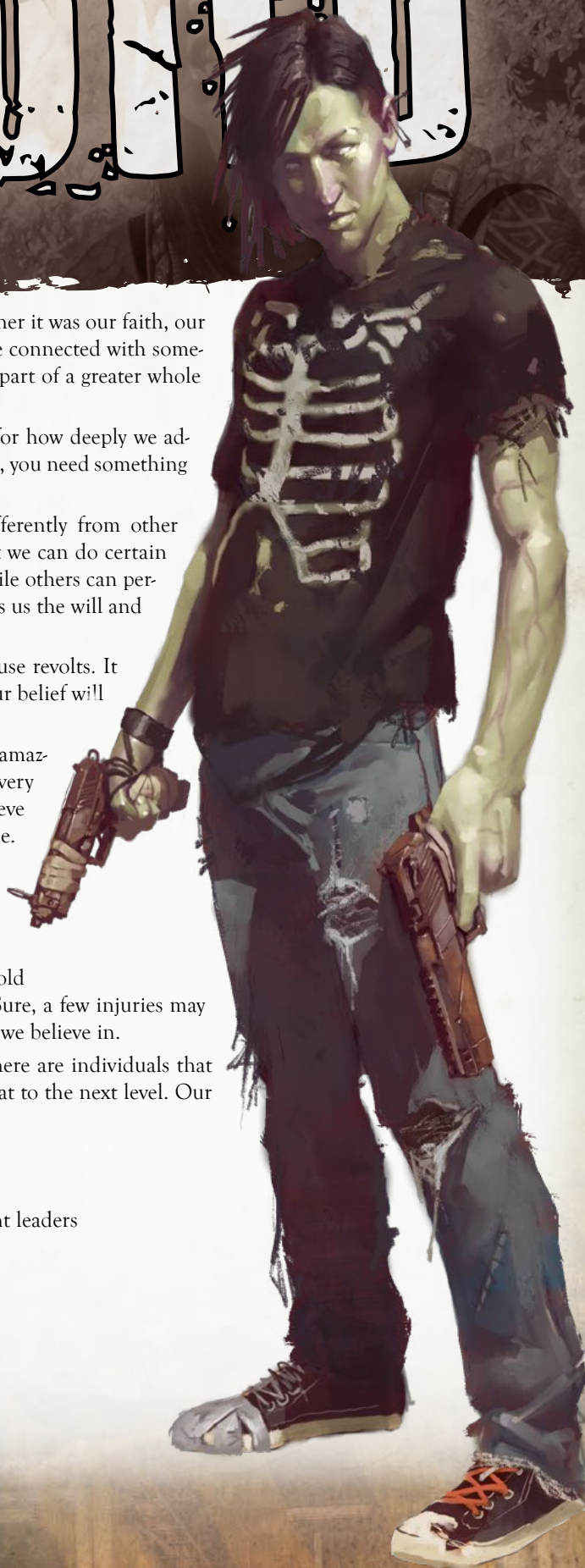
NOMADS

- DIESEL JOCKS
- SALTWISE
- ROVERS

TOWNIES

- BAYWALKERS
- VEGASIANS
- YORKERS

DEVOTED



When the world fell, we found something to believe in, whether it was our faith, our people, or in the Infection itself. Our belief was so strong that we connected with something that other Strains could only imagine. We found ourselves part of a greater whole and put all our faith into that whole.

Some consider us fanatical in our beliefs. We are criticized for how deeply we adhere to the rules we have created for ourselves. Sometimes, though, you need something to hold onto when the times are darkest.

Researchers have found that our brains are structured differently from other Strains. We can process our faith differently, and because of that we can do certain things that other Strains cannot. Some of us can use psionics, while others can perform miracles or rally people to our cause. Our belief is what gives us the will and the strength to carry us through the day.

Belief can change the world. It can move mountains and cause revolts. It can turn men into heroes or demons. We are the Devoted, and our belief will carry us through.

Why We're the Best: Our belief is what holds us afloat. It's amazing what the power of belief can do, and we show it each and every day. We know how to work within the structure of what we believe in, whether it's within a religious organization or a group of people. We are usually authorities in these arenas and are looked up to because of that.

Why Others Don't Like Us: Other Strains don't understand our devotion. They think we're wrong or disillusioned. They're also afraid of the lengths to which we'll go in order to uphold and protect our beliefs. In fact, some call our belief fanaticism. Sure, a few injuries may happen if someone decides to get in our way. But it's all for what we believe in.

How We Survive: Our belief is what carries us through. There are individuals that say mind over matter is what is needed to survive, and we take that to the next level. Our beliefs are so strong that almost anything is possible.

Skills: Close Combat, Integrity, Lore, Medicine

Edge: Meditation (p. XX)

Example Connections: Priests, cult leaders, local government leaders

"I don't think you understand. Our belief isn't a choice. It's our life. Cutting us off from what we believe in is like me cutting off your arm or your leg. You can survive without, but there will always something missing."

- Peter "The Scribe" Russet, Sainthood of Ashes (formerly Final Knight)

STEREOTYPES

Unstable: I hear you folks works with the undead. We don't take kindly to that here.

Remnants: Just because we follow the same faith doesn't mean that you mean anything to me, leftover.

Accensorites

Nicknames: Spiritual Leaders, Faithful, Believers

When the world ended, we turned to faith. We gathered our flocks together, truly believing that we were chosen to continue forward into a new age.

Our faith manifests over time. When we're young, we can pass for many other Strains. As we grow older and our belief hardens into devotion, though, we begin to manifest certain traits. We mutate, our flesh showing what our minds believe. No matter if we're Final Knights or Sainthood of Ashes, we take on traits that physically represent our faith.

Over time, our faith is all that matters to us. Other Strains do not matter. Other faiths are heresy. The only truth is our own and our beliefs.

Edge: Unshakable Devotion (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Do Not Blaspheme (p. XX)

Red Stars

Nicknames: Humanists, Egalitarians, Equalizers

We believe in mankind. We believe in the goodness of others and what can be done for the world if a person only works with others. Perhaps this is a naïve belief, but it's one we hold dear.

We form groups and settlements comprised of Red Stars. We share our food and our resources with one another, working together for a better tomorrow. The Landsmen laugh at how naïve we are, ridiculing our way of living. But we believe in humanity and in ourselves.

When we venture beyond the borders of our settlements, though, we see how cruel the world truly is. Others who are not Devoted do not seem like people to us. They don't have the same beliefs and the same structures. We are never truly happy unless we are with other Red Stars.

Edge: Stronger Together (p. XX)

Strain Condition: One for All (p. XX)

Unborn

Nicknames: Grave Mind Worshippers, Death Seekers, Fungus

Hear that? That's our mother and our father. Those are our sisters and our brothers. That is the Grave Mind and death, something we believe is eternal and everlasting. The fungal mass spawned us, creating us in its image. The first generation of us were grown, but now we are born as any other Strain.

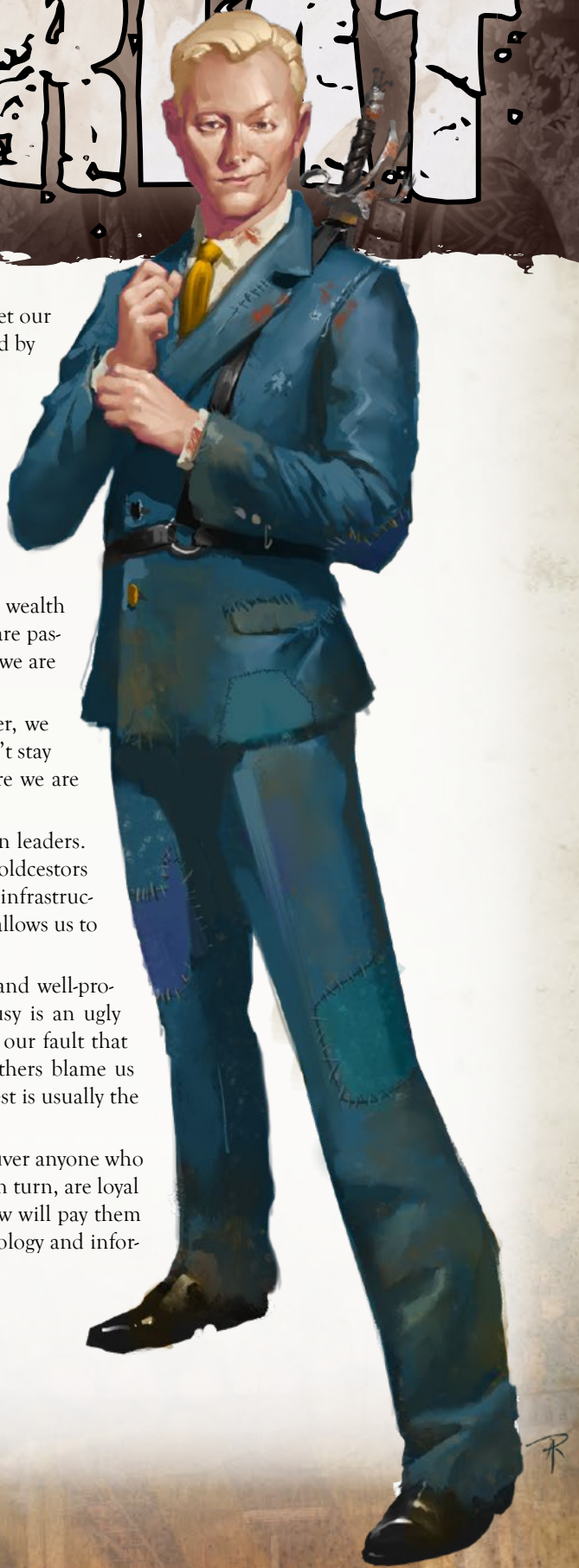
Our skin has a faint, green tinge to it, and a spiderweb of purplish veins crisscrosses our bodies. Our eyes are white, and we are told we are unsettling to look upon. However, we are a product of our environment and the belief of Strains — the belief in the Infection.

Death is not unsettling to us. When we feel our mother call to us, we lie quietly and wait. It is a time to rejoice that we are going home instead of mourning that we leave life behind. Because of our connection to death, and the Infection, we can naturally call upon it to use psionics. In the end, our belief is in the Grave Mind.

Edge: Psionicist (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Not Like the Others (p. XX)

ELITARIAT



People think of us sitting in ivory towers while never deigning to get our hands dirty. They think of us as delicate flowers that are always protected by our militarized forces. They couldn't be further from the truth.

We are the elite. We saw in advance what was coming when the Infection first took hold. Instead of waiting, we were intelligent enough to shelter in bunkers that had been prepared for us. Some of us worked to find a cure for the Infection, while others waited for the new world ahead. Our ancestors were rich enough and had enough connections that we survived.

This may be a new world, but people still act the same as they always have. We take advantage of that, growing empires and our own wealth through industry and hard labor. We are innovators and creators. We are passionate in our ideas and our vision for the future. Most of all, though, we are leaders in our fields.

Because of our past, we have a leg up over other Strains. However, we don't allow that to blind us to the truth. If we don't work hard, we won't stay on top. It's by our inventiveness and drive alone that we remain where we are today.

Why We're the Best: We have resources, knowledge, and are born leaders. We're meant to guide others and lead them through hard times. Our oldcestors accumulated wealth, and we've put it to good use in terms of building infrastructure, roads, and technology. Not only that, but we have drive. It's what allows us to create our vision for the future.

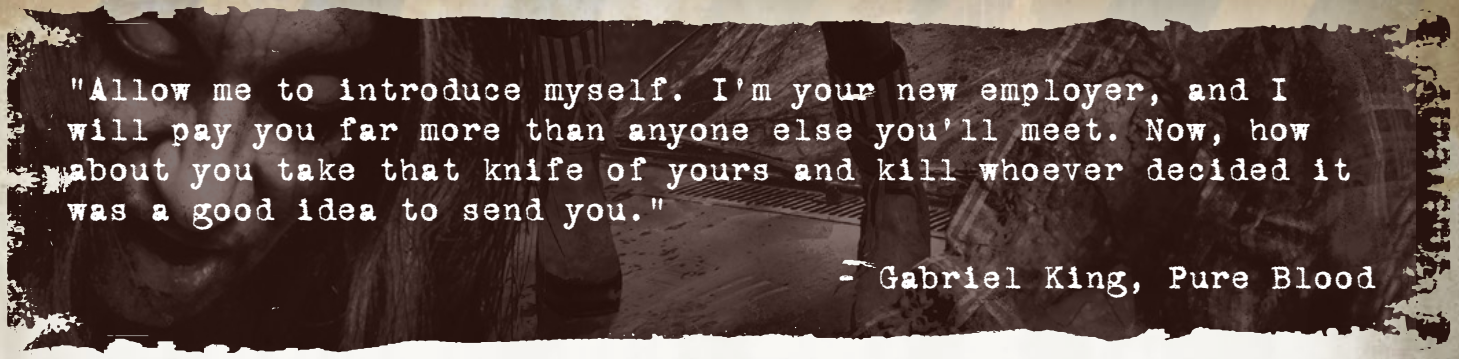
Why Others Don't Like Us: We're well-funded, well-equipped, and well-provided-for, which is exactly why other Strains hate us so much. Jealousy is an ugly thing, and other Strains show just how violent it can become. It's not our fault that our families were smart enough to give us an advantage, but many others blame us anyway. Some other Strains may consider us "bossy," but what we suggest is usually the most logical and financially-sound course of action.

How We Survive: We simply out-buy, out-compete, and out-maneuver anyone who stands against us. We have armies of individuals we provide for. They, in turn, are loyal to us. If you try and stand against us, you stand against those who know will pay them at the end of the day. Not only that, but we see the value in both technology and information. They allow us to remain where we are.

Skills: Leadership, Persuasion, Subterfuge, Technology

Edge: Wealth (p. XX)

Example Connections: Local leadership, assassins, merchants



"Allow me to introduce myself. I'm your new employer, and I will pay you far more than anyone else you'll meet. Now, how about you take that knife of yours and kill whoever decided it was a good idea to send you."

– Gabriel King, Pure Blood

STEREOTYPES

Retrogrades: They call you double-baggers for a reason. Put your mask on before I feel sick.

Tainted: Go back where you came from, raider fucker. We're not a fan of Bad Brain here.

Digitarians

Nicknames: Techies, Cloud Brains, Lore Keepers

Only a few know how the world fell, but we pass the story through our people. It's said when the Infection first took hold, our ancestors were the ones that tried to craft a cure. We stayed in bunkers funded by private corporations as we worked tirelessly. Even after the bombs fell, we still worked. Our ancestors were the last humans, and the last people to finally succumb to the Infection.

Now, our people work to rebuild the technology we once knew. We're smarter than other Strains, and better-equipped with our knowledge. We wear tokens from the world before as jewelry. Green rectangles laced with gold and black tracings are prominent as necklaces and earrings. Old wires are incorporated into our outfits, reinforced with metal.

We feel guilt for what happened to the world, for in some respects it was our fault. Now, we can only push forward.

Edge: Factoid (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Don't Touch My Stuff (p. XX)

Pure Bloods

Nicknames: High Brows, Gold Barons, Bourgeoisie

Other Strains will tell you all sorts of things about us. They'll say we're peacocks and socialites. They'll tell you we're lazy, but that's not true. There's a reason we're on top, and it's not because we got here by sitting on our asses.

We're intelligent in social situations. Some would call us manipulative, but we simply take advantage of our knowledge. We dress well in multiple colors to show off our wealth and power to others of the Elitariats. After all, someone who can afford to dress in blues and purples is also secure enough in their power they don't mind standing out in a crowd.

At our core, though, we are leaders of men. We are generals and mayors. We are the ones that helped band others together in trying times. They may make fun of us behind our backs, but other Strains flock to us when a crisis occurs.

Edge: Charmed Life (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Dress for Success (p. XX)

Solestros

Nicknames: New Money, Half Bloods, Drudgers

We're the go-getters, the ones that get our hands dirty, and the ones that will throw down in a fight if need be. We're the second generation of Pure Bloods, and we're here to stay.

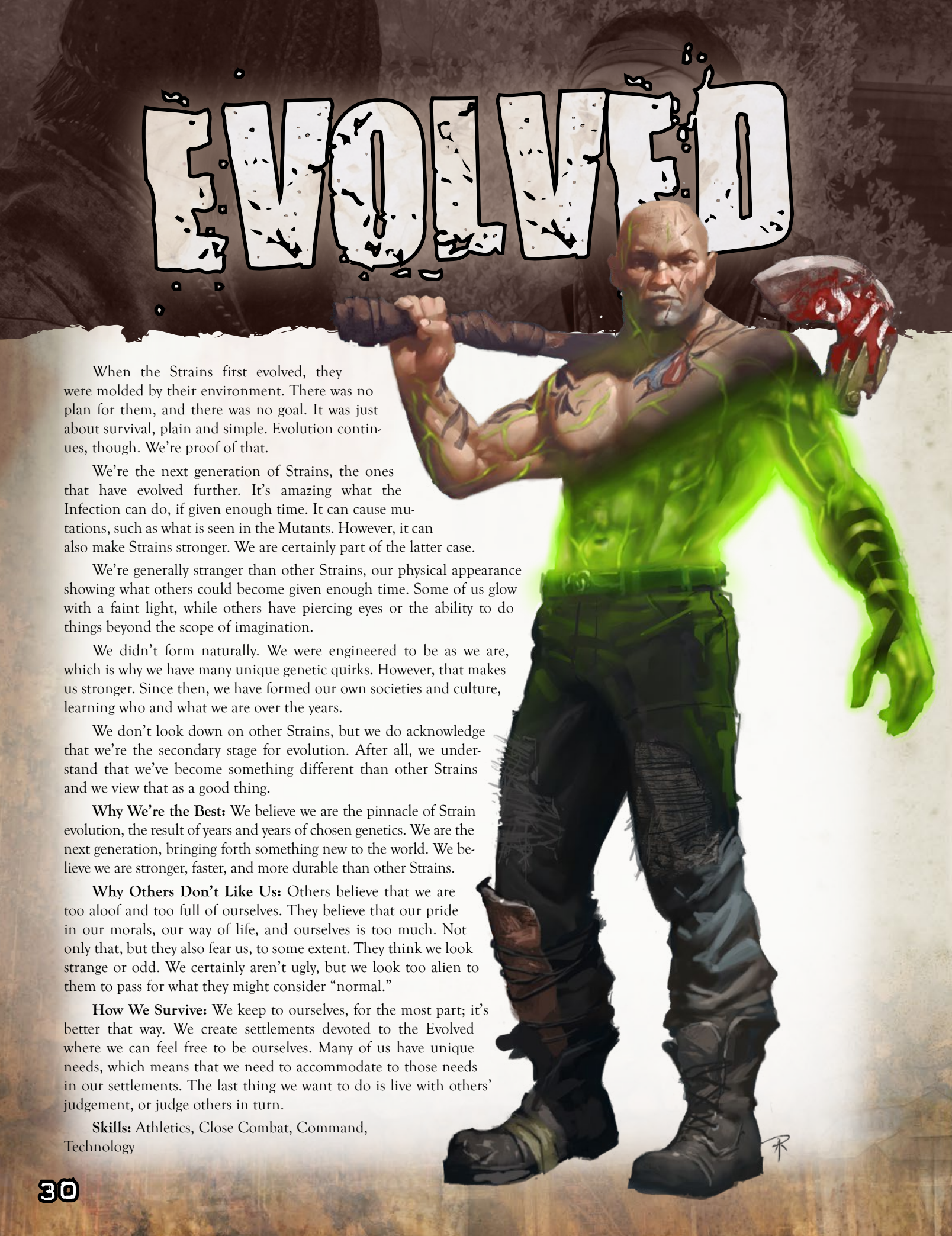
The first of us were born from Pure Bloods, a further evolution in a new world. Unlike our ancestors, we're better adapted to the highly irradiated environment that we're part of. We're the ones that deal with other Strains, making deals and better relations for all.

We dress in expensive but practical clothing. Like our forefathers, we're born leaders. However, we're willing to fight side by side with our troops rather than direct them from afar. We have more passion and vigor than Pure Bloods. They're both traits that have kept us alive in the wastes.

Edge: Convincing Orator (p. XX)

Strain Condition: I Can Do It Better (p. XX)

EVOLVED



When the Strains first evolved, they were molded by their environment. There was no plan for them, and there was no goal. It was just about survival, plain and simple. Evolution continues, though. We're proof of that.

We're the next generation of Strains, the ones that have evolved further. It's amazing what the Infection can do, if given enough time. It can cause mutations, such as what is seen in the Mutants. However, it can also make Strains stronger. We are certainly part of the latter case.

We're generally stranger than other Strains, our physical appearance showing what others could become given enough time. Some of us glow with a faint light, while others have piercing eyes or the ability to do things beyond the scope of imagination.

We didn't form naturally. We were engineered to be as we are, which is why we have many unique genetic quirks. However, that makes us stronger. Since then, we have formed our own societies and culture, learning who and what we are over the years.

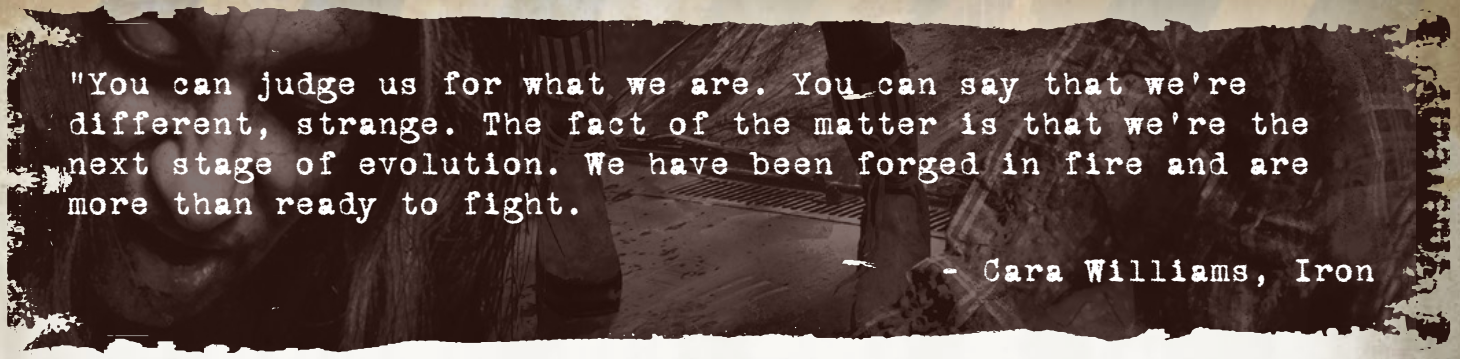
We don't look down on other Strains, but we do acknowledge that we're the secondary stage for evolution. After all, we understand that we've become something different than other Strains and we view that as a good thing.

Why We're the Best: We believe we are the pinnacle of Strain evolution, the result of years and years of chosen genetics. We are the next generation, bringing forth something new to the world. We believe we are stronger, faster, and more durable than other Strains.

Why Others Don't Like Us: Others believe that we are too aloof and too full of ourselves. They believe that our pride in our morals, our way of life, and ourselves is too much. Not only that, but they also fear us, to some extent. They think we look strange or odd. We certainly aren't ugly, but we look too alien to them to pass for what they might consider "normal."

How We Survive: We keep to ourselves, for the most part; it's better that way. We create settlements devoted to the Evolved where we can feel free to be ourselves. Many of us have unique needs, which means that we need to accommodate to those needs in our settlements. The last thing we want to do is live with others' judgement, or judge others in turn.

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Command, Technology



"You can judge us for what we are. You can say that we're different, strange. The fact of the matter is that we're the next stage of evolution. We have been forged in fire and are more than ready to fight.

– Cara Williams, Iron

STEREOTYPES

Accensorites: How about you sheeple look around for once? There's more in the world than your faith.

Unborn: Yeah, the Infection helps keep us alive. Doesn't mean I'm gonna follow you into the grave, fungus face.

Edge: Built to Last (p. XX)

Example Connections: Engineers, scientists, scavengers

Irons

Nicknames: Strong Backs, Unbreakables, Freed Men

We were once used as labor in factories and coal mines. We were once relegated to only the most backbreaking labor. Now, though, we have broken free. We are our own Strain, and we will continue to push forward to a brighter future.

Our bodies are larger than others, able to carry and lift heavy loads. Some of us believe that we may just be another branch of the Reclaimers, but we're not certain of that. From our time in mines, we also developed the ability to glow faintly where our veins show beneath our skin. You can see it as finely laced, glowing lines throughout our bodies in the dark. It's not an ability we can control, and you can bet it can get annoying when you're trying to deal with a bunch of zed at night.

Other Strains call us "unbreakable," because that's what we are. We stand strong in the face of adversity and will not yield.

Edge: Mind Resistance (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Captain Obvious (p. XX)

Reclaimers

Nicknames: Strong Arms, Ice Eyes, Northmen

We come from the northern reaches, used to ice and cold and hard labor. We sequestered ourselves away and became something more than everyone else.

Our genetics are unique in that it caused our muscle structure to become more defined in our backs and arms. Our eyes are silvery or piercing blue in color, and our arms suffer from a similar genetic condition to Retrogrades; you can often see muscle poking through our leathery skin.

Due to how we're built, we often wear stiff leather to help support our back muscles, since they can tire after long days.

Edge: Tough (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Not Like the Others (p. XX)

Unstable

Nicknames: Psi Callers, Blue Lighters, Undead Lords

We believe that we are the pinnacle of all Strains. Yes, we were engineered from Remnants and a concentrated form of the Infection, but that does not make us lesser to others. It makes us something more, something greater. We were created to be the very best in evolution.

The first of us could not live long without the aid of a life support chamber, but they had extraordinary abilities. They could cause psionicists to work on their behalf and could control the undead. We are their descendants and while these powers are much diminished, we can survive by ourselves without support.

Our blood glows a faint blue in color, the result of how our forefathers were first made. It is a sign of the concentration of Infection in our veins, the same concentration that gives us power over others.

Edge: Adrenaline Spike (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Better Than You (p. XX)

GORGERS



They say that we evolved from the dead. The Infection took over corpses from and reanimated them, but with us, they played a cruel trick. The Infection left us our gence even though we still hungered for the flesh and blood of people.

Not all of us are corpses. Some of us have become living, breathing Strains. We still hunger for flesh, though. We still need to consume. Fortunately, most of us are smart enough to keep that aspect of ourselves somewhat private if we're in civilized company.

It's strange to say, but we do form our own towns or groups over time. We often feel more comfortable amongst other predators who understand us. Perhaps it's an instinct that we have, or perhaps it's because other Strains look at us with a mixture of fear and disgust. We aren't ugly, but we are predators. Most sheep dislike it when a wolf shows up in their midst.

There are certainly those of us who act more like wolves. Some of our kind take to the wasteland, hunting in packs rather than conforming to civilized society. Most of us look down on this, but we know that they exist out there — and other Strains know it, too.

Why We're the Best: We're predators, the apex of the food chain. Others may dislike us for it, but we have advantages they don't. We're subtle, nimble, and manipulative if need be. It works to our advantage. Not only that, but we also can survive in conditions other Strains cannot. All we need is a steady flow of our food supply, and we can withstand some of the harshest conditions of the wastes.

Why Others Don't Like Us: Our strength is also our downfall. Because we're seen as predators, other Strains don't like us. There are some of us who are more vicious and earn the reputation that we have. Others of us just take what we need, but even then, that's sometimes seen as too much.

How We Survive: We work to camouflage ourselves in most societies, trying to fit in with whatever culture we find. Some Gorgers create settlements that are exclusively made up of folks like us — and import other Strains for food. There are also some of us who take to the wastes with others of our kind. There, they live off what they can find — and catch.

Skills: Close Combat, Lore, Subterfuge, Survival

Edge: Cannibalism (p. XX)

Example Connections: Assassins, academics, scavengers

"There's no need to scream. How about you tell me your name? Peter, is it? It's a pleasure to meet you, Peter. Now don't you worry one bit. I've gotten very good at preparing meals. You'll barely feel a thing."

– Lee Matheson, Full Dead

STEREOTYPES

Quiet Folk: Don't be so naïve, mumble mouth. If I wanted to eat you, you'd already be dead.

Merican: I don't eat Mericans. I care about what I put into my body, unlike you.

Full Dead

Nicknames: Corpses, Zombies, Sentient Dead

Imagine all the emotions that you feel during a day. Now imagine that they're all numbed and deadened. Imagine if you only had memories of what you felt.

We are a cruel joke – a parody of life. We have memories of our "lives" before the Fall of mankind, but even those are false. The Grave Mind has reanimated us in an attempt to create humans once more. Our memories are just a mishmash of what someone, or several someones, once had.

Our hearts do not beat. We look like walking corpses, and in the back of our minds we hear the whispers of those that came before us. These are the incessant murmurings of the dead, one more piece of evidence that we are dead ourselves.

We are intelligent, however. We know to not mention that we are not born; we simply wake up one day to realize we are sentient. We know better than to mention that if we are not killed, we can live for hundreds of years. We know better than to mention our craving for living flesh. This is our lot, and we will continue to exist, if not live.

Edge: Mind Resistance (p. XX)

Strain Condition: I Hear Dead People (p. XX)

Lascarians

Nicknames: Cannibals, Roaches, Night Crawlers

Shh! Not so loud! Our hearing is excellent, you know. It's better for navigating down dark tunnels during the daylight hours. We escaped the light and hate of other Strains by hiding beneath the earth. Here, we can feast on dead flesh to our hearts' content without judgement.

We're told that we're a branch of the Semper Mort, the result of what happens when something that was once dead gains life. Maybe that's true. Maybe we are the second generation of Semper Mort. But who cares?

Most Strains assume we live underground. That's not true. We stay there during the daylight hours while the sun can burn our flesh, and then emerge during the night to do trade and to farm and to hunt. Some call us savage, but it's a savage world. We're just better equipped to live in it.

Edge: Scavenger (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Bright Lights (p. XX)

Semper Mort

Nicknames: Blood Suckers, Leeches, Pickles

We look frightening to most Strains. Our nails are thick and sharp, and our teeth are jagged – a series of fangs in our mouths that are meant to help us consume only one substance: blood. We accept that we're monsters. We are predators that either maim, kill, or beg for blood.

But we have a major flaw, and that is our memory. Most of us remember waking up from a glass tube, struggling to breathe as we crawled away from our birth place. Researchers tell us that we were dead bodies before the Infection took hold, mutating us to look as we are.

Perhaps it's a good thing that we can't keep hold of memories. Most likely the ones we had were traumatic, but it does mean that we struggle with remembering faces for more than a few years. It's why most of us settle down in areas where we're accepted – so we can see the same faces day after day, and at least be comfortable in our surroundings.

Edge: Skilled Healer (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Dead or Alive (p. XX)

LANDSMEN



Some people thought that it was best to shelter in towns and cities, but we were smarter than that. There's nowhere to grow food in a city. There's nowhere to raise animals or spread out. We fled to the country, and it's where we've been for generation upon generation.

Our ancestors created farms and small towns in the wastes. There, they grew food and survived. Others learned how to live off the land in a different way, becoming hunters and learning to identify which plants were safe to eat and which ones were best to avoid.

Sure, other Strains may think we're close-minded or uneducated, but they just don't realize where we truly excel: survival. We know the practicalities of keeping up a farm or starting a fire. We know how to lure zed away from our animals and we know how to track game. Simply knowing how to live off the land means that we can survive outside of any big city.

We're proud of who we are. We know that we are true survivalists. We'll shout it out to the mountaintops if need be, and we take no shit from any Townies.

Why We're the Best: We know the land and the wilderness, and we know it well. If you drop us in the middle of nowhere, we're the most likely to be able to know how to survive. We can milk a cow and make cheese from goat's milk. We know how to rotate crops and save seed for the following year. The fact is that we can create self-sustaining settlements far away from any big cities.

Why Others Don't Like Us: We're wary of outsiders, and standoffish. We're considered country bumpkins or creepy mountain men or rough survivalists. This is probably because we're blunt, which many Strains find off-putting. However, that just means we're honest. Add that to the fact that most of us feel uncomfortable in big cities and are vocal about that fact, and you can understand why others don't always get along with us.

How We Survive: We know how to live off the land through our own hard labors. We know how to build farms, take care of animals, hunt game, and gather food from the right plants. We know what's poisonous and what isn't. We know which places to avoid and which places are fruitful. It's how we survive.

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Persuasion, Survival

Edge: Danger Sense (p. XX)

Example Connections: Farmers, hunters, scouts

"See these hands? I got callouses on my knuckles and dirt beneath my nails. Some may look down on us for being working men and women, but we're the ones that'll be left even if the rest of the world goes to hell."

— - Billy Setter, Merican

STEREOTYPES

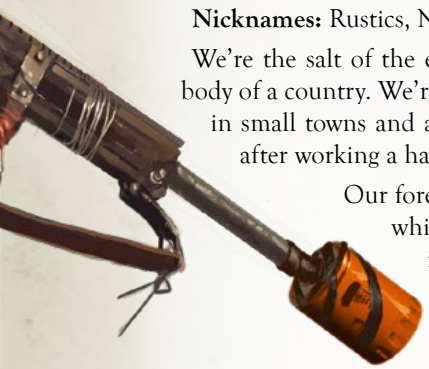
Reclaimers: You there! Bacon arms! You still salty that we outnumber you 10 to one?

Red Stars: If you lemmings got your heads out of your asses, you may see that not all people are trustworthy.

Mericans

Nicknames: Rustics, Nationals, Hayseeds

We're the salt of the earth, the people that make up the body of a country. We're the ones that man farms and work in small towns and aren't afraid to get into a bar brawl after working a hard day.



Our foreheads are larger than other Strains, which is why you usually see us wearing hats in one form or other. These vary depending on where we live and how we were brought up, but it's strange to see a Merican without one.

We're quick to anger, quick to laugh, and quick to cry. We're not afraid of our emotions, but we'll fight with anyone who makes fun of us for them. We're an expressive people, and we're proud of that fact.

Edge: Reckless Abandon (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Social Pariah (p. XX)

Natural Ones

Nicknames: Mountain Men, Survivalists, Frontiersmen

During the Fall of mankind, our ancestors realized that staying in cities and towns would only get them killed. They were smart enough to don their camouflage and use their training to hunt and gather and survive. They tell us that some of them were part of old-world armies. Others oversaw vast landscapes. Still others learned the tricks of our trade because they were interested and enjoyed nature.

Now, we're a fixed part of the woods and plains and mountains that surround settlements. We know how to turn almost anything into a weapon, and our muscles are leaner. We use paint as camouflage on our faces and bodies, and dress to survive in our environment.

Most of us have divided into groups, several families working together in unison. Each of us have our own group name and our own culture, depending on where in the wastes we're from. At the end of the day, we're the best scouters, trackers, hunters, and survivalists you're likely to find in the wasteland.

Edge: Hardy (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Luddite (p. XX)

Quiet Folk

Nicknames: Big Eyes, Small Towners, Insulars

Yes, hello there. We're often overlooked, we know. Most people just assume we're quiet Mericans or Remnants. We're not, though. We're just soft-spoken in big cities and towns.

Our eyes are a fraction larger than other Strains, and our voices are soft. We're always wary of outsiders at first but are always polite. We're a good sort of people, and we treat others well if they're good to us in turn.

We usually live with our close families and cousins in small towns or on farms. We don't like big cities or lots of people. We prefer to live in quiet. Usually, the other Landsmen feel the need to watch our backs, which suits us just fine.

Please don't ever be impolite to us. While we welcome you to enjoy our hospitality, we hate it when people are rude. While we may look disarming, you don't want to get us angry. We'll quietly show up at your front door with our torches before silently taking you away into the night.

Edge: Acute Sense (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Overstimulated (p. XX)

MUTANTS



The Darwinists claim evolution is key to survival. Well, sometimes evolution does funny things, and we're proof of that. Our ancestors fled to the wasteland and met with radiation and harsh conditions. Their children sickened and died, but they persisted and became stronger with each passing generation. They survived and even thrived but were forever changed because of it.

Our physical mutations largely define us, which is perhaps why we've become so good at hiding them. We learn to fit in with other Strains, hiding our peculiarities unless we're with other Mutants. We're not ashamed of what we are, but we do know it's sometimes better to blend in than stick out.

Because of our mutations, though, we're better suited to the world we are left with. We brave storms, radiation, diseases, and other environmental conditions head on. Not only that, but we are proof that Strains can adapt over time, changing so that they can become even stronger than before.

We are the true survivors of the wasteland, and the future of humanity.

Why We're the Best: We've mutated and evolved, which means we're more suited to wandering the irradiated wasteland than any other Strain. We are the product of our environment, which means that we can survive much longer than others. We also know the best ways to blend into society. After hiding your mutations for years, you get a knack for picking out social cues to follow.

Why Others Don't Like Us: We look strange and intimidating; it's true. Some call us monstrous and fear us when we approach simply due to our appearance. We understand that we may never be liked by certain Strains. However, there are some of us who have gone the opposite route. They are so proud of their mutations that they look down on others. Those oppressed, in turn, feel uncomfortable enough that they often hate us even more for it.

How We Survive: We survive in civilization by keeping our faces down and our mutations hidden. Fortunately for us, we can read people well. Socially, we can adjust ourselves to fit with what people need to hear and see. We can also go where others cannot, which means we can always flee to more dangerous areas if need be.

Skills: Culture, Empathy, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Edge: Master of Disguises (p. XX)

Example Connections: Scavengers, outcasts, orphans

"Don't shoot! I'm not a zed! I know my face ain't the prettiest, but I didn't think you'd pull a gun. Gotta be more careful when you're in an irradiated place like this. Us Mutants will be the nicest people you're liable to meet."

- Ricky "Three Fingers" Jones, Retrograde

STEREOTYPES

Pure Bloods: Hey, piggy bank. How about you spare a few trade notes for us lower class folks?

Saltwise: I may be ugly, but at least I don't look like my mother fucked a fish.

Remnants

Nicknames: Leftovers, Splicers, Mix Bloods

No one really wants to be a Remnant. No one really wants a Remnant, either. We're usually born of mixed-Strain couplings in an irradiated area. You see, we're neither one Strain or another, which means we're something else entirely.

Most of us have a mutation of some kind, whether it's a tail, strange webbing between our fingers, scale-like skin, thick, green veins, or something else entirely. We can usually pass for other Strains if we hide our mutation, but for some of us it's too blatant to ignore.

Perhaps it's because we're so different from others, but we feel an innate need to belong somewhere — anywhere. We constantly search to fill that empty hole inside of us, but rarely succeed.

Edge: Big Hearted (p. XX)

Strain Condition: A Quick Fix (p. XX)

Retrogrades

Nicknames: Zed Heads, Rot Faces, Flakes

Do you know what it feels like to wake up in the morning, and find that half your face is falling off? We do. It's something we deal with on a regular basis. Fortunately, we know how to make light of it.

We're the product of our irradiated environment. Our skin molds and decays, sloughing off in patches and strips that show the muscles beneath. It can be painful, but fortunately new skin grows back quickly. It's a constant cycle, and we often leave pieces behind us.

We wear masks to hide our faces in polite society. It's not because we're ashamed, but out of survival. We look more like the undead than any other Strain, so our masks show that we're alive to others.

Edge: Half-Life (p. XX)

Strain Condition: It's Zed! (p. XX)

Tainted

Nicknames: Raider Kin, Bad Brainers, Rabid Bloods

Some say we're kin to raiders, but that's not true. We just evolved to be able to harbor and metabolize Bad Brain, the disease that turns most Strains into raiders. But not us. We just constantly have it, even if it doesn't progress.

You see, we may be a bit twitchier than other Strains. We may be a bit more aggressive. We may be a bit more likely to have a taste of dead flesh like Lascarians, but we're still people. We can still reason and choose not to attack others. We also have more stamina than others and are more suited to survive in the harsh conditions of the wasteland.

We normally stick among our own Strain. It's better that way. Other Strains don't understand our tempers. The fact of the matter is, we're the best Strain out there to deal with Raiders.

Edge: Hardy (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Player can pick Bright Lights (p. XX), Don't Cross Me (p. XX), or A Quick Fix (p. XX) as a Strain Condition.

NOMADS



The first thing most people ask you is where you're from. Well, that's a funny question for us. We travel the wastes, doing trade and transporting others from settlement to settlement. Our home is the road and the sea, and we don't stay in one place for too long. We came from those that found safety by moving from place to place, gathering resources when they could and moving on when there was nothing left for them.

We learn the different cultures and idiosyncrasies of other Strains. We have to if we're going to survive. People see us as hardened by travel, but friendly. Some even ask us to stay, but we can't. We're always on the move.

We have different ways of communicating things to other Nomads. We leave signs at crossroads and outside towns to tell others whether the area is friendly, or if the road is good or bad. There's a certain feeling of family on the road. If you don't look out for each other when you're traveling, who will?

Why We're the Best: We know the roads and the seas and the trade routes. We see more of the world than other Strains can even imagine. We tell stories of our adventures and bring items from far-off lands to trade. We know more than most tiny villages could think of. Because of this, we know how to integrate ourselves in almost any culture that we come across. Whether we stop in a small town or a big city, we understand the importance of fitting in. Not only that, but we know how to survive on the road; we know where it's safe to spend the night and when to move on. It's something no other Strain has in common with us.

Why Others Don't Like Us: People are always looking for a quick meal or an easy target, and they don't like the fact that we effectively patrol the roads and make them safer by virtue of our travels. Not only that, but many people don't trust those that travel all the time. They don't understand how to be open and accepting of entire groups of people that show up on their doorstep. There's a reason why we pass some towns by; they cause more trouble than they're worth.

How We Survive: We're always friendly and polite to those we meet on the road, and we always try to learn the culture of places we end up. Knowing a place is key to knowing its people, which gives us a better chance of surviving the night. We also keep a mental record of which roads are safer than others. This allows us to travel through an area with very few issues.

Skills: Athletics, Pilot, Science, Technology

Edge: Wasteland Connections (p. XX)

Example Connections: Caravanners, engineers, map makers

"Fire's free, and a cup of tea'll cost you a key or a story, whichever. I ain't much for empty pleasantries, but I aim to be civil to others I meet on the road. Never know when you'll be repaid for it."

- Leo aka "Rover Dad," Rover and Postman

STEREOTYPES

Vegasian: Listen here, snake eyes. We don't make deals with the likes of you.

Semper Mort: You're not welcome here. You can look for a meal elsewhere, needle mouth.

Diesel Jocks

Nicknames: Clankers, Grease Monkeys, Road Warriors

First, most people see the dust cloud in the distance. Then, there's the roar of our rides. There's nothing like taking to the open road with your fellow road warriors. We're the strongest and fastest thing out there, and to hell with anything that gets in our way.

The most important thing to us is our rides. One of the worst things you can do is damage them. We show no mercy when someone decides to harm the one thing that stands between us and death on the road. Because of that, we know how to fix and repair rides easily.

We represent our groups and gangs with patches we place on our jackets. We carry our children in trailers until they're old enough to ride themselves. Sometimes, we encounter other riders. Sometimes, we scrap with them. Sometimes, we trade. Sometimes, we mark out fuel stops and food caches with signs and markings drawn with paint on rusted metal.

At the end of the day, though, we're only truly loyal to our clans and our rides.

Edge: Catch a Ride (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Don't Touch My Stuff (p. XX)

Rovers

Nicknames: Caravanners, Traders, Hikers

We take the rules of the road seriously. Diesel Jocks are perceived as more aggressive and "harder" than us, but we can be just as hard in our own way. If someone wrongs us, we always remember it and we pass down that memory to our children and grandchildren. There's a reason that there's the saying of "never cross a Rover."

We usually work together in caravans, moving from place to place. We create roving towns with dentists, shoemakers, engineers, and more. We get most of our food from stops along our routes, but we have many good hunters who can catch game on the go. We also use scraps of cloth to flag important markers on the road and use certain knots and other designs to signal to others what our trade and status is.

Our leg muscles are stronger than most Strains'. We're built for long-distance walking and travel, and it shows. Our shoes are one of the most important things to us; when someone is not welcome in our moving town, we destroy their shoes while they sleep so they have to walk barefoot the next day.

Edge: Endurance (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Don't Cross Me (p. XX)

Saltwise

Nicknames: Fish People, Water Men, Froggies

We may look strange, but we're as much Nomads as Rovers or Diesel Jocks. The only difference is that while they travel by land, we travel by sea. Our ancestors were born on oil platforms and massive flotillas, and to this day we give thanks that we escaped the horrors of land.

We can breathe both air and water, with the help of our gills. We also have two sets of eyelids instead of one, the better to see beneath the waves. Our feet are slightly larger than normal Strains', and we have a little bit of webbing between our toes and fingers. Most people have a hard time telling our gender, which isn't surprising. We can change gender, depending on necessity.

We're known for our ships and our fishing exploits. We never stay in one place for too long. After all, the sea is change; and we must change and flow with it.

Edge: Aquatic (p. XX)

Strain Condition One for All (p. XX)

TOWNIES



We're Townies. We're the ones that have been in cities and towns for as long as we can remember. We know how to survive in groups, learning from one another and getting stronger as a whole. Sure, sometimes we don't agree with other groups of Townies, but we sort it out by a good brawl or by negotiating something or other.

We don't mind crowds. In fact, we thrive in them. We can figure out how to talk best with people and get them on our side. We make friends easily and don't feel truly comfortable unless we have a group around us.

What really defines us from other Strains is our sheer physicality. You have to be quick and tough on the streets, and that's exactly what we are. Some people call us "too loud," or say our personalities are "too big." However, you need to understand those social dynamics to survive in a city. And knowing those social dynamics means that you can also fade into the background if you need to, and that's very convenient when the need arises.

Why We're the Best: We've got something that most Strains don't have — civilization. We've created something out of this wasteland. We've banded together to push forward and upward. We're the ones that can rough it on the streets and know how to read people at a glance. We know when someone's pulling a fast one, and when they're being honest. We know how to fit ourselves into a wider society instead of being an outcast in the wastes. We know how to settle down and create something.

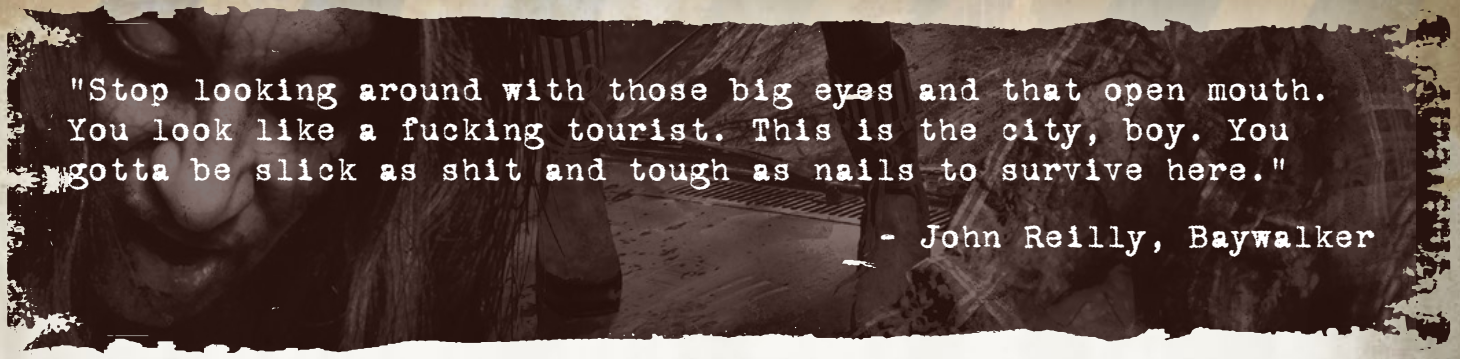
Why Others Don't Like Us: Sure, there are those that dislike us. When someone wrongs us, we get our revenge; it might be right then, or it might be years, but we get it. We don't take too kindly to nature, either. Those Landsmen don't like it when we tell them to civilize things a bit more. We admit we'll tell small towners how much better our city is. While people think we're being know-it-alls because of it, we do know best in the end.

How We Survive: We survive in cities and towns, banding together so that no threat can stand against us. Our gangs, organizations, and groups naturally form a larger whole. Our strength is our ability to make the most of the little space we have, creating rooftop gardens, using multiple floors for housing, and using the hollowed-out remains of pre-Fall cities as a basis for our homes, shops, and more.

Edge: Crowd Pleaser (p. XX)

Skills: Academics, Close Combat, Subterfuge, Survival

Example Connections: Local leadership, city crime enforcement, thugs



"Stop looking around with those big eyes and that open mouth. You look like a fucking tourist. This is the city, boy. You gotta be slick as shit and tough as nails to survive here."

- John Reilly, Baywalker

STEREOTYPES

Natural One: You backwater pinecone wipers have no idea how to live in a big city.

Quiet Folk: Stop gawping and say something, damn it. You're too fucking quiet for my tastes.

Baywalkers

Nicknames: Hipsters, Puddle Jumpers, Swamp People

Many people say that our skin tells our story — and it's true. We mark our skin to tell the history of our lives and our people. Because of how the Infection works within us, our skin scars and takes ink more easily. Both show our strength to the world.

We're a stoic people. We usually live on the outskirts of larger settlements, working together at the dockyards or with the upper-class chuckleheads to solve problems. The fact of the matter is that we're clever — very clever. And Yorkers hate to admit that we're smarter than them. What can we say? We can't blame them for being jealous.

We're also graceful. Some say that it's because we work on ships, but we're just naturally light on our feet. We're used to walking over swampland and tricky terrain on the outskirts of settlements.

Careful about crossing us, though. We hold onto a grudge like none other.

Edge: Factoid (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Get Behind Me (p. XX)

Yorkers

Nicknames: City Slickers, Lead Heads, Yinzers

We're tough as nails, and we know it. Our skin is thicker than others, but we're more than happy to throw down if someone insults us — unlike those smartass Baywalkers. They don't take action like we do.

If you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us. We usually wear our gang patches for all to see, and we're quick to defend our brothers and sisters in arms.

We're stronger and larger than those puny Baywalkers. We're from the inner cities and towns, and we've seen more shit than you have if you live on the outskirts.

Edge: Too Pissed to Care (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Don't Cross Me (p. XX)

Vegasians

Nicknames: Card Sharks, Risktakers, Fake Bloods

Some people call us cheats, liars, and thieves — but that's because they're jealous of how we navigate social waters. Just because we know how to count cards and are smarter than the average person doesn't mean we're bad people.

We dress colorfully for a reason. We want to be noticed. If we're easy to pick out of a crowd, then people are more likely to do business with us. We run bars and entertainments and more for the denizens of our towns and our cities.

Try not to try and cheat us, though. We may smile to your face, but we have a blade ready for your back if you double-cross us.

Edge: Lightning Calculator (p. XX)

Strain Condition: Born Coward (p. XX)

Strain Conditions

Each Strain has a specific Strain Condition. These persistent conditions are triggered during certain circumstances during gameplay. Not only does it help define your character and their Strain, but it also helps guide roleplay. (You can find out more about conditions on p. XX.)

Below, you will find the Strain Conditions associated with each Strain. Keep in mind that many of these Strain Conditions do not just cause a mechanical effect to your character, but also shapes roleplay during your game.

For more information on the mechanics presented here, check out the Blood section of the book, starting on p. XX.

A QUICK FIX (PERSISTENT)

All Remnants start with a compulsive behavior that could include an addiction to a substance or activity that could prove harmful — smoking, gambling, alcohol, sex, and the like. If the Remnant is under intense stress (such as taking a Stress Condition), she gains a 1 Complication of *Need My Fix* on all rolls in the Mental and Social Arenas — she will immediately seek out her compulsive behavior of choice unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: When the compulsive behavior causes the character to make a poor choice.

Resolution: When the source of the stress is gone for several hours or the character loses all Stress Conditions.



BETTER THAN YOU (PERSISTENT)

Whenever the Unstable is treated as inferior, she is so incensed that she has +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental Arena.

Momentum Trigger: When the Unstable is implied to be inferior or lesser.

Resolution: Until the source of the insult apologizes, leaves, or treats the Unstable as an equal (or better).



BORN COWARD (PERSISTENT)

Everyone thinks Vegasians are cowards and untrustworthy, regardless of the reality of the situation. Any rolls in the Social Arena against characters that don't have a positive Bond with the Vegasian have 1 Complication of *Shifty* — the target reluctantly agrees to the task and assumes the Vegasian has ulterior motives, unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: When the Vegasian's reputation would cause problems for the character.

Resolution: The target has a positive Bond with the Vegasian.

BRIGHT LIGHTS (PERSISTENT)

Lascarians can't stand bright lights. Whenever in the presence of the sun or other well-lit area, Lascarians gain 1 Complication of *My Eyes Hurt* on all relevant rolls — the roll might cause some form of minor inconvenience unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the pain of bright lights causes a problem for the character.

Resolution: When the character is no longer in the presence of bright lights.

CAPTAIN OBVIOUS (PERSISTENT)

Irons constantly glow in dim light or complete darkness, which means they have a hard time hiding. Irons gain +1 difficulty on any attempts at stealth in darkness or disguise.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's glow causes problems for them.

Resolution: When the character is no longer in dim light or darkness.

DEAD OR ALIVE (PERSISTENT)

Semper Mort look monstrous in appearance, reminding everyone around them that they are the prey when conversing with them. Because of this, Semper Mort receive a permanent +1 difficulty on rolls in the Social Arena for anyone who is not a Gorger. When a Semper Mort comes out of the Grave Mind, they always receive the *Amnesia* Trauma Condition in addition to any other effects (p. XX).

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's appearance causes problems.

Resolution: None.

DO NOT BLASPHEME (PERSISTENT)

If an Accensorite breaks a tenet of their faith intentionally, they receive a +1 difficulty on all Mental Arena rolls until they can atone.

Momentum Trigger: When the character is forced to intentionally break a tenet of their faith.

Resolution: The character pays appropriate penance.

DON'T CROSS ME (PERSISTENT)

The character is so furious that she has +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental area. For Yorkers, talking to a Baywalker is always considered "being provoked," unless the Yorker has a positive Bond with the Baywalker.

Momentum Trigger: Any situation when the character is insulted socially.

Resolution: The source of the insult apologizes or leaves.

DON'T TOUCH MY STUFF (PERSISTENT)

Digitarians and Diesel Jocks are always tinkering with a pet project, which means they always has something to obsess over. If the project is damaged, stolen, or otherwise unavailable, he gains a +1 difficulty on all rolls in the Mental Arena until the situation is rectified. Such characters can change obsessions between stories.

Momentum Trigger: If the character's pet project is damaged, stolen, or otherwise unavailable.

Resolution: The project is fixed, returned, made available, or the character's obsession shifts.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS (PERSISTENT)

Whenever the Pure Blood is unkempt or unsightly, all rolls in the Social Arena gain 2 Complication of *Not My Best* — the target has a negative or dismissive opinion of the Pure Blood unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: The Pure Blood is forced to be unkempt, unsightly, or otherwise look less than put together.

Resolution: The Pure Blood has a chance to change clothes or bathe.

GET BEHIND ME (PERSISTENT)

Baywalkers can't stand bullies. Any roll in the Social Arena against that character has a 2 Complication of *Shut Your Mouth* — the Baywalker cannot be polite or cordial to the target, unless the complication is overcome. This condition is always active against Yorkers, unless the Baywalker has a positive Bond with the Yorker.

Momentum Trigger: When dealing with bullies or other characters that are loud and aggressive.

Resolution: The bullying stops.

I CAN DO IT BETTER (PERSISTENT)

Solestros are convinced that they can do almost anything and can succeed doing so. If they're forced to acknowledge they cannot do something, they must spend Momentum to succeed even if it's a trivial task.

Momentum Trigger: They are forced to acknowledge they cannot do something.

Resolution: The character moves on to a subject in which they have more familiarity.

I HEAR DEAD PEOPLE (PERSISTENT)

Full Dead constantly hear voices whispering in the backs of their minds. These voices are constructed from the group consciousness that is the Grave Mind. Because of this, all Full Dead receive a +1 difficulty to all checks involving perception. Further, they are at +1 difficulty for their Integrity + Resolve roll to recover from the Grave Mind (p. XX).

Momentum Trigger: The character is trying to pay attention to something important.

Resolution: None.

IT'S ZED! (PERSISTENT)

Unless speaking to another Retrograde, a worshipper of the Church or Darwin, or a character with a positive Bond, the character has +1 Complication of *I Look Like a Zombie* to all rolls in the Social Arena — the target will be uncomfortable around the character because of his resemblance to a zombie unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: The character's appearance causes a problem.

Resolution: None.

LUDDITE (PERSISTENT)

Whenever interacting with technology or forced to use a technological device, the Natural One is at +1 difficulty to all related rolls.

Momentum Trigger: The character's discomfort with technology causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.

NOT LIKE THE OTHERS (PERSISTENT)

Reclaimers and Unborn sequester themselves away from the world, which means that they have trouble interacting with any other characters. These characters have +1 difficulty when rolling to establish or build on a Bond with someone.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever their standoffish nature causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.

ONE FOR ALL (PERSISTENT)

These characters develop a chosen community around them to which they become devoted. Whenever one of their chosen community of friends or family is threatened, the character receives a +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental area.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever a member of the character's chosen community is substantially threatened.

Resolution: The source of the danger is eliminated or no longer present.

OVERSTIMULATED (PERSISTENT)

Whenever in the presence of excess noise or large crowds, Quiet Folk gain a +1 difficulty to all rolls in the Mental Arena.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's overstimulation causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: The character must stay in a quiet area for several hours.

SOCIAL PARIAH (PERSISTENT)

Mericans don't understand social cues or personal space. Unless talking to another Merican, this character has a 1 Complication of *Whatcha Talkin' 'Bout* to all rolls in the Social Arena — the Merican may inadvertently offend or insult the target unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's social awkwardness causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.





chapter three

KNITTING THE FLESH

"It takes character to survive—in the wastelands.
Bullets help, too. Want to know more?
Don't touch that dial."

- Barbara Four, Digitarian, Telling Visionary

Players each portray a single character in **Dystopia Rising**. This character is the vehicle for the drama and story of survival within the game. The player interacts with the game world through her character, and Storyguides leverage the characters to tell meaningful stories for the players. Players make choices for their characters that directly affect plot and other player's characters which could reveal different paths for survival in the wastes.

Before exploring the world of **Dystopia Rising**, you need a character. You can make your own (starting on p. XX) or take on the role of one of the ready-to-play characters presented.

JUMP AROUND

Everything in this first book, "Flesh," is about survivors and Strains. As such, we dive right into the character-creation rules so we can have all the gameplay rules in the second book, "Blood." We'll try to explain a few key concepts along the way, but if you're confused, feel free to jump to Chapter Four, read that, and then come back here when you have a better idea how the Storypath system works.

Ready-To-Play Characters

If you want to jump right into a game of **Dystopia Rising**, the following pages offer you a diverse range of starting characters. Choose whichever one appeals to you and transcribe the character's statistics onto a fresh character sheet.

Although these characters are perfectly suitable as is, you are free to change any part of the character's history, roleplay tips, description, or personality. You can also make tweaks as suggested on p. XX. The Storyguide may also allow you to make more substantial changes, such as switching Strain or swapping equipment, although you may be more suited at that point to making a new character from scratch and using these characters as inspiration. While these five characters complement each other, there's nothing preventing multiple players from choosing the same character as a template and making adjustments in order to make each template into a unique and distinct character.



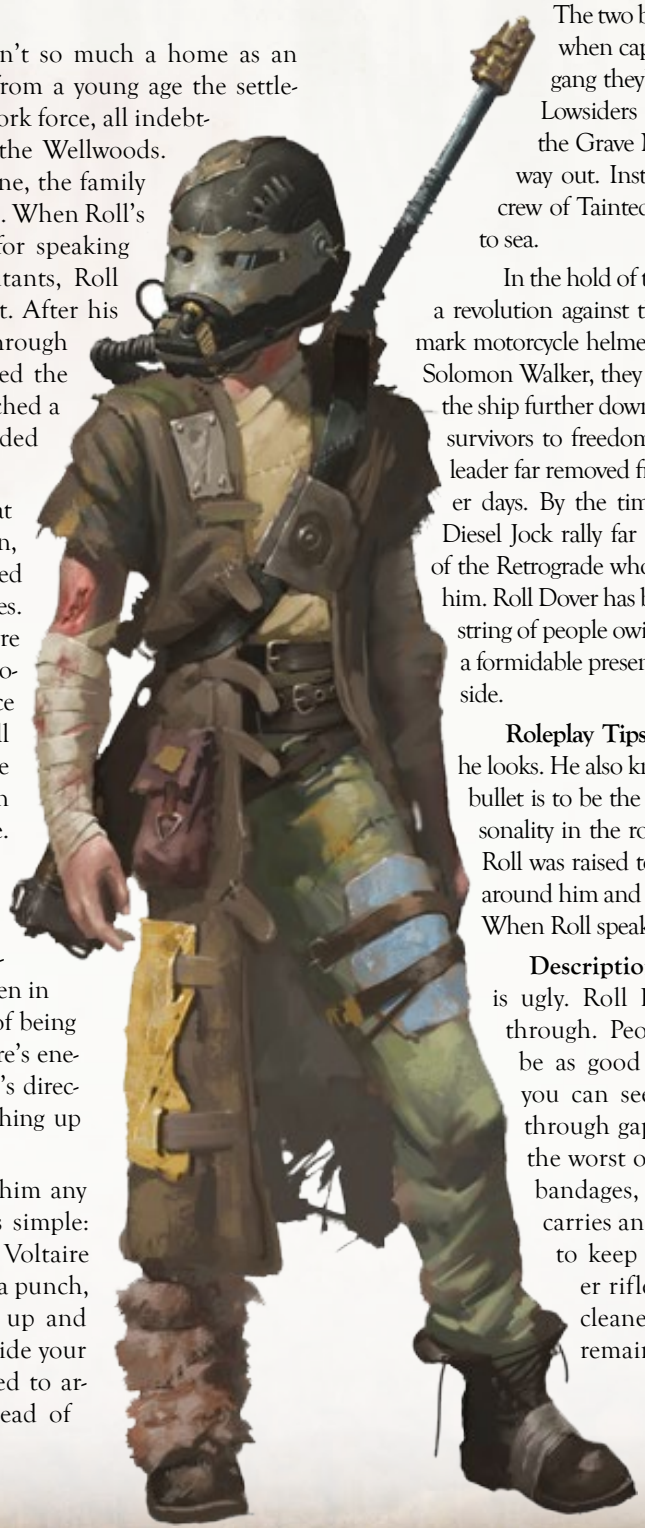
Roll Dover

Roll remembers the first thing he ever heard in his life: "Roll over and play dead!" The kids in the small settlement where he grew up treated Roll like the walking corpse he resembled and trained to fight the undead by beating the living tar out of the Retrograde boy. Roll's mother couldn't protect her family from the abuse, happy as she was just to be given a home.

To Roll, the settlement wasn't so much a home as an open-air prison. He recognized from a young age the settlement used Rotties like him as a work force, all indebted to the town's leading family the Wellwoods. When someone stepped out of line, the family was expelled into the wastes to die. When Roll's older brother Jar was sent out for speaking up against the treatment of Mutants, Roll promised he'd never die like that. After his mother died in a fire that swept through the Rottie encampment, Roll used the chaos to slip out the gate and hitched a ride on a nearby caravan and headed for the big city.

There, Roll learned fast that brains really do make the man, especially when that man looked like a walking pile of rotting bones. Wrapping himself to appear more normal, Roll picked up an old motorcycle helmet to keep his face hidden. Unskilled as he was, Roll might have starved to death if he didn't get picked up by a Vegasian theater master named Voltaire. Within weeks, Voltaire had Roll training with his theater guards to become a bouncer. Roll's brains and natural speed turned the former punching bag into a terror when in motion. Roll won the reputation of being utterly fearless when one of Voltaire's enemies lobbed a grenade in the boss's direction, and Roll picked the damn thing up and flung it back.

After that, Voltaire granted him any wish he wanted. Roll's wish was simple: Teach him to lead, not to follow. Voltaire did. He said it took guts to throw a punch, but it took even more to stand up and be seen when you were born to hide your face. Roll learned to read, learned to argue, and before long was the head of Voltaire's guards.



When a turf war broke out between Voltaire and Boss Nastee, an arms dealer operating out of his own traveling carnival, it was Roll who led the charge in a running street battle across multiple gang territories. During the fighting he went head to head with Nastee's toughest men and got to the big man himself, only to watch him murdered by one of the man's own showgirls, Talia O'Nines. The two became the best of friends that night when captured by the Lowside Crew, a local gang they'd pissed off during the chase. The Lowsiders would have sent them howling to the Grave Mind if the two hadn't talked their way out. Instead, they sold Roll and Talia to a crew of Tainted with their own ship, heading out to sea.

In the hold of the ship, Roll found himself leading a revolution against the Tainted from behind his trademark motorcycle helmet. With the help of fellow prisoner Solomon Walker, they freed everyone aboard and crashed the ship further down the coast. From there, Roll led the survivors to freedom on a long walk inland, a strange leader far removed from the punching bag of his younger days. By the time Roll and company arrived at a Diesel Jock rally far into the wasteland, the reputation of the Retrograde who wouldn't rot away had proceeded him. Roll Dover has become a bit of a legend with a solid string of people owing him for his actions, making him a formidable presence and a solid man to have on your side.

Roleplay Tips: Roll Dover knows just how ugly he looks. He also knows the only way to stay ahead of a bullet is to be the most competent and powerful personality in the room. Calm, practical, and brilliant, Roll was raised to be the punching bag of everyone around him and learned to grow an iron spine for it. When Roll speaks, everyone listens.

Description: There's ugly and then there is ugly. Roll Dover is a Rottie through and through. People are amazed at how he can be as good a fighter as he is, considering you can see parts of his muscle structure through gaping holes in his skin. He keeps the worst of his open wounds covered with bandages, but his face is such a wreck he carries and wears a motorcycle helmet just to keep from scaring people. The sniper rifle strapped across his back is the cleanest and prettiest part of Roll and remains his prized possession.

DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: Roll Dover

PLAYER:

SERIES:

STRAIN: Retrograde (Condition: It's Zed!)

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	○○○○○
Athletics:	●●●○○	Medicine:	○○○○○
Close Combat:	○○○○○	Persuasion:	●●●○○
Culture:	○○○○○	Pilot:	○○○○○
Empathy:	●●○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	●●●○○	Subterfuge:	○○○○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival:	○○○○○
Leadership: Rebellious Firebrand	●●●●○	Technology:	○○○○○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect	●●○○○	Might	●●○○○	Presence	●●●●○
Finesse	Cunning	●●○○○	Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○
Resilience	Resolve	●●○○○	Stamina	●●●●○	Composure	●●●●○

PATHS

Strain: Retrograde ●○○○○

Role: Gunslinger

Society: Settlement (Philly del Phia) ●○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: Lead his crew to safety

Short: Talk to a preacher about faith

Long: Overthrow the Wellwood family

SKILL TRICKS

Command

CONNECTIONS

■ Bruised +1
□ Bruised +1
■ Injured +2
■ Injured +2
■ Maimed +4
Taken Out

■ Troubled +1
□ Troubled +1
■ Distraught +2
□ Distraught +2
■ Haunted +4
Burned

EDGES

Master of Disguises	●●○○○	Adrenaline Spike	●●○○○
Half-Life	●●○○○		○○○○○
Fast Draw	●○○○○		○○○○○
Sniper	●●●○○		○○○○○
Big-Hearted	●○○○○		○○○○○
Entertainer	●○○○○		○○○○○

Weapon: Bolt pistol

Armor: Kavleer vest

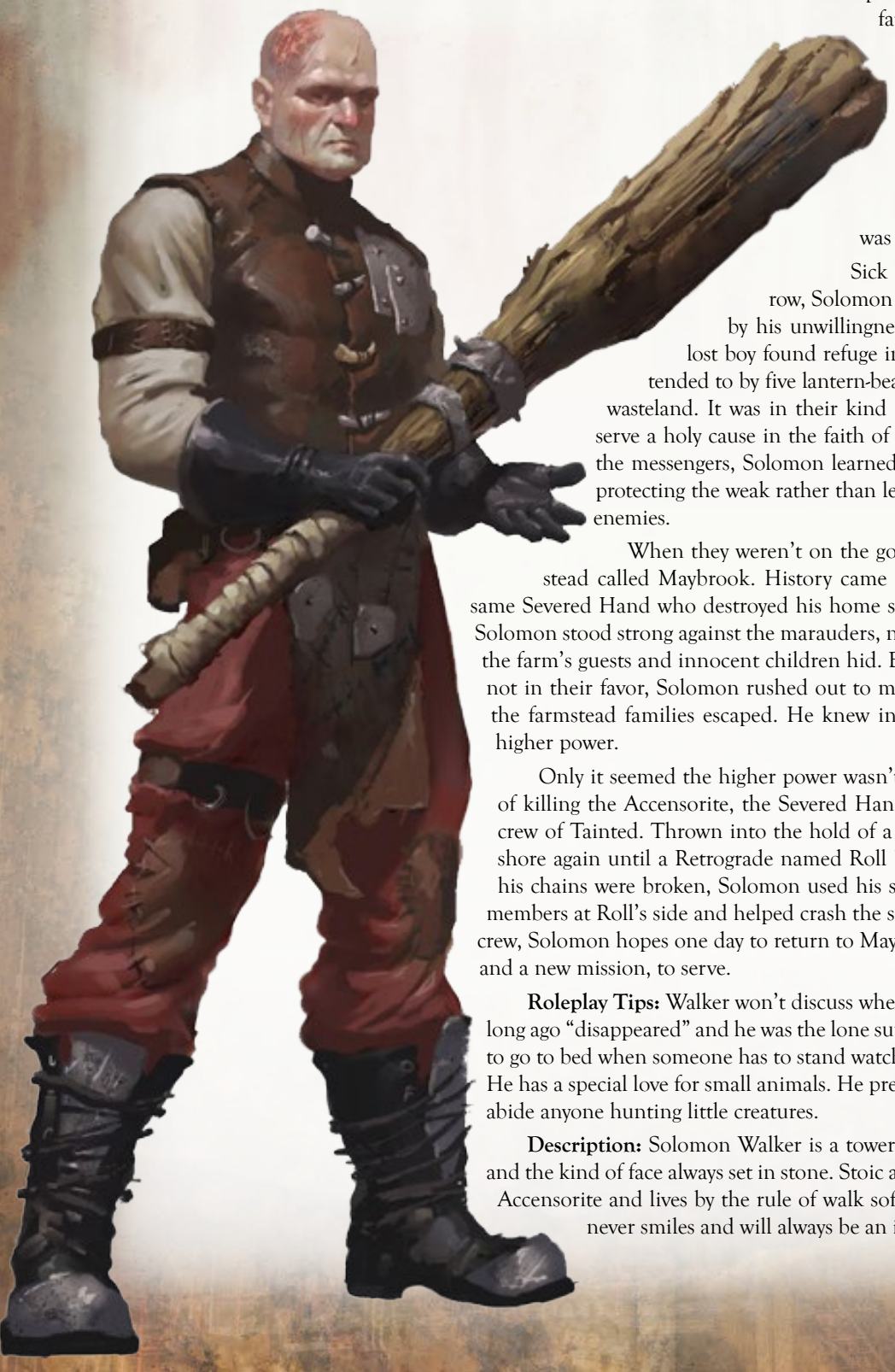
Gear: Crowbar, dry rations, spyglass, flash bang grenade, frag grenade

Experience:

Solomon Walker

Solomon Walker was born the only child of an arranged marriage. His parents were paired at an Accensorite compound, where the Fallow Hopes gathered to marshal their forces against the scourge of the undead and their immediate enemies, the Final Knights. Solomon grew to be a physical specimen to be feared, a boy with a strong body and an even stronger heart. But deep down, Solomon harbored deep concerns about the compound's future.

When his father led the charge against a traveling band of Final Knights called the Severed Hand, Solomon rode out at his side at the age of 15. In the field he saw the carnage of the fighting, saw the families of the Severed Hand killed by his father's men. Upon returning, Solomon argued with his father and stormed out of the compound. In his hurry, he left the rear gate unlocked. When he returned at dawn, the compound was in flames. The Severed Hand had returned the favor by killing everyone inside and set off a baby nuke to bury the survivors deep inside the Grave Mind. Solomon was the sole survivor.



Sick from the radiation and lost in his sorrow, Solomon wandered the wasteland, kept alive only by his unwillingness to lie down and die. Exhausted, the lost boy found refuge in a cave. When he awoke, he was being tended to by five lantern-bearing messengers on their way across the wasteland. It was in their kind care Solomon discovered a new way to serve a holy cause in the faith of the Sainthood of Ashes. Traveling with the messengers, Solomon learned that holy zeal could be translated into protecting the weak rather than leading bloody missions and slaughtering enemies.

When they weren't on the go, the little band stayed at a small farmstead called Maybrook. History came full circle for Solomon when the very same Severed Hand who destroyed his home swept through the area near Maybrook. Solomon stood strong against the marauders, never leaving the door to the barn where the farm's guests and innocent children hid. But when it was clear the numbers were not in their favor, Solomon rushed out to meet the Severed Hand while the rest of the farmstead families escaped. He knew in his heart he'd die in the service of a higher power.

Only it seemed the higher power wasn't quite done with Solomon yet. Instead of killing the Accensorite, the Severed Hand used Solomon to pay off a debt to a crew of Tainted. Thrown into the hold of a ship, Solomon was sure he'd never see shore again until a Retrograde named Roll Dover hatched a plan for escape. Once his chains were broken, Solomon used his size and strength to overpower the crew members at Roll's side and helped crash the ship. Now on the road with Roll and his crew, Solomon hopes one day to return to Maybrook. Until then, he has a new family, and a new mission, to serve.

Roleplay Tips: Walker won't discuss where he came from, except to say his order long ago "disappeared" and he was the lone survivor. Walker will always be the last one to go to bed when someone has to stand watch and the first one up to take on a fight. He has a special love for small animals. He prefers to forage instead of hunt and won't abide anyone hunting little creatures.

Description: Solomon Walker is a towering man, all shoulders and barrel chest and the kind of face always set in stone. Stoic and proud, Walker is a surprisingly quiet Accensorite and lives by the rule of walk softly and carry a big stick. Walker almost never smiles and will always be an intimidating presence wherever he goes.

DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: Solomon Walker

PLAYER:

SERIES:

STRAIN: Accensorite (Condition: Do Not Blaspheme)

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	●●○○○
Athletics: Tenacious	●●●●○	Medicine:	○○○○○
Close Combat: Carry a Big Stick	●●●●○	Persuasion:	●●○○○
Culture:	○○○○○	Pilot:	○○○○○
Empathy:	○○○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	○○○○○	Subterfuge:	○○○○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival:	●●●○○
Leadership:	○○○○○	Technology:	○○○○○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect ●●○○○	Might	●●●●●	Presence	●●●○○
Finesse	Cunning ●●○○○	Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○
Resilience	Resolve ●●●●○	Stamina	●●●○○	Composure	●●○○○

PATHS

Strain: Accensorite ●○○○○

Role: Guard

Society: Creed (Sainthood of Ashes) ●○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: Protect Roll Dover

Short: Discover the fate of Maybrook

Long: End the Severed Hand

SKILL TRICKS

Carry

CONNECTIONS

- Bruised +1
- Bruised +1
- Injured +2
- Injured +2
- Maimed +4

Taken Out

- Troubled +1
- Troubled +1
- Distraught +2
- Distraught +2
- Haunted +4

Burned

EDGES

Meditation	●●○○○	Beacon of Hope (Faith)	●○○○○
Unshakable Devotion	●○○○○	Breath of Life (Faith)	●○○○○
Chosen Weapon (cudgel)	●○○○○	Endurance	●○○○○
Tough	●●○○○		○○○○○
Convincing Orater	●●○○○		○○○○○
Faithful	●●○○○		○○○○○

Weapon: Giant cudgel (+1e, bashing, melee, two-handed)

Armor: Reinforced vest

Gear: Water rations (2), dry rations, animal care kit, lantern

Experience:

Spines

Once upon a time there was a tiny Lascarian who lived in the Old Moss Tunnels. The tunnels went on for miles and every junction had a small family of flesh eaters, all ready to tear apart anything they could to stay alive. The youngest of these tiny killers was Spines, and nobody expected them to live. Born with sharp bone spikes sticking out of their spinal column, the little child was in constant pain and had to be kept very still for their youngest years, and very quiet so as not to attract attention.

Their mother was sure some other Lascarian would pick Spines off as a meal and defended the child against any attack. She carried them in a sling on her back and sang to them when they cried. Spines only remembers her as Manna and she remains the most beautiful thing they'd ever seen.

Spines grew up in the shadow of every other Lascarian around them, their growth stunted from years of sedentary living. Yet soon enough they were climbing faster and running harder than their siblings, making up for their smaller size by standing still unseen until it was the right moment to strike. Still, the other Lascarians thought Spines was weak and during lean times would hunt them when fresh food was low. Spines killed in the dark to survive but always came home to Manna to ask forgiveness, even after they'd eaten their enemies.

One day, the roof of an old section caved in during a terrible tornado, ripping apart the weakest part of the structure and killing dozens. It was during the repair efforts that a passing goliath, a nine-foot-tall undead monstrosity, heard the construction and fell through the roof and into the tunnels. The chaos was immediate, and Manna and the others rushed to defend their home.



Spines doesn't remember what happened next, but the stories go they used a flare they'd taken off one of the Lascarians they killed to lead the goliath to an old sinkhole nearby. The towering undead fell in, but not before nearly killing the tiny Lascarian. When they came to, old Doc Barker was operating. The old doctor then warned Spines the goliath showing up there was no accident. Another Lascarian family sent the monster to wipe out Manna and their family. Together, Barker and Spines fled the tunnels for their own safety and headed above ground, where Spines saw the light of day for the first time. Confused and disoriented, the tiny Lascarian never saw the Pure Blood caravan bearing down on them, nor who carried off Doc Barker on the road to the big city.

Down at the docks, Barker was sold to a Tainted crew and Spines snuck aboard to rescue their friend. Once aboard, it was Spines who freed the leaders of the revolt and got Barker and the survivors off when the ship crashed. When Barker led a bunch of the survivors off to safety, Spines parted ways with the doctor and struck up with the leader of the revolt, Roll Dover, a man they began to idolize. After all, if a Rottie could become a hero, maybe there was hope for a little Lascarian far from home.

Before he left, Barker passed along an introduction letter to Spines and a token they should show when in trouble in any trade town. The littlest Lascarian doesn't quite know what it means, but their skills at murdering their enemies didn't go unnoticed by the doctor. And wherever they go, that token opens a whole new world of possibilities for Spines among Murder, Inc.

Roleplay Tips: Spines is a quiet little Lascarian, rarely speaking except in nervous, fast whispers. Their fingers move when they talk, however, and they have a deft touch that makes them able to pick up and pocket anything they need. The smallest of their family, Spines learned to move fast to stay out of trouble's way. But underneath the nervous gestures lies a heart of someone 10 times as large.

Description: Spines really is the smallest Lascarian you've ever seen. Named for spikes of bone jutting out of their spine, Spines stands often hunched over, hiding gender-neutral features under a strangely adorable hat that looks like a cat head. Spines hides tools and other materials in a small sack on their back or on a tight belt around their tiny waist and prefers to move silently on bare feet.

DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: Spines

PLAYER:

SERIES:

STRAIN: Lascarian (Condition: Bright Lights)

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	○○○○○
Athletics:	●●●○○	Medicine:	●●○○○
Close Combat: Dirty Tricks	●●●●○	Persuasion:	○○○○○
Culture:	○○○○○	Pilot:	○○○○○
Empathy:	○○○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	○○○○○	Subterfuge:	●●○○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival: I Can Eat That	●●●●○
Leadership:	○○○○○	Technology:	○○○○○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect ●●●○○	Might	●●○○○	Presence	●○○○○
Finesse	Cunning ●●●●○	Dexterity	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●●○○
Resilience	Resolve ●●●○○	Stamina	●●○○○	Composure	●●○○○

PATHS

Strain: Lascarian ●○○○○

Role: Primitive

Society: Murder, Inc. ●○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: Find someone connected with Murder, Inc.

Short: Reduce Old Moss tunnels to ashes

Long: Learn to be like Roll Dover

CONNECTIONS

SKILL TRICKS

Vanish

■ Bruised +1
□ Bruised +1
■ Injured +2
□ Injured +2
■ Maimed +4
Taken Out

■ Troubled +1
□ Troubled +1
■ Distraught +2
□ Distraught +2
■ Haunted +4
Burned

EDGES

Cannibalism	●●○○○	Ambidextrous	●○○○○
Scavenger	●○○○○	Balanced Step	●○○○○
Animal Handler	●●●○○		○○○○○
Direction Sense	●○○○○		○○○○○
Chosen Weapon (trench knife)	●○○○○		○○○○○
Hair Trigger Reflexes	●○○○○		○○○○○

Weapon: Trench knife, sluggerville bat

Armor: Leather jacket

Gear: A-frame tent, lock breaker kit, blankets

Experience:

Talia O'Nines

Talia O'Nines started life far from where it nearly ended. Growing up in a traveling circus caravan, Talia was raised to perform from the time she could walk. Her mother Dalia O'Nines might not have been creative in naming her daughter but was the best knife thrower and singer across the wastes — at least to hear her brag about it — and put her daughter to bed every night with stories about far-off Vegasia, her home. Talia believed if she could only get back there, one day she'd become the greatest performer under the city lights. But when Dalia was killed in a brawl with a fellow performer, Talia learned dreams came easy while reality made blood cheap.



Left on her own, Talia followed the circus until the group went bust, performing as a dancer and knife thrower just like her mother. It wasn't until a better option came along that she jumped ship. The Balley Barnes Show was a Pure-Blood-backed extravaganza set up just outside a large city, a dazzling spectacle of performers from across the wasteland. The owner, Antoine Astor, promised only the best to his clientele and offered his protection and patronage to anyone who could impress him. When Talia got her audition, she got second place behind a Merican with the sweetest voice. Too bad she had bad balance when she fell off one of the highest bridges in Old York.

After that, Talia became one of the headlining acts in the Balley Barnes Show, and Antoine Astor's favorite girl. Talia kept the relationship strictly professional, despite Antoine's interest, and invested heavily in as many side endeavors with her money until she established herself as a savvy businesswoman in her own right.

Maybe it was the years of success, but when a dancer named Tauny Lee set her up for an attempt on Antoine's life, Talia never saw it coming. Antoine himself came to kill Talia, out of respect for their old friendship. By the time the fight was over, Talia had lost an eye and Antoine was dead for real. With the Astor family hot on her heels, Talia tried to hide out with a new, if lower-class, show run by a greasy tycoon called Boss Nastee.

Things got even worse under her new employment, as Nastee had a habit of getting into turf wars with other bosses. When he took on a theater owner called Voltaire, Talia knew it was time to jump ship. She intended to kill Nastee and try to bargain her way into Voltaire's employ by presenting him with the head of his enemy, old-school style. Instead, she and Voltaire's big security man, Roll Dover, ended up being captured by the Lowside Crew, who traded them to a Tainted pirate crew heading out to sea.

The two became fast friends and soon they were busting out of the broken-down ship, crashing it into some rocks and swimming to shore with a tiny Lascarian and a giant Accensorite in tow. While Roll Dover led the survivors off into the wasteland like some old holy leader on the way to the promised land, Talia meant to head off on her own. Only she caught wind at a trade stop that Boss Nastee's guys, along with the Astors, were still on her tail. So Talia geared up with lots more knives and headed off with Roll out into the wastes.

Roleplay Tips: You know what they say: You can take the girl out of the show, but you can't take the showgirl anywhere. Talia walks the brassy walk of someone who grew up to be pampered and fell a long hard way down the social ladder since then. Fast-talking but with a glitzy kind of culture, Talia can fake her way into most social circles but craves getting back to the high life she left behind.

Description: Talia was once a showgirl at a fancy Pure Blood joint, and her tastes still run to the flashy. Her dress is stylish and gaudy, her jacket is even louder, but these days she wears an armor vest underneath the glitz. Her hair is worn long and comes down over the eyepatch she tries to keep hidden. Everywhere you look, she's got something sharp to stick into someone's ribs.

DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: Talia O'Nines

PLAYER:

SERIES:

STRAIN: Vegasian (Condition: Born Coward)

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	○○○○○
Athletics:	●●●○○	Medicine:	○○○○○
Close Combat:	●●○○○	Persuasion: Pretty Eye	●●●●○
Culture:	●●●○○	Pilot:	○○○○○
Empathy:	○○○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	○○○○○	Subterfuge:	●●●○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival:	○○○○○
Leadership:	○○○○○	Technology:	○○○○○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect ●●○○○	Might ●○○○○	Presence ●●●○○
Finesse	Cunning ●●●●○	Dexterity ●●●○○	Manipulation ●●●●●
Resilience	Resolve ●●○○○	Stamina ●●○○○	Composure ●●○○○

PATHS

Strain: Vegasian ●○○○○

Role: Scoundrel

Society: The Black Market ●○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: Kill Boss Nastee

Short: Make some cash using only my wits

Long: Travel to Vegasia

SKILL TRICKS

Charisma

CONNECTIONS

■ Bruised +1
□ Bruised +1
■ Injured +2
□ Injured +2
■ Maimed +4

Taken Out

■ Troubled +1
□ Troubled +1
■ Distraught +2
□ Distraught +2
■ Haunted +4

Burned

EDGES

Crowd Pleaser	●●○○○		○○○○○
Lightning Calculator	●●○○○		○○○○○
Natural Athlete	●●●○○		○○○○○
Skilled Liar	●●○○○		○○○○○
Mentor (Voltaire)	●○○○○		○○○○○
Tavern Brawler	●●●○○		○○○○○

Weapon: Scrap knuckles, throwing knives (3)

Armor: Reinforced vest

Gear: Looter's sack, prybar, quality hooch

Experience:

Rocket Rose

Rose's first memory is sitting on her big brother Brigg's lap in his old jalopy, the Boiler Plate, heading across the dusty wasteland on the heels of her father's glorious big rig the Blastback. With her mother on a motorbike beside, the family seemed unstoppable out on the road, going from trade stops to clan meets and never stopping long. And her clan flew the jackrabbit colors, never stopping long, scrapping anyone who got in their way. Rose thought her family would drive forever.

The jackrabbit clan attracted a lot of attention and grew larger with every crew they scrapped, taking on the survivors who proved they could ride. Rose's mother warned it was a bad idea, that a big clan would be too slow to keep ahead of danger, and she was right. During a long sprint across the wastes when Rose was 17, the big construction vehicle at the back of the ride line blew a tire and sank deep into the ground. Rose and Briggs got out to survey the damage with some of the younger kids who served as pit crew. Once they reached the downed vehicle, however, they found the rig crew murdered and a huge pack of raiders cannibalizing the bodies. Before the kids could call for help, the raiders descended on them and tore them apart. The last thing Rose remembered was wild faces over her and then a crude machete going through her ribs, and then nothing.

When Rose came to, she was in her father's arms as their clan raced away from the raiders. In the back of a heavy cruiser, two of the clan's doctors put her back together, snatching Rose back from the jaws of the Grave Mind. Only Rose's recovery wasn't quite complete. The beating had shattered Rose's legs and the blade through the ribs had cut deep into her spinal column. Rose would survive, but she'd never walk without help again.

At the next trade meet Rose's father had an engineer fashion his daughter a pair of leg braces to help her stand and traded for a wheelchair. He then pooled what resources he could, bought an old rig for his little girl, and retrofitted the controls and seat so she could drive it fast as flying without pain. No life would be left behind, he promised, and nobody would stop his little girl, his flying Rocket. Rose promised from that day on, even more than before, she'd make her father proud.

Fearless and brash, Rose took up driving cargo to and from trade stops, sometimes going alone when necessary but often with her brother Briggs riding at her side. One day she met up with her clan again at a fuel stop only to hear her brother went east to do a run to Old York and hadn't returned. She got a message not long later that Briggs had met a boy there and settled down to raise a family, forsaking his clan for an outsider. Disgusted, the clan disowned Briggs, and a heartbroken Rose took up her brother's old armor painted with the green jackrabbit in his honor. From then on, it was hard to look at the family who'd turned against her brother, and when her father was killed in a throwdown with another clan, Rose took off on her own with her brother's old rig.

Rose rides the Downhome Doozer to any rally and race she can. At the last one, she met up with a Vegasian girl named Talia who caught her eye, and she fell head over heels. Talia and her crew needed a ride west, and Rose promised them she can fly better than anyone else in the wasteland. Together, who knows where the road can lead.

Roleplay Tips: Nobody is as bold as Rocket Rose. Straight shooting, laughing loud, and always talking, Rocket Rose is the epitome of someone who'd rather be divisive than indecisive. She's unwilling to accept any nonsense about her disabilities and will abide no one patronizing her.

Description: Rocket Rose is a small woman with leg braces, curly red hair, and the biggest smile. She's curvy and plus sized, wears her hair wrapped in long ribbons, and uses the same fabric to wrap all the way up her arms. Everything about Rose is loud, from her giant rig Downhome Doozer to her (slightly rickety) wheelchair, all done up with bright armor plates and a cow-catcher on the front. Even her armor is bright, thanks to a lime-green, fanged rabbit painted on front.



DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: Rocket Rose

PLAYER:

SERIES:

STRAIN: Diesel Jock (Condition: Don't Touch My Stuff)

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	○○○○○
Athletics:	●○○○○	Medicine:	○○○○○
Close Combat:	○○○○○	Persuasion:	○○○○○
Culture:	○○○○○	Pilot: Downhome Doozer	●●●●○
Empathy:	●○○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	●●●○○	Subterfuge:	○○○○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival:	○○○○○
Leadership:	●●○○○	Technology: Make It More Accessible	●●●●○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect ●○○○○	Might	●●○○○	Presence	●●●○○
Finesse	Cunning ●●○○○	Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○
Resilience	Resolve ●●●○○	Stamina	●●●●●	Composure	●●●○○

PATHS

Strain: Diesel Jock ●○○○○

Role: Caravan Driver

Society: Postal Service ●○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: Ask Talia on a date

Short: Win a race

Long: Avenge her brother's honor

SKILL TRICKS

Wayfinder

CONNECTIONS

■ Bruised +1
■ Bruised +1
■ Injured +2
■ Injured +2
■ Maimed +4
Taken Out

■ Troubled +1
□ Troubled +1
■ Distraught +2
□ Distraught +2
■ Haunted +4
Burned

EDGES

Wasteland Connections	●●○○○	Tech Wiz	●●○○○
Catch a Ride	●●○○○		○○○○○
Direction Sense	●○○○○		○○○○○
Mentor (local mechanic)	○○○○○		○○○○○
Photographic Memory	●●●○○		○○○○○
Swift (in wheelchair)	●○○○○		○○○○○

Weapon: Shiv, lever action rifle

Armor: Scrap armor

Gear: Barracade buster rig, leg braces, turlet hooch

Experience:

New in Town: Making a Character

Character creation has five steps: concept, Paths, Skills, Attributes, and finishing touches.

Step One: Concept

First, each player determines what kind of character they would like to play. This determination can be a collaborative process with the Storyguide and other players. Everyone at the table should discuss their expectations for the game and the character dynamics that interest them. A player may choose to fill an important role within the group of survivors, or simply play a concept that excites her. Two or more players may intimately link their backstories, or the group could decide that they've only just met and must figure out how they think about each other during gameplay. Players should summarize their character concept in a few words or a phrase. A more specific concept helps when choosing or creating Paths and assigning dots.

Examples: *Naïve but caring doctor, grizzled caravan driver, hardnosed mechanic with a soft spot, snooty citified merchant, grungy scavenger*

Next, each player chooses Aspirations: two short-term and one long-term. Aspirations are a player's goals for his character, *not necessarily* the character's own goals. A player may want his character to find a reason to join a caravan train, even though his character might have never left his settlement before. Aspirations are story moments a player wants to see happen.

Achieving Aspirations is the responsibility of the entire table. While a player should always be watchful for opportunities to achieve his aspirations for his character, he should also be aware of chances to set up his fellow players to achieve theirs. If all the players achieve one of their short-term Aspirations in the same act, each player present gets a point of Experience. The Storyguide will also use the Aspirations as guidance for the types of stories players are interested in playing and will provide opportunities for the players to achieve their Aspirations.

Aspirations should always push action, not restrict it. This means that players should phrase their Aspirations as something to *do* rather than something to *not do*. "Don't stop the caravan" removes potential points of interest. In contrast, "Get the caravan to the outpost" gives the character the leeway to stop and investigate potential story hooks without giving up on her goals.

Short-term Aspirations are something a character can achieve in a single act. The Aspiration may be a scene a player wants to see happen, an ability he wants to use, or a character moment he thinks would be interesting or cool.

Examples: *Get into a conflict about faith, use a Psi Edge against raiders, scavenge parts to make a new weapon*

EXAMPLE: CONCEPT

Darren has invited Lilly and a few others to play a game of **Dystopia Rising**. Lilly decides to make a character, whom she names Francis. Francis is a rough-and-tumble character without much in the way of education and a penchant for trouble. Lilly decides on the concept "rowdy troublemaker" for the character and begins from there. She knows she wants the character to eventually join the Light of Hedon Creed, and so sets her long-term Aspiration as such. She isn't quite sure what her short-term Aspirations are yet, so decides to wait until later to fill those in.

Long-term Aspirations are something that takes an arc to achieve and is related to one of the character's Paths. A long-term Aspiration may be how a player would like to see his character grow or change.

Examples: *Become accepted into the new settlement as a citizen, get baptized into a faith, create a new merchant company, overthrow Murder, Inc. in my settlement*

Step Two: Paths

Paths represent a series of decisions characters have made or experiences they've had over the course of their lives. They are the ways characters define themselves. Connected to those decisions and experiences are people — friends, followers, family — and resources — production spaces, safe spaces, Scrap — that each character can access.

In **Dystopia Rising** each character has three Paths: Strain, Role, and Society. Each Path is significant to the character and reflects a major commitment of her time. A Path can be a single word or a short phrase that summarizes the nature of character's experiences.

The **Strain Path** (p. XX) reflects the character's unique history, upbringing, and mutation that allows her to survive in the wastes. Each Strain represents how the character's family survived the Fall, and the subsequent way she views the wastes. It influences her opinions about others, and her approach to survival, as well as dictating a weakness common to the Strain.

You start with one dot in your Strain Path.

Examples: *Baywalker, Merican, Pure Bloods, Remnant, Yorker*

The **Role Path** (p. XX) is the character's occupation or area of expertise. The role is what a character does, either as a personal vocation or the part they play in their group or community.

Role Paths do not have dots.

EXAMPLE: PATHS

Lilly needs to choose Francis' three Paths. For Strain she decides Merican fits her desire for the character to be both rough and somewhat socially inept, and so picks the Landsmen Lineage with the Strain Merican. Next, Lilly chooses Francis' Role as Thug since Francis really likes beating people up for fun and profit. Finally, Lilly opts for Francis to be a certified member of the Black Market, to show her troublemaker side.

Examples: *Caravan Driver, Jones, Publican, Sawbones, Thug*

The **Society Path** (p. XX) is a connection each character has with an organization. This is her chosen group of people and defines her perspective on everything from how one should live, to what one should do to be part of society. You can belong to any number of societies, and many characters have ties to various groups, creeds, and townships. But a Society Path indicates a stronger tie to that one society and helps define the character.

You start with one dot in your Society Path.

Examples: *Church of Darwin Creed, Lineage League, Murder, Inc., The Trade Union, Psionicist Guild*

Each Path consists of the following elements:

- A short description of the Path.
- Four Skills associated with the Path.
- Strain and Society Paths give access to a community, contact, and access connections (p. XX).
- Two Edges associated with the Path. Strain Paths give a single Edge and the other Edge comes from the Strain's Lineage.
- Role Paths give starting gear for each character.

Step Three: Skills, Skill Tricks, and Specialties

Dystopia Rising has a total of 16 Skills (p. XX) with each skill being rated from 0-5. These Skills represent what a character can do, the abilities she has learned, and knowledge she has acquired over the course of her life.

Characters gain **three dots** to distribute among the four Skills for each Path. A player may choose to put all three dots in one Skill or divide the dots among two or three Skills. A player may *not* use dots from one Path for Skills associated with a different Path.

EXAMPLE: SKILLS

Lilly gets to allocate nine dots to the 12 Skills from her Paths. Lilly decides she wants Francis to be well-rounded, but mostly focused on violence. From Landsmen she picks two dots in Close Combat and one dot in Persuasion; from Thug she picks up another dot in Close Combat and one in Athletics and Survival each; finally, from Black Market she picks up another dot of Athletics and Persuasion, and one in Subterfuge each. She has six additional dots of Skills to spend outside of her Path Skills to fill Francis' Skills out. She puts one dot in Medicine, two dots in Pilot, two dots in Survival and a final dot in Subterfuge.

Francis now has a final Skill list of Close Combat 3, Athletics 2, Medicine 1, Persuasion 2, Pilot 2, Subterfuge 2, and Survival 3. She can choose a Skill Trick for either Close Combat or Survival and chooses Melee Weapon Expert for Close Combat. Since none of her Skills are at 4 or 5, she doesn't choose any Specialties.

Afterward, you also get **six additional dots** to distribute among any of the Skills, even those not associated with a Path. If you want to check your allocations, the total number of Skill points a character receives at character creation for Skills, through Paths or not, is 15.

Characters start with a single Skill Trick (p. XX) which must be for a Skill she has rated at 3 or more. A character may buy additional Skill Tricks with Experience when she has three dots in a Skill, and an additional Trick in the same Skill for each additional dot she has over three.

For any Skills with four or five dots, take a Specialty (p. XX).

Step Four: Attributes

Attributes represent different ways of acting and how adept a character is at each. **Dystopia Rising** has nine Attributes divided among three Arenas: Physical, Mental, and Social. Attributes are rated 1-5.

Players should rank the three Arenas in order of which their characters are most adept. This is not necessarily the same as which Arenas the character prefers. For example, a loner scavenger might excel in the Social Arena, rather than the Mental one.

Characters begin with **a single Attribute dot** in each of their nine Attributes. Players then distribute **six dots** among the three Attributes in their top-ranked Arena, **four dots** in their middle-ranked, and **two dots** in the bottom-ranked.

Attributes in **Dystopia Rising** also have an Approach. The Approach is how the character applies the Arena. The three Approaches are Force, Finesse, and Resilience. Every character has a Favored Approach or preferred way of approaching

EXAMPLE: ATTRIBUTES

Now it's time to choose Attributes. Lilly knows Francis is both socially inept and uneducated, but she decides Francis is relatively quick-witted. She chooses her primary Arena as Physical, then Mental as her secondary, and Social as her tertiary. Lilly gets six Attribute dots in the Physical Arena, and places two dots in Might, two in Dexterity, two in Stamina. She gets four in the Mental Arena and places two in Cunning, two in Resolve. And finally, she gains two in the Social Arena and places one in Presence and one in Composure. Lilly decides immediately that Francis approaches the world head on and chooses Force as her Favored Approach. She places one extra dot in Might, Intellect, and Presence each.

a problem, regardless of which Arena he's acting within. If he likes to be direct, his Favored Approach is probably Force. If he likes a delicate touch, his Favored Approach is likely Finesse. If he likes to let people tire themselves out against him, his Favored Approach is probably Resilience. A player places **one additional dot** to each of the Attributes in his Favored Approach.

No Attribute may have more than five dots. If a Favored Approach bonus would take an Attribute over five dots, the player may spend his extra dot on one of the other Attributes in the same Arena as the maxed-out Approach.

If you want to check your allocations, your character should have 24 dots in Attributes.

Step Five: Final Touches

The final touches of character creation involve noting Conditions, adding additional traits, noting a character's Health and Defense ratings, and choosing connections.

Edges

Characters gain **all six Edges** offered by each Path. If the Edge has variable dots, the character gains the first dot in the Edge. If two Paths would give the character the same Edge, gain an additional dot if variable; if not then pick a different Edge of the same or lesser value. This Edge substitution is subject to Storyguide approval. Characters must meet the prerequisites for all Edges by the end of character creation.

Characters then gain **four additional dots** of Edges, which can come from outside her Path but must follow any normal prerequisites. Up to three of those Edges can be Faithful or Psi Edges.

Gear

Characters begin with the starting gear listed in their Role Path; Storyguides may allow characters to switch these with equivalent items.

The player can also five additional pieces of gear not listed within the character's Role Path. None of these additional items can be higher than Tier 3. Ideally, the character should have at least one weapon and one piece of armor — it's tough surviving in the wastelands!

You can find tables of example gear starting on p. XX.

Strain Condition

Take note of your character's Strain Condition and write down its effects and what triggers it.

Health and Stress

All survivors have an Injury Condition and Stress Condition tracker.

Each character starts with three levels of Injury at character creation: Maimed, Injured, and Bruised. At Stamina 3 the character gains an additional Injured Condition, and at Stamina 5 the character gains an additional Bruised Condition.

EXAMPLE: FINISH

Now for finishing touches. Lilly records the Edges from each of her Paths: Danger Sense from Landsmen, Reckless Abandon from Merican, Chosen Weapon and the first dot of Heavy Handed from Thug, and the first dots in both Mentor and Tavern Brawler from Black Market. She gains four dots worth of Edges which she uses to purchase Ambidextrous for one dot, Heavy Handed for two dots, and Fast Draw for the last dot.

She also gets to mark her starting gear from her Role Path. For Thug she gets a Hide Shield and can pick from any weapon as long as it isn't higher than Tier 3, so decides on a Sluggerville bat. She then gets five additional pieces of gear, so she picks a Machete to give her a back-up weapon, along with a molotov cocktail, water rations, dry rations, and some turlet hooch.

Lilly notes her Strain Condition, "Social Pariah," on her character sheet. She has a Stamina of 3, and so marks that she has 1 Bruised, 2 Injured and 1 Maimed Condition in addition to her Taken Out Condition. Since she's not a preacher or a psionicist, she gets her starting Stress Conditions of Troubled, Distraught, and Haunted, along with Burned Out. She decided she'll choose her community, contact, and access connections once she talks with the other players.

Now Lilly is set to play with Darren and the rest of the crew.

Similarly, every character has three levels of Stress: Troubled, Distraught, and Haunted. Only characters with the Faithful or Psi Edges get additional Stress Conditions: At Resolve 3, such characters gain an additional Distraught Condition, and at Resolve 5 they get an additional Troubled Condition.

Defense

A character's standard Defense is 1. Characters can attempt to make a defensive action when being attacked by rolling the most appropriate of their Resistance Attributes without any Skills added.

Connections

Finally, choose your character's community, contact, and access connections based on her Paths (p. XX).

Who Are You?: Paths

Paths are an essential component of **Dystopia Rising**. Not only do they help define a character, but they also affect a character's Skills, Edges, resources, and advancement. While this book offers Paths players may choose for their characters, a player can also elect to create her own.

Each Path has four elements: concept, connections, Skills, and Edges. Strain and Society Paths are rated from 1 to 5 dots. Each additional dot in a Path strengthens the associated connections, gives additional Skills, and increases the character's standing within that Path.

Role Paths are a little different than the others in that once you pick up a Role, you're done. It doesn't come with Connections and assets like the others, and you don't get a support network of like-minded professionals unless you join a society of them. Unlike other Paths, you may have up to three Role Paths at any one time. Role Paths come with Skills, Edges, and Gear that reflects the basic tools of the trade.

Concept

A Path's **concept** is its story. This is a brief explanation of what the Path represents for the character. The concept is indicated by the Path's type (i.e., Strain, Role, or Society) and descriptive word or phrase (e.g., wasteland warrior, tinkers with oldcestor relics). The Path's concept also determines the kinds of connections the Path can offer and guides which Skills and Edges it provides.

Connections

A Strain and Society Path's **connections** are the people and resources the character can access thanks to the Path. Each Path has three different connections: community, contact, and access. The **community** connection is a well-defined collection of people who share a similar Path or are directly related. For example, a character who is a Pure Blood may have a group of shelter babies just like him to commiserate with, or a large extended family from which he can ask for help and resources. The character does not have a connection to all these communities within the Path; the player must choose one. **Characters have a single community connection from each of their Strain and Society Paths.**

The **contact** connection is a single person related to the Path and with whom the character has a relationship. This relationship can be familial, platonic, romantic, competitive, strained, or something else entirely. The contact has some expertise related to the Path and is inclined to do a favor or two for the character. **The player chooses one contact connection from each of their Strain and Society Paths.**

The **access** connection is the equipment or specialized space (e.g., shelter, workspace, library) related to the Path. For example, a character who is part of the Black Market might be able to access illegal substances. Access connections can be anything the Path may give the character access to and serves as an Enhancement to her actions. **Characters gain a single access connection from their Society Path.**

A Path's connections may come with inherent **obligations**, which are up to the Storyguide. Once per act, a Path's connections may ask a character to perform a task. The player takes on the task as an additional short-term Aspiration. Often an obligation is something that can be accomplished quickly, within one scene, though it may end up being a slight burden to the character. The obligation might be Scrap for dues, a balance of favors, a promise to help fix a broken item, or a family member in need of support or guidance. If the character does not complete her obligation by the end of the act, her first attempt to use her connections next act suffers +2 difficulty.

Contacts

Contacts are the people in a character's life who come to her aid when she needs them. They may be friends, family, business associates, or loyal followers — but are always associated with one of her Paths. She begins play with two contacts, one from each of her Strain and Society Paths. Players care create brand-new characters to fill these contact roles or use an existing Storyguide character to build the contact from.

Each contact begins with one dot and one tag (see list of suggested tags in the sidebar). A character gains an equivalent number of points to use to build her contact as she has dots in

SUGGESTED TAGS

- Dangerous
- Informant
- Influential
- Loyal
- Mentor
- Numerous (gain 5-10 followers per dot)



her Path. She can spend these dots on either gaining additional contacts from the Path or making a single contact better. Each additional dot placed in a single contact adds an additional tag.

Tags define the types of actions a contact can help your character with and add the Storyguide character's dot rating as an Enhancement to those rolls. For example, a contact with two dots and the Influential tag would add 2 Enhancement when he uses his status to sway events in your character's favor.

Using Connections and Contacts

When a player wants to leverage his character's connections, he declares which of his connections he's using and rolls Path + appropriate Attribute. If the character is drawing from a group, success equals a single piece of information granted to the character. If the character is tapping a contact, success means that the contact acts accordingly. If the character is trying to use his access, successes equal Enhancement to the player's next roll.

Initially, each connection has the same dot rating as the overall Path it is derived from. Each time a character draws on one of his connections (through access or a contact), that connection's rating decreases by 1. Each favor a character calls in makes the next favor a little more difficult to get. Each connection's rating refreshes at the end of the story.

If the connection is reduced to 0 through use in play, the player may still attempt to draw on his character's connections. The first time he does so, the character gains the Contact Suspended Condition. If he tries a second time in the act, the character gains the Contact Revoked Condition.

CONTACT SUSPENSION

You've done something to upset your Path connections. Maybe you called on them one too many times and they are tired of your constantly needy attitude, or you violated a minor code. You are on the outs, but they haven't written you off completely. You suffer +2 difficulty whenever you attempt to engage anyone within your Path's group. If you attempt to access your connections again, or violate another code, you will gain the Revoked Condition.

Momentum Trigger: Attempting to draw on the connection after the rating has been reduced to 0.

Resolution: This Condition ends at the end of the story. Fulfilling an obligation may remove this Condition early, as will gaining the Path Revoked Condition.

CONTACT REVOKED

You've really messed up this time. Maybe you broke an inviolate code, violated your suspension, or maybe you just broke the rules one too many times. Your membership has been revoked. You are still part of the Path, but you cannot attempt to access your connections while you are Revoked.

STRAIN EDGES

When creating a new Strain Path, the Path gains the Lineage Edge from the lineage the Strain belongs to, and a single additional Edge from the Open Edges list.

Momentum Trigger: Attempting to draw on the connection if you have the Path Suspension Condition.

Resolution: You must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to regaining your Path's good graces.

Skills and Edges

Every Path has four associated Skills. The Skills should extend from the Path's concept. Players should vet their Skill choices with the Storyguide or fellow players at the table.

A Path also has Edges. When creating the Path, a player chooses 2 Edges. As with Skills, the Edges should follow the Path's concept and receive vetting from the Storyguide and other players.

Advancement with Paths

Strain and Society Paths can advance, up to a maximum of five dots. Each dot of a Path strengthens connections and increases the character's investment into the Path's doctrine.

Each dot in a Path costs 15 points of Experience, provides three dots for distribution among the related Skills, and provides one point to apply to the character's connections. (See Advancement, p. XX, for more information.)

Additionally, when a character reaches four dots in a Society or Strain Path, she gains the Mover and Shaker Condition, and when she reaches five dots she gains the Leader Condition.

MOVER AND SHAKER

Your character is an important member of her Path. Others look up to her and often come to her for assistance or advice. She may even have followers within the Path who will gladly do her bidding. Gain 2 Enhancement on rolls in the Social Arena when dealing with other members of the Path.

Momentum Trigger: The character is called upon to do something on behalf of the group.

Resolution: Your character loses this Condition if she leaves the Path or otherwise visibly acts against the interests of the Society or Strain. She also loses it if she gains the Leader Condition.

LOSING FACE

A character cannot change her Strain or Lineage Path, but she can lose face. If a character decides to part ways with her Strain, she does not lose any dots in the Path, but she does lose access and connections granted by the Strain, and any Conditions from increased dots. She cannot gain a new Strain. She still suffers the Strain Condition and may pick up a Condition for cutting ties.

This is not necessarily permanent, and the character can restore relations through game play and resolve Conditions for leaving the Strain behind, which restores her previous benefits from rank within the Path.

LEADER

You are not just important, you're in charge. People do what you say and at least pretend to like it. You are above the normal limitations of asking too much or breaking the rules. You make the rules now. Your character never suffers from the Path Suspension or Path Revoked Conditions. Additionally, all your contacts gain the Loyal tag for free. If they already had the Loyal tag, they gain a different tag of your choosing.

A character may only possess the Leader Condition from a single Path.

Momentum Trigger: The character is called upon to do something on behalf of the group.

Resolution: Your character loses this Condition if she leaves the Path or otherwise visibly acts against the interests of the Society or Strain.

Leaving a Path

Your character may decide to part ways with her previous Society for a variety of reasons. Maybe a priest of the Nuclear Family lost faith in her own family and decided to follow a Queen of Soul in the Kings' and Queens' Court.

Your character may change her Society Path simply by declaring that she's leaving the Path and picking a new Path to replace it. She loses any access or contacts she gained from the Path, but keeps any Skills or Edges granted by the lost Path, unless she no longer meets the prerequisites. If she loses an Edge because of a prerequisite, she gains a new Edge to replace it. She also loses any Mover and Shaker or Leader Conditions she may have gained from increasing the Path's rating. If she picks a new Path, it does not default to the previous Path's rating, but instead starts at 1.

Moving into the new Path costs the same amount of Experience as purchasing a new Path dot or rating, and the character gains all the same benefits. Leaving Society Paths can leave a character in the outs with her former fellows, and some are downright dangerous to leave. The character gains one of several different Conditions, at Storyguide discretion.

FAITHLESS

Your character had a crisis of faith and lost her way. She might have found religion in another quarter, but her former congregation shuns her for abandoning them. Suffer 3 Complication of *Heretic* when attempting to interact with any member of the abandoned Creed — unless they buy off the Complication, the character will still be distrustful and disrespectful to their former brethren.

Her new Creed is also a little wary of her, as she seems to switch faith so easily. Suffer 1 Complication of *Flip-Flopper* when attempting to interact with a member of the new Creed, with similar results to the *Heretic* Complication.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: The character must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to convincing the new and old congregations of her dedication to her new faith.

HUNTED

Prerequisite: Originally had the Mover and Shaker or Leader Conditions in this Path.

You know too much and the people in charge won't rest until you're dead or long gone. They may send assassins after you, or someone from the Path may take an opportunity to attempt to settle your debt, as it were. You're dangerous to be around as few people want to raise the ire of those who hunt you. Suffer +1 to all rolls in the Social Arena when dealing with anyone outside your new Path, unless you have a Bond to them. Additionally, the character may periodically deal with surprise assailants.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: This Condition is resolved if the character gains the Mover and Shaker or Leader Condition.

BLACKBALLED

You pissed off the wrong people when you bailed on your settlement and left them high and dry. Now they won't have anything to do with you, and spend their time making your life miserable. Suffer +2 difficulty when attempting to purchase goods or services, gain entry into the settlement, or otherwise make a transaction.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: The character must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to convincing the new and old communities of her dedication to her new home.

Strain Paths

Dystopia Rising offers eight Lineages with a total of 24 Strains which describe how your character's family survived and evolved after the apocalypse. Each Strain details how your character grew up and influences how she reacts, her way of thinking, and who she is deep down. While her Role and Society Paths define what she does and with whom she associates, her Strain is an immutable part of herself. Increased dots in a Strain Path represent the character delving deeper into the hierarchy of her Strain and possibly digging further into the Strain's variations.

Strain Paths offer a greater look into the character's life and weaknesses in a game of **Dystopia Rising**, and therefore come with Persistent Conditions specific to each Strain.

Strain Paths are described in detail in Chapter Two (starting on p. XX).

Role Paths

The Role Path describes what your character does to survive. In short, it's her job, but it also reflects a honed skillset necessary for survival in the wastes. Maybe she is good with people, so she stays in one place and rises to a leadership position in a town. She might be good at fixing things, and travels across the wastes offering her services to whomever pays the best, or maybe her psionic abilities force her to travel around, so she guards caravans until the hordes of zed force her away.

The following are some example Role Paths. Feel free to delve deeper into these roles and the organizations they may be a part of to make the Path your own.

Caravan Driver

Running vehicles in the wastes are a welcome sight. They bring goods from other settlements and offer a relatively safe way to get from one place to another. He knows how to drive, and maybe even has a ride of his own. Either way, he's more than happy to accept people's hard earned UPPs to transport goods or people across the wastes.

Skills: Culture, Firearms, Leadership, Pilot

Gear: Shiv, Trade Wagon

Edges: Direction Sense, Mentor

Engineer

Some people seem to understand the inner workings of machines better than others. She has a knack for figuring out how things work and making them run better. She's fundamental to any settlement who wants running lights and a working radio, and for their buildings to stand up against the hordes.

Skills: Close Combat, Integrity, Pilot, Technology

Gear: Claw Hammer, Craft Tools

Edges: Ambidextrous, Working Smarter

Guard

Settlements are full of soft people. Sure, they can probably pick up a weapon and swing it at a shambler if push comes to shove. But dealing with the big things, and keeping people safe, that's what she specializes in. She may wander the wastes offering her services to caravans or those in need, or she stands on the walls of a settlement, ensuring the worst don't make it inside.

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Subterfuge, Survival

Gear: Any Tier 3 or lower melee weapon, Reinforced Vest

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Tough

Gunslinger

People pay good money for some brass all around the wastes. Functioning firearms are rare, and those who know how to wield them with deadly efficiency are in high demand. A little sharpshooting might make a good show and a few UPPs, and picking off zed from a distance ensures he stays alive for the next fight.

Skills: Athletics, Firearms, Leadership, Persuasion

Gear: Bolt Pistol, Kavleer Vest

Edges: Fast Draw, Sniper

Jones

The oldcestors left behind literal treasure troves of gear, technology, and Scrap. Most of those things are buried under zed-infested Grave Mind protrusions, radiation fields as far as the eye can see, or deserts only survivable to the worst mutated creatures. But those things have never stopped her before, and they sure aren't going to stand in the way of her next dig.

Skills: Athletics, Firearms, Lore, Technology

Gear: Grapnel Hook, Shiv

Edges: Balanced Step, Scavenger

Mad Scientist

They say she must be mad to play around with long-lost technologies. She says they must be mad to not see the potential for new advancements. Sure, she can cobble together a blade for you, or even a decent set of armor. But really, she'd rather slap a motor on it and see what a little Texas Tea can do for taking out that zed horde.

Skills: Academics, Lore, Science, Technology

Gear: Craft Tools, Leather Jacket

Edges: Mentor, Tech Wiz

Politician

Ensuring continued civility and social norms is the most important thing. The rule of law is what keeps people from devolving into raiders, and she is going to do what she can to ensure that settlements remain safe places to live. Some view her as a leader, and while she certainly thrives while in charge, she mostly just cares about ensuring society's survival.

Skills: Academics, Empathy, Leadership, Persuasion

Gear: Leather Jacket, Shiv

Edges: Convincing Orator, Safe House

Primitive

Capable of finding the right spots to bed down at night, where the good game runs, and where to avoid the zed hordes. He doesn't drive a caravan, but he can get you from point A to point B mostly intact and well-fed.

Skills: Close Combat, Integrity, Medicine, Survival

Gear: A-Frame Tent, Sluggerville Bat

Edges: Animal Handler, Direction Sense

Publican

Everyone wants a bit of good gossip, and the best place to find that is at the bottom of someone else's glass. He works the bar scene, either as barkeep or one of the various workers who keep the clientele happy. No matter what he's paid to do, his real job is to keep a sympathetic ear open for juicy information worth selling later.

Skills: Academics, Culture, Empathy, Subterfuge

Gear: 3 UPP, Heavy Jacket

Edges: Entertainer, Time Sense

Sawbones

Keeping people alive in the wastes isn't always easy, but it's what she's dedicated her life to. Maybe her methods are a little painful, but her customers always pay, and plenty of them come back the next time they have an injury. Of course, that might be because she's the only doc in town.

Skills: Empathy, Medicine, Science, Survival

Gear: Bandages, Healing Herbs, Shiv

Edges: Mentor, Skilled Healer

Scoundrel

He makes his living through shadier means. He likes to think he's someone who relieves people with too much money and not enough sense of their burdens. And he's not above taking jobs that others won't do, like stealing from the rich to give to the other rich. Just as long as he gets his cut.

Skills: Close Combat, Persuasion, Pilot, Subterfuge

Gear: Looter's Sack, Prybar, Scrap Knuckles

Edges: Natural Athlete, Skilled Liar

Thug

He fights not because he has to, but because he wants to. Some say it's no way to make a living, but those people still hand over their money and Scrap to buy his services. Sure, he can fight a zed if one comes shambling around, but he makes his living reminding people that a violent society is a polite society.

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Integrity, Survival

Gear: Any Tier 3 or less melee or ranged weapon, Hide Shield

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Heavy Handed

Society Paths

A society is a group of like-minded people working together to achieve a specific goal within the **Dystopia Rising** world. That may be anything from ensuring the purity of a Strain's bloodline to assassinating bad actors to ensure a settlement's safety. A society could also be a creed of faith that people believe in, giving their lives meaning and focus.

Characters can belong to any number of societies, joining in as a lay member of a faith or a grunt in an organization. The character's Society Path is the group or organization that the character has the strongest ties to or is a leading member of. A character with a creed Society Path is a priest of her faith, while one with the Trade Union as her Society Path is an official within the organization. Throughout the course of the game, a character may step down from her role in a society and change directions. She may have more than one Society Path through the course of the game, but only one at a time.

For more information about factions and secret societies, see Chapter Seven, starting on p. XX. For more information about Creeds, see Chapter Eight, starting on p. XX.

Attercops

He's a mole, an informant for the biggest information-gathering network in the wastes. They are his only true family, and he would do anything to keep them safe. No information is too precious to give to them, and your secrets aren't safe around him.

Restrictions: Lascarian Strain only

Example Connections: Lascarian living topside, paid informant, trade partner

Skills: Culture, Integrity, Subterfuge, Survival

Edges: Photographic Memory, Tough

The Black Market

If there's a good or service that needs doing, she knows how to get it. Words like "illegal" and "illicit" mean little when money is on the line, and she takes pride in setting aside scruples for the right price.

Example Connections: Bartender, local government official, trustworthy smuggler

Skills: Athletics, Culture, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Edges: Mentor, Tavern Brawler



Crafters of Alexandria

Knowledge is power. He knows this more than anyone and has dedicated his life to collecting and protecting knowledge in all its various forms. He doesn't just hoard knowledge, though, he uses it to make lives better and advance current technologies into the future.

Example Connections: Lore seeker, local crafter, scavenger

Skills: Lore, Persuasion, Survival, Technology

Edges: Lightning Calculator, Scavenger

Creed

They look up to her for solace and guidance. She is a priest and can call down the power of her gods, but she must use this power wisely or lose her congregation's support. She is a leader, with a burden of responsibility she takes very seriously.

Example Connections: Congregation members, local leadership, minor creed leaders

Skills: Academics, Culture, Integrity, Leadership

Edges: Convincing Orator, Faithful

Crimson Cross Caravans

His caravan is one of many who travel the wastes helping those in need. He is a true altruist, willing to give everything he owns to make the world a better place.

Example Connections: Caravan driver, merchant with a pure heart, Sainthood of Ashes priest

Skills: Academics, Empathy, Medicine, Science

Edges: Balanced Step, Big Hearted

Dead Sight Society

Psionicists are a blight on this land, and she will do anything in her power to destroy them all. Only with their death can the land be restored to its former glory and the Grave Mind beat once and for all.

Example Connections: Fanatical follower, Grave Mind specialist, small town mayor

Skills: Academics, Empathy, Integrity, Subterfuge

Edges: Psionic Null, Time Sense

Fast Track

He was proud to be a part of the fight to end slavery, and he'll do whatever it takes to make sure that such an abhorrent practice never happens again. Slavery will never completely die, so any remaining slavers need to be stamped out. By any means necessary.

Example Connections: Freed slaves, ex-slavers turned informants, local law enforcement

Skills: Close Combat, Culture, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Edges: Big Hearted, Convincing Orator

Lineage League

When others speak of unimaginable wealth, they only need look at him to see an example. He is a scion of the elites, and he uses his vast wealth and power to chronicle everything there is to know about the Pure Blood families of the wastes.

Restrictions: Pure Bloods Strain only

Example Connections: Elite printer, rich land owner, studious archivist

Skills: Academics, Culture, Leadership, Persuasion

Edges: Breath Control, Mentor

Lone Star Rangers

She knows an outlaw when she sees one, and she isn't afraid to put a bullet in his head. She's as good as 10 armed fighters, and her driving force is ensuring the Merican way of life.

Restrictions: Merican Strain only

Example Connections: City guard, law officer, local leadership

Skills: Athletics, Firearms, Pilot, Survival

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Sniper

Mercy's Chosen

He has dedicated his life to eradicating sickness in disease in the wastes. He hails from his monastery, aiding anyone who seeks him, and training those who would also wish to take up the sacred cause.

Example Connections: Altruistic merchant, former patient, traveling sawbones

Skills: Integrity, Medicine, Science, Survival

Edges: Safe House, Skilled Healer

Murder, Inc.

She waits in disguise, pretending to be just another townsfolk. She does not let her training slip though, for when the order comes to execute someone, she needs to be fast and effective. The suffering of one Fall was enough, and she'll be damned if she lets it happen again.

Example Connections: Assassin mentor, bartender with loose lips, indebted caravan driver

Skills: Close Combat, Firearms, Medicine, Subterfuge

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Hair Trigger Reflexes

Postal Service

Through radiation storms, sand devils, and poison sleet he will walk to deliver his message. It is his sacred duty to ensure communication between the settlements of the wastes never stops, and this he will do until death.

Example Connections: Dedicated caravanner, friendly printer, waystation keeper

Skills: Athletics, Culture, Lore, Pilot

Edges: Photographic Memory, Swift

Priests of the Sound

The beat is in all of us, and the beat must go on. She is dedicated to ensuring the radio waves can be heard clear and true across the wastes. And she's willing to fight for the beat or die with a song on her lips.

Restrictions: Follower of the Kings' and Queens' Court Creed only

Example Connections: Faithful engineer, grateful town leader, inspired survivor

Skills: Athletics, Firearms, Persuasion, Technology

Edges: Acute Sense, Convincing Orator

Psionicists' Guild

Being a psionicist on your own is dangerous. Better to find a few like you and stick together. That's where the Guild comes in — a band of mutual protection and survival in a world that hates and fears you.

Example Connections: Psionicist mentor, unscrupulous merchant, wasteland outcast

Skills: Athletics, Medicine, Science, Survival

Edges: Acute Sense, Psionicist

Road Crew

He doesn't participate in the race, he makes the race happen. He's the one who finds the worst routes, the hardest to find waypoints and then stocks those with the munitions and resources the racers need to try to survive. He might not be a racer, but he is a damned good survivor.

Example Connections: Helpful scavenger, past racer, Vegasian overlord

Skills: Close Combat, Firearms, Pilot, Technology

Edges: Adrenaline Spike, Scavenger

The Scythe

Undead plague the land, and while many survivors know how to fight them, few actively seek them out. She is one of those few, the elite force dedicated to wiping out zed everywhere.

Example Connections: Fallow Hope priest, grateful survivor, trusted weapons crafter

Skills: Athletics, Close Combat, Firearms, Survival

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Tough

Servants of Egress

To defy the gods who brought hell on earth, he must show others pain and suffering. He has happily taken on this burden, and gleefully tortures his victims to bring enlightenment to the weak. For it is better to reign in hell than to be weak and wretched.

Restrictions: Follower of the Final Knight Creed only

Example Connections: Converted victim, disaffected survivor, unscrupulous sawbones

Skills: Close Combat, Empathy, Lore, Subterfuge

Edges: Chosen Weapon, Skilled Liar

Servants of the Undying

The path to immortality is through the Grave Mind. If she can only understand it better, then she could bend its power to her will and live forever.

Example Connections: Desperate psionicist, interested scientist, lore keeper

Skills: Academics, Leadership, Lore, Science

Edges: Photographic Memory, Direction Sense

Settlement

She's only ever thrived in one settlement, such as Philly Del Phia. She might have come from somewhere else, but as far as anyone else is concerned, she's a local. She came before the war, she stayed afterward, and everyone seems to know her, for better or for worse. Some people even look up to her, especially when things go poorly and they need help. She has a strong sense of community, and that lends itself to getting involved, even when she doesn't necessarily want to.

Example Connections: Local leadership, town guard, streetwise orphan

Skills: Culture, Empathy, Leadership, Science

Edges: Big Hearted, Entertainer

Steamers

The rails run on time and stay clear only through his team's constant dedication. Together, they ride the rails and clear away undead or blockages to ensure the Rail Barons get their goods on time. In exchange, he is always in good supply.

Example Connections: Engineer mentor, Rail Baron, supplies crafter

Skills: Athletics, Firearms, Pilot, Technology

Edges: Heavy Handed, Working Smarter

Trade Union

She is a Senator and an investor. She knows that commerce and capitalism are what makes the world go around. So she's willing to invest in such ventures if it means she'll make a profit.

Example Connections: Leader of a trade caravan, merchant organization, settlement guard

Skills: Academics, Persuasion, Pilot, Technology

Edges: Convincing Orator, Safe House

I'm Good: Skill Tricks

In addition to being broadly competent, **Dystopia Rising** characters are survivors. As such, they have honed themselves and their Skills beyond that of what we would consider normal. Skill Tricks

represent this and act like special abilities that characters have making them stand out. In some cases, they make her luckier than most, and in other cases, her own experience makes her outstanding.

When you reach three dots in a Skill, you can choose to purchase one Skill Trick for that Skill. As your character advances in the skill, you can purchase an additional Skill Trick for each dot above three as well. Characters begin play with a single Skill Trick in a Skill with three or more dots.

Each Skill Trick has a description of the circumstances in which it can be used, and costs Momentum to activate. Unless the description of the Skill Trick states otherwise, a Skill Trick always costs 1 Momentum. As long as you have the Momentum to spend, you can use the Skill Trick. (See p. XX for more information on Momentum.)

Creating Skill Tricks

The Skill Tricks listed under each Skill are just examples of the possible Skill Tricks a **Dystopia Rising** character can use. If there is a specific knack that your character has that is not covered by the Skill Tricks listed, you can create your own, using these as a benchmark. A Skill Trick does one of four things:

- A Skill Trick can **add dice to a roll** under specific circumstances. The number of dice added will usually be equal to the Skill the trick is associated with. ***Example:*** *you might create a Skill Trick that allows you to add your Academics Skill to a Technology roll to disarm deathtraps in an ancient ruin.*

- **Changing a character's Scale** for one action allows her to attempt actions that would be beyond most people. See Scale, p. XX, for more information. ***Example:*** *A Skill Trick that allows a character to increase her relative speed for the round, giving her a distinct edge on most people, and potentially allowing her to catch up to a fleeing caravan.*

- **Changing the target number for a roll** can make a specific task not only reliably easier for your character but allow him to achieve greater results as well. Conversely, you could make a Skill Trick that increases the target number for someone else's roll, making it very difficult for them to succeed against you. The target number is always 8 to start. See p. XX for more on target numbers. ***Example:*** *A Subterfuge Skill Trick that increases the target number of social rolls to read your intentions by 1, due to your stoic demeanor.*

- A Skill Trick can also **give a character a free Stunt**, as if they had spent a success from a roll on that effect. Stunts can be used to create complications for an opponent, enhancements for you and your allies, or to defend against harm. See Stunts, p. XX, for more information. ***Example:*** *A Lore Skill Trick could allow you to inform an ally about a topic you know, granting him 1 Enhancement on his next roll pertaining to that topic.*

Skill Tricks almost always cost 1 Momentum to activate. Increasing the Scale of an action costs 2 Momentum. Some Skill Tricks will have an initial cost of 1 Momentum but allow an additional effect if you spend another. Adjust the cost and effect of any Skill Tricks you create until you feel the balance is right. When in doubt, assume it costs 1 Momentum.

Academics

Bartender's Tongue: The character knows a whole lot of expensive words, and when best to use them to confuse her target. Spend 2 Momentum and declare a target for Bartender's Tongue. The target is so lost in the character's glib talk that the target number on all his rolls in the Mental Arena are increased by 1 for the rest of the scene.

Educated: The character had the benefit of a formal education, which makes her particularly adept at forming and testing hypotheses with little to no data. When confronted with a pattern, set of circumstantial clues, or incomplete evidence, the player can spend 1 Momentum to gain the results of a single Research action immediately. This happens as though the character spent the required time to take the action and fulfilled all the Milestones.

Transcribe: The character can read, write, and make complex calculations — often on the move. People are impressed, and willing to pay good money for such services. Spend 1 Momentum to add your character's Academics Skill as bonus dice to a roll in the Social Arena against someone she's trying to impress with her skill.

Athletics

Carry: The character can perform astonishing feats of strength and power. When attempting to lift or push something, spend 2 points of Momentum to increase her effective Size Scale by 1 for a single action (see p. XX for more information on Size).

Defensive Maneuvering: The character springs about the battlefield, dancing away from one attacker to another with barely even a scratch. Spending 1 Momentum, the character can apply her Athletics to her Defensive action for this round.

Mad Bull: When the character gets moving, nothing seems to slow her down. When using this Skill Trick, the character automatically ignores all barriers, complicated terrain, and difficult terrain between her and her destination for a single action as long as she's attempting to leave a fight. This Skill Trick costs no Momentum to use.

Close Combat

Brawling: Your character has been in his fair share of brawls and knows when to throw a punch to take his opponent off guard. If the character is using an unarmed attack on an opponent as a standard action (not a mixed action), he can reduce the number of successes needed to overcome his opponent's Dodge Stunt by his Close Combat Skill dots.

Melee Weapon Expert: Whenever the character engages in a mixed action in violence at close range, she can use her highest dice pool for the action instead of the lowest.

Wide Strike: The character is skilled at attacking multiple foes at once, landing multiple hits without breaking stride. When the character is using a complex action to attack multiple foes at once, she gains 1 Enhancement for each additional target she is attacking beyond the first.



Culture

Income: Sometimes knowing the local culture helps her find work, while other times it helps her find the poor sap that separates easily from his money. When making a roll that involves a monetary exchange, from haggling to theft, spend 1 Momentum to reduce the target number of the roll by 1.

Obscure Tradition: Your character seems to have an encyclopedic knowledge of basic laws in settlements across the wastes. Spend 1 Momentum to add your character's Culture Skill as bonus dice to rolls to evade or deal with the local law.

Social Butterfly: The character understands how groups come together and support each other and can use that knowledge to great effect. The character may spend 1 Momentum to gain the effects of a Bond with another character. This temporary Bond only lasts for one action.

Empathy

Fearful Glare: Understanding a person's behavior helps rile them up just as easily as it calms them down. She gets under people's skin and knows what they fear most, to the point that just a well-timed look can send them running. When attempting to intimidate another character, spend 1 Momentum to reduce the target number of the roll by 1.

Head Shrink: The character knows how to help a person come down after immense mental trauma. Spend 1 Momentum to help someone resolve a Trauma Condition. By spending 2 Momentum instead, the character can help someone resolve a Persistent Trauma Condition. The character can never use Head Shrink on herself.

Rumor Monger: A character with this trick knows exactly how to push someone's buttons, and what it takes to drive a wedge between friends. Spend 1 Momentum to increase a character's negative Attitude (or reduce their positive Attitude) by 1 towards another character for the remainder of the scene. See p. XX for more information on Attitude.

Firearms

Destroy Item: The character is trained to shoot at a target's peripherals rather than the main body. After a character successfully hits, spend 1 Momentum to inflict 2 Complication of *I Shot Your Gear* on the target instead of dealing damage. If the character fails to buy off the Complication on any roll involving that piece of gear, it is destroyed after the action.

Pistol Whip: When in tight quarters, the character knows how to strike with her firearm. The character can use a ranged weapon as a Close Combat weapon, even if she has no training in Close Combat. The character uses her dots in Firearms instead of Close Combat to make the attack.

Scatter Shot: The character can fan the hammer of her weapon with blinding speed or notch several arrows at once. Either way, when the character is using a complex action to attack multiple foes at once, she gains 1 Enhancement for each additional target she is attacking beyond the first.

Integrity

Alert: The character has honed his mind to notice even the tiniest imperfection or thing out of place. It's almost impossible to sneak by him or fool his senses. The character automatically gains 1 Enhancement to actions to spot something, or someone, who is hidden. This Skill Trick does not cost Momentum to use.

Lie: Bandits, judges, the local law — it doesn't seem to matter who questions this character, they never crack. Spend a Momentum to increase the target number of any roll to interrogate this character by 1 for the rest of the scene.

Refuse: People call her cold, but she has simply taught herself that empathy is a liability when dealing with strangers. Spend a Momentum to ignore the drawbacks of one of the character's Bonds for the scene.

Leadership

Challenge: Your character knows how to demand attention, or at least present himself as the most powerful target. Others rise to the occasion, making it hard to focus on anyone else. Spend 1 Momentum and declare a specific target. That target has +1 difficulty to attack anyone other than the character for the rest of the scene.

Command: Sometimes, you must understand when to cajole, and when to yell orders. This character understands how to motivate people and uses this to her advantage in a variety of situations. Before making a Persuasion roll to convince a friendly or neutral target, the player may spend 1 Momentum to add the character's Leadership Skill in additional dice to her roll.

Interfere: She may be a demanding boss, but she is incredibly reliable when it comes to the safety of those she considers under her charge. Whenever your character is stepping in the way of an attack against one of her allies, spend 1 Momentum to add her Leadership Skill in additional dice to her Defensive actions.

Lore

Bomb Awareness: The character spends so much time in lost bunkers and ancient ruins that he knows how to spot danger well before he makes a misstep. Spend 1 Momentum to add the character's Lore Skill as bonus dice to actions involving finding or disabling ancient traps.

Grave Mind Expert: The character has spent her time analyzing zed, infection, and anything related at all to the Grave Mind. In matters of identifying or investigating zed, spend 1 Momentum to have your character automatically succeed at one Research action, applying appropriate Enhancement as though she gained 1 success on the action.

Religious Scholar: Your character has studied all the Creeds and their origins and knows their tenets better than some of their own priests. Spend 1 Momentum to add your character's Lore Skill as bonus dice to a roll in the Social Arena when discussing a Creed or faith.

Medicine

First Aid: The character is trained in field medicine and can treat basic wounds in the middle of a fight. By spending 1 Momentum, the character can reduce the time it takes to perform a First Aid action to a single round. This action takes up the character's entire action; she cannot take a complex action while performing First Aid.

Medical Genius: The character has extensive medical knowledge and a knack for diagnosis. Once per scene, the character can take a simple action to examine a character and diagnose any diseases or illness she may be suffering from. When treating the disease, reduce the difficulty by 1.

Sever: Knowing how to fix wounds inherently teaches the character how to create them. Spend 1 Momentum so the character may add her dots in Medicine Skill as bonus dice to her next attack action.

Persuasion

Beg for Life: She's made it this far, if only by begging and pleading. It's a skill well worth learning in the wastes. Whenever your character suffers any Injury Conditions, spend 1 Momentum to activate this Skill Trick. Anyone attempting to injure her for the rest of the scene has their target number for such actions increased by 1. This Skill Trick doesn't work on zed, who have no compassion for her pleas.

Charisma: When the character turns on the charm, it's like she's the only thing in the room. Activate this Skill Trick to ignore the effect of Atmosphere on one Influence roll (see p. XX for more on Atmosphere).

Trade Ties: Your character knows where to go and who to talk to. She never has to pay full price, and always gets more than her money's worth. Whenever your character is negotiating a price for goods or services, spend 1 Momentum to reduce her target number by 1.

Pilot

Born to Ride: Handling a vehicle is second nature to the character. When in a violent confrontation, rolls to maneuver a vehicle do not count against the character's maximum number of actions for a complex action.

Road Rage: The character has an amazing knack for running vehicles off the road. When ramming another vehicle, spend 1 Momentum to automatically hit the other vehicle in such a way that it is disabled, but no one in either vehicle is hurt. For 1 additional Momentum (for a total of 2), the driver and passengers of the other vehicle are either battered (suffering a Stress Condition) or knocked unconscious, Storyguide's choice. In either case, they do not suffer any lasting injury.

Wayfinder: The character is used to long stretches with no road and plenty of terrain difficulties. Spend 1 Momentum to ignore any Complications due to environmental hazards to Pilot rolls for the scene.

Science

Analyze Compound: The character is familiar with most substances and can identify almost anything with just a feel or a small taste. When attempting to scavenge or find resources, spend 1 Momentum to immediately identify if whatever has been found is safe for use. This can be anything from clean drinking water to usable fuel.

Chop: Your character knows how to salvage the best materials from just about anything. Spend 1 Momentum to destroy a basic piece of gear and turn it into Scrap with value equal to twice its Tier.

Techno-Savant: The character carefully develops her theories before putting them into practical use in an invention. When crafting new gear, spend 1 Momentum to add the character's Science Skill to a single roll during the process. If the successes gained on that roll would be enough to complete more than one Milestone, the character can skip the time between Milestones to complete them both at the same time.

Subterfuge

Disguise: The character is used to donning different personalities and faces, so much so that she barely knows who she is anymore. Spend 1 Momentum whenever your character disguises herself as someone innocuous or unknown to automatically bypass any Complications or difficulty shifts to rolls in the Social Arena for the scene. For an additional Momentum, the character can apply this Skill Trick to disguises to pretend to be someone specific.

Escape: Your character always knows that she may have to run and is aware of the quickest route out. Before making an Athletics roll to run away or avoid someone chasing you, activate this Skill Trick to add bonus dice equal to your Subterfuge Skill to the roll.

Escape Bonds: Spend 1 Momentum to slip out of any kind of binding: handcuffs, zip-ties, manacles, even duct tape. The character can spend 1 additional Momentum to place the binding on another person at the same time as he escapes.



Survival

Animal Handler: This character has always gotten along better with animals than with people. When making a roll to calm, befriend, or train an animal, spend 1 Momentum to decrease the target number of that action by 1.

Vanish: The character has survived this long by avoiding anyone who might want to hurt him. Spend 1 Momentum and increase the difficulty of any rolls to track him by +2.

Wasteland Bounty: This character has extensive experience allowing him to survive in the harshest of climates. Activate this Skill Trick when in a wilderness location to automatically find enough food and water for one person to survive one day.



Technology

Building Tomorrow: Your character can make items that last far longer than the normal person. Spend 1 Momentum to make an item permanent without a roll, Milestone, or Tier change, but it gains an additional Flaw as a drawback for its use.

Master Crafter: The character is the fastest and most capable crafter in the wastes, able to repair or create at record speeds and with fewer materials. Spend 1 Momentum to either ignore dots of Scrap required to craft or repair an item by the character's Technology Skill or to reduce the number of Milestones required to craft an item by 1.

Patch Job: After successfully crafting or repairing any piece of gear, the player may spend a Momentum give the item a +1 Enhancement rating per Flaw accumulated during the crafting process.

It's My Thing: Edges

Skills and Attributes represent a character's overall aptitudes and education level, but Edges tell us what the character is best at. A character's experiences and training may cover a broad scope, but she often has a few specialized abilities in certain areas. These Edges give her an advantage over others and make her better than the rest. Edges generally come from the specialized training or circumstances that comes with belonging to a Path, but players can purchase Edges through play.

Each Edge has a number of dots associated with it. These dots represent the number of points the player must spend to purchase this Edge. Some Edges have a range of costs, such as • to •••••. For example, someone with Animal Handler • may have a slight advantage than others when it comes to dealing with animals, but someone with Animal Handler ••••• can tame the wildest of mutated beasts found in the wastes. Some Edges have prerequisites, which can include having a sufficiently high Attribute or Skill or belonging to a specific Path, but many Edges can be purchased for any character, regardless of their Attributes, Skills, or Paths.

Strain Edges

These Edges represent the fundamental strengths of the various Lineages and Strains. Characters gain Strain Edges at character creation only.

AQUATIC (••)

Prerequisite: Saltwise Strain

Saltwise can breathe water as well as air. They cannot drown in water, although they can drown in more viscous substances, like oil. They are not immune to any dangers from drinking the water they're breathing, such as poison or radiation. Saltwise ignore all Complications and difficulty modifiers from swimming or seeing underwater.

In addition, they have a knack for finding water in the strangest of places. They gain +2 Enhancement on all rolls involving water location.

BUILT TO LAST (••)

Prerequisite: Evolved Lineage

Evolved Strains have lived through the worst and adapted to survive each time. Your character is inherently stronger than others, better suited to survive the wastes, and better prepared physically. It isn't necessarily anything she did herself, so much as the long fight her people have gone through over the years. Characters with this Edge gain an extra Bruised Injury Condition.

CANNIBALISM (••)

Prerequisite: Gorgers Lineage

Gorgers have specialized diets, often due to lack of anything better at hand, but sometimes due to the circumstances of the Strain. Learning to make do with whatever, or whomever, was available, your body is adjusted to eating human flesh, or maybe just blood. During a survival scene that occurs during the same day as a fight with either raiders or bandits, your character is automatically considered fed.

CATCH A RIDE (••)

Prerequisite: Diesel Jock Strain

Your character has a sixth sense, which is only attuned to the sweet rumble of an engine in motion. No matter where she is, she can find a clan ready and willing to trade for a ride. Your character gains 2 Enhancement when attempting to barter or haggle for a ride, either to purchase a new ride or to gain access on a caravan.

In addition, characters with this Edge who choose a vehicle as part of their gear at character creation are not subject to Tier restrictions.

CROWD PLEASER (••)

Prerequisite: Townies Lineage

Townies grow up surrounded by people day in and day out. Your character has had to learn how to navigate social waters, especially in crowded spaces, as just another survival technique. Whenever your character is in a crowded area, such as a bar, market, or just a crowded room, she gains 2 Enhancement to rolls to shift the Atmosphere of the room.

DANGER SENSE (•••)

Prerequisite: Landsmen Lineage

The Landsmen have made their way through the wastes by sheer grit and determination. They live their lives always ready for danger, and always prepared for a fight. It's almost impossible to get the drop on your character, as she has learned that the best way to survive is to always be the one to strike first. Your character always counts as succeeding on Ambush rolls, and she is always aware of immediate threats in her vicinity, even if she doesn't know exactly what they are.

HALF-LIFE (••)

Prerequisite: Retrograde Strain

Retrogrades earned their mutations not through genetic variance, but straight-up exposure to radiation. Families have passed down an ability to not only live in highly irradiated areas, but somehow thrive there. Your character downgrades all damage that would be dealt from a radiation source by 1.

MASTER OF DISGUISES (••)

Prerequisite: Mutants Lineage

Mutants are inherently different from the other Strains, the marks of their family legacy writ large on their bodies. It isn't easy being mocked and feared for the way you look, and many Mutants seek to hide their flaws, and even their Strain, from others. They have done it so long, and do it so well, that they are often far better at being themselves when pretending to be someone else. Your character gains 1 Enhancement to rolls in the Social Arena when she is disguised enough to hide her Strain from others.

MEDITATION (••)

Prerequisite: Devoted Lineage

All the Devoted believe in something. This belief carries them through the hard times and shows them how to survive. Your character grew up knowing the only thing she could really rely on was her own faith: be that in herself, others, or a specific creed. Once per day, your character can spend 30 minutes meditating on her belief. When she does, she gains 2 Enhancement to actions that require Resolve for the rest of the day.

STRONGER TOGETHER (••)

Prerequisite: Red Star Strain

A Red Star's sense of community doesn't just keep her safe and secure but makes her a better team worker than others. Gain 2 Enhancement whenever the character is taking a Teamwork action with anyone to whom she has a Bond. If that person happens to be another Red Star, gain 3 Enhancement instead.

TOO PISSED TO CARE (••)

Prerequisite: Yorker Strain

Yorkers are notoriously angry, and that anger helps your character push through any pain she would feel. Whenever your character takes an Injury Condition, she suffers one lower penalty than she normally would. For instance, if she has the Injured Condition marked, she only suffers a −1 penalty as though she only had Bruised Conditions marked. When only her Bruised Condition is marked, she takes no penalties.

WASTELAND CONNECTIONS (••)

Prerequisite: Nomads Lineage

Nomads survive on the roads. They shun large settlements and instead create large networks of people who travel from place to place. Every Nomad grows up knowing the best routes to take and how to avoid dangers. Your character is no different, and she's a boon to any caravan seeking to travel for profit. Your character gains 2 Enhancement on all actions involving caravans, from navigating a trip to haggling for a spot.

WEALTH (••)

Prerequisite: Elitariat Lineage

Your character's family comes from a long line of ridiculously well-off people who have done nothing but hoard wealth and knowledge for generations. As such, she is lucky enough to share in that wealth. Whether from an inheritance, a trust fund, or just a family with a strong technology base, your character always has easy access to resources. Your character can readily acquire Tier 1 supplies and items without spending or trading if she's in a settlement.

Open Edges

The following Edges are open to all characters and may be purchased at any time, as long as the character meets the prerequisites. Some open Edges may be gained at character creation. Most of these Edges are innate quirks that give your character advantage in particular situations. However, some are the result of unusual experiences.

Mental Edges

CHOSEN WEAPON (•)

The character has a single type of weapon she favors over all others. This can be anything from her own fists to bows and arrows. Choose a weapon type when picking this Edge. Whenever using her favored weapon type, gain 1 Enhancement. A character may only have a single chosen weapon type. If this Edge is picked again, choose a new weapon type.

Drawback: The character suffers 1 Complication of *Unfamiliar Weapon* when attempting to use any weapon other than her chosen weapon type — inability to buy off the Complication means the character will drop or otherwise mishandle the weapon, and she cannot attack with it next turn.

DIRECTION SENSE (•)

Your character has an innate sense of direction and is always aware of her location. Your character always knows which direction she is facing, and never suffers penalties to navigate or find her way. Your character also gains 1 Enhancement to any action related to navigating or plotting a course.

FACTOID (••)

Prerequisite: Cunning ••

Sometimes knowing everything about something isn't as necessary as knowing just the right thing at the right time. Your character isn't very educated, but she remembers small facts and bits of stray information well. Your character can substitute any other Skill in place of Lore on a roll.

Drawback: Not knowing the full story can lead to missing details or dubious facts. Anyone acting on the information you character gives gains +1 difficulty due to some small, incorrect bit of information that leads them to failure.

GAMBLER (••)

Your character knows how to count cards, calculate the odds, and read a table. Your character's first words were "hit me" or "pass." Once per act, your character may gain UPP equal to her Academics Skill rating from a gambling act. Additionally, your character gains 1 Enhancement to gambling actions.

LIGHT SLEEPER (••)

Sleeping too hard can pose all sorts of dangers in the wastes, even when living in an established settlement. Your character sleeps light and does not suffer from Complications that arise from being awoken in the middle of the night.

LIGHTNING CALCULATOR (••)

Your character can almost instantly perform complex mathematics in his head without the need for external help. This Edge allows your character to rapidly perform tasks that would normally require access to some kind of technology, including calculating odds, plotting the trajectory of an arrow, or calculating the distance and fuel requirements of a specific vehicle. It provides 2 Enhancement to any roll that can be directly assisted by mathematical calculation, such as rolls involving gambling, navigation, carefully aiming bullets, or attempting to understand complex, equation-filled scientific theories.

MIND RESISTANCE (• TO •••)

Your character has an extremely strong will and can easily resist efforts to forcibly change his mind. As long as your character is alive and conscious, his will is almost always his own. For every dot of this Edge, your character gains an Enhancement to all actions to resist the effects of fear, torture, interrogation, psionic effects, or mind-altering drugs.



PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY (• TO •••)

Your character has an astonishing level of recall.

- **Trained Memory:** Your character has trained her memory so that she can remember anything she concentrates on. Your character can memorize a conversation or something she read, but when memorizing she can't do anything else. Your character could memorize a conversation she overheard, but not one she took part in and can only concentrate on one subject at a time. Your character receives 2 Enhancement against attempts to alter anything you deliberately had her commit to memory.

- •• **Perfect Memory:** Your character remembers everything he has experienced. Your character does not need to roll to recall details from previous scenes, even minor ones — and receives 2 Enhancement against attempts to change his memory in any fashion.

- ••• **Eidetic Memory:** Your character has a perfect memory and can perform impressive feats like examining details of a crime scene months after she merely glanced at it or looking at a room for less than a minute and being able to put everything back exactly the way it was after someone ransacked it. Your character receives 3 Enhancement against attempts to alter her memory and for any activity where perfect recall can help her succeed.

PSIONIC NULL (•••)

Mental tricks just seem to pass right over the character. Attempts to use Psi Edges on the character suffer +3 difficulty or risk complete failure. Additionally, the character gains 2 Enhancement to resist psionic-based effects.

Drawback: Your character can never gain the Psionicist Edge. This Null state affects all types of psionic abilities, even beneficial ones.

PSIONICIST (• TO •••••)

Your character has the innate ability to utilize psionics. With one dot, she gains access to Psi Edges. Each additional dot of this Edge increases the value of the highest rated Psi Edge the character may purchase.

Drawback: As long as your character has a single dot in the Psionicist Edge, they cannot join a Creed Society Path.

SCAVENGER (•)

Your character is an expert at locating useful resources, even from the most unlikely of places. Your character gains 1 Enhancement to actions to find food, water, or Scrap. If the terrain is such that such an action would not be allowed (such as finding food in a radiation field or finding Scrap in the desert) the character gains the ability to roll anyway.

SKILLED HEALER (••)

Prerequisite: Medicine •

Your character has basic medical training and can administer first aid to great effect. When the character attempts a First Aid action, gain 2 Enhancement. To gain the Enhancement, the character must be in a calm and quiet place. If she's in the middle of a violent confrontation or distracted by a loud argument, she instead can ignore Complications and difficulty shifts that arise from such circumstances while performing First Aid.

TECH WIZ (••)

Prerequisite: Technology • •

If it's got moving parts, your character knows all about it. On Crafting or Repair rolls, your character may add half his rating (rounded down) in a second Skill as Enhancement as long as this Skill is the one used to operate this device. For example, a character with two dots in Firearms could add 1 Enhancement to a Technology + Intellect roll when fixing a bow.

TIME SENSE (•)

Your character has a strong sense of time and can determine the passing of time without any kind of assistance. Your character automatically succeeds on attempts to track time, or determine what time it is, even if she is in a place where she cannot see natural indicators of the passage of time.

UNSHAKABLE DEVOTION (•)

Your character's faith is strong and immutable. No matter what she puts her faith in, she cannot be swayed from the path once she's set on it. Anyone attempting to target the character with an Influence action to change her mind or make her turn against her faith suffers +2 difficulty, or the aggressor changes his own Attitude positively toward the object of her faith.

WORKING SMARTER (••)

Prerequisite: Academics •

Your character knows the instructions are there for a reason. She studies blueprints before beginning her work, and double checks to get it right the first time. Gain 2 Enhancement to all crafting actions.

Physical Edges

ACUTE SENSE (•)

Note: There are four versions of this Edge, Acute Hearing, Acute Sight, Acute Smell and Taste (both senses are improved by the same Edge), and Acute Touch.

One of your character's senses is particularly keen. Each dot of this Edge provides 1 Enhancement to all actions that can be aided by being particularly good with one sense. For example, Acute Touch would help with picking a lock or performing other delicate, fine-manipulation tasks, Acute Sight would add to searching an area or firing guns at distant targets, and Acute Smell and Taste would allow your character to better notice drugs or poison in your character's drink.

This Edge may be purchased multiple times, once for each different sense.

ADRENALINE SPIKE (••)

Some people perform best under extreme duress. Your character acts on her fight response rather than flight. She can ignore an Injury and a Stress Condition one time per day as she draws on her reserves of adrenaline.

AMBIDEXTROUS (•)

Your character can use each hand equally well. Most people suffer a +1 difficulty to rolls where they use their off hand instead of their dominant hand, but your character doesn't.

BALANCED STEP (•)

The wastes are a treacherous place full of pitfalls, traps, and hard-to-navigate terrain. Your character is undaunted by such issues and can ignore up to 2 Complication or up to +2 difficulty increase from unstable footing.

BREATH CONTROL (•)

Your character can hold your breath for an exceptionally long time. Your character can hold his breath for twice as long as normal. Further, if he has a chance to hold his breath, he gets +3 Enhancement against appropriate damage tagged Environmental (such as toxic gases).

ENDURANCE (•)

Survival in the wastelands often means being able to go on despite harsh conditions. Your character keeps going no matter how tired, hungry, or thirsty she might be. Your character can ignore up to 2 Complication or Conditions that arise from exhaustion, starvation, thirst, or illness. She can't resist indirect damage sources, but substances such as poisons, alcohol or the like still don't slow her down, and she can apply this Edge to those effects as well.

FAST DRAW (•)

Prerequisite: Firearms or Close Combat •

Your character has trained with a particular type of hand weapon or firearm so that she can draw from its holster almost instantly without thinking about doing so. Drawing or holstering that weapon is considered a reflexive action.

FAST RECOVERY (••)

Prerequisite: Stamina • • •

Your character has been in so many fights and taken so many hits that her body has adapted to recover faster. After the fight is over, the character automatically resolves one Bruised Injury Condition before any first aid is applied.

HAIR TRIGGER REFLEXES (•)

Your character's reaction time is unusually fast. He gains 1 Enhancement when rolling Initiative.

HARDY (• TO •••)

Your character's body is unusually tough. She can resist and overcome the effects of diseases, intoxicants, poisons, and even radiation better than most people, gaining an Enhancement equal to her dots in this Edge to resist any of these threats or sources of indirect damage. In addition, one or more dots in this Edge allows your character to heal wounds and resolve all Injury Conditions twice as fast as normal.

RECKLESS ABANDON (••)

In the heat of battle, her base instincts take over. Your character throws herself all in, disregarding her own safety in favor of expedient action. Your character may apply successes from her defensive action as Enhancement to her next action that same round.

SWIFT (•)

Your character is an expert runner who can outdistance almost everyone else. If your character is involved in any sort of foot race or is attempting to run to a location before an event occurs, she gains +1 Scale for Speed.

TOUGH (••)

Your character can take whatever they dish out, and often does. Your character always has a soft Armor Rating of at least 1, even when not wearing any armor, and may add this Armor Rating to the value of any armor he wears.

Social Edges

ANIMAL HANDLER (• TO •••••)

Your character gains Enhancement equal to her rating in this Edge to all Survival rolls involving interacting with domestic animals. She can use social rolls to attempt to interact with wild animals but must increase the difficulty of such rolls by +3. Taming a wild animal is an extended action and if successful, allows your character to treat the wild animal as a domestic animal. This does not work on undead of any kind.

BIG HEARTED (•)

Your character always has time for his friends. He can maintain one additional Bond, provided it is positive and personal in nature — a long-held friendship, beloved sibling, passionate lover, etc.

CONVINCING ORATOR (••)

Prerequisite: Persuasion • •

Your character knows how to get people to listen to her and sway the minds and hearts of the masses. Whenever the character is addressing a crowd or a group of people larger than 3, gain 2 Enhancement to Influence actions. (See p. XX for Influence.)

CHARMED LIFE (•••)

Your character is either extremely lucky or skilled at redirecting misfortune onto others. Once per act, the character may redirect an effect that targeted her onto someone else within clash range. This could be anything from an attack to an intimidation effect.

ENTERTAINER (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Appropriate Path

Nothing relaxes the mind and soothes the soul like sitting back and listening to a story or a song. Your character is a skilled entertainer and might even have formal training. People recognize her abilities and respond accordingly, even when she isn't giving a performance. Gain Enhancement equal to the dots in this Edge on attempts to change the Atmosphere of an area using entertainment. Additionally, with the three-dot version of this Edge, your character cannot be denied entrance into an establishment, even if a private meeting is happening there.

Drawback: People may ask your character to perform at a moment's notice. If she doesn't deliver, it draws the ire of everyone expecting a show. If your character refuses to perform,

suffer 1 Complication of *Prima Donna* when dealing with anyone who might have been interested in seeing you for the rest of the day — failure to buy off the Complication means the character will make snide or disrespectful comments during the conversation. Increased dots in this Edge increases the number of disappointed patrons the character might be dealing with.

FAITHFUL (• TO •••••)

Prerequisite: Any Creed Path

Your character is a priest of her faith and has the ability to channel that faith into powerful abilities. With one dot, she gains access to Faith Edges. Each additional dot of this Edge increases the value of the highest rated Faith Edge the character may purchase.

FAME (• TO •••)

Your character is well-known among a particular group of people. He could be famous for a personal accomplishment, a stroke of blind luck, or perhaps for being the friend or lover of someone with more Fame. One dot of Fame means the character is well-known within a small subculture or a small settlement not connected to others. Two dots of Fame mean that he is either instantly recognizable to a large subculture, like members of a Creed, or residents of a large portion of the wastes, like the Nor'east Seaboard. Three dots of Fame give your character Fame across the wastes, where people know at least your name from the Lonestar to the Frozen North. When choosing the Edge, define what your character is known for. Each dot provides 1 Enhancement to any social actions among those who are impressed by his celebrity.

Drawback: Any attempts to find or identify your character gain 1 Enhancement per dot of the Edge. Also, he may be followed by fans or stalkers wanting to be a part of his life and story. You character may never have any dots of the Innocuous Edge.

INNOCUOUS (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Cannot belong to a Mutant Strain Path

Your character is easily overlooked and even easier to forget. This makes it easy for her to hide or eavesdrop on conversations without notice. Each dot of this Edge adds 1 Enhancement to actions to hide. In addition, when the character is in a fight and there are multiple opponents, she cannot be targeted by an attack unless she has attacked first. This doesn't protect her from the undead, who notice her living flesh the same as anyone else.

Drawback: People tend to ignore your character even when she wants to be heard. Suffer +1 difficulty to all rolls in the Social Arena or else be ignored, unless it is someone to whom your character is Bonded. Your character may never have any dots of the Fame Edge.

MENTOR (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Appropriate Path

Your character has someone she looks up to that she can tap for help in hard situations. This Mentor provides protection, training, and the benefits of experience. The Mentor can be a well-known figure like a parent or old friend, or a mysterious individual your character knows little about beyond the aid and advice she provides. The player determines the Mentor's relationship with his character, but the Storyguide handles all aspects of the Mentor's capabilities, as well as determining her true motives. While your Storyguide may allow exceptions, in most cases, Mentors must belong to one of your character's Paths. Mentors may belong to organizations that your character is no longer a part of.

Mentors can always teach the character Edges, but what type and how often is determined by the character's dots in this Edge. Additionally, the Mentor acts as an additional Path Contact, but instead of rolling for access, the Mentor automatically provides for the character. Again, what he can provide is determined by the dots in this Edge.

- • Your character's Mentor is someone moderately important and powerful who takes a regular interest in her. Your Mentor can teach you Edges that you might need a Path teacher for. Additionally, the Mentor can handle minor access, like short-term access to a moderately restricted area.
- •• Your character's Mentor is powerful and influential and is frequently willing to aid her. Your character's Mentor can handle relatively moderate Path access, like access to normally unavailable equipment, as long as the equipment is borrowed for a vaguely legitimate reason and returned immediately afterwards.
- ••• Your character's Mentor is powerful and well connected. She takes a great interest in your character but expects frequent services and impressive results. Also, she almost certainly has powerful enemies who might also take an interest in your character. Your character's Mentor can handle significant Path access, like short-term access to highly restricted areas or borrowing normally unavailable equipment for an unspecified short-term purpose as long as the equipment is returned within a few days. Your character's Mentor can teach her Edges restricted to a Path she doesn't belong to (remember that characters cannot have both the Psionicist and Faithful Edges).

Drawbacks: These favors are not a one-way street. Your character's Mentor occasionally asks him to perform some service. The frequency of the service depends upon the number of dots you choose. The Mentor may provide her normal aid for this service, but always expects your character to take the lead.

SAFE HOUSE (• TO •••)

Your character has a place in the wastelands she can call her own. She can store gear there as well as food and water and

can get a good night's rest without fear of zombies attacking. While the character may have other enemies that could attack her there, she has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the relative size, security, and gear available for the location.

Each dot in Safe House acts as a Complication of *Alert* to anyone attempting to infiltrate or break into the space — failure to buy off the Complication means the person is seen or heard breaking in.

- A small location with enough space to sleep two, food for a day, and multiple ammo and weapons caches.
- •• A medium location with enough space to sleep four, food for all for at least a week, and all the amenities above plus a radio.
- ••• A medium location with enough space to sleep six, food for all for a month, and all the amenities listed above plus a crafting space that grants Enhancement equal to dots in this Edge to crafting and repair actions

SKILLED LIAR (••)

Your character can lie with ease and conviction. Your character gains 2 Enhancement to all attempts to deceive others.

STRIKING (••)

Your character's appearance is remarkable — either in a positive or negative way. Others find him particularly memorable, and he attracts attention just standing around. Gain 2 Enhancement to any social action that benefits from your character's impressive mien.

Style Edges

HEAVY HANDED (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Might •• and Close Combat ••

Your character knows how to fight in a brutal and direct manner using a single type of hand-to-hand weapon, like chain weapons, clubs, or swords. You can purchase this Edge multiple times, but each purchase only applies to a single type of weapon.

- **Power Blow:** Your character can increase the force of her blows. All attacks with an appropriate weapon gain the Weighted tag. If the weapon already possesses the Weighted tag, then it gains the effect of the tag twice, but this tag cannot reduce the number of successes necessary for a Knockdown Stunt below one.
- •• **Deadly Strike:** Your character can trade accuracy for force. She can add the Brutal tag to her weapon in a single attack, but the attack is at +1 difficulty to do so. If the weapon already possesses the Brutal tag, your character can instead add the Piercing tag.
- ••• **Reflexive Block:** Your character excels at knowing how to parry attacks with minimal effort. As long as your character is aware of a Close Combat attack, she can add 2 Enhancement to defensive actions when using this weapon type.

NATURAL ATHLETE (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: A number of dots in Athletics at least equal to the value of this Edge.

Your character has extensive training moving through rough terrain.

- **Avoid:** Your character can race past (or through) obstacles, seldom needing to slow. Your character reduces Complications or difficulty modifiers to moving at top speed with Athletics (fleeing pursuit, chasing another character, racing to a goal, and so on) by 1. If he faces multiple Complications, each of them receives this discount separately.
- •• **Flow:** Your character is not merely an expert runner but is skilled with all forms of movement. He can add his dots in this Edge as Enhancement to all Athletics rolls. Your character can also reduce the number of successes he needs to spend to ignore Complications or difficulty modifiers to all Athletics rolls by the number of dots he has in this Edge and can use some of those dots to reduce difficulty and some to ignore Complications.
- ••• **Ruin Runner:** Your character can move through difficult terrain as part of his normal movement. He ignores all Complications or difficulty modifiers due to difficult terrain as part of his movement, but he still suffers indirect damage from hazardous environments.

SNIPER (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••, Firearms ••, and appropriate Role or Society Path

Your character has both the training and the natural talent for making precise shots. Your character must spend at least one full turn aiming his weapon to use any of these maneuvers.

- **Dead Calm:** Your character's steely calm improves his aim. Double the weapon's Enhancement as a result of your character taking the time to carefully aim an attack.
- •• **Sniped Shot:** Your character subtracts one from all difficulty increases for factors likes range, wind, fog, shooting into a crowd, or poor light. Also, reduce any Complication to making a shot due to environmental factors by 1. If he faces multiple difficulty increases or Complications, each of them receives this discount separately.
- ••• **Called Shot:** Your character knows how to aim a shot to accomplish almost any goal. When firing at a target who is unaware that she is under attack, add 2 points worth of the following weapon tags to the attack: Brutal, Deadly, Piercing, Quality 2, Stun, and Weighted. Also, except for the Stun tag, all these tags can be applied to weapons that already possess them. This applies the benefit of the tag twice. However, your character can only add any single tag once to a particular shot.

TAVERN BRAWLER (• TO •••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •• and Close Combat ••

Your character prefers fighting with her fists and feet and is particularly deadly in landing targeted blows.

- **Iron Fists:** Your character knows where to hit them where it hurts. When making an unarmed strike, gain Enhancement equal to your character's rating in this Edge.
- •• **Defensive Fighting:** Your character excels at fighting defensively. In any turn that she attacks, your character can increase the difficulty of her attack roll by +1 in exchange for adding +1 to her Dodge for the next turn.
- ••• **Defensive Movement:** Your character knows how to move to minimize the damage of any Close Combat attack. As long as she is aware of a hand-to-hand attack, your character gains 2 points of soft Armor by moving in ways that minimize the impact. If the attack is designed to grapple, then this maneuver instead increases the difficulty of the attack by +2.

Learnin': Advancement

Characters advance through the accrual of Experience. The pace at which characters earn Experience relies on both the players and Storyguide. The Storyguide has more control over how quickly characters can reach a story Milestone or complete a group story, but the players have more control over achieving Aspirations and spending Momentum (more on Momentum on p. XX).

The below table describes how characters may earn Experience and how much they receive for each event. The table also indicates whether the experience is "solo" and going to just one player character or "group" and going to all the player characters. We recommend awarding an average of 5 Experience each act, but Storyguides can adjust to higher or lower with story completions and milestones. We suggest not giving more than 10 Experience per act.

Experience

EVENT	XP COST	RECIPIENT
A player achieves their short-term Aspiration for their character	1	Solo
All players achieve one of their short-term Aspirations in the same act	1	Group
A player achieves their long-term Aspiration for their character (all players must achieve their long-term Aspirations before a player can earn this experience again)	2	Solo
The players spend half the Momentum pool in a single scene (the amount spent must be greater than 1)	1	Group
The characters reach a story Milestone	1	Group
The characters complete a group story	3	Group

Players spend experience to purchase dots in Skills and Attributes or to purchase Edges, Skill Tricks, Specialties, Path dots and up to two additional Role Paths. Players also use Experience to change their Favored Approach.

The below table lists the costs for each change. The table does not include prerequisites, such as having a certain number of dots in a Skill before purchasing a Skill Trick. Players may spend their Experience at the end of an arc (p. XX).

OBJECT	CHANGE	COST
Attribute	Add one dot to a single Attribute	10 Experience
Edge	Add one dot in a new or existing Edge	3 Experience
Favored Approach	Change a character's Favored Approach	15 Experience
Skill	Add one dot in a new or existing Skill	5 Experience
Skill Trick	Add a Skill Trick to a Skill	5 Experience
Specialty	Add a Specialty to a Skill	3 Experience
Path	Add one dot in a new or existing Path (maximum 5 Paths)	15 Experience

Tweaks

In addition to earning and spending Experience, players can tweak their characters each act. Tweaks are small, cost-free changes that help a player customize her character to fit the story and her style of play. Players cannot, at character creation, fully anticipate how their characters will work together or the types of the problems they will need to solve. Tweaks help counter this lack of prescience.

Players may tweak their character sheets in the following ways at the start of a new act.

Shift one dot from one Attribute to another Attribute or from one Skill to another Skill. The player must announce that he is going to do a dot shift and mark on his character sheet the Skill or Attribute he plans to change. During that act, the player must roleplay using the Skill or Attribute he wishes to increase. This can be as simple as creating a dice pool using the Skill or Attribute.

Write a new short-term Aspiration. The player can set a new short-term Aspiration even if his character did not achieve his short-term aspiration in the previous act.

BOOK TWO

BLOOD HARVEST

Red vaulted the cement barricade and landed hard in cover, any remaining breath driven out in a coughing gust by the impact, the howling of the raiders so loud on her tail she was amazed she hadn't caught a spear in the back already. As if on cue, a long, wicked-looking metal spear flew overhead and thudded into the ground behind her. Poker and Rennie gaped at it and then down at her from where they crouched down on either side of her, their eyes wide and white in the near dark. "Light 'em up!" she wheezed, reaching for her own shooter.

It wasn't powerful, but her voice broke their trance and the two men rose to firing positions, guns braced on the barricade, and opened up on the raiders charging their position. A second later, Red heard more reports nearby as the rest of the ambush party came to life around them, nearly a dozen shooters blazing and turning the broken terrain of the old caravan lot into a killing floor.

Rennie gave an ugly, wet grunt and went over backward as Red found her feet, a spear right through his scrap vest. He convulsed and grabbed at the shaft, but even at a glance Red could see he was done. All she could spare was a tight, sorry smile and then it was her turn at the barricade, hand cannon up and hunting. A half-dozen raiders were down already, others limping and injured from wounds. A few had managed to close the distance with their attackers despite the trap, and Red could see a furious hand-to-hand battle over in the trees on the right.

And of course, one raider charging right for her. She was powerfully built, like most of her clan, her face painted in alternating lines of white chalk and some sort of blue powder, her armor looking as if it was scavenged from several kills. Though Red could see at least two bullet wounds in her already, the raider didn't appear to notice, and was closing fast. She had a jagged metal axe in one hand, a length of spiked chain in the other, and a smile full of bloody teeth.

"Jammed!" Poker called out next to her, his voice high and panicked.

"Fuck!" Red yelled, somewhere between surprise, a curse, and a war cry. She didn't have time to aim, just pointed her hand cannon at the charging raider and pulled the trigger. She managed to get her axe away in an overhand throw that caught Poker in the shoulder and dropped him, swearing. Red's first shot went wide but she got the second and third under control, taking a big chunk out of the raider's left shoulder and punching another bloody hole in her stomach. The chain fell from nerveless fingers as her left arm went useless, but she kept coming, shrieking as she took the fourth and fifth shots to the body as well, and then she was at the barricade.

"Die die die die—" Red half-chanted, half-shouted, readying a headshot, but the raider was faster than anyone with that many bullet holes should be, and shouldered into Red with a feral leap, taking them both down in a tangle of sweat and metal and pinning the hand cannon between them. They came up with the raider on top — Red shot her free hand out and caught the raider by the throat as she ducked in, filed teeth snapping. She tried to squeeze but the raider's neck felt like rebar, so she shifted tactics and snapped up with a vicious headbutt. Stars exploded behind her eyes, but she felt the raider's strength ebb, so she ignored the pain and did it again, twice, three times, until the raider's eyes were unfocused and blood drooled from her mouth.

"Done," Red hissed, working her hand cannon into one of the raider's bullet holes and angling it upward. She squeezed the trigger, closing her eyes against the gore as the cannon tore a fresh tunnel through the raider's chest and blew out the top of her head. Red grunted and shoved the dead weight off of her, backhanding blood and bits of bone from her eyes. Rennie had stopped twitching, but Poker had staggered to his feet, face pale and screwed up against the pain. "You gonna live?" Red asked.

"Think so," Poker managed through gritted teeth. "Hurts like fuck, though."

Red looked around. The ambush was over, minus a few stray whimpers and gurgles from those they'd need to coax back from the



edge (or send over it). "Bonny Mike! Front and center, Poker's hurt! Everyone else, sound off." As the little medic scrambled to tend to Poker, Red took in the call out. Other than Rennie, everyone else was still functional, which would make taking out the actual raider nest easier. She'd drawn most of them out with the bait run; those that hadn't followed would have heard the ambush, but she wasn't out of tricks yet. Not with a prize so great.

"Some harvest for you, Deacon." Red turned and saw Rocket holding out a bloody lump, still pumping weakly in his hands. Sure enough, it was shot through with faintly glowing blue psi crystals, tiny but unmistakably present.

"Looks like the rumors were right," Red said, sharing a grin with Rocket. She loaded her hand cannon, then raised it over head as she called out to her faithful. "Knights! The prize is close! Let's bring in the harvest!" They cheered back, roaring their prayers, and in that moment, she knew they could not lose.

* * *

Later, they said you could see the raider nest burning for miles, and eerie blue smoke that brought on bad coughing and worse dreams. By then, of course, Deacon Red and her Knights were long gone, along with the crystals they'd bled so hard to obtain... and the locals' problems were only just beginning.





chapter four

ROLLING THE BONES

"If you think a knife and a sidearm is all you need, then you'll find yourself looking for a headstone soon."

- One-Eyed Tom, Retrograde Sniper

A group of wastelanders stands on a small hill overlooking a field of smashed cars threaded by so many thin canyons of empty space. Across that field there could be narrow bridges to traverse or small mountains of automobiles to climb. There could be a whole hidden shop of a Diesel Jocks who want to negotiate to cross their turf or the wanderers might try to intimidate them. There could be a strange pattern of triangular rust showing on some of those cars; is it a riddle left by some loner or a warning to be investigated? In the world after the Fall, the question is not what are you facing, but what are you going to do about it? In **Dystopia Rising**, your characters can use their grit and luck to face the challenges of the irradiated world they call home.

Rolling dice is not for every occasion. Walking across a field or just saying something casual should not call for a dice roll. However, the world of **Dystopia Rising** constantly threatens its inhabitants, and many times the wastelanders will face threats either from the world around them or from other people. In those cases, the rules are here to give you a cinematic resolution to push the story forward.

Resolution of intrigue, procedural, and action-adventure is all represented by rolling a number of 10-sided dice. So, grab some and let's talk about how that works.

Let's Do It: Core Mechanic

Things never go exactly as planned and sometimes the dangerous world after the Fall has other plans for you. You might be able to easily walk across the room of a secure trading post but try crossing a building long-ago abandoned that could be filled with natural or placed hazards and life becomes a bit trickier. During your session your group will encounter moments where the outcome is uncertain.

When your group encounters an issue where they could succeed or fail we call it a *challenge*. To face that challenge, you'll have to decide which Skill and Attribute you are using and form a *dice pool*. Each die that hits the *target number* of 8 or better is a *success*. If the player rolls at least one success, she can add bonus successes from useful *Enhancements* (see p. XX). The player uses this collection of successes to buy off the *difficulty* (see p. XX) of the challenge as well as any *Complications* (p. XX) and *Stunts* (p. XX). If she can't generate enough successes to meet the challenge's difficulty, she fails and receives a *Consolation* (see page XX). If you score 0 successes rolling the dice and one or more of them show a 1, you botch and fail especially badly, but earn more *Momentum* (a kind of Consolation) than for a failure.

This may sound complicated but most of it comes down to rolling a handful of dice. Let's tease this apart so you know what it all means.

When to Roll Dice

You and your crew set up a camp on a bare street among the rusting wreckage. Now a crew with bigger guns than yours is calling you out, saying this is their turf and that you won't get out of here alive. Could you talk them down? Try to find a new way out through the crumbling building you haven't yet dared enter? Maybe you could hotwire one of the old jalopies and ram your way out?

When dice are getting rolled it means that whatever plan you had up to now has a snag. It might be a person getting in your way or it might just be the problem you're banging your head against. Now you're up against a wall. Every act will have

ROLLING DICE

Rolling dice in **Dystopia Rising** is simple, with a lot of optional elements to accentuate your experience. The following pages help explain the process, but here's a quick breakdown:

1. The player picks a Skill and Attribute relevant to the roll at hand.
2. The Storyguide sets the difficulty of the roll, as well as any Complications (optional).
3. The player rolls a number of d10s equal to the Skill + Attribute. Each die that rolls the target number or higher (usually 8) is a success. 10s count as a success and are rolled again. If the roll has at least one success, the player adds any Enhancements to the pool of successes generated (optional).
4. Using her successes, the player spends them to buy off the difficulty. Should she desire, she can use remaining successes to buy off Complications and purchase Stunts (optional).

DON'T ADJUST THE DICE

Storyguides rarely modify dice pools in **Dystopia Rising**. There are Skill Tricks that can do that for the player, but very little else in this game directly adds or subtracts dice. Adjust the difficulty if you want to reflect a harder task or consider a Complication or an Enhancement that might apply.

moments like this where your future is uncertain. The dice resolve this and tell your fortune.

Forming a Dice Pool

A dice pool uses 10-sided dice which represents a character's ability to tackle a particular challenge. Each dice pool is made of two parts: a *Skill* and an *Attribute*. The player decides how their character approaches the challenge and that determines which Skill from their character sheet best matches the challenge he's facing and then which Attribute matches what they are attempting. Then they decide which Attribute best matches his Approach to using that Skill. Finally, they grab a number of dice equal to the dots of the chosen Skill plus the dots of the chosen Attribute.

Any Skill can pair with any Attribute, giving a wide variety of possibilities. Attributes reflect a character's Mental, Physical, or Social strengths, and displays their Force, Finesse, or Resilience in that area, but (for example) a physical Attribute does not have to pair with what you might consider a physical Skill.

Dice Pools for Mixed Actions

A challenge can involve lots of different actions, like trying jump over pool of acid while catching a midair object, but these are always aimed at a single goal, like preventing the object from falling in the acid. When a character needs to do two totally separate things at once, this is called a *mixed action*.

When this happens, the player calculates the dice pool for each action and then rolls the smaller pool. She spends successes from this pool to meet both the difficulty and Complications of each challenge and can succeed at one while failing at another. If she has relevant Enhancements, she can only use her bonus successes to help accomplish whichever task they apply to.

Learnin' Every Day: Skills

Dystopia Rising characters must constantly deal with trials and obstacles and are forced to rely on their own capabilities to get them out of trouble. These capabilities are represented by *Skills*.

Skills are the core of dice pools in **Dystopia Rising**, representing what the character is doing to overcome that obstacle. Attributes represent how the character applies their knowledge of that Skill, both in terms of the Arena (is the action Physical, Mental or Social?), and in terms of the Approach the character is using. Skills are rated between 0-5 dots.

Even if a character doesn't have dots in a Skill, she can roll a straight Attribute to try the action, though she can't gain Enhancement unless something specifically allows it.

In general, the Skill you are using should be obvious from the action. Running from a zombie horde to make it into a settlement before they close their doors is obviously Athletics. Some Skills are regularly used with a specific Attribute, but they also encompass broader expertise within the topic that the Skill represents.

Skills show how a character's training, upbringing, and experiences have shaped her. They represent the knowledge, habits, reflexes, and techniques that the character has developed over time. Skills often represent training, but don't always have to. Someone with a high rating in Close Combat might have been taught by her family how to brawl, or maybe simply had to learn from being thrown into pit fights when she got to a new settlement. By practicing the Skill over time, the character has refined her raw talent to be truly formidable.

Skills are usually reflective of a character's Paths. Paths can show how and where a character first learned his Skill, and how his Skills tie him into the setting.

Specialties

A Specialty is narrowly focused expertise within a Skill. For example, Firearms grants skill with all ranged weapons, but a character may have a Specialty in "revolvers." Once a character has a Specialty, she may apply that expertise as Enhancement to *other Skills*. Each dot the character has in the Skill over three adds an extra point of Enhancement. A character gains the ability to purchase Specialties when her Skill rating is 4 or 5.

For example, a character might apply her revolvers Specialty from Firearms to an action using her Technology Skill to suggest she knows better than most how to repair her revolver. If the character had five dots in the Firearms Skill, the Enhancement would be worth +2.

Failing a roll in which the character uses a Specialty grants an additional point of Momentum for Consolation (see p. XX).

Academics

The Academics Skill represents a character's basic knowledge and ability research and understand new concepts. She might not be fully educated, but she can understand complex concepts readily. A character must have at least one dot in Academics to be literate, and high dots in Academics means the character can memorize complex concepts, teach others those concepts, and maybe even know more than one language.

Intellect + Academics is the total number of languages a character can maintain fluency in without constant effort. This

isn't the number of languages they speak, only the number they can learn. Characters still need to study a language to pick it up. Most people in Nor'America speak English, but there are pockets and cults with quite a few different local languages.

Most Academics rolls will involve Mental Attributes, but not always. Teaching, especially a crowd, will often use Presence. Picking up a new set of knowledge, like the patrol patterns of a group of raiders, often will use Resolve or Cunning depending on how long you need to retain or use that information.

- You can read, and you've read a book or two though maybe the same ones over and over as you were coming up. Abstract concepts are not beyond you, though you might need a bit more time than others to grasp them. You've shown someone the ropes on something else at least once. Where most people finding an old snooker table might be using luck you're looking at the dots on the side and mapping angles (+ Dexterity)

• • • When someone is trying to figure out what's useful in a book they'll be coming to you. Your ability to impart knowledge to others is good enough that some people probably call you "Teach" and if you're not too careful you'll get roped into teaching all the local kids the ABC song (+ Composure to get through the school day).

• • • • • If someone brings up a book then you've probably read it or read some reference to what it's about. You know the difference between metaphor and a metonym. If there is a way to strike a boulder and shatter it then you'll find it (+ Might).

Example Rolls Using Academics: *Reading a map (+ Intellect), simplifying a difficult subject for someone (+ Cunning), using big words to intimidate others (+ Manipulation), following instructions properly (+ Resolve), spending hours reading up on a subject (+ Stamina)*

Athletics

Athletics represents the general fitness and coordination of a character. This ranges from running long distances to dodging an incoming attack. Characters with high Athletics are at peak physical performance levels and can climb, jump, run or swim through just about anything that isn't inherently toxic.

- You won't embarrass yourself if called upon to do a race (+ Stamina). If you try to flex to show off your muscles and impress someone you will want to make sure you also put on your best smile (+ Presence).

• • • A viable security measure for your home would be a series of stones to jump across to get past a chasm (+ Dexterity). In games like smear the zed and rust rover you are never picked last.

FEATS OF STRENGTH

Characters can attempt to lift of break objects without rolling the dice. Sometimes you really need to break a door down. Just compare their Athletics + Might rating to the chart. Breaking something in this way is likely a complex action as the character tears the object apart.

ATHLETICS + MIGHT	SAMPLE FEAT
3	Lift two microwaves, rip tough plastic
4	Tote a hay bale on one shoulder, kick open a deadbolted door
5	Lift a refrigerator, bend an iron bar
6	Punch through a reinforced wooden door
8	Kick a reinforced wooden door to pieces, rip rebar out of the wall

• • • • • You have both power and control. You can lift off a log pinning someone (+ Might) and hold a yoga pose as long as anyone could ever need to (+ Composure).

Example Rolls Using Athletics: *Climbing a wall (+ Might), running away from persistent zed (+ Stamina), developing a training regimen (+ Intellect), riding a skittish horse (+ Composure), running along a narrow beam (+ Dexterity)*

Close Combat

Close Combat is the skill used for physical violence, with or without melee weapons. Characters generally learn some Close Combat skill at an early age, but several dots in the Skill represent years of practice standing and fighting against the hoards. Such a character not only knows how to throw a punch or kick, but also how to hit for maximum efficiency, and just where to land that punch.

- You know enough not to put your thumbs inside of your fists when punching someone. When talking to a knife merchant you can avoid getting fast talked into buying a piece of junk (+ Composure) but when trying to figure out if a blade is of superior balance you might have some trouble (+ Finesse). You never pick up the wrong end of a baseball bat to swing it.

• • • Bats, logs, rebar, repurposed femurs; you've fought with them all and you have a preference if not a specialty. In a bar room brawl you can suss out the best chair to hit

someone with (+ Cunning) where it is light enough to pick up but heavy enough to do real damage.

••••• When unfolding a butterfly knife one handed you might scare off most people (+ Presence). When sizing up a group of opponents outfitted with broken bottles, chains, and other implements of destruction you can determine who actually knows what they're doing (+ Intellect).

Example Rolls Using Close Combat: *Covering up and absorbing punches on your arms (+ Stamina), wrestling an opponent to the ground (+ Might), using improvised weapons (+ Cunning), throwing an opponent off balance (+ Dexterity), socializing with brawlers (+ Manipulation), intimidating an opponent with a showy display (+ Presence)*

Culture

Culture represents a character's knowledge of religious practices, local rules and regulations, and other cultural touchstones. It covers knowledge of the cultural differences between settlements necessary to avoid offending groups and getting yourself kicked out. It also represents a basic understanding of the various Creeds enough to make your way through any group without hassle.

• You can pick up on subtle clues. If someone is trying to drop hints that you and your crew should get out of town before sundown because this town is all cannibals, then you are likely to pick up on it as a warning rather than as a romantic overture (+ Cunning). Probably.

••• You can discern whether a series of vegetables and spices would do well for cooking irradiated flesh (+ Intellect) and calmly explain that they would be better off delaying your execution while more rosemary is gathered (+ Composure).

••••• You could devise a parable that fits so neatly into the local religion that worshippers will never be able to tell it wasn't part of the canon (+ Intellect) and maybe use it to convince them that you and your crew should be let go rather than eaten (+ Manipulation).

Example Rolls Using Cultures: *Telling a meaningful parable (+ Presence), spotting a hidden reference (+ Cunning), remembering the significance of a religious ritual (+ Intellect), attending a religious rite without offending your hosts (+ Manipulation), using local traditions to befuddle an enemy (+ Might)*

Empathy

Empathy reflects a character's ability to read and understand other people's emotions and behaviors. Empathy allows a character to not only know and understand a person's emotions, but also to manipulate them based on social cues.

Bear in mind, having the Empathy Skill is not the same as being empathetic, sympathetic, or compassionate. Just because someone can tell you are suffering under your veneer of toughness does not mean that they care.

• If you get to know someone you've probably figured out how to push their buttons (+ Manipulation) or if they're the sort of person who needs a literal shove to do something you can do that, too (+ Might).

••• You might end up being the agony aunt for your group since you can help them see the things they cannot (+ Intellect) and keep your cool while they explain the sorrows of Wrenches McGee not loving them back (+ Composure). When another crew is talking in front of you their vocal inflections and word choice will probably tip you off if they're planning on stabbing you all in the back after the job (+ Cunning).

••••• You don't have to be told rumors. Just watching people talk about the weather will tell you who's hiding a stash of food and who's been sleeping with someone that they shouldn't have (+ Intellect). When someone tries to read you to determine which of your friends to throw over the cliff to get you to talk you can hold your poker face (+ Composure) and even send them the message that it's Sally since you know she's the one who will not only survive the fall but come back later and free you all in the night.

Example Rolls Using Empathy: *Determining when someone is lying to you (+ Composure), playing on someone's emotions in an interrogation (+ Manipulation), reading what a business rival wants (+ Cunning), calming down an angry Merican (+ Presence)*

Firearms

Firearms is the ability to use ranged weapons, whether a pistol, bow, thrown dagger, or just a rock. In addition to accurately hitting a target, the Firearms Skill also covers knowledge related to ranged weapons, such as how to make ammunition, how to keep a weapon functioning, and the specific details of different weapons.

• You can reload a gun and assemble a rifle, though doing so in the middle of a firefight might take some focus (+ Composure). When shown a gun by a friend you can tell by how they hand it to you if they have any business holding a gun in the first place (+ Intellect). You're also not bad a doing a patrol and keeping trigger discipline (+ Stamina).

••• Ammunition may be rare after the Fall but with the right tools you know how to make your own

ammunition (+ Resilience). Pegging a bullseye is not hard, what's hard is pegging exactly the right part of the target you want when it is not square in the center (+ Dexterity) but you manage.

••••• Sharpshooter, deadeye, and the fastest gun in the wastelands might have all been said about you. Drawing your gun is enough to give most people pause (+ Presence). The exotic and experimental weapons that are often cooked up by local tinkers can be familiar in seconds to you (+ Intellect).

Example Rolls Using Firearms: *Shooting a gun at a target at far range (+ Cunning), laying down covering fire (+ Stamina), shooting while in a vehicle or mounted (+ Resolve), impressing a crowd of marksmen with war stories (+ Presence), picking out a moving target from a great distance (+ Dexterity)*

Integrity

Integrity is the Skill used in opposition to Persuasion and Leadership. A person with a strong Composure Attribute is naturally resistant to being convinced, commanded, tricked, or intimidated, but the Integrity Skill measures how experienced they are at resisting attempts to influence them.

Integrity reflects a character's emotional fortitude against outside influence. A character uses Integrity to resist emotional swaying and to hide her own emotions and intentions from others.

• You've got a bit of nerve and could hold up to some questioning, especially when your friends are on the line (+ Composure, implied in this case strengthened by a Bond). Holding up under prolonged torture might be a bit difficult (+ Stamina)

••• You've got a steel will and an iron heart. When you speak, people know that your word is bond and that you will not budge (+ Presence). When someone wants to know if they can trust you, they can look in your eye and see you will stand your ground (+ Manipulation).

••••• In the wastes, people don't have much. What you think you might have — water, shelter, and weapons — can all be taken away from you in a minute by the right number of raiders. What you do have, what everyone can tell you are rich in, is your honor and knowing when push comes to shove you'll be the one saying "no, you move."

Example Rolls Using Integrity: *Ignoring physical intimidation (+ Resolve), meditating (+ Stamina), resisting temptation (+ Resolve), hiding your true emotions while undercover (+ Composure), shifting focus to someone else (+ Manipulation), realizing something is out of place (+ Cunning)*

Leadership

Leadership is the skill used to get people to follow your will. It is different from Persuasion, in that Leadership is delivering orders — "Don't open that door!" — versus convincing someone that something is a good idea — "You shouldn't open that door because there's a burster on the other side of it."

Having an actual position of authority certainly aids in Leadership rolls to get others to follow orders, but it is not required. A sufficiently strong force of personality (meaning a high Leadership Skill) can often accomplish what rank fails to do.

• You're not great at herding cats but if people are interested in taking direction then you can lay out a plan that they'll follow (+ Manipulation). When you have some special knowledge to share you can get people to listen (+ Intellect).

••• People have decided to get on the dance floor and if you do a move they'll follow your lead (+ Dexterity). Sitting in a cage with a stranger? You can convince them to work with you to break out (+ Manipulation).

••••• Whenever there's a crisis, people turn to you. You can implement a wide-ranging plan with multiple moving parts over a large group of people without dropping any of the proverbial balls (+ Resilience).

Example Rolls Using Leadership: *Give an inspiring speech (+ Presence), figure out who is in charge of a Society (+ Intellect), convince a group of people to use your plan (+ Manipulation), lead a group in a tactical battle plan (+ Cunning), get a settlement to help you based on perceived importance (+ Might)*

Lore

Unlike Academics, which represents a character's potential for research and learning, Lore represents a character's deep understanding of esoteric topics — often pertaining to the past. High dots in Lore means that a character has spent a great deal of time researching and learning about myriad ancient topics, from music before the Fall to various Creed origins to the nature of the Grave Mind.

• You've got a basic understanding of how different faiths work and can pick up on someone's beliefs with a bit of attentive conversation (+ Cunning). The mysteries of the Grave Mind are many, but you've learned some things that you can bring to mind (+ Intellect).

••• This specific kind of zombie that seems to be invulnerable over most of its body, but you see how it moves and know its soft spot (+ Might). Psychic powers don't usually surprise you, but you know how to assess new ones you encounter (+ Cunning).

••••• You've impressed upon everyone around that you're the wise one (+ Presence) but deep down you'll know you'll never know everything. The Grave Mind is deep in ways the ocean finds terrifying and the knowledge you have, while more than all of those around you, is a grain of sand on the beach of knowledge. Hopefully, this knowledge can keep you alive a bit longer.

Example Rolls Using Lore: *Deciphering a message in an ancient ruin (+ Intellect), convince others to adopt a process based on information from the past (+ Manipulation), impress a priest with your knowledge (+ Presence), disarm an oldcestor trap (+ Resolve)*

Medicine

The Medicine Skill represents a character's knowledge of wound care, illnesses, and how to treat most of the ailments that come up in the wastes. Characters with high levels of Medicine not only know how to treat a wound but can successfully do so without causing more pain to the patient. Levels of Medicine almost always come with years of trial and error or watching and learning from others.

• You can do some basic triage and field dressing of wounds (+ Dexterity). If someone has a disease you can probably figure out if it is one of the better-known ones (+ Intellect).

••• They've been calling you Sawbones or Doc after you told off that one idiot (+ Presence). You know your way around keeping people around from the stupid things they've done in a pinch. You try on occasion to even make them eat something healthy (+ Manipulation).

••••• The human body is like a blank canvas. So malleable with the paint of Strains, viruses, Grave Mind, and other things that mere mortals dare not contemplate. You have seen the body's secrets and you can unleash them.

Example Rolls Using Medicine: *Diagnosing a disease (+ Intellect), performing surgery (+ Dexterity), impressing a settlement with medical jargon (+ Presence), digging a bullet out of your own shoulder (+ Stamina), earning a few extra UPPs for performing medical services (+ Manipulation)*

Persuasion

Persuasion reflects a character's ability to convince others to do things for her. A persuasive character can get others to perform tasks without giving direct commands, but instead by convincing them it is a good idea, either through the threat of force or the enticement of reward. Levels of Persuasion usually represent a character's experience in dealing with other people and convincing them to give her what she wants.

• You know exactly what information to reveal to show yourself in the best light (+ Manipulation). When flexing your muscles, you know how to get people to turn their heads (+ Might).

••• Open debate? You would be happy to accept their challenge (+ Cunning). Good cop or bad cop, whatever role you are playing you are the lead (+ Presence).

••••• Some people think you live a charmed life, but they don't know all the work that went into getting this many people to like you.

Example Rolls Using Persuasion: *Fast-talking a barkeeper (+ Cunning), seduction (+ Manipulation), intimidating someone with your physique (+ Might), interrogating a criminal (+ Presence)*

Pilot

Pilot represents a character's ability to properly operate and control vehicles in stressful situations. The Skill covers any kind of vehicle from boats to caravan cars. A character generally won't need to make a Pilot check to travel through the wastes, but he will if he needs to outrun a zed hoard or get his friend to the nearest settlement before she bleeds out.

• Most vehicles found in the wastes are familiar to you. Someone is trying to drive you off the road. You know you've got to keep your cool and steer your way against it (+ Composure).

••• You can look over a vehicle and tell if it will make it more than the next hundred miles (+ Resilience). You can hold onto the wheel even after your street sweeper gets rammed (+ Might).

••••• If it can take people places, you can pilot it. Biplane built by Diesel Jocks? You've flown it. Trolley car? You've raced it in the streets of Old York and won the prize.

Example Rolls Using Pilot: *Plotting a course (+ Intellect), shoving another car off the road (+ Stamina), dodging another vehicle (+ Dexterity), ramming a vehicle to cause it to crash (+ Resolve), avoiding unexpected pitfalls (+ Cunning)*

Science

The Science Skill reflects a character's knowledge of the world around her and how it works. She has a basic understanding of scientific theories, and what we would consider biology, chemistry, mathematics, engineering and physics. While Academics covers research and more basic understanding, Science covers applied understanding along with how to solve problems and make



substances important in the world of **Dystopia Rising**. This is different from Lore, which only covers concepts from ancient times; Science covers new discoveries and current topics.

- • You're familiar with the basic principles of the scientific method and mathematics.
- • • • Last summer you made a shield out of a trash can lid and to do so you used calculus to find the center of balance for the perfect place to put the arm strap (+ Intellect). When faced with unspeakable abominations being born out of what used to be your friend's arm you can keep your cool to try and notice important details that could be salient later (+ Composure).
- • • • • • You can look over the results of a repeated experiment and figure out what exactly went wrong (+ Resilience). You can talk to your friends and distract them with technobabble to keep them from seeing that the thing born from your friend's arm is resting in a cage for your future experiments (+ Manipulation).

Example Rolls Using Science: *Carefully mixing a volatile compound (+ Dexterity), identifying the chemicals used to make an explosive (+ Intellect), designing an experiment to test a hypothesis (+ Cunning), defend your use of radiation or other volatile substance near a settlement (+ Composure), convincing a settlement to allow you to experiment there (+ Manipulation)*

Subterfuge

Subterfuge reflects a character's knowledge of misdirection and deception. The Subterfuge Skill encompasses everything from stealth and sleight of hand to breaking and entering. Levels in Subterfuge may represent training from a secret society or could represent many years of making it in the wastes.

- • Basic locks are things with which you're familiar and you might even be hiding a small lockpick on your person. Trying to move through an area you might try to make no noise (+ Dexterity) or to blend into a crowd (+ Composure).
- • • • You can study a signature for a minute and do an accurate forgery later that day (+ Resilience). If you hold still, most people cannot hear you (+ Composure).
- • • • • • You might be known as a thief...if you'd ever been caught.

Example Rolls Using Larceny: *Running a con game (+ Manipulation), picking a lock (+ Dexterity), picking a pocket (+ Resolve), acting as a distraction for a heist (+ Presence), sleight of hand (+ Manipulation), sneaking (+ Dexterity)*

Survival

Survival is the Skill used to live and thrive in the wastes outside of settlements. A character uses the Survival Skill to find safe food to eat and water to drink, as well as building fires and shelters. It is also used to navigate in the wilderness, possibly with the assistance of maps and compasses, or just using the sun and the stars.

Survival helps a character notice or otherwise avoid natural hazards, such as quicksand or poisonous creatures. It can also be used in place of Social Skills when a character is attempting to influence an animal instead of a human (or other sentient being). Use the same goals for Social interaction, but replace Persuasion, Empathy, or Leadership with Survival.

- You know the basics of getting around in the woods and not killing yourself before a mountain lion does the work for you. You can spot true north based on the stars (+ Cunning) and make your way back to camp based on a few landmarks you pointed out to yourself while foraging (+ Intellect).
- • • When trying to blaze a new trail you're out in front. You can hike through the woods on a single canteen of clean water (+ Stamina). When foraging for food you can pick out the good food from the bad and even trap a bit of meat that isn't infected (+ Resilience).
- • • • • The wilds and the wastes are more of home to you than any civilized town, no matter how small. You know the ways of the trees and the desert as well as the zeds and the beasts that call it home.

Example Rolls Using Survival: *Avoiding radiation sites (+ Stamina), tracking (+ Resolve), identifying which way is north (+ Cunning), finding food for yourself (+ Intellect), calming an angry animal (+ Presence)*

Technology

Technology reflects the character's familiarity with a variety of technical devices, along with their use and maintenance. In general, technology is anything from simple levers that open gates to the repeating rifles used by the city's guards.

- You can make or uses some simple devices in ways that makes other people look at you like you've grown a second head. You might be able to coil a rope or untangle a serious snare (+ Resilience) or see how to work an engine build before the Fall (+ Intellect).
- • • You can make a flint-chip knife by hitting the flint with a rock after you were stranded in the desert by those damned raiders (+ Might). You can improvise turning a washing machine into a car engine with the right tools (+ Cunning).
- • • • • • The remnants of the world before the Fall do not disturb you as they do some, but they intrigue you if you haven't encountered them before. You can improvise a lab by having people assist in the right way (+ Manipulation) and solder a transistor with a needle you just heated in a candle flame (+ Dexterity).

Example Rolls Using Technology: *Repairing small complex components (+ Dexterity), haggling for spare parts (+ Manipulation), analyzing an unknown piece of equipment (+ Intellect), setting a booby trap (+ Cunning), repairing a broken item (+ Intellect), using an unknown piece of technology without understanding it (+ Might)*

Natural Talent: Attributes

Attributes reflect a character's raw ability to function, versus Skills being her training in a particular field. Attributes are rated from 1-5. Each challenge a character encounters falls into a specific *Arena*, either Mental, Physical, or Social. Determining the Arena for a challenge determines what sort of resources the character can bring to bear, and what Attributes she can use. How she deals with each Arena is her *Approach*.

Approaches

A character's Approach defines the way she tackles obstacles. Whenever a character faces a challenge requiring a roll, her player should describe her Approach:

A character using **Force** confronts his problems head on, sweeping obstacles aside with sheer direct power. Force is seldom subtle but is also the most direct approach.

Finesse is a softer approach, one that uses speed and wits to avoid opposition. Though subtle and swift, Finesse can provoke worse problems down the line.

Resilience allows a character to outlast her opponents, using flexibility and guts to achieve her goals. Resilience is often slow or dangerous but is also thorough.

Individual Attributes

Each combination of Arena and Approach is referred to as an *Attribute*. We often reference specific Attributes for rolls, though some actions call for simply the Arena or Approach which can use any of the associated Attributes.

The Attributes of the Physical Arena are the brute strength and speed of **Might** (Force), the deftness of **Dexterity** (Finesse), and the vital toughness of **Stamina** (Resilience).

The Mental Arena is the genius of **Intellect** (Force), the quick thinking of **Cunning** (Finesse), and the discipline and attention to detail of **Resolve** (Resilience).

The Social Arena is divided between the charisma of **Presence** (Force), the subtle graces of **Manipulation** (Finesse), and the stoic calm of **Composure** (Resilience).

Using Approaches and Arenas

In a Physical bar brawl, a fighter could dive in and hammer away with Might, weave around for a perfect shot with Dexterity, or drain his opponent with a Stamina dodge and block.

In a Mental contest of wills with lives on the line, a player might marshal memorized stratagems with Intellect, or try to feint and gamble with Cunning, or simply avoid foolish mistakes and pile on the pressure with Resolve.

In a tense Social interrogation, the perpetrator could try to lie his way out of things using Manipulation, or simply keep his cool and deflect with Composure. Meanwhile, his interrogator uses Presence to intimidate him.

No one makes it in the wastes for long if they are too weak, too stupid, or too irritating to deal with. No one is so pathetic at a full Arena that she can't make it in the world. That said, players can choose to focus their Attribute points into a single Arena, making them so good in one aspect of their lives that everyone forgives their foibles. Even then, there's no such thing as a survivor who is bad at everything. Players may instead choose to focus on a single Approach, making the character excel at using his brute force to either hit or talk his way through situation, but isn't great at fast or fine motor skills. All survivors have strengths and weaknesses, and a player may choose instead to spread her Attributes among them all making the character average in everything instead of great in only one or two aspects of her life.

Mental Arena

Mental Attributes represent cognitive functions, and anything done by the sheer power of thought: deductive reasoning, logical leaps, acts of concentration, and interactions with abstract concepts. These Attributes reflect how quickly the character thinks, the accuracy of her deductions, how bright or dull her intuitive flashes are, and her willpower in the face of adversity and deception.

Intellect

Intellect covers the raw computing power of a character's brain. Intellect is used for deduction, problem-solving, and processing information. A character with a low Intellect isn't necessarily stupid, though they don't learn as quickly. A high Intellect does not necessarily mean the character is educated, though they've often had hands-on training.

Characters use Intellect for digging through moldering books, plotting the best course through the wastes, deciding tactics for town defenses, reading blueprints, crafting and repairing gear, finding food and water, and remembering important facts.

- • Everything goes in one ear and out the other.
- •• You're not really the intellectual sort.
- ••• You've probably read books before.
- •••• An expert in multiple fields.
- ••••• You can learn almost anything if you set your mind to it.

Cunning

Cunning covers mental tasks that require speed over power. A person with high Cunning thinks on his feet, notices details quickly, and comes up with responses before the others. Cunning is like Dexterity in that it covers actions that require speed over force. However, Cunning covers the fine motor skills instead of gross movement. A character with low Cunning may be the sort of person who has their head in the clouds or can't multitask. A high Cunning character is always aware of her surroundings and can act without hesitation.

Characters use Cunning to notice clues, spot hidden enemies, understand a political situation, apply emergency medical care, use a weapon she's never seen before, respond to an ambush, and figure out uses for an unknown device.

- • If you stuck your hand in a fire, it would take you a minute to notice.
- •• You don't deal well when forced out of your routine.
- ••• You handle yourself well in overwhelming situations.
- •••• No one can catch you unaware.
- ••••• You react to things almost before they happen.

Resolve

Resolve measures a character's strength of will and resistance to trickery or mental pressure. Low-Resolve characters are easily fooled and lack mental focus. A character with high Resolve doesn't miss deadlines, ignores distractions, and is difficult to manipulate.

Characters use Resolve to study evidence, move silently, follow animal tracks, resist persuasion, drive under pressure, understand science babble, stay strong under pressure, and remain focused.

- • You are easily distracted and can't concentrate.
- •• You get flustered easily.
- ••• You meditate about once a week.
- •••• You're trained for calm and a reasoned approach to things.
- ••••• Once you have set your mind to something, no one can deter you.

Physical Arena

Physical Attributes cover the control the character has over her body and its interactions with the environment. Feats

of strength, coordination, and resistance to illness and injury are reflected in these Attributes. Characters who favor the Physical Arena are not all muscle-bound athletes — in addition to strength and hardiness, this Arena also describes the level of control a person has over his movements and how he puts his body to use.

Might

Might is raw physical power. It covers lifting or moving heavy objects, including the character themselves. While some fighting styles may require skill and speed over brute strength, a simple punch in the nose requires Might. A high Might score is useful for characters who engage in heavy labor or violent fights on a regular basis. A character with low Might may have suffered an injury so they can't use their strength without harming themselves further. A character with high Might may be strong or simply very good at using what strength they do have to maximum effect.

Characters use Might to lift or throw objects, wield a heavy weapon, intimidate others, climb walls, and muscle through pain.

- • Weak as a kitten.
- •• You aren't much help in holding a barricade.
- ••• You've spent a lot of time in a mine, or on the field of battle.
- •••• People ask you to carry things for them.
- ••••• You are one of the strongest people in the world.

Dexterity

Dexterity covers fine and gross motor control. While Might determines how much a character can lift, Dexterity determines how well they can maneuver either themselves or other objects. A character with high Dexterity is more likely to catch a ball, walk a tightrope, or dive for cover. A low-Dexterity character may be slow and clumsy. High-Dexterity characters are nimble and have good hand-eye coordination.

Characters use Dexterity to jump over gaping pits, pick locks, dance, walk over treacherous ground, maintain balance, impress people, and aim a ranged weapon.

- • You constantly trip over things that aren't there.
- •• You have hand-eye coordination, but not much else.
- ••• You've taught yourself how to avoid getting hit.
- •••• You can safely navigate through crumbling buildings without breaking anything.
- ••••• You have a decent chance of dodging a bullet.

Stamina

Stamina covers how well a character can resist physical threats. This could be environmental threats like holding your breath underwater, resisting a disease, or not dehydrating in the desert. It also determines how well a character can take a punch or how long they'll survive a snakebite before they get treatment. A person with low Stamina is often sick or easily injured. A person with high Stamina can go a long time without respite and rarely becomes ill.

Characters use Stamina to run long distances, continue in a fight despite injury, recover faster, meditate, or resist diseases or poison.

- • You are always the first to get sick and the last to recover.
- •• You spend a lot of your day sitting.
- ••• You rarely get sick.
- •••• You can outrun a horde and not break a sweat.
- ••••• At the peak of human endurance.

Social Arena

Social Attributes gauge a character's ability to interact with others. How easily the character can sway another person's decisions and feelings is a function of this Arena, as well as how skillfully the character comports herself in social situations. The Social Arena defines how a character interacts with other people, how well she can read a person's emotions or determine the temperament of a whole group, and to what degree she can persuade others to act or change their way of thinking. It also measures her ability to withstand attempts by others to manipulate her or influence her choices.

Presence

Presence measures a character's ability to convince other people. A high Presence may be due to striking good looks, strong character, or aggressive personal traits. It measures the character's capacity to impose their will. A character with high Intellect might be able to come up with a logical argument, but it requires Presence to convince others to listen to the logic in the first place. A low-Presence character may be shy or unskilled in social situations. A high Presence character isn't necessarily charming but is skilled at getting their way.

Characters use Presence to give orders, influence another person, trick someone, give a speech, interrogate a prisoner, or train an animal.

- • No one ever seems to notice you, even when you want them to.
- •• Just a face in the crowd.
- ••• You can make decently persuasive speeches.
- •••• People fall all over themselves to please you.
- ••••• Your speeches could inspire the wastes.

Manipulation

Manipulation measures a character's ability to fine tune their social skills and to analyze social cues. A hard sell requires high Presence, while the long con requires high Manipulation.

Low-Manipulation characters lack subtlety or empathy. High-Manipulation characters can bend others to their will.

Characters use Manipulation to manage people, lie convincingly, use sleight of hand, notice social cues, seduce others, or subdue a hostile animal.

- • Open mouth; insert foot.
- •• You can be a little socially awkward sometimes.
- ••• Low-level hustler or savvy networker.
- •••• An expert at cold reading and telling people what they want to hear.
- ••••• You fit in anywhere, even when you clearly don't belong.

Composure

Composure measures a character's ability to resist social manipulation. It measures a character's ability to remain calm under interrogation or make sure that negotiations go the way she wants. It's also useful for recognizing lies and deceit. Low-Composure characters are easily flustered and crack under social pressure. High-Composure characters can remain calm in the most trying circumstances.

Characters use Composure to resist manipulation, maintain a cool attitude, stay firm under pressure, cut through red tape, notice deception, resist psionics, or conceal their intentions.

- • You are fresh out of the bomb shelter.
- •• You sometimes lose your cool when things don't go your way.
- ••• You can usually tell when someone is lying to you.
- •••• You're a tough negotiator and an even tougher sell.
- ••••• Utterly unflappable, nothing ordinary could ever make you lose your cool.

Roll the Bones: Dice

Once the player has assembled their dice pool, they roll the dice. They want each die to land at or above their *target number*. Their target number is 8 by default. Each die that meets the target number is a *success*. If a player rolls a 10, that die gives one success and is rolled again. This is called *10-again*, and it continues until no dice show a 10. Some special benefits provide 9-again or 8-again, where those die results or higher are also rolled again.

A success is the basic currency of **Dystopia Rising**. Players use successes to complete challenges by buying off the difficulty, overcome Complications, and do cool Stunts.

Difficulty

Every challenge has a level of difficulty, which is the number of successes a player must spend to overcome any obstacles and succeed. Every challenge requires at least one success to complete, so the minimum difficulty is 1. If a character wants to vault a difficulty 2 gap between buildings, she must roll at least two successes to buy off the difficulty and succeed. If the character doesn't have enough successes to meet the difficulty, they fail the challenge and receive a Consolation to keep the story moving. Situations where it's impossible to succeed do not have a level of difficulty — characters just don't roll.

The Storyguide normally sets the difficulty based on the scope of the challenge. This is called *static difficulty*. In other cases, the difficulty of the challenge is caused by other characters. This is called *opposed difficulty*, and it is generated by an opposing character's own dice roll.

In direct clashes, like a public argument or a struggle over an object, one character is the "defender." Their dice roll is used to set the opposed difficulty for the "attacker." In the case of parallel efforts such as a foot race, or when it's not clear who the defender is, the competing characters compare their total successes for that roll. The smaller number is used to set the level of difficulty.

DICE MATH

Storyguides, as you balance difficulty and dice pools, consider this: Every three dice in a pool at target number 8 will, on average, yield one success.

Mixed Actions

Each task in a mixed action has its own level of difficulty, which a player must spend successes to meet. If the total number of successes is too low to meet both levels of difficulty, they can choose to fail at one of their tasks to succeed at the other. The failed action may result in a Consolation from the Storyguide.

For example, a character may harangue a crowd while brandishing the severed head of a zombie with the motive of persuading the crowd to switch sides in a conflict (difficulty 3), while at the same time subtly sending a hidden message to a friend in the crowd (difficulty 2). They would have to spend successes and buy off both difficulties to do both. If a character has relevant Enhancements, they may apply the bonus successes to whichever task they like.

Complications

Few things are straightforward or easy in this fallen world. *Complications* are unforeseen consequences that can happen even with a success. For example, a character could be trying to open a locked box and if they are not careful, they may get it open but break the lock. A Complication is a good way to make a challenge more daunting without stopping a character in their tracks. A trivial Complication is a 1, whereas a major Complication might be a 5.

Complications can be avoided by spending successes in the same way as difficulty, but they do not prevent a character from succeeding. Getting back to the box example, if character is picking a lock, the chance of destruction would be a Complication 2 of *Fragile Lock*. She can get the box open, but can she focus enough to not destroy the lock in the process?

Just like difficulty, each Complication has its own level of severity. Players can bypass a Complication by spending enough successes to meet its level — so, in our box example, removing the *Fragile Lock* Complication would cost an additional two successes.

Enhancements

An Enhancement is something that makes a challenge easier, such as a useful piece of equipment or favorable circumstances of which a character can take advantage. If a player rolls *at least one success*, they receive bonus successes from any Enhancements relevant to that challenge. If an Enhancement does not specifically apply to the task at hand, or if they don't roll at least one success, the player can't use it. Using the previous example, if you had a high-quality lockpick, it might grant 1 Enhancement, giving you one more success to help with buying off difficulty and Complications.

Enhancement Drawbacks

Sometimes using an Enhancement causes problems, even as it helps. These are the drawbacks. For example, getting drunk might ingratiate you to table of Vegasians but it'll lessen your judgment in the card game you're playing with them. When an Enhancement has a drawback, the Storyguide can choose to play it out in one of three ways:

- The drawback adds a Complication.
- The drawback increases the difficulty of another action.
- The drawback gives antagonists a free Enhancement to use against you.

Edges

Unique quirks that offer a character a constant, passive benefit are called Edges. They often provide an Enhancement to actions, allow a character to bypass specific disadvantages, or represent access to abilities or resources the character would not otherwise have.

ENHANCEMENTS OVER 3

Be careful giving Enhancements over 3 without accompanying drawbacks. These tend to make even difficult rolls quite easy and remove the challenge inherent in rolling at all.

Teamwork

With the world as antagonistic as it is, no one survives long without learning to work together. When one character helps another in a challenge, the assisting character assembles and rolls their own dice pool, providing an Enhancement equal to the successes they rolled up to a total of 3. The two dice pools do not need to use the same Skill or Attribute, so long as the teamwork makes sense. For example, a character could use Academics + Intellect to search for clues in a journal while a more experienced safecracker uses Subterfuge + Cunning to crack the combination of an ancient safe.

Scale

Your average survivor must be competent to make it even with a group in the wasted world. There are those, especially the shambling horde of zeds out there, who make up for lack of power with numbers. There are others who, though weird science or overwhelming size, make themselves an antagonist for groups by themselves. *Scale* represents a sizeable gap in raw power or scope between two things.

Scale has two components: narrative and dramatic.

Narrative Scale describes the multiplier you should apply to successes or static traits. When comparing Scale to minor characters and story elements, such as scenery, bystanders, and minor opponents, feel free to handwave the Scale multiplier as a rough narrative benchmark of what happens, simply narrating the characters creating massive havoc: All successes from the dice pool are multiplied if a roll is called for, or you can assume one success for every three dice and then multiply that result.

Dramatic Scale is how much the Scale affects characters and other elements that are central to the story. Dramatic Scale provides an Enhancement to actions against narratively important characters or objects. For static values, apply half the value of the Dramatic Enhancement.

When applying Scale to two opposing forces or individuals, compare each character's Scale and then apply the benefits of the difference to whomever has the higher Scale. For example, a clapped-out dune buggy racing after a human receives Enhancement 4 due to its roaring speed (Scale 2), but when it chases a bicycle (Scale 1), the difference in Scale is only one, so it only receives 2 bonus successes.

Scale comes into play for *dramatically important* challenges only; it's the job of the players and Storyguide to bridge the divide between the narrative and dramatic effects of Scale. Just like all Enhancements, different kinds of Scale only affect the challenges they're relevant to.

Some examples of types of Scale follow:

- **Size:** Huge differences in size provide a Scale Enhancement that applies to tasks that make use of a larger creature's weight and height, like crushing, lifting, and intimidation. Hulks and Mottled Bears would have a Scale advantage on your average survivor.

SCALE RANK	NARRATIVE	DRAMATIC	EXAMPLE
0	n/a	+0	A person tough enough to survive and thrive in the wastes, Rust Devil Rats
1	x2	+2	A mob of raiders, a heavy-duty rifle, motor bikes, horses
2	x5	+4	A zombie hulk that pushes aside cars with ease, functioning cars
3	x10	+6	Iron Jungle Cats, Mottled Bears
4	x100	+8	Giant spiders the size of a house, massive hordes of zed

- **Hordes:** Large groups of opponents can provide Scale to a conflict. One shambler is almost laughably easy to kill, but dozens of them are terrifying. (See more on this on p. XX.)
- **Force:** A Scale Enhancement for destructive force applies to efforts to cause damage, like a Scale 2 grenade. It can be opposed by defensive Scale Enhancements, such as tank armor.
- **Speed:** A disparity in speed offers a Scale Enhancement the faster party can use for challenges like races, chases, journeys, and changing range bands. A Diesel Jock's rig should be going at a faster speed than someone on foot or it probably wasn't worth putting together.
- **Command:** Outsized sway over others, such as the Scale 3 influence wielded by a mayor or community leader, is represented by an Enhancement that aids attempts to change minds and encourage certain actions. If the survivors wander into a new town, a local leader who knows their people would have an Enhancement when trying to convince the townspeople the outsiders are lying about her nefarious activities.

Normal humans are assumed to be Scale 0 in every area; they are the baseline. Equipment or circumstances can justify Scale as well; a refurbished tank cannon can be Incredible, adding 6 successes to an already considerable dice pool of 10 or more.

Trivial Targets and Narrative Scale

Scale represents the kind of tremendous gulfs bridged by heroic luck and derring-do. Those lacking such things tend to fare worse. The narrative effects of Scale can be applied to trivial targets and Scale differences of *more than two* should usually result in automatic failure (or success).

In the case of targets such as background scenery or nameless hordes, a difference of more than one level is enough to dismiss them without a roll. **Dystopia Rising** refers to this difference as "trivial targets," who suffer more realistic effects from a difference in Scale. Rolls are only used for challenges, not effortless or outright impossible tasks. For example, a horse should not have to roll to outrun a mob of angry horse thieves on foot.

Player characters are *never* treated as trivial targets, even when the difference in Scale is extreme.

Shockwave

Some kinds of Scale or particular types of hits generate a *shockwave*, which causes the effects of certain actions to spread out across a greater range than normal. The action is rolled once, then applied against everyone within range. Each range increment outside of the original target reduces the effect's Scale by two, as the force peters out.

Conditions

Sometimes characters in **Dystopia Rising** are struck by long-term problems or lingering benefits, such as a broken arm or a high from a brew. A Condition is a long-term status that lingers on a single character, affecting the challenges they face, and is usually represented as a Complication, Enhancement, or difficulty modifier (or some mixture of the three). If a Condition causes a character to fail or otherwise suffer a significant setback, it provides 1 Momentum in addition to any gained as a Consolation. This is called a *Momentum trigger*.

A Condition always includes one or more ways to remove it, called *resolutions*. The Storyguide can add more resolutions if they make sense. For example, the Hangover Condition fades over time, but an appropriate home remedy could end it early. If a Condition is resolved before it naturally fades away, it provides 1 Momentum.

Some Conditions are so tied up with a character that removing them would be a dramatic change, like permanent blindness or an inherent part of their Strain. These are *Persistent Conditions* and they provide the characters with a good source of Momentum. Resolving such Conditions means that the deleterious effects fade for a time, but will eventually return.

In some cases, these Persistent Conditions can be completely removed by things like recovered science or psychic surgery but doing so is always difficult.

You can find a complete list of Conditions in the Appendix, starting on p. XX.

Fields

Fields are similar to Conditions, except they apply to every character within a specific area. Fields are not defined by

distance and have nothing to do with an effect's Range. Instead, they represent a single "place" with distinct features. An abandoned shack crumbling around you is a single Field for a fight, but so are miles of empty ocean.

Fields provide context for the world of a situation, so the Storyguide should add features whenever it makes sense. For example, if the characters are fighting during the night there may be a Field-wide Complication due to darkness. Players can suggest such ideas, but the final decision lies with the Storyguide.

Stunts

Players can spend successes on *Stunts* to improve their character's position or further their goal. Stunts are narrative permission slips — they give you the chance to alter the scene in your favor or do something you otherwise couldn't have done. When a player rolls several extra successes scampering over a barbed wire fence, a good Stunt would be to carefully snip the wire on the way over, so the other characters climbing over won't be injured.

Stunts are deeply involved in the three areas of action, and these Stunts have a success cost associated with them. There are three basic types of Stunt:

- A *complicated Stunt* allows you to make a Complication for another character, making their lives more exciting. How many successes you spend on the Stunt determines the level of the Complication.

Example: *A Lascarian is being questioned about the location of their companions. They try to use Subterfuge to mislead their captors about the location and are so successful that the captor has to overcome a Complication of* **They're Almost There** *to avoid sending people out right away.*

- An *enhanced Stunt* creates an Enhancement that you can use for another action, whether that's your character's next action (using a different Skill) or to aid another character. Again, the number of successes you spend on the Stunt indicates how many successes the Enhancement gives you. It's like giving yourself or someone else some successes for later.

Example: *A survivor is giving a speech to a Red Star commune to risk their lives to save a friend captured by a rival camp. Their words are so moving that it gives a perfect setup to enhance their friend planted in the crowd when they chime in, "I'll go. Those blue banner raiders have been a threat for too long." This gives the friend extra Enhancement successes on their own attempt to keep swaying the crowd.*

- Finally, a *difficult Stunt* makes it harder for others to accomplish actions directed at you. The successes you devote to this Stunt add to the difficulty for characters to take actions against you.

Example: *A Solestros is being chased by zombies through a field of burning tires. They must use Athletics to jump and maneuver around without getting burned. They are so successful that they pull an extra tire out from a pile, causing an avalanche of burning tires to block the zombies and make it more difficult for them to follow.*

Note that some Stunts have a cost of zero successes. Even though such Stunts are "free," you still have to choose to "buy" them. Further, remember that you can only purchase Stunts on a successful roll, so if you can't buy off the difficulty, you can't take any Stunts, even if they are zero cost.

Threshold Successes

Once a player has totaled all her successes from her dice pool and Enhancements, she spends them to meet the difficulty and succeed. Any remaining successes can be spent to overcome Complications or to pull off Stunts, should the player choose to do so.

Leftover successes after all purchases are made are called *threshold successes*. These indicate a general degree of success. One threshold success demonstrates a little extra flair, while two shows remarkable luck or skill, three is a dazzling display, and anything more is bound to win you fame, fortune, and a new folk song about your deed.

Complex Actions

When players need to resolve a challenge that involves lots of separate tasks, they can use a *complex action*. This is a series of linked challenges called *intervals*, each of which have their own dice pools, difficulty, and so on, but all contribute toward a greater goal.

Complex actions act like a montage in a movie, so that each interval focuses on one of the highlights of the process. Meeting the difficulty of an interval gives the character a *Milestone*, which can be a clue, an ingredient, a favor, a racing

JUST EXAMPLES

Throughout the book, we'll list lots of possible Stunts for **Dystopia Rising**. We don't expect you to memorize them all. Rather, consider them all examples of what you can do with the Stunt system. If you're ever unsure how a particular Stunt works, you don't have to slow down the game to look it up. Simply make your best guess. Life in the wasteland is hard; don't make it even harder on yourself.

checkpoint, or whatever most suits the complex action. Once a character achieves a set number of Milestones, the complex action ends successfully.

If a character isn't under any pressure, she can fail as many intervals as she likes, slowly accruing Milestones until her project is complete. More urgent complex actions include a limit on the number of intervals the character can attempt before the entire complex action fails. Complications can force a character to skip an interval as she wastes precious time dealing with them, or even lose a Milestone in the chaos.

In some cases, the Storyguide may award a Milestone without any need for a roll, based on the player's actions.

Example: *Anna is trying to win a seat on the settlement's council. She'll have to start accruing Milestones like currying favor among different groups or doing some deed that benefits the town like clearing out a local nest of raiders. She'll also have to achieve all of this before the general elections come up. The Storyguide says she'll need three Milestones to get enough popularity to win, and that she must do so in five intervals.*

Complex Teamwork and Opposition

Characters can use the rules for teamwork to collaborate on intervals. Alternatively, they can try to achieve different Milestones during the same interval. For example, one character might perform forensic analysis while her partner interrogates a suspect. In this case, each character rolls separately, earning Milestones as normal.

A complex action with opposed participants is a *contest*. The opposed characters or groups each work separately to gain enough Milestones, and the one who does so first is the winner. In contests with a limited number of intervals, like races with a set track, the one who gains the most Milestones within that limit is the winner. Rivals can use Stunts to interfere with each other's efforts, so contests sometimes use initiative to determine who goes first.

Screwing Up: Failure

When a player doesn't have enough successes to overcome the difficulty of a challenge, they fail. Depending on the challenge, this can either mean that they fail to achieve their goals or inflict entirely new problems. For example, a character who fails to abscond out of a window might be caught mid-escape. Alternatively, she might get away by plummeting to the ground and bruising something important.



Failure is never a dead end in **Dystopia Rising**. It always leads to something new, or builds up to a heroic comeback, because the failing character receives a Consolation.

Consolation

A Consolation is a helpful — but minor — side effect of failure, which the Storyguide can use to keep the game moving. The simplest type of Consolation is acquiring Momentum, a resource players can spend later for a variety of effects. Other Consolations can include:

- **Twist of Fate:** Failure reveals another approach to the character's goals, through new information or sheer coincidence. For example, a failed review of scientific research materials to reconstruct car fuel may include insight into finishing the propulsion of the special ammunition that has so far stumped you.
- **Chance Meeting:** Failure introduces a new character who can offer help or information, though perhaps at a price. For example, a character fails to convince the settlement to join with them to rescue their friend, but afterwards one of the locals comes up to offer information on a secret entrance to the raiders' lair.
- **Unlooked-for Advantage:** Failure results in a 1 Enhancement to a future challenge, though it can't benefit a second attempt at the same goal. For example, a character fails to land their shot but the way the target had to duck sets up a shot for their friend.

Momentum

Momentum is a resource players can spend to affect the game on a dramatic level. The characters themselves aren't normally aware of Momentum, but instead put its effects down to fate or good luck.

Momentum is stored in a single pool shared by all players (called the Momentum Pool), which can hold up to 12 Momentum at a time. Whenever a player receives Momentum as a Consolation, she adds 1 Momentum to this pool. Some things that grant Momentum include:

- A Condition caused or exacerbated a problem for your character: 1 Momentum
- Consolation from a failed roll: 1 Momentum
- ... and the failed roll was a botch: +2 Momentum
- ... and the roll was using your Skill Specialty: +1 Momentum

When a player wants to spend Momentum, they must share their idea with the table. If every player agrees, the Momentum is spent. All players can spend Momentum in the following ways:

- **Add Dice:** A player can spend 1 Momentum to add a single die to a dice pool, before it is rolled. This dice pool can belong to any player, but each player in the group can only do so once for each roll.
- **Add Interval:** A player can spend 3 Momentum to add another interval to a complex action, giving the characters more time in which to work.
- **Activate Skill Tricks or Edges:** If a player has a Skill Trick or Edge that requires spending Momentum, they spend it out of the Momentum Pool.

Botch

An especially bad failure is called a *botch*. This occurs when a character rolls no successes at all, and at least one of their dice shows a 1. When a character *botches*, they fail to achieve their goal, and they also suffer an additional setback. A botched attack not only misses, the character's weapon slips from her grip. A botched escape gets her both captured and injured. The only Consolation players can receive for a botch is Momentum. However, they receive an additional 2 Momentum, for a total of 3.

Voluntary Botch

If a character fails and the Storyguide wants to make that failure more awful (and interesting), she can offer the player 2 Momentum for the pool. If the player accepts, their character suffers a botch just as though they'd rolled no successes and at least a single 1.

For example, the player characters have a meeting with an informant who then flees with the box they came to discuss. Bob tries to grab the box as he runs and fails. The Storyguide offers him 2 Momentum and the player accepts. Bob not only fails to grab the box but falls down in the doorway, making it harder for his friends to chase after the contact.

Yes, this is fewer Momentum than you would get for rolling a botch naturally. But 2 guaranteed Momentum is often better than 3 potential Momentum, no matter what the Vegasian in you might think.

It's Been Too Long: Time

The passage of time in **Dystopia Rising** is determined by the pace of the story, just as how weeks, months, or even years can pass in a single scene in a movie. Though time passes normally for the characters, players do not split up the game into minutes, hours, and days, but into scenes, acts, and episodes. The following units of time are purely narrative, but can govern the duration of certain effects, determine how often a power can be used, or help administer character advancement.

Turn: The smallest increment of time, which can last anywhere from a few seconds to a minute. A character can perform a single instant action in a turn. Turns normally only matter in fights or other dramatic and stressful situations.

Round: A round is a snapshot of an exciting scenario such as a fight or competition. It is the length of time it takes all participants to have a turn in a situation governed by initiative. Every round each character involved takes a single turn, which they can use to move around and perform a suitable action, like launching an attack.

Scene: A scene is a single coherent sequence of events, like an entire fight or the search for a much-needed part. A scene takes as long as the story needs, whether a minute or several hours. The Storyguide decides when a scene has come to its logical conclusion and moves the story along to the next one until the act ends.

Act: An act is an entire game session from beginning to end. Acts are made up of different scenes, which together represent a single segment of a bigger story. An act can end early if the characters complete an episode mid-session.

Episode: An episode is a single story, like an episode of a television series, which gives the characters a breather when it finishes. An episode might be completed in a single long act or include multiple acts.

Arc: An arc is a group of episodes that takes a full storyline from beginning to end, but leaves loose ends, uncompleted tasks, and possible successor stories. Most arcs are made up of between two to five episodes.

Season: A season is a complete and conclusive story, usually driven by some great threat or goal which is resolved at the season's climax, just like in a television series. When a season ends, the characters tend to enjoy some downtime before the next story starts.

Series: The entire continuity of the game's story.

It is sometimes helpful to approximate more literal times from these terms. For example, if an Edge lasts a single scene but the next fight is just minutes away, the Storyguide might decide that its effects are still active when the characters catch up to their foe. In fights or similarly fast-paced action-adventure scenarios, a round lasts about four seconds. Scenes can usually be considered to last about an hour or two, while acts default to a single day, an episode covers a week, and an arc or season extend across a month or year respectively.

Three Areas of Action

In **Dystopia Rising**, events tend to fall within three broad areas: action-adventure, procedural, and intrigue. While not strict categories, these areas organize critical systems for playing the game. These areas work together, reinforce one another, and often appear together in the same scenes.

Action-adventure focuses on the physical realm and includes guidance for rough-and-tumble violence, slaying zed, carefully aligned sniper shots, thrilling chases, and sneaky infiltration. It is commonly part of the Physical Arena.

Procedurals focus on mental pursuits and include guidance for ferreting out information, spotting clues, uncovering secrets, tracking down suspects, and crafting clever plans. It's most often in the Mental Arena.

Intrigue focuses on social actions and includes guidance on managing groups, building relationships, and dealing with people — charming, cajoling, bullying, commanding, blackmailing, befriending, persuading, and seducing them. You'll usually find this in the Social Arena.

Body Work: Action-Adventure

The systems for action-adventure support various forms of physical peril, dramatic movement, and moment-to-moment action. The chapter on violence (starting on p. XX) also describes the importance of range and distance in action-adventure scenes.

Actions

When a character takes his turn, he can perform one *simple action*. This is a task which occupies his focus for that round, and usually requires a roll to complete successfully. He can attempt to do two things at once with his action, using the rules for mixed actions.

A character can also perform *reflexive actions* on his turn. These are acts which require little attention, such as standing up, drawing a weapon, or moving around unimpeded. Reflexive actions do not call for a roll, and a character can perform as many different reflexive actions as he likes on his turn, within reason.

Characters can do minor, inconsequential things at any point. If a character wants to throw out a one-liner or brush dirt off his uniform, he doesn't have to wait for his turn to do so.

Moving and Maneuvering

Over most terrain, characters can move freely. This section explores what to do when faced with less forgiving terrain.

It is rare for the precise speed at which a character can move to be relevant. In most cases, the arts of maneuvering, chasing, and fleeing are abstracted into Athletics challenges or range bands. When it's relevant, an unimpeded human on foot can move a number of feet each turn equal to twice their Athletics + highest Physical Attribute.

Drop/Stand

Characters can drop prone as a reflexive action. Standing up from a prone position is also reflexive but occupies the character's movement for that round.

Barriers

A barrier is a wall, gap, or other feature that requires extra time or effort to traverse. Getting past a barrier means climbing or jumping over it, locating an alternate route, or finding or creating a way through it. Many barriers only become a

challenge when the pressure is on — it's simple for a character to haul herself over a garden fence, but harder if she's being shot at, in which case the Storyguide can assign it a difficulty rating and have her roll. The go-to dice pools for overcoming barriers are Athletics + Might or Finesse.

Difficult and Dangerous Terrain

Dangerous Terrain is a landscape feature that could cause the character harm, such as a tar field or maze of rusted junk. A character can pass through these, but in doing so takes a Complication. If she does not wish to be pierced by a random rusty nail, the character can evade such Complications by buying them off.

Difficult Terrain covers features such as slippery mud, a frozen lake, the rotten floor of an abandoned building, and so on — anything that makes passage hard, but not necessarily harmful. When on difficult terrain, the default move action is no longer reflexive, and characters must roll their Athletics + Dexterity whenever they wish to move one range band. All other movement actions are done at +1 difficulty.

Chases

Chases happen when characters flee or pursue someone or something. A footrace against a raider, a desperate escape through a maze of barbed-wire fences, or a rush to nab a Vegasian thief are all chases.

A chase is often a simple action, with flight or failure resolved in a single opposed roll. Longer or more varied chases



are complex actions instead, allowing the different areas or tactics to influence the chase as it proceeds.

An on-foot chase uses Athletics, while Pilot is used if characters are driving. Might is the Attribute for flat-out sprints, while obstacle-strewn or unstable courses call for Dexterity, and challenges of endurance use Stamina. Mazes and other puzzles are the place for Reason, while an interval that requires split-second reactions might use Cunning. Driving always uses Cunning or Dexterity.

Laps

When a chase is resolved as a complex action, its Milestones are referred to as *laps*. The number of laps characters need to succeed in a chase represents the distance it covers. Once a character completes the necessary laps, they either catch their prey, escape their pursuer, or finish their race.



SUCCESS COSTS

Often, Stunts will cost successes on a roll, and the cost in successes is denoted by (s).

Chases with two significant parties are contests, with each character rolling to complete enough laps that they can secure their quarry or get away clean.

An interval limit represents different things depending on what the characters are doing. In flight, it indicates the point at which pursuit becomes all-encompassing, or a dead end, or the inexorable advance of a natural disaster. For a pursuer, an interval limit is a place of safety for their quarry, such as an embassy.

Other Chases

Races are competitions, with each racer rolling for a set number of intervals before the racetrack ends at the interval limit. Each lap earned represents a successful stretch of the race, allowing a racer to pull ahead or conserve their energy compared to their fellows.

The chase rules can also be used to represent the travails of long-distance journeys, such as a voyage to be the first to track down the newest Scrap find in the Delphian Wastes. These often involve more varied dice pools and interval lengths, but otherwise work as normal.

General Chase Options

Here are a few modifiers specifically suited to chases:

Head Start (Enhancements +1-3): Slashed tires, a well-established lead, or chasing down your target before they even know they should be running. Applies at any interval where you begin the chase before your opposition can react. This Enhancement's rating is based on the length of your head start, relative to the length of the interval.

Hazard (Complication 1-3): Whether you're facing slick ice, a literal minefield, or geysers of acid, you need to keep your eyes on the road. This Complication's rating is based on the danger represented by the hazard and inflicts an appropriate Injury Condition of the same rating.

Snatch and Grab (1s): You keep your eyes open and find something useful along the way. You acquire a piece of equipment appropriate to the interval, which offers 1 Enhancement to rolls when used. Racing through a forest might let you snap off a branch as a club, while a street-market chase offers many options.

Use Your Brain: Procedurals

Procedural play involves gathering information and solving problems with careful thought. These systems help characters find clues, form masterful plans, and create useful items. Such goals work hand in hand with the rest of the game.

Information Gathering

Every survivor knows how to look for things...and by "things" they usually mean "Scrap." But sometimes you need to find something a little more insubstantial. When there is some mystery afoot such as seeking out a hidden library of oldcestor knowledge, investigating a spot where raiders took people, locating a hidden door, or cracking a code, then your average survivor is cannier than you might expect. This all involves gathering or deducing information, which can push the story forward by suggesting the group's next course of action. (Also check out the rules for scavenging on p. XX).

Dystopia Rising divides information into two categories: leads and clues. Leads are necessary to kickstart or continue the plot. Since the story would stall without them, they don't need a roll to find — a character just needs to be in the right situation. Clues offer more than basic information and are generally a challenge to uncover. Clues are not essential to driving the story forward, but can hasten its conclusion, deepen the characters' understanding, or allow them to explore personal agendas and side stories.

Finding Clues

There is a variety of ways to find clues. The following basic templates suggest likely dice pools and the types of clues each method would yield. Typical Complications for information gathering include tipping off the opposition, burning a contact, or owing a debt.

- **Analysis:** The character uses experiments and specialized equipment to learn more about the case at hand. This method normally uses Medicine (dissection, diagnosis) or Science (chemical tests, material analysis), and can only provide information relevant to whatever the character is analyzing.
- **Cracking:** The information is guarded by codes, locks, or walls, needing criminal activity to unveil. This method normally uses Subterfuge (picking locks, lying) or Technology (cracking codes, tampering with machines), and offers information hidden by the target.
- **Interrogation:** The character asks around, reads the atmosphere, or screams at someone hanging from a building. This method normally uses Culture (gossip), Empathy (reading a suspect), Persuasion (questions, conversation), or Subterfuge (criminal contacts), and provides information known to others.
- **Surveying:** The information is right there in front of the character, if they have the right knowledge and look hard enough. This method can use any appropriate Skill, from Close Combat (aftermath of a fight) to Survival (wilderness scene) and provides information about the immediate scene.
- **Research:** The character hits the books or whatever records may be available in search of useful specialist knowledge. This method normally uses Academics (research), Culture (customs, traditions), Lore (myth, secret practices), or Science (facts), and offers information that is generally available, if incredibly obscure or advanced.

Clues and Stunts

The more successes a character earns when gathering information, the more the Storyguide can tell them. The following Stunts allow a player to distribute their threshold successes between specific topics or angles of inquiry and can be performed as many times as the player has successes to spend.

Extra Clue (1s): The Storyguide provides the character with an additional clue, which can relate to a Skill they possess but did not use for the original roll.

Interpretation (1s): The Storyguide offers the character some additional context or insight for understanding a clue or lead, and its relevance to the story or the band.

Q&A (1s): The player can ask the Storyguide one question about the clue, which must relate to how the character is gathering information. If the answer would be irrelevant or a red herring, the Storyguide should offer alternative information.

Player Inspiration (1s): The player can create an entirely new fact about the clue, which his character knows. The Storyguide must approve the fact before it is accepted.

Planning and Enhancements

Knowledge is power, and characters who discover useful information can use it to further their plans. The simplest way to do this is by performing an enhanced Stunt, spending successes from an information-gathering challenge to create an Enhancement for a future roll using a different dice pool. In some situations, the Storyguide might allow a character to expend an Enhancement from an information-gathering challenge to gain new clues, using the Stunts listed above.

Complex Investigations

The Storyguide can also run information gathering as a complex action, a series of challenges covering an entire investigation. In this approach, every Milestone is a clue leading toward the truth, and the Storyguide reveals the full truth to the characters when enough have been found. This sort of complex action is a good way of letting the group quickly tackle an extensive investigation before moving into one of the other arenas.

Intervals for an investigation can span days or even weeks, and characters may not even recognize the clues they unearth as important information until the last piece brings everything together. An interval limit on information gathering might be a deadline for presenting your research, the time before a ghoulish murderer strikes again, and so on.

Just Chattin': Intrigue

No intrigue is complete without people, so the systems for intrigue cover relationships, emotions, motives, and all the ways people relate to one another. In **Dystopia Rising**, this social environment has two core systems. *Influence* is the way people affect others' actions and feelings, whether through manipulation or inspiration, while *Bonds* are the relationships characters build, for good or ill. These two systems are affected by character's *Attitudes* toward one another.

Attitude

Attitude is how a character feels about someone else. This feeling is either positive or negative and has a level of intensity. Normal Attitudes fall within the 1 to 3 range, while unnaturally intense emotions can be level 4 or 5. When one character tries to influence or bond with another character, he must consider her Attitude. If her Attitude would help his attempt, he receives an Attitude Enhancement equal to its level. On the other hand, if the character's Attitude would hinder this influence, they receive the Enhancement instead. If the other character has an Attitude of 0, or their Attitude won't affect the influence either way; neither character receives an Enhancement.

In some cases, the influencing character is not the most important relationship. If the aim of an influence challenge directly affects another character with whom the target has a strong Bond, the Storyguide may allow both Attitude Enhancements to apply at once. For example, a character who is asked to save her worst enemy (negative Attitude 3) by her best friend (positive Attitude 3) would receive a +3 Attitude Enhancement to ignore the request, despite the +3 Enhancement her friend would receive to persuade her.

Player Character Attitudes

Sometimes a character will try to influence or Bond with a player character. In these cases, the player should define their character's Attitude toward the other character. The player should first decide whether their character's feelings are generally positive or negative, then choose its level using the examples on the Attitude table as a guideline.

If a player's having trouble defining their Attitude, they should start with a default level of 2. Then the player provides one or two concrete reasons for why their character's Attitude rating should be a level higher or lower and increase or reduce it by one level per reason.

Shifting Attitude

Once an Attitude has been established, it should remain consistent. However, a character's Attitude can still change. The level and even tenor of a character's Attitude can shift from scene to scene, or even within a single scene, depending on the events around them.

- Influence can change one character's Attitude toward another, such as by spreading foul rumors or flattering them.
- Consolations can improve another character's Attitude toward the failing character by one shift, whether through fortunate coincidence or because their failure is humanizing.
- Complications can worsen Attitudes toward the succeeding character by an amount equal to their level. Other characters might be upset by his methods or angered by his goals.
- Events within the game can shift a character's Attitude appropriately. If a character punches another in the face, they won't stay friendly for long.

Atmosphere

Attitudes can also be modified by *atmosphere*. These are the infectious emotions and general vibes that affect everyone in the area, like mass panic or the buzz from a drunken revelry. Atmospheres are either positive or negative, just like Attitudes, and have a level from 1 to 3. They increase Attitudes of the same type and reduce opposing Attitudes.

Influence

Most social interaction is casual, with information and jokes exchanged freely. It only becomes a challenge when one character really needs to sway another. This is called influence, an intrigue system which allows characters to change Attitudes, encourage actions, and spread ideas. Characters can accomplish these tasks using seduction, grand speeches, fast talk, debate, intimidation, or any other means they can think of.

An influence challenge works like any other: One character forms a dice pool and rolls to meet the difficulty. The target's Attitude always provides an Enhancement, either to the character exerting influence or to the target's opposed difficulty roll. Common Complications for an influence roll include leaving behind hard feelings (i.e. a negative Attitude), a third party noticing the influence, or unintentionally encouraging the target to act.

Exerting Influence

If the goal of an intrigue sequence is particularly ambitious, such as resolving an eternal rivalry or encouraging a peaceful priest to commit murder, it may be resolved as a complex action instead. Each Milestone represents an objection to

that goal, usually for a total number of Milestones equal to the target's original Attitude Enhancement against it.

Otherwise, influence can be resolved with a single roll.

- **Encourage Behavior:** The character wants someone to do (or not do) something. They can ask overtly or use a mixed action with Subterfuge to convince their target it was their own idea. This influence commonly uses Persuasion (sweet-talk, taunts, threats) or Leadership (orders, big speeches). The target uses her own dice pool to create an opposed difficulty and receives a +1-3 Enhancement depending on the apparent danger or cost of the task; hiding a body is a bigger favor than lending a few UPPs. If this Enhancement would be greater than +3, the influence should be a complex action.

- **Encourage Belief:** The character wants someone to believe or think something. This influence commonly uses Empathy (psychology), Persuasion (encouragement, fast talk), Leadership (indoctrination), or Subterfuge (rumors), and faces an opposed difficulty. Outlandish lies offer a +1-3 Enhancement to the target, depending on how patently absurd they are. If successful, the target receives a +1 Enhancement the next time this belief is challenged.

- **Shift Attitude:** The character wants to improve or worsen someone's Attitude toward another character, usually them. This influence commonly uses Empathy (a friendly ear, targeted insults) or Persuasion (seduction, intimidation, charisma), and meets a difficulty equal to the intensity of the target's current Attitude toward that subject. For example, shifting a positive Attitude 3 has a difficulty of 3. If this influence is successful, the target's attitude changes by 1.

As a Stunt, the player can spend successes equal to the new Attitude rating to change it by a second shift. For example, after dropping a character from positive Attitude 3 to 2, spending two more successes on the Stunt would change them to Attitude 1.

- **Shift Atmosphere:** The character wants to change the atmosphere of the room. This influence commonly uses Culture (musical accompaniment, party skills) or Leadership (rallying the crowd), and its difficulty is equal to the level of the current atmosphere. The difficulty increases based on the size of the area in question — add one point of difficulty for roughly every five people. Its success offers the same benefits as a Shift Attitude action, but for the atmosphere.

- **Read Attitude:** The character determines the intentions and relationships of others. This roll normally uses Culture (reading the room) or Empathy (reading a single person) and faces an opposed difficulty. If successful, the character learns something of his target's personality or motives, usually in the form of their target's Attitude toward another character or topic.

Blocking Influence

The difficulty of an influence challenge depends on their aim, but as a rule, the difficulty increases the riskier or more strenuous the influence's goal is, or how much it runs counter to the character's current relationships and worldview.

A player whose character is affected by a successful influence roll can refuse to accept that result if they think it would negatively affect the story or would make them uncomfortable. However, if a player accepts influence which would meaningfully inconvenience their character, they receive 1 point of Momentum as a Consolation.

Bonds

When two characters have a deep connection that drives them through the story, they form a Bond. True love, fierce rivalry, and sworn friendship are all possible Bonds, and they each confer certain advantages and downsides.

Building a Bond requires that two characters use teamwork to overcome a challenge or complex action. If their players both agree, a suitable Bond forms immediately. For example, a Bond of friendship can be created when one of the characters is going out of their way to help the other.

Bonds have a pool of successes the characters can spend to enjoy an equal Enhancement on challenges where they help, defend, or otherwise support each other, up to a maximum of +3. When the Bond is first created, it has a number of successes equal to the lowest of the two characters' positive Attitudes toward each other. Both characters can add to this pool by spending successes from the challenge that created the Bond, or any similar rolls that crop up later in the story.

If the characters spend a scene doing nothing but reinforcing their relationship through roleplay, they can each roll a suitable social dice pool and use their successes to create or fuel a Bond. For example, two lovers might discuss the adventure so far over a romantic dinner, rolling Empathy + Presence and either creating a Bond of love or adding their successes to an existing one.

Whenever a character takes an action which works against one of their Bonds, it faces a Complication of My *Heart Hurts* equal to their positive Attitude (minimum 1). If not overcome, the Complication drains an equal number of successes from the Bond pool.

If the pool of successes runs out, the Bond ends. This doesn't mean that two characters are no longer friends or fall out of love, just that the focus is no longer on their relationship. They can remake the Bond during the story if the opportunity arises or adopt a Bond with a different tenor as their relationship shifts. Characters can have multiple Bonds at once.

A character who comes back from the Grave Mind immediately loses all Bonds and Attitudes. Their emotional investments have been eroded through the experience of coming back to life. They remember the experiences they had with others, but they just don't feel as strongly about them (see p. XX for more).

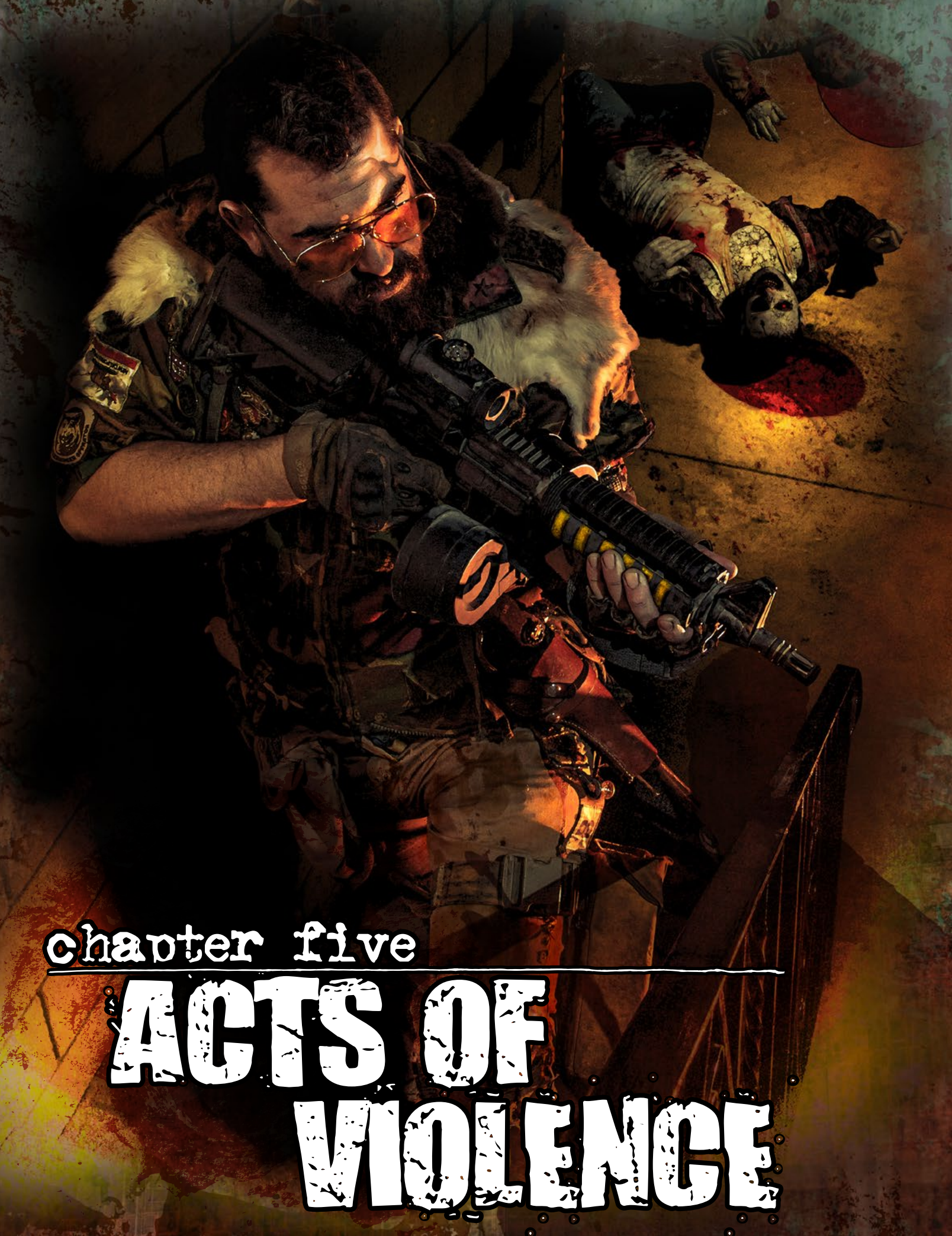
Bonds and Influence

A character's relationships affect how they react to influence through Attitude Enhancements. If a client tries to convince a retired hitman to kill again, he should hope the hitman's beloved mother isn't on his list of targets. An active Bond allows characters to further defy efforts to turn them against their loved ones.

Characters faced with influence that does not support one of their Bonds can spend a success from its pool to increase the difficulty. This increase is normally +1 but rises to +2 if the Bond contradicts the influence in some way, +3 if the influence would genuinely harm the Bond, or +4 if it would outright destroy it.

Bonds are always cooperative and consensual, but characters with a negative Attitude can also Bond with one another. Such a Bond starts with a number of negative successes in its pool equal to their worst negative Attitude, forcing them to spend extra threshold successes to "pay off" the negative pool and create the Bond. Creating a Bond doesn't change a character's Attitude on its own but lets the story focus on a budding change.





chapter five

ACTS OF VIOLENCE

"I believe in being a good neighbor,—but I also believe that cannibals and zed aren't knocking on our door wanting to have a tea party with cucumber sandwiches and the fine china."

- Father Bugs

Brutality in the wastes is a matter of course. People fight to survive: along with the mental and emotional battles of facing fears, sicknesses, radiation, hallucinations, and trying to scratch out another day, come the fights that do not end until one person is down, bleeding out into what used to be a cranberry bog. Most folks pretend they have to hold on to remnants of civilization like a security blanket. Some don't pretend at all, and perhaps the worst enemies in these times are the ones looking the most human. But sooner or later, every survivor meets with violence out in the wastes, and at those terrible times friend becomes foe, family becomes strangers, and a remnant of humanity becomes a creature warped by Infection and instinct.

Suit Up: Armor & Weapons

Your survivors have all found weapons, and have assembled ad-hoc protective gear to function as armor. But are these weapons different from each other? How does the armor function? Something made to protect against scrapes on roads might give way easily to a knife, after all. A shirt made of carefully salvaged and worked chain isn't innocuous, but it might be able to stop a punch or a baseball bat. How do you keep track of what each item can do and how it affects the game?

Tags

Tags apply to weapons and armor and come into play both with intact gear and in attempting to repair gear. Tags help define one set of weapons from another, and what type of attacks can be done with such a weapon. Be creative and keep the general theme of your games in mind. If the characters are going against zombies, they might not mind weapons that leave gaping, messy wounds, or might prefer weapons that do bashing damage. Facing off against other cunning survivors may require finding and using weapons that can be concealed or weapons that have a purpose other than inflicting violent wounds.

Weapons and armor can also act as a characterization method and as a story hook: Did the character make their own armor? Does the survivor in question use a sickle to play on legend and incite fear in targets, or because she has some experience raising subsistence crops in her former settlement and took equipment she was already familiar with? Is the baseball bat he carries around just a weapon, a way for him to imagine a past where sports were played, or a way to ingratiate himself with townies who treasure items of leisure long past?

Starting on p. XX, we have lots of armor and equipment listed, along with their tags. These are only examples: Tags may be different based on character backgrounds, if the weapon in question was meticulously crafted out of Scrap, or to differentiate one similar weapon from another. This applies to armor as well. Players are encouraged to use their imagination. All in all, these tags are meant to be guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules.

Weapon Tags

When designing weapons or using tags to differentiate between weapons available in a story, a single weapon may have up to three total points of tags. There is no point cost for damage type (Bashing, Lethal, and Stun) or weapon use (Firearm, Melee, and Thrown), but weapons may only have one type each.

Arcing (1): This weapon can be fired in an arc, allowing shots to better maneuver around cover. When using this weapon against a target in cover, downgrade the cover's rating by 1.

Bashing (0): The weapon deals blunt-force damage. A weapon with the Bashing tag cannot be used to slice, pierce, or sever objects or limbs.

Concealable (1): This weapon can be hidden up a sleeve, within a particularly long coat, or possibly in a pocket. Gain +1 Enhancement to any tasks that involve sneaking this weapon into a location without someone noticing.

Firearm (0): The weapon is a gun or other ranged weapon. This must be used with the Firearms Skill.

Grappling (1): This weapon grants +1 Enhancement to making the Grapple attack.

Lethal (0): This weapon deals lethal damage, which can quickly lead to serious injury.

Long Range (1): This weapon can be used at long distances, extending its effective range to long. These weapons increase the difficulty of any attacks in the close and short ranges by +1.

Loud (-1): This weapon is noisy and cannot be silenced. This means that it will surely draw attention if used.

Melee (0): This is a hand-held weapon that is swung or thrust to inflict damage. It must be used with the Close Combat Skill.

Messy (-1): This weapon does not do damage cleanly, instead shattering bones, leaving ragged wounds, or blowing apart cover. A

Messy weapon will leave a distinctive trail of gore in its wake and use of the specific weapon can likely be easily identified.

Piercing (2): This weapon is meant to punch through the protective layers of armor. Reduce a target's Armor value by 1 when dealing damage with a weapon with this tag. If the target uses the antagonist rules (see p. XX), just decrease their overall defense by 1.

Pushing (2): The weapon is heavy, large, or otherwise just good at pushing opponents around on the battlefield. After dealing Stress or Injury Conditions to an opponent with such a weapon, a character can also choose to knock the opponent prone.

Reach (1): A weapon with a long haft like a spear, or otherwise a weapon where one end of the weapon can reach up to six feet away (like a whip). These weapons can change Close Combat attacks into short-range attacks.

Returning (1): Often paired with Thrown, this type of weapon returns when fired or thrown away from the character. Examples might include boomerangs as well as harpoons with a retractable chain.

Shockwave (4): This weapon can be used to strike all targets in the same range band. This tag is reserved for weapons at large Scale and is not typical on mundane weaponry.

Slow (-1): This weapon requires time and effort to set up, reload, move, etc. An action must be dedicated to the aspect of the weapon that requires work and attention.

Stun (0): This weapon inflicts Stress Conditions instead of Injury Conditions.

Thrown (0): This type of weapon can be thrown out to short range. When thrown, the Firearms Skill must be used. Unless the weapon also has the Returning tag, weapons that are Thrown must be retrieved manually after being tossed.

Two-Handed (-1): The weapon requires two hands to use. If the character loses the use of one of her hands, she cannot use this weapon.

Unconcealable (-1): The weapon is too big or bulky to be easily hidden. You may be able to smuggle it into places by putting it in a container or case of some kind, but even this might be difficult without arousing suspicion.

Versatile (2): The weapon has other uses than simply causing harm. Add +1 Enhancement when using this weapon to perform any Stunts.

Worn (2): The weapon is strapped to the character's body or otherwise worn and cannot be disarmed.

Armor Tags

Like weapons, armor may have up to three points of tags. The tags included below for armor may help distinguish between sets of armor and their capabilities to avoid or reduce damage. These tags are not exhaustive, and most can be purchased more than once.

Cumbersome (-1): The armor is bulky, imposing a +1 difficulty to any kind of Athletics feats performed while wearing it.

Concealable (2): The armor can be hidden under clothing.

Hard (1 or 3): Hard armor grants the wearer additional Injury Condition boxes. The one-point version of the tag gives the wearer one condition box, and the three-point version of this tag gives a second one. Once filled, the boxes stay filled until the end of the scene, though there is no Complication associated with an Injury Condition box provided by Hard armor. Armor cannot be both Hard and Soft.

Innocuous (2): This type of armor looks ordinary or otherwise used for other activities and does not immediately raise suspicion. Motorcycle or motocross jackets are prime examples of this, but sports pads and associated gear might be considered innocuous as well in some circles that may still recognize or play the sport the gear originates from.

Resistant (2): The armor is designed to protect against a certain type of damage, ignoring certain tags. The most common is *bulletproof*, which ignores the Piercing tag on any weapon that also has the Firearms tag.

Soft (1-3): Soft armor increases the difficulty of the Inflict Damage Stunt by 1. Armor cannot be both Hard and Soft.

Weighty (-1): The armor is heavy or tiring to wear. If a character performs extended feats of labor or sleeps in it, even accidentally, she must make a difficulty 3 Athletics + Stamina roll. If she fails this roll, she gains the Fatigued Condition (p. XX) as a result.

Example: *Kyle, Audrey, Ian, Christopher, Diane, and Erik are all playing a game of* **Dystopia Rising**. *Lakeisha is acting as the Storyguide.*

Audrey's character, Father Bugs, and his traveling companions come across a freshly finished raid. Amidst the carnage lies a body hacked apart by what looks to be an axe. But the weapon in question looks like it has many edges, not polished down for a clean single cut, as if it was specially constructed to prolong pain. Lakeisha mentions that this weapon includes a Messy tag, which can be easily identified by the pattern it leaves on victims.

Improvised Weapons

Sometimes, a survivor is caught off guard but can use her environment to aid her in her attack. If she is in a fight at what passes for a bar in the wastes, she may be able to use a glass bottle as an improvised melee weapon. If her goal is to garrote a guard, she may be able to use a section of barbed-wire fence she cut away earlier in her attempt to get into the compound.

If it is a simple or fragile improvised weapon, such as a broken glass bottle to slice at the exposed flesh of an opponent, the Storyguide gives you +1 Enhancement. For more sturdy weapons, like using a baseball bat or a cane, the Storyguide can give +2 Enhancement. Improvised weapons tend to be taken from the environment and as such tend to only last a scene or two: if you want a more substantial weapon, see the crafting and salvaging rules (p. XX).

Example: *At the train station, Ian's character Kimber goes after a mercenary sniper. Kimber had gone stealthily around and had previously cut a section of barbed wire out of a fence blocking a maintenance tunnel. He attacks this sniper from behind with the barbed wire, trying to cut at the sniper's feet or legs with the impromptu weapon. Lakeisha rules that barbed wire bends and breaks easily, so it only gives a +1 Enhancement and will break after use.*

The scene shifts to Christopher, who is playing Angela. Angela moves slowly even with the assistance of her cane, and she gets mugged as she looks like an easier target than the other survivors on the path. Angela takes the metal cane she uses to help her steady her walk and swings it like a club. The Storyguide decides the cane offers +2 Enhancement.

Come Out Swinging: Initiative

When it is important to know which character acts quickest, initiative must be determined. Each player rolls a dice pool for their characters: this dice pool is the most appropriate Skill + Cunning. In a fight, the most appropriate Skill for one player character (or PC) might be Firearms, while another character might have the most appropriate Skill be Close Combat. The Storyguide rolls the dice pools relevant to her characters as well. If lots of Storyguide-controlled characters (SGCs) are involved in the scene, groups with similar statistics may share the same dice pool.

Once all characters have rolled their dice pools, tally the total number of successes for each character and rank them from highest to lowest. In the event of a tie between Storyguide and player, favor the player in terms of the initiative order. Results from PCs become PC slots; results for SGCs become SGC slots. The players can determine among themselves which player takes which of the PC slots. The Storyguide determines which of her characters takes the Storyguide character slots, or if said characters are being rolled as a singular group. (See p. XX for rules on abstract fights and mass violence.)

The players and Storyguide then proceed with actions in this order. The round ends after all characters have taken their turn. Then the initiative returns to the character in the first slot and repeats through the order until initiative is no longer needed.

Example: *The characters are trying to make their way to a settlement called Do Over. Kyle's character Two-buck and Diane's character Lucky Lyra are traveling together and encounter a small horde of zed.*

Lakeisha asks for initiative rolls. As Two-buck primarily uses an old rifle and wants to try and pick off individual zed before the group gets within close range of them, Kyle rolls Firearms + Cunning for them and gets five successes. Diane decide she's just going to have Lyra dodge and run, rolls Close Combat + Cunning for Lucky Lyra, and gets two successes. Lakeisha rolls for the zombies as one group using Close Combat + Cunning and gains one success.

Two-buck chooses to take the first PC slot and goes first. That leaves the second PC slot for Lucky Lyra and the third SGC slot for the group of zed.

Go for Blood: Attacks

As we mentioned last chapter, if a survivor faces opposition when attempting an action, this is considered a contested action. For the purposes of violent confrontations, however, a survivor is usually *attacking*.

To attack someone or something, a survivor must first be able to reach them with their desired attack. A player checks the tags (p. XX) for their desired weapon to see if their character is within range of that particular weapon, and then makes an *attack* roll. Melee attacks use Close Combat, grappling uses Athletics, and thrown weapons and guns use Firearms.

If the player fails to get enough successes, the attack doesn't do anything significant, but the attacker does gain Consolation. If the player rolls enough successes to equal or exceed the opponent's Defense (p. XX), the attack connects with the target, but doesn't do any substantial damage. The player may also spend additional successes to incorporate Stunts that can range from inflicting an Injury Condition to using more cinematic effects, such as tripping the opponent or disarming them.

Remember that attack rolls may have Complications. That doesn't mean the attack fails, but the Complication may lead to the target's allies in an area rushing to provide assistance, a firearm running out of ammunition, or a dull knife getting unexpectedly caught in flesh or in armor. In short, the Complication adds an unforeseen consequence, which can add variety to a fight, particularly for Storyguides who wish to emphasize scarcity in their games.

Types of Attacks

The following give some examples of attacks you can perform. Each attack lists the following:

- **Range:** The maximum range band at which the attack can be performed.
- **Skill:** What Skill must be used (although choice of Attribute depends on the situation in question).
- **Stunts:** Various Stunts that could be performed with additional successes. *You can only buy a Stunt once per roll*, unless the Stunt specifies otherwise (even if the Stunt costs zero successes to "buy").

ATTACK RESOLUTION

1. Declare your target (or targets) and choose your dice pool. The target(s) declare the Defense action they wish to take and roll for a Defensive action if it's their first time in the turn being attacked.
2. If your target is in range of your weapon, make an attack roll. Total your successes, adding Enhancements to the total.
3. Spend successes to overcome the target's Defense. If the attack is successful, spend additional successes on Stunts.
4. The target takes any Injury or Stress Conditions based on Stunts such as Inflict Damage.
5. The next player takes their turn.

Close Combat Attack

You strike your opponent at close range, either with a weapon or without.

Range: Close

Skill: Close Combat

Stunts

Inflict Damage (0s + Soft Armor): Deal an Injury Condition to your target. Can be bought more than once if there is a Scale difference (see p. XX).

Critical Hit (4s): Deal an additional Injury Condition to your target.

Blind (2s): The target takes +1 difficulty on all attack actions with any weapon with the Ranged tag.

Break-up Grapple (1s): When targeting a character who is part of a grapple (that you are not in) you may use this Stunt to break up their grapple.

Disarm (successes equal to opponent's Close Combat Skill): You use your weapon as leverage, pulling or twisting your opponent's weapon or item out of their hand. You may spend an additional success to knock the item into short range.

Establish Grapple (successes equal to Defense): You force your opponent into a grapple. You and your opponent both have the Grappled Condition (see sidebar).

Feint (2s + variable): For every 2 successes spent on Feint, you generate Enhancement on an ally's next attack against the opponent you're attacking. You must designate the ally gaining the Enhancement bonus when you make this attack.

Knockdown (successes equal to opponent's Might): Knock your opponent prone where they stand.

Seize (successes equal to opponent's Close Combat Skill): You take an object held by (but not strapped or attached to) your opponent. You must be strong enough to hold the object without effort, and you must have a free hand.

Trip (successes equal to the opponent's Dexterity): You force the target to go prone.

Grapple

You wrestle with your opponent. As part of a Close Combat attack, you can choose to place both yourself and your opponent in a grapple with the Establish Grapple stunt, which inflicts the Grappled Condition.

Range: Close

Skill: Athletics

Stunts

Inflict Damage (0s + Soft Armor): Deal an Injury Condition to your target. Can be bought more than once if there is a Scale difference (see p. XX).

Critical Hit (4s): Deal an additional Injury Condition to your target.

Break Free (0s or variable): You break out of the grapple. If you are in control, this requires no successes. If you are not in control, this requires you to spend success equal to the number of successes your opponent spent establishing the grapple.

Gain Control (variable): You maneuver yourself to be in control of a grapple. The cost of this Stunt is equal to the number of successes your opponent spent establishing the grapple. This Stunt can only be purchased when you are not in control.

Pin (2s): Deny opponent their Defense against all other attacks. Must be in control to initiate.

Position (per success): You generate an Enhancement bonus that applies on your next grappling attack against the target equal to the number of successes spent on this Stunt.

Takedown (1s): You render both yourself and your opponent prone. You maintain the grapple. You may also employ Inflict

GRAPPLED

While grappling, you are normally limited to grappling Stunts unless you break free. The person who initiates the grapple starts with control of the grapple. The grapple action is only taken when you are already in a grapple. While in a grapple you can only use weapons with the Grapple tag. While in a grapple and not in control of it, you cannot use the Withdraw defense action.

Momentum Trigger: You are prevented from taking a critical action due to being restrained.

Resolution: You or your opponent successful perform the Break Free Stunt.

Damage or Throw in conjunction with this representing a body slam or sacrifice throw. Must be in control to use.

Throw (variable): You hurl your opponent a number of yards equal to your Might in any direction you desire. Each success spent after the first increases the distance of the throw by a yard. Throwing counts as breaking free, thus ending the grapple. You must be in control to throw.

Ranged Attack

Using a ranged weapon, you fire a projectile at your target.

Range: Determined by weapon

Skill: Firearms

Stunts

Inflict Damage (0s + Soft Armor): Deal an Injury Condition to your target. Can be bought more than once if there is a Scale difference (see p. XX).

Critical Hit (4s): Deal an additional Injury Condition to your target.

Disarm (successes equal to opponent's Close Combat Skill): You fire your projectile at the weapon or their hand, forcing them to drop it. You may spend an additional success to knock the item into short range.

Knock Down (successes equal to opponents Stamina): You spend successes to knock your opponent prone.

Pin Down (2s + variable): Pin Down applies a 2 Complication of *Pinned Down* on the character's next attack. If they choose not to buy off this Complication, then they receive one automatic Injury Condition relevant to the damage type of the weapon. A character can spend additional successes on this Stunt to increase the Complication.

Thrown Attack

You hurl a weapon, such as a hatchet or a javelin, with your raw physical strength.

Range: Short

Skill: Firearms

Stunts

Inflict Damage (0s + Soft Armor): Deal an Injury Condition to your target. Can be bought more than once if there is a Scale difference (see p. XX).

Critical Hit (4s): Deal an additional Injury Condition to your target.

Blind (2s): The target takes +1 difficulty on all attack actions with any weapon with the Ranged tag.

Disarm (successes equal to opponent's Close Combat Skill): You hurl your missile at their weapon hand, forcing them to drop it. You may spend an additional success to knock the item into short range.

Line Drive (successes equal to opponent's Dexterity): You spend successes to knock your opponent prone where they stand.

I CAN'T DO ANYTHING!

Sometimes, a character is in a position where they can't roll enough successes or don't have enough Enhancement to do anything meaningful to an opponent. That doesn't mean they're useless! Remember the Teamwork rules on p. XX? Those work in a fight as well. Yelling and distracting a raider (maybe via a successful Persuasion + Presence roll) can give Enhancement to the team's sniper expert, allowing them enough additional successes to do some real damage.

But you might want to invest in a weapon and some Skill dots in the future. The Wastelands aren't soft on survivors that can't hold their own in a fight.

Example: *On his way from his old encampment to the settlement of Do Over, Erik's character Case gets into a fistfight with another Townie called Millions. Lakeisha rolls Close Combat + Might and gains three successes. Case rolls and increases his Defense to 3, so Millions spends those three to buy off the difficulty and hit. Lakeisha takes the Inflict Damage Stunt (which requires zero successes) to cause damage to Case.*

Range

Range is whether a survivor is fighting at close quarters to take control of a knife or a shotgun, or if the survivor must calculate for wind and momentum during a long sniping shot.

Close range covers characters who are up close and personal. This is the range for Close Combat attacks, and generally involve Might.

Short range includes being in range for reflexive shooting or for use of thrown weapons. At this range, Might or Dexterity can be used as part of the dice pools for these attacks.

At Medium range, firearms and bows can be used comfortably. Dexterity or Cunning may be used as part of the dice pools for medium-range attacks.

Long range attacks include compensating for wind or momentum, for example if a survivor is a sniper. This also includes some special weapon attacks. At this range, Cunning may be used as part of the dice pools.

For Extreme range attacks, these are attacks in the realm of heavy military artillery, attacks that need to compensate for the curvature of the Earth, or other wildly powerful attacks. Most oldcestor tech like this is long gone, but you never know. Intellect can be used as part of the dice pools for these if necessary.

Sometimes, though, an attack is simply Out of Range, which means that the intended attack is beyond the maximum capacity of that particular weapon.

Occasionally, a survivor has no choice but to take a shot at someone who is not in ideal range. For each range band beyond the maximum range of the intended weapon, add +1 difficulty to the roll.

Surprise

When you want to get the drop on an enemy and maximize the element of surprise, you must set up an ambush. Against a single target, roll Subterfuge + Dexterity or Intellect against a difficulty of the target's Composure divided by two (round up). Ties favor the player character. Against a group, roll against the highest rating among the group of enemies.

On a success, the ambushing character or characters have a full round to act against their opponents before initiative is rolled as normal and the enemies join the fight.

Duck!: Defense

Defending creates the minimum difficulty an attack must beat to successfully hit a target. The first time they are attacked in a round, the defending character rolls the most appropriate of her Resistance attributes. Spend the successes on this roll to generate Defensive Stunts: any Defensive Stunts persist until the end of the round. Possible Stunts include but are not limited to:

Dodge (variable): Every success on the defense roll increases the difficulty for the defending character to be hit on a one-to-one basis, starting at a difficulty of 1. This difficulty is often called *Defense* for clarity.

Dive to Cover (1s): The character moves up to one range band away to reach cover established in the Field. Cover utilized by this Stunt absorbs Injuries. (See p. XX.)

Possible Strategies

Much as attacks, other actions can be used as part of overall defensive maneuvers. These actions may modify attack or defense.

Field Conditions: It is also possible for the Storyguide to use the Field concept to introduce Complications and Enhancements as the situation might call for it. Fields in a fight may represent things like a tank leaking gasoline onto the area around it, radioactivity polluting the whole area, or other conditions.

Active or Prone: During the middle of a violent conflict, going prone and standing up can be more difficult. While hitting the dirt sounds like a great option when someone is firing at you, it is a significantly worse option if someone wants to kick you in the head anyway. A prone character takes –1 penalty to their Defense to any opponents that are in close range with them, and a +2 benefit to Defense with opponents at any other range.

Normally standing up is a reflexive action, but if an opponent is in close range with a prone character, the prone character must stand up as part of a mixed action. Standing up is an Athletics roll with a Complication of 1. If the player does not buy off the Complication, his character takes an Injury Condition as his opponent punishes his attempt to stand.



On Cover and Complications

Nothing is as reliable as taking cover against something solid. While a survivor can use a variety of scavenged armor, shields, and weapons to keep attacks away from their fleshy bits, taking cover provides a major benefit: It absorbs Injuries that would have otherwise been taken if the cover was not present. Utilizing cover in the heat of fire requires an Athletics + Dexterity roll or a Defensive Stunt. Cover is either expendable, light, heavy, or full.

Expendable cover includes items like kitchen chairs, barstools, and other objects that are less than person-sized. This type of cover can only absorb 1 Injury Condition before it is destroyed.

Light cover protects a significant amount of a person's body, such as leaning around a pillar in a theater. This absorbs 4 Injury Conditions before it is destroyed: Injuries must be split among survivors utilizing the cover if more than one hides behind it.

Heavy cover protects almost all of the character, leaving only scant parts of him exposed. Examples include firing at a character crouched behind the hood of a car or through a slit in a reinforced door. This absorbs 10 Injury Conditions. Like light cover, Injuries must be split among characters using the cover.

Full cover blocks line of sight entirely but is otherwise functionally identical to heavy cover. A character with full cover cannot be targeted by ranged attacks.

Broken Bones: Damage

If all goes well for you in a fight (or badly, depending on your point of view), someone must deal with damage.

Injury Conditions

Characters gain special Conditions when injured, called *Injury Conditions*.

There are four general categories corresponding to increasing levels of difficulty modifier: *Bruised (+1)*, *Injured (+2)*, and *Maimed (+4)*. Beyond that, the character is considered *Taken Out*.

Characters don't get merely Bruised, Injured, or Maimed, though. That is a mechanical generalization. Instead, they suffer a Broken Arm or a Cracked Skull instead, and this specificity does affect the game: How the difficulty shift might manifest is determined by what kind of injury the character suffers from. A character suffering from a Broken Leg would reasonably face more difficulty walking or running, while a character suffering from a Broken Arm might have more difficulty driving a vehicle or firing a gun at an opponent. Even though both these characters might technically have the Injured Condition to denote the general level of Complication, the way the Complications affect the actions of the character play out very differently.

Be descriptive when applying these Conditions — weapons can only inflict Conditions that would be narratively logical. Being hit with a bashing weapon would leave bruises and broken bones, while a lethal weapon could cause ripped flesh and blood loss. If the Injury Condition would not affect the performance of your character, then the Condition effect and any Momentum generation simply do not apply.

BRUISED

They've been beaten up a fair bit. There are no effects beyond filling the damage level.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the character's way, adding +1 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Strains recover after a night's rest; non-Strain characters (if any are ever encountered) recover after two days' wait.

INJURED

They've been roundly beaten or are sustaining a serious but heroic wound.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the character's way, adding +2 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Strains recover after one week's wait; non-Strain characters (if any are ever encountered) recover after two weeks' wait.

MAIMED

The survivor is suffering from a grievous and potentially permanent wound.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the way, adding +4 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Most characters recover after two weeks' wait; Strains recover after one week's wait.

TAKEN OUT

The character may be dying, trapped underneath the ruins of a platform, or simply knocked out. The character in question is no longer able to fight and cannot take any further actions for the remainder of the scene in which the character acquired this Condition. Any successful hit in a later scene has the same effect until the Taken Out Condition is resolved.

When a survivor is Taken Out, that does not necessarily mean the survivor is dying. Even in the harsh world of **Dystopia Rising**, the Storyguide must be able to read the tone of the game as it is in progress. While death is easy in the wastes, it should not be so severe and imminent for a player to be discouraged from playing. If the Storyguide determines the character is in immediate danger of dying, see Death and Dying, p. XX.

Momentum Trigger: Add three Momentum to the pool when first Taken Out, and for every time a definite lack of the character's presence harms their companions.

Resolution: Medical attention or when conditions change so that the character is no longer Taken Out. The injury that caused the character to be Taken Out, while no longer incapacitating, gets in her way in a later scene, adding +3 difficulty to an action.

Concede

It is possible during a duel or a brawl for a survivor to *opt to concede*. In this case, the survivor goes straight to the Taken Out Condition, bypassing the Bruised, Injured, and Maimed Conditions. Three Momentum are added to the pool as per normal, and the character takes no further damage. Losing a fight can be resolved the same way as a Condition, leading to a new angle in a story. There are also multiple options for withdrawing from a fight, and if a fight seems one-sided, it is the Storyguide's responsibility to gently remind the players of these various options and approaches.

Bleeding Out

When a character reaches the stage of Taken Out, they are conscious but have sustained major injuries, whether mental or physical. However, if the character that is Taken Out sustains further damage such as from further attacks, that character falls into *Bleeding Out*. The additional damage must be intentionally targeted at the Taken Out character: If damage is done by a Field Condition, such as a landslide, the character remains at the stage of Taken Out. A coup-de-grace delivered with a sword or pipe, however, or additional shots targeted at the Taken Out survivor do count.

A survivor that is Bleeding Out cannot perform any actions aside from calling for help, and falls prone, unable to take any defense. Bleed Out has three distinct stages: *Fallen*, *Fading*, and *Critical*. At the end of every round the survivor remains in Bleed Out, the survivor must make a roll using Medicine + Resolve for her dice pool. If the roll succeeds, the survivor continues to cling to life and does not fall further into her Bleed Out. Each consecutive turn spent in Bleed Out adds +1 difficulty to this roll, starting from a base target number of one success needed. If the character fails three of these tests, they die — but that may not be the end.

Each stage of Bleeding Out has its own mechanics.

- At Fallen, the survivor can gain a slight boost to Resolve as she looks for something emotionally or physically to anchor her efforts to avoid falling further into Bleed Out, making the Resolve temporarily +1 for the duration of this stage.
- At Fading, the previous boost is gone as despair and shock start setting in. The survivor loses –1 Resolve (in addition to the temporary +1 benefit from Fallen).
- At Critical, the survivor loses –2 Resolve.

THAT LEG NEVER HEALED RIGHT

If one of the Bleed Out tests results in a botch, even if the survivor ends up stabilizing due to the outcome of the three tests, one of the survivor's Injury Conditions can become Persistent. Perhaps a broken leg never sets quite right, or a fractured skull leads to mild brain damage. Using such Persistent Conditions, and their overall effects, is up to the Storyguide — check out "Disability" on p. XX for more.

Stress Conditions

Not all damage is purely physical. It is one thing to get into a scrap when your will and mind are as healthy as they will be out in the wastes. It is quite another when an already emotionally exhausted survivor stumbles into a shootout.

Mental stress counts as a distinct track from the physical Injury Condition track and is resolved separately. In increasing severity, they are *Troubled* (+1), *Distraught* (+2), and *Haunted* (+4). Beyond that, you're *Burned Out*. However, as with Injury Conditions, which can and will be more specific. Such examples include "Sleepless" or "Trembling," provided that the effects of mental and social damage would be logical to the story.

As with Injury Conditions, if a character faces extreme amounts of Stress Conditions or a particularly daunting ordeal, the player can *opt to concede*, skipping the other Conditions and jumping straight to Burned Out. The character takes no further damage and adds three Momentum to the pool.

TROUBLED

They've had a rough day.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the character's way, adding +1 difficulty onto an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or an hour's break.

DISTRAUGHT

They're stressed out beyond belief, and it's hampering their ability to act.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the character's way, adding +2 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or a good night's sleep.

HAUNTED

They've experienced a horribly traumatic experience.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the way, adding +4 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or a whole day's relaxation.

STRESS AND TRAUMA CONDITIONS

Trauma Conditions are covered in more detail on p. XX, but many of them are Conditions where the character draws comfort from illogical or dangerous activities. Such a character cannot resolve their Stress Conditions unless they are able to get away from all Trauma Condition triggers (even temporarily). For example, no matter how long you sleep in a small, cramped cave, you won't get any less stressed out if you have Claustrophobia.

BURNED OUT

The stress is simply too much to bear, and the survivor shuts down. As a result, the character acquires a Trauma Condition (p. XX). While they are Burned Out, they cannot use any of their Psi Edges.

Momentum Trigger: Add three Momentum to the pool when first Burned Out, and for every time a definite lack of the character's presence or capability harms their companions.

Resolution: Your character must witness an act of compassion offered to them or to their allies. Alternatively, they can devote a single day and night to rest and self-care, which must be portrayed in a minimum of two scenes. Any Trauma Conditions must be resolved separately.

Damage and Scale

Most combatants are similar in power and ability, but when the sides are uneven, Scale comes into play. For the most part, Scale works the same for combat as it does in the other parts of the game (see p. XX for more). Scale Enhancement bonuses are additional successes on a character's rolls during a fight, including for Defense.

In addition to the Enhancement bonus, characters of a higher Scale rating can use their impressive power to deal additional damage. A character with a higher Scale rating may purchase the Inflict Damage Stunt an additional time for each Scale rank they have above their opponent.

When facing opponents (including objects such as vehicles) of a greater Scale, a character can only deal damage to a target no greater than two Scale above her. A character with two or more Scale above the other simply dictates the results of the conflict, so it's not a great idea to face down a massive horde on your own.

Indirect Damage

Attacks by garrote, flame-covered iron, or a good old firearm are not the only ways to die. There are poisons as well as various environmental threats such as heightened radiation, fire, and constant heat that lie in wait to slowly kill when the survivor might least expect it. You can find some examples, such as radiation and severe weather, starting on p. XX.

Regardless of the source of the damage, all types of indirect damage possess a *damage rating* from 1 to 5. A rating of 1 denotes mild harm, while 5 denotes an exceptionally lethal threat. Whenever a character is exposed to an indirect threat, they must roll a Stamina + Resolve roll to resist it; however, the frequency of such rolls depends on the source of the damage. All sources of indirect damage have a difficulty of 1, and on a successful roll, each remaining success subtracts one from the damage rating. The remaining damage rating (which can be reduced to 0) denotes how many separate Injury Conditions the character suffers from that source of damage.

Threat Types

There are different ways that survivors can take indirect damage.

- **Contact:** Anyone touching the object with bare skin suffers the damage. Contact poisons, small fires, various toxic chemicals, and liquid nitrogen are examples of contact-based threats.
- **Environmental:** Anyone spending time in the environment without appropriate protective gear eventually suffers this damage. Extreme natural environments are examples of this, as well as radiation-soaked areas, dealing with toxic gases, and falling from great heights.
- **Ingestible:** The character must eat or drink the substance to suffer its effects. Alcohol is the most common non-lethal ingestible, but poisons and radioactive liquids are greater threats.
- **Injectable:** The character must be injected or stabbed with an object coated in the threatening substance to suffer the effects of the substance. This category includes bites from venomous snakes, but many drugs, tranquilizer darts, poison-coated blow darts, and even plutonium-tipped darts and daggers may also count.

Different protective gear is often needed for different threats. A gas mask or a sealed suit completely protects a character from inhaled toxins, while an oxygen mask may protect against both inhaled toxins and suffocation. Some threats, like fire and radiation, cannot be completely protected against, even though protective gear may still help. In these cases, protective gear works like Soft armor, subtracting 1 (or in the case of the best protective gear, 2) from the damage rating from a single type of damage, such as only fire, or only radiation. In the wastes, though, such specialized gear is coveted, and if word gets out of a newly discovered cache of even minimally tarnished gear from militaries long gone or hobbies long buried, there may be a contest of all types trying to get to it first and to destroy whoever is in the way.

Indirect Damage Tags

Indirect damage has its own tags. Some of the standard weapon tags may also apply, but indirect damage sources may have as many tags as appropriate for the threat.

- **Continuous (X):** This type of damage continues to affect the character in some way as long as they remain in its presence, such as a room full of poison gas that continues to affect characters who breathe in the gas. All sources of damage with the Continuous tag also possess a rating, which determines how frequently targets take the listed damage. Common examples include Continuous (round), Continuous (minute), and Continuous (hour), meaning a character within an area affected by a continuous damage source must roll to avoid suffering the listed damage once a round, once a minute, or once an hour.
- **Deadly:** This type of damage is particularly difficult to shake off: no matter how well a character does on his Stamina + Resolve roll, he always takes at least one Injury Condition from this type of damage. If the source of damage also possesses the Continuous tag, then the character suffers a minimum of one Injury Condition each time he must resist the damage.
- **Non-Lethal:** Damage from this source results in a Stress Condition. The damage rating of the source determines the effect of the Condition. For example, the Complication associated with the Troubled Condition might be "nauseated" in the case of a mild poison. Alcohol is a damage rating of 1 and is a common non-lethal source, but other sources might include tasers, tranquilizer darts, and sleeping gases.

EXAMPLE THREAT	DAMAGE RATING	TAGS	THREAT TYPE
Alcohol	1	Non-Lethal	Ingestible
Antarctic Cold	1-3	Continuous (hour), Deadly	Environmental
Cobra Venom	5	Deadly	Injectable
Extreme Desert Heat	1-2	Continuous (hour)	Environmental
Falling	1 for every 10 feet if falling onto a hard surface	Above 20 feet, falling becomes Deadly	Environmental
Glowing Patch of Radiation	1-3	Continuous (hour), Deadly	Environmental
Interior of a Burning House	1-3+	Continuous (round)	Environmental
Knock-Out Gas	3	Continuous (round), Non-Lethal	Environmental
Nuclear Reactor Leak	5	Continuous (minute), Deadly	Environmental
Tranquilizer Dart	4	Non-Lethal	Injectable

+ Any damage rating with a variable range depends upon the severity of the source of indirect damage.

Example: *Lakeisha lets Diane's character, Lucky Lyra, know that she has accidentally antagonized the settlement of Do Over. The leaders are leading a mob to act against the player characters, and their camp is now on fire. The characters are facing a source of Continuous (round) and Lethal damage — Lakeisha rules the damage rating at a 2, as while the characters are not stuck in a building with the obstacles a building might bring, they are in an open field and must deal with tents aflame, panicked animals, potential loss of gear and supplies, and other dangers.*

On their way to escape the field and get away from the fire, Lyra is not so lucky and suffers two Injury Conditions. However, Lucky Lyra is wearing Soft armor. Lakeisha rules it reduces the damage rating from fire by 1, and Lucky Lyra takes a Bruised Condition of "Inconvenient Burns."

First Aid and Coping Mechanisms

After the violence is over and done with, a character can give and receive first aid or help frantic characters cope with their stress. This allows a character to downgrade one of their Injury or Stress Conditions to one of a lower level.

For Injury Conditions, make a Medicine + Intellect roll with the difficulty based on the severity of the injury (1, 2, or 4, respectively). A character can only remove one Condition this way per act, through a scene of picking out glass shards from a lacerated arm, wrapping a burned arm in bandages, or some

THE MORGUE

Although they pick up different names in different places, ask for the Morgue in most any settlement and you'll be shown to a spot set aside for the dead to return. Survivors know that by arranging psionic crystals in areas of fungal concentration, as well as incorporating certain resonant objects like local memorabilia or personal effects of the deceased, it becomes much more likely for bodies to surface in that spot rather than emerge randomly in the wild. The practice of building a Morgue is so widespread as to be essentially universal, to the point where it's common to see friends and relatives of the recently deceased holding a vigil outside to ease their transition when they finally return ... or put them down for good if they've joined the ranks of the undead.

There's more about Morgues on p. XX.



other sequence that makes sense for the type of injury or mental stress sustained.

For Stress Conditions, make an Empathy + Intellect roll with the difficulty based on the severity of the stress. Stress Conditions can be handled similarly through a scene of sitting down and taking time to meditate, getting to a quiet and dimly lit area to reduce sensory overload, or some other coping mechanism suitable for that type of stress. Others can help a stressed-out character cope by offering to help with the stressed-out character's chores, offering contact such as a hug, saying how much they appreciate the character's contributions, or by even just listening. Players can choose what methods would work best for their characters, so these are merely suggestions players can use and are not the only approaches possible.

Injury and Stress Conditions can only be downgraded once per act, and only if the character in question has empty Injury Condition boxes of a lower level available on the same track. The Bruised Condition is removed when downgraded, as is the Troubled Condition.

If a character removes the Bruised Condition from an ally, there is still the opportunity for the ally to downgrade a Stress Condition in the same act. With Storyguide approval, one solution may be applicable to downgrade both Conditions, such as getting a full night's rest in a relatively safe location.

Death and the Grave Mind

Although the survivors themselves don't all understand how the process of death and reanimation works, they do know that death is not necessarily the end in the world of **Dystopia Rising**... though this isn't exactly the blessing it might seem. The fungal infection behind the zombie plague is literally everywhere — not just in survivors but also in the plants and animals as well as very landscape itself. This makes it possible for someone who's slain to return, though each death takes a harsh toll.

Death 101

When a person dies, assuming a body is left behind at all, the fungal infection breaks it down much more rapidly than standard decomposition. A body is typically gone within a few hours, though there is some variation; for reasons that remain unclear, the process has been known to take as long as a week or as little as a few minutes. When it's finished, all that remains is a telltale smear of fungal residue — which if left in place experienced survivors will recognize as indicative of a site where someone died — as well as any clothing and gear the deceased possessed when she fell.

After a body has been "reclaimed," the fungal infection attempts to rebuild it a short time later. Of course, each time a person dies the Infection is essentially making a copy of a copy, resulting in more imperfections entering the process. This also accounts for why the process eventually fails to revive someone, causing a person to return instead as one of the undead. While her body is being rebuilt, the deceased experiences a strange, often traumatic psychological interlude most commonly known as a Grave Mind vision. (We cover such visions in the Storyguiding chapter, starting on p. XX.)

If there is no Morgue nearby (see sidebar), and sometimes even if there is, the deceased is reconstituted somewhere nearby, emerging from the ground typically no more than a mile or so from where

DICING WITH DEATH

While Integrity + Resolve is a natural choice and the default roll to return from death, the Storyguide can change this roll to suit her series. She might decide different traits are more important, or even choose a different roll for each character, basing it on each character's most deep-seated reason for living. So long as any changes are applied fairly to all characters and agreed upon well in advance of being needed – don't surprise players at the moment of truth! – then the Storyguide should feel free to use whatever roll she feels best suits the series.

they fell. There does not appear to be any pattern to the location; survivors are as likely to return in a random spot in the wilderness as they are somewhere more familiar like a homestead. Those rare scholars who study such things have noticed that this random re-emergence tends to happen most often when a survivor is returning as one of the undead, almost as if her new, malevolent form doesn't want to be found so quickly.

Although returning to life always leaves traumatic marks of one kind or another, mentally a survivor is otherwise as she was right before she died — memories, skills, and most of her personality traits intact. (Her emotional state is another story entirely.) It's also worth noting that unless part of her return trauma includes some form of amnesia, it is entirely possible for her to remember who killed her if she knew who it was at the time of her death, which makes getting away with murder a somewhat more complicated affair in the wasteland.

Physically speaking, a survivor returns naked — many Morgues keep a stock of simple clothing on hand for this reason — and in full health, aside from any Persistent Conditions that accompany her return (such as Strain Conditions). Sometimes a survivor will acquire a scar or similar mark at the site of the fatal wound, but it's just as common to return with no such death marks. The only other notable sign is that her blood and thus her veins appear green for a time, due to residual fungal concentrations in her system. The darker the green and the longer the discoloration lasts, the closer a survivor is to her final trip through the Grave Mind and becoming one of the undead. Thus, survivors have at least a rough idea how many more trips a person might withstand.

Curiously, when the fungal infection returns someone to life, it does not always repair all the damage a body has incurred, especially if an injury was part of a survivor for a long time before death. A survivor who was shot in the eye and killed will almost always come back with that eye regrown, for example, but one who lost an eye years ago and has been living with a patch might come back with that eye still missing. It's as if sometimes the Infection returns the body to what it considers "normal" or even how a survivor sees herself, rather than fully restoring it. In roleplaying terms, this allows players to keep "signature" scars and disabilities they want for their characters while repairing other injuries they don't want to keep.

The Mechanics of Death

In terms of game mechanics, two very important things occur each time a character dies: the roll to see if you recover, and if you do, gaining a Trauma Condition and losing Attitudes and Bonds.

When a character dies, the player rolls Integrity + Resolve to see if they come back with their mind intact. The difficulty is the number of times they've died. If they can't buy off the difficulty, they don't make it through the Grave Mind scene, and will emerge as a zed (and thus an SGC). It is recommended that the roll be made before entering the Grave Mind scene, so that if it is unsuccessful the player is prepared and can work it into the roleplaying that follows.

Assuming he returns from death, a character suffers a Trauma Condition, although the Storyguide may inflict a different type of Condition if she feels it's appropriate to the death and return in question. If the character has a Trauma Condition before death, it may either be switched to a new one, or made Persistent. Whatever the decision, the key here is to underscore that the character is *different* than before; his outlook on the world has changed. Death is traumatic, no matter how many times a survivor has walked the Sunless Garden in the past.

Another mechanical change that occurs after a character returns from the dead is that he immediately loses all his Attitudes and Bonds. Other characters may still have Attitudes with him, but he doesn't feel anything in return. Old friends, trusted allies, family members, spouses, children, mortal enemies — it's all just numb. Nothing can really prepare you for this, even if you've seen others go through it or been through it yourself before; having your heart scoured bare is wrenching no matter how you look at it.

Since a character retains his memories, he can still recall the times he's had with others, not to mention realize he *should* feel something, but it's just not there. This is perhaps the hardest part of coming back, as recent revivals feel isolated even in the midst of the people who love them. From a mechanical perspective, a character may reestablish Attitudes and Bonds as normal during play, with appropriate roleplay.

Hell Broke Loose: Abstract Violence

Most people in a violent confrontation are assumed to be similar in overall power and ability. When the sides are less even but lots of minor antagonists are involved, such as a horde of zed, abstract fights can be used. Making a violent confrontation abstract is nothing more than using the minimum amount of rolls needed to resolve the fight. The Storyguide rolls for the group (say, a gang of raiders), and totals their number of successes. The players choose one person to represent their whole group who rolls as well. Whoever has the highest number of successes wins overall.

This can lead to a more drawn-out sequence if the player characters lose — the player characters may be substantially delayed, for example, in reaching the next settlement, or it may turn into a more full-fledged brawl to destroy the few raiders still remaining after the initial rush. If there is a difference in Scale of 2 or more levels in

favor of the players, however, no rolls are needed. The player characters are assumed to have gotten past such antagonists without any trouble, injury, or even much inconvenience. (If the Scale goes the other way, however, don't just steamroll the players — let them have a chance to find some clever way to fight back.)

In the case of managing lots of characters at once in a fight, complex actions, teamwork rules, and managing Milestones become even more important. If the player characters naturally divide into groupings, such as one group especially tasked with protecting a nursery facility from Dollies while another group defends a town's perimeter wall, this can be a way to manage the fight. Each goal would have its own Milestones — protecting the nursery facility would be a separate goal from defending the town perimeter and so the actions involved in it, such as "check to make sure every child there is supposed to be there and accounted for" will naturally differ from the tasks for the group protecting the wall. Some of the older children may be able to set traps or make sure none of the younger ones are entranced by a Dollie's smile.

Nobody Quits: Disability

A survivor's world is full of death, injury, and devastation on a regular basis. Every survivor is in a constant battle just to live one more day, and most will do just about anything to stay alive. That means for a character who is either born with or incurs a disability during play, that change in physical or mental ability doesn't end their story, their struggle, their capability, or their viability in play. A disabled character in the world of **Dystopia Rising** has just as much chance to be a gun-toting badass or charismatic leader as anyone else, with accommodations and accessibility aides available to help them along.

Should a player be interested in playing a disabled character, there are ways to reflect those disabilities from the very start of character creation. A player may choose to take on a Persistent Condition that represents the characters disability, be it physical or mental. Many disabilities are often invisible and may not be immediately apparent to other survivors but still cause the character to face challenges in their lives. These Conditions should be explained to the Storyguide, and the player should discuss just what they believe those Conditions would do in game so everyone in the game understands the character's capabilities and restrictions.

Characters can also gain such Persistent Conditions through play. A character who goes through Bleeding Out (p. XX) may find that one of their Injury Conditions is converted into a Persistent Condition. Such disabilities keep the mechanics of the original Injury Condition, but the Injury Condition "slot" is freed up. For example, if the survivor breaks their leg after a brush with death (gained from taking "Broken Leg" as the Maimed slot), the Storyguide may declare that it's a permanent disability. After healing, the Broken Leg stays as a Persistent Condition, increasing all actions using that leg by +4 difficulty, but the character can take another Maimed Injury Condition in the next fight.

Whether the character starts with a disability or gains one during play, their different ability will mean the character faces challenges during gameplay others might find simpler. These challenges don't make a character lesser, but instead provide a chance for interesting roleplay and game play opportunities along the way.

Players should recognize not only the viability of those characters as survivors, but also respect the wishes of another player to bring such a character to the table. In the wasteland, people don't have time to hate on someone for things like the color of their skin or their gender, and they certainly don't have time to question a capable survivor fighting at their side based on them being physically or mentally different. The challenges come in when a character's disability becomes a liability to the group, at which point their challenges should be addressed during roleplay to best help that character either cope or adapt (although it will also act as a nice source of Momentum). Discriminating against the disabled in a future where every life is one more life to keep away the zed isn't thematically appropriate to this setting.

Similarly, it's important to do some research into how people with that disability or illness live their lives. A stereotypical portrayal can not only be harmful in perpetuating negative ideas about real-life disabilities, it can make others at the play table feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. You might not know just what another player is going through in their real lives, or else stereotyping might simply make others feel uncomfortable. Always do your research beforehand and clear your play with others to make sure you and everyone have nuanced, respectful, and fun gameplay.

It would be disingenuous to state that those with disabilities didn't have different challenges when navigating the world than those who are considered "normal." Equally it would be unfair to handwave away the challenges disabled characters would face when tangling with the dangers of a post-apocalyptic setting. For those playing disabled characters, facing down those challenges might take a little more creative thinking, preparation in character, and ingenuity in the face of trouble. However, it is not suggested for Storyguides to request additional rolls or raise difficulties for success on disabled characters. Instead, allowing those challenges to be faced down narratively presents the player a chance to express their character's solutions to their issues without penalizing them mechanically for playing a disabled character.

Assistive Devices

When playing a character who is physically disabled, it's important to recognize the potential need for an assistive device to help them survive better in the dangerous wastes. While many would choose not to take such a device and instead adapt to life without these aids, a disabled character can trade for or build items and devices to help them along. Over time, these devices often become as close to a disabled character as any other part of their body, necessary for their continued survival and important to their identity.

Creating an assistive device for a character will require additional expenditure of Milestones at creation so it may be turned into a long-lasting device, or else the device may break down at the end of a scene. This might be fine for a temporary assist, but longer-term needs must be preserved and repaired on a regular basis. See Chapter Six, p. XX, for how to build and maintain such devices.



chapter six

WILD, WILD, WASTES

"There's no time when you'll feel—more alive than when you're outside of your comfy walls. Head out, see what's waiting. If you come back in one piece, you'll have learned something."

- Halloway Morrow, Old York Cross-Wasteland Diplomat

Let's face it. The world is out to kill you.

The world might have once been a land of happier times, but it ain't like that anymore. Now, survivors fight for every inch of land, and not just against the living and undead. There are plenty of natural hazards ready to send a survivor screaming to the morgue, especially once they step outside a town or city. Plus, if that wasn't bad enough, there's illnesses ready to rip them up from the inside, wearing down their health or their mind until they're nothing but a husk ready to join the shambling hordes.

Very few people like the idea of being outside settlements. Behind walls or in town, a survivor has lights, water, and someone to watch their back when the shit gets real (hopefully). But sooner or later, a character will head out into the spaces between, into the wastes. The wastes might have once been good land, populated by folks way back when, but now the wilderness is full of things ready to get you good and dead if you're not careful. The wastes themselves are deadly and without good planning in advance, your character can find themselves out in the middle of nowhere starving to death, or between trading posts without enough fuel for that sweet Diesel Jock ride.

There are rewards for going out into the great open spaces, though. Out beyond settlement walls there's a great wide world of Scrap to harvest, ready to be turned into everything from vehicles to armor to the best weapons you can build. Engineers can even use salvage to make a settlement a safer, better place. If survivors want the water to stay running and those generators keeping the lights on, they better be ready to strap on their best shoes, fortify something fierce, and get out into the wild to find what they can — before someone else does.

Scrap's not the only thing useful out in the wastes. While a settlement might be lucky enough to have some domesticated animals and farmers doing their best to produce, there are things out in the wilderness they can't find anywhere else. Someone wise once said nature should be kept in cages, but this nature can be useful for producing foodstuff and useful supplies, like herbs for medicine and plants or animals for food. Unfortunately, a lot of this nature is the kind a survivor will need to chase down and kill themselves, and they better be quick. Not only are some of these critters ready to chomp down on whatever body parts are handy, but some of them can draw down more trouble than a survivor can handle. Hunters beware and be ready. The rewards are worth the risks.

To survive, you need to know just what might be a serious hazard, be it the weather or radiation, mental trauma or fatigue. We don't want you to ever say you were left unprepared.

Don't Fall Down: Fatigue

The first thing to remember is every survivor needs to rest. This might sound like common sense, but with so much to do to stay alive, people might push themselves to the limit and in doing so, fall to the dangers of fatigue. Survivors may be hardy, but to continue on without a safe place to lay their head, they will eventually begin to break down both physically and mentally.

Fatigue is a Condition that occurs when a character hasn't taken the time to rest and recuperate day after day. While out in the wastes, there is more strain on a survivor, as there are fewer places to safely rest their head. Therefore, fatigue becomes an ongoing danger, accumulating over time. A character may continue on without resting for as many scenes equal to their Stamina rating before they must take the Fatigued Condition.

To remove the Fatigued Condition, the character must rest for a single scene. While the sleepy survivor takes a rest, their cohorts can stand guard and face the perils of the wasteland to keep their friend(s) from being interrupted. Should a Storyguide choose to try and interrupt a character while resting, that character must make a Survival + Stamina roll to remain resting while the world outside goes on. These rolls must go

RIGORS OF THE WASTES

What follows are several sections about how Fatigue, Starvation, and Thirst can affect the health of a character. This might seem like a lot to keep track of during play, but it adds to the feeling of deprivation in a survivor's world. Still, should a Storyguide deem this too much for the players to keep track of during play, they may institute the rule to only track fatigue and starvation when outside of settlements in the wastes. If that doesn't seem fun either, feel free to keep it out of the game entirely.

Radiation and weather should still be considered hazards and used, but if keeping track of naps and meal times seems tedious, feel free to adjust to your players' needs accordingly.

on continuously during every round of the fight. Should the character fail to stay asleep, their Fatigued Condition not only remains, but they must either spend another scene attempting to rest, or else their exhaustion accelerates.

For every scene a character goes without clearing their Fatigued Condition, they begin to deteriorate, taking a Stress Condition. If they are Burned Out, they are forced to rest. This might not sound too bad. After all, it's just taking an unscheduled rest. Except depending on where and when that involuntary nap occurs, the Fatigued survivor might put themselves and their compatriots in danger when collapsing from exhaustion. Storyguides are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to complicate matters as much as possible.

Eat Up: Food and Water

After fatigue, the next largest danger in the wastes is lack of fuel for the body. The body needs a certain amount of food and drink to get through the day, especially when your day is full of killing zed and doing whatever it is your little survivor heart desires. Survivors don't always get to eat on a consistent basis, but they at least better get water and in good amounts, or they face the real possibility of dehydration, illness, and death.

When out in the wilderness, water is always the priority. Finding clean sources of water can mean the difference between a successful mission or wasteland crossing and a disaster. But after that, a survivor must eat, either by consuming food to which they have access or by hunting and gathering what they need. Characters must consume meals on a regular basis and, as with rest, should a character go too long without a meal, they will begin to starve.

Starvation

A character can go without a meal for as many days as they have Resolve rating. Once those days have elapsed, however, they will receive the Starving Condition.

This Condition means they will begin to lose strength and coherence as time goes on, losing a Stress Condition every day they don't get food. In addition, they also must roll Stamina + Resolve for every day they have the Condition, with the difficulty advancing with every day (maximum of 5). Should the player fail to achieve enough successes to stave off the Starvation, they receive an Injury Condition and are one step closer to being Taken Out.

To stave off Starvation, a character must consume food on a regular basis. Every meal a survivor consumes has a rating of 1 to 5 dots. The dots of the meal indicate how many days a survivor can go without having to eat again.

Characters may also choose to share their meals, with each character taking half of the meal rating for themselves, rounded up. Meals rated 4 and 5 dots, however (called *feasts* and *banquets*) have additional benefits. When presented with a feast or banquet, a character may roll their Medicine + Stamina at difficulty 3. Should they succeed, a feast allows the character to resolve one Bruised or Troubled, while a banquet will resolve both a Bruised *and* a Troubled Condition.

FATIGUED

For every scene a character has this Condition, they take one Stress Condition. If the character is Burned Out, they are forced to rest.

Momentum Trigger: Every scene where the character is forced to push through the exhaustion.

Resolution: Character must rest for a single scene without being interrupted. Should their rest be interrupted, the Condition is not cleared, and the character takes another Stress Condition immediately.

STARVING

For every day a character has this Condition, they take one Stress Condition. Further, the character must roll Stamina + Resolve, difficulty equal to the number of days they've had the Starving Condition (maximum 5). If the roll fails, the character takes an Injury Condition as well.

If the character is Burned Out, each additional day the survivor goes without food incurs an Injury Condition, as if the Stamina + Resolve roll failed.

Momentum Trigger: Every day in which the character does anything more than rest.

Resolution: Character must eat a meal worth at least two dots to remove this Condition. Meals of only one dot allow the survivor to recover one Stress Condition and give +1 Enhancement to the Stamina + Resolve roll.

Dehydration

It is a wisdom widely known that the human body is just a big, squishy meat sack in need of regular doses of water to stay functioning. More than food, water is a necessity of life that requires serious consideration. In fact, one of the most fundamental basics to any successful settlement, encampment, or base in the wastelands is a source of fresh, safe, and plentiful water. Without water, even the heartiest of survivors will find themselves falling apart.

Because water is so necessary, there is always fresh and safe water available inside settlements, unless otherwise noted by the Storyguide. Some settlements might be nasty and ration water, they may be running short, or they could be in the middle

DEHYDRATED

For every scene a character has this Condition, they receive an Injury Condition and a Stress Condition. Additionally, should they be Taken Out by other means while having the Dehydrated Condition, the character goes directly to Bleeding Out.

Momentum Trigger: Every day in which the character does anything more than rest.

Resolution: A character must find a source of fresh water to drink worth at least one dot. Any additional dots for the water source can take away the Stress Conditions received while Dehydrated.

INTOXICATED

Your character has drunk a little too much hooch and it's affecting their coordination. While survivors are more tolerant of alcohol from lifetimes of survival, everybody has their limit. This condition affects all rolls that require the Intellect, Dexterity, or Composure attributes.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you fail to roll for the above attributes.

Resolution: For every cup of hooch you consumed, wait one hour, or drink a brew specifically crafted to counter the effects of alcohol consumption.

of a drought, and those could be interesting twists for the players to explore in their game. But otherwise, water is accepted as a resource shared by all survivors in civilized locations.

However, once a character steps outside of the confines of a settlement or location with an established water source, they must be concerned with dehydration. A character may survive without water (or an equally hydrating fruit drink or tea) for the number of days equal to half their Stamina rating (rounded up). Should they reach the end of that last day without consuming fresh water again, they receive the Dehydrated Condition.

Dehydration is perhaps one of the fastest killers in the wasteland, as its effects snowball quickly. For every scene after receiving the Dehydration Condition, the character receives an Injury *and* Stress Condition, to simulate the physical and mental toll dehydration can take on a person. Additionally, should a character be Taken Out while they have the Dehydrated Condition, they are immediately pushed into Bleeding Out, as their body doesn't have the strength to keep them from succumbing to their wounds.

To remove the Dehydrated Condition, a character must find a source of fresh and safe water to drink. Each source of water is rated from 1 to 5 dots, with 1 representing a puddle and 5 being a huge freshwater lake or river. A character need only take in a 1-dot measure of water to get rid of the Dehydration Condition itself, but every rating level higher than removes one Injury or Stress Condition they received while Dehydrated. The character sits and relaxes and drinks deep, finding their way to a little more peace of mind and a clearer head with a little glorious H20.

Alcohol

Ah, drinking, the lifelong pastime of many a wasteland survivor. From turlet hooch to Old York beer and Pureblood sippin' whiskey, every survivor from the poorest to the highest muckity-muck has their own brand of poison they imbibe. And while plenty of folks think they can survive on hooch and hooch alone, alcohol does not provide the same nutritional benefits of water when it comes to hydration. And in fact, drinking provides its own dangers by potentially damaging a survivor or getting them drunk. When ingesting some form of alcohol, roll an Athletics + Stamina roll, the difficulty being the rating of the hooch in question. Fail the roll and the survivor takes the Intoxicated Condition; botch and they incur an Injury Condition to boot. That'll teach them to hold their liquor.

But while booze can be dangerous in the wrong hands, should the character succeed at the roll they may resolve a Stress Condition, as they feel better about the world. It has no effect on the Dehydrated Condition; the character will need to find themselves a source of fresh water to rehydrate after the booze wears off, but for a little while the power of hooch has fortified them against the rigors of the world.

Finding Food

There are two ways to get what they need from the natural wastelands. A survivor can take their chances *hunting* down what animals they can to provide meals, or else choose to *forage* plants, wild fruits, and vegetables during their travels.

Hunting

From bugs to bears, the wastelands are full of all manner of creatures, just ready for a survivor to chow down. The trick will be to capture or kill said creature and then to render the animal you've hunted down for eating later.

The rating of the animal counts in relation to how many people it will take to tackle it safely during the hunt. Animals of 1 to 3 dots only require one hunter, while 4 dots require two hunters, and 5 dots require three or more. Hunting down an animal involves tracking it down first and then inflicting violence upon it. To track and hunt down the creature in question, roll Survival + Cunning. (Should the character have a trap with them, they instead roll Technology + Cunning to see if the creature is caught or killed.) If the roll is a success, a 1-dot animal is found. Each threshold success increases the rating of the animal in question by one dot. The Storyguide should then describe an appropriate animal whose tracks the survivor has found.

HUNTING MAN

For some characters, hunting men isn't just a question of going after bounties or assassinations but practicing some convenient cannibalism. A hunting roll should be done before stalking or trapping the survivor. However, such encounters always use the rules — the Storyguide should never narrate such scenes. They say people are the deadliest hunt of all, so enjoy the thrill of the chase, and happy hunting.

HUNTING RATING	EXAMPLE	NO. OF HUNTERS
•	Small animal (rabbit, squirrel, rust devil rats)	1 hunter
••	Standard animal (dog, cat, monkey)	1 hunter
•••	Medium animal (sheep, goat, pony)	1 hunter
••••	Large animal (cow, ox, horse)	2 hunters
•••••	Huge animal (elephant, giant lizard, rad dragon)	3+ hunters

Should the players take on the hunt with the requisite amount of people, the Storyguide can narrate that the hunt was successful. However, if the players take on the hunt with fewer than the requisite characters, the Storyguide is encouraged to choose a more powerful animal for the players to tangle with and play out the violent encounter. For what kind of animals you can find in the wastes, check out Chapter Ten: Threats of the Wild (p. XX).

Should the characters succeed in killing the animal in question, then comes the task of rendering it into a meal and other spare parts. The character leading the hunt rolls Intellect + Survival to make sure they can render the food properly and convert it into ingredients for later use. If they succeed, they receive ingredients equal to the rating of the animal they were hunting. Any threshold successes give additional ingredient dots or can be spent to create Scrap dots on a one-for-one basis (see p. XX for more on Scrap).

Foraging

As opposed to hunting, foraging for fruits, vegetables, and herbs is more straightforward, since plants (usually) don't fight back. When going out foraging, roll Survival + Intellect to discern what flora is safe to consume. Should you succeed, you find some vegetation safe for consumption. Threshold successes add to the rating of the ingredients you're able to salvage out of the forage, with each success exchanging for a dot of ingredients. Failure means the food the character discovered is inedible and they must continue looking. However, if the roll is botched, the Storyguide can also choose to make the plants a little more aggressive in response. After all, in the wastelands the animals aren't the only things that fight back.

Preparing Meals

Once a character has secured their foodstuffs, the rating of the meal will depend largely on how it is prepared. While some survivors might be lucky enough to have their meals premade and purchased, or else have some foraged food ready to eat, a lot of meat needs to be cooked to be edible.

To prepare a meal, a character must take the ingredients they've collected, traded, or purchased to combine into a cooked meal. Roll a Survival + Intellect roll at difficulty 1. With a single success, the preparation is successful. Add the dots of the ingredients you've put together to indicate how many meal dots you've managed to prepare (p. XX). Any additional ingredients over a 5-dot meal can be turned into one additional 1-dot snack.

Should a character succeed at creating a meal and have successes left over, they may choose to spend those successes on an Enhancement Stunt to stretch the meal so it can be shared with others (the number of characters equal to the number of successes spent on the stunt). This shared meal will allow all characters involved to gain the full benefits of the meal as if they hadn't shared it. The character can also spend successes to extend the expiration of a meal (see Expiring Food and Meals, below).

Characters may choose to combine already prepared meals so they can create bigger and better rated meals for greater effect. A character with multiple meals can make a Survival + Intellect roll with the difficulty equal to the number of meals being combined (maximum of three). Should they succeed, add the dots of all the meals to create a better meal. No meal can have a rating higher than 5 dots. However, dots can be used instead to allow the meal to be shared with an additional person without reduction (so 5 dots can be a 5-dot for a single person, or a 3-dot meal shared with three people).

Going Raw

While there is plenty of food a person can eat uncooked, the nutritional benefits of cooking a meal are far higher than eating things raw. A survivor who can't stop to convert their ingredients into meals can try to stave off starvation by eating their ingredients without preparation. Every 2 dots in ingredients counts as 1 dot of food. Eating raw might keep the hunger at bay, but it's more cost-effective in the long run to find time to start a fire and get your chef on.

Certain kinds of food can also make even a survivor sick if eaten uncooked. For such foods, make a Stamina + Resolve roll to see if you can stomach the ingredients the way they are. A single success will keep the food down, but if you fail the survivor vomits up the results. A botch means the survivor gets food poisoning (see the sidebar).

FOOD POISONING

Food poisoning counts as indirect damage. It is ingestible, has a damage rating of 1, and has the tag Non-Lethal. If the food is irradiated, the tag is changed to Deadly.

Provisions on the Road

For survivors, finding resources can literally be feast or famine. No one can be sure when they'll come across their next source of ingredients, or when they'll be a distance between sources of fresh water or trading posts. It is necessary for survivors to haul meals and water with them across the wastes, along with the rest of their gear. And that stuff gets heavy and messy.

To carry provisions across the wastes, a character must first have gear to carry both food and water. Flasks and bottles can carry hooch and water, while food can be wrapped in cloth or held in metal containers. These should be bartered for or purchased and kept among the survivor's things. Add together a character's Stamina + Survival dots, and that is how many meals and portions of liquid (be it water, its equivalent, or hooch) a survivor can carry at any given time. As ingredients are lighter, a survivor can carry far more, and once a meal or water has been consumed, the character may refill back to their full capacity by cooking or finding additional sources of water for their journey.

Expiring Food and Meals

Along with the constant need to consume meals, part of the reason characters must continue to look for food is that meals eventually expire. Time turns even the best prepared meals moldy or soggy and unprepared ingredients, be they vegetable or animal, can spoil and turn.

The difference in expiration time for food depends on whether it was foraged or hunted, and if left in its original state or turned into a meal. Foraged food remains viable for seven days, while hunted meat will go bad in three. A prepared meal, however, will last for five days before it expires and can no longer be used. Irradiated food will expire in half the time, rounded down.

Aside from preparing it, there are other ways to extend the life of food. A character may spend additional successes when they first forage or hunt food to store it properly and extend its usefulness. For every success used, the food's expiration is extended one day. The same can be done for meals during their preparation.

Should a character try to consume a meal that's expired or irradiated, they must make a Survival + Stamina roll with a difficulty of how many days since the meal expired. Should they fully succeed, they manage to survive taking in the noxious meal and receive all the benefits as if it was a regular meal. Should they succeed with one success, they take in the meal but only receive one scene's worth of sustenance. Failure means the character gets food poisoning.

The Green Glow: Radiation

Anyone who has met a member of the Church of Darwin knows radiation, or rad, is everywhere. The world was brought down in a hail of nuclear fire and ever since, the world is awash in the hot, glowing nightmare. Radiation slips into everything, from the ground and the water to the animal life, causing mutations that transform safe-to-eat food into poisonous traps. Even Scrap can be a danger if it's infused with too much radiation and can cause damage should it go undetected.

Radiation has a devastating effect on every survivor in the wastes. Sometimes survivors must traverse areas of the wasteland that are soaked with radiation, or at least skirt close enough for them to feel the effects. How close a survivor is to an irradiated area will change how much indirect damage they take, as well as how much what is found inside the area is infused with radiation.

For mechanical purposes, radiation counts as indirect damage. How much radiation should affect a character depends on what range they are from said space.

RADIATION RANGE	DAMAGE RATING
Long Range	Damage –1
Medium Range	Normal Damage
Short Range	Damage +1
Close Range	Damage +2

Survivors of the wastes are a sturdy bunch, and most grew up in contact with radiation of some sort and therefore can resist a certain amount of it. Strains encountering these areas gain +1 Enhancement to their Stamina + Resolve roll (see "Indirect Damage," p. XX). Remember that radiation is Deadly, and thus survivors will always take at least one Injury Condition.

Once someone takes at least one Injury Condition from radiation, they take the Condition Radiation Poisoning as well.

REAL RADIATION VERSUS WASTELAND RAD

In the real world, exposure to radiation can be one of the most catastrophic things a person can suffer. Even the smallest doses of radiation can be fatal. However, survivors in **Dystopia Rising** are hardier than us squishy modern folks, so a little leeway has to be given for treating and curing rad damage in such a heavily irradiated setting. Otherwise, this would be a short game.

RADIATION POISONING

Once the character has been in contact with a radiation source long enough to receive at least one Injury Condition, they now take Continuous (scene) damage, even if they leave the source of the radiation. If they are Taken Out, they go straight to Bleeding Out.

Momentum Trigger: Every time the character takes damage from their poisoning.

Resolution: The character must seek treatment for their poisoning through medical attention, anti-radiation medication, or decontamination.

While damage to a character by radiation can be lethal, the damage done to a person's gear can be equally devastating. Radiation seeps into everything and infuses it with its deadly green glow. If the character takes damage from radiation, their gear gains the Irradiated Flaw and loses +1 Enhancement. If a character is Taken Out while they have the Radiation Poisoning Condition, their equipment is both broken and contaminated, gaining the Broken and Contaminated Flaws. (See p. XX on Flaws.)

Decontamination of Irradiated gear requires a scene away from the radiation and a roll of Science + Intellect, difficulty depending on how much radiation the gear's taken on (generally 1-3). On success, the object is no longer Irradiated.

The only way to salvage Contaminated supplies is by using a Decontamination Kit (see p. XX). A standard for most parties out in the wastes, these kits allow you to roll Technology + Intellect to process the supplies and salvage them from destruction. Difficulty depends on how much damage the item has taken (generally 1-3), and if successful, the object is no longer Contaminated.

Deadly Skies: Weather

Survivors starting out across the wastelands might leave their settlement under clear, cloudless skies, but you can almost guarantee it won't stay that way. Where zed, raiders, other survivors, and irradiated animals will murder a survivor right quick, the next greatest threat to a wasteland crossing is mother nature's wrath: the weather.

Weather can come in many forms, but all of it translates into environmental damage. From basic rain soaking characters through and destroying supplies to tornados bearing down



to rip whole settlements off the face of the map, the weather can wreak havoc not only on those out in the open but with entire settlements, towns, and even cities. Storyguides are encouraged to use this environmental hazard as often as they'd like to add atmosphere and additional threats to an already dangerous world.

Weather comes in several classifications. The most simple, everyday weather doesn't cause any negative effects on characters. However, any weather moderate and above can cause characters anything from inconvenience to outright death.

WEATHER	DAMAGE RATING	EXAMPLES
Mild	0	Rainstorms, wind, elevated heat or cold
Moderate	1 Non-Lethal, Continuous (hour)	Thunderstorms, high winds, above-average temperatures
Severe	2 Non-Lethal, Continuous (hour)	Wildfires, gale-force winds, floods
Dangerous	1 Continuous (hour)	Tornados, extreme winds, extreme temperatures
Devastating	2 Continuous (hour)	Hurricanes, massive tornados, below freezing or above boiling temperatures

The damage caused by weather is calculated very much like radiation in that it depends largely on how close the characters are to the epicenter of the storm or affected area.

WEATHER RANGE	DAMAGE RATING
Long Range	Damage −1
Medium Range	Normal Damage
Short Range	Damage +1
Close Range	Damage +2

Shelter in this setting operates very much like taking cover during a fight, as players are locked in battle with nature itself. To find shelter, roll Survival + Cunning to discover a safe place the survivors can get to and what kind of damage it can absorb. Groups can use the teamwork rules (p. XX) to give Enhancements to the primary searching character.

A basic success allows the survivor to find only expendable cover, which will absorb one Stress Condition before it is destroyed. Threshold successes allow for stronger shelter, with +1 success allowing for light cover, which absorbs four Stress Conditions before it is also destroyed. A +2 success allows for heavy cover, taking 10 Stress Conditions before it is wrecked as well. A +3 allows for full cover, which will protect a character and their equipment completely from the damage outside. All survivors who contributed to the search for shelter gain the cover benefits. Some weather is so severe, however, that even the strongest shelters can't protect survivors from its wrath. Only full cover offers protection against Injury Conditions gained from weather.

Characters left without shelter, or whose shelter has been destroyed, must resist damage as per the usual indirect damage rules (p. XX). Weather rated Dangerous and Devastating can also be instantly deadly to characters who make a serious misstep. Should a character botch any time when facing off against this weather, a character is instantly Taken Out.

Injury and Stress Conditions taken should be related to the weather, such as Waterlogged or Sunburn. Make sure the Condition is appropriate to the kind of weather for the sake of flavor and play it to the hilt.

Wasteland Weather

If you think the regular weather out in the wastes is awful, there are weather patterns stranger and more unusual than your typical hurricane or blizzard. While Storyguides are encouraged to come up with their own odd combinations of the setting and the weather, here are some of the more terrifying examples of wasteland horror weather.

Radiation Storms and Rad Clouds: When your standard rain storm or hurricane isn't bad enough, there is the terrifying radiation storm. When a storm front sweeps through an irradiated area, it will sweep up environmental radiation and carry it along in its wake. All damage done by a rad cloud or radiation storm causes the Radiation Poisoning Condition if the character takes an Injury Condition or is Burned Out from the weather.

Zed Attractant Clouds: Someone thought it was a good idea along the way to use science to create Zed Attractant, a chemical able to bring zed to their yard. And while this already sounds like a bad idea, when storms pass over an area full of zed attractant, the chemical can be dragged along with the weather pattern and spread across a larger area. Storyguides should feel free to first pelt the characters with the regular weather conditions before bringing in the wave of zed driven to follow the storm as far as it will lead.

Additionally, some weather can serve as the perfect cover for attacks by wasteland raiders or even some kinds of zed which flourish in the unsettling conditions. Feel free to mix in weather conditions with the worst kind of attacks the wasteland has to offer. After all, nothing says the wasteland is safe just because it decided to rain.

Gear and Weather

Equipment can take damage from storms as well as people. As with radiation, if a survivor takes damage from the weather, their gear gains the Weather-Worn Flaw, and all uses of the gear lose +1 Enhancement. Once a character takes an Injury Condition related to the weather, their equipment is either

destroyed or is unusable and gains the Broken Flaw (p. XX).

Dealing with Weather-Worn equipment is called "drying out" (even if water isn't the problem). Drying something out requires a scene away from the weather and a roll of Science + Intellect, difficulty depending on how badly damaged the gear is (generally 1-3). On success, the object is no longer Weather-Worn. The only way to salvage Broken supplies is by salvaging or repairing them (see p. XX).

A survivor may heroically sacrifice themselves to save their own supplies. Be it that all-important generator keeping the settlement alive or that crate of hooch you just can't live without, when gear is about to be destroyed or Broken, a survivor may choose instead to be Taken Out rather than see their equipment be wrecked. After all, sometimes you just really love your stuff that much.

What Does Kill You: Illness

The wasteland can kill you a million ways, but what lives inside a survivor can kill them all the quicker. All wasteland dwellers understand they'll join the shambling hordes eventually, but illnesses can bring survivors to those hordes all the faster, as medicine and recovery time are precious and scarce in this dangerous world. What's worse, there are diseases that survived the Fall and became all the harder to treat due to this scarcity. Plus, new diseases have cropped up, necrotizing flesh and driving people into an early grave.

Incubation and Onset

All illnesses in the wasteland have two stages: *incubation* and *onset*. During the initial incubation, a character has a number of hours or days (depending on the disease) equal to their Stamina to recognize they are ill and seek medical assistance before the disease reaches the onset stage. The characters do not take any damage from the disease, but instead the Storyguide should present symptoms the character is feeling as hints toward what disease they may be suffering from. Should they guess or have someone properly diagnose the disease, and have the appropriate equipment or medicine on hand, a Medicine + Intellect roll (difficulty equal to how long the incubation has lasted — typically 1-3) can treat the illness and save the survivor from falling into the disease's onset.

Once the allotted time has passed, and if a character has not received adequate medical assistance during that time, the character reaches the onset stage and receives the Ill Condition.

Other elements will make survivors succumb to their illnesses faster. Should a character gain the Fatigued or Dehydrated Conditions while they're also fighting the incubation of a disease, they immediately enter the onset stage of their illness and gain the illness's Condition. Additionally, Radiation Poisoning in addition to an Illness Condition will make a character who is Taken Out go directly into Bleeding Out instead.

Example Diseases

Storyguides are free to create illnesses all their own to plague players, but there are some illnesses more widespread across the wastelands. Here are only the most prevalent.

BAD BRAIN DISEASE

A terrifying disease that occurs when a survivor is exposed to the blood, saliva, or other fluids of a type of raider. Once infected, the subject begins to exhibit unusual behaviors such as mental instability, motor twitches, inattentiveness, difficulty speaking, and bouts of extreme violence. Advanced symptoms include inability to speak and insanity as well as the urge to eat not only the flesh of other Strains but even the flesh of the undead. Unlike other diseases, if left untreated a patient will not die of Bad Brain Disease but instead transforms into a Bad Brain raider, incurably lost to madness and violence.

Incubation: Daily.

BLACK LUNG

Occurs when a subject is introduced to contaminated air for extended periods of time, either from natural sources or from industrialized airborne byproducts. The lining of the lungs becomes necrotized, with patients coughing up blackened, tar-like blood. Subjects eventually suffer hypoxia due to inability to draw enough oxygen and drown in their own blood.

Incubation: Daily.

ILL

While each of these diseases has their own symptoms and flavors, they all can be tackled the same way. For every day the character has the disease and does not receive treatment, they receive a single Injury Condition (related to the disease) and further entrench the disease into their system. Equally, for every day they do not have it treated it will add +1 difficulty for a medical professional to cure the disease, to a maximum of 5.

If a character reaches the stage where they would be Taken Out by the damage given by a disease, they enter a desperate battle to survive. Medical professionals must succeed their First Aid roll (difficulty 5) to save the character's life or else they will succumb to the disease and perish.

This Condition may have additional modifications, based on the disease in question.

Momentum Trigger: The character succumbs to the symptoms of their disease.

Resolution: Medical treatment, or as per the illness.

DISRESONANCE

A mental disease usually only affecting psionicists and occurs when exposed to an area of particularly powerful psionic resonance, or else steeped in heavy psychic trauma from past events. Areas with a high concentration of psionic crystals can exacerbate the effects. Symptoms include serious headaches, bouts of vertigo, and blurred vision; which progresses to chills, hearing voices, and eventually hallucinations and bleeding from the nose, eyes, and ears. Trepanation is suggested to relieve pressure, with surgery to remove affected brain tissue needed at advanced stages.

Modification: In addition to the other effects of the Ill Condition, use of all Psi Edges are at +1 difficulty.

Incubation: Daily.

DRY ROT

Occurs when a subject is exposed to arid, hot winds that deposit contaminants into skin cracked from dehydration or open wounds. The skin dries and cracks further, weeping fluid from infected sores. The subject further dehydrates as the tissue blackens and spreads the disease across the skin into deeper tissue.

Modification: This character also has the Dehydrated Condition.

Incubation: Daily.

FROSTBITE

An injury caused by exposure to extreme cold on exposed or under-protected skin. Symptoms begin with redness in the exposed area, then numbness and paleness. The skin will harden and crack while turning a deep purple or black. By then, the subject begins to lose coherence, slurs their speech, and is unable to think straight. Entire limbs can be lost to frostbite and, if untreated, hypothermia can set in and a patient can die.

Incubation: Hourly.

GIBBERING DISEASE

This is a disease caused by a bloodborne parasite that infects the issue around the mouth and throat, causing slurring of speech and unintelligible gibbering. Though it is not contagious, the infection may spread throughout the body, causing involuntary spasms of the arms and upper torso and eventually causing death when it reaches the brain.

Incubation: Hourly.

HEMOPHILIA

A blood disorder that does not allow wounds or open cuts to clot and close properly. The disease is not infectious but rather carried by parasites and infected leeches. Subjects suffering from hemophilia will bleed for extended periods of time, bruise easily, and suffer swelling from the slightest of injuries, especially to joints. Small cuts might continue to bleed a little, but even the mildest wounds can become life threatening, with larger wounds becoming easily fatal.

Incubation: Daily.

NECROSIS

A disease that causes flesh to die due to infection. Also known as festering, wounds left open or untreated, or certain other diseases, will cause tissue to break down and liquify, causing sepsis to spread. Though not contagious, necrosis can be brought on by the bite of infected animals or through venoms like arachnid and spider bites. Necrotized flesh is similar-looking to Retrograde or zed skin, or else marked by liquifying yellow pools of pus, and advanced necrosis might get a character mistaken for one of the undead.

Modification: Target also gains the It's Zed! Strain Condition (although it is not Persistent if they do not already have the Strain Condition).

Incubation: Daily.

PNEUMONIA

A disease spread by bacteria and fungi that affects the lungs. Symptoms begin with coughing and aching in the body, which might seem like nothing but evolve over time into producing phlegm and fluid up out of the lungs. If left untreated, patients can have difficulty breathing as their lungs fill up and the character chokes to death. Don't worry, though, they'll probably die from the fever before they drown from the inside out.

Incubation: Daily.

ROTBLOOD DISEASE

Comes from the introduction of necrotized parasites into a host, making the character easily fatigued. Symptoms include blackened veins spreading from the point of infection all the way up throughout the body.

Modification: Characters with Rotblood Disease also have the effects of the Fatigued Condition.

Incubation: Daily.

SWEATING SICKNESS

A disease that affects the tissue of the brain as well as the body. Though the cause is still unknown, many point to high concentrations of infected or poisoned vermin and toxic water sources as the culprit. Whatever the cause, Sweating Sickness makes the body less efficient at pulling itself back together after injury and fatigue. Symptoms include heightened anxiety, giddiness, headaches, and hallucinations in the advanced stages, as well as extreme restlessness, extreme thirst, dizziness, and the titular sweating. The patient experiences high fever and eventually collapses, drifting into a fitful sleep before sudden death occurs.

Incubation: Daily.



TUBERCULOSIS

An airborne illness affecting the lungs. Resistant to many medications, tuberculosis symptoms include severe coughing with blood coming up at advanced stages, chest pains, sweating and chills, and extreme exhaustion. Tuberculosis can spread to other organs, causing pain in the spine that can be debilitating. Doctors beware, tuberculosis can spread like wildfire, especially in smaller settlements.

Incubation: Daily.

The Shakes: Fear and Trauma

Physical diseases aren't the only kind of illness to haunt the lives of survivors. With a world as dark and dangerous as the wastelands, the illnesses of the mind can make life even more difficult. Even the stoutest heart will eventually come up against something so horrible and disturbing, it shatters their sense of self and security and opens them up to trauma.

The first and most common response when presented with unimaginable horrors is fear. Fear is caused when a situation or creature the character encounters is too overwhelmingly awful to contemplate. To try and resist, roll Integrity + Resolve, with a difficulty appropriate to how terrifying the source is. Success means standing strong against the danger with a stalwart heart, while a failure incurs a Stress Condition.

After the character becomes Burned Out from stress (whether through fear or some other form of mental pain), they may acquire a *Trauma Condition*. Characters can also acquire Trauma Conditions directly from intense, mind-altering experiences, such as returning from the Grave Mind (p. XX).

Resolving Trauma

Trauma Conditions need to be treated by a character trained as a mental-health professional. Often called a head shrinker, these survivors must spend time speaking with the afflicted individual to diagnose the source of the trauma. Then, a difficulty for resolving the trauma is set by the Storyguide based on character's mental condition (generally, 6 – the character's dots in Resolve is a good metric). The head shrinker spends time — sometimes days or even weeks — working with the character, and then rolls Empathy + Intellect to meet the difficulty.

Success means that the Trauma Condition can be removed. Should the head shrinker not achieve enough successes to resolve the Condition, they cannot attempt to roll a second time within that scene. Sometimes treating mental illness and disquiet takes time, and the head shrinker might have to set up a second session to truly get to the root of the problem.

Some Trauma Conditions are considered Persistent Conditions, indelible to the character's personality and part of continued play. To remove said Condition would change the character in a fundamental way and should be considered an ongoing and consensual roleplay choice between the player in question and

the head shrinker, as well as the Storyguide. To remove a Persistent Trauma Condition, the head shrinker must attempt to treat the afflicted character as a complex action, with five Milestones. Each Milestone represents a week's worth of regular therapy. The therapist must succeed at an Empathy + Intellect (difficulty 6 – the character's dots in Resolve) to clear the Milestone.

Playing Trauma (Or Not)

Trauma as presented in **Dystopia Rising** is not the same as mental illness. Mental illness is a very serious issue afflicting millions of people worldwide in the real world. Trauma is a dramatic, fictionalized version of that, but they are close enough that the topic may be difficult or important to someone in your gaming group. Portraying a character with a Trauma Condition brings unique challenges, especially if it is a Persistent Condition, in that it requires an understanding of the mental illness it emulates and how a person would behave when afflicted.

So, while Trauma Conditions expressed in this game are not one-to-one to their real-world counterparts, it's also important to be sensitive to the way they are represented at your gaming table. Having a frank discussion with your players about their comfort levels regarding including mental illness as Trauma Conditions in the game is important, and about the expression of the Conditions' symptoms and causes.

Should players want to skip over using specific Trauma Conditions that reflect real-world mental illnesses, simply use the Nightmares Condition as the default. It's also suggested not to question why someone might not want to see a specific illness included in game, but instead to respect their choice and move on from there. After all, it takes nothing to be respectful to a player's needs.

Example Trauma Conditions

While Storyguides are invited to create genre-appropriate Trauma Conditions as they'd like, here are some examples of the most prevalent ones brought on by the horrors of the zed-infested world.

Addictive Personality Disorder

The character needs a particular substance to stabilize their moods and craves the substance constantly. Whether it be drugs, hooch, sex, or food, the survivor must intake that substance or risk falling into depression and irritability, as well as experience physical symptoms like nausea, headaches, sweats, and shaking, also known as withdrawal.

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to gain their substance or activity of choice, possibly taking a Stress Condition as a result.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

Agoraphobia

Also known as Nester Syndrome, the character avoids areas that present either unknown dangers or are associated with past trauma. Symptoms include severe anxiety, avoiding large social environments, or remaining indoors in what is considered a safe space. Anxiety heightens the longer the character stays outside of their safe zone, while trusted friends or safety objects may comfort them should they need to face the unknown.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into an outdoor environment.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

Amnesia

Whether long or short term, the character's memory has been damaged so they have lost chunks of their recall from their recent or long past. Though the character may attempt to recall, there is no reliable cure to recover all the lost memories. The subject's personality may be drastically affected by the memory loss, with experiences having shaped said personality locked away from reach.

Momentum Trigger: The character needs to rely on their memory of an event.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

Antisocial Personality Disorder

Known in layman's terms as psychopathy, the character shows no regard for the well-being of others and may act impulsively or seemingly irrationally. Symptoms include irritability, severe mood swings, inflated sense of self, and illogical thinking. The subject may act out, causing damage or doing violence to everything around them with punishment no dissuasion from their actions. Psychopathy might be an early indication of a character transforming into a raider.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to consider the needs and interests of others.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

Avoidant Personality Disorder

Often caused by fear of rejection or failure, those with this disorder are often labeled recluses as they shut themselves away from the world and others around them. Highly sensitive to negative feedback or the negative emotions of others, the character will avoid emotional entanglements or relationships and at the worst stages will remove themselves completely from interacting with other people.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted with a negative emotional outburst.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

BEREAVEMENT

Caused by the loss or perceived loss of a loved one, the subject suffers emotional distress which manifests such symptoms as depression, insomnia, poor appetite, malaise, and irritability. The subject often feels guilt about surviving and working through these feelings of separation is often a long and drawn out process.

Momentum Trigger: The character must confront the subject of their loss.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

CHRONIC MOTOR TIC

Brought on by ongoing stress or fatigue, the character exhibits an unconscious physical movement or verbal cue they are unable to restrain. These movements or sounds can be highly dangerous when attracting attention at the very worst of times.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to contain their tic.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Often brought on by trauma associated by enclosed spaces or entrapment, claustrophobia is the intense fear of being surrounded or confined either by a location or by others. Often suffered by miners or prisoners, the subject will panic and avoid any situation that will leave them confined or surrounded against their will in any way. More extreme forms of the trauma will force the character out of doors and away from larger crowds.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into an enclosed space.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

Sometimes, when confronted by a trauma, the subject's mind cannot handle the events and therefore splinters into separate and unique personalities, often switching to take control of the subject's body. Often considered a severe form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), each identity develops their own likes, dislikes, and mannerisms, all unaware of one another's experiences or the fracture that has occurred.

Momentum Trigger: The character incurs a Stress Condition of Distraught or higher, forcing them to switch personalities.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Triggered by confrontation or competition, the subject feels the constant need to be the center of attention and strives to exert their influence on any situation to gain the acclaim they crave. The subject will display themselves to others in any way they believe will get them attention, going to further and further lengths and changing their personality to get the adoration they believe they deserve.

Momentum Trigger: The character is in a position where drawing attention to themselves would be a problem.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

IMPULSE CONTROL DISORDER

While plenty of wastelanders might be the hot-headed kind, like your friendly neighborhood Merican, Impulse Control Disorder takes it to a whole new level. The subject is unable to stop themselves from acting on the random impulses passing through their mind, no matter how irrational they are in the situation. If there is something the subject wants to do, they will, even if it costs them relationships, interferes with important business, or even puts them and others in harm's way.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to not act on their immediate whim.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

INTERMITTENT EXPLOSIVE DISORDER

Commonly misdiagnosed as simple tantrums, the subject will respond to even the tiniest stressful situation with disproportionately strong and often violent outbursts. Despite attempts at calming, the subject might even go so far as to harm themselves and others when triggered by stress, only to show embarrassment or regret after the episode. This may cause additional stress, and the cycle of episodes may continue.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character gains a Stress Condition, they lash out in an emotional outburst.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

KINEMORTOPHOBIA

Known also as zedophobia, the subject is struck terrified by the presence of anything resembling or reminding them of the dead. In a world full of zombies, this can be a devastating phobia, sending the subject running from anything from a horde of shamblers to your favorite neighborhood Full Dead. This is not a rational fear, but a gut reaction, and the subject will do anything to flee from the subject of their terror.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted with zed, or characters that look like a zombie (such as Full Dead or Retrogrades).

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

KLEPTOMANIA

People suffering from this disease are commonly called filchers, as they suffer from the uncontrollable need to steal whatever catches their eye. Once the subject spots something they want, they will do anything to steal it and make it their own, reveling both in the thrill of potentially getting caught and the satisfaction of owning said object. In the end, however, the hoarding of these objects doesn't fill the void inside, and the filcher will simply go on to the next object as soon as it strikes their fancy.

Momentum Trigger: The character takes an object belong to someone else, and they get in trouble as a result.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

MASOCHISTIC DISORDER

Though no one is exactly sure whether this is a physical or psychological disorder, pain junkies, as they are commonly known, find themselves taking intense pleasure at receiving both psychological and physical pain. The subject often finds the pleasure more intense when caused by an outside source, and they will enter dangerous situations and relationships in the hope of receiving such pain. Many subjects gradate from this disorder to the more serious surgical addiction.

Momentum Trigger: The character refuses to take painkillers, heal an Injury Condition, or otherwise dull his pain.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

MELANCHOLIA

Commonly known as Survivor's Fatigue, the subject falls into a deep depression marked by a lack of interest in the things they previously enjoyed, even going so far as to feeling a disconnect from everything of this world. Subjects will show no motivation toward any of their interests or responsibilities, and they disconnect from their relationships and seem lethargic, even going so far as to fall into catatonia unless the illness is properly addressed.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into action against their will.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NAPOLEON COMPLEX

Sometimes called Bulldog Syndrome, the subject will express over-the-top or domineering personality traits when confronted with any situation where they are challenged, both in social or physical situations. The subject attempts to compensate for a real or perceived shortcoming by trying to control the situation, making others believe they are greater than they may be, and requiring others to recognize that greatness to address their internal need.

Momentum Trigger: The character must acquiesce to someone they consider to be an inferior.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NARCISSISM

Though plenty of braggarts exist in the world, someone suffering from narcissism (often called a boaster) has a higher-than-average opinion of themselves, seeing themselves as the perfect specimen of their group or class. The subject believes they are above reproach and will take any attack on their capabilities or appearance as a personal and very serious challenge that must be answered no matter the cost. This illness often goes undiagnosed, as certain groups like Pure Bloods tend to showcase narcissistic personalities to begin with. However, the illness will drive its subject to the farthest actions to rectify any challenge, even to the point of causing others or themselves severe harm.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to confront a mistake they have made.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NARCOLEPSY

Called "Drop Dead Disorder" colloquially, subjects will take involuntary naps throughout the course of the day. They may nod off, go into a semi-paralytic state (even with their eyes open), or go completely unconscious at any time. This might seem like a more harmless illness, but depending on the timing of the attacks, the subject may be injured or even killed should they be in a dangerous situation, such as in the middle of a zed or raider attack.

Momentum Trigger: The character falls asleep at an inopportune time.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NIGHTMARES

A more aggressive form of simple sleep terrors, nightmares are terrifying dreams that plague the subject once they go unconscious. The dreams are so frightening they cause disorientation while asleep and upon waking. Should the subject be woken during a nightmare, their response can be volatile and even violent, as the line between awake and asleep can remain blurred. Subjects suffering from nightmares can stay asleep for long periods to avoid these dreams, leading to fatigue if they're not careful.

Momentum Trigger: The character does not get a good night's sleep (possibly taking the Fatigued Condition as a result).

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Known in shorthand as PTSD, this common illness is the result of traumatic experiences that unfortunately are all-too common in the wasteland. The subject suffers from bouts of anxiety, fear, paranoia, and hypervigilance at all times, triggered into extreme episodes when they are reminded of the source of their trauma. The subject will remain on guard, always ready to defend themselves, and will often find it hard to engage with others, seeming aloof and removed as they prepare for any time they might be in danger once more.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to confront their trauma.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

PYROMANIA

Though there are debates as to the causes of pyromania, the fire-starter illness gives the subject the uncontrollable urge to start fires. The subject achieves a sense of instant gratification when they cause something to burn, a feeling that becomes more powerful and intense over time. Though the subject may begin with smaller fires, the itch usually grows until they require larger blazes that cause more damage to satisfy their needs. This illness can go unnoticed during its early stages but becomes severely problematic as the fires grow larger.

Momentum Trigger: The character is put in a position where they cannot light a fire to ease their anguish.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

A complicated and insidious illness, schizophrenia is often characterized by hallucinations and beliefs about one's self and relationships that are not rooted in reality. Commonly present alongside other illnesses like depression or paranoia, schizophrenics can be found manifesting abnormal behaviors such as experiencing hallucinations, speaking to things which aren't there, mimicking the words of others, presenting no outward emotions, behaving in silly or immature ways, and developing delusions about themselves and the world around them. This devastating illness can evolve over time from small behaviors into more serious forms that impair the subject's ability to function in the world safely as their hallucinations and beliefs grow more out of control.

Momentum Trigger: The character confuses what is real and what is a hallucination, which causes problems for him or his allies.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Caused by trauma and issues of abandonment, the subject is unable to be left alone for even short periods of time. This deep-rooted fear of abandonment makes the subject seek out others they trust for solace no matter the circumstance, sticking to them even when the other party is unwilling. Should the subject be left alone, they will often act out in the most violent of ways until returned to the person they find comforting, or else lapse into terrified catatonia until the subject of their trust is returned to them once more.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to be alone for a scene.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

THRILL KILL

Known by the complex moniker of Severe Anti-Social and Narcissistic Personality Disorder, this dangerous illness makes a subject take sadistic pleasure from the harming and killing of living things. The subject will seek out anything alive, from raiders to animals and other people to maim, torture, and kill. This illness becomes the single focus of their life, stripping away all other interests until the hunt and the kill is all that brings them pleasure. Commonly caused by Bad Brain, the subject will devolve until they can feel no other pleasure than the thrill of the kill, and the more pain the subject inflicts, the better.

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to kill to soothe themselves.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

SALVAGING

Salvaging is much easier than scavenging. If you have a piece of gear that doesn't work anymore, has too many Flaws (see below), or otherwise just isn't wanted, a Technology + Cunning roll (difficulty equal to the item's Tier — see below for that, too) can break it down into dots of Scrap. Like a salvaging roll, successes can be spent to yield more dots, but you can't get more dots than the item's Tier. There are only so many useful things you can get from a baseball bat, after all.

My Stuff: Gear

There's an old saying: "a survivor is only as good as their gear." From the furthest parts of the wastelands to the streets of Old York, there's not a day that goes by when good gear hasn't meant the difference between life and certain death. Armor and weapons, vehicles and gadgets, everything a survivor carries gives them one additional tool against the hordes of the



undead. Unless you want to give over to the Infection and join the zed, it's time to gear up and get ready for the fight ahead.

Scrap

Nothing in the wastelands would get made without almighty Scrap. Scrap is any component salvaged to be repurposed for use, from pieces of metal dug up by a canny Iron to the leftover parts of a decrepit Diesel-Jock ride rescued for reuse elsewhere. Nothing gets wasted in a world with so little, and the entire economy of the wastelands, no matter the currency, comes down to the movement of Scrap to build what's needed.

Scrap comes in two different varieties: organic and inorganic. *Organic* Scrap comes from plants, animals, raiders, zed, and members of the higher Strains. Bone, fur, teeth, skin, and organs all have their place in creating some of the items needed across the wastes, as do different strains of plants for various medicines and meals and wood for building. For the purposes of gameplay however, all these components are considered Scrap, and can be harvested during hunting.

Inorganic Scrap, on the other hand, is anything made of metal, either mined or pulled out of the ground where it was left behind from previous equipment and items. The wasteland is littered with the rusting hulks and hidden troves of relics from before and after the Fall, just waiting to be discovered and repurposed. Even zed and creatures of the waste carry Scrap, from rotting gear on now-dead survivors to old weapons stuck in the side of the nightmare beast that got away. Any intrepid salvager can find Scrap just by looking hard enough, provided they know just how to look.

Scrap is rated from 1 to 5 dots, with 1 being the most basic component and 5 being a rare and valuable piece of Scrap needed for delicate or complicated pieces of equipment.

Scavenging

Scrap doesn't usually come without effort. While there are professional salvagers who spend their lives seeking the best treasures in the trash, everyone can take a shot at scavenging what they need.

There are two steps to any good salvage mission. First, the survivor must find a site to salvage, where they believe they might find a choice cache or rich vein of Scrap. After studying maps, landscape, or surveying the area, roll Survival + Cunning, difficulty equivalent to how hard it is to find useable materials (from 1 for an old junkyard to 5 for a desolate area with nothing visible for miles). If the roll succeeds, a cache of Scrap is discovered, while any threshold successes can allow for additional caches of Scrap to be found, at Storyguide discretion. Should the initial salvage roll fail, the salvager comes up empty and has to move on to another location. One cannot attempt to salvage more than three times in a single scene, as after three times the area is "played out" and the salvager must look elsewhere.

Once the salvager succeeds at their initial search roll, they roll once more to see just how good the Scrap is. Roll Athletics + Cunning, difficulty 1, as the character works to get as much

as they can out of the find. One success yields one dot of Scrap, and additional successes can be spent to increase the value of the Scrap up to five dots on a one-for-one basis.

Crafting

At certain points in a story characters may need to gather reagents for an antidote, repair a vehicle to escape pursuit, or forge a sharp blade. These tasks use crafting, which can allow characters to acquire the tools needed to overcome a challenge or provide rewards near the end of a story. And Scrap is the building block of everything in the wastes, from equipment to armor and weapons to vehicles. Once it's been salvaged, a survivor can work to turn it into a sweet piece of something they need, either for their own use or to barter and trade with others.

Dystopia Rising boils any craft project down to a goal with a *Tier*. The goal is the aim of the crafter's work, and usually comes down to creating an Enhancement or resolving a Complication. The Tier is based on the goal's scope and determines how hard it is to achieve. Tier 2+ projects (and some large Tier 1 projects) are complex challenges that have a number of Milestones equal to their Tier, plus one for every key element (materials, tools, design, etc.) that is missing when the project starts. Possible Milestones include:

- Acquire rare materials.
- Hard labor in a forge, laboratory, garage, kitchen, construction site, and so on.
- Uncover a recipe or secret technique or gain inspiration from a similar item or phenomenon.

Note that the Storyguide may allow simple, Tier 1 projects to occur without resorting to a complex action. For example, if the only Milestone is "fix this car and make it run again," that only requires a point of Scrap and a single roll. It's important to note every piece of equipment is temporary and only lasts for an episode, unless a Milestone is added in the planning stage to make it more durable. So that quick fix to get the car running means it'll conk out again at the end of the episode.

To create more complex gear, simply narratively describe just what it is you're trying to create to the Storyguide. The Storyguide then decides how many Complications to add, combined with the inherent complexity of the object, which determines the final Tier. Here are some examples of additional Tier modifiers:

- Turning a temporarily salvaged object into one you can use permanently (see below).
- Fixing an object or removing a Flaw like Broken (see p. XX).
- Adding a particular tag to an object (see p. XX).
- Fixing only part of a complex object (such as the engine of a car) might reduce the Tier of a project.

NO MORE BOOKKEEPING

The universal price point system allows players and Storyguides to streamline the commerce system within the game while still reflecting the importance of trade in a scarcity-filled environment like the wastelands. Still, it does require players to keep track of how many UPPs they've accumulated and how many UPPs will be required in every transaction. Should players and their Storyguide be less interested in doing such bookkeeping during game, feel free to strip away the more complex parts of the UPP system and simply handle trade narratively. The UPP system was created to make things easier, but there's always room for the rules to be set aside for what the players are interested in doing. Remember, it's always about whatever is the most fun at your table.

Once the Storyguide has figured out what Tier it is, you'll need to make sure you have enough Scrap. Every dot of Scrap converts to points you can use to make said gear, with the rating of the Scrap equaling how many points it represents. A 3-dot piece of Scrap, for example, is three points worth of points one can put toward a piece of gear.

Crafting requires taking multiple pieces of Scrap and bringing them together to make what you need. Once your character has begged, bartered, traded, or salvaged enough Scrap, you need to start making plans. Roll Technology + Intellect, with a difficulty equal to the object's Tier. If the character already has blueprints (a valuable commodity in the wastes), these act as an Enhancement to the roll. Should you succeed, you can begin crafting.

The salvager spends one point of their pool of Scrap points, and rolls Technology + Intellect again at the same difficulty. If you succeed, the Milestone is passed and whatever the character sought to accomplish at that stage happens.

Should you fail, you need to attempt the Milestone again. In addition, you tack on a Flaw to the item. Flaws are just like Conditions, but they're applied to items instead of characters — something that causes the user difficulty while wielding or utilizing the crafted item. Maybe the brew you're creating is noxious and makes one want to throw up, or else the blade created is ragged and catches on bone and flesh, making it hard to remove. Work with the Storyguide to craft a good Flaw that's thematically appropriate to the new item.

Should you botch when crafting an item, something has gone badly wrong during weapon creation and the item is destroyed, along with all the resources that have been committed to the process.

Regardless of success or failure of a Milestone, however, a point of Scrap is always spent.

Once all the Milestones are completed, choose one additional Flaw. This is the item's *Fatal Flaw*, and it is persistent — it can never be removed unless the item is completely destroyed and rebuilt. But if you do that, it's a whole new set of crafting Milestones, and at the end you'll have to choose another Fatal Flaw. In the end, most folks just accept an item's quirks.

Not every item in the wastelands has a Fatal Flaw, mind you. It's entirely possible to find a gun that'll work just fine after you take it apart and clean it. It's only when you're trying to rebuild something out of whatever odds and ends you can scrape together that things get dicey. In the end, it's up to the Storyguide to decide if a particular crafting roll mandates a Fatal Flaw or not. But when in doubt, assume that if it's complicated enough to warrant some Milestones, it's probably going to end up with a special quirk.

Flaws

Every item has a Flaw. Here are a few examples.

BROKEN

It's busted. Gummed up. Trashed. The item doesn't work and won't until it's fixed.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character wants to attempt an action with the piece of gear in question but must fail or otherwise get into worse trouble because the item won't work.

Resolution: Fixing the item, either with a Tier 1 crafting roll (p. XX) or through some other means, like finding a particular part.

CONTAMINATED

The gear has so many rads it's functionally useless. The gear also gains the Broken Flaw (if it doesn't have it already), and the Broken Flaw cannot be resolved until the Contaminated Flaw is.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Contaminated gear.

Resolution: The gear is decontaminated (p. XX) using a Decontamination Kit.

FUEL/AMMO HOG

The item requires more fuel or ammo than usual. Whenever a roll using the item is a botch, it stops working until more fuel or ammo can be found.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character botches and the item runs out of fuel or ammo.

Resolution: The gear is given more fuel or ammo (temporarily removing the effects) or the Flaw is removed through repair.

IRRADIATED

The gear has taken on too much radiation, and it don't work so well. It loses 1 Enhancement (down to 0) while it has this Flaw.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Irradiated gear.

Resolution: The gear is decontaminated (p. XX) or gains the Contaminated Flaw.

NOXIOUS

The item in question tastes or smells disgusting. Every time the item is used successfully (granting effects or Enhancement), the user must roll Survival + Stamina, difficulty 1, or take a Stress Condition due to nausea.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character takes a Stress Condition from the item's use.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

ON THE BLINK

The gear randomly loses effectiveness. On a successful roll using this item, roll a single die. If the die is even, the item generates one fewer Enhancement than normal.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character loses Enhancement at a critical moment.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

STICKY

The gear gets caught on things easily. When the item is used on another target (such as putting a sword into a zed), the item is stuck until the user succeeds in an Athletics + Might roll, difficulty 1, to remove the item.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character loses the object at a critical moment.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

WEATHER-WORN

The gear has been battered by the elements, losing some effectiveness. It loses 1 Enhancement (down to 0) while it has this Flaw.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Weather-Worn gear.

Resolution: The gear is dried out (p. XX).

Beg, Borrow, Steal: Economy

The wasteland is a big place, full of different settlements that each have their own way of doing things. Go from Old York to up the Baywalker way, down to the Rover caravans heading across the wide-open spaces, and everyone has a different way of doing business. Some folks will only take things in trade, while others have a complicated system of haggling or their own currency. Whatever you're dealing in or how you're doing it though, there's a few basic rules to keep if you don't want to find yourself on the business end of what's probably a rusty-as-hell firearm.

Be Fair: We all know the art of the deal is trying to haggle your way to the best prices you can get. But that doesn't mean trying to cheat someone out of their shirt. Not everyone has to act the Vegasian. Everyone in commerce expects a little bit of cutting corners and there's an art and even a code about the little tricks of the trade to getting the best deals. That said, if you step over the line and push that back and forth too far, you'll get a reputation as a cheapskate or worse, a bad business risk. Try people too often and you'll get frozen out of the local economies. Be warned: Reputations have a funny way of following you around.

Be Respectful: Part of the code of trade is to show respect, and that sometimes means sitting down and breaking bread with traders, sharing their customs, and going through the motions even if they make no sense to you. That kind of respect earns you the reputation to be welcome in places you might never have breached, simply because you shook the right hand and complimented the right person.

Keep Your Word: Nobody likes a liar or a fraud. If you say you're going to make a deal, have the courage to look your partners or the opposition in the eye and give them the score straight up. A little bit of subterfuge is expected when trading, with the back and forth more like a game of cards than an economic exchange. But if you're caught lying before or after making a deal, the retribution can be ugly depending on who it is you've pissed off.

Keep Your Opinions to Yourself: Commenting on people's merchandise can be great if you're paying a compliment. But rag on the craftsmanship or capability of someone's work and not only can you find yourself frozen out of purchase, people can get indignant. And indignance can lead to firefights, and we don't want to see that.

Always Inspect the Merchandise: While you don't want to insult a crafter by making comments about their work, it's also considered wise to check out just what you're purchasing. Use a Skill roll with Intellect to see if there are any Flaws you should be aware of (and there's usually one). If you walk away without assessing the merchandise, it's generally considered your fault if you get something faulty. As they say: Buyer beware.

Universal Price Point

Nobody expects every part of the wastelands to have the same currency. That would require a level of coordination and cooperation most people after the Fall can't imagine. But rather than require players to remember and deal with the conversion of every settlement and city's own currency, the game provides a universal price point system that supports the narrative-driven, in-character barter and trade system.

The universal price point is a standardization of currency set by the Storyguide for every piece of equipment, item, or even service in game. If currency is exchanging hands in character, there is an equal value in the universal price point (UPP) for players to keep track of instead. While in character players may call the transaction currency creds or bullets or whatever the local currency is during play, the exchange with the Storyguide will always be in UPP. (Widely-traveled characters may also reference and use UPPs, but in general it's not commonly part of discussion with local merchants.)

During a scene where a character wishes to purchase something from a trader, for example, the trader may say they want the character to pay them 75 credits for a small portable generator. If the character doesn't have credits but instead deals in bullets, it would be a lot of math to try and figure out a conversion rate. Instead, the Storyguide would tell the player out of character that 70 credits translate to 60 UPPs. The player, who has traded their own crafted equipment before and accumulated UPPs, which they keep track of out of character, simply tells the Storyguide they're spending the UPPs and then continues roleplaying the exchange as if it was done in credits all along.

As the UPP is a standard across the game, there is another component that is standard: Scrap. On average, the ratio of Scrap to the UPP is **3 Scrap to 1 UPP (rounded up)**. That should assist Storyguides and players on deciding how much equipment costs during barter and trade.

The Storyguide is the one who sets the price point for the item in UPP, so much like in the wastelands, a certain amount of bartering can happen. Players should bargain with the trader in character and not with the Storyguide themselves, allowing for the haggling to remain in character. Once the trader drops the price, the Storyguide can adjust the UPP accordingly, and the roleplaying can continue from there. The UPP can also be applied to services rendered, such as guard duty or assassinations, anything that involves the exchange of services for monetary gain. The Storyguide sets the UPP for the job in question and the character may either haggle or accept as is applicable in the scene. The UPP exists to make such roleplay easier, so ham it up and really let the characters get into the nitty-gritty of a world of complex wasteland commerce without the hassle.

Example Gear and Tiers

While there are plenty of assorted objects made across the wastelands, here are some iconic items used as examples of the Tiers, tags, and Scrap requirements for making weapons. Note: They don't necessarily follow the weapon and armor tag guidelines on p. XX — the focus was on giving them the tags and Enhancement that made sense over "game balance."

MELEE WEAPONS

NAME	ENHANCEMENT	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Shiv	1	Lethal, Melee, Concealable	1	3	1
Scrap Knuckles	1	Lethal, Melee, Concealable, Worn	1	3 (pair)	1
Scrap Knife	1	Lethal, Melee, Concealable	2	5	2
Cleaver	1	Lethal, Melee	3	6	2
Claw Hammer	1	Bashing, Melee, Messy	3	6	2
Crowbar	1	Bashing, Melee	3	6	2
Sluggerville Bat	1	Bashing, Melee, Two-Handed	3	6	2
Whip	1	Bashing, Melee, Grappling, Reach	3	6	2
Cane	1	Bashing, Melee, Versatile	3	6	2
Staff	1	Bashing, Melee, Reach, Two-Handed	3	6	2
Trench Knife	1	Lethal, Melee	3	7	3
Machete	2	Lethal, Melee, Messy, Versatile	3	7	3
Hand Axe	2	Lethal, Melee, Messy	3	7	3
Scrap Sword	2	Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Two-Handed	4	8	3
Heavy Chopper	3	Lethal, Melee, Messy, Two-Handed	5	9	3
Pole Axe	3	Lethal, Melee, Reach, Two-Handed	5	10	4
Shotgun Knuckles	3	Bashing, Melee, Loud, Worn	5	13	5

GUNS

NAME	ENHANCEMENT	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Scrap Shooter	1	Lethal, Firearm, Concealable	1	5	2
Throw-Away	1	Lethal, Firearm, Concealable	2	8	3
Revolver	1	Lethal, Firearm, Concealable	3	10	3
Bolt Pistol	1	Lethal, Firearm, Concealable	3	13	4
Hunting Rifle	2	Lethal, Firearm, Two-Handed	3	17	6
Sawed-Off Shotgun	2	Lethal, Firearm, Pushing, Two-Handed	3	18	6
Lever Action Rifle	2	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-Handed	3	19	7
Sniper Rifle	2	Lethal, Firearm, Long Range, Two-Handed	4	20	7
Semi-Auto Pistol	1	Lethal, Firearm	4	22	8
Automatic Pistol	1	Lethal, Firearm	4	25	9
Sub-Machine Gun	2	Lethal, Firearm, Loud, Piercing	5	30	11
Flame Thrower	2	Lethal, Firearm, Loud, Unconcealable	5	32	12
Assault Rifle	2	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-Handed	5	35	12
Machine Gun	2	Lethal, Firearm, Loud, Two-Handed	5	38	13
Turret	3	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Unconcealable	5	40	14
RPG Launcher	3	Lethal, Firearm, Arcing, Shockwave	5	40	14
Missile Launcher	3	Lethal, Firearm, Shockwave, Slow	5	45	15

RANGED WEAPONS

NAME	ENHANCEMENT	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Sling	1	Bashing, Firearm, Concealable	1	1	1
Throwing Knife	1	Lethal, Thrown, Concealable	2	3	1
Boomerang	1	Bashing, Thrown, Returning	2	3	1
Bow	1	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-handed	3	5	2
Javelin	1	Lethal, Thrown	4	8	3
Recurve Bow	1	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-Handed	4	10	4
Compound Bow	2	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-Handed	4	15	5
Crossbow	2	Lethal, Firearm, Piercing, Two-Handed	5	20	7
Heavy Crossbow	3	Lethal, Firearm, Long Range, Piercing, Two-Handed	5	25	9
Repeating Crossbow	3	Lethal, Firearm, Shockwave, Two-Handed	5	30	10

EXPLOSIVES

NAME	ENHANCEMENT	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Molotov Cocktail	1	Lethal, Thrown, Arcing, Loud	1	1	1
Flare	1	Lethal, Firearm	2	5	2
Smoke Grenade	1	Stun, Thrown, Concealable	2	8	3
Flash Bang Grenade	1	Stun, Thrown, Concealable, Loud	3	8	3
Frag Grenade	1	Lethal, Thrown, Concealable, Loud	3	12	4
Rad Bomb	3	Lethal, Loud, Messy, Shockwave	5	40	14
Baby Nuke	5	Lethal, Loud, Messy, Shockwave	5	50	17

ARMOR

NAME	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Leather Jacket	Soft (1), Innocuous	1	10	4
Hide Shield	Soft (1)	1	10	4
Reinforced Vest	Soft (2)	2	15	5
Scrap Shield	Hard (1), Cumbersome	2	20	7
Motorcycle Helmet	Soft (1), Innocuous	3	20	7
Scrap Armor	Hard (3), Cumbersome	3	25	9
Kavleer Vest	Soft (2), Resistant (bullets), Concealable	4	25	9
Combat Helmet	Hard (1), Cumbersome	4	30	10
Military Armor	Soft (3), Cumbersome	4	30	10

ARMOR (CONT'D)

NAME	TAGS	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Riot Shield	Hard (3), Weighty	5	35	20
Metal Armor	Hard (3), Resistant (Bashing), Weighty	5	40	14

VEHICLES

NAME	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Sled	1	5	2
Bicycle	1	10	4
Rickshaw	1	15	5
Cart	1	20	7
Motor Wheelchair	2	25	9
Trade Wagon	2	25	9
Light Sailboat	2	25	9
Heavy Wagon	2	30	10
Distressed Motorbike	2	35	12

VEHICLES (CONT'D)

NAME	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Caravan Wagon	3	40	14
Rusted-Out Car	3	45	15
Iron Horse Motorcycle	3	50	17
Compact Car	3	55	19
Fishing Trawler	4	60	20
Rebuilt Sedan	4	65	22
Stripped-Down Truck	4	70	24
Heavy Cruiser	5	75	25
Construction Vehicle	5	80	27
Army Surplus Humvee	5	85	29
Half-Tracked Rig	5	90	30
Baricade Buster Rig	5	95	32
War Rig	5	100	34

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

NAME	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Healing Herbs	1	1	1
Bandages	1	2	1
Eye Patch	1	2	1
Limb Splint	1	3	1
Walking Cane	1	3	1
Cough and Cold	1	5	2
Crutches	1	5	2
Leg Braces	1	5	2
Weak Poison	1	5	2
Disinfectant	2	8	3
Rad-B-Gone	2	8	3
NRG Boost	2	8	3
Leg Braces	2	10	4
Re-Buff	2	10	4
Hearing Aid	2	10	4
Rat Poison	3	10	4
Quick Seal Spray	3	15	5
Antibiotics	3	18	6
Wheelchair	3	18	6
Quality Poison	4	18	6
Jump Kit	4	20	7
Doctor's Bag	5	20	7
Exam Bed	5	25	9
Surgery Bed	5	30	10
Mobile Surgery	5	35	12
Surgery Bay	5	40	14

FOOD & HOOCH

NAME	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
Hooch	1	3	1
Dirty Water	1	3	1
Turlet Hooch	1	5	2
Dry Rations	1	5	2
Fresh Rations	2	8	3
Water Rations	2	10	4
Quality Hooch	3	10	4
Vita-Water	3	15	5
Quality Rations	3	15	5
Family Dinner	4	20	7
Sumptuous Feast	5	25	9

TECH & ASSORTED GEAR

NAME	TIER	SCRAP	UPP
1 Liter Bottle	1	1	1
6 oz. Flask	1	2	1
Tarps	1	3	1
Looter's Sack	1	3	1
Blankets	1	3	1
Trusty Lighter	1	3	1
Glasses	1	3	1
Spyglass	2	5	2
Lantern	2	5	2
Prybar	2	5	2
Grapnel Hook	2	8	3
A-Frame Tent	2	10	4
Hand Lights	3	10	4
Craft Tools	3	12	4
Animal Care Kit	3	12	4
Decontamination Kit	4	15	5
Lock Breaker Kit	4	15	5
Mechanic Kit	4	20	7
Portable Stove	5	25	9
Travel Brew Still	5	30	10
Travel Workbench	5	35	12
Metal Detector	5	40	14



chapter seven

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

"Realize that even that guy wandering alone may have friends, and if they come calling you best know what side you are on - and more importantly, which side they are on - before you pull that trigger."

- Johnny Twist, Merican Gunslinger.

Just Folks: Factions

There is safety in numbers, and few loners manage to survive in the wastes. Just as people group in towns and settlements for safety, factions spring up as a place for those who share goals and ideals to come together and increase their power base. Below are included just some of the many that make up the known world.

Attercops

No one can be said to know more of what occurs across this broken world than the Attercops. A secret network of Lascarians, the Attercops have eyes and ears in unlikely places. They gather information on even the most mundane events and spread it through an underground network of what they call tap points. The eldest among them oversee these lines of communication and sort, organize, and disperse the information to those who can most benefit from it. Their agents, known as spinnerlings, then travel back up to the surface world and mingle among communities to broker everything from protection details to assassinations. Attercops are known for keeping their eyes and ears open and their mouths shut, as discretion is a watchword in their field. However, if the price is right, they are always willing to come to a beneficial arrangement.

This faction is solely made up of Lascarians. Members are chosen for inclusion in the Attercops based on their loyalty to their Strain and to each other. Elders of the faction treat their spinnerlings like family, and the affection is reciprocated. It is common for family dinner to be a reoccurring event where connections between faction members are affirmed and strengthened. With such a powerful information network, they very rarely make mistakes in who they draft for inclusion, as the vetting process for entry can take quite some time.

Paranoid and overcautious in many cases, one thing the Attercops rarely are is *wrong*. Those that do dare to betray the family, however, are dealt with in the harshest manner possible as a warning to the others of the price of betrayal. Attercops have connections and relationships with some of the most dangerous men and women on the planet, and they will not hesitate to use those to punish any Lascarian foolish enough to cross them once they are welcomed into the family.

Crimson Cross Caravans

The Crimson Cross Caravans claim to descend from an altruistic pre-Fall organization that helped the helpless. In following that tradition, they are known for traveling from settlement to city, freely dispersing knowledge and medicine in almost equal measure. They refuse to take any payment for their services, beyond a promise to give freely to others what has been given to them, and thus increase the benefit to all whom should have need of it. However, they will accept donations of supplies or components that may then be turned into medicines or other lifesaving items back at their hidden settlements. They use these trips to ensure that all people within the settlements are being treated fairly. Failure to do so is a quick way to ensure such a place will not receive another visit until they mend their ways.

As their name implies, the Crimson Cross Caravans are a nomadic organization with very few permanent locations to call their own. These areas are the most heavily guarded secrets among their members, as it is here that they grow crops and distill medicines that they then disperse throughout their travels. Some settlements or cities make a habit of donating to the Crimson Cross Caravans early and often, in the hopes that they will be remembered fondly when need does eventually arise.

While not a primarily religious organization, many Sainthood of Ashes members find the Crimson Cross epitomizes many of their ideals, while the Red Stars eagerly embrace the concept of bettering the community over the fate of a single individual or small group. Members of this organization value sincerity, self-sacrifice, and self-sufficiency as the most important guiding ideals. Over the years, some have sought to use the beneficence of the Crimson Cross Caravan for their own use, but such actions have always ended up extremely poorly for any organization that tries. The ire of those whom the Caravan have helped in the past always falls harshly and in significant force.

Lineage League

The Lineage League is a unique blend of record keepers and social elites. They take on the tasks of maintaining family ancestry records, land claims, and records of significant ancestry within the different Pure Blood families. If there is any faction that the Pure Bloods of the wastes rely on, it is the Lineage League.

However, they are not merely record keepers. Members of the Lineage League also have access to almost unimaginable

levels of wealth due to their significance with the Pure Blood families. With members throughout every major metropolitan area, the amount of concentrated wealth under the purview of the League could purchase entire trade routes without blinking twice. Rumors circulate, among those who know of the faction, that they even have connections beyond cities like Old York, Vegasia, and the Ironworks. Such places are merely myths and legends to most, but to the members of the Lineage League, their reality is proven in trade goods and other wealth that sustains their faction's way of life.

Whether power is wealth, or wealth leads to power, the Lineage League is just happy to be so flush with both that they do not have to care. As such, they zealously guard their work to ensure that there is no other group that can rival both their monetary power, or the depth of their familial knowledge. Members of the League achieve elite social standing among Pure Bloods. Few are as rich or connected as those who are admitted to its ranks. Only the most aristocratic and wealthy scions have a chance to receive an invitation to the ranks of the Lineage League.

Lone Star Rangers

Deep in the heart of Merican territory, down south in and around Star City, is the home of the Lone Star Rangers. Bounty hunters, vigilantes, and self-appointed lawmen, Rangers ride their iron horses deep into the wastes, righting wrongs with simple and heavy-handed violence.

Lone Star Rangers work alone for all but the most difficult assignments. When something overwhelming comes to light, only then will they group together and form a posse to call down a reckoning on those who flout the law as they see it. Those that wish to join the Rangers must go through a baptism of fire, usually at the side of a confirmed member of the faction, before receiving their recommendation. Without a recommendation of an already accredited Ranger, the only way to join them is to be appointed by one of the rulers of Star City. Such an honor is rare but can be won by doing some notable or outstanding service to the interests of the leadership, or to Star City as a whole. These meritorious acts are always highly publicized and acclaimed among the population by the locals and the Lone Star Ranger membership.

Members of the Rangers have a rough-and-ready sense of justice, and the ammo to back it up. They have a fanatical loyalty to each other, as they are most likely going into dangerous situations alone. While it is rare that they will travel together, one thing is certain: The death of a Ranger is sure to bring down the wrath of every other Ranger who finds out about it.

Mercy's Chosen

Outside many smaller settlements in the wastelands are monasteries dedicated to curing disease and treating wounds. These are the homes of Mercy's Chosen. Doctors and medics refuse payment or trade, accepting only donations, to improve the overall health of all that seek them out. They keep themselves apart, always on the outskirts and never living within a settlement's borders, to help keep them true to their doctrine and avoid the temptation that is rife in the wastes.

Mercy's Chosen also offer training to any who would learn to cure the sick or injured, offering them a home within their walls, or sending them off to share that knowledge to other places outside the reach of the Chosen. These nomadic doctors who retain an affiliation with this faction are a source of news, scouting out new possible monastery locations, and sending back supplies and donations they manage to recover from the depths of the wastes. Rumors have arisen that the Chosen are in talks with the Crimson Cross Caravan on the possibility of combining their efforts, or even their factions, but nothing official has come from the leadership of either group. The two have similar ideals, and may even combine efforts when the occasion warrants, but for now they each retain their own core values and members.

Members of the Chosen, nomadic or not, are all dedicated to the attempt to eradicate sickness and disease from the wasteland. Rumors abound of less savory practices that may go on behind closed doors of these monasteries, but those who dedicate themselves to the Chosen lifestyle aren't talking, nor are the lucky few who receive their care when they need it most. Such speculation may even be part of the reason the Crimson Cross Caravan has kept its distance from any official collaboration between these factions with such similar goals.

Post Walkers of the Postal Service

Post Walkers believe that communication is the key to survival, and they put their lives on the line to prove it. These veteran survivors travel the wastes from bustling cities to barely surviving settlements to keep lines of communication and contact alive.

Very few are willing to interfere with a Post Walker, who walk alone through miles and miles of wasteland and endure the most dangerous conditions. Such a feat takes a dedicated soul, and a dangerous one. Such is the respect these hardened warriors are afforded, that other survivors often follow in their wake, relying on the reputation of the Postal Service to keep them safe in their own travels. Few members of this faction are willing to travel with others, as even a moment's distraction can prove deadly in the wilds they walk. Post Walkers refuse any monetary reimbursement for their jobs, though a bed for a night or two and some supplies will be accepted as payment for delivering information.

This faction is a famous source of information on the safety of popular travel routes, or even as a source for new routes that are traversable. Many prominent merchants and traders will seek out Post Walkers for their advice or guidance on the hazards and pitfalls of the routes they want to travel before setting out if the opportunity arises. While it is not a mandate, some members of the Postal Service are willing to share their own experiences if it does not impinge on the integrity of their calling.

Members of the Postal Service take their responsibility seriously. When they commit to delivering a message, even death isn't always enough to stop them from ensuring their mission is complete. Membership in this faction is a lonely road, both literally and figuratively, and requires determination and survival instincts in equal measure.

Priests of the Sound

Priests of the Sound are a warrior faction directly tied to the faith of the Kings' and Queens' Court. They originate from the First Temple of Sound in Old York. After intense training, members are sent out into the wastes to collect artifacts of music and broadcasting.

What makes them unique is that every single Priest of the Sound has tattooed or branded upon their body the blueprints required to build radio receivers and radio-relay stations. They travel the wastes, from settlement to settlement, in their search for dead zones, areas where the signal does not reach. When they find such a place, they seek out a settlement nearby and use the blueprints they carry upon their bodies to rectify this travesty. They build radio-relay stations and receivers and preach their faith to the survivors that rally to protect them. Once the shrine is protected, they train a new Priest of the Sound, branding them with the sigils of their faith and sending them out into the wastes to seek out other dead zones and continue to spread the signal.

Because of the importance of their mission, fighting ability and physical training are rigorously taught among the Priests. They constantly train themselves in the event they are given the blessing to roam and seek out a dead zone, or upon finding one, they are skilled enough to train any converts to prepare them for their own sacred journey.

Members of the Priests of the Sound are zealous in their commitment to spread the signal to cover the planet. They live by the belief that one day music will bridge the gaps and reunite survivors from Old York to Vegasia and beyond. The blueprints etched into their bodies offer a type of protection as well, from the saner denizens of the wastes, as few would willingly risk damaging such priceless knowledge. However, the undead care little for radio, so members of this faction are highly trained to defend themselves and their mission.

Psionicists' Guild

Psionicists in the wild are dangerous. Few want them around for too long, though plenty want them to use their abilities for them. The Psionicists' Guild not only accepts psionicists but also trains them and helps them survive. What started out as a small group of psionicists banding together for mutual safety has organized into a hierarchy of trainers, companions, and employers. Psionicists find safety within the Guild and wastelanders feel safe with psionicists on the proverbial Guild leash.

Now the only acceptable psionicist belongs to the Guild, and those caught in the wild without membership are quickly turned over or outright murdered. It's safest to use the Guild as your umbrella, and the upside is that the Guild cares little about what their members do outside of learning basic control of their psionic abilities.

Road Crew

The origins of the Road Crew lie firmly embedded in the gambling dens and high-stakes arenas of Vegasia. These engineers and Diesel Jocks created this faction solely to support the Guts N Bolts racing tournament sponsored by several prominent members of the Vegasian gambling elite. They roam the wastes, scouting out locations for waypoints, fuel and ammo drops, and ensuring that the only thing easy in this long-haul race is never making it to the finish line. From Vegasia itself to Missionary Bay, they set up routes deep in the most zed-infested territories so every racer faces untold dangers to access the fuel, credit, and ammo they'll need to finish the race.

While some intrepid few might seek to make their fortune on a single run of the Guts N Bolts circuit, members of the Road Crew constantly traverse these routes. Adrenaline or foolishness, few can truly understand the Road Crew without themselves becoming a member, but all can respect the accomplishments they continuously achieve. Betrayal is something they rarely worry about, as the sponsors of the race have endless ability to ensure that while someone may accomplish such a feat, they will not live anywhere near long enough to enjoy it.

Members may seem like just support, but it is important to remember that before a single racer can brave these dangers, a team of the Road Crew has already made the run, set the supplies, and made it back to report the way point. They not only have the stealth skills necessary to sneak their way in and out of zed and raider territory, but they have the firepower to blast their way back if they need to. Underestimating a member of the Road Crew is a terrible mistake, as these rough-and-ready survivors live on the edge of an adrenaline high every day they show up at work.

The Scythe

Black armor, stained with the viscera of the undead and bearing a reaper's scythe in white, is the hallmark of the military faction known as the Scythe. These warriors walk tall in the most uncivilized parts of the world, secure in their mandate to see every single example of undead wiped from existence itself.

They live by the creed of their "majority mandate" when they encounter any settlement. This states that if the number of undead to be killed is more than three times the number of survivors to be rescued, then no attempt at rescue shall be made. Members firmly believe that sacrifices must be made for the greater good, and that a scorched-earth policy is a means justified by the end. As such they are viewed with fear far more often than respect, unless they are out of range.

Their methods bring the most scorn. Far too many members of the Scythe, when faced with the choice to save a life or destroy a zed, will choose to kill the zed, even if it requires more effort than the rescue. However, they are also used as a tool by

many, who will send information on zed infestations well before they could threaten any nearby settlements, in the hopes that the Scythe will remove the problem before it evolves — a situation the Scythe is all too happy to take up, in its never-ending assault on the zed of the wastes.

Members of this organization have an unrelenting drive to see the undead removed from the planet by extreme and unmerciful force. While not a religious faction, members of the Cult of Fallow Hopes are particularly common members of the Scythe, as their ideals about the eradication of undead are almost identical.

Servants of Egress

Born as an order of the Final Knights, the Servants of Egress see the only way to defy the vengeful gods who visited hell on Earth is through venerating the suffering of man. Servants move through the wastes in groups, seeking out any that look vulnerable, to bring torture and agony to all that reside within. These zealots use their training in psychology and torture to wring from their victims every ounce of suffering possible. It is only through this suffering that they believe it possible to "enlighten" their victims.

These sadists also seek out any vestiges left of the old preFall religions they can find, holy sites or texts, and destroy or defile them as thoroughly as they can — yet another way to show their contempt for the gods who lay their wrath upon the world and created the wastelands. They see as their holy mission to scourge the flesh and minds of those who might still believe in some benevolent deity or faith, to open their eyes to the truth that they espouse. Rarely, if ever, do they even consider the idea of suffering themselves, when there are so many others who need to be enlightened. Only when one of their members flags in their faith or passes on an opportunity to teach their faith to a nonbeliever will they themselves suffer the scourge as a reminder.

Members of this faction are quantifiable sadists. They see as their holy mission to inflict pain and torture on any unenlightened who fail to realize it is better to rule in hell than to remain faithful to long-dead gods who damned the planet and the survivors who still walk it. They are zealous in their faith and vigorous in their duties, much to the detriment of any hapless victim that manages to get caught in their snares.

Steamers

Steamers are teams that patrol the railways of the Ironworks, seeking out obstructions, ambush raiders, or undead that may threaten the safe and consistent operation of the Ironworks rail lines. The Rail Barons themselves fund their own companies of steamers to protect their personally owned lines, as well as to have a ready team to conduct sabotage or mayhem on the railways of their enemies.

Beyond their duties as guards and repairmen, this faction also provides surveyors who seek out new areas to expand the already impressive matrix of rail systems that spreads out from the Ironworks hub. Due to the funding provided by the massive wealth of the Rail Barons, steamer teams can usually look forward to being well equipped with all they might need to serve their interests. This includes the tools to sabotage the lines of rivals, weapons to defend against attempted sabotage, and proper gear to ensure no roaming zed or bandits can interrupt the timely and efficient running of the trains. Few things anger the Rail Barons more than any delay in their profits, and the steamers are their primary tool to ensure such an activity never happens.

Members of this faction always work in teams, spending considerable amounts of time away from secure locations as they ride the lines. A blend of guards and engineers, each team must be self-sufficient, and handle whatever situation might threaten the safety of other rail-riders. While they share a faction, members share a deep loyalty with other team members, as it is not uncommon at all to have multiple teams vying with each other over acts of sabotage or outright war.



Behind Closed Doors: Secret Societies

Secret societies are like factions, but far more specialized. They have strict agendas that all members are focused on achieving with an almost fanatical zeal. Some are more secretive than others, but the one thing they all have in common is that commitment to the cause they endorse is the most stringent requirement.

The Black Market

Every area of the wasteland is different. Different traditions, different laws, and different regulations. However, that doesn't stop people from wanting the things that they want, laws be damned. Thus, the rise of the Black Market. This secret society is a network of hidden individuals who supply the illegal and unsavory to demanding customers throughout the wasteland. Money talks, a sentiment that survived the Fall and has taken root even in the most remote areas, and while some may hesitate at the more questionable requests, this society prides itself on being able to deliver whenever it takes on a commission.

Members of this faction are often innocuous. They present themselves with an amiable façade to ensure that what law may exist where they are has little-to-no reason to suspect them. Adept at maintaining their secrecy and ferreting out customers who can do the same, members of the Black Market excel at finding the supply to meet any demand. Due to the secrecy involved in protecting their safety, the Black Market has a strong connection with Murder, Inc., who handles cases of betrayal at a discount to supply their more illegal requests.



Leader: Inner Circle

Members of the Black Market who gain the Leader Condition qualify for membership in the Inner Circle.

While the Black Market operates in cell-like secrecy to ensure that no member can compromise the whole network, there must be a spider at the center of that web. Members of the Inner Circle are those spiders. These are the masterminds behind the Black Market's operations.

Elite thieves and operatives, membership in the Inner Circle is no easy feat to attain. Years of dedication and service are required to bring a member of the Black Market to the notice of the Inner Circle. Having attained such attention is a double-edged sword. Advancing to the Inner Circle is a one-time possibility. Failure in this test is a guarantee that the offer shall rarely, if ever, be extended again. Inner Circle members are also the trump card for any situation that arises that could threaten the existence of the Black Market as a whole. When multiple cell identities are at risk, or when supply routes have been blocked, an Inner Circle member will likely be sent to evaluate the problem if they cannot solve it immediately.

Members of the Inner Circle have the responsibility to coordinate prices and availability for the most sought-after illegal and hard-to-obtain items. They ensure delivery routes are safe, that couriers remain unmolested, and hand down requests to Murder, Inc. when someone dares to betray the Black Market.

Crafters of Alexandria

Nothing is certain. Knowledge that has been gained could easily be lost with one well-placed bullet from a raider rifle or at the claws of a hungry zed. With just a moment's violence, society moves two steps back. Crafters of Alexandria find this unacceptable and have vowed to do all in their power to prevent it. They create powerfully protected storehouses of knowledge and technology. They store information and devices so that it is always two steps forward and never back. At any cost.

Crafters do not just chronicle advancements either. They make use of this knowledge and seek to advance it themselves. They are skilled craftspeople pushing the boundaries as often as possible, and then recording their success and failures for the next giant to stand upon their shoulders and reach ever higher.

Members of the Crafters of Alexandria are chroniclers and defenders of knowledge, as well as researchers and scientists. They are crafters of tomorrow, using their hands and minds to push technology ever forward. Even the staunchest guardians of their storehouses are responsible for keeping martial sciences continuously advancing. There are also members of this faction whose job it is to explore the wastes, seek out information they may not yet possess, and bring it back to the libraries and storehouses of the Crafters for safekeeping.

Dead Sight Society

The Dead Sight Society believes in the complete and utter eradication of all psionicists that roam the wastes. They firmly believe that anything a psionicist sees or understands is communicated to the Grave Mind itself. If they can be destroyed root and branch, then they can remove the influence of the Grave Mind once and for all.

Members of the Society establish themselves in as many settlements and major cities as possible, drafting likeminded individuals to the cause by preaching the dangers of psionics. Their members span many Strains and religions, united by their undying hatred of psionicists and what they believe they represent. They share their hatred of psionicists with anyone and everyone who will listen. They are zealots in the cause of destroying what they see as a continuing plague upon the wastes. Favored recruits often have a personal bias against psionicists already, which the Dead Sight Society is happy to expound upon and exploit for the cause. Their righteous fury does not make them stupid, however; they can be stealthy when infiltrating areas that are positive or neutral in their dealings with psionicists, to learn who the best targets are and when they can be taken out.

Fast Track

With the abolishment of slavery as an acceptable practice, a society known as the Fast Track has sprung up in the wake of the dissolution of the Underground Railroad. Where there used to be a group dedicated to freeing slaves, instead they have rebranded themselves as an organization to ensure such a practice never takes root again.

Conductors on the Fast Track continue to help those recovering from the bonds of slavery rebuild their lives and those of their families. They travel the wastes attempting to reunite long-lost family lines that were shattered by the slave trade. They offer work supporting their organization and others while teaching survival and combat skills. Members of the Fast Track welcome former Underground Railroad members and agents into their fold and give them a new goal to strive for. Agents of the Fast Track infiltrate communities and cities alike to seek out any remaining tendrils of the slave trade and alert the organization to send in the right team to eliminate them in as aggressive a fashion as possible, to serve as a warning to anyone else foolish enough to attempt a revival of the slave trade.

Members of the Fast Track are zealous in their ideals and vigilante in their methods. While a large faction of the society works on support and rehabilitation, their militant wing does not hesitate to make an example of slavers or those that would condone such behavior. Even some ignorant members of communities have been punished for failing to see what seems obvious to members of the Fast Track. As such, their reputation among those who have heard of them can swing wildly depending on personal experience.

Murder, Inc.

One of the most powerful groups within the entirety of the wastelands, Murder, Inc. exists for one purpose: to ensure that the Fall is never repeated. And the best way to ensure that is through organization and careful management of everyone. Though the title might suggest otherwise, this faction is made up of myriad different groups, all supporting each facet of the others under the overall

goal. Murder, Inc. has a host of different divisions from Supply to Public Relations, Murders and Executions to Internal Auditors.

No matter to which division one belongs, the most important thing is loyalty. The aims of the faction come before all other concerns. Anyone who wavers on that belief should expect an Internal Audit member to swiftly arrive to discuss rehabilitation. Others may shy away from policing their own and ensuring the mistakes that led to the Fall are eliminated, but Murder, Inc. embraces this destiny and will not falter in ensuring that it will never, ever, *ever* happen again.

Members of Murder, Inc. are highly trained, extremely motivated, and very deadly. Even those members who do not participate in the Execution or Internal Audit aspects of the faction are incredibly capable when push comes to shove. This can and does include taking months or years building up an identity before executing a contract. The town drunk, a coward who runs from the slightest mention of zed, or a successful trader could be a member of Murder, Inc. in disguise, simply waiting until the moment an order is given.

Leader: Upper Management

Members of Murder, Inc. who gain the Leader Condition qualify to join Upper Management.

Some of the most dangerous killers in the wastelands are members of Upper Management, the faction that directs and controls Murder, Inc. These elite assassins work countless assignments before consideration of promotion. It is the responsibility of these managers to ensure the goal of Murder, Inc. is carefully nurtured. Eliminating those that stand in the way of progress takes just as high a priority as protecting those that could rise to make a difference. It is Upper Management that determines who belongs to which category, and then assigns either lower-ranked members of Murder, Inc. to handle the situation, or takes it upon themselves.

Upper Management is also the society that handles betrayal in the ranks of Murder, Inc. Permanently. Members of Upper Management directly handle the most dangerous or impossible targets. Those that must be removed without a trace or in ways that seem accidental are generally in their purview. As leaders, they also finance scientists and builders to seek out scientific and technological advances that could benefit the faction, or seek out rival groups of assassins that may one day seek to displace Murder, Inc.

Promotion to the ranks of Upper Management is a high privilege and a solemn responsibility. Betrayal at this level is unheard of, as the vetting process takes years.

Servants of the Undying

The benefits of Infection, the ability to die and return to life, can become addictive. It is easy to grow desensitized. At the same time, the fear of the ultimate death can lead some down a very different path. The Servants of the Undying have embraced that lure of immortality and members believe that there is a path to true immortality: that of the Grave Mind.

Servants believe that they can find a way to harness the power of the Grave Mind itself and, through its ability to return others from the dead time and again, finally achieve a true level of immortality. Constantly seeking knowledge and researching the powers of the Grave Mind, Servants of the Undying ultimately seek to bend the will of the Grave Mind to serve them and remove forever the fear of death.

Members of the Servants of the Undying come from many faiths and Strains. They seek knowledge of the Grave Mind, the experiences of those who have returned from its grasp, and any power that might grant them a key to manipulating it for themselves. Members are willing to go to any extreme in search of their ultimate answer. They hold no prejudices when it comes to a tool that may get them closer to their goal and embrace faith, or the strange powers of the psionicists — anything to deny that final trip to the embrace of the Grave Mind.

Trade Union

If serving the public is a privilege, then Senators of the Trade Union believe that profiting while doing so is a right. This society is based entirely on the premise of commerce for profit. They seek to organize trade caravans, establish safe routes between settlements and cities, and even fund road projects to help ease the dangers of trade. This is all with an eye on how best to profit from these ventures. Some Senators do seek to put the needs of others before their own, with the idea that increased trade and connections will help grow the wastes, but even these few feel it's only right that they be compensated for their good deeds.

Members of the Trade Union are known as Senators, and they keep profit at the forefront of their minds. They are well known for publicly supporting ventures that can serve what many consider the greater good with trade, construction, and overall administration. This secret society is one of the most loosely organized themselves, with little hierarchy beyond a shared interest in creating profit.



chapter eight

WHAT YOU BELIEVE

"But when the world robs you of everything
and doesn't have the goddamn decency to finish
the job and take your life, you've got one chance.
So you pray someone finds you before
the zed sniff you out."

- Eleanor Jett, Front Man of the Switchblade Kisses

During the Fall, as the infection seized the world and nukes fell from the sky, those who couldn't run — or wouldn't — gathered together in the few houses of worship that still stood. Hiding away from the snarling zombies and staccato gunshots, these terrified humans waited for the end of the world. Surrounded by crumbling concrete and broken glass, they prayed for mercy, forgiveness, and salvation.

In those terrible nights, be it slow from the zed or fast from nuclear fire, religion perished on Earth, and for a time, its survivors despaired.

Burdened by the memories of those they abandoned or lost, many traveled the wastelands alone, avoiding any contact with those who might shatter their will to live. As the years passed, the common doctrine was to survive, and a spiritual death took hold of the first generations that emerged from the wastes.

But as they learned how to fight and stay alive, the whisper of hope began to grow. A sense of ease settled in souls across the wastes and, despite their brutal lives, survivors turned to one another again. As they banded together, so did their individual beliefs, meshing together into the very first seeds of religion in the wastes.

Generations after the Fall, its descendants live in a pseudo-renaissance of faith, sharing the world with strange creeds and wonderful miracles. Across the wastelands, preachers proclaim their beliefs while charlatans attempt to sway the meek. And although not every survivor believes in higher powers, there's no denying the very physical effects of these religions. With a little luck, these new religions will be the cornerstones of society for children and grandchildren alike.

Religion in the Wasteland

Today, the various faiths have rooted themselves in communities across the Nor'Merica, with the occasional offshoots of cults and new denominations. No matter how strong their presence, these creeds offer their followers a sense of inner comfort and understanding — that in the face of dystopia, their devotion will let them rise above any challenge.

More practically, faith also unifies communities towards common goals. When one follower is threatened, it isn't uncommon for other devotees to offer aid, daring enemies to attack the entire congregation. But members of each faith will also band together if food supplies run low or water sources are poisoned. At the core, each creed offers a means of survival for all who believe in their tenets.

Beliefs can also divide communities. Since multiple faiths are usually present in a region, their relationships to each other are dependent on the local history of the area. While great unity may exist within two flocks, the divisions between them can range from lighthearted ridicule to outright war. In dire times, mediating such differences is essential to the survival of both groups and the settlement they share.

No matter what survivors believe, no one can deny the real and physical benefits of faith. For the truly devoted, their higher powers have granted them incredible abilities to help their friends and terrify their foes. While the origin of these powers is uncertain, divine acts are now considered commonplace in the wastelands.

After all, in a world of despair, people need hope, and faith rewards the faithful.

INITIATION RITES

While each faith is unique in its expression, it's worth noting that due to the disparity of customs between regions and even towns, it is highly unlikely that two congregations will possess the same initiation rites. As a result, no power rests in the rites themselves, but such a responsibility is only carried out by the Faithful — that is, those who possess divine power and are willing to use it for the good of their creed. Of course, one must be part of the creed to initiate new members to it.

With consideration to the struggles of survival in the wasteland, it is equally likely that a flock doesn't have any specific rites. Those who declare themselves a person of faith with these groups will very much have to prove it, either through the expression of their beliefs or consistent attendance of any regular gatherings.

Church of Darwin

"Survival of the fittest has never mattered as much as it does now. One must evolve or die. So says Savannah." — **Curie Francois Grunter**

The wasteland has created a menagerie of wild mutants and monsters. Even the Strains are proof of this rapid change, showcasing generations of evolution to adapt to the harsh world in which survivors must make do. The Church of Darwin has found this to be something outside science and beyond luck. The rapid evolution of survivors is proof that there is divinity in mutation, and that the true heroes of the wastes will not be constrained by the bodies with which they are born. Darwinists will coerce evolution by any means necessary, to honor and worship the holy glow of mother radiation.

History

With the world in flames, and the infected spreading across the globe, many military powers chose their most desperate of options to quell the threat: nuclear weapons. The bombings killed most of the populations within the major cities, with a rare few crawling out from the ashes, having changed. Those changed few saw the aftermath of what they survived and realized they had done the impossible. Something within them had been altered at a fundamental level. It may have simply been the work of the Infection, springing them back from death but somehow keeping them aware and conscious. The Darwinists would come to believe that they had evolved from the radiation and were the first step towards surviving the new world.

A young girl named Savannah, daughter of a preacher and a scientist, saw these events and realized their connection. She gathered her mutant flock and taught all she met to embrace the changes brought on by the holy green glow of radiation. She and her followers found themselves wracked with fever dreams from their extended exposure but took them to be prophetic visions which would guide them towards a bright future. She preached of the great scientists of evolution, and how Darwin would see the world they lived in as a culmination and validation of all his prophecy. By working through the sickness long-term exposure caused, one could force evolution onto the human body, causing it to adapt and survive even the most insurmountable conditions. The light was the way.

Savannah was eventually taken by the light, becoming one with it. Her name lives on within the faith, and others have taken on her task of spreading the word of evolution. As generations have progressed, and mutations have expanded, the Church of Darwin now has more to show for itself than ever before.

Philosophy

The Church of Darwin is rooted deeply in science. There is proof positive to their belief structure, as those exposed to radiation for an extended amount of time do show change in their bodies. Evolution surrounds the Darwinists, and they understand that for good or for ill, all change is made to improve the survivors. They understand that great men and women came before them and had theories that have now been proven. These scientists were prophetic in that sense, and the world as it stands would not be as such without their influence.

Where they diverge from science, however, may be the most dangerous portion of the faith. In their zeal to bring about evolution, they seem less capable of seeing the inherent dangers of their holy radiation. More radiation is better, no matter the cost. They see miracles in illness, and prophecy in its symptoms. It is frequent for Darwinists to not ask about the inherent dangers of objects of power to their faith, and frequently this has been known to have explosive consequences. Many of the faithful carry atomic-bomb-related paraphernalia on their person, without truly questioning the rationality or safety of such devices.

Many Darwinists are seen to be frustratingly pragmatic, as they can justify most things in the name of evolution and observing their faith. They will actively fight those who are opposed to radiation and its changing powers and have begun many holy wars over places that contain high levels of radiation.

This has led many to have a distaste for the Church of Darwin. There is a stereotype that wherever Darwinists go, explosions follow. This is not necessarily untrue, but there have been many recorded instances of Darwinist scientific ingenuity saving whole settlements from destruction. Therefore, a wandering Darwinist may not know what to expect upon entering a new settlement, and often has to wonder whether they'll be able to guide the lost toward the light or be run out of town on a rail.

They are often captivated by Retrogrades and Remnants, and many Darwinists tend to fall into those two Strains. Retrogrades are beautiful within the Church, and not unsightly as they are in other places. Their melting and rotting flesh is seen as an advancement rather than a burden, and their resilience to radiation makes them poster children for Darwinist ideals. Because of this positive affirmation, Retrograde Darwinists often do not wear masks, as they feel their wretched visages are signs of the glow's love for them and covering that up would be heretical. Many members of the faith do wind up getting horrible skin burns and sores from their love of the glowing green and are sometimes mistaken for Retrogrades. This seems to cause very little problem for those who encounter Darwinists, as Retrogrades and Darwinists are frequently treated with the same disdain within the wastes. Remnants are already a biological proof of odd mutations caused by cross breeding. These walking Punnett squares are incredibly appealing to many Darwinists, and due to their typical desire for acceptance, some Remnants find their way into the Church.

The Church of Darwin has a hatred for the Elitariat lineages, as they tend to be the least touched by radiation. Often, that feeling is reciprocated, mainly by the Pure Bloods. However, some Darwinists have made it their quest to convert members of the Pure Bloods to the Church, as removing their purity is a testament to their faith. Some believe that the Pure Bloods may

be the most likely to evolve the fastest, as they have had the least exposure to the glowing light of evolution.

Theology

Members of the Church of Darwin hold one thing above all other things, and that is radiation. This is actively referred to as "the light" among followers of the faith. They believe those who are untouched by the glow are "pure," and those that are pure should be avoided. It is against the faith to not at least have some form of radiation poisoning or sickness, as continued exposure is the only way to evolve and advance.

They also hold those that came before them in the name of the light in high places of honor. Charles Darwin and his studies of evolution and Savannah for her foresight to found the faith and spread the word are chief among them. But many Darwinists research and learn of other old-world scientists who sought to advance the world. Their highest religious position, the Curie, is named after such a prophet.

Locations that hold objects from the past that contain massive levels of radiation are considered holy ground for the Darwinists. The holy green glow marks these locations, and the faithful will congregate there in hopes of receiving the area's blessings. Sometimes these are important areas for others as well, but the Darwinists will fend off -invaders. They believe in showing all the way of the light as Savannah did before them, but some are more difficult to persuade than others.

There are leaders among the Church known as Cassandras. These are high prophets, who see clearest the visions of the light, caused by lifetimes of exposure. These visionaries are regarded with much esteem among the faithful. The faithful also believe strongly in the concept of "survival of the fittest." They seek evolution in order to be the best and understand that surviving is up to them and their tools they develop.

Customs and Organization

The head of the Church of Darwin is always known as the *Curie*. There are regional Curies throughout the wasteland who command a flock in a certain area. If a chance meeting of Curies occurs, normally one will yield to the other for the time they share together. If this somehow leads to dispute, the stronger Curie will survive and take control of the flock.

There are also the *Cassandras*, who are important leaders to the Darwinists. These seers see visions of prophecy, brought on by their exposure to radiation. Members of the faith will often listen at length to renditions of these visions, and Curies may utilize the visions of their Cassandras in helping lead their faithful.

There is the *Civil Corps*, who function mainly as the soldiers for the Darwinists. They actively fight those who oppose the glow. These warriors are also utilized as scouts, to track out new locations which may contain relics of the glow or important church artifacts. They operate under the command of their Curie.

A Darwinian Prayer

Let the light flow through you and follow its journey. Bless Darwin for his insight that led you here. Bless Savannah for her path that led you here. You are the culmination of all things before you. You are the start of all things beyond you. May the light guide you to salvation.

Some followers of the Church of Darwin have their own ways to seek the glow and find evolution. The *Techno-Evolutionaries* believe that through mechanical and scientific enhancement, they can graft and replace parts until they discover their evolutionary advance. Although their attempts have not yet been successful, their faith is still strong. Members of the *New Arc Reactors* believe in utilizing technology as well, yet they hope to repair the world with it. They consider the wasteland to be a massive device that is in disrepair, and they hope to use scientific advancements to fix it.

There are the *Organus Sempris*, who believe that the Infection is the true answer to Darwin's evolutionary goals. They claim that the infected, who have perhaps showcased more mutations than any Strain or animal, have the key to finding perfect evolution in the faithful. The *Mortus Supremis* believe that they have found that key, and the answer is culling the weak. They believe the world belongs to those who have the strength to take it and culling out the sick and broken is the ultimate solution to guiding evolution forward.

No matter what rank, or what sect the faithful follow, they carry on with them symbols that express their love for the glow. Many carry a symbol of a fish with legs, with their churches namesake, Darwin, written on the inside. Others carry images of bombs, radiation, mushroom clouds, and scientific gear to help them in their studies. All Darwinists have some form of radiation poisoning, and it shows on their persons. They are frequently blistered and reddened, some ashen black from explosions. Some glow naturally green from their extended exposure. Any Darwinist that can find a piece of glowing material will proudly display it on their person and bear the ill effects it brings with pride. Aberrant mutations among the Darwinists are badges of honor, even if the mutation is unhelpful and even dangerous.

Tenets

- The Light is the way and the truth. Only exposure can help you evolve.
- Purity of flesh is to be scorned; evolution comes from mutation.
- Seek out the places marked by radiation. Only here can we advance.
- Oppose those who deny the light; show them the way if you can.
- Some call our visions mad. They have not seen the truth.
- Darwin knew we must evolve to survive. Savannah taught us the path; honor them with all you do.

Cult of the Fallow Hopes

"We are beset on all sides by the damned and unjust. But there is hope. It requires our sweat, blood, and force to nurture it. Grab your weapons, brothers and sisters. Our work is great, and our cause is righteous."
— Chaplain Allison Friedman

There is a war out there. The wastes are full of dangers that threaten all survivors, and the Cult of the Fallow Hopes has made it its duty to save what they feel is left of humanity. Often seen as zealots and fanatics among many people of the wasteland, the Fallow Hopes is a militaristic organization with a belief inherent that its members have a sacred duty to carry out. They train for war as part of their doctrine and attempt to purge the worlds of "demons" and "the damned." These beliefs often put them at odds with other faiths and with people who are less prone to seek conflict, but the Fallow Hopes are incredibly well armed, well trained, and resourceful.

History

Before the Fall there was a general belief among many faiths that a time would come where the dead would once again rise and walk the Earth, and those who worked for the dark forces of those faiths would send demons to torment the living. When the Fall came, there were many who had trained their whole lives to prepare for this end of days. Others found themselves unprepared but with enough tenacity to survive in a burning world. The ones who were prepared took in many who were not, opening their bunkers full of foodstuffs and arsenals to those who would join them.

All the while, the travelers who would join up with these groups began to spread whispers of a god-fearing man who was beginning to organize people to fight the undead. He called them demons and hell-spawn, and claimed the radiation was hellfire, sent to destroy the living. His name would change from storyteller to storyteller — Rockatansky, Constantine, Eckert, the Sarge — but the message maintained the same. This man with a long coat and a big hat would teach the hapless survivors how to avoid the hellfire, and how to "send the fiends back to hell." He would then depart to find more to train, leaving with the survivors a message to spread: "Hope isn't dead, it just needs a few seasons to lie fallow." Eventually, these survivors would go searching for others, and this led to them banding together and forming the Cult of the Fallow Hopes. They were better armed, better trained, and better fed than most, and began clearing roads and making areas safe, in the name of their Lord.

In these times, the Cult was still disjointed and slightly scattered. Territorial disputes and misunderstandings occasionally had believers fighting each other. It was in this time that all the leaders of these separate factions had a vision to travel to the shell of a bombed-out church. Inside, on the melted shards of stained glass, they formed a more cohesive organization. With a focus on the paramilitary and a church hierarchy, the Cult found its ground and the Fallow Hopes became a force for order across the wastes. Destroying the demons of course came first, but the need for order and discipline was apparent. It was the fault of disorder that the world fell to the hell-spawn to begin with, and they would not let such an error happen again.

Philosophy

The Cult of the Fallow Hopes has a simplistic goal, with an incredibly difficult end game: They are tasked with sending the walking dead back to hell. It's not an easy task but it is simple to describe to outsiders.

The Cult also must adhere to a strict hierarchy, in military fashion. A member will always answer to a superior officer. That officer should be followed without question, and if a lower member were ever to ascend the ranks, it would be assumed that their followers would do the same for them. This strict discipline often mars the faith's public appearance. They are seen as scary and joyless by many. The concept of duty coming before other things makes the faithful seem to be overly intense, but any Fallow Hopes know that when the demons are purged from the world, then they can find rest.

The Cult also believes that all Strains and pre-Fall sites are the last vestiges of humanity. They have been disfigured, certainly, but the core is still within. Therefore, they believe things that would further damage or change these "cores" are against the will of their god, and therefore against the soldiers of the Fallow Hopes. Anything irradiated is the work of hell, and those who attempt to use radiation on others are demons. They believe those who are tainted by hellfire may be redeemed, and even are encouraged to offer them a second chance. Those that squander that chance are not forgiven. This often puts them at odds with other faiths, and as their tenets tell them to "wipe the scourge from the Earth," which can and does lead to immense bloodshed.

The Cult of the Fallow Hopes is more than up to that challenge, however. They believe in blessing their weapons, ammunition, armor, and persons. All Fallow Hopes are prepared for to destroy the damned at a moment's notice and will do so immediately upon command. This may sound mindless, but that is not the case. A member of the Cult is encouraged to be obedient, but tactical minds and resourcefulness are also prized.

Reclamation and constructing for the future are major focuses of the Fallow Hopes. Making sure people are prepared means that they need places to have them rest, learn, and eat. A safe and secure base is key to any strategic battle plan, and in reclaiming places from the damned, they often find strong foundations and sturdy walls; perfect for fortification.

Theology

Members of the Cult believe they are tasked with a mission from their god. Their purpose is to rebuild humanity and wipe the scourge of the undead from the Earth. When others interfere, they are clearly in league with the demons that walk the Earth and need to be purged for the holy task they have at hand. They believe that it was weakness in men that caused the Fall, and that the Almighty has tasked them with removing that weakness in order to build a world of strong, capable people to carry on the legacy of humanity. The wastes are a divine test, who sought to purge the world of the weak-willed and sinful. The Cult is responsible for producing the new crop of people who will not lack discipline.

The men and women who lead the Cult of the Fallow Hopes believe there is work of the Almighty in everything they do. In training those who don't know how to defend themselves, they are doing their duty. By cleansing the land of the damned and undead, they are doing their duty. By following the leaders above them, they are following the will of the Almighty, and doing their duty. This duty comes before all other things, and when their work on this Earth is done, they will have brought back humanity to its former glory.

They believe that the word "radiation" is a deceitful trick, and those who bandy it about are agents of hell. Radiation is hellfire, and unclean, and needs to be buried away where its ill effects can do no harm to humanity. Those who have been scorched by its unholy glow can be saved and redeemed. Psionicists in particular have drawn the ire of the Fallow Hopes, as they are powerful attractants for activity of the damned. The tenets state that one who has been made unclean should be offered a chance at redemption. If they fail to redeem themselves, however, they should be wiped from the Earth, as there should be no third chances.

Customs and Organization

The Cult of the Fallow Hopes follows a strict hierarchy. The top of the command chain is obviously the Almighty, but beneath him is the *Minister General*. This leader represents a geographic location and may control other areas outside of that as well. For example, there may be an *East Coast Minister General*, who is also the Minister General of a settlement. In their area, the Minister General is the highest authority on all matters military and religious.

The *Colonel* of an area is the Minister General's head of the military. The Colonel will make sure members of the faith are well trained, well outfitted, and prepared for combat. They are tactically masterful and are knowledgeable about weaknesses and strengths in the surrounding areas. Often, the Colonel is sought to council the Minister General on military matters and they know of the strength and numbers of the damned in their vicinity. As they are the sword hand for the Minister General, they are the second in command for an entire geographic location, or diocese.

The *Chaplain* is the second in command for the Colonel. They are an expert on all matters religious and maintain proper blessings and rituals for the faith. They often lead sermons, and work toward converting those who are not on the path of the faithful. Due to their knowledge of the faith and their connection to the Almighty, many Minister Generals confer with Chaplains on matters of faith.

Brothers and *Sisters* make up the rest of the Cult. Depending on their service, and the diocese they find themselves in, they may be assigned military ranks from the old world. That structure depends on the orders of the Minister General for that area.

There are many rituals and rites the Fallow Hopes perform to help them seek divine aid in their holy quest. Most serve a dual purpose, to both keep things efficient while inspiring zeal in the troops. There are some rituals to inspire hope before battle, in which the



A FALLOW PRAYER

May god make my aim true, my heart pure, and my mind dutiful. May I strike down all touched by damnation, and may my body be a weapon for the salvation of humanity. Hope has been left fallow. It is time to reap.

local Chaplain will bless the armaments of the faithful. This allows the unit to have their weapons and armor inspected for quality (and replaced, if in disrepair), while granting the faithful the blessings of their god. There is the Long Walk, in which a member of the faith feels themselves coming to the end of their life. They will then wander into the wastes, hoping to kill as many demons as they can before the Infection claims them. There are also many rites performed on those who are too ill to follow through in their duties.

There are of course, many subsects of the Fallow Hopes. The *Brightburn Calvary* operates using powerful Diesel Jock rigs to draw the damned away from settlements. The *Doctors of the Final Plague* are Graverobbers (a group of experts who deal with the inner workings of the Grave Mind) who seek to study the Infection and better learn how to destroy it. The *Inquisition* monitors the faith, making sure no diocese is acting inappropriately. They are renowned for their fearless devotion to the faith and their unflinching desire to keep the Cult of the Fallow Hopes pure, even if it means purging higher-ups who have lost sight of their duty.

Cult members often mark themselves with symbols of the faith. Tools used to build or grow, chains to remind themselves of their duty, old-world holy symbols, and military insignia are typically found on the faithful.

Tenets

- Seek the damned where they dwell. Wipe the scourge from the Earth.
- Follow your superior's commands to the letter; dereliction of duty led us to this fallen world.
- Remain faithful. God is testing us, and we must meet the challenge through strength of arms.
- Do not trust those who rely on the green glow. They call it radiation, but it is the light of hellfire.
- A person, even one tainted by hellfire, may be redeemed if he finds the light; all are given a second chance. There is no third chance.

Final Knights

"This world is hell. And to survive, one must rule it." — **Lord Ogreth Mort**

There is a law in the wasteland, and that law is power. Those who lack power are forced to bow to the whims of the powerful, while those who have that power can enforce whatever they wish. The Final Knights believe the world did end with the Fall, and that all inhabitants now are in hell. This may be a bleak view, but the Knights don't see it that way. They believe that being in hell and living well do not have to be separate things. Instead, through gaining power and controlling the weak, they can rule hell, and make the best of the end of days.

History

In the ancient religions before the Fall, many spoke of a day of judgement. The holy and good would be taken and brought to paradise, and the rest would be doomed to live in damnation. A young priest saw the Fall unfolding around him and realized that he had been found wanting and was damned with the rest of the world. His vision came at a cost, as witnessing a nuclear blast struck him blind. He was enraged, having devoted his life to being pious and virtuous. In his anger, he realized that if he was doomed to hell, he should seek to control it all.

He found followers who were lost and told them of his revelation. Their worship moved from the holy and pious to the work of the infernal. They cried out to the rulers of hell, asking for strength. In his search, he wandered alone through the burning deserts, singed by nuclear fire. For 40 days he wandered, and when he returned, he had claimed the moniker Brother Isaac. He gathered some ragged survivors to witness his testimony; he had been gifted with a vision. He had learned the secret knowledge of the demons who would grant them infernal power, and he could lead these followers to be the masters of this new hell on Earth. As they were to be the last of the leaders — the Final Knights — it was their duty to find power and maintain it, ruling over the world.

After a time, many of the Knights began to battle each other, seeking power over the faithful. Brother Isaac faded into obscurity, and the Knights sought ways to bend the world to their will. After much infighting, they settled on a hierarchy, based on the knowledge Brother Isaac had given them. To this day, the Knights still often attempt to gain power through murder and internal politics; as such, the duplicitous, strong, and cunning tend to rise to power.

Philosophy

The Final Knights understand that there are many ways to achieve power. Some opt for the use of fear as a tool to gain followers. Doing dark and gory deeds for the demonic powers they worship and making visages that terrify and confuse outsiders has proven effective to gain power in certain communities. By utilizing the macabre and taboo, Knights keep an air of horror and mystique around them.

This technique is not always effective, as there are many in the world looking to prove themselves as heroes. Therefore, playing the villain may get a Knight into a showdown with someone they are not yet capable of defeating. Other Final

Knights utilize manipulation and economic superiority to gain power over those around them. Some seek knowledge as a tool to gain power. There are even Knights who find power by helping those around them, coercing loyalty to build an army.

Knights cannot stand those who preach other faiths and subverting the faithful from other groups is part of a Knight's job. A good Knight is skilled in spotting moments of weakness in which a person of great religious strength is tested, and then helping them realize the truth of their situation: They are in hell.

Hell does not mean anarchy. Laws are incredibly important to Final Knights, as one day they hope to be the ones who are setting them in place. Some Knights go so far as to follow the laws of the locations they are in to the letter, as they are in hell, and therefore the laws of where they are must be the laws of hell.

Final Knights believe that suffering is proof of being alive, and proof that hell is all around you. The Knights bring suffering to themselves and others, as the suffering is the key to that knowledge and enlightenment. Brother Isaac did not wander for 40 days of starvation and sunstroke because it was comfortable. He needed the suffering of that desert to awaken him.

It is against the ways of the Final Knights to bend the knee to anyone they feel does not deserve it. This pride has been the undoing of many Knights, but also has helped them gain their fearsome reputation. A Knight would rather die than live under the tyranny of an idiot or pay lip service while plotting the demise of a buffoon ruler.

Many Knights work undercover, as there is a great fear and hatred associated with them. Knights have been responsible for horrific atrocities throughout the wastes, and many communities outlaw the faith entirely. Even in those pure and clean communities however, there are almost certainly some Knights waiting for weak moments in the faithful to enlighten them.

Theology

Knights have a simple theology. They understand that they are in hell, and those that deceive others into having some hope of divine influence in the world are not evil or wicked, but simply deluded. While other faiths may believe the tribulations of the world are tests put there by their higher power, the Final Knights understand that suffering is part of living. There will never be relief from it, and there will never be a time in which the Damned are released from their suffering. Hell is eternal, and even when they come to rule all of hell, they will still suffer.

Power is only taken by those who deserve it. If one cannot claim power, one does not deserve it. If one cannot keep that power after claiming it, one does not deserve it. This does not mean the weak should be forsaken, or the middling should be destroyed. In fact, one should raise the weak up. The middling should be monitored, for if they grow too powerful, they may attempt to take the power from you. A clever and strong Knight will always watch their back, while cultivating a following of people who need them and are loyal to them.

A FINAL PRAYER

Through suffering, I see. Through power, I control. Through the lore, I rise.

Knowledge of the demon lords (or devils, or evil gods; Brother Isaac's exact words are often disputed) is the key to gaining power within the faith. Every scrap of knowledge learned is a step further up the ranks of the organization. Keeping that information to yourself is the most obvious choice, as by sharing it you lose parts of your power in doing so. Often those in power will offer out bits of information in exchange for completion of immense tasks or huge favors.

Customs and Organization

The hierarchy of the Final Knights is almost always in flux due to assassinations and political power plays. The head of the church in an area is known as the *Pontifex*, but only if they have massive and true knowledge of the demon lords. Following the orders of a Pontifex is not required under the duties of the faith, but the Knights within understand that one only becomes a Pontifex if they have immense power and knowledge.

The rank below Pontifex is *Lord*, who usually knows a fair bit of the secret knowledge given to Brother Isaac. They answer to the will of the Pontifex (and often usurp them) and are responsible for several Deacons under them. A *Deacon* is a member of the Final Knights who has taken their faith above just base worship, and once they are given the title of Deacon, they can begin to learn the lore.

The *Damned* is a term for all Knights, but also a catch-all for any untitled Knight who just worships within the faith. They are brought into the church via a baptism known as the Rite of Condemnation, in which they acknowledge they are in hell, that they understand suffering, and that they will work to help their leaders gain power.

Many rituals and customs of the Knights involve the use of the number 33. Five-pointed stars are also often found on Final Knight unholy instruments, as well as symbols of an eye with a mushroom cloud for the iris. This of course represents how Brother Isaac was blinded only to see the ultimate truth.

As the Final Knights have a high diversity in their methodology of practicing their faith, many subsects exist that all take different stances on how one could best gain power. The *Undying Monks* see self-flagellation and extreme masochism as methods to best discover the truth of existence. Often dressed in dour and black robes, these monks utilize incredibly sadistic rituals to open the eyes of non-believers and believers alike. The *Bone Collectors* are zealots who utilize subterfuge to infiltrate communities, and then slay high-ranking worshippers of other faiths. They are also known for their quest for suffering and destruction, and it is the Bone Collectors and the Undying Monks who have most informed the common man's view of the Final Knights.

The *Architects of the Fallen* actively work towards destroying and disproving the scriptures of other faiths. They utilize science to disprove divinity, and often destroy artifacts and old-world texts of religious importance to create a future without the misguided dogma of other faiths. The *Shepherds of the Lost* teach the unknowing (and occasionally the unwilling) the tenets of the Final Knights. They groom weak and broken survivors, training them in the paths of suffering and teaching them how to survive under the laws of hell. This has gone poorly for more than one Shepherd in the past, as a well-trained student may become a well-trained ruler.

Tenets

- This is Hell and we are Damned.
- Power is the true role of the Damned; those who have none should take it. If they cannot, they do not deserve it.
- Thwart those who would promote the false truths of the divine.
- Uphold the laws of Hell.
- Bring suffering where you can, and always take power.

Light of Hedon

"This world is wildly impermanent. Take in as much as you can, while you can, for there is no guarantee of a tomorrow." — **Hierophant French Carter**

In a world where safety is not guaranteed on a day-to-day basis, one may find that the act of living is a futile gesture. The followers of the Light of Hedon do not, however. They have decided to take the short lives they are given and milk them for all they're worth. The seven deadly sins of the old world — gluttony, lust, greed, wrath, pride, sloth, and envy — all have their place in this new world. The Hedonists believe in observing each sin, and truly understanding it. There needs to be balance, however, for each sin would not taste as sweet if there was nothing else. The Light of Hedon understands that one must work for the weekend, and then savor every moment.

History

There is much debate as to the exact history of the Light of Hedon, and how it formed as a faith. Before the uprising, the Irons were kept shackled, and forced to do labor for the rich and powerful. To survive a bleak existence, it is theorized that the faithful joined together to make the weekend into a holy holiday. They would work agonizing hours over the course of the week but held Saturday as a sacred night in which they could engage in revelry. These bacchanals would run long into the night, and the Hedonists would sleep well into Sunday. All involved found themselves much more rested and content to go into work on Monday, and they would find the harder they worked in the week, the more they would enjoy the contents of the weekend.

There is also speculation as to the founder of the faith. It may have been a group of Irons, trying to find respite. Some say it was the work of their cruel masters, encouraging them to be ready to work on Monday, but losing sight of the fact that it was empowering them. Some even speculate that it was a lone woman, charismatic and bright, who first bore the message of Enlightenment. The Enlightened, as they call themselves, do not tend to make records of what happens on these weekends, and often they don't remember at all. It isn't surprising that the true origins are lost somewhere to time when most of its architects were black-out drunk.

The faithful hoped one day to find a safe place in which they could spend less time toiling and more time reveling. But when the time came, many found that without the work, the reward wasn't as sweet. The Enlightened grew in numbers, and spread out across the wastes, sharing their message of enjoying life and living while you can.

Philosophy

The followers of the Light of Hedon find pleasure in all things. As all survivors have, the Enlightened have seen lifetimes worth of tragedy. They've had loved ones torn to shreds before them and seen the gruesome carnage the world has to offer. There is no doubt in their minds that life is brief, and this concept has been proven to them time and again.

The most commonly observed sins are the ones that make for the best parties. Lust, gluttony, and vanity tend to run the show on Saturday nights, while greed and envy make smaller appearances. Sloth is most often observed on Sundays, as many of the Enlightened nurse hangovers.

The Enlightened also understand that some sins weigh heavier than others, and some have outstanding repercussions for those who do not indulge carefully. Although their fellow Hedonists may forgive or understand an act of wrath, outsiders may not.

This public perception leads many outsiders to believe that the Enlightened are lacking in common sense. They are often seen as layabouts and wastrels. Those who know better realize that members of the Light of Hedon are some of the hardest working members of the wasteland, and their partying is a release that allows them to continue their toil.

The Hedonists could be described as engaging in vice, but they would disagree. The Enlightened feel there is no taboo left in the wasteland and calling their joys "vices" is a method of disparaging their faith. The worshippers of the Light of Hedon do have a high percentage of addicts among their population, but many church leaders carry tonics and remedies to help beat those addictions so people can get back to work.

Theology

Hedonists believe deeply in the observance of all the sins, but also in a general nonviolence toward those outside of the faith. They are tasked to oppose no one, but also to not let people stop them from enjoying life. They are also tasked with helping others find pleasure in the now, as pleasure is greatest



when shared. It is considered their holy duty to offer a drink and a bed to those in need or in dour spirits.

They believe strongly in living for the now, and not planning for the future. The Enlightened understand that to truly enjoy the moment, one must be in the moment. They believe they should surround themselves with likeminded individuals, who are also only living moment to moment.

The sanctity of Saturday night as a party is incredibly important to the Enlightened. This is the time to engage in their sins, and while some members of the faith may sin throughout the week, all members of the faith must indulge on Saturday. If a Saturday-night bacchanal is interrupted or attacked, it is the perfect time to observe the sin of wrath. If another party seems better down the way, one can envy it. One should dress for the occasion, looking their best, and one should prepare to consume large quantities of food, alcohol, and drugs.

Sunday is the day of rest, in which most of the faith will practice sloth. Some Enlightened go so far as to refuse to be a part of life-threatening situations on Sunday, as even self-defense may be too active.

Customs and Organization

Due to the party-driven nature of the Light of Hedon, there is not a grand hierarchy across the wastes. There are leaders and leadership in certain areas but going somewhere and bossing another Hedon around would be out of the bounds.

The leader for an area is called the *Hierophant*. They are the most knowledgeable on the faith within the area and are most likely the person Enlightened come to with questions regarding how to get better in touch with any number of the Seven. Unlike many other faiths, the Hierophant is less of a leader and more like a celebrity to the local Enlightened. They are in charge, and they do make decisions, but many Hierophants take a much more open-management style than other faith leaders. The Hierophant is also looked upon by newer members of the faith for assistance with introductions and in finding their path.

The *Host* (a title used by all genders) is the master of the local temple of Hedon. They are tasked with the most holy of jobs: organizing the Saturday-night revelry. Hosts take this task very seriously, and work toward securing the best entertainment, food, drink, and drugs they can for their end-of-the-week festival. If you are a Hedonist in a new town, and you don't know anyone around, the local Host will certainly be able to hook you up with who has what, and who knows who. The Host is also deeply invested in recruiting for the faith, because if people who aren't faithful are milling about their parties, they clearly are on the road to Hedon. They may just need a little push.

The *Enlightened* are the rest of the faithful who have been baptized into the church. Some go by titles such as Playmate or Playboy, but most go by Enlightened. The Hedonists are not really ones to tell people what to do, so the name of a recruit may be whatever they wish it to be.

All of these are seen out and partying on the holiest day for the Enlightened: Saturday. The Host for an area spends most of

A HEDONISTIC PRAYER

Let me eat 'til I'm full. Let me fuck 'til I'm exhausted. Let me fight 'til I'm broken. Let me take what I want. Let me ache for what's not mine. Let me know my own worth. Let me rest 'til we do it all again. Praise the Seven.

their time preparing for this revelry. There are rooms prepared for the lustful, food and drink for the gluttonous, mirrors for the vain, seating for the envious, and wares for the greedy. Often a Hedon party attracts many zed, which allows members of the faith to work out some wrath. The Host contracts out local brewers and cooks, as well as entertainers and vendors. The Hierophant takes this time to hold court and entertain, as well as partake in the festivities. On Sunday, a good Host will have made accommodations for the Enlightened to sleep in and partake in slothful times.

The subsects of the Light of Hedon typically follow paths of extremity. The *Chosen of Excess* seek out ways to test their absolute limits with each of the Seven. Some focus on one sin and live it out every day, while others live their lives trying to do each of the Seven with each breath they take. There are also the *Wrath of the Seven*, who see themselves as the military arm for the Enlightened. They are generally seen as black sheep, due to their ignoring of certain tenets in the name of carrying out others. They are often brought in as bouncers or mercenaries for local Hosts, who wish to keep their parties fun and free of problems. Many faithful dislike their violence and propensity to kill. The Wrath justify that these things must be done, and that anyone who is imposing on their desires to commune with the Seven are in violation of the tenets as well.

The *Crafters of Sin* and the *Hosts of Sensation* both work to bring better things to the Enlightened. The Crafters take pride in their work, and make the best drugs, equipment, booze, and food to make the experience better for their fellow faithful. There are very few in the wastes who can match them in skill for sinfully delicious meals, drugs, and alcohol. The Hosts of Sensation are Hosts who decline the pleasures of the Seven for themselves, and instead dedicate their lives making those Seven better for all other Hedonists. They find their great pleasure in the aid of others and arrange vast networks of traders and merchants who can provide what their local Enlightened desire.

Tenets

- Stop trying to plan. There is no tomorrow. There may not be a later today.
- Enjoy yourself while you can. There is no vice anymore. The gods of temperance have left us.
- Oppose no one, but do not let them prohibit you from enjoying what you can.
- Show others the pleasure of the now. Offer them a drink and a bed.
- Each person who worries more about the now will help you enjoy it more.
- The Seven are the guide to supreme enjoyment. Do not leave any out.

The Nuclear Family

"Just because the world has become filth doesn't mean we have to. While the rest of the communists and filth peddlers wallow, we will rise above it. A good home for good family." — **Father Mary Samuels**

In the wasteland, one does not survive in solitude. The Nuclear Family has taken that ideal and heightened it even further. They believe that in the times before the Fall, a spiral into indecency and debauchery is what caused the destruction of the world. The Family hopes to restore the good old-fashioned values of the old days. Good and hardworking families must build homes and rise again and bring cleanliness and order from the ashes.

History

Before the Fall, there were white picket fences. There were perfect homes, in what were called the "sub-herbs," where families could settle down and live wholesome and healthy lives. A person named Father Ward preached out to the community and guided them in wholesome values.

Then the world took a turn, and the words of Father Ward fell to the wayside. The world fell to drunkenness and debauchery, and even worse: communism. With the filth corrupting the world, and good old family values being destroyed daily, the dead rose, and the nuclear holocaust came. But Ward made sure that their words would reach out into the world after and became the first prophet and founder of the Nuclear Family.

Telling Visionary groups have attempted to take credit and revise the words of Father Ward, but the true believers in the Nuclear Family hold sacred the lessons he passed on. Take care of your family and avoid the wicked.

Philosophy

The Nuclear Family holds family most sacred. Most often, an ideal Family Unit is made up of one's own Strain and therefore biological children, but some Family heads believe adoption of those who are less fortunate fits well with certain aspects of the faith. Each Family must have a Father and a Mother (although any gender can fill either role), and the ideal number of children is debated. Father Ward believed the ideal number was two and a half, but Fathers and Mothers can make their own decisions.

More important than that, however, is appearances. A Family must not only be perfect but look perfect to outsiders. Squabbles can be saved for private times but fighting in public should never

occur. This does not preclude gossip, and well-placed quips that could be taken to be offhand remarks about other Families. Outsiders would have a hard time noticing that many Families dislike and distrust other Families. This may be brought on by jealousy or it may be entirely justified. Not everyone raises their kids the right way, and if they're doing things improperly, it would be a blemish on the entire Nuclear Family community.

This outside appearance does not mean lying about mistakes however. If a Family member makes a mistake, they should most certainly own up to it. It may serve to teach an important lesson to the rest of the Family. The only mistake that can certainly not be made is to trust communists. The Red Star believe in concepts contrary to all things that the Nuclear Family stands for, and they cannot be easily trusted. Some may redeem themselves, but not many.

Theology

Father Ward taught the way to live, and in the world's dissent from that path, everything fell to ruin. It is up to the Nuclear Family to bring those ways back, and to nurture a healthy and wholesome world. There are many temptations that may cause Children to stray from the path, and if a Father or Mother is not careful, they may not only lose their Children, but they may destroy the world.

The Nuclear Family is sure that before the bombs fell, the world was in grave danger. They understand and know that people had strayed from Ward's words, and that's what caused the dead to rise and the bombs to fall. But before that straying, there was paradise. By following Ward's teachings and helping to guide the masses to the correct path, the world may be paradise again.

Good Children should always obey their Mother and Father. If a Father is stern, they are doing it for the sake of the Family. If a Mother is strict, they are doing it for the sake of the family. And nothing is more important than the Family. A member of the Family should work to provide for their Family above all other things.

One should be kind to members of the community who are not in your Family. It is the duty of all Nuclear Family members to set positive examples in the world and remind people that being wholesome is possible. Being a good neighbor is a part of that duty. Helping those less fortunate or those from broken homes or bad parents is a good way of giving back, while showing off how perfect and well managed your own family is. Feeding your Children's less-fortunate friends will make them look even better and well-mannered by comparison, and if you do things right your kids may even rub off on them. By that same token, Family must always come first. If the community is leeching off the Family, and it becomes unsustainable, the Family will suggest other means of the community handling its scarcity. Politely, as the neighbors might be watching. Appearance is incredibly important.

Family Units differ in opinions on the use of strong language and what is considered obscene. No matter where the line lies, strong language should rarely be used (only in dire circumstances), and obscenity should be censored. Yes, the world has become much less polished, but that does not mean that people should. One must think of the children, after all.

Communism was the cause of the end of days, or so Father Ward said. The Red Star are faithless heathens, who have the most convoluted and disgusting ideas of "family," and they stand against everything that's wholesome. Certain members of the Red Star may eventually come to see the wisdom of Father Ward, and a few might even be trustworthy, but most prove themselves time and again to be unworthy of kindness.

Customs and Organization

All families have a hierarchy, and a Nuclear Family is no different. Each *Family Unit* has its own leaders, and there is no larger leadership than that throughout the wastes. Each Unit has a *Father*. The title does not describe gender: The Father's role is to be stern but fair, wise and kind, and to provide the best and most comfortable life that they can for their Family. The Father should be quick with worldly advice, and reasonable in punishments for misbehaving Family members. The Father's word on a matter is final.

The *Mother* is their counterpart. They do not have to be a woman, as their title is also a descriptor and not indicative of their gender. While the Mother lacks the final authority of the Father, they are there to give counsel and advice to the Father. Father Ward noted that this advice should be given in any situation, even if it is not asked for. The Mother is often warmer with the Children and may be a balm for when Father's punishments grate or are too harsh.

The *Children* have much less responsibility, as they are to be taken care of by the Parents. They may be asked to do an occasional task by Father, or to run an errand for Mother. Their main duty is to be respectful to their Parents and outsiders, and to show that they have learned the proper values that their Mother and Father have conveyed to them. They should always strive to make their Parents proud. The Mother and Father will of course do whatever they can to make sure that their Children have comfortable and value-driven lives.

There is an odd outlier in the Nuclear Family community, known as the *Coach*. They have decided to wander the wastes and help adjudicate disputes between Family Units. A Coach is knowledgeable, personable, and a neutral party in matters where a neutral party is needed. They typically don't belong to any Family, as that would give them an inherent bias.

Disputes between Family Units are common, but rarely ever public. It is only good practice that you wouldn't speak ill of the neighbors. But giving backhanded compliments and sniping at each other from the shadows is acceptable.

The Nuclear Family celebrates many customs, such as Family Dinner and X-Mas. All are utilized to showcase the Families comfort, togetherness, and values. Families celebrate customs differently across the wastes, and they are often rather public displays in order to show off the Parents' well-behaved and morally centered Children.

Every Family has its weird cousins, and the subsects of the Nuclear Family are no different. There are the *Caretakers*, who focus

A FAMILIAL PRAYER

Blessed be my Father, who keeps me safe. Blessed be my Mother, who keeps me warm. Blessed by my siblings, who keep me honest. Blessed be this house, my home sweet home. Down with the Red menace. Amen.

on being community leaders. They believe good neighbor relations may mean going beyond the small Family and becoming involved in the hierarchy and politics of the town in which they live may be necessary. They care for heathens and Family members alike, and often refer to the unfaithful as "rebellious teens" or "kids going through a phase." They act as Mother and Father to any and all that will have it.

The *Neighborhood Watch* is a network of Mothers and Fathers who do their darnedest to eradicate unseemly and immoral behavior. They censor the inappropriate, while working to destroy the slave trade, drug trafficking, heathen religions, and the Red Menace. The *Neilson Family* is similar in their extremity, but with a creepier tinge. They are closely tied to the Telling Visionaries and attempt to model themselves as the perfect pre-Fall Family. While many Family Units may seem old-fashioned, the Nielson Family is a sect that is almost eerie in its detachment from the world they're living in.

There are the *Valued Hosts*, who have a set of vastly different values than many Family Units. They get into the dark and gritty side of things; dealing with prostitution, theft, or even murder. They bring in their employees as Family members and expect them to live by the rules they have set. The *Atomic Home* is perhaps the most progressive of the subsects. It encourages large, mixed-Strain families, and encourages independent thought among the Children in it. Many Atomic Homes are built from the remains of other Families that did not survive, and some are just people picking up strays.

Tenets

- Faith is family. Keep your family close.
- Never argue with your Parents; they know what is best for you.
- The Family does not falter nor waver. The Family endures, no matter what.
- Love your siblings, even when they snitch to Father. It's for your own good.
- When you make a mistake, admit it. If you don't, you only make matters worse.
- Always treat others with respect; the neighbors might be watching.

The Telling Visionaries

"Do not fear, brothers and sisters! As all has been broadcast, all has been foretold. The Guide is the only way! Act now, for just two easy payments of 19.99! May the Signal guide you and the Sponsor watch over you!" — **Reverend Alfonse Activia Reversi Morgenstern**

There has always been the Signal, and the Telling Visions are its heralds. The Visionaries believe in the power of the Signal, and its grand creator, the Sponsor. The Signal played through boxes in people's homes, telling the word of the Sponsor and his prophets, teaching life lessons and parables to the people of the old world. Now the Visionaries wander the wastes, collecting artifacts of this holy word, and preaching it to a world that has forgotten it. These stories contain lessons, advice, and something often lacking in the wastes: hope.

History

The Signal existed from the dawn of time, as did the great Sponsor. It was only when the people of the pre-Fall were able to produce Oracle Boxes that they were able to see these great and Telling Visions. It was Father R. Clark who first saw these visions, and he was able to write them not on simple paper, but on the air itself. The whole of the world worshipped these visions, until the Sponsor decided to go off the air.

A man of our time, Father Ramirez Walken, was the first to teach of these Visions in the world after the Fall and tell a dirty-faced group of pilgrims that it was their duty to spread word of these Visions until the Sponsor came back "on the air." He began by going from town to town, gathering lost and weary people, and telling them what he knew of these ancient parables. In these stories, handsome men and fearless women saved towns, the zed only fed on sexy teens, and kids would say the darnedest things. These were tales of love and longing, of good vanquishing evil, and of beautiful people learning beautiful life lessons. These were tales that could bring hope.

It was only after the Father had amassed a few thousand followers that he gave his biggest sermon yet. He explained that these Visions were not his, but that they had been the work of the Signal the whole time. He said that it was the duty of all who had heard him to spread the word and help return the world to the clarity and perfect picture of the Signal. He laid out the tenets of the faith, and rode off into the sunset, searching for the lost city of Bell Air, where everyone was beautiful, rich, and young forever.

Philosophy

It is the duty of all Telling Visionaries to spread the word of the Signal. Many of the less-devout and non-clergy members of the faith know very little about the depth and scale of the Signal. Most of them are aware of some facet or aspect of it and base their faith around that. For example, a child born into the Telling Visionary faith may have been raised hearing of the great heroes of action. They may have been brought up hearing of Saint Rambo or Saint McClane. Another child from another house may have

been brought up learning of entirely different saints from an entirely different "genre" of the Signal's stories. On the road however, if they were to meet, those children would share the stories they had learned with each other, to further their understanding of the Signal's meaning, and what it means for them. Each Visionary should be as much a teacher as they are a student of the Signal.

Members of the faith should always be on the lookout for pieces of the "Holy Wood." These relics of their scriptures were touched by the great sacrament of Merchandising and are keys to the Visionary faith. Many members of the faith will not know from what scripture their Holy Wood pieces are from, or what significance they hold in the greater message of the Signal, but they will know they are of great value.

The Visionaries are neither good nor evil, which garners them some ill attention. The faithful understand that in this world, there needs to be both heroes and villains. They do their best to provide both. Meddling to make the story better is incredibly important to them. This also includes their most sacred of all duties, which is watching and being a good Viewing Audience. They would rather push others into the lead roles, assist people in their quests, and then observe — all the better to understand their faith.

Their scriptures may seem silly, and some mock them for it. But the Visions given by the Signal are not silly. The scriptures are the closest approximation to what life was like before the Fall, and the Visionaries are deadly serious about this.

Theology

The world is more beautiful through the lens of the Signal. The Signal is the word of the Sponsor, who the Visionaries believe is a being beyond our comprehension. The Sponsor sends Earth the Signal, and the Visionaries do their best to interpret that Signal.

The Visionaries do their best to spread that word to the Viewing Audience. In return, the Audience will let them know if they have entertained, and in the case of a "Very Special Episode," if they have learned anything. The Viewing Audience is simultaneously both the people around the Visionary at work, and a nebulous other party that exists conceptually and ethereally. Some unseen choir judges the actions and efforts of all people, and that Viewing Audience can usually be gauged by the people present.

A key to that question as well is if the people are entertained. "Entertained" does not have to mean happy, though. One can be entertained while weeping profusely or cursing angrily at the Visionary. Entertained means engaged and interested, which is the goal of all Visionaries.

When a Visionary is baptized into the faith, they are given a name from one of the scriptures and are doused in a special liquid. They are tasked with spreading the stories of the Signal, and on a much more secret level, creating stories. They are told never to showcase the powers of their faith unless people pay-to-view. This does not necessarily mean currency, but could be with services, worship, or favors to that Visionary in the future.

All Visionaries, especially priests, are tasked with picking out seasonal Protagonists. This is not common knowledge among most of the laypeople within the faith, but the Visionaries must find someone who they wish to be their main character for the season and do their best to keep their lives interesting and exciting. Some approach this task by telling their Protagonist, while many keep this secret and work in the darkness to influence things. The Protagonist should learn something between seasons, ensuring character growth, and the Protagonist should never have their choices interfered with directly. The Visionary understands that the Protagonist may not be participating in the story of their own free will, but their free will guides where the story goes. The Visionary also must ensure that the show is not canceled, and therefore must be willing to sacrifice their own life to keep their Protagonist alive, although a good Visionary will never throw more at their Protagonist than they think they can handle.

Customs and Organization

Some Telling Visionaries locations follow different organization structures. The most standard leadership position is a *Director of Programming*, who is the head of a community. The Director of Programming is the most knowledgeable on the faith and helps newer community members select their protagonists for the season. The Director also assigns tasks for people to organize around the holy holidays and chooses the programming for each season.

Priests among the faith are known as *Showrunners*, while non-priests are often *Production Assistants*, *Key Grips*, or *Viewers Like You*. Showrunners often select a "genre" of scripture to be their focus, while their flock may often select only single historical characters.

The Visionaries have an extensive list of holidays, some of which are more pressing and famous than others. The Newfall Season begins as the mind turns to the harvest, when the Visionary picks their latest Protagonist and begins this courtship by offering them a piece of the Holy Wood. If the Protagonist accepts, they are now the star of that Visionary's season. There is Sweep'sweek, which takes place in both late November and May. This week is when the stakes need to be the highest, and the Visionaries are tasked with making the best "Must-See-TV" they can muster. The Midseason Replacements occurs in late winter and allows the Visionary to select a new Protagonist if their prior Protagonist died.

With such a diverse body of scripture, it is unsurprising that the Visionaries have numerous smaller channels that act as the subsects of the Faith. The *Nemesis* are by far the most famous of all, as their harvest time horror shows have given the Visionaries a bad name for ages. The Nemesis believe that to make heroes, one truly needs villains. They don disguises and portray these monstrous beasts of the scripture, terrifying and killing many to attempt to make them stronger. They rarely hunt the Visionaries, as there would be little for them to learn, and on the night they are most famous for, Halloween, they are not supposed to kill anyone. They only will kill those who know of that secret: Halloween is more about generating fear than anything else. It's better for the story that way.

A VISIONARY PRAYER

In Nomine Aybesee, In Nomine Enbeesee, In Nomine Beebeesee, In Nomine Seebeeyess, and all local and regional Network Affiliates.

The real fear for a Visionary is *Standards and Practices*. Practically the boogeymen of the faith, S&P may show up at any time, with nary a word or reason, and act out the will of the Signal and the Church. Visionaries know not to interfere with them and that they have removed both the rich and poor with clean precision and no explanation.

There is the *Spotlight*, who are considered heretics by many in the faith. They attempt to take the role of protagonist in many cases, and train to get the accolades that come with heroism. In doing so, they eschew the Visionary duty of observing. There is the *Actors' Guild*, who focus less on the characters of the scripture but more on the people that portrayed them. By following the actor, they often can cross through multiple genres and learn the ways of many different scriptures.

The *Screen Writers' Guild* are the secret masterminds of the Visionary faith. They observe communities of survivors and write storylines that target those audiences. They'll bring morality to the immoral, drama to the calm, and tension to the complacent. The *Film Union* are the librarians for the faith. They catalog, protect, and transcribe relics to document as much of the Signal as they can. They oversee religious sites and accrue as many holy relics as they can.

Tenets

- There is the alpha and the ohm-mega. The Signal is the beginning and the end.
- Collect the lost relics of the Telling Visions, and always quest to find the signal.
- Destroy those who would impede the great Signal.
- Do not allow others to witness your prayers without having them pay-to-view.
- Every member must carry a piece of "Holy Wood" upon them as a sign of faith.
- Respect the merchants and heed the words of their Sponsors.
- Follow the visions of the Telling Visions and learn from their enigmatic ways.

Sainthood of Ashes

"Let us be a light for others. Be good, and do good, and divinity is with you." — **Sister Valerie Marks**

It seems hard to believe that a faith can be solely dedicated to doing good works, but the Sainthood of Ashes have little other dogma. They believe in educating, healing, helping, and being a beacon of light for a dark world. Truly kind souls with good intentions, the Sainthood works to make sure others have what they need, which sometimes means they themselves will go without. Some may call them naive, and some may take advantage of their kindness. But those cynics who would are darkening one of the purest and most altruistic things in all the wastes: The soul of a Sainthood.

History

It seems like every other faith has some origin within the world, but there is little to be said about the Sainthood of Ashes' origins. There is some oddness to that, as the Sainthood are obsessed with the collection of history and the teaching of lessons. In reality, the Sainthood came from the holy men and women who survived the Fall. All were people of faiths since lost to time and decay, but in the world's time of need, they united to do take care of those who needed it.

This began many of the faith's wandering roots, as the Sainthood would work in a location to help until the survivors there could help themselves, and then move on to the next weary town. Originally there may have been a focus on helping the faithful, but that was quickly disbanded to helping all who needed it. The world became their flock, and the lost and scared and hungry became their task.

The faiths these people came from are long gone, but something pure sprang from their joining. The struggling masses had a beacon to look toward, and that beacon was united, glorious, and blindingly luminescent. The lanterns they would carry to light the dark became their symbol, as they were to be lights in a dark world. While other faiths clung to dogma and tightened up, making outsiders of everyone else, the Sainthood opened their doors and invited all inside. And as only the purest could, they did so with utter humility.

Philosophy

If all lived by the philosophy of the Sainthood, the threats of the world would not stand a chance against the will of the survivors. They believe in compassionate care for anyone, and in making sure they're not only helping, but teaching. They walk through the world as philanthropist educators, understanding that a person should lift the fallen, but not carry them.

The Saints have trouble staying in one place, because many places may need their aid. The Sainthood's goal is to share as much of their knowledge and skills as they can in a location and move onward to help the next settlement. They often serve as messengers and can bring good news or tragedy with them. Either way, their lantern is welcome in almost all settlements.

They believe in helping people become self-sufficient but have mercy and understanding that some people are just not as capable as others. They will give until they are left with only the essentials. Sainthood do not help without thought, however. If someone is taking their gifts and turning them on other survivors, the vengeance of the Sainthood is swift and painful. The

kind face of a Saint could easily show horrors for those that try and take advantage.

Most of the Saints are archaeologists, looking for knowledge from the old world to learn so they can share it with others. Many are doctors, going from town to town and attempting to heal the weak, sick, and wounded. But there is no one specific thing that the Sainthood does, other than help anyone that needs it, and share knowledge wherever they go.

There are many stories of Saints making naive deals and being gunned down by con men or ruffians. Many of the faithful give away their worldly possessions to help decrease the suffering of others, and that is seen as a weak or foolish action. But doing good for your neighbor, and doing so with humility, comes with strong allies and stronger good will.

Theology

The Sainthood of Ashes believes in a god. "God" is not clearly defined, and his or her influence on the world is not clearly noted, but their god is supposedly all-seeing, all-knowing, and deeply invested in the survival of the people of the Fall. It is the Sainthood's belief that their god has willingly given all people free will, and that means the choice to do good or evil. The Sainthood believes their god wishes them to do good.

Their beliefs on violence only seem to come up with the matter of the undead. The Sainthood of Ashes believes that the undead are a "parody of dynamic life" and a mockery of their god's will. They combat the undead at any turn and are only rivaled by the Fallow Hopes in terms of their fervor in clashing with zed.

Most of the beliefs of the Sainthood focus on education and charity. One should always teach others, and especially teach people how to teach. If you are knowledgeable in anything, then that knowledge should be shared, because knowledge is a powerful tool. Teaching others how to teach will allow people to continue your good works after you have moved on to the next town.

The Lantern holds specific significance to the Sainthood. It serves as their holy symbol, and most carry one, or a facsimile, on their person. The significance of the light is obvious; the Saints consider themselves a light in dark places. But the fire from a lantern has far more meaning than that. In the lighting of candles from that lantern, the lantern still burns as brightly, but the light has now spread to all the candles. The knowledge and charity of the Sainthood is the same way. It can be shared and shared, but it will never diminish within the heart of a true Saint.

The Sainthood also believes in only having what you need to survive, without excess. This may have started from their wandering roots and a desire to pack light, but now it is a key part of their faith. Many are impoverished themselves but will take every bit of spare change they have and give it to those who are suffering. Many do free work for people or provide free medical care.



A SAINTLY PRAYER

One candle can light a thousand. May my flame bring light to the world.

Customs and Organizations

There is no leadership among the Sainthood, as members of the faith don't have many decisions they can't make themselves. Reverence is paid to Saints who have traveled farther, or who have had great adventures in their journeys, but even the tenets of the faith were formed by word of mouth over time. Due to their altruism, they've never required any form of boss.

The Sainthood typically don't conflict with other faiths. While they may disagree with the views of other religions, and occasionally fight with them for the betterment of the world, they believe that all can seek redemption. Even the darkest and most wicked of Final Knights may just need to understand the personal benefit in helping others to change their ways.

Among each other, the Saints call themselves *Holy Men*, *Holy Women*, and *Holy People*. Outsiders sometimes call them *Preachers*, even though most of them never preach. Members of the Sainthood have never really searched for recruitment, as it's not a lifestyle for which most people are suited. If you've been called to the Sainthood, odds are you're already seeking it out.

Usually in times of spiritual crisis, a Saint will confer with another Saint for advice. Often, a priest of the faith will be sought out by people in towns to help sort their spiritual crises as well. As they are a faith that is incredibly accepting, they tend to get along well with some of the other faiths and tend to be hated by many of the more radical ones.

Most Sainthood customs and rituals involve candles or lanterns. For their marriage ceremonies, a candle is lit, and then both participants light their candles from that, showing their unity. There is the lighting of candles at fieldstones and road markings to indicate the passing of a Saint from the world. And of course, a Saint would not truly be a Saint if they did not partake in a pilgrimage of some kind, spreading charity and wealth on the way.

The Sainthood of Ashes has some sects that do some of the most good throughout the wastes. The *Postal Service*, for example, is utilized and untouched by all civilized factions of the world. Post Walkers are some of the toughest and strongest people in all the wastes. They can make long journeys on foot by themselves, with a singular goal of delivering the mail in mind. They've been known to walk through entire hordes of undead, raiders, and even battlefields to deliver letters firsthand. They know they can spread the light and knowledge through the world. Even in the most villainous and evil camps, it is still unlikely for someone to attack a Post Walker. And if someone did, they would certainly regret it. The Post Walkers also have secret tasks they hope to complete, including the education of literacy across the wasteland. Communication breeds knowledge, and therefore letters spread information. The second task is the storage and delivery of seeds, which are incredibly valuable and could possibly save the fate of the world. The third task is the subtle and secret assistance in freeing slaves from captivity. Since the slave uprising, however, this task has thankfully been far less necessary.

The *Lamplighters* also do an amazing service. Men and women of the Lamplighters have gathered essential plans and documents to help make settling a new location easy. Water purifiers, crop-tending techniques, and medical documents are all bundled together in a Settler's Guide. The Lamplighters set out from a settlement, taking five students with them. They then task the students with breaking off with the caravans they ride on, helping clear new roads, and setting up new settlements in fertile and infertile areas. That way, maybe one day no survivor will be out of the distance of a safe town.

The *Path Finders* work with the Lamplighters, clearing roads and paths and making travel easier and safer. Clearing the road of undead threats, the Path Finders even trailblaze new paths to locations that can help weary travelers. The Engineers of Hope are an organization constantly looking to find the newest and greatest technological advances and to put them to use for the betterment of mankind. They also seek out old-world technology, hoping to find something lost that may help thousands. The *Scribes of the Eternal Teacher* record as much knowledge as possible to make sure it is never lost again. Blueprints, books of lore, and historical records are all transcribed by these monks in the hope that they can one day be used to teach the masses.

The *Honorarium* is an amazing group that finds towns that have suffered immense loss and ensures that those left behind have the capacity to take care of themselves. They offer spiritual and technical guidance and carry the heavy burden of putting down the undead shells of the loved ones that have come back from the dead. Finally, the *Watchers of the Crossroad* have taken it upon themselves to be some of the sharpest and most lethal people in the wastes. The Watchers watch, looking for the markers of another great fall and doing everything in their power to prevent it. They destroy pre-Fall weapons of mass destruction, kill mad scientists who are making plagues or bombs, and destroy forbidden knowledge that would lead to more harm than good.

Tenets

- God gives us the power to make choices. Choose for good, always.
- Never leave a fellow traveler hungry or hurt. Karma always comes back around.
- Educate in your wake! Be it gardening or gunfighting, knowledge is power.
- Teach others to teach, so your touch might linger after your feet have moved on.
- If you can, do without.
- Combat the undead wherever you can. Zombies are a parody of dynamic life.

Tribes of the Seasons

"The seasons change. Sometimes it is a long season. Other times a short one. But the seasons always change." — **Priest of Autumn Kwik Hek**

The world was rocked by fire and war, and yet time marched on. Each season of the year offers a different insight for the Tribes. Winter is a time for contemplation and wisdom, Spring a time for growth, Summer a time for labor, and Autumn a time for reaping. These seasons persisted even after the world fell, and the Tribes believe that this shows how inconsequential mankind is on the shape of things. Mankind fell, and the world didn't notice.

History

The origin of the Tribes of the Seasons goes back before the Fall. The seasons have always been there; it just took the right mind to see their significance. After the Fall, the Tribes saw that the seasons still turned, and that the world still revolved despite the devastation that the humans brought to themselves. Clearly, nature was stronger than anything mankind was making, and nature needed to be praised and worshipped for this. But nature did not answer, and the Tribes realized that something so large and so vast does not need the worship of something so small. The seasons do not need worship — just reverence.

Each season has a task assigned to it, and those come from the very natural needs of those seasons. Spring is the time for planting crops. Summer is the time for hunting, as this is when the animal populations are at their highest. Autumn is the time for the harvest, and when the undead and raiders are at their most threatening. Winter is the time for contemplation and quiet, as the cold kills the outside so the internal world can thrive.

Philosophy

The Tribes believe that all things happen for a reason. The seasons will march on and change regardless of the work or will of the people on the Earth. The impact of man is so inconsequential in the scheme of things, that the seasons' power simply washes over it. The Strains that scatter the wastes now are in fact so small that their actions have become part of the cycle. The stars will shift, and the sun will rise and fall, and the men will fight and die. There is little to be done about these changes.

This is not to say that nature does not include the remnants of the old world. All structures left by man before the Fall are nature's now, as nature has claimed them. It only makes sense that the time of man came to an end, because seasons end, and the seasons will claim what the last season left behind. There are many things that the world and the seasons have claimed and adapted to their own devices. Those collapsed buildings are now gardens, and the broken bridges have become reefs. Life marches forward, and the world grows and adapts.

Each season has its duty, and those claimed by that season are to act out their duty. The Spring Tribe is mostly farmers and scavengers, who grow and find things from the land. The Tribe of Summer is mainly brewers, builders, and crafters who take the resources made by the Spring Tribe and build with it. The Autumn Tribe are warriors, who destroy the undead. The Winter Tribe is the most educated of the Tribes, focusing on scholars and priests who study and contemplate through the winter.

The Tribes all understand that it is their duty to follow the rulings of other Tribes when they are out of season, and to honor their season with rituals when their season is ascendant. There is no remorse or bad feeling if a season is particularly short or unproductive, as the Tribes understand that all of this is a cycle, and they will have their turn again when the seasons come around to it.

Theology

Worship of the seasons is nonexistent. Reverence is paid, and a respect that one would have for something large and incomprehensible is given. The seasons do not care to be praised, as they cannot hear the praise of something so small.

Instead, the Tribes acknowledge the effect of the seasons, and listen to them. Instead of attempting to influence, they act as agents of the seasons, fulfilling roles the seasons have given them. Depending on location, the seasons may shift in dominance and power, and that is perfectly acceptable to the Tribes. If one lives in the Frozen North, the summer Tribes find very little time to rule, while if they lived in Vegasia, they would be in control almost perpetually. Such is the will of the seasons, and so therefore the Tribes will carry it out.

Everything comes in cycles. The seasons are vast and large, but they lead good examples for effects that take place in the world. Life itself has a Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Most Tribe members acknowledge and accept this inevitability of death. This does not make them nihilistic, but they understand that death comes for all, as it does for even the most ancient of things, and one day they will be gone — like the seasons, they will begin again in some way. Either as fertilizer for new trees, or food for some beasts.

Tribes are incredibly adaptable to the location they live. No matter what the local view is, the Tribes will find their way to glean the meaning of the seasons in that area. If the town decides to go to war, they will not be swayed into believing it's Autumn. The Tribes would advise that town to wait until the season changes.

Tribe members mark the season changes with rituals. These rituals are not asking for anything, but instead acknowledging the change of season, while simultaneously denoting the changeover in leadership.

Customs and Organizations

Each Tribe elects a leader to rule for that Tribe's season. The Tribes may test this leader to make sure they are up to the task of ruling for the season. The Autumn may test their warrior

A SEASONAL PRAYER

I will wait 'til my season. I will advise and follow. When the seasons wish, I will have my rule. I will take my action. I will guide my Tribe.

king in combat or fortitude, while the Winter Tribe may test their potential leader with a test of morality, or a puzzle to be solved. When the season is over, leadership moves on to the next Tribe, and the other Tribes follow their rule.

Ruling terms are entirely dependent on the length of the season, and members of the Tribes will know when the season is complete from the changes in the weather and the surrounding area. Some Tribes have far more specific definitions of these rules, while others are laxer. The fractured nature of the Tribes breeds diversity, but the seasons roll on no matter what.

Just because a Tribe has taken over rule, doesn't mean that much will be different. Even in a short Spring, the farmers will still need to farm, and if they do not, it does not matter how much the Summer Tribe hopes to craft, as they will have no supplies to do so. The Autumn will have very short fights if the Summer Tribe has not made them enough weapons and brews.

No matter what season it is, your Tribe still indicates your role. A Winter in Spring will help with the math and inventory to better the harvest. They'll research blueprints and recipes for the crafters in the Summer. They'll plan the tactics for the Autumns in the fall. Your role stays the same, but you adapt to each season, still serving the Tribe with your best foot forward. Members of each season have distinct colors and markings on their body that indicate what Tribe they belong to.

Tribes is a broad term for what your role is in the season's community. Some Tribes form smaller groups that comprise members of each Tribe, like a family unit. A group of Tribe members may travel together. They will still support each other and work together, and like the seasons, they function as a whole.

There is a moderate amount of xenophobia when it comes to other religions and their interactions with the Tribes of Seasons. The Tribes are known to host outsiders who seek to learn of their faith, as there is nothing secretive about their beliefs. A Tribe member who is not of the ruling season would ask if it was acceptable for them to invite an outsider in to learn. Depending on who is the ruler of the season, this could be potentially difficult to do, or it may work out in their favor. Members of the Tribes of Seasons have difficulty understanding many other faiths, as nothing could be as vast or unknowable as their seasons. As many Tribe members are Natural Ones, this xenophobia is often enhanced, but if an outsider comes in with respect and reverence, there is often little to no problem.

Tribe members are welcoming to other Tribe members who may join them. Many times, they find that these Tribe members have different approaches to looking at the world. A Tribe member will not judge, but instead teach their own method, and hope the shared knowledge helps everyone grow.

Some Tribes take different approaches to their reverence, although they still all understand the nature of the seasons. The *Crow Eaters*, for example, are an aspect that mainly follow Autumn and Winter. They are savage and brutal, leaving battlefields full of carrion for the crows to pick at. The Crow Eaters adorn themselves with feathers and bird skulls, and hope that those markings will keep the crows at bay from eating them.

The *Natural Order* believes in helping the world with natural solutions to technological problems. They create items that are renewable and durable, which will not rot and rust away like many technological devices. The *Redeemed Earth* sees the path of man not as a cycle, but as a river. Each action taken by a person is another stone in a river, and they believe that the stones of pre-Fall people will be moved and worn away with time. They tend to be more mindful and quieter than your average Tribes member.

The *Children of Father Night* are a primarily Lascarian branch of the Tribes of Seasons. Father Night and Mother Luna are their representation of the nocturnal aspects of nature, and the followers show their respect by dressing in the garb of nocturnal animals. Wolf pelts, owl masks, and darkened furs are the preferred garb of the Children.

Tenets

- The cycle of the seasons is proof that the world will continue, and that there are forces outside the suffering of this world that we cannot understand.
- Each season must rule in kind. If a season is without followers, then none rule during that period and no decisions can be made.
- Mark the turning of the seasons with the natural rites; never turn another away from your ceremonies.
- The seasons rule in all places that the seasons exist, be it forest or be it city. Do not let the ways of the local people away your faith. Those of the Tribe may call on the aid of the other Tribes in turn with their season.
- Let our Springs be fruitful, our Summers productive, our Autumns feared, and our Winters insightful.

Virtues of the Kings' and Queens' Court

"Every faith on this world uses music to preach their ceremonies. You ever wonder if maybe they're all wrong? Maybe it's the music that means something. Who'd have thought?" — **Bop D-Wop, Notorious Front Man**

There is a history that is told in the corners of crowded bars and in the dulcet whispers of new mothers, rocking their babies to sleep. These Virtues of the Kings' and Queens' Court capture every moment of history in an easily consumable package. With every song there is proof that no matter how bad or good you feel, someone has lived it and felt that way before. The Kings and Queens of the old world dished that out every night and left their songs behind for the worshippers of the Court to follow and sing. Even the illiterate can be grabbed by music, and the Courtiers do their best to spread the word of their Kings and Queens throughout the wasteland.

History

At the dawn of time, one brain-dead goon turned to another and showed how they could hit two rocks together to make a beat. But before even that, there was the sound of rain falling to the Earth, the whistle of the trees in the wind, and cracking of branches as the aged and died. The beat of every heart in every chest. That was the birth of music.

The Kings and Queens took that music and brought it to a whole new level. These icons could take their souls out and bear them in front of their bodies. They could write lyrics that captured the breath of anyone listening. They could hit notes that would break hearts. They could inspire armies and tear down temples. These Kings and Queens captured an entire world in five-line staffs.

They died, though. When the Fall came, it took all of them with it. Some died long before the bombs and the undead, and some made it all the way up to the end. But no matter what, they're long gone. But their music lives on through the Courtiers. They've taken their words, style, beats and melodies, and they've brought them into this post-Fall world. The Courtiers understand that what is dead is gone, and that the Kings and Queens were not gods to be worshipped. It was their humanity that made them great, and the Courtiers aspire to be as much like them as they can be.

Philosophy

A lot of Courtier doctrine comes from the study of their Kings and Queens, and how they functioned within the world in which they lived. While music is most certainly about emotion, many Kings and Queens wrote entire symphonies that described huge chunks of pre-Fall history. They captured times, places, and feelings so well, that much of the known history of the pre-Fall world can be gleaned from listening to the right songs.

There are some simple rules for interaction and behavior that Courtiers do their best to follow. Firstly, the Kings and Queens are not gods, and that no one should be worshipping them. While they did amazing things, the Kings and Queens were just mortal, and should be treated as such. They live on through their music, and that is what should be focused on.

Music is not just the actual art, but also the magic of charisma and the skill of performance. A Courtier knows they should do their best to emulate their King or Queen in dress and style, and they should try to emulate the personalities they exuded. Completing the ensemble makes for a full performance, as opposed to a half-assed one.

Not everyone can sing, and not everyone can play music. Some people who follow in the paths of their Kings and Queens can't carry a beat in a backpack. This does not preclude them from the faith, and if anything, it may even strengthen their desire to prove themselves. Learning the lyrics and history of the Kings and Queens holds incredible significance to the Courtiers, and many tests of faith involve recitation of the lyrics of the songs they hold most dear. In dire moments, you may even hear the Courtiers charge into battle, screaming off-key the songs that burn in their hearts, swinging blades and bats with a purpose: To honor their fallen skalds.

There has been much debate in the Court about what constitutes their faith as something beyond a philosophy. Courtiers believe in the power of music, but that power is evident. Faith often involves believing in something unseen. The Courtiers can see the power of music ushering through every faith. Even the enemies of their faith still use music to enhance their ceremonies. Telling Visionaries talk about theme songs, and the Nuclear Family has wholesome sing-alongs. The Final Knights even use music — often scary and intimidating music, but it still conveys an emotion. The fact that music permeates every faith solidifies Courtier belief in the power of music, and they worship at an altar of something truly wonderful and mystical in its allure.

Theology

Courtiers collect the relics of their Kings and Queens. This may be t-shirts, album covers, ticket stubs, pins, posters, or patches. These artifacts are important to represent what they believe in, and many Courtiers with an abundance of relics will pass them off to newer Courtiers. Each icon tells a story, like each song tells a tale. This spreads the faith and advertises to the uninitiated what the Court is about.

Albums are hard to find. If a Courtier lives in a mecca, they may be lucky to hold a few unbroken vinyl discs in a lifetime. Much of the Kings and Queens legend is consumed through live music, and if one is fortunate, a radio. Therefore, having an encyclopedic knowledge of all the Kings and Queens would be incredibly difficult.

Choosing your King and Queen isn't an option. Your King or Queen chooses you. The first song that pulls you in and grabs you and makes you feel the faith for the first time: That's your



King or Queen. From there on, people may evolve, and their tastes may change, but your King or Queen most likely won't.

Defending your King or Queen is incredibly important for a Courtier. Other members of the faith will attack you, trying to test your knowledge and strengthen you. A Courtier must be ready to defend, and attack back. It is the duty of all Courtiers to test each other to strengthen the faith.

The Courtiers also battle the undead threat, as is asked of them in their tenets. They act as bards on the battlefield, inspiring the survivors around them with rousing music that gets the blood pumping and makes one feel ready to take on anything. If a Court show is interrupted, the audience will usually turn on the interlopers to drive them out, as long as the band doesn't stop playing.

Customs and Organizations

Courtiers organize into bands, usually led by a Front Man. A *Front Man* would be nothing on his own, just as vocals harmonize with the instruments. But with their band, the Front Man is the decision maker. They bring the band together and interpret the songs of their Kings and Queens to make sure the band is acting accordingly. In the early years, bands were much smaller, and typically contained people that all followed the same King or Queen. Now bands tend to be larger, and the Kings and Queens followed vary more within them.

Bands still frequently battle each other. In the older days of the faith, this would mean bloodshed. As time moved on, the battles of the bands now usually test each other's knowledge, musical skill, and devotion to the faith. There is less of an emphasis on aggression and more emphasis towards making sure Courtiers are not going out and spreading weak versions of their Kings and Queens.

Of course, with so many different genres of music, there are many subsects of the *Virtues*. There are the Kings of Rock and the Queens of Soul. The Kings of Rock follow the rough-and-tumble lifestyle of their rock-and-roll forebears. They are not exclusively men, and they believe that the life of a rock star requires a life of ass-kicking and road-travelling. The Queens of Soul take on the sultry and slower message of the soul musicians of the Court. Not necessarily women, these Queens understand the true emotional depth of their music and can pass that on to the Courtiers with whom they surround themselves.

The *Road Crew* is the most essential staple of the Kings' and Queens' Court. Not every Courtier is musically gifted, and one does not need to be to understand the spirit and word of the Virtues. The hardest working members of the Court, these folks don't get to be center stage. They work hard making sure that the music is heard, crafting instruments and stages, and caring for the musicians. The literally unsung heroes of the Court, the

A MUSICAL PRAYER

I believe in the power of rock and roll, of rhythm and blues, of country and western. I believe in the word and the beat and the melody. I believe that our songs will carry until we fall to ashes.

Road Crew is responsible for music getting out into the world, just as much as a person with a guitar.

There are the *Priests of Sound*, who have learned the old ways of sending out the radio waves. They travel from tower to tower, until they can no longer hear the radio being broadcast. There, they pass out blueprints and plans to the people of that settlement, teaching them about music, and teaching them the ways of building a radio tower, in the hopes that they'll be able to spread the word further. They have the prints tattooed on their flesh so that the will never lose them, and printers can come and transcribe what is written onto them. Then, when the new tower is done, they leave and walk again, waiting until they lose the broadcast once more.

There is the black sheep of these sects, however: The *Cult of the Crossroads*. In many old legends of the Kings and Queens, it was rumored that to gain their incredible gift for music they had to stand at the Crossroads and make a deal with a demon to gain their power. The Cult of the Crossroads does just that, and offers power, fame, and money to those who seek it. To join the Cult, one must join the Final Knights for three years, and then return to join the Court. The Courtier has then made it "through hell," and most likely has returned stronger for it.

Tenets

- The voice, words, and spirit of your leader is the voice, word, and spirit of your band. They interpret the voices of the King or Queen you follow.
- Faith is more than just following blindly. Prove the strength of your faith by challenging the faiths of others. Strengthen all, and do not destroy.
- Celebrate as the Kings and Queens would. Fight as they would. Live as they would dream us to live. Die with the beat on your lips.
- Recover the icons of your fallen skalds, but do not worship them. The day the music died has come and gone, and these icons are nothing but ghosts.
- Let all who walk in your presence give respect to your King or Queen.
- Let your battle hymns be heard, as the mindless and soulless undead are sent to their final rest. One day we will be able to bring these songs to the masses again, and one day you will be called.

Faith and Your Character

While the wastelands are unforgiving to those who inhabit them, a character may still find an abundance of hope in one of the major faiths. If they do, the rating of their Society Path in a Creed (or just "Creed Path") will determine the strength of their connections to the members and leaders of the religion. It doesn't necessarily indicate their devotion to the tenets or how strong their beliefs are, but it serves as a good guide for both.

When it comes to your character and what they think of faith, they tend to fall somewhere on a spectrum. On one end, they're not the spiritual sort at all. If such a survivor possesses a Creed Path, it is likely because a parent worshipped with that faith. On the opposite end, they are devoted followers and leaders of the creed, actively working towards its goals. Like other spiritual figures, their following requires time to build up, and their Creed Paths can sometimes start out with a low rating as a result. In between, your character could be agnostic, believing in something divine but uncertain about the specifics. They could also be a loose follower of such tenets, or perhaps their devotion is conflicting with something else in their life. Since it's a spectrum, your character's faith in a high power can absolutely fluctuate and waver in strength.

As a form of Society Path, it is possible for you to upset your connections or break a tenet in front of the wrong person. From there, you might screw up badly enough to find your active participation in the faith revoked. When this happens, you are still a member of the faith when it comes to your beliefs. However, along with losing your connections, you also lose access to religious services and ceremonies, and the members of your congregation choose whether you're allowed to take part. This presents a tough dilemma for survivors who are trying to get back into the good graces of the faith but can't do so without repenting to individual followers.

Leaving the creed entirely is a personal choice for your character. When they leave a faith, they keep all the points devoted to that Creed Path, along with any Faith Edges learned (although they may not be able to use them if they no longer meet the requirements). This represents their clergy and other followers attempting to bring them back into the fold. Once a character joins a new faith though, they lose all dots in their previous Creed Path and can no longer purchase Faith Edges that are exclusive to that creed.

Faith and the Faithful

No matter the range of beliefs any character may hold, there are two types of worshippers: those who follow the faith, and those who embody such creeds. While the strength of their beliefs may be equal, characters with the Faithful Edge have connected with a higher power. These are the holy folks of the world. If they live to preach their lessons, they will be the prophets and saviors of religion across the wastes. But for now, they wield their divinity in the face of a dire world.

The Faithful Edge is ranked between 1-5 dots. Once you purchase the first dot, you're able to gain an additional Stress Condition (see p. XX). Once a character takes the Faithful Edge, their player can purchase Faith Edges for them, provided they meet the prerequisites for the Edge in question. Should a character cease to meet any prerequisites after purchase, they do not lose the ability, but cannot use it until they meet the prerequisites again.

Some requirements are specific to certain creeds, while many others demand an exceptional amount of faith. There are also Edges that are considered forbidden in certain creeds and restricted as a result. However, this doesn't prevent you from taking such Edges — the act of learning restricted Edges is not an affront but regarded with suspicion. However, if the local congregation learns that you *used* a restricted Faith Edge, you lose a dot on your Creed Path, no matter the circumstances behind its use. Such acts are best kept a secret among close friends, lest they be used as blackmail.

Every time your character expresses doubt in their creed's philosophies or fails to adhere to its tenets, you may be required to roll Integrity + Composure against a difficulty set by the Storyguide, which is based on the severity of the infraction. If you fail to generate enough successes to meet the difficulty, your character must take a Stress Condition in an available slot. Your character must also take a Stress Condition if you fail to meet the difficulty of a Faith Edge they attempted to use. If the character becomes Burned Out, they take the additional Condition *Hopeless*.

Upon receiving the Hopeless Condition (see sidebar), their divine powers ebb away and disappear until they resolve it by regaining their sense of faith — that is, the driving belief that keeps them going when hope leaves the world. However, that doesn't mean they've left their creed; rather, they hang on the brink between despair and hope, and it remains a personal choice for the character. Should they join a new creed though, it doesn't automatically return their miraculous powers. They must still address the Hopeless Condition before they can use Faith Edges again.

HOPELESS

Your character has no guiding compass left, and all the strength their faith offered has been robbed and forsaken by the horrors they've witnessed or committed. As the weight of such deeds bear down on their soul, their spiritual powers fail to come forth when they need them the most, abandoning the pious character to peril or an inability to help. While they are Hopeless, they cannot use any of their Faith Edges.

Momentum Trigger: Every time your character cannot help someone or defend themselves with a Faith Edge.

Resolution: Your character must witness an act of compassion offered to them or to their allies. Alternatively, they can devote a single day and night to rest and self-care, doing nothing else in the interim.

Distinctions of Faith

The following sections detail the different categories each Edge can be classified as, along with the faiths that do not allow such acts of faith and why.

Blessings of the Faithful

Restricted by: None

Blessings of the Faithful constitute a category of simple, esoteric prayers that create mystical effects in the wastelands. Exclusive to each faith, they are guarded secrets that are dependent on what the user believes, as opposed to the how strong their beliefs are. As a result, the preacher of one creed cannot use the blessings of another creed. It is not a matter of what is forbidden, but a matter of what isn't compatible with the foundations of every religion.

No faith forbids these blessings, but there are occasionally cults or factions that do not hold these powers in high regard and may treat them as restricted Edges in their limited flocks.

Edges: Bacchanalia (•), Beacon of Hope (•), Burning Touch (•), Evolved Olfaction (•), Find Tuning (•), Mal de Ojo (•), Parental Guidance (•), The Solar Wheel (•), U.H.F. (•)

Divine Sacrifice

Restricted by: The Nuclear Family, The Telling Visionaries, Tribes of the Seasons

Divine Sacrifices make up a set of powers that defines the line between followers of the creeds and those who would die for their faith. The latter constitutes the saints and the martyrs of whatever remains in the wastes. With divine willpower, they have stepped up and faced battle, death, and worse in the name of their higher powers. Time and time again, their resolve and stamina are tested, but belief carries them through.

A few creeds customarily prohibit these acts. For the Nuclear Family, sacrifices of this nature spit in the face of their duty to provide for each other. It is considered a fault of the Family Unit overall, although each infraction is addressed should the martyr admit the mistake in line with the tenets. When it comes to the Telling Visionaries, these acts of faith are not necessary to the stories each follower seeks to write into the world and consist of an extremist attitude that runs counter to their moral relativism. Finally, the Tribes of the Seasons believe the seasons are proof of the forces that work beyond the suffering of the world, forces that cannot be understood. As a result, the notion of martyrdom is antithetical to most followers in a faith that believes the world will merely continue.

Edges: Blind Devotion (•), Breath of Life (•), Fueled by Faith (•), Eye for an Eye (••), Driving Purpose (•••), Stigmatic Mark (••••)

Miracles

Restricted by: Cult of Fallow Hopes, Final Knights, Virtues of the Kings' and Queens' Court

Miracles is a category composed of the gifts of benevolent forces — beings that created the universe and, ultimately, the Fall of humanity. In the face of a hopeless future, those who believe have turned to faith for spiritual healing, and such devotion is now rewarded with miracles that physically cure ailments of all kinds.

Even then, they are traditionally restricted in a variety of faiths. Followers of the Fallow Hopes are god-fearing folk, so whatever injuries befall them are treated as a lesson in fear and devotion, not as an opportunity to heal someone with sins of which you may never know. Meanwhile, Final Knights thrive on the belief that the world has ended, that a benevolent being has been disproven to exist, and so nothing as pure as healing should be accepted in the hell they walk. Finally, the Kings' and Queens' Court believes in a force that exists *within* the universe, not one that created it. To wield miracles would be to embrace a higher power without limits, and to follow faith blindly is against their very tenets.

Edges: Faith Healing (•), Proof of Faith (•), Purifying Light (••), Call the Almighty (•••), Serenity of the Mind (••••), Final Wake (•••••)

Word of the Almighty

Restricted by: Church of Darwin

The Word of the Almighty is a set of Edges comprising blessings that are not about healing believers or communing with a specific faith, but instead serve more utilitarian needs. In the wastelands, such favors upon people and items tend to prove more useful than inconsistent techniques and unreliable equipment. They also tend to motivate and inspire people to great heights and nigh-impossible deeds, putting every broken dream within reach again.

Only one faith prohibits such divine acts, and that is the Church of Darwin. Crucial to their faith is the understanding of human adaptability and their focus on evolution. Thus, the boons granted by the Word of the Almighty are antithetical to their tenets, as they are not evolutionary mutations. To rely on these blessings would be to count on a tool at the moment it would fail you.

Edges: Blessed Visage (•), Faithful Toil (•), Guiding Light (••), Hallowed Protection (•••), Sanctify Relic (•••), Burden of Guilt (••••), Conviction (•••••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Restricted by: Light of Hedon, Sainthood of the Ashes

The Wrath of the Almighty is a concept long feared by survivors, all the way back to the Fall and perhaps even before. It punishes hubris and teaches lessons about humility that follow survivors every day. Once, such retribution seemed nonexistent and only the holiest individuals feared them. Today, they are a very real force, feared by believers and nonbelievers alike. No matter the explanation, holy warriors walk the wastes with the wrath of their higher powers, and they make great allies or terrible foes.

A couple of faiths regularly restrict these deeds. While the Light of Hedon preaches the teaching of the Seven, the concept of wrath is a strange contradiction to the core beliefs of living it up, pursuing joy, and never expecting another day in a terrible world. Thusly, they would prefer not to offer up their faith as a force of anger and retribution. When it comes to the Sainthood of the Ashes,

their devotion to what is good and pure is paramount. While they know survival may depend on the harm they dole out in the heat of battle, it is sacrilegious to inflict it with their divine powers.

Edges: Pray for Justice (•), Fervor (••), Sanctify Weaponry (•••), Searing Light (•••), Righteous Fury (••••), Retribution (•••••)

Faith Edges

The following Edges are presented in alphabetical order. Potential Stunts possible with each Edge are also listed.

BACCHANALIA (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: The Light of Hedon •

Anybody can face their doom at any time, so now is the time to live it up. Your character can touch another, spend a Momentum, and make an opposed roll of Lore + Presence against the successes of the target's reflexive Empathy + Resolve roll. Upon succeeding, both characters are set awash with pleasure and relief, and the target feels intoxicated as though they'd been drinking, taking the Intoxicated Condition.

Blackout Drunk (2s): Just like being Intoxicated, except that the target will not remember much about the time they spent inebriated. In particular, they forget the character that used Bacchanalia on them.

BEACON OF HOPE (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Sainthood of the Ashes •

During the dark nights, terrors are abundant, and hope is sparse. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Dexterity against a difficulty of 2 to set a lantern down and lay hands on it, filling it with divine radiance and casting a soft glow over their surroundings in a 15-foot radius. Anything within the light does not suffer Complications due to darkness or fear and gains a +1 "Fearless" Enhancement. The lantern shines for up to six hours or until it is moved, whichever comes first.

Beacon of Strength (2s): You strengthen the lantern's brilliance and temporarily soothe the Trauma Conditions of anyone within 15 feet of it, preventing any effects they would otherwise cause.

BLESSED VISAGE (•)

Word of the Almighty

Around the faithful, their power permeates their very soul, expressing their devotion in subtle ways. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Presence against a difficulty of 2 to cast a divine aura of serenity over them. They gain the +1 Enhancement "Holy One," which may be used on all social rolls. This effect lasts for one hour.

Camaraderie (2s): You widen the aura, and anybody within three feet is granted the same "Holy One" Enhancement, provided your character wishes it.

BLIND DEVOTION (•)

Divine Sacrifices

Brutal forces can invade the mind at any time, but some can resist. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Resolve against a difficulty of 2. If they succeed, they gain the +1 Enhancement "Hardened Mind" for the next 30 minutes to defend against faith and psionic powers.

Ongoing Devotion (1s): Your faith offers a boon and increases the duration by 30 minutes. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

Stalwart Mind (2s): Your loyalty allows you to gain the "Hardened Mind" Enhancement at +2 instead of +1.

BREATH OF LIFE (•••••)

Divine Sacrifices

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••••

Those with the strongest faith hold it in their friends and followers when they've done no wrong. When a target within 100 feet is about to die, spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Presence against a difficulty of 4. If you succeed, you character assumes all the Conditions of the target (although some Persistent ones, such as Strain Conditions, might not transfer), and grants them a second chance at their life. The next attack against the target does no damage whatsoever, and they gain the +1 Enhancement "Second Wind," helping them fight or flee.

In exchange, the user of this Edge gives their life, and no roll can prevent this, regardless of whether the user will return to life or depart for the last time. Storyguides may rule that this voluntary death offers some benefits during the resurrection roll (p. XX).

BURDEN OF GUILT (••••)

Word of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••••

Those who are wicked of heart wither in the disappointed eyes of the pious. Spend a Momentum and make an opposed roll of Lore + Presence against the target's Subterfuge + Composure. Upon success, the target receives the Choking on Lies Condition and cannot lie. If they attempt to do so, they begin coughing up phlegm or choking on bile as they try to deceive anybody around them with their words.

Cold Sweat (2s): Add the +1 Complication "Cold Sweat," which forces the target to break out in a cold sweat during any social rolls. This also serves as a drawback for certain actions, such as donning a disguise or maintaining their facades. This Complication fades away once the Condition does.

BURNING TOUCH (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Cult of Fallow Hopes •

Survivors speak of those who walk the wasteland with divine fire in their eyes. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Might against

CHOKING ON LIES

Your character is no match against the stare of holy folks. They cannot lie whatsoever, and any attempt to do so forces their body to cough up phlegm or choke on bile as they try to carry out their deception

Momentum Trigger: Every time you attempt to lie.

Resolution: Tell nothing but the truth for 10 minutes.

a difficulty of 2 to channel their inner fury into a purging fire of righteousness, which coats their hands and weapons without burning their skin. They gain the +2 Enhancement "Purifying Fire" until they defeat two opponents or until the fight ends, whichever comes first.

Just One More (1s): You can defeat one more opponent before the fire dissipates. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

CALL THE ALMIGHTY (•••)

Miracles

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

Though furious in power, divine miracles can revive any warrior with barely strength to stand. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Stamina against a difficulty of 3 to grab a single target and immediately resolve all their Bruised and Injured Conditions. In exchange, the user takes Fatigued Condition. This Edge does not affect Persistent Conditions and may only be used twice per act.

Call the Almighty Above (3s): Immediately resolve one of a target's Maimed Conditions, on top of their Bruised and Injured Conditions.

CONVICTION (•••••)

Word of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••••

In the wastelands, survivors tell stories of selfless miracles beyond any seen in everyday life. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Composure against a difficulty of 4 to invoke their divinity in a life-changing, unexplainable miracle that convinces all witnesses of their holiness and terrorizes entire enemy armies. If they succeed, they gain the +5 Enhancement "Paragon of the Creed," which is used for a single action that wouldn't be achievable otherwise, such as walking on lava, parting rivers and seas, and removing themselves from any visible sight. Once it is used, it disappears, and that particular miracle can never be used again. This Enhancement lasts for one hour and may be used only once every three acts.

Such actions taken with "Paragon of the Creed" cannot directly attack a target. If they do, the effect ends immediately and offers no benefit to such violence. However, the chosen action can still grant an opportunity to maneuver through battlefields and outflank opponents.

DRIVING PURPOSE (•••)

Divine Sacrifices

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

With a just cause and deep resolve, their dedication can push them through any crippling injury. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Resolve against a difficulty of 2 to ignore the effects of all Injury and Stress Conditions for five rounds. At the end of those five rounds, all Injury and Stress Conditions take effect instantly. You may only use this power once per day.

Higher Power (2s): Increase the duration of this Edge by three rounds. You make take this Stunt multiple times.

EVOLVED OLFACTION (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Church of Darwin •

Whatever radiation may take of you, it will surely evolve you. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Composure against a difficulty of 2 to grasp the head of a willing participant and flood their orifices with radiation, evolving them ever so subtly. Upon doing so for 30 seconds, the target gains the +1 Enhancement "Heightened Sense of Smell," which helps them sniff out food, water, enemies, and even radiation. This Enhancement lasts until dawn or dusk, whichever comes first.

Shared Blessings (2s): Your character gains the same Enhancement as their target.

EYE FOR AN EYE (••)

Divine Sacrifices

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••

Defenders of their faith know that for every blow they receive, another will come for their foe. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Composure against an opponent's defense to inflict a single Injury Condition the opponent previously dealt to the user of this Edge. This may only be done if the foe is within 30 feet and visible to the user.

Tooth for a Tooth (3s): Increase the severity of the inflicted Condition by one level: Bruised Conditions become Injured Conditions, and Injured Conditions become Maimed. You cannot increase a Condition past Maimed with this Stunt.

FAITH HEALING (•)

Miracles

Those who start down the path of faith usually discover its healing properties first. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Intellect against a difficulty of 3 to lay hands on a target and heal a single Bruised Condition, mending fractured bones, knitting flesh, and fusing torn muscles back together. The user may not use this ability on themselves.

Further Healing (2s): Instead of healing a Bruised Condition, heal an Injured Condition. This takes several minutes.



FAITHFUL TOIL (•)

Word of the Almighty

Those who toil for their higher powers are the greatest followers of their flock. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Dexterity against a difficulty of 2 to grant a spiritual boon to a target they touch. This gives them the +1 Enhancement "Strength of Faith," which may be used on all physical rolls conducted in the name of their faith.

Unity in Faith (2s): Take the +1 Enhancement "Unity in Faith." This Enhancement may only be used when your character helps the original target conduct any physical actions which are carried out in the name of their faith. This grants an automatic Enhancement in any roll for teamwork, which counts toward the maximum of 3 you can offer.

FERVOR (••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••

With enough devotion, a true follower of faith can help protect their allies against any terror of the wastes. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Composure against a difficulty of 2 to reach out and touch somebody, infusing them with the comforts of divinity. Upon success, they gain the +1 Enhancement "Undaunted," which may be used against all attempts to intimidate, scare, or terrorize them. This effect lasts for one hour.

Valiant (2s): Increase the "Undaunted" Enhancement to +2.

Intrepid (5s): Increase the "Undaunted" Enhancement to +3. You do not need to purchase the Valiant Stunt first.

FINAL WAKE (•••••)

Miracles

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••••

Sometimes, there is no greater privilege than to speak to a loved one that is gone from the world. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Presence against a difficulty of 4. If they succeed, they momentarily slump to their knees as the spirit of a deceased individual floods their being. While sudden actions such as fighting or running cannot be accomplished without disrupting the connection, any nearby individuals have the chance to speak to the deceased for up to five minutes. This doesn't change the user's appearance, but the deceased is entirely unaware of the body they occupy, even if they look in a mirror. After five minutes, the spirit departs from the body and cannot be summoned with this Edge ever again. This power may only be used once every three acts.

To make contact, the deceased must be related to a nearby survivor or possess a strong friendship or love with them. They can be portrayed by the player of the character who used this power, a player who previously played as the character, or the Storyguide, depending on previous depictions in the game. Regardless, such characters are and remain SGCs after death.

FIND TUNING (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Virtues of the King's and Queen's Court •

No matter where you may walk, the beats follow. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Cunning to seek out these hidden

songs and shunt them into nearby sound systems, speakers, radios, and even certain instruments. As long as they are within 30 feet, they can be broken or like new. Either way, music erupts from them, granting followers of the King's and Queen's Court the Enhancement "Rhapsody" at a rating of 1. This Enhancement can be used on all rolls relating to fighting and performance for as long as they can hear the music, which lasts for five minutes or until the conclusion of the fight or a single performance, whichever comes first. To stop this music prematurely and return the equipment to its original function, a character must make a successful Technology + Cunning roll, the difficulty of which is determined by the complexity of the device and how often it's used.

Discover Sabotage (2s): Any attempt to stop the equipment from playing music is automatically sabotaged. If a character trying to stop the music fails their Technology + Cunning roll, the equipment burns their fingers, and they take a Bruised Injury Condition of "Scorched Fingertips."

FUELED BY FAITH (•)

Divine Sacrifices

Some survivors hit their limit, while others let their pain and exhaustion fuel their faith in the cause. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Stamina against a difficulty of 3. If they succeed, they ignore any Complications, drawbacks, or other ill effects from any Bruised Conditions they previously took for up to three consecutive rounds.

Powered by Faith (1s): Ignore your Bruised Conditions for another round. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

Embodied by Faith (3s): Ignore both Bruised and Injured Conditions.

GUIDING LIGHT (••)

Word of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••

When doubt grows and hope seems lost, the divine grants guidance and shelter to those who believe. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Resolve against a difficulty of 2 to manifest a small dot of light in their hand, which acts as a compass that points to what they need (although not necessarily what they want or expect). This grants them the +1 Enhancement "Guiding Light" for one hour or until they find what they needed.

Persisting Light (1s): Increase the duration of "Guiding Light" by one hour. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

HALLOWED PROTECTION (•••)

Word of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

There are those who preach their words, and then there are those who defend them. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Stamina against a difficulty of 3 to imbue a piece of protection, such as armor, a shield, or cover, with a defensive ward. An individual who uses it gains the +1 Enhancement "Hallowed Protection" if this particular protection is part of their defense rolls. This effect lasts for one hour.

Everlasting Protection (1s): Increase the duration of "Hallowed Protection" by one hour. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

Consecrated Protection (2s): Increase the "Hallowed Protection" Enhancement to +2.

SOLEMN OATH

Your character is bound by more than flimsy honor, but by the Nuclear Family's power. Whatever agreement you came to with another participant, you chose to seal it as a solemn oath so that neither of you could walk away so easily.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you're inconvenienced by the agreement you made.

Resolution: The passage of one year and one day, or fulfilling the oath in its entirety, whichever comes first.

MAL DE OJO (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Final Knights •

There is darkness in the world, but there's always something darker willing to face it. Whenever an opponent attempts to scare, intimidate, or terrify your character, spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Resolve against difficulty 2 instead of rolling as opposition. If the user succeeds, the opponent must roll opposition against their original roll to withstand the terrible darkness that lives behind the eyes of the damned, reflecting their meager attempt to make your character cower. Failure results in the opponent taking a Stress Condition.

OATH BREAKER

To whomever dares to break an oath bound by the Nuclear Family, woe falls unto them. Through inexplicable happenstance, their appearance is blemished, their reputation ruined, and luck no longer favors them. On any roll that is a failure but not a botch, reroll one die — if the reroll comes up as a 1, the failure is now a botch.

Momentum Trigger: Every time your failure becomes a botch.

Resolution: Resolve Solemn Oath or seek out the character that mediated the original oath and beg for forgiveness.

Ojo de Terror (1s): Increase your opponent's original number of successes by 1, thus increasing the difficulty of their new roll. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

PARENTAL GUIDANCE (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: The Nuclear Family •

Even in these times of deception and false promises, there are some oaths you do not break. Whenever your character mediates an agreement between two willing participants, spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Manipulation to bind the final agreement as an oath, spiritually holding each party accountable to fulfill it and turning it into the Condition "Solemn Oath." Should either participant fail to uphold their part of the oath, they suffer from the Oath Breaker Condition, which damages their appearance, reputation, luck, and more.

PRAY FOR JUSTICE (•)

Wrath of the Almighty

Even the smallest of faithful servants can be mighty, and those who hone this divine fire are renowned and feared in the wasteland. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Might against a difficulty of 2 to release their anger and bestow a raging fire upon one of their weapons. With that weapon, they gain the Enhancement "Fire of Justice" rated at 1, which they may use on their next three rolls. If they do not choose to use it on a roll, or if a roll doesn't make use of the weapon, it still counts toward one of the three rolls, as it lasts a very short time. This Enhancement does not work on bare fists but can be assigned to a gauntlet or knuckle that would be used to attack someone in a fistfight.

Raging Fire (2s): You can use "Fire of Justice" on one extra roll when you initially roll for this Edge. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

PROOF OF FAITH (•)

Miracles

Even in this renaissance of faith, no survivor will follow you blindly without hard proof. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Cunning against a difficulty of 2 to invoke their devotion and appeal to their divine power. Upon succeeding, a nearby object manifests a miraculous event, such as a fire roaring to life on the surface of water or a sickly, radioactive glow emanating from a nearby tree. This effect does not last longer than a minute and grants no real benefit, but any who doubted your power or faith begins to believe in it anew.

Distracting Proof (1s): Gain the +1 Enhancement "Distraction" to take advantage of the distraction this provides.

PURIFYING LIGHT (••)

Miracles

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••

The greatest miracles are sometimes the simplest ones, especially when it comes to clean water. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Manipulation against a difficulty of 2 to purify a single ration of water or food, good for a single person to consume without skimping on their dietary needs. This removes all toxins, diseases, and otherwise-harmful effects. Tragically, this also renders any drink non-alcoholic.

Purifying Glow (1s): Purify an additional ration of either food or water. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

RETRIBUTION (•••••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••••

Survivors who walk the wastes know better than to cross any major figure of faith with such power. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Intellect as a ranged attack against an opponent within 20 feet. If you succeed, the target immediately suffers a Maimed Condition as a holy fire engulfs them for one minute. This effect cannot be quelled with water or dirt, and the target suffers the +3 Complication "On Fire" until the minute ends — if the Complication is not bought off, the target takes a Stress Condition. This Edge may only be used once per act.

RIGHTEOUS FURY (••••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••••

The truly divine and faithful know that retribution can strike zed down from the very sky. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Stamina against a difficulty of 4 to call down a lance of pure light and strike a visible, undead target within 100 feet. If successful, this attack automatically deals a Maimed Condition, or the target loses 3 Health.

Ferocious Wrath (3s): Deal an Injury Condition to any undead within 20 feet of the original target with a web of white lightning.

SANCTIFY RELIC (•••)

Word of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

Across the wastelands, there are relics of the various religions that can rally all who dare to come together in defense of hope. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Cunning against a difficulty of 3 to boost the divinity of a holy relic or a sacred area, which then confers the +1 Enhancement "Defender of Faith" to all true allies within 20 feet of it. This effect lasts for one hour.

Sanctuary Relic (1s): Increase the duration of this Edge by one hour. You may take this Stunt multiple times.

SANCTIFY WEAPONRY (•••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

In the wastelands, it isn't enough to survive, but rather to rise for the good fight. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Might

BRANDED BY FAITH

Your character's defense failed them at the worst possible moment, and a holy fighter has branded them with the power of their faith, forcing you to share their injuries and suffer their inner struggles. Any time the holy fighter takes an Injury or Stress Condition, your character also takes it.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you suffer a Condition through the brand.

Resolution: 10 rounds, or the end of the fight, whichever comes first.

against a difficulty of 3 to touch and bless a single melee weapon and bolster it with the force of your faith behind it. Upon success, any user of that blessed weapon gains the +1 Enhancement "Holy Weapon" while they wield it. This effect lasts 30 minutes.

Sacred Weapon (3s): Increase the "Holy Weapon" Enhancement to +2.

SEARING LIGHT (•••)

Wrath of the Almighty

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge •••

Those who hone their wrath can call upon the divine to touch and bless ranged weapons, ranging from bows and arrows to heavy artillery. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Dexterity against a difficulty of 4 to transfer your power into a ranged weapon, blessing it with a holy light that ignites upon firing. If you succeed, any user of that blessed weapon gains the +2 Enhancement "Consecrated Weapon" while they wield it. This effect lasts 30 minutes or until the quiver, magazine, or fuel tank is depleted, whichever comes first.

Sacrosanct Weapon (3s): Increase the "Consecrated Weapon" Enhancement to +3.

SERENITY OF THE MIND (••••)

Miracles

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••••

The guiding hand of faith can focus any soul and inspire the meekest survivors to do great things. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Composure against a difficulty of 4 to place your thumb against the forehead of a target and resolve all their stress Conditions. Furthermore, their persistent Conditions do not hinder or complicate their actions in any way for 30 minutes. In exchange, the user takes the +3 Complication "Migraine," which hinders all their actions for one hour (if Migraine isn't bought off, the character is nauseated and takes a Stress Condition after taking the action in question).

STIGMATIC MARK (••••)

Divine Sacrifices

Prerequisite: Faithful Edge ••••

The righteous understand their divine will and know the power of branding their foe with a single strike. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Dexterity against a target's defense to attack them in close combat and brand them in the spot you strike. Upon success, they take an Injury Condition, as well as the Condition "Branded by Faith."

THE SOLAR WHEEL (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: Tribes of the Seasons •

No matter the challenges of life, the seasons turn and offer aid. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Stamina against a difficulty of 2 to ground yourself with the Earth and call to the heavens, summoning blessings to aid or hinder your target. During the spring and summer, this power grants healing energies to the target, curing a single Bruised Condition. In autumn and winter, this power calls down a bolt of energy that deals the "Smitten" Condition.

Solar Warmth (2s): Cure an Injured Condition instead of a Bruised Condition, provided it is spring or summer.

Solar Wrath (2s): Deal the "Smitten" Condition to a second target, provided it is autumn or winter.

U.H.F. (•)

Blessings of the Faithful

Prerequisite: Creed Path: The Telling Visionaries •

No matter the question, the Signal seems to yield all the answers. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Intellect against a difficulty of 2 to meditate on the messages behind the mysterious Signal, sifting through its mysteries to determine something about the past or the present. Upon success, you may ask one "yes or no" question of the Storyguide, which might earn your character an Enhancement based on what is revealed. This Edge may only be used once per day.

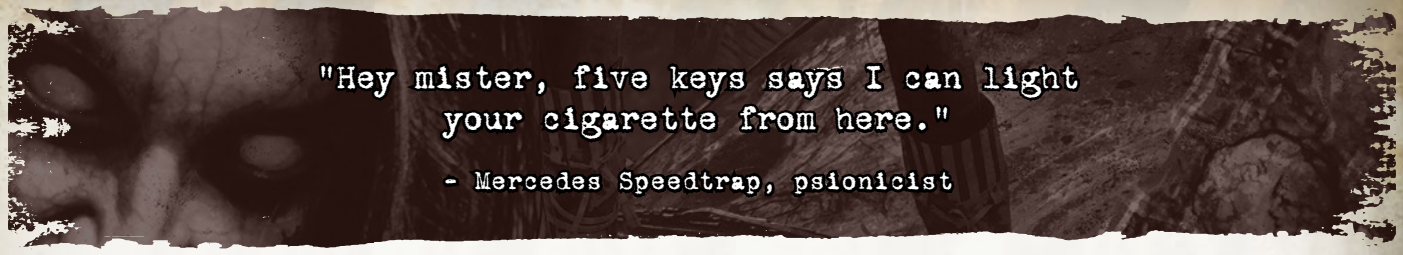
SMITTEN

A fiery burst of energy came down from the skies, called down by the will of a holy fighter, and struck your character down. Weakening you, it sapped your strength and left you singed, struggling to continue the fight. Your character is at +1 difficulty when using rolls involving Stamina.

Momentum Trigger: Every time this Condition affects Stamina rolls.

Resolution: Begin a new scene.


chapter nine
BRAIN BLEED



As generations of post-Fall survivors evolved into various Strains, a commonality appeared among all of them. In some twisted form of genetic lottery, some children began to exhibit strange mental abilities far beyond explanation. As these children grew and honed their abilities, communities started to question where their unique powers came from, and more than a few whispered about how these "psionicists" heard the soft choir of the Grave Mind.

The frightening control they could exert over machines, flames, minds, and even bodies made the psionicists useful, yet rarely trusted, allies in the wasteland. Over time, the abilities were grouped into different seven different influences, with each psionicist pursuing as many or as few psionic powers as they desire. These "influences" are nothing more than methods of focusing psionic power, not organizations that govern their use. Psionicists are not bound to any oath or code of honor; their practices are very different from the faithful of the wasteland, and part of the wariness toward them comes from their lack of a unifying code or obvious agenda.

Despite the claims of more fearful or single-minded survivors, psionicists are not usually seen as a threat to most communities. This is largely due to the majority of psionicists just wanting to live their lives in relative peace and cooperation with their fellow survivors. The ability to set things on fire won't help a man against raider attacks as much as a group having his back and lending their aid will. The ability to levitate objects won't help a woman meet the girl of her dreams and start a family. Most of these psionicists just want a normal life with the non-psionicists they are surrounded by.

That's not to say that every psionicist is just looking to eke out a living with their friends and family. Assholes come in every variety and unfortunately, the psionicist flavor can be especially hard to take. A Telepath Highwayman may tell himself that compelling victims to give over their cash is better than using a knife, but it doesn't change the violation, fear, and danger those he robbed felt. The tales of dangerous psionicists serve as a more gripping story, and therefore those are the ones that are retold and spread across the wastes.

Mind Bullets: Using Psi

Each ability in a psionic path has a rating of 1 to 5 dots. The limit in progression for each psionic influence is the character's dots in the Psionicist Edge. There is no limit on how many influences a player character may take.

PRIORITY TARGET

When a horde of zed are coming your way, sometimes you just pray that they will pick off stragglers while you make your escape. But if they are drawn to you through some terrifying magnetism, then it's either kill or be killed.

While under this Condition, the character becomes the first target a zombie within range will attack.

Momentum Trigger: A zed goes out of their way to attack the target.

Resolution: All zombies in the scene are destroyed or otherwise leave the scene.

Psionicists must focus their thoughts (represented through Momentum use) to use any of their psionic abilities. In addition, the process can be mentally taxing — failure on a roll for a Psi Edge can result in incurring Stress Conditions. Luckily, the more Resolve a psionicist has, the more mentally resilient they are. At Resolve 3, a psionicist character gains an additional *Distraught* slot, and at Resolve 5 they gain an additional *Troubled* slot, bringing the maximum number of Stress Condition slots before *Burned Out* to five.

Another cost of psionic power is more of a disturbing reminder of the Grave Mind's connection to every psionicist than anything else: Each use of any psionic ability, even minor ones, generates the 1 Complication *Attracts Undead*. The Complication must be bought off, unless the psionicist wants to chance drawing the undead to the scene or gaining the Condition *Priority Target* in a scene with zed already present.

Each Psi Edge has Stunts listed, along with each Stunt's cost. Some Stunts add an additional effect, while others allow for more targets, time intervals, or the ability to give another target the benefit of the power. Unless otherwise stated, Stunts that provide Enhancements or changes to time intervals may not be stacked for larger effect. After all, there is a limit to the amount of focus and power a psionicist can channel at one time.

Sometimes, you just need to get a power off, particularly if everything is going against you. If the Momentum pool is dry, or if the other players won't let a psionicist spend it, characters with Psi Edges can voluntarily incur a Stress Condition in lieu of spending Momentum to activate a power. Of course, they

might incur a second Stress Condition if they fail the roll, so this isn't an option to be considered lightly.

Unless otherwise stated, the range for psionic powers is short.

Paths to Power: Psi Influences

Each psionicist influence focuses on pushing the limitations of the mind's control over the body and the surrounding environment. There are minor psionicist powers that are not part of any influence; these are typically the first abilities that budding psionicists develop through accident or experimentation. Some with psionic talent never progress beyond these minor tricks of the mind, either from lack of support and training or through a conscious effort and desire to give up potential power for a life of fewer questions and less suspicion. The rest, upon understanding their psionic nature, begin to focus their powers into the narrow *influences*.

Below is a brief overview of the seven psionic influences available. The only requirement to learn a new influence is Storyguide approval, though Storyguides are encouraged to make use of procedural and intrigue elements, awarding Milestones to mark progression towards the desired new influence.

- **Biogenetics:** The manifestation of the mind's ability to enhance or hinder living bodies by manipulating their very structure.
- **Egokinetics:** The exploration and manipulation of the psionicist's own mind for their benefit, or the detriment of others.
- **Necrokinetics:** A branch of psionics that has developed recently, which centers around the psionicist's eerie connection with the dead.
- **Pyrokinetics:** Dangerous for the untrained, this influence manipulates flame with a frightening measure of control.
- **Technokinetics:** The ability to control and interfere with technology and machines.
- **Telekinetics:** This influence utilizes mastery over the movement of objects around them, both for offense and defense.
- **Telepathy:** Seen as a sister influence by egokinetics, practitioners of telepathy can enter and manipulate the minds of other living creatures.

Each of these influences are open to those with the ability to learn their secrets. Some teachers may require a prospective student to prove that they are "worthy," but there is no universal rule for this. Many psionicists are able to pick up on a new influence through watching others and liberal amounts of self-examination and experimentation. The process is taxing, but for some it's an attractive alternative to running errands for some would-be mentor.

Minor Psi Powers (Various Skills)

Minor Psi powers are an arsenal that everyone with psionic talent can access – unlike Psi Edges, you don't have to purchase them separately, and you can access these as long as you have at least one dot in the Psionicist Edge. They are more than just tricks and the basic expression of psionic power; these abilities are a loose collection that can be the ace up someone's sleeve in the unforgiving wastes. Minor Psi powers do not have Stunts.

GHOST SOUNDS

The psionicist can make phantom noises to distract those around him. Spend a Momentum and roll Subterfuge + Cunning vs. the target's Integrity + Resolve. Success gives the target the Distracted Condition for one round.

LUMINESCE

A soft glow is produced to provide a light in the darkest of times. Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Resolve against a difficulty of 2. Success allows the psionicist to negate one relevant Complication or Field Condition.

PRECOGNITIVE STRIKE

By focusing and receiving a glimpse of the future, the user can strike true with their next attack. Spend a Momentum and roll Integrity + Cunning vs. the target's Defense. Success allows for a 1 Enhancement on their next attack against that target.

DISTRACTED

Dabblers and other psionicists can produce false sounds that pull at the target's focus. This can make concentrating on any task difficult as someone suddenly hears his name called or the sounds of gunfire.

For the duration of Distracted, the target faces all difficulty for actions increased by 1.

Momentum Trigger: The character's situation becomes worse due to their inability to focus their thoughts.

Resolution: At the end of the character's round or scene, a Resolve + Composure roll against difficulty of 2 will resolve the condition.



SENSE PRESENCE

By projecting the edges of their consciousness out around them, the psionicist can sense the presence of others. Spend a Momentum and roll Survival + Cunning vs. a difficulty equal to the number of targets. Success prevents any Ambush or Surprise actions within that Field against the user.

TRANQUILITY

Through channeling her mental fortitude, the psionicist can ease some of her pain for a short time. Spend a Momentum and roll Survival + Resolve vs. the number of Injury Conditions. Success allows the user to reduce the difficulty increase by 1.

TRICK

A little psionic skill can add a lot to showmanship, as psionicists have learned for some time now. This ability allows the user to "augment" their already honed skills at sleight of hand. Spend a Momentum and roll Subterfuge + Cunning against a difficulty of 3. Success allows the psionicist to use any Subterfuge Skill Tricks during the scene without spending Momentum.

TOYS IN THE ATTIC

It doesn't take much for someone with psionic ability to affect the mind of another person. Even the smallest intrusion can have consequences and is felt, at least subconsciously. Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Cunning against the target's Subterfuge + Composure. Success grants the user a 2 Enhancement to the next Influence attempt against the target.

WHISPER WALK

This ability to muffle sound when traveling is one that has proved invaluable while wandering the wastes. The psionicists who make use of this often hire themselves out as travel accompaniment for a high price. Spend a Momentum and roll Stealth + Cunning vs. a difficulty of 2. On success, the user gains a 1 Enhancement on Stealth based rolls or may remove 1 level of Complication related to detection.

Biogenetics (Medicine)

Biogens focus on the control the mind has upon their body and the bodies of others. The ability to enhance themselves and remove control from their enemies makes the Biogen a terrifying psionicist to be on the wrong side of. Some specialize in healing and giving aid to those suffering in the wasteland, while

DIPLOPIA

Biogens can literally change how a person sees the world — and it's terrifying. Anyone who is under the effects of Diplopia faces difficulties with any action requiring visual coordination. Diplopia causes the eyes to uncouple slightly, which results in a fainter duplicate of whatever the person is viewing.

While under the effects of Diplopia, all attacks with weapons act as though they are being done at 1 range band higher than their maximum. Uses of the Pilot Skill impose a +2 difficulty.

Momentum Trigger: The character's situation becomes worse due to their inability to see clearly.

Resolution: Rest for a scene or more.

others take delight in toying with others as a puppeteer would a marionette.

AMPED UP (•)

By manipulating the blood flow, muscle movements, and breathing, a Biogen can increase their physical prowess for a short time, making their biological energy use more efficient. The Biogen spends a Momentum and rolls Medicine + Intellect, at difficulty 2. They gain the benefit of 9-again on any physical action for one round.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

Target other (2s): You can target another character.

SLOWED STEPS (••)

Speeding up neural fatigue can cause a living body to experience difficulty moving and can turn the fastest runner slow or the most graceful dancer into an uncoordinated mess. Spend a Momentum and roll Medicine + Intellect vs the target's Athletics + Stamina. On a success, the target treats the area as Difficult Terrain for one round.

Barrier (2s): Target also acts as if there's a barrier in their way.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

DOUBLE VISION (•••)

By targeting the extraocular muscles of another, the Biogen is able to make their victim unable to view their surroundings properly. Spend a Momentum and roll Medicine + Intellect vs the target's Cunning + Resolve. Success imposes a +1 difficulty on rolls that require vision.

Lasting effect (4s): Target incurs the Diplopia Condition (p. XX.)

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

JOLT (••••)

Biogens can heal by increasing the metabolic process involved in repairing damaged tissue. Spend a Momentum and roll Medicine + Intellect; the difficulty is the number of current Injury Conditions. The Biogen heals themselves as though they were performing first aid. This may be done once, in addition to first aid.

Healer's insight (2s): Treat an Injury Condition as though it's one severity less.

Target other (2s): You can target another character.

BODY LOCK (•••••)

Making a prison of their target's body, the Biogen causes every muscle to seize up painfully. Spend a Momentum and roll Medicine + Intellect vs the target's Athletics + Might. On success the target is considered Grappled (p. XX) for the next two rounds. The *Inflict Injury* and *Pin* Stunts may be purchased as allowed by Grappled. The target's difficulty for the Break Free Stunt (p. XX) is the number of successes gained in the Body Lock roll.

Increased range (1s): Increased the Range from Short to Medium.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

Egokinetics (Empathy)

The ability to focus on the mind's relationship with itself and perception is an enigma that Hypers, those who focus on Egokinetics, pursue with a startling intensity. These psionicists can take the phrase "mind over matter" to new heights with feats such as treating the most devastating wounds as they would a minor scratch, forgoing sleep for days at a time, and even using their force of will to drain another of their mental fortitude. Hypers can also offer valuable aid as frontline defenders, or trainers for those preparing to face the harshness of the wasteland.

TRICKSTER'S MIND (•)

One of the first things a Hyper masters is the ability to fracture their mind to isolate those aspects that complicate their goals like the truth, motivations, or even conscience.

Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Cunning, difficulty 2. Upon success, gain a 1 Enhancement to all Subterfuge and Persuasion rolls for next three rounds.

Increased duration (2s): The Enhancement lasts a scene.

Stronger (2s): Upgrade the Enhancement to 2.

BERSERKER'S FOCUS (••)

There are reports of Hypers continuing to fight long after receiving the most punishing of wounds, or for hours at a time without rest. This is because of the Egokineticist's unique talent to shove aside the pain and fatigue until a later time.

Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Cunning, difficulty is the number of Conditions the character wishes to ignore. Upon success, the player character ignores their Injury Conditions for the next round.

Boost of energy (2s): Ignore the Fatigued Condition and all Stress Conditions as well.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

DREAM WALKING (•••)

Time is often a valuable commodity out in the wastes. This ability allows the user to go into a meditative trance lasting several hours while doing some rote action, such as walking, chopping wood, or recitation, which revitalizes and can even heal some wounds.

Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Cunning. The difficulty is Stamina + the number of Conditions on the character. On success, the user can do one of three things:

- Remove all Stress Conditions
- Remove one non-Persistent physical Condition such as *Fatigued* or *Radiation Poisoning*
- Heal a *Bruised* or *Maimed* Condition if that is the most severe Injury Condition on the character

The user must engage in a repetitive activity for at least a scene and cannot do other activities or engage in anything that requires concentration.

Efficient (2s): Reduce the time to one hour.

Effective (2s): Remove two Conditions.

MIND OF A KILLER (••••)

Hypers are terrifying when they join fight, and are said to know where exactly to strike for maximum impact. The ability to block out the distractions of the battlefield and home in on the optimal spots to strike is what fuels this reputation.

Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Cunning vs target's Survival + Stamina. Success grants allows the user to pick one benefit for one round:

- Negate all Soft Armor on the target
- Gain a 2 Enhancement to all combat rolls

Double up (3s): Gain both available benefits.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

SUNDERED MIND (•••••)

The ultimate expression of an Egokineticist's power is her ability to use her will as a weapon, pulling the strength of another's mind to weaken him and strengthen her.

Spend a Momentum and roll Empathy + Resolve vs the target's Resolve + Integrity. On success, the target gains the Condition *Stolen Potential* (p. XX) and the user picks one:

- Heal a Stress Condition
- Gain a 2 Enhancement to all Mental Arena rolls for the next two rounds

Double up (2s): Gain both available benefits.

Vicious (4s): Target takes one Stress Condition and upgrades *Stolen Potential* to a Persistent Condition.

Necrokinetics (Lore)

Every psionicist hears it — the call of the dead. There's no denying a connection exists between each psionicist and the Grave Mind. Necrokinetics is the exploration of that connection, pioneered by Gemma Gold in recent years. As the influence spreads and gains more practitioners, communities begin to wonder: How strong of a hold does the Grave Mind have on these psionicists? The Mori, as practitioners have started calling themselves, have learned to walk among the zed and can exploit their connection to the Grave Mind for their benefit. As disturbing as these abilities are, the uncovered knowledge of how to create Morgues make the Mori the only ones who may have answers about the Grave Mind.

DEATH SHROUD (•)

The first Mori, Gemma Gold, revealed her unique abilities by wading through a horde of frenzied undead without fear or detection to retrieve a child stranded across the sea of rot and hunger. This began the start of the Influence of Death.

Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Cunning, against a difficulty equal to the number of zombies, to a maximum of 5. The number of threshold successes is added to the difficulty to detect the user for the scene or until notice is gained through sound or an attack.

Shared (1s per Target): The effect covers on other target in close range.

Silent (2s): Gain the Surprise effect (p. XX).

WHISPERED INSIGHT (••)

Psionicists are said to hear the Grave Mind in their empowered minds, and one day Gemma decided to ask it some questions. The result gave her an eerie insight.

Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Intellect against a difficulty of 2. Success gives a 1 Enhancement on a (specific) future Mental Arena roll. Threshold successes can increase this Enhancement on a one-for-one basis, to a maximum of 3.

STOLEN POTENTIAL

An Egokineticist who turns their will upon another not only drains them of their Resolve, but also leaves their targets feeling mentally fragile. One survivor, Rusty Sabri, described it as "realizing all of your small failures in life are the result of your own inability to comprehend how insignificant you are in the world. You just want to lie down and not exist for a while as you think of how small you are." This is not a mindset conducive to survival in the wastes, and if it weren't for his friends, he surely would have died.

For the duration of the Condition, Skill Tricks require an additional Momentum to spend.

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to use a Skill Trick in a situation.

Resolution: The target clears all her Stress Conditions (p. XX).

Alternatively, this power may be used to acquire clues during a procedural roll, at Storyguide discretion.

Target other (2s): 1 Enhancement may be granted to another target.

BORROWED MEMORIES (●●●)

When someone returns from death, they are reborn in some ways. Their former connections to others must be reformed. Some Mori speculate that the Grave Mind takes those Bonds as part of the price to come back. Enterprising psionicists have learned to tap into these connections and use them for personal benefit for a short time.

Spend a Momentum and roll Lore + Intellect, against a difficulty of 3. On success, the user may select a Bond they do not have and treat it as theirs for a scene. The target of the Bond, if a player character, receives one Momentum as though it were a consolation.

Stronger Bond (2s): Increase the difficulty to influence the stolen Bond by 1.

CRYSTALLIZED MIND (●●●●)

Necrokineticists have learned that psionic power is measurable in a more tangible form than the effects their abilities have on the world around them.

By sacrificing part of their mental fortitude, they can form a psionic crystal, which focuses their abilities and can be used to create Morgues (see p. XX). There is no roll for this ability. The psionicist merely needs to spend a Momentum and spend a number of hours equal to 9 − their dots in the Psionicist Edge to form a psionic crystal. The process is painful, as their power crystallizes and pushes its way out through the psionicist's neck at the base of their skull. Forming the crystal causes the psionicist to gain the Condition *Split Minded* (p. XX).

Possession of a psionic crystal gives 2 enhancement on all Psi Edges.

MYCOLOGICAL REBELLION (●●●●●)

The apex of the Mori's skillset is terrifying to witness and has led to more than one Mori being exiled from an enclave. The permeation of fungal infection is at the Necrokineticist's power to coax into action. Reports of raiders writhing in pain as their body is wracked with necrosis, or groups of undead turning in unison to attack the Mori's enemy, only enhance worry about this new influence. The frightening implications of one who can influence the Infection have brought on a worrying question: are the psionicists working for humanity or the Infection?

Spend a Momentum, and roll Lore + Cunning, difficulty equal to the target's Resolve. Success means the target is in immense pain, gains the *Distraught* Stress Condition, and takes an Injury Condition every round for three rounds as the fungus in their cells reject the tissue around it.

Horde Control (2s): Up to five zed may be controlled for three rounds. They must act in unison, and have the same initiative.

SPLIT-MINDED

When a psionicist uses Necrokinetics to form a psionic crystal through the ability Crystallized Mind, they are literally removing part of their psionic potential and creating a tangible manifestation of it. The result is a highly useful focus, but comes at a lasting cost, as the psionicist is more susceptible to the ravages psionic abilities have on the mind. A Split Minded psionicist is functionally the same as any other, but their innate tolerance for the weight of psionic manifestations is lessened. Such is the price of power.

During the duration of Split Minded, the psionicist loses one Troubled Injury Condition slot.

Momentum Trigger: The character falls to Burned Out.

Resolution: Split Minded lasts until a psionic crystal is reabsorbed, the psionicist's crystal is destroyed or is used to Awaken Morgue.

PSIONIC INVESTMENT: AWAKEN MORGUE

The ultimate expression of a Mori's power is her ability to form a Morgue with others of her influence. Together, the Necrokineticists sacrifice psionic crystals and consecrate an area as a Morgue (p. XX). This process is long and exhausting, but the benefit it provides a community has become a means for Moris to gain tacit acceptance in the insular and untrusting wasteland societies.

This investment of psionic power requires at least one master Necrokineticist, two or more psionicists with Necrokinetics, and a psionic crystal must work together to create a Morgue. The psionicists undergo a long communion with the Grave Mind, letting its power seep into the area around them. Each participant spends a Momentum to start the process.

The process requires a number of Milestones equal to 10 minus the Resolve of the Mori leading the process. Each Milestone, the leader rolls Lore + Intellect, which represents a day's work. The base difficulty is 5, and each other participant adds an Enhancement through teamwork (p. XX). If successful, this process consumes all psionic crystals in the area.

They share a health track, which represents the psionicist's control over the group.

Early Grave (3s): The Mori can immediately and completely heal all damage on them and remove all biological Conditions. In exchange, they increase the number of times they have "died" by one, for determining loss to the Grave Mind (see p. XX).

Pyrokinetics (Survival)

Pyrokineticists, called "Firebugs" by many, exhibit an unparalleled control of flame. They can strengthen a smoldering ember into a roaring fire, snuff out an inferno with little concern, and even sear their targets with blazing wrath. Firebugs are feared and seen as volatile, a reputation that is little more than assumptions and conjecture. This doesn't mean a Firebug's anger won't result in more than tempers flaring. However, for every temperamental Pyrokinetic, there is another who offers warmth and respite during long, cold nights.

Each ability within Pyrokinetics after *Douse Flames* adds the 1 Complication *Fiery Temperament*. Failure to overcome the Complication results in the fire spreading beyond the psionicist's control.

DOUSE FLAMES (•)

The basic ability of the Firebug is not creating flame, but snuffing it out. The Pyrokineticist learns to starve fire before they can learn to feed and nurture it. This ability requires a source of fire.

Spend a Momentum and roll Survival + Cunning vs. a difficulty of 2, adjusted for Scale if needed. The fire is reduced in Scale (size or force) one step per round.

Quenching (1s): The Scale is reduced two steps in the first round.

Quick (2s): Time interval lowers to a turn.

SPARK FLAME (••)

With the heat and wildness of fire sufficiently tamed, Firebugs next learn how to encourage its growth, eventually becoming able to produce a flame with a snap of their fingers. They feed and grow it to fuel their later abilities.

Spend a Momentum and roll Survival + Intellect. The difficulty is 3, with Scale modifiers considered for environment. On a success the fire is increased in Scale (size or force) one step per round. The power lasts for three rounds and requires a source of fire.

Kindled (2s): A source of fire is not required.

Quick (2s): Time interval lowers to turn.

BURNING FOCUS (•••)

A Pyrokineticist can develop a relationship with flame that allows him to coax it to coat a weapon or even his hands, adding a new level of danger to any attack dealt.

A Momentum is spent and Survival + Cunning is rolled against a difficulty of 2. Any attack for the next round that hits will give the target the *On Fire* Condition. This ability requires a source of fire.

Longer time (2 successes/round): Adds one round to the duration.

ON FIRE

The imagery of a psionicist setting someone ablaze with only a look is unsettling to many. The reality is that it's less common than assumed, but it can still happen.

Characters inflicted with this condition will take an Injury Condition each round until resolved.

Momentum Trigger: The character takes damage from fire.

Resolution: Someone, either the character or another in close range, spends a standard action to extinguish the flames.

PYROBLAST (••••)

This ability gives a Firebug precise control over the fire they lob at their targets. The degree of precision allows for the psionicist to avoid allies, but at the cost of raw power. Spend Momentum and roll Survival + Cunning vs the target's Athletics + Dexterity. Success hits the target for one Injury Condition. This ability requires a source of fire.

Ignite (3s): Add the *On Fire* Condition.

Raging (2s): Increased Scale (force).

MAELSTROM (•••••)

It is a terrifying sight to see a wave of cinder and flame rushing toward you, and for some raiders and a lot of zombies, it's the last thing they'll ever see. The inverse of Pyroblast, Maelstrom sacrifices finesse for raw strength, and more than one Firebug's teammate has gotten burned in the chaos of a fight.

Spend a Momentum and roll Survival + Intellect vs. the highest Athletics + Dexterity plus 1 for every other character in the Field. Success means that everyone in the Field is hit with a Shockwave attack that inflicts the On Fire Condition.

Forceful (1s): Add the Pushing Tag.

Technokinetics (Technology)

Technokineticists, or Tinkers as they are sometimes called, find their ability to interface with machine and technology unrivaled. With a bit of concentration, a Tinker can turn a Diesel Jock's ride against them, nullify the security measures of a community, or jam a gun at that critical moment. This makes any who depend on technology and machines especially nervous when reports of an incoming Tinker begin. Tinkers who devote their lives to diagnosing and repairing overworked machines find there are plenty of folks who'll pay UPPs for a Technokinetic's unique insight.

Technology Modifiers

Technology in the wastes is a crapshoot of what any scavenger will find. The following table should be used by Storyguides to determine the difficulty for Scan, Glitch, Knock, and Willed Power. The difficulty starts at 1.

AGE	MODIFIER
Ancient	+3
Antique	+2
New	+1

CONDITION	MODIFIER
Heap of Rust	+3
Seen better days	+2
Well-loved	−1

COMPLEXITY	MODIFIER
Excessively Elaborate	+3
Specialized	+2
Child's Play	−1

AFTERMARKET	MODIFIER
All the bells and whistles	+3
Light Customization	+1
Basic	−1

SIZE SCALE	MODIFIER
Scale 4	+3
Scale 3	+2
Scale 1	−1

TECHNOLOGY SKILL	MODIFIER
Possess 0 dots	+3
Possess • - • •	0
Possess • • • +	−1

For *Willed Power*, the base difficulty is the item's Scale, and the Scale modifiers of this table are ignored.

SCAN (•)

Every Tinker begins with the basic knowledge of how to suss out the intricacies of a machine. From the ride that needs to downshift before hitting third gear, to the record player that really works best if you put a 1/16th-inch lift on the right side, the Technokineticist is able to coax the secrets from any piece of technology just by fiddling with it for a moment.

By spending a Momentum, rolling Technology + Intellect and touching the target object for at least one round, the Technokineticist may act as though they have the specialty in an appropriate Skill, and further uses of Technokinetics become easier for the Tinker.

Example: *Bethany, a Pure Blood Tinker, comes across an abandoned motorcycle on the road while running to get help for her kidnapped friends. Bethany's player spends the Momentum, and rolls 3 successes. Bethany is considered to have the Pilot Specialty "Motorcycle," and after a few minutes, she's able to hotwire it and ride off.*

Insight (1s/question): Each success allows a question to Storyguide about the item

Intuitive (2s): Gain a 1 Enhancement to the first use of *Glitch*, *Knock*, or *Willed Power* on item

GLITCH (••)

Once a Tinker has learned to read a machine, they can then subtly sabotage it. Vehicles may spring a fuel leak, a rifle's safety gets stuck, or a homemade flamethrower's ignitor refuses to spark. It isn't obvious the piece was sabotaged, but if there is a known Tinker around, blame will surely fall on him.

Spend a Momentum and roll Technology + Cunning. The device is rendered hard to use and has the Flaw *On The Blink* (p. XX) for the next three rounds.

Broken (3s): The item instead gains the Flaw *Broken* (p. XX) for the next three rounds.

Increased duration (2s): The effect of the Flaw lasts for a scene.

KNOCK (•••)

Any tinkerer, psionic or otherwise, can tell you breaking shit is much easier than fixing it. This ability allows for the Tinker to intuitively know the best approach to repair and restore a machine back to functioning, and even make improvements. The Tinker must spend time repairing the item, but their alacrity and expertise in the repair is unparalleled.

Spend a Momentum and roll Technology + Intellect. On a success, repair rolls for the next scene receive a 2 Enhancement.

Improved (2s): Repaired item gains a 1 Enhancement for use for the rest of this act.

Quick (1s): Half the time required for repair.

WHITE NOISE (••••)

At this level of intuitive understanding, the Tinker can cut off surveillance technology in an area around them, just by sending feedback through the devices. For less ethical people, this makes having a Tinker around for clandestine meetings something worth paying for.

Spend a Momentum and roll Technology + Cunning against a difficulty of 3. Success makes the Field secure for a scene; any attempts by technology to record, listen, or view into the Field have their difficulty to gain information increased by 2.

Increased duration (2s): Increase time interval to an act.

WILLED POWER (•••••)

Mastery of Technokinetics brings the ability to breathe life into a no-longer-functioning machine. Vehicles spring to life long after their fuel tanks are empty; dried-out generators spring into action once more, and record players can run with no power. A Tinker with this level of understanding rarely has to worry about being stranded in the wastes.



Spend a Momentum and roll Technology + Cunning. As long as the psionicist is touching the machine, they are able to operate the machine without a source of power for the next day or until they lose contact. Vehicles still require Pilot rolls, and other technology may require rolls to successfully operate.

Hands free (1s/hour): Does not need to be in constant contact for a period of time.

Savant (3s): Gain the effects of Scan.

Telekinetics (Science)

The psionicists who focus on the influence of Telekinetics have been dubbed "Peekays," for reasons that history has lost. Most Peekays show an alarming awareness of their surroundings and the objects nearby, leading some to wonder exactly what they could do with everyday items that litter a community at any given time. The stories of lifting large rocks and attacks ricocheting off of an unarmed Peekay lead those who encounter a Telekinetic to not judge by appearance alone. Peekays who find acceptance and refuge in a community can be certain to use their talents in the construction and security of their new home.

PANOPTICON (•)

By rooting themselves in place and going into a meditative state, a Peekay can intimately know where every object is in a given area. This attunement gives the Telekinetic a definite advantage over even the most confident of opponents. Spend a Momentum and roll Science + Intellect against difficulty 2. Success prevents Ambushes and negates any terrain penalties for three rounds. The effect can be ended at will.

Increased Duration (3s): Extend duration to 1 scene.

Target other (2s): You can target another character.

PRECISION (••)

Every Peekay has to start small, with pebbles before rocks, rocks before boulders and so on. As a result, one of the first things a budding Telekinetic learns is how to subtly apply their power to everyday tasks.

Spend a Momentum. No roll is required. A piece of 1 Enhancement gear is increased to 2 Enhancement during a procedural or intrigue Scene.

TELEKINESIS (•••)

The ability to move almost any object at will is something that makes most people afraid, and rightly so. Telekinetics find the most creative uses for this ability, and are capable of causing mayhem and great damage at their leisure.

Spend a Momentum and roll Science + Cunning, with the difficulty being the Size Scale of the item plus 1. Upon success, the Peekay is able to apply the Thrown Weapon tag along with two total points of tags from the following: Returning (1), Bashing (0), Lethal (0), Long Ranged (1), Piercing (2), Pushing (1), Stun (1), or Versatile (2).

Enhanced (1s): Tag point limit is raised to three.

Strength (2s): Affect one Size Scale larger.

PUSH (••••)

Often used to deter raiders or thieves, this ability allows a Peekay to force an attacker or object away through manipulation of the air around him. The effect is startling to see, but nonetheless a highly effective deterrent. Once someone is flung backwards by seemingly nothing, they're rarely aching for a repeat of the experience.

Spend a Momentum and roll Science + Cunning vs Athletics + Stamina. On a success, the Telekinetic can make a Shockwave attack that is either Pushing or Stun. For an object, the difficulty is the scale, and the effect is to move it to the other side of the Field by one range band per round.

Double up (2s): Add both tags to the target.

DEFLECTION (•••••)

At this level of Telekinetic ability, the Peekay is able to repel even bullets and blows as they form a deflective field around them. Melee Weapons will miss or bend, and bullets seem to ricochet off, much to the confusion of attackers.

Spend a Momentum and roll Science + Intellect. The user gains 1 Hard Armor for one round. Additionally, they may gain a 1 Enhancement on all Disengage attempts for the round.

Forceful (2s): The Enhancement is upgraded to 2.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

Telepathy (Leadership)

Telepaths are able to exert their will to compel animals and people to follow their commands. There is hardly any secret that a Telepath can't ferret out with enough time and focus; their ability to communicate directly into the thoughts of others has earned these psionicists their reputation as spies and manipulators to be feared. The knowledge and control gained by Telepaths may be exploited by the greedy, but some Telepaths strive to prove themselves as adept at helping those who are haunted by nightmares or trauma to find some measure of peace.

BEAST MASTER (•)

The simpler, primal mind of an animal is the first a Telepath learns to influence. Telepathics are able to implant basic instructions in the mind of a living animal and it will follow the order to the best of its ability. This power is highly useful when facing the various wild creatures of the wastes.

Spend a Momentum and roll Leadership + Cunning against a difficulty of 2. On a success, the target animal is compelled to follow your mental commands for two rounds. The user cannot override the creature's self-preservation instincts, such as telling

a wild dog to run off a cliff, but it will attack to defend. The creature is considered to have 5 Health, representing the user's control over it. When they are depleted, the animal stops obeying and cannot be targeted again.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

Solid connection (2s): Increased Scale (size).

INSPIRE (••)

Telepaths often have a higher understanding of what will motivate and empower a person, thanks to the telepathic hints they can pick up. By utilizing these hunches, a Telepath is able to bolster the morale and encourage her allies to push toward success and can even help shift how people they encounter feel about the Telepath.

Spend a Momentum and roll Leadership + Cunning. There is a difficulty of 1 for willing targets, and an opposed roll vs. the target's Integrity + Resolve if unwilling. Success allows for the following options, based on the area of action:

- Action-adventure: Target gains 9-again on rolls for one round.
- Procedural: Teamwork confers an additional level of Enhancement
- Intrigue: User gains a 1 Enhancement on rolls to Exert Influence.

Longer time (1s/round): Each success adds one round to the duration.

Widespread (1s/target): Each success adds another target

TELEPATHIC LINK (•••)

Communicating with someone directly into their thoughts is an ability that requires trust and closeness between the participants. This highly intimate form of communication has obvious benefits, but each person in the link is allowing herself to be mentally vulnerable. As such, it can take a lot of work for a Telepath to gain this level of trust. In order for Telepathic Link to function, the psionicist must have an Attitude and Bond rating of at least 2 with the target.

By spending a Momentum and Rolling Leadership + Intellect against a difficulty of 3, the Telepath may communicate mentally with the target for a scene. Once the link is established, it makes it easier for others to join in or "hear" the conversation. Attempts for another Telepath to "eavesdrop" results in an opposed roll, each rolling Leadership + Cunning, with ties going to the defender.

Webbed (1s/target): Each success adds another target.

Increased duration (2s): Increase the duration to an act.

BRAIN SCOUR (••••)

Telepaths at this level of skill find that no secret is out of their reach. They can turn the mind over, exposing the writhing insecurities, lies, and shame hiding underneath. This is the reason that communities will sometimes shut out a known Telepath. Each member of the settlement realizes that if one person's secrets are exposed, then none of them are safe. The process is highly invasive, and Telepaths are divided on when and how such an ability should be used.

Spend a Momentum and roll Leadership + Intellect against the target's Subterfuge + Resolve. A willing target, rare as that is, has a difficulty of 1. Success means that the user may gain the answer to one question. Examples include: "*Did you steal the missing cattle?*", "*Did you lie when you said you had never seen her before?*", or "*What were you doing on the morning in question?*" The target must answer truthfully, and is aware of exactly who is in their head.

Dig (1s/question): Each success allows an additional question.

Wiped (2s): May remove the gained information from the target's mind.

COMPEL (•••••)

A master of Telepathy has gained the knowledge of how to apply mental pressure to a person until the Telepath's desires become that individual's goals. This display of power is frightening to witness, and the idea of becoming a mental puppet for another is one that very few find enticing.

Spend 1 Momentum and roll Leadership + Intellect against the target's Leadership + Resolve. Success allows the user to dictate the next action of the character. If the player of the target feels uncomfortable with the action or it would harm the story being collectively told, the action automatically fails. If the player does choose to accept an action that would harm their character, they receive 1 Momentum as a Consolation.

Delayed trigger (3s): The implanted order happens later in the act.

Lasting (2s): Target is controlled for an additional action.

BOOK THREE

BONE

THE MOTHER OF EXILES

The tugboat growls as the captain kills the engine.

For a moment, Kai thinks they're busted, and she nocks her loose arrow. But nothing stirs this far out on the river. Exhaling, she relaxes her arm and glances towards the stern.

In their wake is the Plunge, skeletal buildings glimmering with a thousand small fires, burning at every level that hasn't collapsed into the swampy streets below. It's beautiful, the way the orange dots meets the starry sky above. But it's also a testament to hubris, and the Natural One knows it better than any of the Yorkers aboard the boat.

Once, even taller buildings stood in Old York, stretching from the tip of the Plunge all the way to the Heights and Iron Gardens. "Sky scrapers," as the stories go, because they clawed holes in the sky. But they're long gone, to nuclear fire and the waters below.

"We gotta paddle from here. Any of their riders hear us, whole thing's toast before we start," the captain whispers, stepping away from the wheel. "Everybody grab an oar. Not you, you keep watch at the bow."

She nods, walking without a sound as she approaches her assigned spot. Propping a foot up, Kai stares as the scrap heap begins to push past the remnants of a sunken barge, its hull carving a new channel toward the Broke Lands shore.

In the echoes, she begins to hear it: bloodcurdling screams and wailing that carries from Hell's Gate all the way over the water.

"What's that noise?" one Yorker, young and inexperienced, whispers across the tug boat.

"Prisoners," answers Kai. "Word of advice, take a trip down before you let them take you alive."

She can hear him gulp and shut his trap. A sense of dread hits everyone on the boat, even Kai. It's been a week since their friend went missing, and five days since this gang paid her to track the man down. A shame she didn't return with better news.

Now it's bank or bust. They're paying triple to stage an impossible heist. Either they'll rescue him, or they'll all be tortured by the 33rd Street Boys for... well, probably for the rest of their damn lives. But the boy's worth money to someone, and she's done it once.

As they grow closer and closer to the jagged shore, Kai spots an Iron Horse on patrol, headlight coasting along the outer perimeter of their territory.

"Oars up," she murmurs. Two-by-fours slide against the railings. Underneath her, the tug boat drifts on the water, softly bouncing between the hulls, sticking out a foot above the surface. Last time she snuck into this territory, she didn't spot a patrol this far out.

"Security's tighter. Might be a ceremony tonight."

"A Final Knight ceremony? Shit."

The patrol rumbles out of sight, and then silence. No snipers watching, no souls save for them.

Kneeling down, she pulls a special arrow from her quiver. Thicker, and instead of an arrowhead, it's a grappling claw. She also retrieves a special coil of rope from her pack. It's thin, but strong enough to hold her. Both cost a fortune, but they've been worth it ever since.

She ties one end of the rope to her arrow, making sure it won't come loose. Then, in one fluid movement, Kai lines up her sight with the nearest building, aiming for a small fortification of sandbags on the roof, and pulls. She inhales, her fingers snap open, and the arrow arcs over the building. Once the rope behind it sags, Kai pulls on it until the claws catch on something and she can't move it any more.

"Tie this end to the barge," she orders, tossing the captain the rest of the rope. "All right, folks, here's the plan. This rope won't hold you and your armor, but if I travel light, I can climb up to that roof with a stronger line. I tie that, you climb up, and we move deeper into their territory from there."



"This is such a stupid idea."

Kai glares at the Yorker lady, an older woman with green veins crawling up her neck, but years of fighting left in her bones. "You didn't pay me for smart ideas. You paid me to get it done, and if you want my honest advice? This is a suicide mission. I didn't see you here two nights ago though, pulling this shit. But I know what I'm doing and where I'm going, so you're getting your money's worth."

Everybody pauses, and the Yorker raises hands in defeat, backing off. "All right. Five-story fall is better than these assholes."

"Hooray," Kai's voice growls with sarcasm as the captain returns. As she looks, the line is taut, so she removes her armor. Metal clatters on the floor of the boat, and her cotton layers breathe again. She didn't realize that the muggy summer night was coating her with sweat, but she feels it caking under her arms and across her chest.

She's been through worse, though. After wrapping a thick rope around her torso and clasping its rusty carabiners together, Kai pulls her bow and quiver on and clambers onto the line. Hanging upside down, she begins to shuffle up, bit by bit with her arms and knees.

It takes ten minutes to cross the distance over the water below, the howling of the Damned at the edge of her ear, before she reaches the sandbags and crawls up and over them. Catching her breath, she checks the hook.

Bloody thing caught on the rustiest grate in the city. It's a miracle she didn't fall.

In two minutes, she finds a better place to hook it and uncoils the stronger rope. One clips onto the rope and slides back down to the tug boat. The other joins the claw.

As she waits, a trembling breeze ruffles her hair. The waves batter the husks of tankers down below, and across the bay she spots the dark silhouette of half a giant woman, the Mother of Exiles, torn apart by the Fall.

It's go time.



chapter ten

CAMPFIRE STORIES

"That's the thing about stories, friend.
Don't matter if they happened, so long as they're true."

- Jimmy Three Ex, Yorker priest

Telling stories is a collaborative experience, and as the Storyguide it is both your privilege and your responsibility to facilitate that collaboration with your players and keep it running as smoothly as possible. This chapter is all about how to make that work and tell the best stories possible with your players while avoiding problem areas and common difficulties.

As a Storyguide, you have a great amount of authority at the table, but as a wise man once said, with that power comes certain responsibilities. You're in charge of creating the setting and other characters for the players to interact with, arbitrating rules disputes and creating house rules, and safeguarding the enjoyment of everyone at the table as you follow the story. This section discusses how to get started doing exactly these things.

Before Game

Don't overlook the importance of everything that happens before play begins and the dice start rolling. Setting up a game properly ensures that everyone is on the same page and ready to tell stories together, which in turns heightens enjoyment and avoids problems down the line.

Make Everyone Welcome

Roleplaying is a social activity. Whether you're playing with a group of strangers at a convention or old friends in the comfort of your home, it's important to make sure everyone is comfortable and having a good time. Before play starts, go around and do some introductions (if needed), let friends catch up or strangers say a little about themselves, ask if there are any topics people want to see, and perhaps more importantly if there are any subjects that players want to avoid. Nobody wants a *player* to pass out during a torture scene because he was shy about mentioning he can't handle gory descriptions!

One great tool to ensure that people can lean in and play hard while still having an out if things become uncomfortable is the X-card. Created by game designer John Stavropoulos, the card is simply an index card or piece of paper with an X drawn on it, which is placed in the center of the table. If anyone feels uncomfortable with a topic being touched on during play, they can simply tap the X-card; this lets everyone know that it's time to change topics. No explanation is necessary; just drop the current subject and move on. This lets everyone get as into a scene as they want, while making sure there's an escape hatch if it starts to go too far.

Another good strategy is to manage expectations at the outset. If a Storyguide has a rule that sexual violence will not be depicted at the table, let players know that their stories may reference it, but it will not be "on-screen." The group may decide to use "fade-to-black": The Storyguide can simply describe the effects the situation currently has on a character instead of going into detail about past abuses that character has suffered. Particularly sensitive scenes can be negotiated between players or the affected player and the Storyguide and referenced as necessary.

Related, if a player is playing a character with Trauma Conditions, it is wise to talk this over if possible with other players and the Storyguide. As much as we love playing games, sometimes real life intrudes on it whether we want it to or not. Players can be dealing with their own traumas, from sexual abuse to assault, to home invasions, to being in conflict zones, to being mugged. While **Dystopia Rising** is a hard-hitting game of survival and brutality in a wasteland dealing with post-apocalyptic fallout and cargo cults, safety and enjoyment of players come first. In the end, this game is a collaborative story, which means interaction with other players. Clarifying up front what your game will include and describe is important to provide an enjoyable experience for all players, and players will be more invested in participating in the story.

It is also important to recognize that **Dystopia Rising** is a world where nobody gives a tiny tin-plated fuck about the prejudices of the modern world. Things like skin color, sexuality, and gender identity aren't issues anymore; the Strains changed a lot, for one, and for another there just aren't enough people left for folks to be too picky about neighbors and allies. Sure, there are still bigots — nice to see that even the end of the world can't cure the need to be a useless asshole — but these days they're bigoted about other Strains, or different religions, or natives of other territories they dislike.

With that in mind, players and Storyguides alike should avoid using real-world prejudices and slurs while playing **Dystopia Rising**, opting for insults based on Strains, in-game religions, or territory disputes. This is especially true when talking about other players' characters — always make sure that it's clear you're insulting the character, not the player, and avoid insults that recall real-world issues like racism, sexism, body shaming, ableism, homophobia, gender bigotry, and other modern prejudices. If you think "but it sounds silly to call a Retrograde a 'no good rottie'," consider that it's a lot better to say something that sounds "silly" than to call that Retrograde a "fat bastard" and make someone at the table feel bad about their own body.

Using game material like Strains and religions instead allows such stories to be told allegorically, with less risk of an unpleasant out-of-game experience.

That said, in-game elements like Strainism and religious intolerance can still hit close to home, even when they are only presented through fictional concepts. At the end of the day, if there's a particular topic or element of **Dystopia Rising** that someone at your table would rather not explore, dump it. There are problems enough in the wastelands, so there's no need to add more to your plate.

Choose Your Own Post-Apocalypse

Understanding the themes and expectations in a post-apocalyptic setting is an important part of creating a vivid and interesting story for the players to engage with around the table. The world of **Dystopia Rising** is a bit different than other games with which players might be familiar. As a post-apocalyptic world, this setting is full of endless undead, inhospitable terrain, mutant beasts, and the ever-present dangers of their fellow survivors. Just like living in a ravaged world requires a different approach by the characters, enjoying this setting requires a different mindset from the players.

It's easy to see post-apocalyptic settings as just being about ruin, loss, and violence, and it's true that those elements are important. The world is a smoking crater compared to the long-lost glory days of peace and plenty; just look around and you can see the scars. Everywhere you turn you can find traces of just how far humanity has fallen, from rusting high-rise spires

GRITTY GEAR: FLAWS

One way to reflect scarcity of equipment without making players track every bullet or gallon of gas is through gear Flaws. If a player botches a roll using a piece of gear, that gear gains an appropriate Flaw. Broken (p. XX) is a common one, but there are other possibilities.

Gun's Empty: The ranged weapon cannot be used again until more ammunition is purchased or found.

Out of Gas: The vehicle will no longer run until fuel is acquired. If driven by an animal team, use *Fatigued* or *Dehydrated* instead.

Needs Batteries: The item in question has run out of power, and no longer works until a new power source is provided.

Details on each of these Flaws can be found in the Appendix, p. XX, but they're just examples. Feel free to create more.

to crumbled interstates. It's hard to find a survivor whose life story doesn't include loved ones lost to some horror or another, whether it's zed or raiders or the strange beasts of the world. That's the nature of the wasteland, and more importantly to a certain degree — what players *want* when they sign up for this game. Post-apocalyptic, dystopian settings are *supposed* to hurt. It's a feature, not a bug.

That said, it's also important to remember the *post* part of post-apocalyptic. The world we know ended — badly — but that doesn't mean everything stopped. However improbably, life goes on. Humanity survives and adapts, learns the rules of this new world, and carries on as best it can. Don't always couch the world in comparisons to ours; showcase the weird, terrible, wonderful, and strange ways society is new as well. Humanity has moved on, for better or worse, and now it's become something *new*.

But in the end, there isn't one "true" way to play **Dystopia Rising.** While this book assumes certain default thematic elements and story expectations as part of creating a coherent and evocative setting, you are always free to adjust these settings to suit your needs and those of your players. Think of this setting as being governed by several sliding values, with different types of games at the ends of each slider. Talk to your players about the different aspects of the setting and think about where you want to set each one. We've provided the default settings for each one along with a brief explanation, but in the end, they are your choices to make.

Gritty vs. Gonzo

This slider controls the sense of realism in the setting. Choosing a gritty game means players can expect to keep close track of things like supplies, ammunition, and injuries, while a gonzo game pays less attention to everyday worries in favor of spectacle. A gritty, post-apocalyptic world is focused on the nuts and bolts of survival. Every bullet counts, every day takes rations to survive, and resources are always scarce. By contrast, a gonzo setting is louder, brighter, and defiantly over the top, full of strange characters, weird mutants, and outrageous situations.

Default: Gritty. While it's true **Dystopia Rising** contains psionists, mutants, zombies, and other strangeness, these aberrations are just part of life to the natives. Survivors are a lot more concerned if you can bring in a crop, fix a busted shooter, or mend a broken leg, and they tend to view the bizarre with more wariness than wonder.

Horror vs. Adventure

This slider controls the primary type of tension you're looking to create in your stories, from the fear-based stress of terror and horror to the adrenaline rush of action-adventure. Horror stories are about confronting things that make us afraid. They are frequently imbalanced in favor of the horror as well, forcing protagonists to be clever and choose their battles carefully as well as imposing harsh consequences for anyone caught by the horror. Adventure stories, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with action and exploration, and derive a lot of their entertainment from encountering new locations and characters as well as big, cinematic chases and fight scenes.

Default: Horror. The world is broken and cannot be fixed, and from zed to raiders to the tainted ground itself its dangers can never be totally defeated, only temporarily overcome. This doesn't mean there can't be adventures and moments of joy along the way, only that fear and danger are never very far away.

Heroic vs. Humble

The slider controls the scale of the game, or how big events are likely to get. Do you want a game where the players try to take down an entire raider clan across the whole Nor'east, or one where they struggle to keep their settlement safe from raiders long enough to bring in a crucial harvest? To be clear, a heroic game does not necessarily assume the characters are all virtuous souls and champions of the innocent! It simply means that the series features big events and sweeping implications for the setting — whole regions, Strains, religions, or even the world might be changed because of the characters' actions. Humble games, on the other hand, play for much smaller stakes. These stories tend to focus on individual settlements, interpersonal subplots, and the day-to-day business of survival.

Default: Humble. Although there are certainly chances to affect the big picture, most of the time it's all survivors can do just to, well, survive. Keeping a single settlement or caravan going is challenge enough in a world that's literally out to kill you at every turn!

Bleak vs. Bright

This slider adjusts the emotional tone of the game. A bleak setting focuses more on negative emotions as a window into life in the wastelands — cynicism, fatalism, ruthlessness, betrayal, and hard-eyed pragmatism are the order of the day. What happiness there is tends to either come in chemical form or at the expense of others; genuine joy is precious beyond measure. A bright setting, by contrast, views the wasteland through more positive emotions — hope, compassion, optimism, honor, and hard-won camaraderie come to the fore. This doesn't mean survivors in bright settings are naïve innocents, mind you, just that they see the future being better than the present... if they try hard enough to get there, that is.

Default: Mixed. While most survivors see their world as irredeemably broken, a certain (gallows) humor and an indomitable can-do spirit are more common reactions to this fact than despair and nihilism. People may not think the world can be fixed, but they're sure not just going to stand by and let it get any worse, either. They're not called survivors for nothing, after all.

Series, Acts, Scenes

Running an ongoing game may seem like a daunting challenge, but if you break it down into its component parts, it's not so bad. It just involves thinking about a series, its component acts, and the cool scenes that bring the story to life.

The Series

Before the game can properly begin, it's good to have a conversation with the players about what sort of stories everyone is interested in playing. If a couple of players want more of a violent, action-oriented series while another player is interested in plumbing the mysteries of psionicists and the last player wants to dive into settlement politics in the wasteland, that's just begging for trouble and frustration down the line.

As a group, talk out the broad strokes — where the story takes place, the sort of places and characters the players find interesting, go over the different setting "sliders" discussed previously, etc. You don't need a detailed plan just yet, though if you have one that's fine, too. Even just a basic setting, some characters, and a rough idea of a villain or conflict you feel will interest them and get them moving will suffice to start a series.

Example: *Pete and his group are getting ready to start a Dystopia Rising series. After talking it over, they decide to focus on playing the founders of a small shore settlement, The Hook, dealing with town politics as well as facing the various wasteland threats to their struggling community. Pete decides that the major villain for this series will be the Pure Blood head of a smuggling syndicate, who wants the harbor and isn't shy about hiring spies, saboteurs, and muscle to sow dissent and get her way. This should provide a good mix of action, horror, politics, and small-town subplots, which gives every character a way to shine.*

Discussing it with the players, they settle on mostly default "sliders" for the series: gritty, humble, and horror-based. However, the players ask if it can be a little brighter than normal, at least to start. The characters are trying to build up a town to call their own, after all, and that takes a certain extra level of optimism. Pete agrees, though he notes that this could change over time if problems arise, and the players are fine with a possible shift down the line.

The Act

Once you have a loose series structure in mind, it's time to plan individual acts. Each act should advance the overall series story, while also offering some resolution to smaller questions and problems the characters face.

This isn't to say you can't have acts end on a cliffhanger every now and then. That can be a great way to spur interest in the next act, for one thing, as well as prolong a sense of tension. However, if it seems like acts never actually resolve everything — if every act is just another cliffhanger — the players will quickly become tired of constantly feeling like they're not getting any real answers or solutions.

Example: Pete wants to start off the series with a bang, so he decides the first act will begin in the middle of the characters repelling a zed attack, only to find that during the confusion someone has sabotaged the town's ancient-yet-vital water desalinization machinery. This will highlight the fact that The Hook has problems within and without and start the process of pointing the characters at the Pure Blood antagonist they'll confront down the line.

The Scene

A scene is a particular dramatic sequence during an act and can be anything from a tense political standoff during the settlement town hall to a running gun battle against a zed horde to a breakneck chase after an escaped fugitive through the nearby woods. The average act contains 2-4 scenes. There is no set duration for a scene — one scene might cover several hours of a settlement holiday celebration, while another might be a brief-but-intense chase scene that only takes 10 minutes of time in the game world. Most of the time a new scene means a change in location, characters, or both, though this is not strictly required.

Try to make scenes as vivid as possible. Think of the best dramatic confrontations, fights, chases, escapes, and other great moments from your favorite books and movies — those are the stuff great scenes are made of, and excellent sources of inspiration. Not every scene has to be over the top, but they should

STORY SEEDS

If you're struggling to think of a starting point for a series — or the players threw you a real curve ball and you need an idea fast — here are some story seeds that you can easily use as starting points. (You can even roll a die and choose one, if you're in a *real* hurry.)

1. Plague sweeps the settlement
2. It's broken, and we need to fix it *now*
3. War between local crime lords
4. Massive zed horde, incoming!
5. A town holiday celebration
6. Raider clans on the warpath
7. Holy war breaks out
8. Freak weather conditions
9. Something's leaking radiation
10. Disaster exposes unknown ruins

all add something interesting and important to the story. Even if two scenes take place in the same location, there should be a significant shift — in tone, circumstances, etc. — that makes them feel distinct.

When framing scenes, it's good to keep them focused and think about what each one is meant to accomplish. It's also good to think about what kinds of characters will thrive in each scene; while you might not always be able to include a chance to for every character to shine in a given act, you also want to make sure characters aren't totally ignored. If not all characters are present, consider letting players of absent characters chip in as minor supporting roles.

Example: *For this first act, Pete plans three scenes. The first is an action-horror scene, jumping right into the middle of the survivors repelling a zombie horde attack. This should give more violent characters a chance to shine and start things with urgency and excitement. He might even assign some random injuries to the characters, demonstrating how the fight has already been costly. The second scene is a mystery-investigation scene as the characters investigate the sabotaged machinery and search for clues to the saboteur's identity, which should let more intellectual and deductive characters take the fore.*

Pete leaves the third scene a little flexible, depending on how the investigation goes — if the characters do well on the investigation, they may identify the saboteur outright, leading directly to an interrogation scene. If they don't do as well, they can bring their findings to an emergency town meeting and try to smoke out the saboteur there, possibly followed by an interrogation. Either way, more socially adept characters will be important here, and by the end of the act the survivors will learn that they've attracted the attention of a very dangerous foe...

During Play

Once it's time to sit down and play, your Storyguide responsibilities shift a bit as you focus on telling the best possible story you can with your players. This section contains advice on how to make that happen and even what to do if things start getting out of hand.

Bring the World to Life

It's your job to immerse the players in the world of **Dystopia Rising** as fully as possible. Part of that is learning how to give evocative descriptions so players can picture everything clearly in their minds. If that sounds intimidating, don't worry! Like a lot of skills, it gets better with practice, and you'll have plenty of that as you guide the players through their adventures.

One important thing to remember is that evocative descriptions don't need to be exhaustively detailed — in fact, unless precise detail is important, you often don't need to worry about every little thing. If you're introducing a local Retrograde gunsmith, you don't need to do height, weight, eye color, and so on. Focus on the details that jump out, the most interesting things, the things that tell a story: *The gunsmith looks up as you push aside the canvas tarp he's using for a doorway. He's tall, hunched over in the small space like a pale, pockmarked spider. He's got a battered "Sheriff" cap on his greasy head, and his eyes are red and watery from the heat. And he's squinting with suspicion at his new customers.*

While sight and sound are generally going to take up the bulk of your descriptions, try to go beyond them whenever you can too. Smell, touch, and taste are highly evocative, and what's more because we normally only experience them up close, they help a situation feel real in ways that sight and sound alone cannot. The scent of cooking bacon, the bitter taste of kicked-up trail dust, the feeling of the worn tape grip of a favorite weapon sliding into your hand — these are all things that draw players in and make a situation feel *real*.

Of course, you also want to make sure that your descriptions include information the characters need to know, especially it's something they should pick up on. A Yorker isn't going to miss that the big gal at the bar in front of him is wearing the colors of a rival gang, for example, and no Jones worth her hat is going to ignore a strange and promising bit of Scrap sticking out of the ground. Don't be stingy with detail — give it freely, especially in response to rolls. If the characters miss something important, it should be because it's hidden or because they rolled poorly to find it, not because you held out on them.

You're also the one who brings the supporting cast to life: friends, family, allies, enemies, and of course all the horrors this world has to offer. Don't be afraid to use every trick at your disposal to bring characters to life in memorable ways: accents, voice

MASK THE FAMILIAR

One way to reinforce the post-apocalyptic flavor of the setting is to describe objects and locations from before the Fall rather than simply naming them, and let the players try to figure out what the characters are looking at. For example, if a bunch of city rats are heading out into the countryside from Old York, don't tell them "you see a silo" — describe a strange, rusted cylinder that rises from the edge of a farmstead and see if they can put it together. Obviously, you don't need to do this if a character knows what something is, or if stopping to describe things this way would take up too much valuable play time, but used judiciously it can be a fun and evocative way to convey a post-apocalyptic feel where what's familiar to us has become mysterious and inscrutable to the generations that followed.

APOCALYPTIC AMBIANCE

Don't overlook the value of proper game ambiance. Rearrange furniture to make familiar spaces different, drape the table with camouflage or tattered fabric to set the mood. Use lanterns or dim the lights when you can, so long as people can still read sheets and roll dice. Many film scores provide excellent instrumental tracks to underscore mood, and you can also find sound effects or soundscapes for everything from howling winter wind to woodland animal noises to extended gun battles. You can even experiment with scented candles to conjure up environments from shorelines to deep forest. Try to avoid snacking on sugary drinks and junk food — they just lead to sluggishness and energy crashes later — in favor of fruits, juice, nuts, tea, and other more sustaining energy sources.

Finally, ask that players try to stay focused and in-character as much as possible during an act, especially during intense or emotional scenes. You have all week to check your phone, make out-of-character jokes, and otherwise goof off away from the table. Game time is precious, so make sure to make the most of it!

changes, gestures, little bits of props and costuming, whatever it takes. You don't have to be elaborate — just a suggestion of a character will do. For example, you might keep an eye patch at hand for when you portray the series' major villain; after a little while, even just picking up that simple prop will make the players sweat.

If you want to create interesting and memorable characters on the fly, follow a simple formula. For heroic or at least sympathetic characters, assign two positive traits and one negative trait. (Clever and funny, but greedy.) For villainous or anti-heroic characters, flip the ratio. (Cruel and ruthless, but loyal.) Having a mix of traits instead of all positive or all negative avoids stereotypical characters, as well as provides complexity that can lead to story hooks based on exploiting their weaknesses — or appealing to their redeeming qualities.

If this all seems overwhelming, just start small and build as you go on. Offer short, thumbnail-sketch descriptions and simple accents or voice changes for supporting characters, then add on as the players ask for more detail. As you get more comfortable, try more elaborate descriptions and supporting cast transformations, until you reach the level of detail that works best for you and your players.

Preparation vs. Improvisation

Some Storyguides like to make detailed preparations for their games, potentially including everything from the names and backstories of important characters to maps of act locations and inventory lists for the caravan the players are escorting. Other Storyguides prefer to improvise most if not all their act material, literally making it up as they go along and in response to the reactions and input of the players. There is no "right" way to run a game, only what works for you, but each style can benefit from a little advice.

Preparation-oriented Storyguides are great for crunchy, detail-oriented groups, but still need to leave some room for the unexpected. Players have a knack for doing the unexpected, after all, and forcing them go a certain way just because you didn't write up notes and maps for a different path can make them feel frustrated and stifled. Improvisational Storyguides are great for collaborative groups, but often benefit from a player aide taking down names of people, places, and events, as what is made up off the top of the head has a habit of being forgotten just as quickly, which can lead to confusion and narrative gaps later.

Interpret the Rules

Another major job as Storyguide is ensuring that the rules are applied correctly and consistently during play. While every effort has been made to make the rules clear and straightforward, it's impossible to anticipate every possible situation or rules reading — players are unpredictable genius bastards that way — and so sometimes your job will also include interpreting the rules and making decisions on how they work. Like anything else, this might seem intimidating at first, but if you just do your best to be fair, make sure everyone's having fun, and admit when mistakes are made, you can't go too far wrong. Everyone gets the rules wrong sometimes! Don't sweat it.

The key is to make sure your rulings are consistent. If the rules work one way at one time, they shouldn't work differently in an identical situation later. Likewise, if you decide to change the way a rule works — this is known as a "house rule" — that's absolutely your prerogative. Nothing in this book is written in stone, and if a house rule makes the game better for you and your players, then go with it! However, *make sure the players know what you're changing and why*. This avoids frustration and conflict later.

Sooner or later, you will make a bad rule call during play. If it happens, don't be afraid to use your authority to make it right, especially if the characters were adversely affected. Backtrack if you can, or at the very least soften the blow now and let everyone know how it will work in the future. Having consistent rules helps build a framework for telling stories, but it's important to remember that if push comes to shove, always side with what makes a good story over following the rules to the letter.

Failing Forward

One common mistake Storyguides make is looking at dice rolls as only leading to binary success or failure outcomes. The classic example is a locked door the characters need to open to move the story forward. A player rolls dice for her character

attempting to pick the lock — if she succeeds, she opens the lock, if she fails, she doesn't. But why even make her roll, if the story will only stall out until she finally succeeds? Unless there's a deadline and each roll represents valuable seconds lost, repeated rolls just slow down the game.

This is where Complications come in. They offer success with a setback or cost rather than simple success and failure. If the roll succeeds, the character picks the lock. However, if they don't buy off the Complication *Nearby Guards*, the lock is still picked but the character alerts the guards on the other side with the noise. Both options get the door open, so the story moves forward, but success is still preferable as failure makes the characters' lives harder by adding a new challenge. Don't forget that the Consolation mechanic exists for a reason, too! Failing one test just means you've got some more fuel for other efforts down the line, so make sure players aren't afraid to fail.

The key to this approach is to make it clear what the possible outcomes are *before* a player rolls, especially if the consequences might be such that they consider taking a different approach. Sometimes players may even offer ideas for possible consequences, which is great! Just remember to be fair in what setbacks and costs you offer, and you can find this approach really keeps the game moving and makes even "failed" rolls interesting and exciting.

Making It Count

All the great descriptions and solid rules in the world don't count for much if the players aren't invested in the story. Fortunately, there are a few tried-and-tested ways to engage their interest and make sure they feel the tension you're working hard to create.

Show Them the Implements

Before the players can invest in a story, they must understand what's going on, and just as importantly what's at stake. Without understanding, events are too random to generate fear; without stakes, neither wins nor losses matter. In a horror game, caring often equates to showing players exactly what they stand to lose, or just what sort of terrifying situation they're up against. While you don't need to share anything the characters wouldn't know, don't hold back on what they would.

Even fear of the unknown can only arise when players are aware there's something beyond their understanding. Mystery has its place, of course, but should always arise naturally because of the characters not having access to information, not from information being withheld from the players. It's a subtle but important distinction.

Making the players invest in the stakes involves some willingness on their part to engage in the story but also means setting up situations where they're inclined to care in the first

place. The best way is to involve elements of the story that have been used previously — old friends, old enemies, and other familiar faces. Those marauding raiders aren't going to attack just any settlement — they're going to burn the friendly farm where the characters recovered after getting hurt during a previous story. Familiar things are a great way to make past scenes and decisions resonate, as well as get characters immediately involved.

Hard Questions and Hard Choices

Once the players understand the situation, open it up. Answer questions as the characters apply their training and talent to assess the situation, but don't hesitate to pose questions, too. Ask them what they value, and what they don't. Make sure everyone knows what they need to frame the scene and what their characters would know to make their choices. It doesn't have to be elaborate, especially if they're rushed or roll poorly, but don't hold back if they've earned some answers.

Likewise, unless something is impossible, consider offering hard bargains instead of saying "no" outright to players. What are they willing to give up to succeed? Who are they willing to leave behind? Sure, they could probably grab that extra ammo stash on their way out of the raider compound, but too much delay means risking their Diesel Jock getaway driver getting spooked and taking off without them. Is it worth it? That's for you to offer and them to decide.

It's also important to keep things moving. Don't rush the players to the point where they feel frustrated and unable to make meaningful decisions, but don't let events linger too long either. Even if there isn't a pressing time constraint in game, boredom and the overall slowdown in play is rarely worth multiple layers of contingency plans or prolonged arguments about the best route to take through hostile territory.

Twist the Blade

When events go bad, or when hard choices are made, resist the urge to soften the impact. A crucial theme of the setting is desperation — the world is badly wounded, and it's not getting better any time soon. In fact, it's often all you can do to keep it from getting worse, either in a personal sense or from a larger perspective. If losses and defeats have no sting, then there is no tension and what's more, triumphs wind up feeling hollow as well. So, when something goes wrong and the best efforts come up short, let it sink in.

It's important to note that this doesn't mean you should rub the players' faces in failure. Gloating is immature and counterproductive; besides, you are not the players' adversary. Try to avoid springing surprise punishments as well. For example, if the characters hear a pleading voice behind a locked door but decide to run past as they escape, it shouldn't turn out to be a dear friend just as way to twist the knife. Now, if the characters knew their friend was there — in advance, or just knew her by the sound of her voice — that's different but pulling that as a surprise when they had no idea or no real way to avoid it isn't being fair to the players.

It's also worth mentioning that if you don't stint on the consequences of failure, you also should let the players enjoy their moments of glory, too. So, twist the blade when it's called for, but let them raise a glass when they've earned it. Victory only has savor if defeat stings.

Problem Players

Although gaming is a collaborative experience, sooner or later problems will arise at the table. Sometimes players might disagree with an interpretation of the rules, become upset over a setback, or even have an in-character dispute that spills over into a real-life argument. The most important thing to do first is restore calm. Typically, such disagreements are the result of people getting too caught up in the moment, and not as the result of any serious bad blood. Taking a break from the game to cool off, reminding everyone it's a game and not to take it too seriously, then talking to the parties individually or mediating a resolution between them will usually suffice to settle most personal disputes.

While it's less common, sometimes two or more players develop genuine bad feelings towards each other, which necessitates a bit more in-depth action. Ideally this can be done between acts, as it might be a bit too complex or sensitive to resolve at the table, but regardless it requires sitting down with everyone involved and discovering the source of the feud. If it's a misunderstanding or a momentary mistake that got out of hand, clearing that up and some apologies can be enough to set things right. If it's a deeper dispute, however, such as a player disapproving of another player's lifestyle or beliefs, or two players going through a romantic breakup, it might not be possible to settle it with a simple conversation or two.

In such advanced cases, remember that above all else, games are supposed to be fun. If playing has become too heated or painful, it's likely best that such players step back for a time, even if it means putting the game on hold. It's not a matter of taking sides, but rather about being fair to everyone at the table — including yourself! Let the players know that while the game is still open to them, they cannot return unless they can be civil and respectful with each other. If they can't do that, it's unfortunate, but maybe the game just isn't for them right now.

Finally, a small but very visible minority of players take pleasure in being disruptive, or at least don't seem to care if their bad habits make everyone else at the table miserable. Don't feel bad about ejecting trolls, bullies, divas, creeps, and other toxic players — one person's fun should not come at the expense of everyone else! The rest of the table will thank you for it. If an offender is truly sincere about mending their ways, you may consider allowing them to return, but otherwise you're far better off without them.

Tell It True

Okay, repeat after me: *I am not the enemy of the players or their characters, I am here to follow the fiction and tell the best story possible with my friends.* Sounds simple, but there's a lot of truth in that statement.

THE DYSTOPIAN RULE

Always remember that just because the setting is ruthless and harsh doesn't justify acting rudely or inappropriately to your fellow players. *Characters* can argue or even fight, but *players* should always strive to keep things light and friendly. Unless everyone has explicitly agreed to a more cutthroat game where backstabbing each other is permitted, literally or figuratively, player vs. player conflict should be limited to verbal sparring and non-lethal physical tussling,

By default, **Dystopia Rising** player characters are assumed to have reasons to trust each other and willingly work together to achieve their goals. Characters may not all be friends or even like each other, but they still begin play as allies that stick together and look out for each other. It is advisable to create positive Bonds between characters to reinforce this idea.

That said, while you shouldn't be shy about hitting the characters with bad luck, bad enemies, and worse friends when it's called for, it also means that you absolutely *cannot* see it as your job to "defeat" or kill them. The setting is harsh enough; if the players realize that you never intend to let them triumph or even survive, no matter what they do, then a lot of the point of playing goes right out the window. There is a fine line between handing out problems and consequences because they're deserved in the fiction as opposed to handing out punishments to be sadistic, and you should always strive for the former.

Instead, cheer for the characters, even as you put problems and obstacles in their way. The characters are the stars of the show; root for them! You don't have to make their lives any easier, but you should give them chances to shine even as you pile on the twists and setbacks. Give the Lascarian knifeboy a formidable target to take down. Plot a thrilling chase scene where the Diesel Jock can push her rig to its limits. Let the Pure Blood gunslinger strike terror in some hapless minions just by dropping his family name, right before the lead starts flying.

This isn't to say that you only follow where the players lead — it's part of your job to bring your own plots and stories to the table for them to engage in — but it's important to remember that you're all telling a story collaboratively. The characters aren't there to act out your meticulous game script by rote; in fact, you can pretty much guarantee that if you write a story outline with three possible paths, the players will find a fourth one, typically going 100 mph. On fire. Without pants. Don't get frustrated! Roll with it and follow where it goes.

If you're ever really thrown for a loop, just take a time out and figure out where to go. Don't be afraid to ask the players what they think might happen next either — they might have some great ideas to help get you going again. Maybe the carefully planned scene you designed that they just roared right past can be used later or saved for another story. Or maybe you can let them run for a while, then steer them back to the cool ideas you had down the road.

No matter what, follow the fiction, play to find out what's going on, give the characters room to risk (and fail), and always just tell it as true as you can.

The Grave Mind

Between dying and returning to life, everyone goes...somewhere. It's known by many names, from the Sunless Garden to the Hell Between to the Black Passage, but the most common term is simply the Grave Mind. It's a place of fear and darkness, a twisted reflection of a broken world, a haunted house unique to each survivor. Before a survivor returns to life, she must pass a place packed with her worst fears and darkest secrets, often reliving the trauma of the death she just experienced as well. Sometimes the experience is visceral and direct, while in other cases it's more abstract, but no matter what it always leaves a mark.

Exactly what the Grave Mind is and why survivors visit it between life, death, and rebirth remains a subject of much speculation. Naturally each faith has its own perspective on it, ranging from communion with a wounded world to undergoing a purgatorial crucible to a foretaste of hell or even stranger things. Some psionicists argue that it's a dive into the collective consciousness of the fungal infection, though others conjecture that it is created as a defense to avoid mental dissolution as the body reforms. To many survivors, however, exactly what the Sunless Garden is doesn't really matter — it's just another hardship to endure as part of life in the wastes.

As a rule, it's considered a terrible breach of etiquette to ask someone for details about their time in the Grave Mind unless specifically invited to do so; even the densest Merican usually manages to avoid committing this faux pas. By the same token, it's a sign of great trust for a survivor to share such experiences outside of therapeutic treatment; the Sunless Garden literally dredges up someone's worst fears and faults, so being allowed in to see the dark parts of a person's soul is intimate trust indeed.

No matter how many people die at a given time, everyone goes through their Grave Mind alone. While other survivors may appear in a character's vision — maybe even be portrayed by their actual player during the scene — they are just part of the psychodrama, and not truly present. While rumors persist that powerful psionicists or especially saintly folk have mysterious ways of entering someone's Grave Mind to intervene, at present these stories remain just that, rumors.

Preparing a Harrowing Ordeal

As a Storyguide, you have a wide variety of options when it comes to running a Grave Mind scene. This can be a little intimidating at first, but never fear! With knowledge of a few

THE METAPHYSICS OF DYING

The Grave Mind is a concept best understood in contradiction. People talk about it as a place, but it's not a nether realm or location. Some talk about it as if it's an active intelligence, but it doesn't have "thought" any more than plants do. So, what the hell happens when you die?

When someone with an active mind and ego dies, that consciousness (or "soul," if you prefer) is absorbed into the larger consciousness of the Grave Mind. It's a hive mind, connecting the various beings touched by the Infection, all coalesced and merged into a bundle of instincts. It's pure, unadulterated id, ripping at the social and mental structures of civilization. Why worry about ethics, relationships, or communities? Everything is so much easier if you just focus on killing, eating, and sleeping.

Most people's minds can't handle the raw intensity of the experience, so it gets interpreted in a variety of ways. Your personal experiences are called upon to try to give some meaning to the pure mental chaos. And if someone makes it out of the experience with their sanity (mostly) intact, the images they experience fade away, like a nightmare that slinks into the corner of your mind, leaving only unfocused dread. No wonder most folks don't like to talk about it.

foundational pieces of information and a short checklist, you will be running eerie and intense scenes of personal torment in no time.

The first thing to know about Grave Mind scenes is that they do not involve rules or dice rolling. They are entirely role-playing-based scenes. A character's traits do not matter in the Sunless Garden, except as representations of her identity and capabilities. Since there is no chance element to resolving these scenes, however, no dice are rolled. It's just a conversation between you and the player of the (currently) deceased character.

Another key element of Grave Mind scenes is that they are not bound by normal logic — they're more like nightmares. Settings and characters can shift or blend without warning, time can speed up or slow down or even loop back on itself, and a character may find herself facing not just old ghosts but other versions of herself or even apparent visitors from the future. Use this to your advantage and create dark, twisted, nightmarish scenarios that combine gritty detail and real memories with symbolism and abstract representation.

Which leads to another important truth about Grave Mind scenes: As a rule, you don't dictate the outcome or decide when the scene is over — the player does, and she should know this up front. Whether the character overcomes her darkest feelings or succumbs to them is up to the player to decide. As the Storyguide, you will create the setting and supporting characters for the Grave Mind scene and enforce the nightmare logic of events as they occur, but ultimately the player decides whether what she's experiencing breaks her character or if she's able to rise above it, and thus when it's time to exit the Hell Between.

If a player is uncomfortable with having so much freedom to control the scene, or simply would rather have you decide the outcome, that's fine! Nothing says you can't make those decisions if the player prefers; it just defaults to player control as a rule. Being able to decide how a scene resolves and when it's over can take some getting used to, especially for players accustomed to the Storyguide being the only arbiter of game fiction.

Some Storyguides might be concerned that player control means a player could simply have her character zip through the Grave Mind scene and emerge victorious in a few minutes. Technically that's true, but we've found the opposite tends to happen — having some control removes any adversarial feeling and makes players more likely to prolong the scene, take risks, and really dig into it. When you add that characters will receive a Trauma Condition and lose their Attitudes and Bonds no matter how the Grave Mind scene resolves in the fiction, "win" or "lose," it makes for an environment where players feel free to play it out as best suits the situation.

Preparing the Grave Mind

Although you will most likely find your own rhythm and rituals for Grave Mind scenes, here is a basic checklist as well as some setup ideas to get you started:

Take a brief break. The death of a character can be highly emotional, even in a game where characters can die multiple times, so before you start the Grave Mind scene it's good to give a player a few minutes to cool off and collect herself before you dive back in.

Fears and hopes. If no idea for a good scene or environment jumps out at you, have the player write down both her character's greatest fear and greatest hope. The fear shapes what is attacking the survivor or holding her back in the Grave Mind, while her hope offers her a way out of the situation or a means of beating back the darkness. A character who is afraid of being left behind might be trapped on shore while a ship pulls away and the horde closes in, for example, while her hope that she's made a difference to others manifests as a partner heading back in a boat to rescue her. The closer the character is to her final revival, the stronger the fear gets and the fainter the hope becomes — the ship gets farther away, the horde reaches her and starts ripping her up, the boat turns back even as she tries to swim out to it, and so on.

Set limits and expectations. While Grave Mind scenes are intense and disturbing by design, if the player doesn't want certain topics to come up, it's best to set those limits clearly in advance. Even if you set expectations at the start of the series, go over them again. If you're using the X-card, make sure the player has it handy. Likewise, some players will have requests

or suggestions for things they want to confront in the Grave Mind — that's great! You don't have to include them all but pay attention to what the player wants.

Set the mood. It's a good idea to come up with a special setup for Grave Mind scenes to make them feel different. As these scenes don't require rolling dice, you could turn down the lights and use a single candle to create a suitably spooky atmosphere, for example, or perhaps pass around a flashlight in the dark like telling a campfire tale. Even just putting on different music or rearranging the seating works, so long as it makes the setup different.

Secrets or spectators? Some groups like running Grave Mind scenes privately, while others don't mind other players watching or even jumping in to play bit parts and supporting roles in the psychodrama as it unfolds. Whatever works best for the group is fine, but if these scenes are private, try to limit their duration so the rest of the group isn't left bored and waiting. If the group is watching, remind everyone to keep player knowledge and character knowledge separate; if other players are participating, it's good to give them specific roles and remind them not to steal the spotlight from the player whose character is undergoing the Grave Mind scene.

Read the introduction. Since Grave Mind scenes run a bit differently than scenes players might be used to, it's recommended that you read the speech below before beginning the scene. Naturally, you can alter it as needed to suit your players and the situation at hand or even skip it, if you like, but giving some sort of introduction like this is recommended to remind players what the scene is about and help them get into the proper roleplaying mindset for the experience.

Before we enter the Grave Mind, remember that this is a roleplaying-only scene. No dice are rolled, and no game traits count. Together, we are going on a strange trip into the darkest part of your character's mind, and we're not coming out until your character has broken through their fear...or it has broken them. The choice to triumph, break, or fall somewhere in between is entirely yours. So, embrace the fear, enjoy the horror, and remember that there are no "right answers" in this scene, only what you feel is right for your character. We're just telling the best possible story we can about the time between life and death...where there's nowhere to hide from yourself.

Challenge the character. Since the player controls when a Grave Mind scene ends and whether her character overcame her demons, it's your job to present the player with intense, disturbing, and challenging scenarios based on her character's darkest feelings and memories. Set up a problem, show it to them, and work with them to explore it and play it out. Don't be afraid to pile it on, be as descriptive as you can, and use nightmare logic to subvert expectations and present cruel and horrifying twists. Make it personal for the character and twist the knife whenever possible. There's a reason everyone comes back scarred, after all.

Cool off. Grave Mind scenes should be a lot of fun, but they can also be very intense, so it's a good idea to take another short break afterward. Talk to the player, make sure they're okay, and if they need to do some more processing give them a little extra time to come back to the game. Don't forget to also give yourself a minute if you need it! Running these scenes can be as stressful for you as it is for the players.

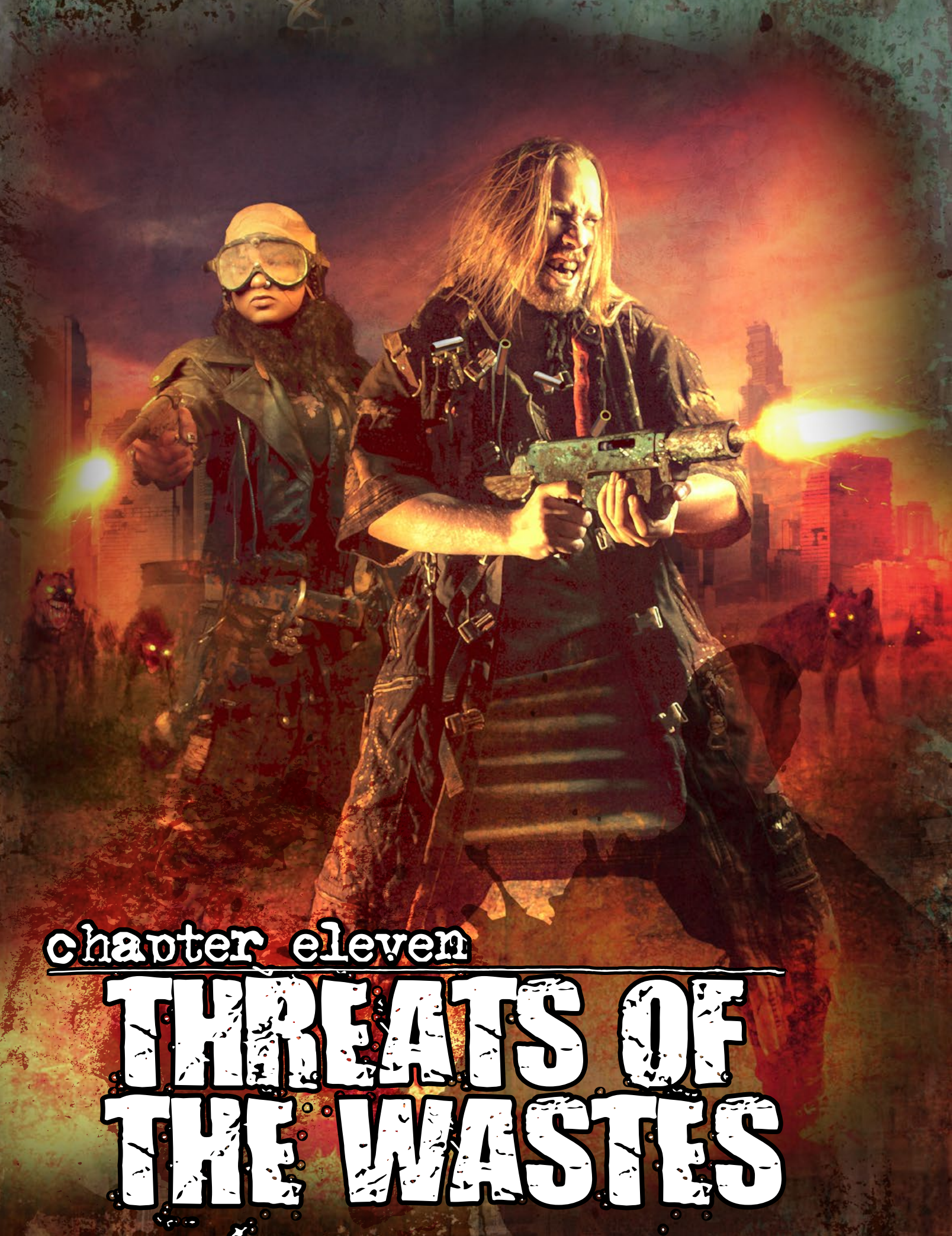
MEMENTO MORI

Sometimes it might be difficult to fit a Grave Mind scene into an act. If you're pressed for time or it feels like it would harm the momentum of the game, you can always choose to simply inflict a Trauma Condition and remove the character's Attitudes and Bonds but save running the actual Grave Mind scene for later. These scenes are powerful experiences that keep death scary and interesting instead of just being a temporary nuisance; rushing one just to get back to the main story really does them a disservice. In narrative terms, it's not uncommon for the trauma of returning to wipe the experience from a survivor's mind for a time, only to have it come back in nightmares and flashbacks later, so postponing a Grave Mind scene until later works just fine in game fiction as well.

Choosing a Trauma

Perhaps the best way to determine what type of Trauma Condition to inflict is to look at how the Grave Mind sequence went. What is the character afraid of? What is he holding on to? What does he have to come back to, that keeps him motivated? Is there trauma he just can't let go of, and if so, what is it? Is he now obsessed with revenge over who killed him, or does he want nothing more than to run far away from it all?

Even a character who has a "successful" Grave Mind scene where he conquers his demons doesn't just wake up smiling. Reviewing the list on p. XX can be helpful, but don't shy away from creating a custom Trauma Condition to suit the situation. Just make sure to discuss it with the player first, since they'll have to portray that trauma.



chapter eleven

THREATS OF THE WASTES

"God, why?!"

- Molly "Two Steps" Malone's first (and last) encounter with a Rad Dragon

Cannibal clans of raiders, mindless hordes of shambling zed, or man's best friend mutated into an unholy terror: These are just a few of the unending threats that appear every moment in the wastes. Whether a major city, or the desolate and unforgiving wastes themselves, one thing all who live must learn is that there are threats around every corner. Safety is a luxury that is both precarious and expensive, and the only guarantee is that it won't last forever. Only by knowing what threats are out there, and the best way to fight them, is there hope for survival and many make it their life's work to learn and catalogue what dangers inhabit different areas.

As a Storyguide, encounters with threats offer players a chance to grow their characters, make decisions that flesh out their beliefs and goals, and help put them on the route to their character aspirations. While not all these encounters are violent, they all offer an opportunity to gain further insight into the characters that are being played. Their response to being swindled by a sly merchant can fuel just as much growth as defeating a ring of bandits. These are opportunities for the Storyguide to help players dig deeper into the character motivations they are playing and build a solid framework to watch them grow and change before their eyes. Pressure creates diamonds and having to make difficult decisions is what makes marks on a sheet into a character.

They're Coming: Making Encounters

Creating an encounter for **Dystopia Rising** can be accomplished by asking yourself five questions.

- **Who:** This determines what Storyguide characters are going to be involved in the encounter. Considering the other questions, and the scenario itself, can help decide which SGC antagonists are the most appropriate for the encounter you have in mind.

- **What:** What type of encounter is this? Is this a minor random encounter on the way to something bigger? Is this the major threat they are dealing with in this arc? Once you know what the purpose of the encounter is, it will help you determine the threat level you're looking for.

- **Where:** Where does the encounter take place physically, as well as where in the story is it happening? Is this an encounter in a settlement, the wastes, or a barroom? Also, is this an encounter happening before a major narrative moment or after one has just occurred? This will help balance out the threat level you are going for, as well as choose appropriate SGCs to fill the encounter. If you have a major story moment coming up, making an overwhelmingly powerful encounter happen before then may derail that story, however if you are seeking to drive home the danger, it could be a potent warning for the players regarding what they are getting themselves into.

- **When:** This goes along with "where" quite well, as determining when to have the players face the encounter will help you detail its exact nature. You may wish to have an encounter ready in case they make a certain choice, or a different encounter prepared if another option is chosen. When an encounter takes place can alter its difficulty as well, which is something important to keep in mind. If players have just overcome a major obstacle and are low on resources and high in Conditions, having a major fight may be too much for the story you are trying to tell.

- **Why:** Why are they encountering this? What choices have they made to go down this route? This can illustrate the depth of the challenge, taking a minor narrative encounter and changing it into a story-defining moment for some characters. Someone who has a path or accomplishment that can be linked to the encounter will have a much different reaction than a character that has no direct ties to what is going on. It is also a way for you to gain information on how the players interact with events, so you can tailor further encounters and story to the direction they want to play.

Example: *Jeff, the Storyguide, decides that he wants to add in a random encounter in between the actual mission objective of the players that has a few ways to solve it to give a little more flavor to the world. He goes through his five questions to determine what he wants to do.*

Who: *This is a minor encounter on the way to the objective, so since they are traveling from a settlement, he decides a small group of highwaymen would be appropriate.*

What: *This is a minor narrative encounter with a few ways to solve it through fighting, diplomacy, or escape so he keeps the number of highwaymen small, going with three bandits and a ringleader.*

When: *He doesn't want to derail the main objective, so he decides to put the encounter soon enough after they have left the settlement to allow them an escape option back to safety if they get in too much trouble.*

Where: *They can travel by road or through the forest, so whichever decision they make will determine if the bandits attack from stealth in the forest or confront them head on along the road. Both are close enough to the settlement to keep escape as an option.*

Why: *This is a minor narrative encounter to give them the chance to determine how they confront problems, as well as seeing if they gain any Conditions that would affect the main objective.*

Horde Mechanics

A horde is when enemies have gathered into large or even overwhelming numbers. Most commonly this refers to zed, but it can also be applied to animals, raider clans, or even a mass of guards from a settlement. There is no fixed number for what constitutes a horde, but a general guideline is that anything that dramatically outnumbers the opponents should be considered a horde for narrative and dramatic purposes.

A horde starts with a Scale of 2, which applies to appropriate rolls such as attacks. This Scale will increase by an additional 1 with every additional two levels of outnumbering of the horde size. For example, 4 to 1 odds would be Scale 3, while 6 to 1 would be Scale 4, and 8 to 1 would be Scale 5. If an SGC has an inherent Scale (like a Brute — see below), add this as base before adding the horde's Scale modifier. No matter the size of the horde or the starting Scale of the antagonist, the max Scale a horde can achieve is 6.

Hordes seem incredibly strong, but they do have some weaknesses. With such a target-rich environment attacks are far more likely to be successful on some part of the horde, reducing its overall strength. As such, for every time the overall horde's Health is reduced to zero, the Scale drops by 1 and the Health is refreshed. Particularly powerful hits might reduce the Scale by 2 or more, at Storyguide discretion. This lasts until the mass no longer qualifies as a horde. Additionally, hordes attack as a single attack — it costs them one additional success to do the *Inflict Damage* stunt (see p. XX), but they can buy that stunt multiple times, once per each viable target.

Fear Effects

Fear is a way of life in the wasteland. It keeps some locked behind stout walls and closed doors, while it spurs others to be alert and ready to confront the things outside them. When a horde of living creatures loses half of its numbers, it must make a successful check to maintain morale and continue to fight. Failing this check will cause the remaining members to scatter in fear to save their own lives.

To perform a morale check, a number of dice is rolled equal to the remaining members of the horde. The Storyguide must receive one success to maintain the horde's assault. Failing that, the horde scatters in fear. The automatic successes gained from Scale do not apply to this morale check.

Only the undead have no fear, and that is one of the things that makes them so incredibly dangerous to all living things. Hordes of zed never make this check.

Brute Mechanics

Whereas a horde becomes more dangerous with numbers, a brute is most often a single threat increased in power. They are champions of their category and can arise from the simplest bandit to the most terrifying Rad Dragon. A brute allows for an enhanced threat from a smaller total number of antagonists.

Adding the Brute tag to an SGC increases its Scale by 1. Brutes also have a maximum Scale of 6, regardless of their inherent starting Scale. Brutes attacks are staggeringly powerful and may evoke a Shockwave depending on the attack.

While it is possible to combine both brute and horde mechanics, it isn't recommended unless the Storyguide is seeking a truly herculean challenge to pit the characters against. Both brutes and hordes should each evoke their own level of challenge.

Building New Threats

While there are many examples below of possible antagonists, due to mutation, radiation, and other circumstances, the extent of the threats in the wastelands are myriad. Storyguides should feel free to create and customize their own threats for players to challenge and overcome.

When developing a new type of threat, one should first see if there are any matching the characteristics the Storyguide is looking for listed below. Even if nothing matches exactly, they offer a great example to start with. The template below offers a range of easily accessible variables you'll want to have on hand when designing the threat.

One should also consider the characters themselves when designing a new threat. What are their goals and aspirations?

ABSTRACTED DETAILS

In order to get rolling in the wastelands right away, these antagonist mechanics are a little abstracted from what you'd get in a full character sheet. For example, we don't call out soft armor — we just make those characters a little tougher, giving them a higher defense dice pool. We also don't track weapons, but it's easy to give raiders or Strain antagonists a +1 or +2 Enhancement as appropriate to the situation. Feel free to add more mechanical details to any of these characters!

What motivates them? What frightens them? Answering just a few of these questions will give you an idea of how to custom craft your threat to have the greatest amount of impact on the story you are telling as a group. Some may have a crusade against the zed, while others seek to establish a settlement according to their own goals and ideals. Antagonist threats can be designed that appeal to both these desires as well as others. Creating a zombie specifically attracted to a specific attribute of that area could give both types of characters a meaningful encounter at the same time, slaughtering zombies and defending the area while investigating what is causing the attraction. Keeping this in mind when you are creating new and interesting threats in the wastes will enhance the experience for all involved.

Rogue's Gallery: Threats

Mutated cats, shambling zed, and cannibalistic raider clans: These are just some of the myriad different threats that are encountered at any moment when making your way through the wastes. Below are some examples of the threats that must be endured and overcome to survive another day in the wasteland.

Each antagonist below is presented with a short description, a statistics template, and any special abilities they might possesses. The description paragraph gives a short explanation of the type of creature, as well as some of the most common traits associated with them. This can give Storyguides a basis upon which to describe the encountered creature to the players. The *statistics block* (initiative, melee attack, ranged attack, and defense) is listed with the number of dice rolled for each type of action, along with any Enhancement they would use. After that we list any Edges they may possess such as Faith, Psi, or Stunts.

Health refers to how many Conditions they may suffer before death. Threats do not suffer Injury Conditions like most characters. Whenever they would suffer an Injury Condition, simply reduce the amount of Health instead. As such, Threats do not usually have difficulty modifiers for increased damage. If the Storyguide wishes, however, they can apply an appropriate Injury Condition should the situation warrant it — such as if a survivor kneecaps a raider or cuts an arm off a zombie. Either way, Health is decreased after an attack.

Once Health is reduced to zero, the threat is either Taken Out or Bleeding Out, depending on the situation. Stress Conditions can apply to Health at Storyguide discretion.

These threats are just examples, and Storyguides should feel free to adjust them as they feel necessary to better enhance the story they and their players are crafting.

Just Folks: Denizens

Everyone is a threat. The deadliest assassin is sometimes less dangerous than a tinker with an idea and the will to attempt it. Bandits prey on settlements and travelers, merchants prey on customers, and the zed just prey on anything moving. Creatures once domesticated now harbor an unending taste for human flesh, and once-innocent animals who would run in fear have instead become the hunters. Most denizens are found in cities or settlements, or near access to them. Bandits need an income and are unlikely to be found far from established trade routes or settlements, as zed and raiders have no issues preying on them just as they would any other.

Animals

Plague Hound

Combine mindless ferocity with undead endurance, and you have a Plague Hound. These vicious canines have a voracious desire for flesh and don't care if it is still moving when they consume it. Plague Hounds are rarely found alone, and most often hunt in packs. Their mutation has made hunting much easier for them, as their diseased bites swiftly poison the body, leading to muscle spasms and tremors. This makes it far more difficult for any living prey to successfully escape their jaws.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Diseased Bite: Plague hounds are not picky about their food, and carrion will work in a pinch. This has caused their bite to fester with disease which spreads to anything they get within their jaws. When a Plague Hound successfully bites a target, they receive poison damage (Continuous, 1 minute), lowering their initiative by 2 until it is cured or has run its course.

Rad Dragon

Rad Dragons are the ultimate terror of mutated lizards. These reptiles have been mutated by radiation into giant size and potent poison. Entire caravans have gone missing after a Rad Dragon attack, with only the green glow of radiation and the toxic poison residue left as traces behind them. As if their melee attacks are not dangerous enough, Rad Dragons can violently expel their breath in a poisonous cone at multiple targets. Those who breathe even a single breath of this poison without a ready cure can find themselves in life-threatening danger without a single wound from the dragon itself. Just the rumor of a Rad Dragon in the area is enough for some settlements to pack up and flee just in case.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 10

Ranged Attack: 8



Defense: 5

Health: 8

Poison Breath: Rad Dragons can violently expel the poison within themselves as a breath weapon. This poison causes horrific pain from its caustic nature as well as lingering side effects. Rad Dragon poison inflicts Continuous (minute) Deadly damage with a rating of 3 on anyone who encounters it until cured. This breath weapon is a 30-foot cone.

Rust Devil Rats

These rats of unusual size have spent so much time burrowing throughout city ruins that the rust dust has permanently inhabited their fur. This cloud of acrid dust follows them wherever they go and is the bane of men and mechanicals alike. Rust devil rats prefer to ambush their prey in enclosed spaces, where the rust they exude will enhance their defense and hinder the attacks of their prey.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Unrelenting Rust: Rust devil rats give off a cloud of rust whenever they move, which blends in with their natural coloration. In an enclosed area, rust devil rats receive a +1 Enhancement to their defense rolls.

Assassins

Sell Blade

Sell blades are just as they sound. Some survivors are willing to do anything for a few cred or a favor in the future. At best considered amateur assassins, they rarely work with any flair or style when a sharp knife and a dark alley will do. Many sell blades serve as thugs for gangs, bodyguards for the more criminally minded, or work as ruthless protection for lower-class establishments that need a little extra muscle.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Improvised Weapons: Sell blades have experience in making anything at hand into a weapon: bar stool, broken bottle, or even a twisted piece of metal used as a dagger. They gain a +1 Enhancement to melee and ranged attacks with any common item used as a weapon.

Nighthawk

Nighthawks take being an assassin to heart and are expensive solutions to the problem. They are true professionals and carefully plan and execute their missions with high-level talent

and skill. Nighthawks value their reputation as just as important as the weapons they use, so go the extra mile to ensure they protect it. A rare few may be contacted directly, though most often work for some organization or faction. Nighthawks command high prices in UPPs or items to ply their trade, and only the most junior of assassins can be hired without a heavy investment.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 8

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Never See It Coming: Nighthawks pride themselves on executing their targets in a single strike and escaping unseen. When attacking from stealth, unobserved by the target, they receive a +2 Enhancement to their melee or ranged strike for that single attack.

Brawlers

Pugilist

Bare-knuckle fighters, barroom bouncers, and street fighters, pugilists let their fists do the talking when it comes to fighting. They are common toughs, but still dangerous in their particular specialty. Anyone thinking to hold their common ways of fighting against them is in for a rude awakening, as pugilists know that the first rule is to do unto others before they do unto you. No trick is too dirty, no move too risky for a pugilist seeking to put an opponent down.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 3

Defense: 3

Health: 4

High Impact: Pugilists know where to hit to disable their opponents quickly and brutally. They can purchase the *Knockout* Stunt (p. XX) with one less success.

Gladiator

Gladiators are extensively trained in the fighting arts. They master several weapons and types of armor in constant warfare. Either in gambling arenas or out in the wilds of the waste, gladiators are a potent threat. Their mastery of multiple styles of violence can give them a crucial edge when it comes to handling situations that suddenly go sideways. A gladiator lives to fight and fights to live, and their savagery is unmatched.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Armor of Scars: Gladiators receive an increased defense and resistance to pain due to their constant exposure to wounds that would lay another low. A hearty constitution is required to thrive in the arena. Upon receiving a successful attack, gladiators receive a +1 Enhancement to their defense rolls for the remainder of the fight.

Highwaymen

Bandit

Often found alone or in small groups, bandits are ambush predators. They rarely kill and are far more likely to steal everything valuable and then abandon their victims. It is far more lucrative for these villains to leave their targets alive to regain their wealth and belongings for a chance to rob them again another day. Bandits look for easy marks when it comes to targets; individual wanderers or small trading caravans are their favored prey. Only in very successful groups, or bands that have formed strong bonds of loyalty, will these opportunists dare to remain when things get bad. Far better to live and rob another day than die beside someone who may knife you for your loot that evening anyway.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 2

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Surprise!: When ambushing prey, that first strike is crucial. Highwaymen get a +1 Enhancement to initiative rolls if they strike before their targets realize they are there. This bonus applies to the round immediately following their surprise attack, and then is lost.

Ringleader

When enough bandits come together to hit higher-value targets, it is inevitable that a ringleader emerges to control the group. Ringleaders are either the smartest or the most brutal of the bandit crew. They lead by fear or by success, because a ringleader who can't keep her crew in spoils will quickly find herself deposed, often fatally. Often the presence of a ringleader can stabilize the morale of normally self-centered bandits, ensuring that even those of their crew that would rather run when things get tough are too loyal or afraid to do so in the presence of their boss.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 3

Ranged Attack: 7

Defense: 3

Health: 4

All the Best Loot: Ringleaders gain the first pick of the spoils, so have enhanced equipment compared to the others in their band. They receive a +1 Enhancement to melee attack, ranged attack, and defense rolls. In addition, they give an additional die to morale checks for any Highwaymen nearby.

Soldiers

Guard

A typical town or caravan guard is often hired as much for show as for any martial talent. Guards serve as a warning device when danger is imminent. They often serve as rudimentary deterrents of any obvious violence in settlement boundaries. Standard guards are also often seen working as security or bodyguards for the more law-abiding people and establishments. They can also be found as the core of many police forces for those cities and settlements lucky enough to have such a structure in place.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Familiarity: A guard becomes quickly familiar with who belongs and who does not. They have increased alertness when dealing with someone they have met less than twice. When dealing with someone for the first time, guards receive a +1 Enhancement to their initiative.

Rank and File

Rank and file are soldiers that have training and the will to use it. These soldiers are more expensive to hire but show far greater results than standard guards. Higher-end caravans and more wealthy settlements generally hire rank and file soldiers to protect their interests. These are the veteran corps of any group of soldiers, and often serve as trainers for the newer guard recruits and guards. Grizzled sergeants and corporals are members of the rank and file.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Phalanx: Rank and file soldiers are trained to work together. They trust their brothers and sisters to watch their back with the save fervor that they would for them. When at least two others are present, the defense for each rank and file is increased by 1.

Officer

Officers are the commanders of groups of soldiers. They are both leadership and administration, highly trained in both clerical and martial skills to allow them to best make use of their soldiers. Officers command garrisons or oversee larger cities and trade caravans. Officers are either the cream of the crop, or those wealthy enough to buy their way into such a position. As such, the quality of officers varies wildly based on circumstance. No matter how they got the position, however, they command quite a lot of power through the respect, or fear, of the guards that serve under them.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Well Equipped: Officers get paid more and often get first pick of any loot from kills their squad makes. This ensures the officer generally has the best gear and thus the most chance to survive. Officers gain a +2 Enhancement to their melee attack, ranged attack, and defense rolls.

Thieves

Pickpocket

Prevalent in larger settlements and cities, pickpockets spend most of their time in bars and market areas obtaining whatever small things they can steal and resell with none the wiser. Loners by nature, in rare cases some will form small gangs for complicated capers. The most common is a group of two, with one serving as a distraction while the other handles the actual lift. Another common occurrence is gangs forming with pickpockets, cutpurses, sell blades, and ringleaders, who work within cities and settlements to control specific territories.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 4

Ranged Attack: 2

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Unassuming: The best pickpockets can blend in with the crowd before and after their crime. Difficulty to spot a pickpocket with others around is increased by 1.

Cutpurse

Cutpurses are all about the cash. They specifically target monetary wealth over items, unless they are working in a larger gang. While a cutpurse won't turn down an easy acquisition, they are far more likely to work crowded areas where they can make the most quickly and then fade away into the crowd. Unlike pickpockets, who focus on getting anything they can reach and then getting away, a cutpurse will focus on wallets, bags, and other storage items on a person. Nicking them by stealth or surprise, they will then flee with a big score to live off until the heat dies down, when they can go out and do it again.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 2

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Quick hands: Cutpurses are naturally dexterous. When focused solely on dodging or avoidance, their defense rolls are increased by 1.

The Cannibals: Raiders

In nearly all creatures that walk the wastelands, a spark exists that enables them not only to survive, but to do so earnestly, with eyes facing the future despite the sins of their past. But in this bleak world, desperation grows paramount. One tragedy can lead survivors on paths riddled with horror, and tragedies are all-too common nowadays. In the face of that agony, eating people becomes a little more convenient. Then the question of searching for bodies is answered by hunting them down instead, with other like-minded *things* that are not truly animals but definitely not people.

These "survivors" go on to develop heinous conventions about how to eat flesh, how to harvest it, and how to process it. But the entire time, their brains are ill-equipped to perpetrate these horrors. In a final search for amity, they unite with others who have fallen into this abyss, to turn such acts into conventions, and then to turn conventions into dark and terrible cultures of rage and hate.

In the dark depths of their minds, that spark to survive goes out. It is replaced by a drive to do nothing more than exist, and in the wastelands, existence is *monstrous*. Therein lies the truth of the matter; that you are one bad day away from becoming just another terrifying raider.

Across the wastelands, individuals and communities alike are regularly assaulted by the unreasoning cannibals known as raiders. Driven insane by the weight of their deeds and the Infection inside the meat they consume, they are warped into a force of nature, comprised of countless beings who are beyond redemption. Bestial, ravenous, utterly amoral, and downright petrifying, entire clans are composed of these genetic abnormalities. Within the cultures they have grown, each clan is unique in expression, traits, and tactics. Those who deviate are killed and eaten. But those who survive can transform their clans into something worse than before.

As cannibalistic people, their diet of infected meat is crucial to survival. Without it, raiders cannot heal over time and perish from starvation. But if they eat enough, they are remade with forms like the Strains, allowing for more insidious plots to hatch among their clans. Due to their reliance on the Infection though, they do not pass through the Grave Mind like survivors. They are remade much like they were before, and view those who return with trauma as a greater threat than the undead.

For all their crimes, raiders cannot be redeemed. Due to the concentration of the Infection inside their bodies, raiders have become reliant on it and will die if they do not eat enough. All attempts to reform them have failed, for they are now different from all the other Strains. No longer people, they are the monsters of the wastes, wholly separate from the all-too-common undead.

Berserkers

The most common type of clans is best categorized as Berserkers. These raiders are people from all walks of life whose self-hatred and violent urges have transformed into a terrorizing lifestyle. Driven by rage and psychosis, they attack outsiders on sight for the glory of their clan, beating down and cutting up their opponents with simple melee weapons.

Their developed culture is remarkably complex, however. In the face of their deeds, they resort to acts of mutilation as part of sadistic rituals to prove their invulnerability. This status of greatness, and perhaps perceived godliness, results in a hierarchy of scars. Those with the most scar tissue and the most kills control the tribe itself.

The only exception is facial scars, which are perceived as a sign of weakness, and proven by warfare. However, it is also reserved for scarification between mates in the tribe, which simultaneously demonstrates submission and dominance among them. Such a convention has only strengthened Berserkers over the years, resulting in coming-of-age ceremonies where prisoners are either tortured or forced to partake in arena-style fights.

Donning primitive masks, Berserkers are a wild and unpredictable force. They are a swarm of skirmishers, which can easily overpower an experienced fighter. It is recommended that their groups are fought with greater numbers, which can split up and cut down their fighters.

Berserker Juvie

Inexperienced in the regular customs of the clan, Berserker Juvies are either recent additions to the clan or young raiders who have come of age to partake in fights with the experienced fighters. Easy to defeat in close quarters, their javelins tend to complicate battles with entire groups.

Initiative: 4
Melee Attack: 2
Ranged Attack: 6
Defense: 3
Health: 3

Berserker Thug

The bulk of the clan's ranks, Berserker Thugs wield trench knives and hand axes with wild imprecision, preferring to overwhelm opponents with force rather than outmaneuver them with finesse. While one is easily dispatched, groups of them are dangerous if they manage to close in.

Initiative: 3
Melee Attack: 7
Ranged Attack: 5
Defense: 3
Health: 4

Berserker Champion

Feared by survivors, raiders, and even their own clan, Berserker Champions are the uniting force for swarms of these raiders. Equipped with symbolic machetes, sledgehammers, and throwing knives, their rage is unparalleled and has been rewarded with control of most, if not all, of their tribe. For more inexperienced survivors, attacking this enemy is not a solo effort.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Last Breath: When Berserker Champions are out of Health, they explode in rage. When they do so, they lash out at the nearest target and continue to fight for three turns or until they successfully strike their target. During this rage, they gain +2 Enhancement on all their rolls. Upon ending their fight, they are immediately considered to be Bleeding Out.

Degenerates

Those raiders who give in to instinct and fear until they seem more animal than person are known as Degenerates. From there, they organize themselves into packs, roving across the wastes in search of prey together. Instead of weaponry, they utilize mutations that have evolved in them over the years, such as claws, teeth, and keen sight. However, the tradeoff is their inability to comprehend technology of any sort, ranging from wasteland innovations to pre-Fall concepts.

No true hierarchy exists in a group of Degenerates, but their packs tend to max out at about a dozen members. Any sort of leadership tends to default to parental figures in the group, and while these raiders are fierce predators in the wild, they are rarely aggressive toward members of their own pack. They also maintain dens to which they routinely return, with pieces of their victims in their teeth. In a curious twist, they like to decorate their nests with pretty colors and fine textures. They will also claim any object with an uncommon or rare color, such as pink or white, along with prints and neon clothes. These newfound belongings quickly become part of their bedding and attempts to repossess them are always met with violence.

Since they don't understand technology, Degenerates stake out territory away from civilized or urban areas unless food is scarce. They'll seek out areas with consumable plants or animal herds, as experience has taught them that prey eventually comes looking for food. As pack hunters, they regularly engage in tactics with lures, flanking and eventually swarming their targets.

Degenerate Whelp

The juveniles of a pack, Whelps are usually the members who are too young to hunt without assistance or too frail or injured to fend for themselves. As a result, their claws and teeth are a little easier to deal with. However, other members of their pack will defend these members to the death, as they possess a strong kinship with the ones for whom they care.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6



Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Degenerate Hound

Most of a pack is always made up of Degenerate Hounds, who constitute the combined strength of the group. While incapable of striking at long range, these raiders are formidable up close, as their swarm tactics possess no human strategy and can be wildly unpredictable.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Degenerate Alpha

Every pack that thrives in the wilderness eventually finds a Degenerate Alpha in one or two members. These are normally the strongest raiders in the group, and as a result, they frequently take up the flank in any hunt. Few things prove more terrifying than a Degenerate Alpha pouncing when you think you've escaped its pack. Because of their duties, they also tend to survive violent encounters, slinking away while nobody is looking.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Dollies

During the shift to a raider mindset, the survivors who grow obsessed with the ideals of beauty and attraction in their consumption eventually becoming dark, terrifying creatures. Known as Dollies, these raiders possess a mutation that has destroyed their vocal cords. However, they make up for it with a nearly inhuman beauty, no matter their gender. Wielding stiletto knives and straight razors, they do not seem difficult to contend with — that is, until their grace and poise enraptures you.

Dollie clan hierarchies are entirely centered on the appearance and attractiveness of each individual member. Without voices, outsiders have no means by which to interact with them, and so their tribes are incredibly insular. These creatures choose who can reproduce or lead their societies based solely on their perfection. Unblemished skin, blood-red lips, paleness, high cheekbones, and striking features are all praised, and those who don't meet the standards of the clan are ostracized and exiled. Agile and stealthy, Dollies are content with their culture and only make excursions in the pursuit of beauty.

Dangerous even in small numbers, Dollies collect the softest human fat, sneaking into communities and snatching young children and tender babies. If they can, they will try to avoid a direct attack on outsiders unless it's the only way to steal their defenseless victims. However, they are fierce defenders of their homes and their cosmetic supplies. Furthermore, the moment a Dollie suffers an injury, they enter a blind rage and attack outsiders until dead. This is due to the blemish of such a wound, and rather than face exile, they will defend their tribe until put down.

Dollie Ingenue

Among the more innocent members of the clan, Dollie Ingenues are younger raiders who are beginning to build up their own collection of cosmetics. Due to their youth, they are highly regarded within the clan, and so they receive a decent amount of support on any excursion. Most survivors know that if they catch an Ingenue, other Dollies must be nearby.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Unnerving Beauty: Any character that wishes to attack this creature for the first time, without provocation, must roll Culture + Composure against difficulty 3. If they fail this roll, they just cannot bring themselves to strike. If a character has had a violent encounter with Dollies before, they automatically succeed in this roll.

Dollie Hoi Polloi

A step up from the younger Dollies, the Hoi Polloi make up the other half of the tribe. Constantly infighting with each other over appearance and who leads whom, these raiders tend to act a lot like other clans, swarming and overwhelming opponents with numbers. However, their main objective is to compel others to defend them and, eventually, join them. To discover another creature of beauty is a major boost to their internal status.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Unnerving Beauty: Any character that wishes to attack this creature for the first time, without provocation, must roll Culture + Composure against difficulty 3. If they fail this roll, they just cannot bring themselves to strike. If a character has had a violent encounter with Dollies before, they automatically succeed in this roll.

Killer Smile: This creature may compel and mesmerize a single target to help them once a day. Upon smiling at a character, the target must roll Persuasion + Resolve against difficulty 4. If they fail, their character gains the +1 Complication *Mesmerized*, which evokes guilt and an obligation to help this creature if not bought off. Once the Complication is bought off once, it doesn't return, even if the Dollie attempts Killer Smile again.

CAPTURED

You faced insurmountable odds, and whether you fought to your last breath or accepted surrender, you're now in the hands of the enemy, alive but in chains. Who knows what they're going to do with you, but it's best not to stick around and find out. Or bide your time, maybe you'll get lucky...

Momentum Trigger: Whenever you spot something that might help you escape.

Resolution: When you escape or break free of your restraints, cage, captors, and so on.

Dollie Queen

Far above the others in looks, grace, and charm, Dollie Queens are some of the most dangerous raiders in the wastelands, commanding large groups of their tribes with absolute power. It is these leaders who exile subpar members and enforce the customs of beauty. Utilizing a savage mix of violence and seduction, this enemy is not to be faced alone, and mercy to the soul that discovers the sins a Queen commits in their home.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Unreal Beauty: Any character that wishes to attack this creature for the first time, without provocation, must roll Culture + Composure against difficulty 4. If they fail this roll, they just cannot bring themselves to strike. If a character has had a violent encounter with Dollies before, they automatically succeed in this roll.

Killer Smile: This creature may compel and mesmerize a single target to help them once a day. Upon smiling at a character, the target must roll Persuasion + Resolve against difficulty 4. If they fail, their character gains the +2 Complication *Mesmerized*, which evokes guilt and an obligation to help this creature if not bought off. Once the Complication is bought off once, it doesn't return, if the Dollie attempts Killer Smile again.

Dread Surgeons

On one of the darker paths for raiders, Dread Surgeons are raiders who obsess over the perceived defects of the unmodified body. Beginning with their own forms, they mutilate their bodies to the extreme before they seek out victims for surgical experimentation. All this is done in the pursuit of transcending flesh, and so whatever pain is suffered by a patient is of little concern to them. With procedures for skin removal and limb grafting, their abhorrent acts are infamous across the wastelands. However, they have also become some of the most advanced doctors in existence, resulting in desperate survivors contacting them and attempting to strike deals for their services. Rarely does this go as planned.

Within their cabals, Dread Surgeons operate with a hierarchy solely based on experience. The more operations one has done, the higher their standing. This occasionally results in feverous blood rages, where the members of a clan invade and overwhelm a region, subduing and operating on as many victims as possible. Death of their patient does not discount their experience, since survivors are likely to return from the dead. Otherwise, they live beneath settlements or in the remains of old-world hospitals and clinics. They scavenge old medical uniforms and craft personal medical smocks with tanned human leather.

Dread Surgeons are not a significant challenge in a fair fight. However, they rarely do battle like other raiders, preferring instead to kidnap their victims. In their hidden operating rooms, any wounds and imperfections are addressed while the "patient" is restrained. Only then does medical experimentation begin.

Dread Surgeon Resident

Regardless of age, the Dread Surgeons with the least amount of experience are considered Residents. Noticeably cleaner and more put together than the others, Residents constantly seek to prove themselves in open surgery. The growing mess of blood on their belongings is considered their coming-of-age over time; however, their inexperience has been known to get the best of them.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 2

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Medicinal Bolt: Dread Surgeons prefer to sedate their victims from a distance with a compact pistol crossbow. Every shot from this device that successfully hits its target deals the Fatigued Condition (p. XX) and resolves after an hour or with a Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to number of shots taken. After every shot, the crossbow requires a separate turn to reload and refuel the doses.

Quick Stitch: Dread Surgeons understand the need for a fast stabilization, if only to successfully steal people away for their experiments. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes, if a Dread Surgeon reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to prevent their death. However, that character earns the Captured Condition and doesn't resolve any previous Conditions, which further inhibits their escape.

Dread Surgeon Attending Physician

The clear majority of Dread Surgeons are Attending Physicians, comprising insidiously calm raiders who grow more and more dangerous with every operation. Better at kidnapping victims, Physicians have developed some of the most advanced medical techniques known in the wastes, but at the expense of

countless unwilling victims who have either perished or barely live in the wake of their treatments.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 3

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Medicinal Bolt: Dread Surgeons prefer to sedate their victims from a distance with a compact pistol crossbow. Every shot from this device that successfully hits its target deals the Fatigued Condition (p. XX) and resolves after an hour or with a Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to number of shots taken. After every shot, the crossbow requires a separate turn to reload and refuel the doses.

Quick Stitch: Dread Surgeons understand the need for a fast stabilization, if only to successfully steal people away for their experiments. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes, if a Dread Surgeon reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to prevent their death. However, that character earns the Captured Condition and doesn't resolve any previous conditions, which further inhibits their escape.

Dread Chief of Surgery

At the head of every cabal, a Chief of Surgery has experimented long enough to know the most basic building blocks of a survivor's mind, body, and perhaps their very soul and spirit. Conducting heinous experiments, their actions violate the very laws of nature, but in the wastelands, no law is considered sacred anymore.

Initiative: 8

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Medicinal Bolt: Dread Surgeons prefer to sedate their victims from a distance with a compact pistol crossbow. Every shot from this device that successfully hits its target deals the Fatigued Condition (p. XX) and resolves after an hour or with a Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to number of shots taken. After every shot, the crossbow requires a separate turn to reload and refuel the doses.

Quick Stitch: Dread Surgeons understand the need for a fast stabilization, if only to successfully steal people away for their experiments. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes, if a Dread Surgeon reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to prevent their death. However, that character earns the Captured Condition and doesn't resolve any previous conditions, which further inhibits their escape.

Surgical Correction: With a Captured target, a Dread Chief of Surgery can spend an hour cutting, sawing, stitching, and injecting horrific substances into open wounds. Upon doing so, a dot from one random Attribute is removed and added to another random Attribute. This change is permanent, but the target suffers a Trauma Condition from the terrible process.

Headhunters

Even today, there are trophy hunters who exist to hunt down the biggest zed and kill the best prey. The raiders who take this to another level are known as Headhunters. Sadistic and primitive, they originate as creatures who express such pride in their fighting skills that this savagery is all they have left. Such a raider distinguishes between outsiders and others like them, but only barely.

Within the roving clan, their trophies are the sole indicator of status. Consisting mostly of faces carved from their victims, they are constantly decomposing after Headhunters acquire them. As a result, those who get ahead in the hierarchy are raiders who hunt frequently, replenishing and increasing the size of their collections. The beauty of such faces is also important, but ultimately, strength means nothing to their internal culture unless that strength has helped build an exceptional collection of trophies. These raiders will defend such collections to the death.

In a fight, Headhunters rely on a mixture of stealth and surprise. They will close in on their targets as quietly as possible, at which point the eldest sounds a horn. Thriving on the chaos of the noise, the pack will strike all at once in a form of shock and awe, using hatchets, knives, and bows to overpower the enemy and bring them down. However, Headhunters are not out to behead or even kill survivors. They solely intend to carve faces off, and whether the victim is dead or alive afterwards is not of their concern. Horrifically, they are usually still alive afterward.

Headhunter Tenderfoot

Those Headhunters with meager collections and a relatively young age are known as Tenderfoots. Juvenile but fearsome, these

FACELESS

A Headhunter, or one sick bastard, got their hands on you when a fight went wrong. With a knife and rudimentary slicing, they peeled your face off and left you with barely more than the muscles underneath. While you're faceless, all Social rolls are +2 difficulty against characters impacted by this gruesome appearance.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever you fail on a Social roll, or another character doesn't succeed on their rolls due to your gruesome appearance nearby.

Resolution: Graft the original face back on or substitute yours with a new face. (Beware of side effects.) If you die with this Condition, you return with facial scars and possibly a Trauma Condition related to your disfigurement.

raiders are wholly intent on building up their collections, even if it means scrambling against each other and butchering the job in the process.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 4

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Face Carving: Headhunters are trained from an extremely young age to skin and carve off faces, and so they need only seconds. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes in a fight, and a Headhunter reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to cut off their face and inflict the Faceless Condition.

Headhunter Brave

While each tribe differs in the details, those Headhunters who acquire a certain number of trophies undergo a coming-of-age ritual where their own faces are carved off. Those who survive or return from the dead become Braves, the primal bulk of the packs and all the more precise in their shock and awe techniques.

Initiative: 7

Melee Attack: 5

Ranged Attack: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Face Carving: Headhunters are trained from an extremely young age to skin and carve off faces, and so they need only seconds. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes in a fight, and a Headhunter reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to cut off their face and inflict the Faceless Condition.

Headhunter Chieftain

Those Braves with the largest collection of faces become the Chieftain of a pack. As terrifying as any Headhunter, these raiders usher in their devastating assaults with the sounding of their horns. There has been some mild success in stealing horns or killing Chieftains before they have a chance to blow it, but the moment the Chieftain falls, chaos overtakes the area until every Headhunter is dead and gone.

Initiative: 8

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Face Carving: Headhunters are trained from an extremely young age to skin and carve off faces, and so they need only seconds. Whenever a character is Taken Out or concedes in a fight, and a Headhunter reaches them, that raider may spend a turn to cut off their face and inflict the Faceless Condition.

Thrill Killers

Among raiders, there are those creatures that the others fear, with darker deeds and an unknown drive that terrifies survivors. Those who fall to their sinister natures eventually become Thrill Killers — hunter-gatherer raiders that honor their own dark cults every autumn. Little is known about their origin otherwise, but stories are told of a place where the night knows no darker shadow, and that is where Thrill Killers emerge from.

For most of the year, their lives are simple. They take up farming tools to farm and scavenge the wastes, their neighbors none the wiser. But once the leaves start to wither in autumn, something sadistic awakens in them. Gathering together in remote areas, they conduct the first of their rites as a new community. When the animals begin to feel the chill, that's when they begin to strike. Crafting masks of bone and leather anew, they usher in the harvest at night, raiding caravans and settlements. They have no true target except to terrorize their victims and leave them in agony; they do not collect supplies or nest in the homes they take. All that matters is fulfilling their dark need to stain the ground with blood, taint the air with screams, and revel in their horrific courting rituals across the wastes.

When the night ends, they return to their daily routines until the moon rises again. When the last of the leaves fall, they burn their masks and forsake their deeds until autumn returns. The Thrill Killers need only claw hammers, javelins, and hand axes to accomplish their goals, which remain esoteric. They have become a dark symptom of the world as a result.

Thrill Kill Lunatic

Fresh masks to the Thrill Killers, Lunatics are inexperienced and have recently succumbed to their twisted destiny. While easy to dispatch one, they understand the wisdom of sticking with other Lunatics as a result. As a result, a horde becomes more challenging with every young blood that joins the fray.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Efficient Horde: When Thrill Kill Lunatics are combined into a horde, they gain an additional point of Scale.

Thrill Kill Maniac

Terrifying in every sense of the word, Maniacs have wholeheartedly given themselves over to their dark rites. Leading their fellow Thrill Killers through each milestone of the harvest, their howls can be heard for miles at night, and this is usually the only warning any nearby survivors will receive.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 7 (+1 Enhancement)

Ranged Attack: 5

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Thrill Killer's Dish: Once Thrill Killers reach the peak of revelry, madness takes hold of the region. Those who witness this height of terror must roll Survival + Resolve against difficulty 3 to face it. If they fail, the sight sends them screaming into the night, Thrill Killers on their tail.

Those who are Taken Out and Captured face a torturous fate worse than death. Forced to participate in these unspeakable rites of sadism, such victims suffer a Stress Condition for every 10 minutes they're involved, until they are Burned Out. Should a victim continue to commit these acts for their own survival, they gain a Trauma Condition due to their forced barbarism.

During this time, a player may choose to have their character concede. This immediately results in their death; however, if they have taken a Trauma Condition from the raiders, they do not gain another from dying.

Thrill Kill Lord Psychopath

The epitome of horror, the Lord Psychopath carries whips and swords intended to deal as much pain as possible to their victims. No act is considered heinous to these Thrill Killers, and those who survive the attacks wish they had died instead. Those who perish and return know that no hope remains in the wake of the Lord Psychopath

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 8 (+2 Enhancement)

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Thrill Killer's Dish: Once Thrill Killers reach the peak of revelry, madness takes hold of the region. Those who witness this height of terror must roll Survival + Resolve against difficulty 4 to face it. If they fail, the sight sends them screaming into the night, Thrill Killers on their tail.

Those who are Taken Out and Captured face a torturous fate worse than death. Forced to participate in these unspeakable rites of sadism, such victims suffer a Stress Condition for every 10 minutes they're involved, until they are Burned Out. Should a victim continue to commit these acts for their own survival, they gain a Trauma Condition due to their forced barbarism.

During this time, a player may choose to have their character concede. This immediately results in their death; however, if they have taken a Trauma Condition from the raiders, they do not gain another from dying.

Urban Raiders

In more urban areas, raiders have proven incredibly adaptable to their surroundings. As a tradeoff, their ranks are not diversified like other clans. They comprise their own unique swarm, operating like an infection that is regularly stomped back down under the weight of every city. Like other raiders, they are no less dangerous, and those who come from more rural areas may contend with more than they bargained for when it comes to these creatures.

Twisted Metal Raider

Deep in the ruins of the old cities, Twister Metal Raiders dwell in collapsed I-beam piles and crumbling balconies they have converted into nests and dens. Adorned in scrap metal, they hoard shiny materials in the name of their simplistic creed, which praises the call of the rubble as a form of salvation. They are one of the few types of raiders known to use guns, which come in the form of scraplock pistols.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 2

Ranged Attack: 6 (+1 Enhancement)

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Never Without Scrap: If a Twisted Metal Raider is disarmed or without a weapon, they can spend a turn to scrounge the area and acquire the +1 Enhancement "Scrap Knife" from the wastes.

Siltmurk Raider

Wielding javelins and knives, Siltmurk dwell at the edge of canals and open bodies of water. Covered in silty mud, they sneak along the waterline before popping up and viciously attacking survivors in close quarters. Territorial, cannibalistic, and primitive, they drag victims down the coast to their dens, where they are devoured in carnal rites of sacrifice and sustenance.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6 (+1 Enhancement)

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Waterbaby Ambush: When Siltmurk Raiders first attack from the water, they do so with +1 Enhancement.

The Undead: Zombies

In the wastelands, the most common threat by far is the undead. Commonly referred to as "zed" as a handy shorthand in chaotic fights, the diversity of humanity both before and after the Fall has resulted in over a dozen common categories of undead and countless zombies that are unique to certain regions or wholly different in the machinations of the Grave Mind. Since they are their own twisted product of evolution, they tend to be present where it is most advantageous for them to exist.

Zombies are ubiquitous to the wastelands, serving as a constant threat to all survivors no matter their ulterior motives. Whether they're only a nuisance or change the very course of the game is up to the Storyguide, and can vary from act to act, or even between scenes.

ZOMBIE POWERS

All the zombies listed below possess the following powers:

Mindless: While the undead can be manipulated, compelled to act, and even baited, there's no true interaction with them. Any Social rolls to communicate with zombies automatically fail.

Undead: The undead do not tire. They do not take Complications, Conditions, or any drawbacks whatsoever from mortal concerns such as fatigue, starvation, thirst, disease, or exhaustion.

Animates

The more insidious forms of the Infection have affected insects, maggots, and other bugs. These undead denizens tend to result in a zombie that not only reanimates, but constantly seeks out other hosts. Since these insects control the flesh in a hive, Animates do not move forward in a normal fashion. Their motions are inhuman and disjointed, usually sickening to any who witness them. The flesh itself is forced forward, resulting in a constant puking sound, and the variety of insects results in a bizarre combination of clicks, squeaks, and disjointed cartilage. More often than not, survivors can hear Animates before they see them.

Animates always attempt to grapple with their targets, biting into skin and angling towards exposed orifices, so that the hive itself can transmit from an old host into a new host. Some only seek to spread their infestation, while others require new bodies. Found in areas with infestations of both bugs and vermin, they're commonly spotted in waste areas, sewers, or dumping sites.

Animate Ragdoll

Slow and disjointed, Ragdolls are the most frequently seen Animates in the wastelands. With unnatural movements and infected bugs dripping from its fingers, maggots crawl along its teeth as it searches for new hosts.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Parasitic Infestation: If the Animate successfully grapples a target, its insects begin to crawl into wounds and orifices such as the mouth and nose. Once within the survivor, they quickly begin to multiply, turning their blood rotten with eggs and pus. Any survivor infested in this manner now suffers from the Rotblood disease (p. XX).

Animate Swarm

Buzzing louder than other Animates, Swarms are assembled from flying insects, ranging from hornets to roaches, and everything in between. Due to their nature, they are a much greater threat at longer distances, which forces survivors to close in and risk their safety, if only to dispel the hive itself.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 5

Ranged Attack: 7 (+1 Enhancement)

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Locust Swarm: Animate Swarms are composed primarily of flying vermin, such as locusts and wasps. As a result, they can make ranged attacks. They are also immune to any attack dealt by a ranged weapon, such as arrows, guns and javelins, as it passes through the undead mass as though someone tried to shoot the wings off a fly. They are still susceptible to melee attacks, as any bug can be swatted down. They still need to grapple a target to infest them.

Parasitic Infestation: If the Animate successfully grapples a target, its insects begin to crawl into wounds and orifices such as the mouth and nose. Once within the survivor, they quickly begin to multiply, turning their blood rotten with eggs and pus. Any survivor infested in this manner now suffers from the Rotblood disease (p. XX).

Animate Skin Statues

The biggest type of Animate, Skin Statues lunge over greater distances, while their grapple can virtually swarm a survivor. Standing straight up, they average about seven feet, although their fragmented nature leaves them hunched over.

Initiative: 7

Melee Attack: 9 (+3 Enhancement)

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 6

Parasitic Infestation: If the Animate successfully grapples a target, its insects begin to crawl into wounds and orifices such as the mouth and nose. Once within the survivor, they quickly begin to multiply, turning their blood rotten with eggs and pus. Any survivor infested in this manner now suffers from the Rotblood disease (p. XX).

Boneheads

Slightly more dangerous than typical zed, Boneheads are zombies that are characterized by their deteriorating facial tissue, which eventually leaves their entire skull exposed. Usually misidentified as Shamblers at first glance, they possess a survival instinct that compels them to travel within larger hordes and keep to the middle. With this tactic, it allows the other undead to push forward and wear down at survivors before closing in on

their targets. In the past, it has been spotted walking at normal speeds, indicating that its pace with slower zombies is intentional. This has led to a lot of speculation that Boneheads possess some basic thought functions.

While not as intelligent as survivors and most mammals, its tactics enable a camouflage that belies the danger of fighting it. Many fighters have been surprised when they try to strike down a zed, only for the Bonehead to rear up and knock them down instead.

Bonehead

The common Bonehead is known for both its camouflage and ambush tactics. Frightening, they have also been spotted alone, scrounging through the wastelands as if searching for valuables. Most witnesses consider this an old reflex of whatever survivors they used to be.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Bonehead Bruiser

Much more likely to injure fighters, Bonehead Bruisers are stronger and meaner, almost appearing to take offense if their camouflage within a horde is uncovered. Parents will scold their naughty kids by telling them that Boneheads will come for them if they don't behave.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7 (+1 Enhancement)

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Bursters

Among the different types of zed, Bursters are especially reviled by survivors. Usually the undead bodies of those who died hungry or discovered a natural talent for speed, they normally appear in hordes alongside Shamblers and Walkers. Not much seems different about them, but to the trained eye, these zombies twitch and suffer from muscle spasms during their slow walk.

Once they sense a target nearby, though, they spring into madness. Some begin to mindlessly scream, while others cease making noise. Either way, their head turns to lock on a target before darting towards it. Their speed seems inhuman, and their agility is almost unrivaled. Leaping over tall obstacles, they are driven by a suspended state of near-starvation. Desperate for flesh, they attempt to knock their targets down and pounce on them, clawing them open with sharp teeth and broken nails.

Burster

These average Bursters, due to their common nature, are the most likely to blend in within hordes of other zed. As a result, it takes a sharp eye to spot them before they charge, and they usually become the first volley of attacks when survivors battle a group of the undead.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 4

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Burster Lunger

A step up, Burster Lungers are slightly faster and more prone to a silent but intimidatingly fast approach. Many distracted survivors have glanced away from approaching hordes only to turn back and suffer a crippling attack from one of these zed.

Initiative: 7 (+1 Enhancement)

Melee Attack: 5

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Burster Speedball

One of the fastest zed out there (if not the fastest), Burster Speedballs rely on their initial charge to bring down targets as fast as possible. They tend to roar during their approach, and while it might give them away, there is little one can do except take the brunt of it. Fortunately, their ferocity is somewhat tempered after the first blow.

Initiative: 8 (+2 Enhancement)

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 6

Speedball Special: The Burster Speedball is an undead creature with unholy speed. During a turn, if the Burster Speedball hasn't been engaged in attacking someone, they may charge at the nearest living target. During this attack, they immediately take their action at the top of the round, regardless of their slot's location on the initiative ladder, while their Melee Attack pool gains +3 Enhancement. Whether this attack succeeds or not, the Burster's stats return to normal afterwards.

Cinders

A terrible fusion of natural destruction and undead fire, Cinders are zombies that are composed of eternally burning flesh. Once an attempt to burn the remains of survivors so they didn't return as zed, the Grave Mind twisted this against the wastelands, unleashing fiery zed that leave a wake of destruction

behind them. Today, Cinders are more commonly the result of wildfires, witch hunts, and explosive accidents, but they are no less terrifying.

Walking at normal speed, they always move in straight lines towards the closest potential victim. At night, they can be spotted from miles away by the burning terrain, which usually causes more damage than the zombie itself. Due to the intense heat within their undead flesh, weapons tend to burn or melt in conflicts with Cinders. Hand-to-hand combat does more damage to the fighter than the zed, so it is recommended that these zombies are neutralized at long range.

Cinder

Burning through the night, Cinders are most commonly neutralized at night to track them down and take advantage of the light they emit. Unfortunately, many zed also rally around them in search of prey near the wildfire.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Burning Embers: Any contact with a Cinder risks damage to weapons and armor from the intense heat. They always possess the +1 Complication "Burning Embers," which must be bought off in Close Combat to avoid adverse effects on weaponry and armor. If the Cinder grapples a target, this turns into a +3 Complication, which inflicts the On Fire Condition (p. XX) and sets fire to their gear if it isn't bought off.

Cinder Hothead

Typically identified by their fiery scalps, Cinder Hotheads burn hotter than the normal variety and leave much more devastation in their wake. Many Hotheads have thinned the herds of wild animals as a result, complicating the hunting seasons for communities all over.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Burning Embers: Any contact with a Cinder risks damage to weapons and armor from the intense heat. They always possess the +1 Complication "Burning Embers," which must be bought off in Close Combat in order to avoid adverse effects on weaponry and armor. If the Cinder grapples a target, this turns into a +3 Complication, which inflicts the On Fire Condition (p. XX) and sets fire to their gear if it isn't bought off.

Molten Touch: On a successful attack, the Cinder may target a weapon or piece of armor instead of inflicting damage to the foe. Any use of item gains the +3 Complication *Heated* for three turns. If the item is used for offense, defense, or utility, and the Complication isn't overcome, it immediately gains the Broken Flaw (p. XX).

Diggers

A major threat to subterranean survivors, Diggers are malformed zombies that look like soil and undead flesh combined. Incredibly dangerous, it is believed that they are the result of miners who went missing in their tunnels and returned as stalkers in the dark. With long, shovel-like arms, Diggers can sense the vibrations from survivors on the surface, and the more foot traffic, the better. As a result, it digs toward these areas, where it begins to hollow out a pitfall trap. Once complete, the Digger expands it upward, where the weight of some unfortunate survivor will cause it to collapse inward. What results is a frantic, tight-quarter fight between survivor, zed, and the sinking earth.

While crafty, Diggers despise bright lights and loud noises, and will only tolerate them while eating. Unlike other zed, silence is the preferred environment for them, especially since they can sense the softest vibrations.

Digger Mole

The common Digger Mole is a softer excavator than the others, preferring instead to squeeze and wiggle through the earth. Its preferred hunting tactic is to bury victims alive in the walls of caverns and let the soil choke them to death.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Burrow: During its turn, the Digger may dig into and move through soft earth to escape. A survivor can make an Athletics + Might roll against difficulty 2 to prevent this, which uses up their turn. If they do not, the Digger's place in the initiative order changes at the Storyguide's discretion. When it's the Digger's turn again, it emerges and may attack as well. A Digger cannot burrow and surface in the same turn.

Digger Tunnel Breaker

More dangerous than the common Mole, Tunnel Breakers are notorious for reusing mines as their own pitfall traps. They are perfectly willing to collapse entire tunnels and dig to their prey, where they will dig in while the target is immobilized.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Tunnel: During its turn, the Digger may dig into and move through soft Earth to escape. A survivor can make an Athletics + Might roll against difficulty 3 to prevent this, which uses up their turn. If they do not, the Digger's place in the initiative order

changes at the Storyguide's discretion. When it's the Digger's turn again, it emerges and may attack as well. A Digger cannot burrow and surface in the same turn.

Digger Plowhead

A true behemoth, the Digger Plowhead wields a flat and jagged head that is used to push aside massive amounts of rock and stone. Due to its size, it can also be spotted above ground, in remote areas where the only thing standing is a single house with four walls...

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Tunnel Down: During its turn, the Digger may dig into and move through soft earth to escape. A survivor can make an Athletics + Might roll against difficulty 4 to prevent this, which uses up their turn. If they do not, the Digger's place in the initiative order changes at the Storyguide's discretion. When it's the Digger's turn again, it emerges and may attack as well. A Digger cannot burrow and surface in the same turn.

Wall Crasher: The Plowhead can attack through a wall and shower an area with dangerous debris to any nearby targets. Survivors must roll Athletics + Dexterity against difficulty 2 to avoid this, or else they take 2 damage and fall prone.

Goliaths

Among the largest zombies of the wastelands, Goliaths are giant, malformed figures with misshapen limbs and swollen growths across their muscles. Standing between 15 and 20 feet tall, its weight slows it down and forces it to move with both arms and legs. However, its giant mass of flesh can suffer a lot of punishment, and its arms are strong enough to behead a survivor with a single swipe. Many consider this form of death to be a merciful one when facing a Goliath, though.

Unlike other undead, they do not gnaw on their food. Rather, they use their weight as a weapon, crushing targets into the ground with arms, legs, and bulbous torso. Once their target's limbs have been shattered, a Goliath leans over them and inverts its decomposing stomach. As it does so, the acidic nature of this undead flesh rapidly breaks down the target, usually while they're screaming, until they are little more than a condensed blob of human flesh. With a horrific slurp, the Goliath then retracts its organs and food via the esophagus cord still hanging from its maw.

Previous attempts to neutralize Goliaths have always resulted in casualties for the attackers. While feeding, the esophageal cord proves a weak spot, as it cuts off the ability of the Goliath to feed and regain strength. Unfortunately, victims tend to be too far gone at this point.

Goliath

Massive and intimidating, the Goliath roams the wastes in search of food. Traveling survivors know from a very young age the trail of this zed and take care to avoid areas under threat.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

It's Huge!: Goliaths have a size Scale of 2 for melee attacks and defense.

Vulnerable Gullet: Once a target is Taken Out, the Goliath takes two turns for it to crush them, invert their stomach, and begin breaking down the victim, sending them into Bleeding Out. Every round during this process, it gains 1 Health, but any attacks against the exposed esophageal cord do double damage to its Health. In the meantime, rescuers may roll Athletics + Stamina against difficulty 5 to free the victim, whether or not the Goliath is neutralized.

Goliath Crusher

The Goliath Crusher is a giant zed that defies comprehension. Many survivors view their appearance as a sign of ill omen, and it can tear small shacks and barricades apart completely.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 9

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 6

It's Huge!: Goliaths have a size Scale of 2 for melee attacks and defense.

Vulnerable Gullet: Once a target is Taken Out, the Goliath takes two turns for it to crush them, invert their stomach, and begin breaking down the victim, sending it into Bleeding Out. Every round during this process, it gains 1 Health, but any attacks against the exposed esophageal cord do double damage to its Health. In the meantime, rescuers may roll Athletics + Stamina against difficulty 5 to free the victim, whether or not the Goliath is neutralized.

Goliath Ironhide

Uncommon, but not unheard of, the Goliath Ironhide is a threat which unifies enemies against it. One of them can decimate an entire town if a strategy goes undiscussed, and survivors still tell horror stories about the settlements that couldn't pass such a test.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 10

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 5

Health: 8

It's Huge!: Goliaths have a size Scale of 2 for melee attacks and defense.

Vulnerable Gullet: Once a target is Taken Out, the Goliath takes two turns for it to crush them, invert their stomach, and begin breaking down the victim, sending it into Bleeding Out. Every round during this process, it gains 1 Health, but any attacks against the exposed esophageal cord do double damage to its Health. In the meantime, rescuers may roll Athletics + Stamina against difficulty 5 to free the victim, whether or not the Goliath is neutralized.

Hulks

Overgrown and bloated, the Hulk is a more portable form of muscle. Commonly looming in hordes, its callused skin ripples with unnatural distortions, creaking ominously as this zombie moves. The Hulk is known for its lumbering stumble and possesses the tactics to wait until the last minute. In the thick of battle with a horde, these zombies strike, crushing barricades and destroying shields and armor against unsuspecting fighters.

It is not commonly observed to feed. Instead, it drags survivors out into the open, mangling their limbs before leaving them as food for the horde. This has given some insight into the workings of the overall Infection and the Grave Mind behind it.

Hulk

The normal Hulk is a common danger in Hordes, resulting in an ongoing strategy to remain vigilant and attack them with specialized fighters. Unfortunately, surrounding hordes prove a certain complication — on a botch, the Hulk accidentally damages the horde instead of the intended target.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Hulk Wrecker

Larger than normal Hulks, the Wrecker is known for tossing itself through walls and doors. They make effective line breakers in fights against survivors.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Wrecking Ball: The Hulk may use itself as a battering ram against barricades, gates, doors and walls. During a turn, if it can charge 10 feet before hitting such a target, it gains +3 Enhancement toward tearing through it and breaking it apart. A single Hulk may only destroy one such obstruction in a turn, never two or more.

Collateral Damage (1s): The Hulk attempts to damage one nearby survivor with the impact and debris. They may roll against difficulty 2 to avoid it, or otherwise take 2 damage from the debris. The Hulk may take this Stunt multiple times, one per nearby target.

Killer Clowns

Despite their name, Killer Clowns are much more representative of their deadly nature than their humorous nature. This breed of undead is a byproduct of normal zed consuming Glow Lizards and Glow Frogs, both of which are toxic and radioactive. Once these substances invade their systems, the zed themselves are compelled to eat more of the lizards, rather than avoiding them. These eventually results in discoloration of their rotten flesh. Since they are brightly colored like other poisonous creatures, many survivors have come to associate them with actual clowns.

With the poison circulating in their system, their eyes, mouths, and pores begin to secrete the excess. These patches are colorful and dangerous, staining the rags of the Killer Clown and giving them the appearance of makeup. The poison also causes a minor degree of muscle paralysis, forcing the undead to exaggerate their movements. As a result, they are easily identified as Killer Clowns.

Unfortunately, Killer Clowns are tactical killers, with varied experience and a haunting reputation. They are often found far away from settlements, keeping to themselves until an opportunity to strike presents itself. This has led to suspicions of their thought functions, as they laugh creepily, fight well, and seem to show true pleasure at the moment of the kill. In some communities, they are confused for raiders.

Killer Clown Twitcher

In the early stages of Glow Frog consumption, a Twitcher's skin is only beginning to turn into the various hues of a Killer Clown. It is a strange amalgamation of the zed's rotting skin and the flourishing colors. Some are still mistaken for other types of zed at this stage as a result.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Taint: Any skin-to-skin contact with a Killer Clown Twitcher risks a stinging, chemical burn from the poisons. If a Killer Clown grapples a victim with exposed skin, their target immediately takes indirect Deadly damage with a damage rating of 1. They also inflict this damage if the survivor touches the Killer Clown's skin willingly, even if it's with their fists.

Killer Clown

Killer Clowns eventually gain their full discoloration and are unmistakably identified as what they are. However, this is also the stage of existence where they begin to develop their own tactics,

resulting in a zed that is notoriously hard to hunt down and eliminate outright.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Contamination: Any skin-to-skin contact with a Killer Clown risks a stinging, chemical burn from the poisons. If a Killer Clown grapples a victim with exposed skin, their target immediately takes indirect Deadly damage with a damage rating of 2. They also inflict this damage if the survivor touches the Killer Clown's skin willingly, even in brawls.

Killer Clown Ringmaster

Like all tactical squads, groups of Killer Clowns eventually come to follow the lead of particularly strong zed in their cabals. These become the Ringmasters, virtually overdosing on Glow Lizards and proving a challenge in the wild. They are notorious for their taunts.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 8

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 5

Blight: Any skin-to-skin contact with a Killer Clown Ringmaster risks a stinging, chemical burn from the poisons. If a Killer Clown grapples a victim with exposed skin, their target immediately takes indirect Deadly damage with a damage rating of 3. They also inflict this damage if the survivor touches the Killer Clown's skin willingly, even if it's with their fists.

Lost Ones

Dangerous in their own unique way, Lost Ones are zombies that have retained a few short phrases in their thought functions. With a form of mimicry, they can recreate the sounds of wounded people calling for help, though they do not understand their meaning. As a result, Lost Ones loop three to five sets of phrases to draw well-meaning survivors towards them. Groups of them can set more complicated traps, recreating multiple survivors calling for help or even conversing. The stronger ones can even respond to potential rescuers naturally, making them deadly at night.

Lost Ones feed like most zombies but learn new words by breaking the limbs of their targets and wandering away, listening to their dying sounds and parroting them afterwards.

Lost One

Lost Ones tend to be children and young adults who were lost to the hordes, usually by accident. The longer one exists,



the younger it sounds, which enables it to lure unsuspecting prey more effectively.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Mimicry: Lost Ones can reproduce words they have previously learned, in patterns that can fool even the most skeptical survivors. At night, a survivor must roll Empathy + Composure against difficulty 3 to identify it as a Lost One, otherwise it is considered a fellow survivor in need of aid.

Lost One Mimic

The Mimics are a type of Lost One that are infamous for instances where they engaged in conversation with their rescuers before ambushing them. Many attribute this legend to gullibility, but far too often, the Mimic is practiced in how to respond to its prey.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Imitation: Lost One Mimics can reproduce words they have previously learned, in patterns that can fool even the most skeptical survivors. At night, a survivor must roll Empathy + Composure against difficulty 4 to identify it as a Lost One, otherwise it is considered a fellow survivor in need of aid.

Mass Graves

Among the largest undead a survivor might encounter, Mass Graves are a terrifying fusion of corpses that were buried together in communal pits. When this happens, the Grave Mind takes advantage of such folly and absorbs the flesh and skeletons of these bodies into a giant mass of arms, faces, legs, mouths, and torsos. There is virtually no distinguishing between the original bodies; it is, in every sense of the world, an abomination.

Moving on their uneven combination of limbs, a Mass Grave will lumber towards targets and attack with dozens of arms and mouths. With them, it hopes to hook any target — living or undead — on its body, in order to slowly absorb it over the next several hours. Those who haven't been swallowed yet are chewed alive and left to scream.

Within the Mass Grave, living victims are broken down over several more hours, without reprieve. Undead flesh is shifted around to make room for consumed zombies, allowing this zed to expand over time. Once they reach an unsustainable point of growth, the Mass Grave will rip itself in half, allowing two lesser Mass Graves to roam the wilds.

Mass Grave

An intimidating sight in the wild, Mass Graves are most often spotted in areas torn apart by war, as many fallen fighters are buried together to speed up their return. They are the zed of nightmares, and many victims are haunted by the experience of encountering one for years to come.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 9

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 4

Health: 6

It's Huge!: All Mass Graves have a size Scale of 2 for melee attacks and defense.

Crushing Mass: Although slow, the Mass Grave can attempt to run over prey, crushing it under dozens of limbs and hooking whatever remains, alive or dead. Any target in the way must defend against its Melee Attack or roll Athletics + Dexterity against difficulty 2 to dive clear of the zed. If they fail either check, they are immediately hooked into the Mass Grave as per the Flesh Hooks power.

Consume Flesh: The Mass Grave can spend its turn to consume up to four adjacent zombies per turn. It regains health equal to half the total number of zed consumed, rounded up.

Flesh Hooks: If the Mass Grave successfully deals damage, it spends extra successes to use the *Establish Grapple* Stunt. The target is drawn into the rolling mass of the creature and gains the Grapple Condition. They cannot use the *Gain Control, Pin, Takedown,* or *Throw* stunts on a Mass Grave. To use the *Break Free* Stunt, they must spend successes equal to the number it spent on the *Establish Grapple* Stunt.

After the target is grappled for two turns, any held items that do not have the Worn tag are lost to the Mass Grave. On the third turn, if they cannot break free, the victim disappears into the Mass Grave. Inside, they may roll against difficulty 2 to find their items. Attempts to attack the creature from the inside out are rolled against Defense 6.

Mass Grave Behemoth

A rarity, some Mass Graves absorb exceptionally strong tissues, allowing them to grow bigger than normal before splitting apart. These become Behemoths, which are strong enough to topple over large trees and fold sheds under its weight.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 10

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 5

Health: 8

It's Huge!: All Mass Graves have a size Scale of 2 for melee attacks and defense.

Crushing Mass: Although slow, the Mass Grave can attempt to run over prey, crushing it under dozens of limbs and hooking

whatever remains, alive or dead. Any target in the way must defend against its Melee Attack or roll Athletics + Dexterity against difficulty 2 to dive clear of the zed. If they fail either check, they are immediately hooked into the Mass Grave as per the Flesh Hooks power.

Consume Flesh: The Mass Grave can spend its turn to consume up to four adjacent zombies per turn. It regains health equal to half the total number of zed consumed, rounded up.

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Shamblers

By far the most common zed in the wastelands, Shamblers are zombies that never travel faster than a slow walk. Due to their low speed and tattered flesh, one poses little to no threat. However, survivors understand that they never travel alone. Moving like herds across the land, their swarms can total anywhere from a dozen to almost 400, and their sheer combined force can turn into a menacing threat.

Shamblers are relentless in their slow pace, and any obstacles in their way are either clawed at or detoured around. If they cannot make any forward progress, though, they will strike and snarl at the objects in their way. While ineffective for a single Shambler, the noise quickly attracts more and more. All the noise eventually attracts zed from the surrounding areas, and if left unchecked, that cacophony of sound will pull in zed from across the region. Under such a giant onslaught, no barricade can withstand such numbers.

Shambler

With nothing but claws and gnawing teeth, Shamblers roam all over the wastelands, moving no faster than a weak limp. The majority of survivors who perish become this zed, as a grim reminder that no matter their triumphs, they will be simple corpses in the end. Something of a joke when alone, vast numbers can strike hope from any soul.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Shambling Dead: Stuck at a shambling pace, this zed can never move more than a couple of yards every turn. However, they are immune to rolls and effects that would slow their pace. They only stop when a reasonable barrier is in the way, and even then, they constantly try to push forward.

Walker

Slightly faster, Walkers sway and tilt forward as they move. Their claws are slightly sharper, but their teeth are largely the same. The presence of Walkers in a region usually indicates an active or recently disturbed Grave Mind. However, they are not exceptional if they share the battlefield with Shamblers.

Initiative: 3

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Walking Dead: This type of zed can only move at a slow walking pace, covering up to four yards every turn. If a roll or effect would slow their pace, they cannot be fully immobilized. They will always manage at least one yard per turn, unless a reasonable barrier is keeping them from making forward progress. Even then, they are always trying to push forward.

Skinriders

Normally mistaken for beheaded corpses dumped in the wastes, Skinrider zombies look like little more than a rotting human head and a portion of the spine. However, identifying this zed can mean the difference between life and death. When a target of substantial size, such as larger mammals or survivors, comes within a few feet, the zombie whips to life. Stabbing the prey with its sharpened spinal column, it excretes a paralyzing venom much like a snake. Once immobilized, the Skinrider drags itself over and attaches itself like a leech, slurping on the blood of the victim.

Eventually, Skinriders detach themselves when the target is low on blood. Rolling away, the victim is left paralyzed and bleeding to death, sometimes for up to an hour. They are common in unstable regions where hanging or beheading is utilized as capital punishment.

Skinrider

Using itself as a lure, the average Skinrider looks like an abandoned human head. As its victims investigate, they'll notice its advanced stage of decomposition, but by then, the Skinrider has already leaped into action.

Initiative: 6

Melee Attack: 4

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Play Dead: As long as the Skinrider doesn't move, it is nearly impossible to identify it as something other than human remains, and difficult to tell it apart from the terrain. A character must

roll Survival + Cunning against difficulty 2 to spot it. It has a Complication 2 of *Hiding in Plain Sight* — the Complication needs to be bought off to identify it as a Skinrider.

Backbone Lance (3s): On a successful attack, the Skinrider may buy this Stunt to lance the target with the tip of its spinal column. This delivers a powerful neurotoxin into the victim's bloodstream, which is represented by injectable, indirect Non-Lethal damage with a damage rating of 3.

Skinrider Leaper

The Skinrider Leaper is far more dangerous. Its paralyzing venom allows it to maintain the appearance of a recently decapitated human head. Among zed, it is unique in that it displays almost no signs of decomposing. Survivors sometimes pick it up and carry it for a mile before the inevitable attack.

Initiative: 7

Melee Attack: 5

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Play Dead: As long as the Skinrider doesn't move, it is nearly impossible to identify it as something other than human remains, and difficult to tell it apart from the terrain. A character must roll Survival + Cunning against difficulty 2 to spot it. It has a Complication 2 of *Hiding in Plain Sight* — the Complication needs to be bought off to identify it as a Skinrider.

Spinal Tap (2s): On a successful attack, the Skinrider may buy this Stunt to lance the target with the tip of its spinal column. This delivers a powerful neurotoxin into the victim's bloodstream, which is represented by injectable indirect damage with a damage rating of 3. (Unlike Backbone Lance, this inflicts Injury Conditions instead of Stress Conditions.)

Toy Boxes

In the wastelands, the death of the martyred faithful or an exceptionally gifted psionicist can pose a great threat from the grave. When it rises as a zombie, it is not uncommon for it to retain its previous power, becoming a zed known as the Toy Box.

The Toy Box is a sentient zombie, capable of limited thought and caught in an illusory world of their own creation. Haunted by their death, its new connection to the Infection enables it to subtly alter reality, with power that only grows the longer it is left unchecked. The newer ones tend to send ripples only a few feet away, while older Toy Boxes can alter the surroundings a mile away. Recreating the world at their whim, it usually turns into a grim shade of an already hostile world. Common creations include pre-Fall political structures, family memories, and nightmarish landscapes, all of which reflect their broken psyche and their new connection to the Grave Mind.

Those within the radius begin to find their willpower drained away, as the Toy Box softly feeds on their mind. Once these victims are completely drained of their free will, they become part of the Toy Box's creation for the foreseeable future, subject to partake in the illusion or give themselves up to other zed in the area. Fortunately, they only need to be lured out of range for this influence to dissipate.

Vertigo

A nearby Toy Box is beginning to shift the laws of reality and feed on your willpower. Every five minutes, you suffer a splitting headache and must roll Integrity + Resolve against difficulty 2 to prevent yourself from falling to the mercy of the Toy Box. If you fail, you immediately succumb to the will of the Toy Box and cannot distinguish between what is real and what is mere illusion.

Momentum Trigger: Every time the sufferer takes damage or is fooled by the illusions.

Resolution: Defeat the Toy Box or leave the Field.

Toy Box

Relatively weaker face to face, the true terror of the Toy Box lies in its ability to fool survivors and defeat them without ever swinging its claws. Those few Toy Boxes who find peace in their undead world are easily dealt with, though.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 4

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Potent Mind: After death, the introduction of undead flesh expands or limits the power previously held by the former person. Every Toy Box has access to 3 Minor Psi Powers and 2 Psi Edges, which are selected by the Storyguide. The longer the Toy Box has existed, the stronger the chosen edges.

There's No Place Like Home: Once a potential victim enters the Toy Box's Field, everyone in the Field gains the Condition *Vertigo*.

Urban Zed

Out in once-developed areas of the wastelands, zed have shown their own unique ability to adapt in response to the shattered cityscapes left by the Fall of humanity. Urban zed rarely appear outside these habitats, proving a new and almost crippling challenge for foes unfamiliar with them.

Grinders

One of the most dangerous threats from above, Grinders can climb vertical surfaces and suspend themselves from ceilings. After waiting for hours, they will attack a single lonely target that happens to walk under them. If they haven't eaten for days, they

will attempt to attack groups of creatures or survivors. Launching themselves at their targets, they knock them prone and attempt to feed on vital organs.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Frenzied Hunger: If the Grinder smells a wounded target, the Grinder is stirred into a feeding frenzy and fights with +2 Enhancement to melee attacks. It will not retreat until it feeds on living flesh with a successful bite attack.

Shallow Sleepers

A major threat in bodies of still water, Shallow Sleepers are partially rotted undead that lie in wait within the shallows. With elongated arms, they crawl under and through debris on nearby coasts. If prey walks within a few feet, though, the Shallow Sleeper reaches upwards and attacks viciously, attempting to slaughter their food before it escapes or retaliates.

Initiative: 5

Melee Attack: 7

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 4

Dead Man Float: While hiding in water, it requires a Survival + Cunning roll against difficulty 4 to spot Shallow Sleepers.

Thirteenth Floor Ghasts

Multi-jointed zed with elongated fingers, Thirteenth Floor Ghasts look malnourished and anorexic in appearance. Climbing up drain pipes and through building cracks, it latches onto its prey and drags them to relative safety, so that it may feed on unprotected areas of the body. Failing that, it may drop the body from a very high height to subdue or kill it before feasting.

Initiative: 4

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Triple-Jointed: Ghasts can force themselves through incredibly small spaces as small as one foot in diameter without a roll. However, this makes them vulnerable to physical damage dealt by blunt weapons. They take double the damage to their Health from blunt melee weapons or brawling attacks if they're trying to squeeze through a small space at the time.

Water Rots

Bloated, undead corpses that float beneath the water, Water Rots are opportunistic zed. Flimsy like soaked fabric, they wait for targets to get near them in the water before dragging them under the surface. From there, they try to grapple the victim until they drown, before consuming them.

Initiative: 2

Melee Attack: 6

Ranged Attack: 0

Defense: 3

Health: 3

Waterlogged: Completely saturated by water, Water Rots are so fragile that they must remain in it. For every round spent out of the water, they take 1 damage to their Health.

Grasping Talons: Water Rots are exceptionally good at grappling other targets. Whenever they do so, they roll Melee Attack at 7 to impose the Condition Grappled.

Making Your Own

If you want to make your own new threats, here's a table of the numbers we used. Feel free to move some numbers around or change them to suit your needs – it's not an exact science. Then give them a unique Edge or two, and you're ready to stomp some zed!

THREAT LEVEL	PRIMARY POOL	SECONDARY POOL	TERTIARY POOL	ENHNCMNT	DEFENSE	HEALTH
Minor Threat	6	4	2	0	3	3
Medium Threat	7	5	3	1	3	4
Moderate Threat	8	6	4	2	4	5
Major Threat	9	7	5	3	4	6
Colossal Threat	10	8	6	4	5	8



chapter twelve

THE WASTELAND

"People are the same all over the wastes. They all want something. The difference is if how they fulfill those wants. Some ease suffering, and others cause it."

- Isaac Walker, Digitarian

How We Got to Now

I would like to say that the world has changed. I would like to say that we learned from the past and that we're building a brighter future. I would like to say that, but in good consciousness I can't. Our genetics may have changed, but people are still the same.

I've made it my life's work to record the history of mankind, from our Fall into chaos until this point. I dredged the archives of the Lineage League, and I consulted oral histories. I have traveled and searched and have compiled it all here.

I warn you now, though, this is your chance to turn back. This is your chance to go back to your partner and your kids and to continue living happily in your own way. There's a reason that I drink a bottle of hooch every day. It sure as shit isn't because I'm celebrating.

You still want to know the truth? Then get your glass ready, settle in, and prepare for one wild ride.

The Fall of Mankind

Before the Fall of mankind, our ancestors existed in excess and wealth. These individuals created technological marvels that we can only dream of. Most of them had their own houses, their own green spaces, and entire places dedicated to their entertainment. They were creatures that would put even the staunchest Hedons to shame.

Now, imagine the largest city you can think of today. Double it, triple it, quadruple it. That doesn't even come close to how many humans existed in the world. They created soaring towers and architectural masterpieces. Cities stretched out for as far as the eye could see. You wouldn't be able to comprehend what they built.

For all their strengths, however, humans also had their flaws. They became comfortable in their immortality. While they were surrounded by unheard-of delights, they were still unhappy. They were able to communicate across great distances and were more likely than ever to wall off others due to their differences. A person that disagreed with them was immediately shut out of their circle. Instead of engaging in dialogue, they screamed at one another, not viewing each other as people but instead as "other." If something bothered them, they pretended it wasn't there.

Perhaps this is why humans finally ceased to exist. They raised their walls against the wars and the turmoil and the strife that was happening around the world. They closed their ears to truthful words and instead focused on petty differences that didn't matter. When the end came, they didn't understand what was happening. At first, they tried to pretend it didn't exist, like everything else that caused them distress.

I still cannot determine what exactly caused the initial outbreak. However, a few of my sources point to research being conducted by a group called the Mon Corporation.

Due to the sheer volume of people in the world, those who were in power realized that something needed to be done. There simply weren't enough resources to support a population at the rate that it was growing. The only possible solution seemed to be systematic population control. Those in power gave subsidies to corporations that created poisonous, edible substances. They helped spur wars in areas that were deemed as "not contributing to human advancement." They manufactured famines and committed atrocities for the sake of the "greater good."

It worked for a time. Unfortunately, they didn't factor in how resilient and robust life is. They didn't realize that evolution may have other plans.

The Rise of the Infection

The Infection spawned from a fungal material, that much is certain. I hypothesize that it originally may have been used to manufacture famine, but so many records are lost that it's impossible to determine exactly where it spawned from. What is certain, however, is that it mutated and interacted with the chemicals in human bodies to cause a massive plague. This plague swept through the population, killing people by the score. The few that were immune became our oldcestors.

Unfortunately for the world, those killed by the fungal infection didn't stay dead. They rose again to wreak havoc on cities. When the contagion couldn't be stopped, areas were bombed in the hopes of wiping out infected individuals, and even some of the *houses* came back, just as twisted and warped as the people. Radiation spread across what was once known as America. Mercenary groups killed anyone who had a trace of infected material within them.

The inevitable finally happened, though. The world fell, and our oldcestors ceased to exist. However, this wasn't the end of intelligent life on the planet. The fungal infection within certain individuals mutated into different Strains. Over time, environmental and genetic factors created the Strains of humanity, able to withstand the new, harsh environs of the world.



At this point, what is now colloquially known as the "Infection" is present in every part of our environment. It has incorporated itself into plants, animals, humanity, and even objects. It is what sustains our very existence on this planet. Without it, life as we know it would cease to exist.

Now, here I need to explain a bit about the Infection. The Infection, at its core, is about replication. This explains why we can come back a certain amount of times; each "copy" becomes more and more imperfect until we are simply walking corpses. The same goes for the rest of our world. It explains why we still see pieces of Scrap that are from "before" the Fall. They are simply imperfect replications, a copy of a copy of a copy.

What does this mean for us? It means that, over time, our world is becoming more imperfect and possibly degrading. It means that eventually, our ecosystem may completely collapse. It's a thought that keeps me awake at night and haunts my nightmares. However, there is also the hope that evolution may be able to steer us another way; it's possible that these "copies" may be better than the originals.

This is why I drink so much. It hurts my head just thinking about it.

I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for our forebears. They came from a society where everything was handed to them. They didn't have to know how to build houses or wells or filter water. Suddenly, all their conveniences were gone, and they had to learn how to cope in this new age.

Rebuilding Civilization

The first settlements didn't last long. They were more like shanty towns rather than actual, established locations. Those who stayed in cities lived in the sad remains of buildings, while those who took to the country built what they could out of natural resources. There were exceptions, of course. A lucky few found abandoned farms and set up shop there. But even then, there were difficulties. Infected dead hungered for living flesh. Many of these first colonizers were swept away in the tide of the undead hordes.

Humanity, however, is persistent. Over time, small settlements were born out of the wastes. People began to return to what they once viewed as "home" and began to rebuild. They formed new societies and cultures that spread to every corner of what they now called "Nor'Merica."

Now I come to the part of history that you may recognize. Many people believe that the Fall of mankind happened only one or two generations ago. The fact of the matter is that it was probably a lot longer than that, especially when you look at the ruins of where major pre-Fall cities were built. It wouldn't make sense to have cities built so close to the water line or, in some instances, underwater. By looking at how much geography itself has shifted, we can assume that the Fall happened more than 1,000 years ago. It's taken that long for our world to get back to some semblance of normalcy, and even now it's fraught with turmoil and strife.

Most of you will know about the major cities spread across the wastes. There's the City of Sunken Saints to the south, and there's Old York and Beacon Hill to the northeast. There's Vegasia to the west, and cities and settlements spread everywhere in between. These are the major settlements that have begun to build themselves up again amid the chaos.

Many of them are built in the remains of pre-Fall cities. Others have shifted a few miles north or south, east or west. If you notice, some of the ruins are extraordinarily well-preserved. This is largely because the same fungal component that allows us to regenerate is also in everything. While a piece of scrap metal isn't going to heal itself, it may still actually exist in some capacity even after all this time.

The Struggle to Modernity

Now that we're closer to what we know as "modern" history, I feel it important to go over a few things that have helped define and shape the wastelands that we know today. As these settlements were built and as people began to come together, major superpowers emerged.

Vegasia, ruled by Pure Bloods and populated mostly by Vegasians, was first a hub for the Church of Telling Visionaries faith. That all changed with the emergence of the Final Knight religion. The founder overthrew the Pure Bloods in power and established herself in the Black Pyramid. There, she displayed her power for all to see.

In the northeast, Old York emerged from the remains of what was known as "New York City." Here, people divided up into gangs with defined territories, and trading routes began to spread outward toward the rest of the wastes with the help of Nomads. To the southeast was the Big A.C., a place of vice and gambling that exported its love of entertainment to Old York.

Further north, Beacon Hill emerged from the area that was once "Boston" as a major settlement. Built on swamplands, this new settlement became a tightly controlled city state ruled by Pure Bloods and Baywalkers that mainly subsisted on the fishing industry along with underwater scavenging rights. I will also note that one of their main exports for a time was whale oil, which helped power lanterns across areas that did not have access to electricity.

In the northwest was a major settlement by the name of the Ironworks. Here, I get to the darker portion of our history. This was a place of major industry and production. For their time in our modern history, they were amazingly technologically advanced. They created trains and rails, shipping items across the northeast. However, all of this came at a price. Iron Born were used as factory workers and miners without pay, often treated terribly by the Mericans and Pure Bloods that worked as overseers.

In the far north the Reclaimers established their cities and towns, becoming a force to be reckoned with after years of warring with Mericans in the south over certain profitable areas. It's a war that first began when humans from the south tried to evacuate to the north and were barred entrance. To this day, there is still an uneasiness between the Landsmen and the Evolved. There are certain stereotypes that cannot be removed even after centuries in between.

Further south was DeeCee, a location that held onto some of the knowledge of what occurred before the Fall. This was also the place where the Trade Union originated, a group that wished to spread safe trade routes across the wastes to help facilitate rebuilding the world. Trade Union Senators were dispatched to various large cities as envoys to help with this process. However, many settlements looked upon them as untrustworthy. They felt as if these individuals were attempting to control the wasteland as their own when they were only trying to improve trade routes. As you may suspect, this perception changed, but it took years before it did.

In the deep south, an individual by the name of "The Rat King" began to rule over a series of islands that were once part of a place called "Florida." Known as the Rat King's Kingdom, or the Rat Trap, the waterlogged city flourished under the rule of scientifically-minded Pure Bloods. Intrigued by the Bad Brain disease and the rapid evolution of raiders, they began experimentation to create a new Strain that was resistant to the disease. The corruption there was almost palpable, and still is today. However, I'll get to that a bit later.

Nearby is the City of Sunken Saints. While you'll likely see a city made from a series of docks on the surface of the waves, the real city lies beneath the murky waters. Here, Full Dead and Saltwise live in relative peace. This is the city of the dead and the dying. This location is where, I suspect, you can find the origins of some of the most influential and dangerous organizations in the wastes. However, I won't say more about the topic here. While I may drink myself into a stupor each day, I don't feel like disappearing completely just yet.

To the west is Star City, a place mostly made up of the Landsmen. This settlement dealt with the unique issue of zombie hordes amassing into groups that consisted of hundreds of individuals. They therefore developed new ways to lure zed away from their settlements. Nearby are also the rich oil fields of the region, which fuel Diesel Jock rides. These were once worked by Irons with Merican overseers. As you probably know, that all changed; but I'll get to that later.

Across the wastes, raider groups began to become more established as threats as they continued to evolve. They raided and marauded, stealing people that they infected with the horrific Bad Brain disease. New types of undead also emerged, multiplying and becoming more of a threat to the world at large. During this time, Strains remained mostly static, while raiders and zed thrived.

This was the landscape of Merica as our grandparents and great-grandparents knew it. Trade routes were only just beginning to form, and most roads were dangerous to tread. Most Strains died early in life due to raiders or encounters with the undead, or simply due to violence between Strains. Mericans were lucky to live to the age of 25, and the oldest Strains only lasted until about the age of 45. While the Infection allowed Strains to come back a certain amount of times, it wasn't

enough to offset the rise of mortality. In fact, I theorize that the Infection is the only reason why the Strains weren't wiped off this planet long ago. Without it, there would simply not be enough time to reproduce and raise the next generation.

The Rise of Civilization

As you may know, things have changed in these later years. We've become more civilized and, I fear, are falling into the same vices that humans once did. History repeats itself, a wise man once said. I only hope that we learn from it this time around.

I suppose I should start with the major changes that occurred across the wasteland during this period. After these major cities were established, our world entered another rapid bout of evolution. It's possible that we simply were unaware of some things that already existed, but I believe it's more likely that the sudden stability in our world combined with the nature of the Infection helped spur a period of evolution among the Lineages.

Notable are the Tainted, which evolved when certain Remnants began to develop an immunity to Bad Brain. Enough of them developed this same genetic anomaly that a new Strain was born out of the Mutants. With that said, I theorize that the rise of the Strain can largely be attributed to the experimentation that occurred within the Rat Trap. Similarly, the Strain of the Evolved called the Unstable was also originally created from Remnants. Instead of evolving naturally, this Strain was at first created to be a weapon. However, successive generations that bred with Remnants eventually created the Unstable that we know today.

I should also give a special mention to the Quiet Folk as a potentially newly evolved Strain. However, I and others suspect that they didn't so much evolve as they were overlooked. Even now, some individuals still claim that they're quiet Mericans. However, their physiology differs enough that they're clearly their own Strain.

Amid this rash of Strain evolution, we also evolved more in terms of our civilization. During a meeting of the Circle of 12 Knots, individuals from across the wasteland were invited to participate in discussions about the future of our civilization. While this particular meeting is usually reserved for Nomads, they opened their doors to representatives from the Ironworks, DeeCee, Old York, the Kingdom of the Rat King, and other locations. Each had a different agenda they wished to push, and each had their chance to speak during this gathering.

I believe that this meeting was the first step toward the modern wasteland that we know today. Since so many voices were able to gather together, individuals from across the wastes were able to see that others harbored similar, or dissimilar, opinions. This paved the way to new trade negotiations and alliances. Over the next few years, other meetings were held across the wastes to discuss important information. Settlements began to be less suspicious of the Trade Union, and Nomads began to push for better routes to be able to travel across the wastes.

The Iron Uprising

Most notably, this meeting helped spur a revolution that remains fresh in the minds of our parents. The Irons of the Ironworks began to stage revolts that spread outward to the rest of the wastes. Using the railways that their kin had built under forced servitude, they were able to send messages as far south as the Rat King's Kingdom and as far west as Vegasia.

This bloody uprising caused the Ironworks to fall. It's said that you could see smoke rising from the burning factories for hundreds of miles around. Those who once ruled were slaughtered by the score, victims of their own hubris and past cruelties. The Irons quickly took hold of the machinery and technology that was present and began shipping weapons to other Irons across the wastes. Both Old York and Beacon Hill quickly outlawed slavery, with the Rat King's Kingdom following. Vegasia held on for longer. However, this choice wound up partially destroying the desert city.

This uprising truly shaped the world we live in today. The Ironworks has been slow to recover, which explains the stall in railroad expansion. Similarly, Vegasia still has not completely recovered since the incident. The massive streams of cash that once flowed freely through the city have dried up to an extent. The massive halls that once housed Pure Bloods have been burned and pillaged. These days, there is less excess in the area and more focus on survival. This may explain why Solestros can be found staging rebuilding efforts in the region.

This uprising was, in part, so successful because travel had improved exponentially in a few short years. The Trade Union and Nomad groups worked together to create established and safe roads for all to travel. There was an active effort to create transportation between major trade hubs and establish safe havens at points along these roadways. This allowed information to spread more freely, and allowed individuals fleeing certain settlements to be able to do so with far less effort than they used to be able to.

Of course, today the network of roads is continuing to spread through the combined efforts of settlements across the wastes. These pathways help move information, goods, and armies, if need be.

The War Against the Raiders

This brings me to the second thing that occurred during this tumultuous time. Raiders began to amass in various locations across the wastes, making certain areas impossible to enter. Some people call this period the "war against the raiders," though in my opinion to call it a "war" is a bit much. Certainly, there were more raiders than usual simply due to the spread of Bad Brain during this time (which partially explains the rise of the Tainted), but I wouldn't name it a war. It wasn't organized enough, and instead resulted in several large skirmishes that, at times, involved entire settlements fighting for their right to survive.

A particularly large mass of raiders descended on the Rat Trap. While the Rat Trap was defended well against the undead, it stood no chance against the onslaught of raiders, especially when some of them were already within their walls. No one is quite sure what happened to the Rat King, but rumors say he either succumbed to Bad Brain or died during one of the attacks.

The amount of life lost in this area can't be calculated properly. I can only state what has happened during the aftermath in this once-large settlement. Experimenting with raiders has been outlawed, like everywhere else in the wastes. The Pure Blood dynasty that once existed in the Rat Trap has all but been exterminated. Instead, Baywalkers and Saltwise have begun to live in the area, and only a few Pure Bloods remain. In my opinion, the Rat Trap got the wakeup call it sorely needed. It's no longer the technological powerhouse that it once was, but it does have better trade relations with the surrounding areas.

The Dangers of the Overgrowth

Another important thing to note is the expanse of the Overgrowth in the Midwest. This large mass of trees and foliage has been prominent throughout our history, hiding mutated creatures that evolved over generations and generations. While settlements that live near the Overgrowth burn back the foliage every so often, it's worth noting that the animals that reside within it have mutated even further over successive generations. These days, you can find what I can only describe as monsters hiding within this mass.

This wouldn't be so much of an issue if the push for roads and pathways didn't see the Overgrowth as something to be conquered. Some of you may remember the "incident" that occurred about 10 years ago. There was an initiative to burn out parts of the Overgrowth to create a safe road that went straight through the area instead of around. Many settlements near the Overgrowth pushed for it and offered their manpower to help.

At first, it looked as if the initiative might succeed. They managed to cut about three miles into the Overgrowth, clearing large swathes of the foliage as they worked to lay down stone so that it didn't grow back. Armed guards kept the worst creatures at bay, and many believed they were going to make history with this endeavor.

Unfortunately, their good luck didn't last. I probably could have told them that. They ran into a creature's territory during its breeding season. Reports are vague about exactly what type of animal it was, but it was large and exhibited pack-like behavior with others of its kind. The workers on the roadway were slaughtered and consumed. Two members escaped, one moving to a small settlement on the coast and the other moving all the way to Old York. There have been some murmurings about another attempt, but people are still wary about entering this untamed bit of wilderness within our wasteland.



Technology Today

This brings me to another point: technology. Our technology still hasn't advanced much over these past few years. While we've improved roads and even some aspects of transportation, we're still behind anything humans once had. I personally blame the amount of outside threats we must deal with daily. It's hard to construct a nuclear generator when you have to worry about a horde of dead bodies breaking down your front door.

With that said, we have managed to make some strides forward over the past few generations. There are a few printing presses across the wastes, and there is also a higher rate of literacy in consequence. We've also advanced our weaponry by leaps and bounds, which I largely blame on our need to constantly defend ourselves, our families, and our homes. Better guns have been created, and sharper blades have been forged.

Even so, I see us going down a darker path with these weapons. While I would hope that they'd be largely aimed against the undead, there are some weapons that are clearly aimed at hurting and destroying Strains. Weaponized forms of harmful diseases have been reported in certain parts of the wastelands. My hope is that we turn from this and go back to creating weapons and tactics that help make our settlements and our world safer to live in as we protect ourselves against the dead.

Not all our technology is aimed at destruction, though. The Mass and, in particular, Beacon Hill has also made some amazing steps forward when it comes to underwater scavenging. It makes sense considering most of their economy is based around that and fishing. They've created pressurized tanks of air that can be breathed underwater with the proper equipment. It's dangerous work and many divers often suffer severe sickness if they stay underwater too long, but it's certainly a technological marvel that's worth being noted.

In addition to these new pieces of technology, there are also generators in some areas that create power. This power is often sporadic, but it's there. And you can be sure that more towns have power now than they did 40 years ago.

I will also say that medical research has advanced. Graverobbers, who study all aspects of the Mortuus Amaranthine and the fungal Infection, have made huge strides toward perfecting certain surgeries and techniques that help sustain and revive Strains. While Strains are naturally hardy because the Infection allows for rapid healing, there are certain diseases that have formed that are difficult to heal. In addition, Graverobbers have begun to become better at restoring Strains who are close to coming out of the grave as zed rather than as Strains.

As you can imagine, these life-restoring surgeries have had a major impact on the lifespan of most Strains. Some Strains live as long as 55 years these days, and Mericans are living until their mid-30s instead of their mid-20s.

The Coming Storm

With that said, I fear that there is turmoil on the horizon in this new age. The wasteland has become more organized, which means more conflicting views are coming in contact with one another. While we were largely scattered as recently as 50 years ago, these days we're closer than ever simply due to transportation. Instead of taking almost a year to cross the entirety of Nor'Merica, it can be done in just a few short months.

Certain organizations believe that by expanding outward, they can control the wastes as a whole. Others still hold the belief that some Strains are expendable when it comes to the advancement of technology. Still others are quick to eliminate anyone they see as a potential threat to their way of life.

I already see the storm on the horizon. I see how tyrants may wish to become wasteland-wide kings. I see how the ability to shift armies across the wastes may very well turn the tide for what has been a relatively peaceful existence for us.

With that in mind, I give you my plea as a researcher, a scholar, and a killer. Do not follow the same path as our forebears. Do not give in to fighting about petty differences and inconsequential actions. Do not wall yourself against information from other settlements and towns. Do not turn a blind eye to the atrocities being committed in other parts of Nor'Merica.

We are at a point where we can follow the others that have come before us, or where we can forge our own path. It's time for us to band together as survivors and as people. The next time you hear an opinion within your earshot you don't agree with, ask why that's their opinion instead of immediately calling to arms. The next time you dislike an opinion, don't immediately scream about it, but instead find out the reasoning behind it.

We evolved brains, thoughts, and feelings. We were created as people instead of the restless dead or raiders. We have the capability for greatness.

However, we also have the capability for atrocities beyond imagining. As you travel the wastes and as you see more of the world, remember that the only way we can survive is by staying together. This is our chance to rise up as a whole instead of falling once more. Our history is fraught with collapses, but I fear one more may very well destroy what is left of intelligent life on our world.

This has been a faithful narrative of the world as we know it, and how we came to be. My hope is that it will fall into capable hands, and that individuals will not abuse the information I have placed within here. In parts, I have tried to be vague in order to protect more sensitive information, but I can only do so much.

To conclude, I can only hope our future will be brighter than our past. We are people. We are survivors. These are our lives, and how we live them matters.

Philly Del Phia

True to the region's history before the Fall of humanity, the recently solidified community of Philly Del Phia was born of strife, betrayals, and the desire for a better life. The product of a land grab between cooperating and at times competing Pure Blood families, hardworking Retrogrades, and dedicated

Mericans, the result put the Pure Bloods into the appearance of power at great cost and with little stability.

Past

The Fall of humanity was not kind to cities, and the area that would become Philly Del Phia was no exception. Until recently, threats living and dead meant that few kept any organized effort in the area. However, as generations come and go, some care more than others, and some care enough to break the status quo. What is known as Philly Del Phia only came into existence fewer than 10 years ago, but it soon formed into a growing powerhouse in the region.

Hustle and Heart

When Mila Tierney came of age, she would not be married into some strategic alliance to some far-off Pure Blood family. Instead, she went to the community and talked to anyone who would listen. She organized efforts to push back raiders and redirect the undead. She also sent messengers to the Big A.C. and Old York along with samples of Philly coal, animal furs, timber, iron ore, and foodstuffs. In the span of a year, a community of maybe a few dozen between town and farms grew to nearly 300 and 300 more on homesteads to the north. Trade flowed from here to Big A.C. and Old York. With it came opportunity and, much to Mila's consternation, other Pure Bloods. They carved out pieces of the pie, experience and treachery overwhelming the young Tierney's enthusiasm and ambition.

Tobias Tierney, her younger brother, had other plans.

While Mila was the brains and the family connections, Tobias was the heart of the Tierneys. Only 15 years old, he was the rudder to Mila's sail, helping her course correct. While Mila went down to *talk* to locals, he stayed on the ground and *did* with them, from pulling nets to fighting raiders. Soon, the other Pure Blood families who moved here realized the newfound Tierney popularity would mean a protracted fight. For now, they backed off.

We the People

Mercius Kole was one of the people who jumped at a chance that Philly offered. A farmer and distiller from another community, he traveled to Philly with a group of other Retrogrades and set up shop farming, making tools, and printing a newspaper. They taught people to read so they would have an audience, sold ads, and spread information far and wide. At first, he was content to make money; as heard the tales of abuse of the common man, he knew he needed to make something more.

Like Tobias, he talked to the people, and worked with them. Soon, people chose sides between Pure Bloods and the Retrogrades, but the money still flowed, and everyone thought there was room enough. Still, information was always good, and the Tierneys took care to seed the area with spies and informants. One such man was Enyolds, a Retrograde of some education who thought he knew which way the wind blew. He was a printer, and he made a place in "the People," as the rambunctious Mericans liked to call Mercius' group. Comfortable that the Retrograde was monitored, Mila turned to continued consolidation of her power.

Watering the Tree of Liberty

It was like any night at Roscoe's, a public house run by an older Merican. People loosened their tongues after a long day. One in particular, a Remnant named Kid Dynamite, complained about working in the mines, how taxes were going up, and how Tierney's thugs just needed a proper beating.

Tierney's thugs, two of which happened to be in the public house, listened. They decided to complain too, with knives and Yorker rage. When it all ended, Roscoe was dead and the Yorkers fled into the night, a mob hounding them into the darkness. In the morning, the newspaper *The People* only ran one article: the consequences if Tommy Flanagan and Rayda Gibbs were not brought to justice. People gathered outside of City Hall where Tierney had set up residence, rather than the high tower the family used to live in. Tobias tried to talk to the people, offered to meet with Mercius, sent riders to look for Gibbs and Flanagan...and on the steps, someone in the crowd put bullets in Mercius and Tobias. Everyone ran from the lit fuse, City Hall slamming its doors shut.

THE PURE BLOOD FAMILIES

While the Tierneys were the only Pure Blood family in the area for a long time, others saw opportunity in the region and were quick to move in when they realized the potential. Several families have relocated members to Philly, looking to make a name and profit for themselves.

Bloomberg: The powerful Bloombergs of Old York have always traded in information and their inroads to Philly serve this well. Fayola Bloomberg, the local family member, places information brokerage above all else.

Guggenheim: With talk of "returning to a home left long ago," the Guggenheims of The Mass have sent daughter Alexa and entourage to expand their holdings, focusing on coal mining and even bringing electric power to everyone in the community.

Hansen: A scion of the Big A.C., the nearly 60-year-old Niall Hansen is personally spearheading expansion efforts in Philly, bringing his grandchildren Sven and Marta. His family quickly took hold of a portion of the fishing trade, seeking to crowd out Boat Town's hold.

War, Cold and Hot

Philly Del Phia shut down that day. In the coming weeks, the population of Philly Del Phia swelled with Yorker shock troops, Diesel Jock blockade runners, and people with more knives and guns than sense. Slowly, the town came back to order; Mercius stayed hidden even from Enyolds, running a war by letter and note. This went on for three years, running cold and hot. Weeks of peace would be punctuated with the death of a dozen. Tobias would find those he had common ground with burned out of house and home; Mila tightened her grip in response. Firearms were banned for a time outside of her soldiers. Anyone with a copy of *The People* would be interrogated and fined. People were imprisoned; some vanished. Retrogrades were especially targeted, required to register their masks' appearance.

And Mericans, bred on tales of the great saints Abraham Roosevelt Washington and Clinton Ford, were going to have none of that. These "Sons of Liberty" (p. XX) met in public houses, called their cousins to show up by the dozens, smuggled weapons, and planted bombs on Pure Blood trade ships and even in the local market. Retrograde "Patriots" swapped masks and clothing to give themselves alibis and found mysterious and wealthy benefactors to their cause.

Burning Down the Heart

Someone seized the local Morgue while the caretaker was away on a matter. Someone took time to meet with Tobias Tierney, someone who — based on the evidence left behind — was known well enough to him to sit at his table, drink his hooch, and kill Tobias and his guards without a real struggle. When Tobias and the others came out of the Morgue, they were killed again and again, to their last. Then, as quickly as they seized the Morgue, the assailants left, the apprentices of the caretaker unharmed.

Mila camped out at the Morgue for three weeks. Representatives from the other families camped out at the Morgue as well, waiting for someone they suspected, or knew, would never come out. Soon, Mercius himself came to the Morgue and waited; Tobias was an enemy, but one he respected. He knew Tobias being burned down would unleash Mila from any form of restraint, and that any war they continued would kill everyone involved and harm the people.

He offered a deal; he'd give Tierney a win, drawing back to the north past the Mütter Museum with his core of people. They wouldn't be banned from the community, and they would concede to some restrictions and "rents" they would have to pay. He'd even provide a scapegoat for Tobias' death as a show of unity. In exchange, hostilities would cease, and both sides would stop bleeding each other dry.

Peace in Our Time

She accepted the offer. They set terms, the restrictions Kole and his people would be under, what the Tierneys would offer in exchange. And Mercius Kole did indeed offer up the "murderer."

KEY CONVERSION RATE

Currently, five keys are worth one Universal Price Point (p. XX) due to their recent establishment as a currency and the up-and-coming nature of Philly Del Phia. Storyguides should note that the exchange rate does not matter too much except as a story element in light of using UPP for valuation.

Enyolds.

At once enraged and impressed by his skill at exposing her spy, she swallowed the bitter pill and went through with the show. Enyolds wasn't given a chance to plead his case; Mila had his tongue removed. By the time they burned Enyolds down and then dealt with his return, people were accepting the new normal: Pure Bloods on top, Retrogrades not, but with some concessions. Mercius Kole and his people nurse their wounds while Tierney continues to consolidate her power among the Pure Bloods and the greater community under the lie that they caught Tobias' killer.

Present

Mercius Kole and many Retrogrades moved north and east of the Mütter Museum, not banned from Philly Del Phia by virtue of capturing and turning over Tobias' "killer." Any statement other than Enyolds being the killer is a hushed rumor among barflys and whispering Pure Bloods. With this behind them, Mila established the key, a currency based on old transit cards, as well as introducing civic improvements and increased trade. She is running before the wind on a tall ship, all sail made... but no rudder. Other Pure Blood families gossip and wait for openings. Mercius and the People get ready for her next mistake. Her police force is little more than profiteering thugs, and while people are prospering for now, the Pure Bloods are taking more and more.

Notable Locations

Philly Del Phia is as much a community of places as it is of people. The foundation of this community is based on the rich history of the region as well as the buildings which remained. In this post-apocalyptic world, survivors salvage what is suitable and alter it to their needs and beliefs.

Boat Town

Located on the west side of the Delwar River, Boat Town is a collection of skiffs, old tugboats, and fishing vessels lashed together as one giant home. It's a microcosm of Philly Del Phia, with its own bars, hospital, and other businesses that cater to the nearly 50 Baywalkers in the town proper and outlying areas. Many of the town's Baywalkers also reside here both for protection and because it is near their livelihood in the fishing waters.



City Hall

Barricaded, boarded, and reinforced, the building that was the seat of government for the great city that stood here is now the home of the Tierney family, their servants, and soldiers. The courtyard is opened during the day for business and closed off at night, heavily patrolled and guarded. In addition to being the administrative seat of Philly Del Phia, it is also the location of the town jail and the constabulary headquarters. Mila Tierney lives and works in the clock tower, looking down upon her domain, coming out less and less as she squeezes the people tighter and tighter.

Merican Hall of Merica

Part tavern, part collection of artifacts relating to the revolutionary history of the region, the Merican Hall of Merica is one of no fewer than nine locations with the same name, all insisting they are the "bona fide" location, the others being imitators. Each possesses several objects carefully displayed, from one of four Freedom Bells to a pair of Saint Abraham Roosevelt's plastic teeth. The Sons of Liberty frequent a number of these locations at various points, often switching when the clientele shifts to more pro-Pure-Blood tendencies or constabulary.

Mütter Museum

The home of the local Morgue, the Mütter Museum was an old-world repository of medical knowledge. It operates as a place of curiosity outside of its intended purpose; the Mütter, the Graverobber who maintains it, has apprentices give guided tours to both old and new exhibits for a small fee. In addition to maintaining a gift shop where oddities, toys and basic notes on such topics as proper hygiene to zombies may be purchased, the caretaker of the Morgue and her apprentices are available for hire regarding esoteric matters. It is most notable for being a neutral ground; even during the war, no one interfered with those sitting and waiting for the return after death.

The Lockup

To the north of the Mütter Museum sits an old-world prison. Even before the Fall it was a storied place, used to hold some of the most powerful criminals of the time. During the Fall of humanity, its high walls kept many out and over the years it has been rarely explored except for the foolhardy. Currently, it is the base of operations for Mercius Kole, who moved his crew here after ending the war with Tierney and spent weeks clearing out the mass of undead that somehow ended up behind the walls.

The Jerzy Hulk

Located on the eastern shore of the Delwar River, across from Boat Town, the Jerzy Hulk was a great weapon of war from the time before Fall of humanity. Now a rusted hulk, many stay clear of it unless they seek an empty place to conduct terrible business or seek out the vast resources said to be still aboard. Rumors persist of the interior changing shape; what few efforts undertaken to map the hulk have failed, or the parties have not returned.

LAW AND ORDER

The laws of Philly Del Phia are not that complex in their presentation but represent a deep cultural divide between the powerful and the oppressed. Below is a cross-section of such laws:

A crippling assault on another: The attacker tied to a culling post, where they are brought to NorPhil and securely tied to a length of chain on a pole. They are left out for a period of time, from three hours to three days, and must fend for themselves. Friends may assist their protection.

Possession of seditious texts, books, or papers: Five-key fine and imprisonment for one week.

Assaulting a member of the constabulary: Breaking of both hands, imprisonment, variable fine.

Theft: Breaking of one hand, public shaming, branding on multiple offenses.

All cases are heard by either the chief marshal or one of the other marshals of the constabulary, who range from mildly ethical to virulently Strainist to corrupt.

All non-resident Retrogrades must register with the constabulary if they intend to stay longer than 24 hours, including displaying any mask they wear as well as showing their face for documentation. They must post a three-key fee, two of which are returned when they leave town.

The Ninefive

The Ninefive is a shattered stretch of elevated road running southward along the eastern portion of Philly Del Phia and then curving to the west. The broken pedestals are periodically used for high-elevation scouting or as a place to conduct secret business, as it is unusable for its intended purpose in this area.

NorPhil

A collection of rusted and leveled buildings, opening into cleared spaces turned into farmland over the years. Many of the area's farmers live there, growing crops, raising horses, or scrounging to survive. They have become quite skilled in fighting as a group due to the lack of attention by the constabulary and the encroachment of raiders and road agents.

PATCO Below

The PATCO transit system served Philly Del Phia before the Fall; now, parts of it house the Hanging Together tribe of Lascarians. Few beyond the Lascarians go into the tunnels due to the unwillingness of Lascarians to tolerate visitors. During the war, a few people from both sides tried to use the tunnels as shortcuts; this did not end well for either side, most losing a finger before being sent on their way.

Sandwich Wars

Patty Emperor of Water Giraffe and G-Note's WG Hoagie. To the uninitiated, both sandwiches look and taste the same. To the faithful, however, making such a comparison are fighting words. Recently, two Yorkers set up a kitchen on what they called "holy ground," serving sliced "water giraffe" on rolls. Soon after, the two had a massive falling out and one moved across the street to open his own "Hoagie Shop," where each shop yells at the customers of the other for their poor choices.

Roscoe's

Roscoe, the namesake of Roscoe's, runs the public house where he was killed by Tierney's people defending Kid Dynamite. He even hung a plaque outside explaining how those "no-good urinal fuckers Tommy Flanagan and Rayda Gibbs put the boots to my head for protecting a dumb kid in his cups and all good sorts won't associate with them," complete with drawings of them. Everyone has an opinion here, and most involve what to do to Pure Bloods.

The Squared Circle

The local Telling Visionary monastery, it is located at an old sporting arena on the outer edge of a broken elevated roadway. South of Boat Town, the faithful make several-times-weekly trips into town for trade. In addition to regular church services, the Squared Circle hosts FriNightFights, a "Pay-Per-View" spectacle of "sportive entertainment" where a host of characters meet in both dramatic scenes and gory, gripping violence. These performers do not break character throughout the week, leading to impromptu events occurring in town as members of the monastery run across each other. The constabulary has little love for these incidents, especially as all the Telling Visionaries have taken to wearing masks in solidarity with the diminished Retrogrades.

The WaWaWa Terminal

The central market for Philly Del Phia, it's the place where a great deal of honest business happens in town. From Baywalkers bringing in the latest catch from Boat Town to Lascarian scavengers trading wealth from the deep, the work of hundreds in town and on the outskirts comes to one point here. It's heavily patrolled and even erstwhile enemies make sure to behave lest they are cut off from fresh food and supplies.

Zoopark

The territory of the Parkrangur tribe of Natural Ones, Zoopark extends from an old zoo at its southern border and then spreads outward to the west and north for several miles, with the Skully River the border on the east. It is a place of dangerous animals, both normal and mutated, as well as extensive

timber resources. Mila Tierney has managed to make arrangements to harvest timber growing in the southwest of Zoopark, under the careful eye of the Parkrangur.

Notable Storyguide Characters

Philly Del Phia is filled with trustworthy, deceitful, straight-shooting, manipulative, kind, or monstrous people of all lineages, creeds, and backgrounds. Figuring out which is which is the struggle, literally life and death for some.

Antony

"I heard once an average person can do four real things a day. I try to do five."

Anthony is one of the few open Lascarians in town. He and a few others make runs to the WaWaWa Terminal, trading Scrap and oddities for food and medicine. He is friendly, as far as Lascarians go, and will at times appear in late-night taverns to sing beautifully, a shock to anyone who has heard his rusty-blade speaking voice. He bears trophies along his twisted belt, the mark of the Hanging Together tribe; many of them are from those who sought to use the tunnels to their advantage during the war.

Director Channel 48 MayYoung Caldor-on

"We teach the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, the drama of athletic competition. Why not step into the ring and see what you can learn?"

The local leader of the Telling Visionaries, Director Caldor-on is a stout Remnant woman in her mid-40s with dark eyes and graying rust-colored hair cut especially short. She is often seen around the Squared Circle carrying young production assistants on her back as part of her fitness regimen. Originally neutral during the war, watching the abuse against Retrogrades has radicalized her. She and others of the faith altered their programming by adopting the lessons of the *luchador* Scriptures, where great masked warriors would defend the common people from the rich, the corrupt, and the horrors of the undead. Some even wear the masks of the *luchadores* in solidarity with the abused Retrogrades.

Jerimiah

"Like my mother, and her father before her, and before them, the Parkrangur Tribe has dedicated itself to the responsible use of this land and are quite willing to have you die for our beliefs."

Jerimiah is the current Chief Rangur of the Parkrangur Tribe of Natural Ones in Philly Del Phia. A leathery and cheerful man with thick wrists and tightly twisted hair, he bears the arrowhead mark of the tribe all adult Parkrangur have scarred onto their faces. Like the others of his people, he wears flannels and green wool, and a campaign hat as a sign of his standing in the tribe.

Mercius Kole

"Someone told me that before it all went to shit, you could walk around without a weapon. Only people other than lawmen who carried them were either looking to cause trouble or expecting trouble. Well, I guess we're all expecting trouble now... or looking to cause it."

Just as Mila Tierney is above many, Mercius Kole is below. At ground level, in fact; he is a farmer and distiller, and a bit of a scientist as well. His upbringing was not simply of dirt and toil; his parents, for the time he knew them before being put into indentured servitude, actually taught him to read. A nearly skeletal man with sad eyes and a wrinkled brow dressed in coveralls and bits of armor, he used to wear a mask but publicly broke it in front of his people. This causes no small source of trouble the few times he goes into town, being as his face is a black and green rictus of teeth and rage. His voice is soft even when angry, and he makes a deliberate effort to pronounce words due to the strange shape of his mouth.

Mila Tierney

"I heard somewhere that you can't fight City Hall. So, I became City Hall, and there is a lot less fighting against me now."

A woman of average height, with red hair and blue eyes, the Mayor of Philly Del Phia is a ship cast adrift on dark waters. While she has the other Pure Blood families under control, and the rebellious influences are tamped down thanks to her constabulary, Tobias was the one person who kept her humanity intact. With him gone, she doesn't consider the suffering caused by her actions or the people harmed in her quest for reputation and wealth. Her ambition and ruthlessness have kept her enemies turned against each other, but it's only a matter of time before those conflicts shake themselves out and Mila Tierney becomes the target again.

The Mütter

"That is the answer to a question you wish I asked, not the one I asked. Answer what I asked."

A slim Retrograde woman wrapped in leather, canvas robes, and rags, the Mütter wears a mirror-polished brass mask that has a slit for a mouth and holes exposing her beautiful blue eyes. Her movements are at times fluid and disquieting, like someone pretending to be a person, and she tends to invade personal space as well as not let people play word games when she asks questions. She and her apprentices arrived in the area years ago, using strange abilities to kill or drive away the Darwins who were "living in my house." The local Graverobber, she and her apprentices mind the Morgue located at the Mütter Museum, an old-world repository of medical oddities she carefully curates and adds to through her extensive research of zombies, the Grave Mind and the Strains of humanity.

Nariana Chandra

"Don't mind me, I'm just going to reach up here and measure your inseam, nothing personal."

Few would expect that Nariana, a local Baywalker seamstress, is one of the main movers and shakers of the Black Market. The market fell into her lap as she was trying to get dyes for her business; since she was so resourceful, someone asked her to find medicine for her daughter and she made it her business to fulfill people's needs. Furtive, with delicate hands and mousy hair, she moves her slight body with care, as though avoiding sinkholes. Word has gotten out among the local Yorkers to "not bother the nice lady."

Rino Gerret

"I'm afraid you are going to have come with us. I mean, unless you can give me a reason why you shouldn't..."

The chief marshal of the constabulary and appointed by Mila Tierney, Rino's favorite aspect of the job is the ability to harass Retrogrades and anyone else who bothers him. While "law and order" are important to the thick-wristed Yorker, being able to impose himself on others is what makes the job truly worthwhile. Most of his police force is the same: rights and peace for those in favor, harassment and graft for those who aren't.

Roscoe

"I didn't give a life up for freedom. I gave it up to protect a dumb kid who didn't deserve to get killed by fancy people's thugs."

Roscoe really didn't plan to be radicalized. He's a husky Merican grandfather, was a farmer, and settled down to run a public house. He's Sainthood of Ashes and wanted to give people a place to relax after a hard day of work. When he died protecting Kid Dynamite, he lost his ties to his wife and kin, but fought to reconnect with them. Now, he acts as a moderating voice to the Sons of Liberty, mindful of preparation and passionate in purpose.

Senn Davies

"I'm not here to rob you, I'm here to make sure you don't rob him. Move along and I'm keeping an eye on you..."

One of the few honest members of the constabulary, Senn runs interference for otherwise-decent people being harassed by Rino and his thugs. She settled here after taking on work as one of Tierney's shock troops, and some people still haven't forgiven her for her actions during the war. Still, she tries to find out the truth rather than pin it on a local Retrograde to make herself look good. A Yorker in her early thirties, with dark hair and eyes, her smile is accented by a deep scar along her cheek, a memento of an ambush early in the war.

Minor Characters

While there are always movers and shakers in any area, some people just stand out in a crowd even as they don't have much power in the world. Use these to give local flavor or to highlight history.

Boo Bird

Not the most powerful, or the smartest, but the luckiest raider anyone has ever fought. At times curious, no one has caught or killed him in the decade since his first sighting. He is distinctive in his green sports attire and booing of those he fights.

Cletus Freeman

One of the Sons of Liberty and a local horse merchant, this loud Merican brick wall of a man agrees to do outrageous tasks for hooch money. Has knocked himself unconscious more than once.

Da and Ma Tierney

Mostly stepped back from family business, Mila Tierney's father and mother, Declan and Rose, are happy to spend their time entertaining to cover for their grief of losing their favorite child.

JoJo Banks

A very small-time hustler from the Big A.C., JoJo has managed to latch into something big in the drug trade to Remnant miners and fishmongers. She is going to get lots of attention very soon.

Kid Dynamite

A little wiser after the events at Roscoe's, Kid Dynamite was raised in the Squared Circle. A small Remnant with a shock of orange hair; a red, white, and blue mask; and a drinking problem, he's managed to focus his dislike of the current order on acts of sabotage against the constabulary.

Lub

Lub, an addled Merican who lost her whole family in the war, pushes around a shopping cart covered with colorful rags and filled with whatever junk she finds. She sometimes tries to sell what she finds, from used underwear to a working Oracle Box.

The Sons of Liberty

A catch-all name for those opposed to the Tierneys during the war, especially Mericans. At any point a Merican could have been a Son of Liberty in the war, or is one now, or is just joking about it. That said, the heart of rebellion still beats, and the Sons of Liberty may still rise up again.

The Stoop Kids

A collection of young Yorkers, they congregate at various spots and sass passersby until chased off or bargained with. They sometimes have useful information.

Vika Van

A small and fat Baywalker merchant who sells fish at the WaWaWa Terminal, she's happy with the Pure Blood efforts to improve the region.

Will Hallaran

A particularly old and mean Yorker who has a distaste for children to the point of punching any he finds annoying.

Creeds of Philly Del Phia

Philly Del Phia has a long tradition of faith even before the Fall, and the present is no exception.

Church of Darwin

There hasn't been an open presence of note of the Church of Darwin in Philly Del Phia since the Mütter took over the Mütter Museum. At most, people making a pilgrimage through the area to a place called "Limerick" would denote any of the Church of Darwin.

Cult of Fallow Hopes

Much like their opposite number, the Darwins, the Fallow Hopes have no real open presence in town. When word of a horde or raider band uprising gets out to them, they will certainly congregate to deal with such wickedness, and be insufferable while doing so.

Final Knights

A local Deacon and her few followers are all who represent the Final Knights in the area. They also happen to be some of the highest-ranking members in Murder, Inc. at present, which has let them turn their vision of the Infernal on Earth into job opportunities.

The Nuclear Family

The Nuclear Family has several families in the community, mostly Merican but a few Lascarians and Retrogrades. Nominally, Mila Tierney is Nuclear Family, having been raised so, but she has not claimed the title of Father nor started any family.

Light of Hedon

Those who follow the Light of Hedon truly ascribe to the philosophy of "all in." Some of the hardest workers in the community, they especially embrace the Seven after seeing the horrors of the war. Several of the Constabulary are Hedons, including Rino Gerrit, although they tend to have their own celebrations due to their reputation in town.

The Sainthood of Ashes

The Sainthood of Ashes has an open and diverse membership in the community. Many are drawn from the Retrogrades, with Mericans, Baywalkers, and Remnants rounding out their numbers. The Sainthood was instrumental in supporting the People both through arms and other means during the war.

STORY SEEDS

Bounty: A child killer escaped into Zoopark and Mila Tierney wants her captured alive. Characters will have to risk the ire of the Parkrangur, who want the woman dead for killing several of their tribe. She is a skilled hunter and psionicist who knows the area well.

Facecutter: A man was severely beaten before someone removed his face and replaced it with a crudely crafted mask. As it is being investigated, several others suffer this fate over days; all of them have openly harbored anti-Retrograde feelings. Is it vengeance or an attempt at a false flag?

Must Work Harder: Remnants keep dying after violent episodes, with some not coming back. Normally, this would be a concern to no one, but they all are people engaged in the dangerous work of the town such as mining or logging and it is affecting productivity. They are reluctant to talk about why it is happening, and the Remnant community has closed ranks.

Telling Visionaries

Until the events of the war, the Telling Visionaries kept to themselves. With the crackdown on Retrogrades, the unofficial stance of the Telling Visionaries has been to fight injustice in the true fashion of the *luchadores*. Much of this is reflected in their expressions and tales of Scripture, and it may only be a matter of time before the powers that be take them to task.

Tribes of the Seasons

Most of the members of the Tribes are Natural Ones of the Parkrangur tribe in Zoopark. Other faithful include the farmers past and around NorPhil as well as an occasional urban primitive who lives in the various ruins.

Virtues of the King's and Queen's Court

The region being the home of several Kings and Queens, the Courtiers make up the third sizeable portion of members of faith in Philly Del Phia. While everyone enjoys the music, and Yorkers make up a solid part of the faith, it is the Lascarians who dive into the lessons of soul who comprise some of the most ardent worshippers.

The Nor'East

Communities like Philly Del Phia exist throughout the wastes. Some are greater, some are lesser; all contain powerful

tales of survival and suffering. The density of population of the Nor'East during the Fall ensures there will always be conflict and strife among and against the survivors of humanity.

Delphian Wastes

Past Philly Del Phia to the west, and past layers of forests claimed by various Natural One tribes lay the Delphian Wastes, a warzone like no other. Travel out to the Wastes is difficult without knowing the areas the Natural Ones lay claim to, and experienced guides can make good money shooting the gaps with people and cargo. The Wastes are dotted with irradiated Retrograde strongholds, Diesel Jock waystations, and hardscrabble communities that may not make the next spring. When the stakes are lowest is when people fight the hardest, and this region has some of the lowest stakes.

Limerick Generating Plant

One of the nuclear plants of the old world, Limerick is a known holy site for the Church of Darwin. Here, the faithful seek to meet their fellows and contemplate the mysteries of evolution. Currently, they are in a guerilla war with a small group of Diesel Jock Fallow Hopes called the Sons of Thunder, who are content to engage in hit-and-run tactics with their rides for now but may escalate if they can get the troops. Their leader, Sister Audra Redeemer, hopes to fully destroy the site if she can get enough technicians and explosives.

Dutchcaster

Further to the west is a relative oasis of peace called Dutchcaster. A group of Quiet Folk Sainthood of Ashes descended from insular farming communities welcomed a commune of Red Stars for mutual defense. Effectively two settlements side by side, they still manage to keep much of the violence off their front door by reputation of doing whatever is necessary to survive. Right now, the Dutchcasters are in a shooting war with representatives from the Iron Works who are looking to run a rail line through their community, since it is the most peaceful location. It's taxing the Dutchcaster and the town elders are concerned that even if they win, they will be too weakened to hold off the people who will come after.

The Green Carbuncle

Between Philly Del Phia and Dutchcaster is a blasted field of craters and burned forest nearly 10 miles across. The result of a set of experimental nuclear device from the old world accidentally launched long after the Fall of humanity, it littered the area with undetonated nuclear material, Scrap, and even a functional microscale nuclear device. It is another holy site to the Church of Darwin, who test themselves in its glow and harvest Scrap from the area. Retrograde warlords have set up shop at various points, while mutated animals and irradiated zed wreak havoc on anyone in their hunting grounds.

Morgan's Town

A Pure Blood compound in the Delphian Wastes, Trocerra Morgan, matriarch and engineer, finds she needs no threats from outside her family to make her life perilous. She's already executed two sons and banished one daughter, but there are six others she hopes may turn out alright in the long run. Her husband, someone recommended by the Lineage League, has turned out to be of small measure and even smaller ambition; thus, Trocerra consoles herself with her husky Merican bodyguard and that the Natural One tribes just outside her door have started fighting each other again. With time to breathe, she's been able to rearm and make a call for mercenaries and technicians to help her continue her work on artillery and rockets to burn down the local forests.



The Hopewell Iron Plantation

One of several Retrograde strongholds in the area, it is the closest to Morgan's Town and the space between them is a no-man's land of charred wood and snipers on both sides. Here, in a former self-sufficient iron foundry from the old world, Retrogrades have banded together to mine coal and iron, farm, and wage war against people around them as needed. Recently, the Hopewell leadership had a surprise dropped in their lap; Canella Morgan, the outcast daughter of Morgan's Town. While they don't trust each other yet, Canella is hoping to replace her mother and make a deal with Hopewell to provide raw materials for waging war.

Old York

A vast set of middle fingers reaching up to the sky, the skyscrapers of Old York have always been a symbol of their defiance from miles off. When the Infection first raced through the city, the government tried everything in its power to contain the threat. Restricted roadways, closed-down airports, and jammed waterways trapped many; those poor souls who remained then fell victim to violence by either their fellow man in the form of rioting or military containment or the growing zombie hordes, which could not be turned back. As with many cities, moving below or moving above bought time; anything near the ground was a target to both the living and the dead.

As time passed, so did the weak; whether it was the flooded underground, those caught in the blast radius of airburst nuclear fire, or the inhabitants of the resource-starved towers of steel and stone, those who remained were the strongest of the strong. Here was born the Yorker, the Retrograde, the Lascarian, laying claim to below and above. Here, in Old York, civilization has been reborn.



Welcome to Gangland

The north of Old York is the urban sprawl of what was the greatest city in the world. Now, what is called the Iron Gardens is a flooded mess, low stone buildings and the twisted metal skeletons of apartment buildings and office towers connected with intricate walkways. These rickety bridges and cable slideways are the safest routes to travel in the area; the zed-filled water is the province of the foolhardy and their well-armored and armed boats. Both on water and walkway, travelers may see colorful marks and symbols along the way; these are the tags of the local gangs, who paid for their turf with blood and don't like freeloaders.

Relative peace and the lack of all-out war exists only because of the efforts of the Affiliates, who watch from the Blue Notes Bar high on one of the few skyscrapers of the Iron Gardens. Acting as both hands-off overlord and arbitrator to the Old York gangs, the Affiliates are proven to be the craftiest and wisest people of Old York. Lead by Jackson Bluenote, a soft-spoken man with slate-dark skin and age-white hair, all the Affiliates are over 40 years old, a shock in a world where life is cheap and dies young and violently.

Gang life dominates Old York, from the Lineage League to the smallest crew with half a floor in a tower. Knowing them and what they stand for can make a huge difference between living and dying in Old York, and this list is just a sampling of the gangs of Old York.

ABC Shipyards: Merchants and shipwrights with a long reach outside of Old York

The Blue Line: A group of gangs intent on restoring civil order, including a telegraph system and a prison

Laughing in the Dark: One of the few groups to survive the horrors of Coney Island, the clown-faced gang hires itself out for any job

MPYRE Dogs: A large gang with subchapters throughout Old York, their current leadership is in flux and no one is sure who is really in charge

Papaya Kings: Gun manufacturers with a reputation across the wastes

33rd Street Boys: A gang capable of remarkable cruelty even for Final Knights

Tremors: Known to burn down a block to get one person who wronged them

Waterfront Boys: A major player in water trade and salvage due to their large number of ships

Blue Street Dukes: Fell upon a cache of Scrap and managed to arm themselves well

The Darlas: Violent men and women who wear the most beautiful (to them) dresses and jewelry, mimicking high society

Lowdowns: Run an honest casino on their turf and have attracted some high rollers

Old York ACs: They live and travel on a boat, selling food of all kinds

Red Mist Shootas: Drugged-out gang of Lascarians and Retrogrades dealing in drugs and oddities

MAKING A GANG INTO A SOCIETY PATH

Gangs are an integral part of Old York and an integral part of those who live there. Even those who are "unaffiliated" to any gang are affected by the ebb and flow of relations between gangs and by the turf they claim. Here is an example of a gang as a Society, the S-Train:

Connections: Group (S-Train Affiliated Gang), Contact (one of the S-Train Conductors, part of gang leadership), Access (the S-Train's defensible and well-equipped headquarters), Obligation (Other S-Train Members)

Skills: Academics, Crafting, Repair, Technology

Edges: Tech Wiz, Working Smarter

Other gangs grant different Connections, Skills, and Edges in line with their resources and goals.

S-Train: A group of craftspeople and weaponsmiths with an incredibly defensible headquarters including an electrified fence

Ten Feet Below: Saltwise gang resisting a takeover by the Waterfront Boys; they specialize in dive work

At the Waterfront, any part of the Iron Gardens that touches the water, gangs of "new fish" fight both each other and the constant threat of Lascarians, undead, and aquatic beasts. The Waterfront Boys have turned this danger to their advantage, claiming turf for small ports and mostly living on heavy barges used to bring goods and people from place to place. Led by Red Carlos, the Captain of the Waterfront Boys would seem to fit in at a Pure Blood dinner as well as the deck of a skiff. Tall and fit, with curly hair and never without a pair of deep red lenses over his eyes, his willingness to overwhelm conflict areas with his fleet has upset the Affiliates, and a "talk" may happen soon.

The south of Iron Gardens is Twelve Winds, an array of warehouses and factories that keep 12 groups of windmills out of the water below. Here, the sprawling complex generates most of the electricity for Old York as well as housing a water desalination device and a biodiesel plant. Even more than the most paranoid Pure Blood's compound, this is the most protected and fortified area of Old York; civilization is marked by water, fuel, and power, and all those of Old York will not risk it to waterborne raiders or opportunistic scavengers ripping a critical motor apart for a hunk of copper. Controlled by the powerful Dons gang, they currently have an agreement to never cut power to Old York, backed by an Affiliate-forced treaty and 33rd Street Boys "minders" onsite led by Elia Staya, a cruel sniper who does not accept challenges to her skill lightly.

Up and Down

The territory of Old York is not just mapped as north and south, east and west, but "up" and "down." "Up," in this case, is not only to the south of Iron Gardens but up in the middle fingers of the city. Located in the central island of Old York, the Heights is the home of Pure Bloods, Yorkers, and other Strains. It is a place of tense and sweet words and dirty work done by others; old money and old grudges rule this place as well as extract wealth from the surrounding area. It is the home of the Lineage League, a powerful gang that has reach throughout the wastelands. Dedicated to tracking the lineage of Pure Bloods, they also focus on funding efforts to advance humanity and technology, from the Second Ark farming project to eugenics experiments, with little consideration of ethics in the face of humanity's survival.

Other areas of note in the Heights include the Monastery at 30 Rock, the Grand Central Market, and AMNH. Despite various war efforts depleting their forces, 30 Rock is the largest gathering of the Telling Visionaries on the East Coast, and is still a powerful force in Old York, being the de facto hospital of the Heights as well as a source of old-world history. Meanwhile, the Grand Central Market draws only the most powerful merchants and buyers, who are vetted as to their resources, and in the market most trades aren't for single items, but production runs and trade routes. Finally, AMNH is a Sainthood of Ashes dig site, the only recently-discovered legendary remains of a museum of the old world, submerged and part of one of the largest excavation efforts in the known world.

To the south of the Heights is its counterpoint, the Plunge. While the Heights symbolize wealth and excess, the Plunge is the place where work gets done, its broken streets used as canals where the pavement has failed them. It's inhabited by craftspeople and scientists, printers and engineers, all trying to make a better world with their hands and minds. It's the home of the Blue Line and Papaya Kings, and a host of other gangs who do work and get paid. The center of this effort is the Union Sanctuary, an open courtyard of stone and trees south of the Grand Central Market. The buildings around it host storefront faith centers of all stripes while a Red Star commune has claimed a pre-Fall hospital as home and observation post. Here, in the Sanctuary, ideas spread like wildfire between writers and sages, tinkers and common folks. Here, as well, the natives are very good at defending themselves from masses of raiders from the south and zed coming in with the tide, with Red Stars keeping careful watch while the Blue Line engages in regular patrols.

The Brokelands

The Brokelands, to the east, is the bad-news cousin of the Plunge. Here, on the ground, a person does their own knifework if they want any measure of respect, and there is a lot less cooperation. While much of it is still dry land, enough is touching water to let the undead climb out into the ruins of factories holding a vast wealth of Scrap. Here, diverse gangs from the neat and ordered Dragon's Head collection of Digitarians to the madness that is Coney Island's Laughing in the Dark trade, hustle and hate with the best of them. The north Brokeland finds its own unique conflict between the Red Stars commune of Williamspoint and the Brokeland Bowl, a Nuclear Family gang centered on a revitalized bowling alley and diner. Having lost much territory to a no-man's land the Red Stars filled with zombies to protect their own turf, Nathan Eisenhower, Father and gang leader, is still not willing to give up his dream of a perfect 300 game even as he struggles to keep families in the neighborhood.

The Reach

If someone were to travel north from Old York by land, avoiding the mobs of raiders on the Tappen Zed Bridge to the west and then heading north at the Eight7 signs, they would find a rusted graveyard of all the vehicles that tried to flee Old York. Desperate to flee the Infection, people found themselves trapped on narrow and wide roadways alike. The Infection caught up with them in fits and starts, and those who survived to flee their mobile cages as hordes erupted ran to the small communities in the region. Such are many of the roads in the area with numbers instead of names, crowded with the dream of escaping to the Frozen North and the nightmare of rusted-out traffic and zombie hordes.

Albanlaer Tech

A former seat of government of the region marked by brutal concrete buildings, much of the city is a burned husk. While the western part of the city is the home of giant hordes of shamblers and the north is swarming with raiders, across the river to the east is a fortified technological enclave. A mix of Diesel Jocks, Remnants, and Pure Bloods, they occasionally send out people to gather information and trade new inventions for supplies. Well-armed and with an entrance exam for staying with the community, they have had little trouble from the raiders and bandits who probe their defenses and are considering more formal contact with the Powers That Be in Old York to establish trade by waterway.

George's Lake

A resort town before the Fall of humanity, George's Lake is a series of small fishing communities spread out along its coast. Mostly Merican or Natural Ones, they have developed a host of ritualized celebrations in line with the area's past, from the 15th Annual Mayor Uriah Sanders MiniGolf Classic (held every year) to the Drowning of the Stranger. Even the normally xenophobic Natural Ones make some effort to be courteous to the "tourists," and the Mericans are downright brotherly. Currently, something from the lake has been eating people and the communities are at odds with how to deal with it, from a massive hunting expedition to feeding it poorly behaved children.

The Eight7 Project

An adventurous effort by several Diesel Jock and Rover clans, the Eight7 Project seeks to clear the Eight7 roadway

which runs northward from Old York, reconnecting civilization as best they can. They have met with mixed success, from the logistics of moving scrapped vehicles on narrow mountain passes to distracting and diverting raider clans while they set to work. The brainchild of Selia Markam, a Rover Sainthood of Ashes, she's always looking to hire on people for short or long-term assistance in the effort.

The Hall of Legends

Several days' walk from Albanlear Tech and far enough from the major roadways to not be caught in the wanderings of zombie hordes lies a holy site to the Nuclear Family. Recently discovered by Karen Salinski, Father of the Nuclear Family, and her family, it celebrates one of the greatest pastimes of the old world, chronicling the bravest warriors of one of their most deadly games. A town has sprung up around it and the faithful are busy both chronicling the artifacts and fighting off several factions that would be more than happy to just loot the place.

Nine-Oh

Cutting roughly southeast to northwest from Albanlear Tech, the roadway is especially cluttered with abandoned vehicles, which makes it even difficult to travel by horse in some locations. Most of the small settlements along Nine-Oh use the waterway for both travel and their livelihood. Those traveling northward can hire boats to take them to just before the Saintlaw Sea and then take one of the overgrown but still passable roadways. Undead threats are minimal along the river, replaced by bandits and curious aquatic animal which can still tip a boat over.

The Saintlaw Sea

At the end of several roadways to the north, the Saintlaw Sea slashes the land with watery claws. Travel across the sea is perilous for low visibility and numerous islands as well as the Johnsons, a group of Saltwise and Reclaimer pirates operating sailing vessels along the waterway. Most are content to accept tribute for passage, or even ferry people through the hazards for a fee, but a few groups give no quarter to those they come across. Their current headquarters is Boldt Castle, a former Pure Blood island enclave the pirates seized. Entrance can be had for the right price, with being drawn into bloodthirsty political maneuvering part of the cost of admission.

The Big A.C.

A tribute to and cautionary tale of excess even before the Fall of humanity, it found itself burned, overrun and crushed under the waves. Still, excess will never be out of style and Pure Blood wealth, Vegasian guile, and slave labor turned a broken coastline into a palace of depravity second only to Vegas City in scope. The Iron Slave Revolts were a major setback, with fire engulfing much of the city and forcing them to rebuild further inland. The Board Members, the ruling elite of the Big A.C., were quick to turn to other vices in order to maintain power, and they still hold some people as "indentured servants" out of sight. Drugs of all types, specialty contract killers, gambling, and other stranger needs all find themselves filled in this den of iniquity.

The Boardwalk

Inside the walls of the Big A.C. is a main thoroughfare pulled up and reconstructed from the amusement piers which had fallen into the ocean many years ago. Built in the remains of a grand meeting place where only the walls remained, the collapsed roof was cleared and left a giant open-air concourse. Gambling halls, brothels and drug dens line the twisting path of the Boardwalk, giving easy access to most any desire. The main areas are carefully constructed to allow the Board Members to observe from a series of concealed windows in their high tower next door. Any non-sanctioned violence is met with sniper fire or the fury of the Pit Bosses who walk the floor of the Boardwalk.

The Dive

A series of barges and boats anchored above and next to the old Big A.C. site securely tethered to piers jutting into the water, the Dive is a massive effort to pull any remaining wealth from the broken remains of the old world as well as the burned remains of the old Big A.C. Saltwise navigators guide skilled people in diving suits to various points underwater to cut free valuable Scrap and attempt to break into the fabled vaults of the lost casinos. Other Saltwise keep guard against the hunter zombies and sea creatures which swim the ruins with regularity, while engineer teams operate the air systems to keep the workers alive.

The Hex

Part mercenary hiring house, part bloodsport arena, the Hex is a fighting ground like no others. One of the major celebrations of Saturday Night for the Hedonists is a card of arena fights in a large hexagonal cage. Designed to be modular and expanded, the arena can be kitted out with a variety of scenery, from live firepits to a chained burster. Fights can range from first blood to death, although most are until someone passes out. Betting is fierce, and "The Commissioner," a rather jowly Vegasian named Lila Harvest, manages to keep the fights interesting and is always looking for new talent, even if they aren't interested in fighting of their own free will.

Pleasantville

A place whispered about among the learned, with its location known only to a few, Pleasantville is allegedly an experiment in how to shape the local Grave Mind as well as create high-value slaves. A cross-section of "normal" Strains was placed in a guarded community from birth and put behind high, hidden walls far beyond where people would travel. They are told nothing about the world other than carefully crafted lies fed through school books, rigged radios, "visiting merchants" and

even a few townsfolk who are all in on the deception that it is not actually the pre-Fall world.

The Morgue for Pleasantville is outside the walls; anyone who dies in the experiment is sent far away to the few places where slavery still holds sway. This lets the minders of this experiment shape a Grave Mind which does not "know" the trauma of multiple deaths and does not let the inhabitants be aware of the true nature of the world outside of "forest devils" who their religion says will take them should they wander too far from town. While the market for these slaves has dropped dramatically, and some thought of shutting Pleasantville down, several investors approached some Board Members to financially rescue the project.

The Red Floor

Looking above the Boardwalk, even outward past the walls, is the Red Floor, the highest level of the former hotel that makes up part of the Boardwalk. Here, the Board Members hide themselves, governing the Big A.C. and reveling in excess or engaging in foul rites as their faith demands. Out in the world, they act like everyone else, never admitting their role; here, they are iron hands in velvet gloves. The Board Members' tastes range from the sublime to the bizarre. While one is content to insist on only dining on rotted food, another makes sport of using an old-world hunting device to put a red dot on people at the Boardwalk and to see if they notice before he shoots them.

Rico's Dimes

Located off the Boardwalk, if Rico Wysol's actual intent was to sell drugs, he would be long out of business. His products are horrible and he's not a very good salesman. If his intent was to act as a covert information source on one of the last holdouts of slavery in the wastes, though, he'd be doing quite well. Rico, Vegasian Sainthood of Ashes, is working his way into the local black markets and is taking advantage of his moneyed benefactors to make things happen. He's getting a reputation of being able to deliver product outside of drugs, and Rico hopes that opens doors that can give him the whereabouts of some of the hidden slave camps still in existence, including Pleasantville.

The Rest of Nor'Merica

Out of the crowded Nor'East, communities grow sparser and dangers shift from cities full of zed and the machinations of man to wide-open spaces teeming with zed hordes, raiders, road agents, and wildlife. The communities themselves are not always safe havens, as the less people have the more they will fight to keep it.

The Ironworks

Nowhere did the Iron Slave Revolt change a society more than the Ironworks. Once built on the back of slaves of all stripes, and social status bound like chains, the Revolt upended long-held power structures and broke the backs of the Pure Bloods who ruled so ruthlessly. The leader of the revolt, an Iron Slave who has taken the name Joa Simm, currently struggles to make sure the new leadership doesn't fall into the same patterns that turned the Ironworks into a stratified hellhole. She established a reconciliation committee focused on open and public trials for the architects of the slave trade, reparations to slaves and abused workers, rehabilitation of those who were the gears of slavery, and an attempt at a more equitable society.

This has not been easy, as it has been a balance between punishing the drivers of slavery and keeping those around who understood the processes that make the Ironworks function and had the resources to keep it flowing. While some bray for blood, and others want to keep their heads down and let it all pass, Joa and others try to rebuild a better world while keeping the rail lines that define what space is the Ironworks intact and functioning.

Motor City

Motor City is a screaming, steaming city of industry, still building tools of death and civilization. Railrunners to generators for far-flung towns find their way off the Motor City assembly lines, and the Revolt did not interrupt much of the process due to the fire-and-forget nature of assembly line work. Recently, production has slowed as they have switched over to weapons and armor lines in response to both increased undead threats and outside groups seeking to take advantage of the disorder in the new government.

The undead situation, in particular, has become particularly grave in that getting railrunners out of the city, once a long but manageable process, has been stymied more than once. The press of undead hordes has been too much, requiring a massive effort to redirect them before Motor City can open its doors to let trains out. Currently, some of the best minds of the area are researching ways to redirect or otherwise blunt the mass of undead away from the tracks and toward more cordoned areas, with little success so far.

Mill City

Touching the Nekota flatlands, Mill City is the breadbasket of the Ironworks. During the Revolt, the quick overthrow of the Pure Bloods let the rebellion cut off food supplies to Motor City and Rail City. Forces from Motor City made strategic raids to capture foodstuffs from hidden storage locations, only to find a terrible truth: Ezekiel Freeman, a Lascarian slave, had no moral quandary about poisoning food he had placed as a trap. Over 200 Motor City troops died painfully that day, and Ezekiel did not shed a tear.

Unhappy with the work of the reconciliation committee, Ezekiel directs a private organization to capture, try, and then convict the people who fell through the cracks of the reconciliation efforts. People who passionlessly cut food rations,

doctors who separated mothers from children, guards who extorted slaves for their own benefit, all are too low down the chain to be punished but not so low that Ezekiel's team will not eat them alive in a formal "family dinner." Rumors continue about such extrajudicial punishments, and Joa has tapped her top people, including Ezekiel, to investigate and put a stop to the matter...

Rail City

Unlike the walled fortresses of the other cities of the Ironworks, Rail City is a collection of bunkers and factory enclaves connected to each other and the larger Ironworks by rail. In the aftermath of the Revolt, many of the Pure Bloods who called Rail City home fled with their loyal soldiers into the ruins of the surrounding area. The reconciliation committee has needed to put their capture on the back burner in favor of city survival as the massive death toll of the Revolt has resulted in a dramatic rise in intelligent undead. Some days it is a struggle to get a train from one bunker to another, let alone out to the wider world.

Each week, Joa Simm or one of her representatives visits Chancellor Christine Daily, the former power behind the throne of Rail City. They give her a report on the improvements in the city and the expansion in rail they have laid to connect the rest of the continent. Then, they leave her in her damp cell deep in the earth, guarded by loyal soldiers who will do everything to keep her alive so she can know everything she controlled is lost to her.

Rust City

Once only a lone rail bunker remaining of a larger settlement felled by bad planning and even worse walls, Rust City is now one of the fastest-growing communities of the Ironworks. After the execution of the Stationmasters of Rust City, Rust City had become one of the destinations of Iron Slaves looking to make a new life for themselves. The population has grown fivefold, with an attendant rise of crime and strain on infrastructure as teams restore walls and claim back the city block by block from zombies and raiders. Formerly a gateway from the Ironworks to the rest of the wastes and charging for the service, Rust City has both sought to diversify their work as well as send out teams to lay new track allowing better connections to Old York, Philly Del Phia, and other communities.

One such business that has found a place in Rust City is Murder, Inc., which was very pro-slavery and stacked with Pure Bloods. Hiding themselves by various means, many seek a return to the old ways or at least to escape detection as they carve out a path to wealth for themselves. Some have taken to removing heroes of the Revolt, staging "accidents," or making well-planned hits seem like raider attacks or street violence.

Missory Bay

What was once a mighty river and rich farmland is now marsh and moor. The end result of storm and sea, cities lie underwater and people hug the new coast. Roadways are nearly useless, replaced with flat-bottom boats poled about as people eke out an existence. Most places have one or two resources upon which they can draw, making trade more important to the small homesteads and hamlets.

Music City

If the Virtues of the Kings' and Queens' Court were to have a holy land, Music City would be it. In time past, the city was a crossroads of music and spirituality, artists in the blessed "honky-tonks" and grand stages both professing their experiences in song for enraptured audiences. Now is no different as the faithful seek and live the lessons of their Kings and Queens in joyful noise and hard living. A prosperous trade center on the east side of the bay, with a diverse population, it is the starting point for many seeking to travel across Missory Bay to the west.

Recently, a minor schism has formed between followers of the King of Rock and Roll in Music City; while some believe he is best represented in his youthful time wearing gold lame and a ducktail, others insist that he was only truly the King when he gave up childish things and the burden of Telling Visionary antics for dazzling jumpsuits and burning love. The dispute has been carrying over outside of matters of faith, with both sets of adherents spreading the word of the One True King and warning of the "Fat Pretender" or the "Boy Lip-Syncher" respectively to all traveling through the area. It may only be a matter of time before it comes to blows.

Blue Delta

Some places want to be left alone to create rather than destroy, and Blue Delta is just that place. A community of musicians, artists, and fishmongers, they rely on their self-sufficiency and the isolation that only a floating half-submerged city in the middle of Missory Bay can provide. Reachable by the right ferry for the right price, visitors will find both suspicion and art in equal measure, and few are left untouched by the experience. Meanwhile, rumors swirl about Blue Delta, with travelers claiming strange lights and music have led ships into traps by waterborne raiders or worse fates.

Such is the rage about a pure place of creation that several groups have plans to find and destroy the community, reasoning that something as simple as a community of artisans must be a Toybox. This has gotten the ear of Minister General Gopal Shan, who has offered large payments to boat captains for locations of Blue Delta so he can investigate. So far, they have demurred, but the Minister General is offering more money and has less patience being denied.

Riverside & Mabel Vale

On the western shore of the Missory Bay, Riverside is a mass of cargo containers and repurposed ships smashed up against the remains of family homes and storefronts. The western exchange for Bay travel, it's become a trade hub of some

note and a place people stay when they have nowhere else to go. Rowdy, rough, and with some measure of peace only by the Merchants' Alliance's hired goons, it is a sharp contrast to the Nuclear Family community of Mabel Vale.

Sitting on the bluffs over the trade center, Mabel Vale is downright neighborly to visitors. Guarded by a well-equipped Neighborhood Watch, the community has their own way of doing things that will seem peculiar to those unfamiliar with the Nuclear Family.

Profanity and rough language are forbidden around the "children," with increasing fines to be put in the town's "Swear Jar" and rumors of harsher punishment, from culling post to execution. The Mayor of Mabel Vale, Big Bob, is avuncular and not afraid to publicly punish his family loudly behind closed doors for the most minor breach of family rule, where the neighbors are sure to not see or hear their dirty laundry. Private family matters are just that, and anyone responding to them will find Mabel Vale a not very neighborly place at all.

The Rum Coast and The Paradise Isles

The Rum Coast is dotted with fishing villages and simple farming collectives, the low population limiting the number of zed in the area. It is not an easy life, though, as pirates periodically pass through the area and take what they wish, and storms lash the land. Still, people manage, and they hope to find a way to make it through.

Distant Shores

To the southeast lie a few islands that struggle through or are just on the edge of the hurricanes which rip through the area. In the past, these places were getaways for the powerful and wealthy. Now, they are where a few huddled masses gather and scrape a living through fishing and farming. Travel is perilous, with powerful raider camps on other islands or abandoned oil derricks taking to the sea like pirates of old, and disease is rampant.

The Everforest

The new swamps of the Rum Coast when the sea rose up, the Everforest is a place where danger lies just below the surface of the water and just on the other side of the vines. Travel is by canoe or fan boat, the few Natural Ones or Diesel Jocks who will travel in past the edge demanding a high price to guide others. Visibility can sometimes be less than 10 feet due to the plant life, giving plenty of places for raiders, hunter zombies, and other creatures to burst forth and attack the unsuspecting.

People travel here for only one sane reason; to speak with the Sleepless, a tribe of Full Dead who live on stilt-raised houses. Traders of song and words, they demand a pound of flesh for their greatest service: an answer to questions unknown. No one knows how they know what they do; some attribute it to mystical forces of faith, while others claim they have connections to the Grave Mind itself and wrest the answers from those who have died before. In any case, they know things that few outside the most learned know, seemingly pulled from the air their twangy music floats upon.

The Kingdom

In the mess of flood waters and relentless nature, the Kingdom rises out of the land. Built on dreams of long ago, the former amusement part is a place of nightmares. Home of Pure Bloods and their Semper Mort servants, they found the Iron Slave Revolt reached even their doors. Although the Kingdom survived, its slavery did not; slaves either died fighting for freedom or escaped to the north, establishing their own communities. Still, the Kingdom goes on, from the service tunnels used by Semper Mort and Lascarian technicians to keep the magic happening to Paradise Island's life of Pure Blood luxury and ease. Most of all, the Castle, the broken icon of the Kingdom, still stands, and the Rat King still rules over them all.

Midland Resources 7

One of the largest concentrations of raiders in the Rum Coast, this massive collection of oil rigs is the launching point for many of the seaborne raiders to terrorize the land. Operating terrible belching ships of all descriptions, they terrorize coastal communities and even venture inland for resources before they return to their rusted home. While most raids consist of fewer than a half-dozen small ships, reports of flotillas with dozens of vessels have increased in frequency. Some people have given up entirely on the coast in response, while others have banded together and consolidated their holdings to protect themselves.

Recently, parties of raiders from the rigs have been found far inland actively scouting. Some of them carry well-crafted drawings of individuals, mostly children, on small sheets of human flesh. Several of the pictures bear a strong resemblance, as though they were extended family. The raiders carrying them acted as though the pictures were important, sometimes breaking their own limbs to be free of any restrains so they could recover the pictures.

Vegasia

With the shattering of the former West Coast by weapon and nature, people sought an oasis from the suffering of the world. They found it in Vegasia, a land build on dreams and crime, a bright spot in the sun-blasted desert. Now only dozens of miles from a giant bay, survival wasn't a matter of thirst but surviving itself. Old-world rivalries carried over to the new face of the city, threatening to rip it apart.

Vegas City

Vegas City would rather burn itself down than give up slavery, and it almost did. The Iron Slave Revolt was little more than a disruption here due to the tight grip it holds on water; with the turn of a valve the small communities expanding

outward from Vegas City would dry up under the blazing sun and blow away. As always, Vegas is the road to excess many seek, a place of gaming halls, drug dens, fight clubs, road races, and anything a person can place money on. For the Final Knights, however, Vegas City is their New Gomorrah, a place where man is free of the gods of old.

Such is their belief in their holy land that a group, 33 Black, ensures that no other faith takes hold in the city. With members spread across all social classes, from the most powerful businesswoman to the lowliest slave, they inform on, hunt down, or corrupt those of other faiths and beliefs. Accensorites are especially prized, with lavish gifts delivered to those who could capture, kill, or even convert one. A number are held prisoner in various locations, including a valuable asset of the Lineage League.

Reno Auto Reserve

The R.A.R., or "the Roar" has been a wellspring of new technology for Vegasia; beneath the ruins of Reno sat a host of classic pre-Fall automobiles as well as other technology. It's become a gathering place for Diesel Jocks, Rovers, mechanical savants, and scientists throughout the west, the wealth of pre-Fall knowledge giving Vegasia incredible bargaining power with both the Ironworks and Lone Star. Even as both have rejected slavery, the continued technological advances have advanced the factories and oil fields immensely, so both grit their teeth and plan for a time they can cut off Vegasia for good.

Hoover Falls

A large hydroelectric dam located on the eastern border of Vegasia and a series of great canyons, Hoover Falls is a common stopover for those traveling from Vegasia to Lone Star, and their ability to generate electricity for Vegas City has given them a measure of freedom other communities do not share. With only a few of the generators still in operation, much of the population's work involves repairs and securing or manufacturing spare parts for the equipment. Carefully guarded, there are still incidents of sabotage; Derrill, the head of security for Hoover Falls, has his hands full with raider and zed attacks and may try to find outside help to catch his saboteurs.

S.L.C. and the Tabernacle

On the shores of a salt sea to the north of the canyon lands lie a number of settlements. These are the edge of Vegasia, the land transitioning to the dangerous Nekota Flats that separate Vegasia from the Ironworks and Missory Bay. Two of the most noted settlements are Salt Lake Commune, a large gathering of Red Stars whose sheer size and influence with their neighbors has unnerved the Tabernacle, a settlement of Fallow Hopes Accensorites. Confused and angered by the lack of faith of Red Stars, the growing Tabernacle continues their war on S.L.C. to mixed results. The warring has disrupted trade and several money-eyed interests would like to see a stop to the hostilities one way or another.

The Rust Coast

The Rust Coast is aptly named: In the northwest, hard rain and harsh sea air makes quick work of the bones of buildings and the shells of Diesel Jock rides. Powerful winters and torrential summers have ruined cities even more than the nuclear blasts and zombie hordes, driving much of survivor life underground or to the periphery of the wilderlands. Lascarian and Retrograde communities have made bringing the treasures of the Earth out to the world at large a priority, while mixed communities live at high altitudes among jagged hills, farming in volcanic soil and trying to work together without tearing each other apart. Down the coast, the land is shattered, both sea and trees reclaiming much of what did not fall into the ocean. Travel through the labyrinth of canals and waterways is dangerous, encouraged only by the vast pre-Fall relics found by the lucky and foolhardy.

Under-Sea

One of the largest economic forces in the north of the Rust Coast, the Under-Sea is deliberately built to survive the terrifying storms that pass through the areas. Fortified outer buildings, some from before the Fall and others constructed after, shelter other buildings farther and lower in the interior. In this inner core, which along with the protective buildings is called the Sky Watch, business happens; some would call it an "Honest Vegasia."

The true life of the Under-Sea, however, is below the surface. Here, in the Crucible, are miles of tunnels engineered to last and all the parts of a community visitors never get to see. It's like its own separate community, to the point where the interests of the Crucible and the Sky Watch may not be aligned anymore, conjoined twins who tolerate each other less and less.

Shanghai City

Spared the ocean but not the fallout and rain, Shanghai City is the home of the most violent and opportunistic people on the western coast. While its upper city leached away in acidic rain, the lower city was barred, barricaded, and braced figuratively and literally during the Fall of humanity. Those below during the collapse of the world did whatever it took to survive, "us versus them" and their Red Star descendants continue this legacy. Trading here is an exercise in risk, not only for the communes here deciding someone must be looted for the "greater good," but in understanding the peculiarities of Red Stars and trading. Still, if something is needed, it can be found here; walking out with it once the trade is done is another matter entirely.

The Lost Angel Isles

Those lucky or unlucky enough to not have their ships ripped apart by the shorelines may find themselves on the Lost Angel Isles. Depending on the particular isle or coastline, shantytowns behind gang-erected fences, blocks of corroded desolation, the massive Telling Visionary party town of San Dimas,

or a pyre of zombies used as a power source will greet new arrivals. Meanwhile, the Hills are the place of the Pure Bloods, a decadent lot who throw their wealth away on drugs and hooch rather than industry as their servants toil endlessly and are then hidden away in a dismal Servants Row.

The Overgrowth

Along the Rocky Mountains, the land explodes with forests. Hard rain and Infection-laced trees combine to swallow up mountain passes, valleys, and foothills. Passage is difficult, as the plants grow back as quickly as they are cut away. Spanning hundreds of miles across in some places, plants range from giant trees to twisted, glowing fungus, with enormous mutated wildlife stalking throughout. Civilization as is commonly known in the wastes does not exist, although communities of Rovers and Natural Ones living deep in the overgrowth embrace predatory spirituality. Some paths are easier to follow than others, and massive efforts from Vegasia and the Ironworks seek to clear a rail path through the Overgrowth.

Lone Star

If any place were to embody the Merican spirit, it would be Lone Star. Wide-open spaces call for men and women to ride rigs and horses and be free, while prospectors and farmers settle into small villages and lone cabins in the wilderness. Honest folk do hard work while the shiftless and cruel take advantage, only stopped by good people with guns in hand and sand in their boots. Compounding the perils of the desert land are the undead, born of cities and towns from before the Fall as well as those that did not survive after resettlement. Here, the shambling hordes of undead combine with the Natural Ones of the Pridelands and the Nekota Flats to bring endless war, memories of the time before the Fall fueling the feuds just as the oil beneath the ground fuels the machinery of the wastes.

Star City

Standing out on the open plains like a welt beaten out of enslaved flesh, Star City is a testament to the tenacity of the people of Lone Star. The only large settlement in the region, it has General Mustang to thank for growing it from a dismal backwater to the walled and fortified powerhouse of the wastes. With his Lawmen diverting zombie hordes from the city and the city transforming into a thriving center of trade, the greatest threat to Star City is General Mustang's ambition. Constant battle with people of the Pridelands and the Nekota Flats give no end to his thirst, and at one point or another he warred with everyone across the wastes.

In back rooms and letters sent to far-off places, people complain of Mustang's brutal rule and the cost in lives and taxes to fund his war machine. Mustang's fanatical Lawmen following the letter of the law even in the face of absurdity, the growth of other settlements, and increasing disorder behinds the walls have soured people on Star City and Mustang. Mustang has grown older but not much wiser, redoubling efforts to grab as much as he can while even those favorable to him question his actions or even his sanity.

The Tremblin' Plains

The ground of the Tremblin' Plains shakes with the thumping of oil derricks and the chewing of earth under the wheels of those who travel to ensure the wells and refineries keep running. No one stays in one place for long here; the vibrations of the pumps and drills are a siren's song to the worst zed and abominations the wastes have to offer. Crews of worker gangs, traveling a dozen trucks deep, patrol the land and repair whatever damage they find for a cut of the oil to use with their rides. Oil prices have gone up since the Iron Slave Revolts and the attendant escape of many of the Iron Slaves; roughnecking is hard work and commands a high price, not pleasing the Pure Bloods who see their profits cut. Many keep slaves in all but name but find that it is sometimes more trouble than it is worth.

The Dune Sea

Northwest of Lone Star lies the Dune Sea, a swirling nightmare of light sand and high wind. Landmarks can change from day to day when the wind picks up, and the grit can strip the paint off rides and the flesh off the unprepared. Those traveling to the canyon lands of Vegasia talk of sighting strange movements in the sand, some claiming it is a type of digging zed which tracks prey by movement. The veterans of the Dune Sea who make regular runs through the desert by motorized rigs or wheeled sailing vessels have reported a more unsettling threat, groups of individuals dressed in all black or all white standing vigil in random spots. These "Nezregal" are brutal fighters and powerful psionicists, and the wise give them wide berth.

The Nekota Flats

North of Lone Star and out of the reach of Mustang's Lawmen, bandits, road agents and cattle thieves share the wide-open spaces of the Nekota Flats with Rovers and Natural One nomads. Here, the wildlife is relatively normal, with herds of giant bison, coyote packs, and birds migrating through the area. Undead are scarce here, which encourages caravan travel through the plains even as the threat of bandits increases. There are no real permanent settlements here, only temporary nomad camps or hideouts for the many criminals who take advantage of the limit of Lawman reach to the area and people's unwillingness to be under Lone Star's gaze.

The Pridelands of the Sierra Madre

In the time before the Fall, the people of this land were told to be ashamed of who they were, their achievements and land stolen from them. Used to the violence of narcoterrorism, which profited the powerful, the Fall of humanity gave the people here a new sense of purpose and a chance to reclaim what was taken from them. Even their name, the Pridelands, reflects that they will no longer be ashamed.

Great Stone Steps of Toltec

In the disputed area with Lone Star stands a great place of stone, adobe, and wood. The Great Stone Steps of Toltec is a nexus of trade and a doorway to the rest of the Pridelands, a door very well-guarded by over 1,000 Natural Ones. Here, Lone Star seeks to claim the oil-rich lands as its own; here, the Natural Ones defend their city from all comers, man or monster, living and dead. Some creatures have taken residence in the scrap piles of the old oil rigs torn away by the city dwellers, making trips in or out of the city for hunting and foraging dangerous.

Mexico City

While the massive hordes of undead have been the plague of many cities, here they act as a defense system for Mexico City. Built behind miles of Scrap mazes and raised on ancient stone pedestals, the community thrives out of reach of raider and undead, using the undead as a screen. Reaching the central community involves travel on a man-powered rail system, further limiting access, while snipers provide a final line of defense. In the city itself, two cultures define the settlement. One holds tradition in high regard, dressing and marking themselves with jungle cat motifs as the ancient warriors of the land did, while the other is content to carry guns and operate in a modern style. They are one city with two hearts, and whether they keep beating together is anyone's guess.

The Frozen North

Beyond the Saintlaw Sea and Lake Eire, the Frozen North is just that: frozen and north. While there are homesteads of very hardy people who live here, mostly Natural Ones and Reclaimers, and attempts have been made to establish permanent settlements, it is difficult. The bone-chilling climate resulted in places only able to keep their door open for trade barely six months out of the year. Combined with the peculiarities and grave danger of the native fauna along with the abusive short-sightedness of the Pure Bloods in the past who hungered for trade with Old York, even the vast natural resources of the region were not enough to keep a settlement in place. Those that do stand are a testament to the spirit of the survivors who live here.

The Rainbow

The Rainbow is a bridge, one of the last few from the northwest of the Reach. It is heavily guarded by Reclaimers still stinging from the flood of people crashing their borders during the Fall of man and the slave raids from the Iron Works. With the Iron Slave Revolt and the change in the Ironworks, some who guard the bridge are still wary of their southern neighbors. Talk of the Ironworks extending rail lines from Motor City have been met with fear and excitement, memories of occupied settlements still fresh in the minds of many.

Tohr

Once a marker of freedom for Iron Slaves escape the Ironworks, the tall spires of Tohr are a warning track for a zone of death. Struck by a contagion like no other, the fever and black bile ripped through the inhabitants, killing four of five struck by it. Reclaimers were especially affected, and soon the citizens of Tohr fled to nearby islands. It has been the hope of the people to reclaim their city, and they do just that, block by block. While the contagion still exists, Iron Slaves have proven to be especially resistant, giving hope that soon the city proper will be back in the Reclaimers' skinless hands.

The World at Large

No part of the world was spared the Infection, from the tip of Cape Horn to the points farthest north. Each was shaped by the Infection in its own way, showing the best and worst of humanity revolting against the hordes of undead.

Africa

As Africa was not as industrialized as other places, the land was not as ravaged by radiation and strife during the Fall of humanity. Rising waters created new coastlines and riverbanks, providing an abundance of resources to the people who reside here. While cities have become a mix of stone and steel Necropolises, home of Full Dead and Unborn communities, the former deserts of the northern continent have erupted with great grasses and tall trees, providing ample habitat for the giant animal breeds of the area. Both Pure Blood families and Natural One tribes make great sport of hunting 10-foot-tall boars in large groups, then safely retreating behind strong walls as protection against even more dangerous animals and undead seemingly from myth. It is a larger-than-life wonderland of resources, stemming most conflict among the various factions.

To the west, a dramatically altered coastline littered with new rivers and tributaries has given rise to a seafaring culture of Strains both known and unknown. Undead are a constant threat, the massive tides regularly washing hordes into the bays, who then march back to land as the tide lets out. Here, unlike the north, Natural One tribes on land regularly battle each other both in full open warfare and ritualized conflicts, while being especially cautious of interlopers seeking to exploit the resources they rightfully call theirs.

Meanwhile, central Africa is nearly a single mass of jungle canopy, untouched by the sun and lit by a variety of bioluminescent fungi and moss. The inhabitants of this region have adapted to the lack of daylight and find all of what they need in the plants and animals, including protection from ambient radiation courtesy of the thickness of the canopy and the natural plant life. Attempts to penetrate the area have been met with hostility from the very land, the local Grave Mind agitated by those alien to it. Limited inroads have been made by explorers taking boats down rivers, with outposts on the shores reporting tribes of Purebloods and Rovers. These small families, connected only by the interactions of the wanderers, were until now unaware of a wider world.

Eastern Africa is the opposite of the core of the continent: interconnected, sweeping landscapes exposed to daylight, and

filled with vibrant communities of all types. The coastal areas host many fishing villages and salvage companies seeking old-world wrecks, and the foundation of a larger, centralized government has taken root. Here, a collection of Strains have made their mark, from Diesel Jocks intent on mapping the region as they travel to Remnants seeking to belong and thrive. Remnants here are especially fertile, contrary to other areas, and it has become a matter of serious study among the educated and scientific of the region.

To the south, the broken coast has been washed away, with a new coastline of mountains jutting out of water and islands stretching from the mainland. Inland, the beached and broken hulks of great ships of commerce have turned into ramshackle royal palaces of competing god-kings. Psionicists of intense power and hunger, these Pure Blood, Diesel Jock, and Accensorite rulers and their family lines command unquestioning loyalty from their subjects, driving them to mine gold and diamonds to feed their egos and to engage in endless war on land and sea to assert their dominance. The undead threats of the area are secondary to destroying the "pretenders" to divine power, the ground and sea awash with the blood of blasphemers.

Asia

The chill of northern Asia has given respite to the settlements here, severely limiting the types and quantity of undead in the area. Most threats consist of scarcity of resources, raiders, and fellow humanity, and society has often dug downward for protection and community. Be it abandoned bunkers with mushroom farms and fish hatcheries or networks of volcanic caves warmed by the earth, life has found a way here. Lascarians comprise most of these underground communities, although rumors of a Digitarian stronghold with wildly advanced technology keep popping up. Further south, more aboveground settlements appear, home of Retrogrades and Red Stars; Full Dead communities grow around old-world shrines in these same areas, cautiously avoided by others.

Central Asia is a blasted wasteland, scarred by nuclear strikes and filled with poisonous crater lakes. Few can survive the radiation and millions of radioactive undead that live in this region; civilization consists of nomadic empires traveling from waypoint to waypoint on a fixed schedule. Guided by the stars with navigation tools handed down through families, these bands of Diesel Jocks and Rovers calling themselves the Azimuth overcome the confusion of the constantly shifting landscape to meet up with their fellows for trade and camaraderie. In the harshest seasons of the region, the bands travel southward to trade with the established communities of those areas, returning northward as the stars and itinerary demand of them.

To the southwest, before reaching the African continent, the threat to humanity made unlikely allies of sectarian and cultural enemies. They joined together to fight for their survival in the face of new enemies living and dead. Even as humanity fell, the people survived, already accustomed to a harsh life with limited resources and regular violence. The environment, hot and irradiated, is more of a threat than the undead, punctuated by well-armed and technologically-advanced raider clans. To survive, the mix of Accensorites, Diesel Jocks, Natural Ones, and Rovers have harnessed both old-world technology and made strides in education to fight the many dangers of the region. Oil flows, both to use for fuel and to trade, and the same greed in the world rises up again in its wake.

In the south proper, undead threats are very real; the population density ensured a great supply of undead, with most being of the simple variety. Still, the strong family structures and ingenuity of people have allowed the people of this area survive well, protecting themselves from poisonous weather, radioactive wind, and the hordes of undead. This relative safety has paid off, allowing time to reclaim old-world knowledge and restore their passionate culture just as undead reach up to their raised homes and fall off the ledges of their mountain villages. Contrast this to the southeast, where dense jungles and rapidly spawning fungi have swallowed the remains of civilizations recent and ancient. Communities are small and embattled, aggressive megafauna and other species claiming the spot of apex predator.

Finally, eastern Asia represents one of the most ambitious, although failed, efforts to stem the tide of the Infection. Those who would eventually become the Digitarians sought to use their incredible medical knowledge and technology to reverse the plague, even establishing secure outposts throughout the world as staging grounds for rapid response and supply drops. When the Infection finally took them, it did so with a rapidity and force previously unseen, and also created some of the most dangerous zombies known, such as the burster and the hunter. Here, in their stronghold, even the technology that approaches that of pre-Fall wonder only serves as a reminder of how it was just not enough.

Australia

A place often too dangerous for zombies, Australia is ruled by wildlife. Unconstrained by human predation and rapidly evolved by the Infection, these animals have grown to be both very large and very intelligent. Western Australia is home to herds of irradiated boars, giant flightless birds and cunning packs of ambush spiders capable of dragging off a person. The weather in this region ranges from tolerable to wildfire, leaving the undead in the region those that can survive great heat.

To the north, the sea is a roiling mass of volcanic eruption, dozens of new land masses spreading out into the water. Combined with radiation, the heat has made the area nigh-uninhabitable. Some do come here, mostly tribal folk who look to harvest obsidian; the most faithful of Darwinists will use the northern territory as a proving ground for their evolution, and rumors persist of a technological enclave of Digitarians hidden in the area. Traveling south will eventually bring rugged grass, twisted flowers, giant insects and swarms, of lizards to view. Natural Ones dominate any population that may be here, although a small community of Pure Bloods and their servants manage to survive in an isolated fortified compound.

Compared to the rest of the continent, southern Australia is a paradise. Fertile soil and an abundance of natural resources leave enough for Natural Ones, Rovers, Pure Bloods, and Baywalkers to work together or at least leave each other alone. Having fled the madness that was the largest cities, life is still a challenge. Massive Diesel Jock clans harass and harry the people of the area, the only saving grace being the frequency of powerful electrical storms that find their vehicles wonderful targets. Meanwhile, native wildlife runs roughshod through deadly plant life while 100-year storms are the norm. Even through the incapacitating hail, explosive lightning, and tree-shattering winds, the people of the area stand strong as the hardy folk before the Fall of humanity did in their time.

Going farther south to the Bay of Hellbourne leads to the home base of the Diesel Jocks conducting raids to the north, a variety of raider clans and Hedonists of all Strains mixed together into a community of blood, drugs, and debauchery. The only saving grace of the place is the massive amount of fuel generated by the still-operating refineries, which poison the water and the sky with oil and smoke. Sometimes, the Diesel Jock clans stop raiding long enough to trade fuel for other supplies, but then begin their degradations anew. Still, the respite of raids is welcome to those targeted.

Traveling eastward, to what was once Queensland, finds the ingenuity of Accensorites and Natural Ones using native animals as weapons, from keeping giant birds near strategic food sources to deter raiders to rites of passage involving driving colossal echidna into undead hordes. Most of the Accensorites and Natural Ones are of The Tribes of the Seasons, although a few are Telling Visionaries, sharing tales of the Lone Warrior Jonfrum who will come in his white uniform, bringing Oracle Boxes and other cargo to help drive away the zombie menace and restore the Signal to them all.

To the southeast lay the flooded lands of New South Wales, broken into several parts: Sydney, the mainland, and Tasmania. While Sydney is a place of relative refinement, culture, and trade, the mainland has focused on farming and mining and a no-nonsense approach to the world. Both have concerns regarding raider clans which have bred with local Diesel Jocks, as well as the Necropolis of Tasmania filled with Full Dead and Unborn.

Europe

Europe was in turns irradiated, eradicated, or untouched during the Fall of humanity. For northern Europe, bitter cold is the worst enemy, followed by zombies and raiders. Midnight sun and polar night are the norm for what survivors are here, living marginally on coastlines while raiders sometimes die from exposure and zombies freeze in place for months on end. Efforts have taken place to better use the vast natural resources of the north, with well-armed trade missions sent by land and sea. A large cell of Red Stars on the remnants of a military base keeps to themselves, patrolling in wider and wider circles to gather resources and assist in dealing with grave threats if called upon, but otherwise not involving themselves in the larger world.

This is contrasted with the former British Isles to the southwest, where efforts to contain the growing hordes with nuclear weapons only irradiated the crowded and panicked cities. Cities such as New London, Brummieham, and Tynecastle are the realm of the Full Dead and the wide variety of zombies that conveniently ignore them, while Baywalkers have laid claim to the old castles and churches in the north of the isles. Taking on old ways, some focus on farming and family in their own expression of the Nuclear Family. Meanwhile, with a strong Sainthood of Ashes presence and tapping into the myths of old, several warlords have claimed a divine right to the land whether they believe it or not. For now, they cooperate in the interest of the people, but that may change if resources shrink and ambition grows.

Western Europe suffered much of the same fate as the British Isles due to population density and ease of travel. Cities quickly became Necropoleis, now ruled by Retrogrades and Full Dead. Recently, a group called Der Rat der Leichen (The Council of Corpses) has risen in the remains of Berlin and aggressively extended its reach toward other pockets of civilization. Several groups have put together resistance efforts to fight against the expansion, relying on an ingrained distrust of authoritarian rule and Yorkers willing to put the boots to people in their way. Opposition has been most successful in the south and west, funded by Pure Bloods from secluded mountain enclaves in Schweiz seeking to protect their own interests and not have a nearly dead army at their foothills.

Farther to the south, past Schweiz and the Alps, people have taken to escaping the mainland and the zombies there in favor of the many islands that have formed in the wake of bombs and tectonic upheaval. Large pods of Saltwise ply their trade over the sea, some even sailing to southwestern Asia, while other Strains either live on collections of rafts or in strong shelters on the islands near the shore. Ravenous sea creatures provide both constant threat and bountiful harvest to the survivors, where teams of sailors work together to hunt and harvest the giant aquatic mammals that hunt in this region.

Following the new coastline of the Mediterranean Sea to the west brings a land in conflict between raider clans, powerful and seemingly organized undead, and competing orders of Fallow Hopes unwilling to cede command to those they consider to be heretics. Locals eagerly trade for weapons and armor while mercenaries can easily find work protecting communities from raiders, zombies, and domineering Fallow Hopes alike. The Fallow Hopes have not entered into open conflict with each other, too busy purging the land of undead, but it would only seem to be a matter of time before they do.

Greenland

Perhaps one of the most ambitious attempts to hold off the Infection failed here. In western Greenland's Disko Bay, the carefully crafted bio-domes, strong walls and bleeding edge of technology could not contend with the planet-altering climate change and the voracious nature of the fungal growth consuming all it touched. The stronghold is now a mix of Digitarians and Semper Mort who

respectively were awake in the world when the Infection finally took hold and who were in cryogenic sleep at the biodomes themselves. Distrustful of each other, the outsider Digitarians and the amnesiac Semper Mort have managed to keep a peace in the face of survival.

Whether the peace holds remains to be seen in the face of a flood of Semper Mort from First Hope, however. Awakened by curious Natural Ones seeking Scrap but finding the massive storage facilities for those who would become the Semper Mort, they tried to open the chambers both for the Scrap as well as to properly inter the remains of those they thought dead. With a transformative rapidity, the Infection consumed the bodies and turned them into the monsters of legend in the minds of the Natural Ones. Forgetful of their past, the Semper Mort still understood how to operate the equipment enough to awaken their brethren and make their way to Disko Bay where they received a lukewarm welcome, barred at the gates and facing down sentry guns. Some Semper Mort have given up on trying to join the Disko Bay community while others have used their appearance as monsters to manipulate Natural One tribes to their will, including an eventual assault on those who they do not recall but who rejected them at Disko Bay.

To the east, Natural Ones dominate the remains of the area, much of which fell to the sea. Many of the Natural Ones focus on the history of the world before, seeking communion with the past through explorations and powerful mind-altering substances. Some of these create a psionic resonance in the individual, allowing for the user to actually observe the Grave Mind and those who may have passed through at one point. Here, they may ask questions of themselves and others, knowing the world like none have before. These substances are also used in rites of adulthood, which involve cutting oneself and putting themselves in shark-infested water while the rest of the tribe protects them for a proscribed time.

Southward is a group of confused and very fortunate Natural Ones face to face with a massive armada of Saltwise and Full Dead. While initial contact was confusing and bloody, the ship was able to establish relations with the locals, exchanging well-crafted steel weapons and other materials for rights to the "metal islands leaking black poison" that dot the southern reach of their fishing grounds. More importantly, Telling Visionaries and Courtiers among the visitors shared tales of Scriptures and Kings and Queens with the tribes; like their cousins in east Greenland, they hungered for knowledge of the past, so much that many have constructed craft to travel to the fabled "Old York" and "New London."




chapter thirteen
LET THE DEAD LIE

"The trick to surviving is knowing what's your problem,
and when to let well enough alone.
Learn quickly or you won't need to anymore."

- Silence

Introductory Notes

Despite the current peace in Philly Del Phia, there have always been tensions bubbling just beneath the surface. Gideon Jones always did his best to stay out of the bloody politics, but now his recent trip through the Grave Mind has driven him to seek help uncovering the secrets surrounding his brother's death. As the survivors assisting him begin digging through knowledge best left forgotten, they uncover a story that threatens to reignite a war.

Setting

This episode takes place in Philly Del Phia, as detailed on p. XX. While this chapter provides the basic information the Storyguide needs, the setting material earlier in this book will provide useful background on the region and further insight into the motivations of the characters portrayed herein.

Involving the Characters

This episode is designed for a group of newly made characters who are familiar with Philly Del Phia and the major figures that control it. The characters may be residents of the settlement or may simply be regular visitors. The players should to work together to create an explanation for their group's presence in the settlement. Some ideas include:

- The characters might be members of a Rover caravan or a crew on a fishing boat that regularly stops in Philly Del Phia.
- The character might be a group of mercenaries willing to work anywhere a little extra muscle is needed.
- The characters might wander from town to town, living off handouts from others while enjoying the freedoms of a life with few tethers.

Despite their story, all the characters have previously done jobs for Silence (p. XX), a mysterious individual who pays well, looks out for their people, and doesn't ask a lot of questions.

This episode begins after the characters have been approached by Silence and asked to check on Gideon Jones, a local shopkeeper. Gideon has recently abandoned his corner store and his children in favor of wandering the town, trying to sort out years-old rumors about the death of his brother Eynolds. Silence tells the characters to sort out whatever is bothering Gideon so that he will return home and stay there. Eynolds was executed for the murder of Tobias Tierney years earlier, but Gideon has always had doubts about Eynolds' guilt. Now, haunted by the visions from his recent trip through the Grave Mind, Gideon needs the characters to help him find out what happened all those years ago.

As they explore the settlement, the characters uncover the story of the night Tobias died his last. At the time, Eynolds was working as a double agent for both Mila Tierney and Mercius Kole. Mercius suspected the betrayal and, before most people knew Tobias was not coming back, he met with Eynolds and offered him an ultimatum. Eynolds could either accept blame for Tobias' murder and be handed over to Mila, or Mercius could kill him on the spot for his betrayal. Since Mila's vengeance against whoever ended her brother's life would be ruthless, Kole reasoned that Eynolds would only choose to take the blame if he expected leniency from Mila, thereby confirming his guilt. Although he was innocent of the murder, Eynolds chose to take the blame. In response, Kole cut out his tongue and presented him to Mila as the murderer. Mila had her vengeance in full measure.

Unfortunately, people in power don't like strangers stirring up their secrets. By the time the characters return to tell Gideon the story, he has been killed. The characters must face the fact that whoever silenced Gideon will likely come for them as well. Armed with a story that could shake the balance of power in Philly Del Phia, the characters must decide how best to save their own skins.

Storyguide Characters

During this episode the characters will interact with several Storyguide characters. The Storyguide should strive to depict these characters as dynamic people with their own thoughts, motivations, and quirks. The backgrounds and motivations of some of the major SGCs are explained below.

Gideon Jones

The years have not been kind to Gideon, and he's seen quite a few. His early adulthood was shaped by the struggles between the Tierneys and The People. While Gideon did his best to keep out of the conflict, his brother Eynolds saw it as an opportunity for profit. Distrustful of the Tierneys, Gideon tried to talk his brother out of getting involved with them. Eynolds, frustrated by Gideon's perceived shortsightedness and wooed by the Tierneys' money, disregarded the advice and distanced

GIDEON'S NOT ALL THERE

SGCs don't work the same way as player characters, even if they're Strains. As Storyguide, you might want to make up a full player character sheet for noteworthy SGCs. Here, we give you a small statistic block just like we did in the Antagonist chapter (starting on p. XX). Feel free to tweak or remake Gideon's stats to your own preferences.

himself from his brother. When Eynolds started working with Mercius Kole Gideon believed Eynolds had finally seen reason. He was sadly mistaken. Eynolds was only spying on Kole for the Tierneys, a decision that would ultimately lead to Eynolds' execution in retribution for the murder of Tobias Tierney.

However, despite the charges against him, Gideon knew his brother. While Eynolds was reckless and perhaps even treacherous, he wasn't a murderer and he certainly didn't have the resources to abduct the Mütter's apprentices and burn down one of the most loved Pure Bloods in the town.

After the "trial" and execution of his brother Gideon saw threats everywhere. He feared drawing the wrath of both sides of the political conflict, so he kept his head down, raised a family, and worked hard to build up his small-but-profitable corner store. He poured his heart into the business and in return it provided him a stable living and some measure of peace.

As much as Gideon has tried to come to terms with what happened to Eynolds, his brother's death has been a cloud over his entire life. Gideon never doubted that his brother was innocent of the murder he was executed for, or at least that if he did kill Tobias Tierney someone else must have been pulling the strings. Over the years Gideon has heard whispers confirming his suspicions, but he's never dared to investigate it further.

Two weeks ago, Gideon died trying to defend the corner store from a group of raiders. During his trip through the Grave Mind, he heard Eynolds taunting him for failing to never trying to clear his name. Since his return, Gideon has spent most of his time wandering Philly Del Phia alone in search of answers about what really happened all those years ago. He has left his children to run the corner store alone.

Initiative: 2 (+1 Enhancement, due to quick reflexes)

Melee Attack: 4

Ranged Attack: 6

Defense: 3

Health: 4 (can recover 1 Health after a fight per day, due to an adrenaline rush)

Silence

No one seems to know much about Silence except that they are a person who gets things done. If you need someone to complete an odd job, Silence can find someone. Colorful and friendly, they keep a room at Roscoe's and have a knack for showing up just when people need their services.

At some point in their past, Silence approached each of the characters and asked them if they wanted to do a job. For whatever reason, each of the characters said yes. Silence took this acceptance to heart. Since then, Silence has shown up randomly and unexpectedly whenever they have more work for the characters. While Silence never provides more information than is needed, they have always made sure their employees are exceptionally well compensated and they've gone to lengths to make sure everyone comes home without visiting the Grave Mind.

The characters can visit Silence at any time during this episode at their room at Roscoe's. The Storyguide can use any interactions with Silence to provide insight and encourage the characters to complete their job, or the Storyguide can use these conversations with Silence to encourage the characters to reflect on the implications and possible repercussions of their actions.

If you need stats for Silence, use the Nighthawk stats on p. XX.

Background

Shortly before the beginning of this episode, the characters received a midnight visit from Silence, who told them they had a job and handed them a staggeringly large stack of keys (30 UPPs total) as a down payment. They told the characters that a kid from the corner store needs help getting his old man to come home. The old man he has been acting strangely since his recent trip through the Grave Mind. He has become obsessed with his brother's death at the hands of the Tierneys nearly 15 years ago and he hasn't been home in days.

Silence further informed the characters that the old man is currently camped out on the NineFive and requested they go check on him. Silence told the characters to do what they need to do to get the old man to go home and stay home and promised there would be good money in it if they succeed. While Silence cannot handle this job personally, they assured the characters that they can be found in their room at Roscoe's if there are any issues.

Scenes

Below are the major scenes for this episode. While they are numbered for convenience, they do not necessarily need to occur in this order and, depending on the characters' choices, may not all occur. The Storyguide should progress through these scenes in whatever order makes the most sense for the story the players are creating. In addition, if the characters pursue a course of action not anticipated by this episode, it may be necessary for the Storyguide to improvise additional scenes not included here. If this happens, the Storyguide should rely on the setting and the background information provided here to create a scene that furthers the story and directs the characters back to the plot provided in this episode.

Scene 1: The Silence of the City

How did the characters get to this scene? Following Silence's directions and going to the NineFive to look for the old man.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Safely reach the NineFive.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? The zed on the road.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 2: Meeting Gideon Jones.

Storyguide Goal: Introduce the characters to each other and to the fighting rules in **Dystopia Rising**.

Read the following aloud:

The night is silent except for your own footfalls and the patter of a soft but annoyingly persistent drizzle striking the crumbling asphalt. It is eerie to see the familiar streets standing dark and empty. This is the sort of night when only cutthroats and thieves dare roam the streets. At least you're not out here alone.

If the players have not already done so, this is a good time for the Storyguide to let them describe their characters to each other before continuing.

When the players are ready to proceed, read the following aloud:

Even in the darkness and rain, you can see the crumbling white cement of the NineFive arcing above the southern end of the settlement like the rib of some long-dead monstrosity beached along the water. It takes some searching, but you find a place where the fallen debris from the old road has created enough of a pile that you should be able to scramble up onto the old roadway without too much effort.

As you near the rubble, you hear heavy, dragging footsteps nearby and a mindless moan cuts through the silence of the night.

As the players near the NineFive, they encounter four Shamblers (p. XX) and one Burster (p. XX). The fight should not be too much of a challenge for the characters. The Storyteller should use this opportunity to help the players become more familiar with the violence system used in **Dystopia Rising**. Begin by creating the initiative ladder (p. XX) for the characters and antagonists and allow the players to decide which character will use each PC slot. Then let the players proceed with their characters' actions in the agreed-upon order. Work with each player to determine what dice pool best fits their character's actions.

The encounters in this episode may be more difficult for some groups than others, depending on the number of players and the types of characters they have decided to play. The Storyguide should feel free to adjust the encounters to make them more or less challenging and to better suit the group. This can be done by adding or removing adversaries, or by changing the local conditions to the characters' advantage. For example, if the characters are fighting in a doorway, even if there are many adversaries, the characters may be able to fight one or two at a time and avoid being overwhelmed. In addition, the Storyguide can provide the characters with allies. For example, in this scene the Storyguide can have Gideon assist the characters by shooting at the zed from his perch on the NineFive.

Scene 2: Meeting Gideon Jones

How did the characters get to this scene? Defeating the zed on their way to the NineFive to look for the old man.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Meet Gideon Jones, earn his trust, and learn more about the job they've been hired for.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Gideon's paranoia.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 3: Roscoe's or Scene 4: The Corner Store.

Storyguide Goal: Explore the intrigue rules used in **Dystopia Rising**.

Read the following aloud:

It is easy enough to scramble up the loose rubble to the top of the NineFive. As you pull yourselves over the edge of the ancient roadway, you find yourselves looking down the barrel of a gun. Even in the dark, you can see that the hands holding it are ragged and misshapen with rot. If it weren't for the fact that he's holding the gun, you might have mistaken the old man for a zed. A quick glance around convinces you that he has made a fairly permanent camp up here. A few crates of supplies are stacked under an old tarp and a pile of blankets lies crumpled on a chair near an old telescope.

"Who the hell are you?" the man demands, shoving wisps of graying hair away from his sunken eyes. His gun remains fixed on you.

The old man is paranoid and suspicious of the characters, but once realizes that they are not an immediate threat he introduces himself as Gideon Jones, the proprietor of the corner store. However, he remains irritated by the characters' presence and implores them to leave him alone.

If the characters mention that his children asked them to check on him, Gideon tells them that they should tell his children to stay out of things that don't concern them.

While the Storyguide should present this scene in a way that encourages a conversation with Gideon, the characters may ultimately decide to forcibly return him to the corner store. If they forcibly subdue Gideon, Gideon discloses the information he would have disclosed if the characters had succeeded in Earning Gideon's Trust below.

Action: Earning Gideon's Trust

Difficulty: Gideon begins with a negative Attitude 1 toward the characters who have unexpectedly arrived at his

lookout and will not converse freely with them until they have resolved this in their favor.

Enhancements: If the characters tell Gideon that his son sent them or that they work for Silence they gain a +1 Enhancement.

Complications: Hell No, I Won't Go! (+3 Complication): If the players buy off this Complication, they convince Gideon to return with them to the corner store.

Roll Results

Botch: Gideon becomes convinced that the Tierneys sent the characters to kill him. He insists that everything is fine, refuses to answer any further questions, and demands that the characters leave. Gideon will be belligerent in future interactions with the characters and he will have a negative Attitude 3 toward the characters the next time they meet.

Failure: Gideon becomes suspicious of the characters. He explains that the Tierneys executed his brother 15 years ago, and that it is "just hitting him really hard right now." If asked, Gideon will tell the story of Tobias Tierney's murder (p. XX). Gideon insists that he needs to continue to keep an eye on things and cannot return to the corner store yet.

Success: In addition to revealing the information he would have revealed in response to a failure, Gideon apologizes for pointing a gun at the characters and explains that he has been under a lot of stress the past few days. After all, with the Tierneys' spies everywhere, anyone you talk to could be your enemy. Since you can't tell who may be a threat, you have to assume that everyone's against you until they prove otherwise.

Further, Gideon reveals that he died about two weeks ago when a particularly large raider horde attacked the corner store. In the Grave Mind he believes he saw his brother Eynolds, who called him a coward and a failure of a brother for never trying to clear his name. Since then, Gideon has been wandering the settlement listening for rumors and hoping to find some answers. Now he is afraid that if he returns to the corner store the Tierneys will send someone to kill him as well. In addition, to Gideon, going home without finding answers first would be betraying his brother a second time. He mentions that he wanted to go to Roscoe's, since a lot of rumors get passed around there and it might provide some good leads, but that he didn't like the look of some of the people who were there the last time he walked by.

Gideon assures the characters that once he has proof of Eynolds' guilt or innocence, he intends to go home again. However, he also emphasizes that everyone lies, so he needs more than just hearsay and rumor. He needs physical evidence that shows that his brother didn't murder Tobias or this is going to continue to weigh on his soul.

Clues: Gideon may disclose the following clues in response to the characters' information-gathering attempts:

- After coming back from the grave, Gideon had green veins and he's not sure he'll come back again if he's put through the Grave Mind. He tried to hide it from his kids, but he thinks they know.
- When he and his brother were young, Eynolds worked for Mila Tierney. Several months prior to Tobias' final murder, Gideon believes Eynolds left Mila's employ and went to work for Mercius Kole, one of her biggest rivals. He doesn't know what caused Eynolds' change of heart. (In reality, Eynolds never left Mila's employ; he just started working as a double agent while he was spying on Kole for Mila.)

Scene 3: Roscoe's

How did the characters get to this scene? Talking to Gideon in Scene 2 or Bennie in Scene 4.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Speak to Lina and learn what she knows about Eynolds.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Lina's fear of Kole and her old loyalty to him.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 4: The Corner Store or Scene 5: The Ruins.

Storyguide Goal: Allow the characters to further investigate what happened the night of Tobias' murder.

Read the following aloud when the characters enter Roscoe's:

Old but reliable, Roscoe's is one of the few businesses in Philly Del Phia that has stood the test of time. Despite the fact that Roscoe, the aging proprietor, has brought in some new help lately, he still makes a habit of lingering behind the bar, doing the same job he hired others to do. While the establishment is clean, its clientele is far from reputable. More than one of its regulars has expressed a desire to see the Tierneys get what is coming to them. Perhaps for this reason, it's one of Silence's favorite haunts. For as long as you've known them they've kept a room here.

As you enter, Roscoe yells a sunny greeting from the kitchen. A moment later he makes his way back to the counter. The dining room is empty except for a grizzled Baywalker stabbing at a plate of eggs. Her forearm bears a faded tattoo of an eagle clutching a pen – the old insignia of The People from the days of the war.

Roscoe is always happy to talk and cheerfully asks the characters what he can do for them. If they ask him about Eynolds, he tells them that, on the night of Tobias' murder, Eynolds went to speak with Tobias, shared drinks with him, and then murdered him and his men. Roscoe tells the characters that Eynolds' accomplices made sure the Mütter Museum was empty

VISITING SILENCE

If the characters go upstairs to Silence's room, Silence groggily opens the door and chides them for waking them up, but invites the characters in, and will be glad to discuss the job if needed.

so that they could send Tobias through again and again until he didn't come back. At the end of his story, Roscoe yells over to the woman in the dining room, and asks, "Weren't you still working with Mercius back then?"

Action: Asking Lina for Evidence

Lead: The Baywalker is willing to speak with the characters, but cautiously and largely out of anger toward Kole. She introduces herself as Lina. While she once worked as an enforcer for Kole, she became disillusioned with his methods and left his employ some time ago because she believes Kole betrayed the ideals of the cause for which they were fighting. Through her work for Kole, she also knew Eynolds.

Difficulty: If Roscoe involved Lina in the conversation, Lina begins with a negative Attitude 2 toward the characters.

If the characters approached Lina directly, Lina begins with a negative Attitude 1 toward the characters.

She will not tell her story to the characters until they have resolved this in their favor.

Enhancements: If the characters offer to pay Lina to tell them what she knows, they gain a +1 Enhancement.

If the characters promise Lina that they won't tell anyone they spoke with her, they gain a +1 Enhancement.

TREACHERY!

Regardless of how the conversation with Lina proceeds, she thinks better of her decision to talk with them and reports the interaction to Kole. It is likely the characters will not discover this betrayal until the end of the episode, if they learn of it at all.

If the characters want to return to speak to her later in the episode, the Storyguide should use their discretion as to whether she can be found again.

Roll Results

Botch: Lina demands to be left alone and threatens to tell Kole that the characters are asking questions.

Failure: Lina tells the characters she was there the night they found out Eynolds was working for the Tierneys. Kole called Eynolds to a secret meeting at the old print shop. Eynolds fell for Kole's tricks and as good as admitted his betrayal. While he didn't kill Tobias, he got what was coming to him. If asked if there is any proof that Eynolds didn't kill Tobias, Lina shrugs and tells the characters that there might be something left at the print shop, but they'd be taking a risk going out there. She refuses to say more, just saying she doesn't want any trouble.



Success: Lina invites the characters to sit down and have breakfast with her. She explains that by working with Kole during the war, she also worked closely with Eynolds while he was spying on The People. However, she had no idea that he was reporting back to the Tierneys until the night Tobias was killed to his last.

After that night, both she and her friend Scratch decided the political situation had gotten too dangerous and began looking for ways to leave The People. Kole saw that as a betrayal, and Scratch died under suspicious circumstances. The last time she saw him alive he told her that if things got bad he had an "insurance policy" hidden in the print shop. She doesn't know what it was but suggests that it may be of use to the characters if they can find it.

Clues: Lina may disclose the following additional clues in response to the characters' information-gathering attempts:

- As soon as Kole received news of Tobias' murder, before people knew Tobias wouldn't be coming back, Kole sent Lina to call Eynolds to a private meeting. During the meeting Kole told Eynolds he knew about his arrangement with Mila and gave Eynolds an ultimatum. He could either take responsibility for Tobias' murder and be handed over to Mila, or Kole would have him killed on the spot. The ultimatum was a brilliant test of loyalty. Kole later explained to Lina that he hadn't been certain of Eynolds' loyalties at the time. However, if Eynolds had no ties to Mila his death at her hands would be slow and painful. Therefore, if he had truly been loyal to Kole, a quick death at the hands of The People would be far preferable to whatever Mila would do to him. Only if he were working with Mila would being handed over to her be preferable. By choosing to take the blame for the murder, Eynolds effectively confessed.
- In light of everything happening that night, people were constantly interrupting the meeting with messages for Kole. While she doesn't know the details, Lina tells the characters that Kole got so frustrated by the interruptions that he eventually scribbled a note on one of the newspapers and told Scratch to deliver it to someone at Roscoe's.
- Eynolds ultimately agreed to take responsibility for Tobias' murder, but not before getting Kole to agree to pay him a sizeable number of keys for his trouble.
- After the meeting, Eynolds was locked away while Kole worked out his agreement with Mila. Since Kole knew he was returning Mila's spy to her, Kole had Eynolds' tongue cut out before handing him over to make sure he couldn't reveal anything more than he already had.

BENNIE JONES, RETROGRADE CHILD

While Bennie is a Retrograde and not a raider, he has the same stats as a raider Juvie (p. XX).

Scene 4: The Corner Store

How did the characters get to this scene? Talking to Silence in the Introduction or talking to Gideon in Scene 2.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Find out what Bennie knows and investigate Gideon's office.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Bennie's fear of disappointing Gideon.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 3: Roscoe's, or Scene 6: The Print Shop.

Storyguide Goal: Unpack the consequences of entering the store.

When the characters enter the corner store, read the following aloud:

The corner store, clearly identified as such by an ancient, peeling sign, is one of the only buildings standing in this part of Philly Del Phia. Heavy metal grates cover the foggy glass windows. Looking up, you can see guns mounted along the crumbling white accents of the building's old façade. A roughly painted "open!" sign hanging on the sheet-metal door is building's only welcoming feature.

The aroma of tobacco and gunpowder hits you as you step through the door and a boy greets you nervously from behind the counter. You'd guess he can't be more than about 12 years old. Despite his welcome, you notice his hand slip under the counter, undoubtedly resting on a weapon just out of sight. A smaller child pokes his face around the corner of the counter, then, seeing you, darts off between the shelves. A variety of wares fill the shelves, ranging from basic necessities like food, brews, and simple weapons to small luxuries such as tobacco and sweets.

At the rear of the store, you spot a formidable metal vault door labeled "office." Next to the metal door, a narrow flight of stairs winds upwards into what you assume are the family's living quarters. Aside from you and the children, the store appears to be empty.

The Storyguide should allow the characters to purchase supplies while they are here if they would like to.

How this scene unfolds will depend on whether the characters brought Gideon with them.

If Gideon voluntarily returned to the corner store with the characters, Bennie will begin this scene with a positive Attitude 2 toward the characters. If the characters brought Gideon to the corner store against his will, however, Bennie will begin this scene with a negative Attitude 2 toward the characters. Both children run to greet their father, only to be brushed off as Gideon pushes by

them, telling them he just needs a few things and will be leaving again shortly. Gideon then goes upstairs to the living quarters. If the characters try to follow Gideon upstairs, he asks to be left alone. If they persist he reluctantly lets them follow him. The Storyguide should use Gideon's desire to be left alone to encourage the characters to return to the store and speak with the children.

If the characters did not bring Gideon with them, Bennie will begin this scene with an Attitude 0 toward the characters. Bennie, the child behind the counter, will treat the characters as typical customers but is obviously nervous about having strangers in the store. If the characters try to ask about Gideon without first earning Bennie's trust, Bennie lies and tells them that Gideon is well.

In either situation, the characters have the opportunity to speak to Bennie without Gideon present. Even if Gideon returned to the corner store, he isn't planning to stay.

If the characters have not yet visited Roscoe's, once the characters begin asking about Gideon Bennie mentions that before Gideon died he was upset about some rumors he had heard about Uncle Eynolds at Roscoe's.

Action: Earning Bennie's Trust

Difficulty: Bennie's life has been turned upside down in the past few weeks, and he is nervous and suspicious of all strangers. His Attitude ranges from positive 2 to negative 2, depending on the character's actions.

Enhancements: If the characters have convinced Gideon to return with them to the corner store they gain a +2 Enhancement.

Roll Results

Botch: Bennie becomes convinced the characters are a threat and denies that anything is wrong. Bennie is not a convincing liar. Bennie gains a negative Attitude 3 toward the characters.

Failure: Bennie remains cautious about speaking to the characters but acknowledges that he hired Silence to help sort things out with Gideon. Bennie tells the characters that he already told Silence everything he knows and asks them to leave if they aren't buying anything.

Success: Bennie thanks the characters for coming to help.

If the characters brought Gideon with them, Bennie asks them what is wrong with him. While the characters likely won't have an answer, Bennie then asks the characters how much more he would have to pay them to sort out what's bothering his father (i.e., find Gideon evidence showing Eynolds' guilt or innocence) so that Gideon doesn't leave again. Bennie will readily agree to any price that the characters request, no matter how ridiculous.

If the characters did not bring Gideon with them, Bennie asks them if his father is alright and asks the character to continue to try to help Gideon.

Clues: Bennie may disclose the following clues in response to the characters' information-gathering attempts:

- A doctor came to see Gideon and set his mind straight after he returned from the Grave Mind. As he was leaving, the doctor took Bennie aside and told him his father probably wouldn't come back the next time he died.
- After his recent death Gideon started neglecting the corner store's business. He spent days locked in his office. Then he started going on longer and longer walks. Eventually he stopped coming back altogether. At that point, Bennie went to Roscoe's looking for help and Roscoe connected him with Silence.
- While the corner store is not significantly profitable, Bennie found some money he figures his father must have tucked away for hard times and used some of it to hire Silence to get his father back. If the characters have demanded more payment, Bennie also assures them there is enough left to pay them to complete the job.
- Bennie's mother stops by from time to time. He hasn't seen her in a while and doesn't know when she'll come around again, but that's normal.
- While he died before Bennie was born, Bennie knows he had an Uncle Eynolds who was killed for murdering people. Gideon never talked much about Uncle Eynolds until recently. After he came back from the Grave Mind, Gideon started saying things like "I've got to make sure things are right before I see him again."

Action: Entering the Office

The office at the back of the corner store is securely locked. Bennie tells the characters the office is his father's place and nobody but Gideon is supposed to go in there. However, Bennie does have a copy of the key. If the players try to enter the office without Bennie's consent and he notices, he takes whatever measures are necessary to stop them, up to and including attacking them. If Gideon is present, Gideon also refuses to grant the characters access to the office.

The Storyguide should encourage the players to be creative in figuring out how to gain entry to the office. Some methods the characters may attempt are set forth below.

Dice Pool:

- Athletics + Might (difficulty 3) if the characters try to break down the door
- Subterfuge + Cunning (difficulty 2) if the characters try to steal the key from Bennie
- Subterfuge + Dexterity (difficulty 2) if the characters try to pick the lock

- Persuasion + Manipulation (difficulty 2) if the characters try to coerce Bennie into opening the door

- The characters may also attempt to persuade Bennie to open the office for them. Bennie has a positive Attitude 3 toward Gideon. Therefore, in order to convince Bennie to defy Gideon and open the office, the characters have to overcome any negative Attitude Bennie has toward them. In addition, Bennie gains a +3 Enhancement to ignore their request.

Enhancements:

- The characters gain a +1 Enhancement to an attempt to break the door, steal the key, or pick the lock if a character is distracting Bennie from these efforts.

- The characters gain a +1 Enhancement to an attempt to convince Bennie to open the door if the characters have told Bennie that they are working for Silence.

Complications:

Defender of the Castle (+1 Complication): Applies if Gideon is at the corner store and the characters are attempting to break the door or coerce Bennie into opening the door. If the players do not buy off this Complication, Gideon hears the commotion, comes downstairs, and demands the characters leave immediately. If they refuse, Gideon will attack them and attempt to force them to leave the corner store. In addition, both Gideon and Bennie will have negative 3 Attitude toward the characters if they meet again.

Keeping an Eye on You (+1 Complication): Applies if the characters are attempting to enter the office with Bennie's knowledge. If the players buy off this Complication, Bennie allows them to explore it on their own and does not follow them.

Keeper of the Keys (+3 Complication): Applies if the characters are attempting to convince Bennie to open the door for them. If the players buy off this Complication, Bennie hands the characters his key ring, containing both a large key that obviously opens the office door and a second, tiny key. While the Storyguide should allow the characters to search for what the tiny key opens, it is the key to a locked drawer in the desk in the office.

Roll Results

Botch: Bennie becomes convinced the characters intend to rob the store.

If the characters are attempting to get into the office without Bennie's knowledge or consent, he notices and demands they leave. If Gideon is in the corner store, this triggers a confrontation with Gideon as well.

If the characters are attempting to convince Bennie to open the door or trying to threaten him into opening it, Bennie swallows the key.

Failure: If the characters are attempting to get into the office without Bennie's knowledge or consent, the characters fail, and Bennie notices and loudly tells the characters they should not be in the office. If Gideon is in the corner store, this triggers a confrontation with Gideon as well.

If the characters are trying to convince Bennie to open the door or coerce him into opening it, he refuses.

Success: If the characters are attempting to get into the office without Bennie's knowledge or consent, they succeed, and Bennie doesn't notice.

If the characters are trying to convince Bennie to open the door or coerce him into opening the door, Bennie opens it but implores them not to mess things up.

Regardless of how the characters enter the office, when the characters successfully open the door, read the following aloud:

The office looks like the lair of a madman. A rough, hand-drawn map of the city is spread across the wooden desk. A circle has been scribbled around a block in NorPhil, and the words "print shop" are scrawled next to it in messy, capital letters. Lines connect the print shop with several other key locations in the settlement and distances have been written in between them. The ruler used for these calculations is still sitting on the desk along with a marker with no cap. Piles of papers, including old copies of "We the People," are scattered across the floor. A quick investigation of the desk reveals the corner store's business ledgers. While the business is clearly profitable enough to support Gideon and his children, there is no way they earn enough to be throwing around the kind of money you've been promised from this alone.

Action: Investigating the Office

Difficulty: The characters may explore the office by Surveying (p. XX) the room (difficulty 2).

Enhancements: If the characters have Bennie's key ring, they gain a +1 Enhancement to searching the office since they know they are looking for whatever the tiny key opens.

Roll Results

Botch: The characters trash the office while exploring it, destroying any chance to make sense of the documents. Bennie notices and, when the time comes, will refuse to pay them any additional money.

Failure: The documents and drawings appear to be the work of an unsettled mind. Nonetheless, the characters can tell that the maps would probably be tactically useful if one was planning or expecting an attack.

Success: In addition to the information disclosed upon a failure, the characters find a locked drawer in the desk and manage to open it. Inside, they find an aged, opened package addressed to Gideon. The package contains a small jar of liquid with someone's tongue floating inside. In the same package beneath the preserved tongue is a phenomenal number of keys. A small notecard stuck between the keys reads "Deepest condolences," and is signed by Mercius Kole.



GIDEON'S EQUIPMENT

Gideon had riding leathers (p. XX), a sniper rifle (p. XX), and a machete (p. XX). The Storyguide can also let the characters scavenge for Scrap at the lookout. This is a good opportunity to reward the characters for locating the evidence by giving them equipment that can be used in the last few scenes of this episode or in subsequent stories even though it is now impossible to give the evidence to Gideon.

Clues:

- Bennie tells the characters the package has been in the desk drawer for as long as he can remember, but that Gideon told him it was cursed.
- The package is obviously the source of the money Bennie used to hire the characters.

Bennie will not willingly let the characters take the money from the package, but he will let them take the tongue or the notecard.

Scene 5: The Ruins

How did the characters get to this scene? Talking to Lina in Scene 3 or looking at the map in Scene 4.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Gain access to the print shop.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Berserker raiders.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 6: The Print Shop

Storyguide Goal: A challenging fight, but not a lethal one.

As the characters travel to the print shop, read the following aloud:

It takes you several hours to find the ruins of the building that used to be the headquarters of "We the People." Once bustling, the years of disrepair have taken their toll on the building. Its brick walls are stained black from the smoke of fires from ages past. However, for the most part the building is still intact. The same cannot be said for much of the surrounding area. While you've heard scavengers speak of coming out here from time to time, most of this area seems to have been picked clean of anything of value. Most of the remaining pieces of large debris have been arranged into makeshift barriers around the print shop itself. The smell of blood tinges the air and mixes with the nauseating stench of the residue left behind when bodies sink into the earth. Several figures, smeared with blood as war paint, mingle behind the barriers in front of the shop.

GIDEON'S CORPSE

The characters may want to go to the Mütter Museum to deal with Gideon's body. If they do, Gideon emerges as a Walker (p. XX).

Three Berserker Juvies (p. XX) and one Berserker Thug (p. XX) have taken up residence in the remains of the print shop and are between the characters and the only entrance. They'll fight until they drop, but they'll use the environment as much as possible — taking cover behind furniture and heavy printing presses, setting traps for the player characters, and the like. The Storyguide should not hesitate to add or remove adversaries to make this fight challenging for the characters.

Alternatively, characters may decide to try to sneak past the raiders and enter the print shop without engaging them. If so, remember that the raiders outside will still be alive and well when they try to leave. The characters will have to either fight them or sneak by them again on their way out.

Action: Sneaking into the Print Shop

Difficulty: Subterfuge + Dexterity (difficulty 3)

Roll Results

Botch: The character steps on some rubble that gives way, alerting the raiders to the group's presence and knocking the character prone. The raiders attack all the characters.

Failure: The character stumbles, alerting the raiders to their presence. The raiders attack the character.

Success: The character bypasses the raiders and successfully enters the print shop without being detected.

Scene 6: The Print Shop

How did the characters get to this scene? Defeating the raiders in Scene 4.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Locate the "insurance policy."

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? The disarray of the abandoned building.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 7: A Job Well Done!

Storyguide Goal: Let the characters investigate an area for resources and clues.

When the characters enter the print shop, read the following aloud:

Even though the raiders have left their mark, the print shop was obviously once a bustling business. Wooden file cabinets line the walls, but most of their drawers lie scattered across the floor or have vanished entirely. Scraps of half-burned documents are scattered everywhere stained with blood and viscera from the building's most recent inhabitants. Deep in one of the shadowy corners, a thick tarp covers a single, ancient printing press that must have been too old or too cumbersome to be saved when Kole moved to the Lockup.

The characters can explore the print shop using the salvage mechanics (p. XX). During this search, the Storyguide should ensure that, in addition to any Scrap uncovered, the characters eventually locate a loose floor tile.

Read the following aloud when the characters lift the floor tile:

A puff of dust and soot fills the air as you knock the tile free from the floor. A pile of scrap rests inside with a single page of yellowed newspaper. As you unroll it, you see the date, nearly 15 years ago. The headlines are by far the least interesting part of the old paper. A handwritten note scribbled in the margins reads: "STAY WHERE YOU ARE YOU TWAT. I've got someone else lined up to take the fall for this. Mila can choke on her spy." The letters "MK" are signed after the message.

If the characters found the package at the corner store, they notice that the handwriting matches the handwriting used on the notecard. Once the characters have figured this out, the Storyguide should encourage them to take their evidence to Gideon. If the characters are not inclined to leave the print shop on their own, the Storyguide can entice them by having the characters hear another threat nearing the print shop.

Scene 7: A Job Well Done!

How did the characters get to this scene? Finding the newspaper in Scene 6 and either finding the notecard in Scene 4 or otherwise identifying Kole's handwriting on the newspaper.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Deliver the evidence to Gideon.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Gideon is dead.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 8: The Gambit.

Storyguide Goal: Underscore the dangers of challenging the powers controlling Philly Del Phia.

Read the following aloud when the characters return to the NineFive with their evidence:

While it looked skeletal in the dark, in the afternoon sunlight the NineFive's white concrete arc almost seems like a majestic monument to ages past. A fresh breeze blows and the pigeons nested under the old roadway coo softly as you climb back onto the old road surface. Gideon's lookout appears almost untouched since the last

time you visited. The crates of supplies are still sitting where you last saw them. The telescope remains pointed at the settlement with Gideon's gun resting on the ground beside it. Gideon's clothing and armor are there, too, in a ragged pile near the telescope. A telltale smear of blood and fungal residue coats the gear. Spent shell casings litter the crumbling pavement nearby. Rough letters smeared in crimson on the white cement edge of the NineFive read "let the dead lie."

Regardless of the actions the characters have taken, Kole has had Gideon murdered. Gideon will return as a zed. Lina has been fearful of Kole her entire life. No matter how well the characters' conversation with her went, she also told Kole the characters were asking questions about Eynolds. Kole assumed Gideon was behind the investigation and is responsible for his murder.

The Storyguide should give the characters an opportunity to search through the gear left behind at the lookout. While Gideon was obviously killed here, his keys are still in the pockets of his clothing, as are his keys to the corner store. If the characters did not yet search the desk drawer, the Storyguide can use this as an opportunity to let the characters return to the corner store and find the package. In addition, Gideon's weapons, ammunition, and food supplies have been left untouched. This clearly was not a robbery.

After the characters have had a chance to search the lookout, Silence arrives and informs the characters that their room at Roscoe's has been sacked. Upon seeing the scene of Gideon's murder, Silence surmises that whoever did this may also know the identities of the characters and warns them to watch their backs.

Silence also points out to the characters that, with Gideon dead, it is now impossible to complete their job as originally planned, and that it is unlikely that Bennie will have much use for the evidence the characters have obtained. In reality, telling Bennie what they have discovered would probably be handing him a death sentence, since someone is obviously willing to kill to keep this quiet and Bennie doesn't have the cunning to handle this well. Silence encourages the characters to decide what they would like to do with the information they have uncovered. Silence emphasizes that, if the characters do nothing, they will probably be murdered as well.

If the players have creative ideas as to how to proceed, Silence will examine and encourage these plans. Otherwise, there are several options that Silence will discuss with the characters.

- If the characters provide the evidence to Mila, she will likely try to use it to gather support to begin open hostilities against The People again. If she can prove that Kole had a hand in covering up Tobias' murder, Mila will likely be able to incite rest of the Pure Blood houses to assist her in finally driving The People out of Philly Del Phia. In exchange, she might offer the characters payment and protection.

- If the characters take the evidence to Kole, the characters may be able to use it as a show of loyalty and gain his protection. After all, they located and secured evidence that someone once intended to use against him.

- Alternatively, the characters could choose to make what they have learned public knowledge. While this could be exceptionally dangerous and might restart the war, it also might discredit both Kole and Mila enough for a new power to take hold in Philly Del Phia. If the characters can manage to circulate news of what they have learned without getting the leak traced back to them, this might be the best option for the future of Philly Del Phia.

- Finally, the characters could choose to destroy the evidence and move on with their lives in hopes that whoever killed Gideon doesn't actually know about their involvement.

Silence should act as a facilitator for whatever course of action the characters choose to take. This should eventually lead into the appropriate section of Scene 8. However, if the players want to return to any of the locations from earlier scenes, the Storyguide should facilitate this so long as it ultimately helps to bring the episode to a close.

Scene 8: The Gambit

How did the characters get to this scene? Returning to the lookout in Scene 7.

What do the characters need to accomplish in this scene? Execute the plan they established in Scene 7.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? See the individual scenarios below.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Epilogue.

Storyguide Goal: Give the characters an opportunity to use the evidence they have uncovered.

The scene can progress in different ways depending on what the characters intend to do with the evidence they have uncovered. While suggestions are presented below, if the characters choose to do something different the Storyguide should accommodate their plans.

Both Mila and Kole do not want the evidence the characters have discovered to come to light. For Mila, even a rumor that she executed the wrong person for her brother's murder will make her look weak in the eyes of her enemies. For Kole, if Mila can show that he framed the wrong person for Tobias' murder, thereby helping the real murderer escape, he fears she will use the information to unite the Pure Blood families and reignite the war. With this in mind, this scene may proceed in one of the following ways:

Bringing the Evidence to Mila

Read the following aloud:

The imposing pre-Fall architecture of City Hall stands in stark contrast to the crumbled buildings around it. While it once had windows facing the exterior, destruction and necessity have

required them to be covered with wood and metal, almost as if the entire building is wearing patchwork armor. The white clock tower rises above the main building, gleaming in the afternoon sun, and the gates to the courtyard stand open, welcoming the locals to the market within. The crowd inside the gates is punctuated by Mila's enforcers. It only takes a quick word to one of them to get you quickly ushered into the building proper.

Mila has grown suspicious of the general populace over the years, and her first assumption will be that the characters are there to blackmail her with the evidence. She will not see them without her guards present.

If the characters offer Mila the evidence they have found, she will question how they got the evidence and what their motivations are. This is a good chance to review what has happened in this episode and to question the morality of the characters' decisions. Of course, Mila is less concerned with morality and more concerned with making sure the evidence doesn't become public knowledge. She agrees to pay the characters for the evidence and their silence, and, if they accept, she emphasizes that they surely know better than to break that pact of silence. She also offers the characters protection from Kole if they ask for it.

If Mila obtains the evidence, she will call a meeting of the Pure Blood families, tell them that Kole helped Tobias' murderer escape detection, and attempt to use this information to gain the support of the other Pure Bloods to kill Kole and drive his supporters out of Philly Del Phia.

Bringing the Evidence to Kole

Read the following aloud:

You know from the crowd of armed guards waiting for you at the gate to the Lockup that their lookouts must have seen you long before you reached Kole's fortress. Most of these people's faces are twisted by rot and decay. None of them wear masks. They seem more annoyed than concerned by your presence. As you approach the yawning cavern of a gate that serves as the only way in or out of the ancient building, one of the guards steps forward.

"Surrender your weapons or be treated as an enemy."

The Storyguide should impress upon the players the futility of trying to gain access to the Lockup on their own. It is an effective fortress.

If the characters surrender their weapons, they are brought to see Kole, who, unlike Mila, has no qualms about speaking with them alone. Kole's demeanor is calmly threatening. Despite making concessions to Mila in the past, he is just waiting for the right time to seize power again.

If the characters offer to give Kole the evidence, he asks them why they think he needs it. The Storyguide should let the characters try to convince him. In response, Kole points out that he could just have them killed and taken the evidence.

Action: Bargain with Kole

Difficulty: Kole begins with a negative Attitude 3 toward the characters.

Enhancements: If any of the characters are Retrogrades they gain a +1 Enhancement.

Roll Results

Botch: Kole smiles and tells the characters that, if they want to keep their lives, they'll give him the evidence, leave Philly Del Phia, and never return. If the characters refuse, Kole summons his guards to try to kill the characters. This should be an extremely difficult fight that will likely end with some of the characters losing an Infection.

Failure: Kole refuses to pay the characters for the evidence. He pleasantly reminds them that he is a patient man and always gets what he wants one way or another and allows them to leave... for now.

Success: Kole smiles and tells the characters that, while they're in no position to bargain, he likes their spirit. They've just found themselves a new employer — whether they wanted one or not.

Making the Truth Known

There are many ways that the characters can spread the story of what they have learned, and the Storyguide should encourage creativity. In particular, the characters may recall that one of the printing presses was left behind at the print shop. If the characters choose to return there, the Storyguide should let them scavenge to find sufficient supplies to print a notice that can be distributed to the public. If the players particularly enjoy fighting, the Storyguide can also have the characters encounter more raiders at the print shop.

If the characters attempt this, Silence follows the characters and reminds them that, if they proceed with this plan and get caught, both Mila and Kole will want to burn them all down. They encourage the characters to come up with a creative plan to distribute the fliers without being noticed.

Action: Avoiding Detection

Difficulty: Subterfuge + Cunning (difficulty 4)

Enhancements: If the characters have attempted to disguise themselves, they gain a +1 Enhancement.

If the characters have planned to avoid detection after distributing the fliers or spreading the word, they gain a +2 Enhancement.

Roll Results

Botch: The characters are caught in the act and immediately attacked by Mila's supporters. The Storyguide should make this a difficult fight.

Failure: The characters are successful in spreading the information, but they are spotted and identified. They narrowly escape through the streets of Philly Del Phia, but both Kole and Mila offer a bounty for their capture.

Success: The characters spread the information and avoid detection. Kole and Mila place a bounty on anyone involved, but the characters are not tied to the information leak — at least not yet.

Epilogue

Regardless of how this episode concludes, the characters' investigation has stirred things up in Philly Del Phia. If the characters have decided to give the evidence to Mila or Kole, they each will try to use it to consolidate their power within Philly Del Phia. If the characters have decided to make the evidence public knowledge, they may have created an opening for fresh faces to vie for control of the settlement. On the other hand, if the characters have decided to say nothing, the balance of power remains undisturbed, but Kole may still be looking to tie up loose ends. In any event, the characters may someday have to pay for the choices they made, perhaps in blood.



APPENDIX: CONDITIONS AND FLAWS LIST

This appendix contains all the Conditions and Flaws listed in Dystopia Rising: Evolution, in alphabetical order.

Conditions

As Storyguide, you are encouraged to create additional Conditions as needed. Feel free to use these as a guideline.

A QUICK FIX (PERSISTENT)

All Remnants start with a compulsive behavior that could include an addiction to a substance or activity that could prove harmful — smoking, gambling, alcohol, sex, and the like. If the Remnant is under intense stress (such as taking a Stress Condition), she gains a 1 Complication of *Need My Fix* on all rolls in the Mental and Social arena — she will immediately seek out her compulsive behavior of choice unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: When the compulsive behavior causes the character to make a poor choice.

Resolution: When the source of the stress is gone for several hours or the character loses all Stress Conditions.

ADDICTIVE PERSONALITY DISORDER

The character needs a particular substance to stabilize their moods and craves the substance constantly. Whether it be drugs, hooch, sex, or food, the survivor must intake that substance or risk falling into depression and irritability, as well as physical symptoms like nausea, headaches, sweats, and shaking, also known as withdrawal

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to gain their substance or activity of choice, possibly taking a Stress Condition as a result.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

AGORAPHOBIA

Also known as Nester Syndrome, the character avoids areas that present either unknown dangers or are associated with past trauma. Symptoms include severe anxiety, avoiding large social environments, or remaining indoors in what is considered a safe space. Anxiety heightens the longer the character stays outside of their safe zone, while trusted friends or safety objects may comfort them should they need to face the unknown.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into an outdoor environment.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

AMNESIA

Whether long or short term, the character's memory has been damaged so they have lost chunks of their recall from their recent or long past. Though the character may attempt to recall, there is no reliable cure to recover all the lost memories. The subject's personality may be drastically affected by the memory loss, with experiences having shaped said personality locked away from reach.

Momentum Trigger: The character needs to rely on their memory of an event.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

Known in laymen's terms as psychopathy, the character shows no regard for the well-being of others and may act impulsively or seemingly irrationally. Symptoms include irritability, severe mood swings, inflated sense of self, and illogical thinking. The subject may act out, causing damage or doing violence to everything around them with punishment no dissuasion from their actions. Psychopathy might be an early indication of a character transforming into a raider.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to consider the needs and interests of others.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

AVOIDANT PERSONALITY DISORDER

Often caused by fear of rejection or failure, those with this disorder are often labeled recluses as they shut themselves away from the world and others around them. Highly sensitive to negative feedback or the negative emotions of others, the character will avoid emotional entanglements or relationships and at worst stages remove themselves completely from interacting with other people.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted with a negative emotional outburst.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

BEREAVEMENT

Caused by the loss or perceived loss of a loved one, the subject suffers emotional distress that manifests such symptoms as depression, insomnia, poor appetite, malaise, and irritability. The subject often feels guilt about surviving and working through these feelings of separation is often a long and drawn-out process.

Momentum Trigger: The character must confront the subject of their loss.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

BLACKBALLED

You pissed off the wrong people when you bailed on your settlement and left them high and dry. Now they won't have anything to do with you, and spend their time making your life miserable. Suffer +2 difficulty when attempting to purchase goods or services, gain entry into the settlement, or otherwise make a transaction.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: The character must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to convincing the new and old communities of her dedication to her new home.

BETTER THAN YOU (PERSISTENT)

Whenever the Unstable is treated as inferior, she is so incensed that she has +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental area.

Momentum Trigger: When the Unstable is implied to be inferior or lesser.

Resolution: Until the source of the insult apologizes, leaves, or treats the Unstable as an equal (or better).

BORN COWARD (PERSISTENT)

Everyone thinks Vegasians are cowards and untrustworthy, regardless of the reality of the situation. Any rolls in the Social Arena against characters that don't have a positive Bond with the Vegasian have 1 Complication of *Shifty* — the target reluctantly agrees to the task and assumes the Vegasian has ulterior motives, unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: When the Vegasian's reputation would cause problems for the character.

Resolution: The target has a positive Bond with the Vegasian.

BRANDED BY FAITH

Your character's defense failed them at the worst possible moment, and a holy fighter has branded them with the power of their faith, forcing you to share their injuries and suffer their inner struggles. Any time the holy fighter takes an Injury or Stress Condition, your character also takes it.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you suffer a Condition through the brand.

Resolution: 10 rounds, or the end of the fight, whichever comes first.

BRIGHT LIGHTS (PERSISTENT)

Lascarians can't stand bright lights. Whenever in the presence of the sun or other well-lit areas, Lascarians gain 1 Complication of *My Eyes Hurt* on all relevant rolls — the roll might cause some form of minor inconvenience unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the pain of bright lights causes a problem for the character.

Resolution: When the character is no longer in the presence of bright lights.

BRUISED

They've been beaten up a fair bit. There are no effects beyond filling the damage level.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the character's way, adding +1 difficulty onto an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Strains recover after a night's rest; non-Strain characters (if any are ever encountered) recover after two days' wait.

BURNED OUT

The stress is simply too much to bear, and the survivor shuts down. As a result, the character acquires a Trauma Condition (p. XX). While they are Burned Out, they cannot use any of their Psi Edges.

Momentum Trigger: Add three Momentum to the pool when first Burned Out, and for every time a definite lack of the character's presence or capability harms their companions.

Resolution: Your character must witness an act of compassion offered to them or to their allies. Alternatively, they can devote a single day and night to rest and self-care, which must be portrayed in a minimum of two scenes. Any Trauma Conditions must be resolved separately.

CAPTAIN OBVIOUS (PERSISTENT)

Irons constantly glow in dim light or complete darkness, which means they have a hard time hiding. Irons gain +1 difficulty on any attempts at stealth in darkness or disguise.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's glow causes problems for them.

Resolution: When the character is no longer in dim light or darkness.

CAPTURED

You faced insurmountable odds, and whether you fought to your last breath or accepted surrender, you're now in the hands of the enemy, alive but in chains. Who knows what they're going to do with you, but it's best not to stick around and find out. Or bide your time, maybe you'll get lucky...

Momentum Trigger: Whenever you spot something that might help you escape.

Resolution: When you escape or break free of your restraints, cage, captors, and so on.

CHOKING ON LIES

Your character is no match against the stare of holy folks. They cannot lie whatsoever, and any attempt to do so forces their body to cough up phlegm or choke on bile as they try to carry out their deception

Momentum Trigger: Every time you attempt to lie.

Resolution: Tell nothing but the truth for 10 minutes.

CHRONIC MOTOR TIC

Brought on by ongoing stress or fatigue, the character exhibits an unconscious physical movement or verbal cue they are unable to restrain. These movements or sounds can be highly dangerous when attracting attention at the very worst of times.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to contain their tic.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Often brought on by trauma associated by enclosed spaces or entrapment, claustrophobia is the intense fear of being surrounded or confined either by a location or by others. Often suffered by miners or prisoners, the subject will panic and avoid any situation that will leave them confined or surrounded against their will in any way. More extreme forms of the trauma will force the character out of doors and away from larger crowds.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into an enclosed space.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

CONTACT REVOKED

You've really messed up this time. Maybe you broke an inviolate code, violated your suspension, or maybe you just broke the rules one too many times. Your membership has been revoked. You are still part of the Path, but you cannot attempt to access your connections while you are still Revoked.

Momentum Trigger: Attempting to draw on the connection if you have the Path Suspension Condition.

Resolution: You must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to regaining your Path's good graces.

CONTACT SUSPENSION

You've done something to upset your Path connections. Maybe you called on them one too many times and they are tired of your constantly needy attitude, or you violated a minor code. You are on the outs, but they haven't written you off completely. You suffer +2 difficulty whenever you attempt to engage anyone within your Path's group. If you attempt to access your connections again, or violate another code, you will gain the Revoked Condition.

Momentum Trigger: Attempting to draw on the connection after the rating has been reduced to 0.

Resolution: This Condition ends at the end of the game's story. Fulfilling an obligation may remove this Condition early, as will gaining the Path Revoked Condition.

DEAD OR ALIVE (PERSISTENT)

Semper Mort look monstrous in appearance, reminding everyone around them that they are the prey when conversing with

them. Because of this, Semper Mort receive a permanent +1 difficulty on rolls in the Social Arena for anyone who is not a Gorger. When a Semper Mort comes out of the Grave Mind, they always receive the Amnesia Trauma Condition in addition to any other effects (p. XX).

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's appearance causes problems.

Resolution: None.

DEHYDRATED

For every scene a character has this Condition, they receive an Injury Condition and a Stress Condition. Additionally, should they be Taken Out by other means while they have the Dehydrated Condition, the character goes directly to Bleeding Out.

Momentum Trigger: Every day in which the character does anything more than rest.

Resolution: A character must find a source of fresh water to drink worth at least one dot. Any additional dots for the water source can take away the Stress Conditions received while Dehydrated.

DIPLOPIA

Biogens can literally change how a person sees the world — and it's terrifying. Anyone who is under the effects of Diplopia faces difficulties with any action requiring visual coordination. Diplopia causes the eyes to uncouple slightly, which results in a fainter duplicate of whatever the person is viewing.

While under the effects of Diplopia, all attacks with weapons act as though they are being done at 1 range band higher than its maximum. Uses of the Pilot Skill impose a +2 difficulty.

Momentum Trigger: The character's situation becomes worse due to their inability to see clearly.

Resolution: Rest for a scene or more.

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

When confronted by a trauma, the subject's mind cannot handle the events and therefore splinters into separate and unique personalities, often switching to take control of the subject's body. Often considered a severe form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), each identity develops with their own likes, dislikes, and mannerisms, each unaware of one another's experiences or the fracture which has occurred.

Momentum Trigger: The character incurs a Stress Condition of Distraught or higher, forcing them to switch personalities.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

DISTRACTED

Dabblers and other psionicists can produce false sounds that pull at the target's focus. This can make concentrating on any task difficult as someone suddenly hears his name called or the sounds of gunfire.

For the duration of Distracted, the target faces all difficulty for actions increased by 1.

Momentum Trigger: The character's situation becomes worse due to their inability to focus their thoughts.

Resolution: At the end of the character's round or scene, a Resolve + Composure roll against difficulty of 2 will resolve the Condition.

DISTRAUGHT

They're stressed out beyond belief, and it's hampering their ability to act.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the character's way, adding +2 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or a good night's sleep.

DO NOT BLASPHEME (PERSISTENT)

If an Accensorite breaks a tenet of their faith intentionally, they receive a +1 difficulty on all Mental Arena rolls until they can atone.

Momentum Trigger: When the character is forced to intentionally break a tenet of their faith.

Resolution: The character pays appropriate penance.

DON'T CROSS ME (PERSISTENT)

The character is so furious that she has +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental area. For Yorkers, talking to a Baywalker is always considered "being provoked," unless the Yorker has a positive Bond with the Baywalker.

Momentum Trigger: Any situation when the character is insulted socially.

Resolution: The source of the insult apologizes or leaves.

DON'T TOUCH MY STUFF (PERSISTENT)

Digitarians and Diesel Jocks are always tinkering with a pet project, which means they always have something to obsess over. If the project is damaged, stolen, or otherwise unavailable, he gains a +1 difficulty on all rolls in the Mental Arena until the situation is rectified. Such characters can change obsessions between stories.

Momentum Trigger: If the character's pet project is damaged, stolen, or otherwise unavailable.

Resolution: The project is fixed, returned, made available, or the character's obsession shifts.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS (PERSISTENT)

Whenever the Pure Blood is unkempt or unsightly, all rolls in the Social Arena gain 2 Complication of *Not My Best* — the target has a negative or dismissive opinion of the Pure Blood unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: The Pure Blood is forced to be unkempt, unsightly, or otherwise look less than put together.

Resolution: The Pure Blood has a chance to change clothes or bathe.

FACELESS

A Headhunter, or one sick bastard, got their hands on you when a fight went wrong. With a knife and rudimentary slicing, they peeled your face off and left you with barely more than the muscles underneath. While you're faceless, all Social rolls are +2 difficulty against characters impacted by this gruesome appearance.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever you fail on a social roll, or another character doesn't succeed on their rolls due to your gruesome appearance nearby.

Resolution: Graft the original face back on or substitute yours with a new face. (Beware of side effects.) If you die with this Condition, you return with facial scars and possibly a Trauma Condition related to your disfigurement.

FAITHLESS

Your character had a crisis of faith and lost her way. She might have found religion in another quarter, but her former congregation shuns her for abandoning them. Suffer 3 Complication of *Heretic* when attempting to interact with any member of the abandoned Creed — unless they buy off the Complication, the character will still be distrustful and disrespectful to their former brethren.

Her new Creed is also a little wary of her, as she seems to switch faiths so easily. Suffer 1 Complication of *Flip-Flopper* when attempting to interact with a member of the new Creed, with similar results to the *Heretic* Complication.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: The character must dedicate a long-term Aspiration to convincing the new and old congregations of her dedication to her new faith.

FATIGUED

For every scene a character has this Condition, they take one Stress Condition. If the character is Burned Out, they are forced to rest.

Momentum Trigger: Every scene where the character is forced to push through the exhaustion.

Resolution: Character must rest for a single scene without being interrupted. Should their rest be interrupted, the Condition is not cleared, and the character takes another Stress Condition immediately.

GET BEHIND ME (PERSISTENT)

Baywalkers can't stand bullies. Any roll in the Social Arena against that character has a 2 Complication of *Shut Your Mouth* — the Baywalker cannot be polite or cordial to the target, unless the Complication is overcome. This Condition is always active against Yorkers, unless the Baywalker has a positive Bond with the Yorker.

Momentum Trigger: When dealing with bullies or other characters that are loud and aggressive.

Resolution: The bullying stops.

GRAPPLED

While grappling, you are normally limited to grappling Stunts unless you break free. The person who initiates the grapple starts with control of the grapple. The grapple action is only taken when you are already in a grapple. While in a grapple you can only use weapons with the "grapple" tag. While in a grapple and not in control of it, you cannot use the Withdraw defense action.

Momentum Trigger: You are prevented from taking a critical action due to being restrained.

Resolution: You or your opponent successful perform the Break Free stunt.

HAUNTED

They've experienced a horribly traumatic experience.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the way, adding +4 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or a good night's sleep.

HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Triggered by confrontation or competition, the subject feels the constant need to be the center of attention and strives to exert their influence on any situation to gain the acclaim they crave. The subject will display themselves to others in any way they believe will

get them attention, going to further and further lengths and changing their personality to get the adoration they think they deserve.

Momentum Trigger: The character is in a position where drawing attention to themselves would be a problem.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

HOPELESS

Your character has no guiding compass left, and all the strength their faith offered has been robbed and forsaken by the horrors they've witnessed or committed. As the weight of such deeds bears down on their soul, their spiritual powers fail to come forth when they need them the most, abandoning the pious character to peril or an inability to help. While they are Hopeless, they cannot use any of their Faith Edges.

Momentum Trigger: Every time your character cannot help someone or defend themselves with a Faith Edge.

Resolution: Your character must witness an act of compassion offered to them or to their allies. Alternatively, they can devote a single day and night to rest and self-care, doing nothing else in the interim.

HUNTED

Prerequisite: Originally had the Mover and Shaker or Leader Condition in this Path.

You know too much and the people in charge won't rest until you're dead or long gone. They may send assassins after you, or someone from the Path may take an opportunity to attempt to settle your debt, as it were. You're dangerous to be around as few people want to raise the ire of those who hunt you. Suffer +1 to all rolls in the Social Arena when dealing with anyone outside her new Path, unless she has a Bond to them. Additionally, the character may periodically deal with surprise assailants.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted by her former group.

Resolution: This Condition is resolved if the character gains the Mover and Shaker or Leader Condition.

I CAN DO IT BETTER (PERSISTENT)

Solestros are convinced that they can do almost anything and can succeed doing so. If they're forced to acknowledge that they cannot do something, they must spend Momentum to succeed even if it's a trivial task.

Momentum Trigger: They are forced to acknowledge that they cannot do something.

Resolution: The character moves on to a subject in which they have more familiarity.

I HEAR DEAD PEOPLE (PERSISTENT)

Full Dead constantly hear voices whispering in the backs of their minds. These voices are constructed from the group consciousness that is the Grave Mind. Because of this, all Full Dead receive a +1 difficulty to all checks involving perception. Further, they are at +1 difficulty for their Integrity + Resolve roll to recover from the Grave Mind as well (p. XX).

Momentum Trigger: The character is trying to pay attention to something important.

Resolution: None.

ILL

While each of these diseases has its own symptoms and flavors, they each can be tackled the same way. For every day the character has the disease and does not receive treatment, they receive a single Injury Condition (related to the disease) and further entrench the disease into their system. Equally, for every day they do not have it treated it will add +1 difficulty for a medical professional to cure the disease, to a maximum of 5.

If a character reaches the stage where they would be Taken Out by the damage given by a disease, they enter a desperate battle to survive. Medical professionals must succeed their First Aid roll (difficulty 5) to save the character's life or else they will succumb to the disease and perish.

This Condition may have additional modifications, based on the disease in question.

Momentum Trigger: The character succumbs to the symptoms of their disease.

Resolution: Medical treatment, or as per the illness.

IMPULSE CONTROL DISORDER

While plenty of wastelanders might be the hot-headed kind, like your friendly neighborhood Merican, Impulse Control Disorder takes it to a whole new level. The subject is unable to stop themselves from acting on the random impulses passing through their mind, no matter how irrational they are in the situation. If there is something the subject wants to do, they will, even if it costs them relationships, interferes with important business, or even puts them and others in harm's way.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to not act on their immediate whim.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

INJURED

They've been roundly beaten or are sustaining a serious but heroic wound.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the character's way, adding +2 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Strains recover after one week's wait; non-Strain characters (if any are ever encountered) recover after two weeks' wait;

INTERMITTENT EXPLOSIVE DISORDER

Commonly misdiagnosed as simple tantrums, the subject will respond to even the tiniest stressful situation with disproportionately strong and often violent outbursts. Despite attempts at calming, the subject might even go so far as to harm themselves and others when triggered by stress, only to show embarrassment or regret after the episode. This may cause additional stress, and the cycle of episodes may continue.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character gains a Stress Condition, they lash out in an emotional outburst.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

INTOXICATED

Your character has drunk a little too much hooch and it's affecting their coordination. While survivors are more tolerant of alcohol from lifetimes of survival, everybody has their limit. This Condition affects all rolls that require the Intellect, Dexterity, or Composure Attributes.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you fail to roll for the above Attributes.

Resolution: For every cup of hooch you consumed, wait one hour, or drink a brew specifically crafted to counter the effects of alcohol consumption.

IT'S ZED! (PERSISTENT)

Unless speaking to another Retrograde, a worshipper of the Church of Darwin, or a character with a positive Bond, the character has +1 Complication of *I Look Like a Zombie* to all rolls in the Social Arena — the target will be uncomfortable around the character because of his resemblance to a zombie unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: The character's appearance causes a problem.

Resolution: None.

KINEMORTOPHOBIA

Known also as zedophobia, the subject is struck terrified by the presence of anything resembling or reminding them of the dead. In a world full of zombies, this can be a devastating phobia, sending the subject running from anything from a horde of shamblers to your favorite neighborhood Full Dead. This is not a rational fear, but a gut reaction and the subject will do anything to flee from the subject of their terror.

Momentum Trigger: The character is confronted with zed, or characters that look like a zombie (such as Full Dead or Retrogrades).

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

KLEPTOMANIA

People suffering from this disease are commonly called filchers, as they suffer from the uncontrollable need to steal whatever catches their eye. Once the subject spots something they want, they will do anything to steal it and make it their own, reveling both in the thrill of potentially getting caught and the satisfaction of owning said object. In the end, however, the hoarding of these objects doesn't fill the void inside, and the filcher will simply go on to the next object as soon as it strikes their fancy.

Momentum Trigger: The character takes an object belong to someone else, and they get in trouble as a result.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

LEADER

You are not just important, you're in charge. People do what you say and at least pretend to like it. You are above the normal limitations of asking too much or breaking the rules. You make the rules now. Your character never suffers from the Path Suspension or Path Revoked Conditions. Additionally, all your Contacts gain the Loyal tag for free. If they already had the Loyal tag, they gain a different tag of your choosing.

A character may only possess the Leader Condition from a single Path.

Momentum Trigger: The character is called upon to do something on behalf of the group.

Resolution: Your character loses this Condition if she leaves the Path or otherwise visibly acts against the interests of the Society or Strain.

LUDDITE (PERSISTENT)

Whenever interacting with technology or forced to use a technological device, the Natural One is at +1 difficulty to all related rolls.

Momentum Trigger: The character's discomfort with technology causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.

MAIMED

The survivor is suffering from a grievous and potentially permanent wound.

Momentum Trigger: The injury gets in the way, adding +4 difficulty to an action.

Resolution: Medical attention. Strains recover after one week's wait; non-Strain characters (if any are ever encountered) recover after two weeks' wait.

MASOCHISTIC DISORDER

Though no one is exactly sure whether this is a physical or psychological disorder, pain junkies, as they are commonly known, find themselves taking intense pleasure at receiving both psychological and physical pain. The subject often finds the pleasure more intense when caused by an outside source, and they will enter dangerous situations and relationships in the hope of receiving such pain. Many subjects gradate from this disorder to the more serious surgical addiction.

Momentum Trigger: The character refuses to take painkillers, heal an Injury Condition, or otherwise dull his pain.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

MELANCHOLIA

Commonly known as Survivor's Fatigue, the subject falls into a deep depression marked by a lack of interest in the things the previously enjoyed, even going so far as feeling a disconnect from everything of this world. Subjects will show no motivation toward any of their interests or responsibilities, and disconnect from their relationships and seem lethargic, even going so far as to fall into catatonia unless the illness is properly addressed.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced into action against their will.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

MOVER AND SHAKER

Your character is an important member of her Path. Others look up to her and often come to her for assistance or advice. She may even have followers within the Path who will gladly do her bidding. Gain 2 Enhancement on rolls in the Social Arena when dealing with other members of the Path.

Momentum Trigger: The character is called upon to do something on behalf of the group.

Resolution: Your character loses this Condition if she leaves the Path or otherwise visibly acts against the interests of the Society or Strain. She also loses it if she gains the Leader Condition.

NAPOLEON COMPLEX

Sometimes called Bulldog Syndrome, the subject will express over-the-top or domineering personality traits when confronted with any situation where they are challenged, both in social or physical situations. The subject attempts to compensate for a real or perceived shortcoming by trying to control the situation, making others believe they are greater than they may be, and requiring others to recognize that greatness to address their internal need.

Momentum Trigger: The character must acquiesce to someone they consider to be an inferior.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NARCISSISM

Though plenty of braggarts exist in the world, someone suffering from narcissism (often called a boaster) has a higher-than-average opinion of themselves, seeing themselves as the perfect specimen of their group or class. The subject believes they are above reproach and will take any attack on their capabilities or appearance as a personal and very serious challenge that must be answered no matter the cost. This illness often goes undiagnosed, as certain groups like Pure Bloods tend to showcase narcissistic personalities to begin with. However, the illness will drive its subject to the farthest actions to rectify any challenge, even to the point of causing others or themselves severe harm.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to confront a mistake they have made.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NARCOLEPSY

Called Drop Dead Disorder colloquially, subjects will take involuntary naps throughout the course of the day. They may nod off, go into a semi-paralytic state (even with their eyes open), or go completely unconscious at any time. This might seem like a harmless illness, but depending on the timing of the naps, the subject may be injured or even killed should they be in a dangerous situation, such as in the middle of a zed or raider attack.

Momentum Trigger: The character falls asleep at an inopportune time.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NIGHTMARES

A more aggressive form of simple sleep terrors, nightmares are terrifying dreams that plague the subject once they go unconscious. The dreams are so frightening they cause disorientation while asleep and upon waking. Should the subject be woken during a nightmare, their responses can be volatile and even violent, as the line between awake and asleep can remain blurred. Subjects

suffering from nightmares can stay asleep for long periods to avoid these dreams, leading to fatigue if they're not careful.

Momentum Trigger: The character does not get a good night's sleep (possibly taking the Fatigued Condition as a result).

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

NOT LIKE THE OTHERS (PERSISTENT)

Reclaimers and Unborn sequester themselves away from the world, which means that they have trouble interacting with any other characters. These characters are +1 difficulty when rolling to establish or build on a Bond with someone.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever their standoffish nature causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.

OATH BREAKER

To whoever dares to break an oath bound by the Nuclear Family, woe falls unto them. Through inexplicable happenstance, their appearance is blemished, their reputation ruined, and luck no longer favors them. On any roll that is a failure but not a botch, reroll one die — if the reroll comes up as a 1, the failure is now a botch.

Momentum Trigger: Every time your failure becomes a botch.

Resolution: Resolve Solemn Oath or seek out the character that mediated the original oath and beg for forgiveness.

ON FIRE

The imagery of a psionicist setting someone ablaze with only a look is unsettling to many. The reality is that it's less common than assumed, but can still happen.

Characters inflicted with this condition will take an Injury Condition each round until resolved.

Momentum Trigger: The character takes damage from fire.

Resolution: Someone, either the character or another in close range, spends a standard action to extinguish the flames.

ONE FOR ALL (PERSISTENT)

These characters develop a chosen community around them that they become devoted to. Whenever one of their chosen community of friends or family are threatened, the character receives a +1 difficulty on any rolls in the Mental Arena.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever a member of the character's chosen community is substantially threatened.

Resolution: The source of the danger is eliminated or no longer present.

OVERSTIMULATED (PERSISTENT)

Whenever in the presence of excess noise or large crowds, Quiet Folk gain a +1 difficulty to all rolls in the Mental Arena.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's overstimulation causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: The character must stay in a quiet area for several hours.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Known in shorthand as PTSD, this common illness is the result of traumatic experiences that are unfortunately all-too common in the wasteland. The subject suffers from bouts of anxiety, fear, paranoia, and hyper-vigilance at all times, triggered into extreme episodes when they are reminded of the source of their trauma. The subject will remain on guard, always ready to defend themselves, and will often find it hard to engage with others, seeming aloof and removed as they prepare for any time they might be in danger once more.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to confront their trauma.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

PRIORITY TARGET

When a horde of zed are coming your way, sometimes you just pray they will pick off stragglers while you make your escape. But if they are drawn to you through some terrifying magnetism, then it's either kill or be killed.

While under this Condition, the character becomes the first target a zombie within range will attack.

Momentum Trigger: A zed goes out of their way to attack the target.

Resolution: All zombies in the scene are destroyed or otherwise leave the scene.

PYROMANIA

Though there are debates as to the causes of pyromania, the Fire-Starter illness gives the subject the uncontrollable urge to start fires. The subject achieves a sense of instant gratification when they cause something to burn, a feeling that becomes more powerful and intense over time. Though the subject may begin with smaller fires, the itch usually grows until they require larger blazes that cause more damage to satisfy their needs. This illness can go unnoticed during its early stages but becomes severely problematic as the fires grow larger.

Momentum Trigger: The character is put in a position where they cannot light a fire to ease their anguish.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

RADIATION POISONING

Once the character has been in contact with a radiation source long enough to receive at least one Injury Condition, they now take Continuous (scene) damage, even if they leave the source of the radiation. If they are Taken Out, they go straight to Bleeding Out.

Momentum Trigger: Every time the character takes damage from their poisoning.

Resolution: Character must seek treatment for their poisoning through medical attention, anti-radiation medication, or decontamination.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

A complicated and insidious illness, schizophrenia is often characterized by hallucinations and beliefs about one's self and relationships that are not rooted in reality. Commonly present alongside other illnesses like depression or paranoia, schizophrenics can be found manifesting abnormal behaviors such as seeing illusions, speaking to things that aren't there, mimicking the words of others, presenting no outward emotions, behaving in silly or immature ways, and developing hallucinations about themselves and the world around them. This devastating illness can evolve over time from small behaviors into more serious forms that impair the subject's ability to function in the world safely as their hallucinations and beliefs grow more out of control.

Momentum Trigger: The character confuses what is real and what is a hallucination, which causes problems for him or his allies.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Caused by trauma and issues of abandonment, the subject is unable to be left alone for even short periods of time. This deep-rooted fear of abandonment makes the subject seek out others they trust for solace no matter the circumstance, sticking to them even when the other party is unwilling. Should the subject be left alone, they will often act out in the most violent of ways until returned to the person they find comforting, or else lapse into terrified catatonia until the subject of their trust is returned to them once more.

Momentum Trigger: The character is forced to be alone for a scene.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

SMITTEN

A fiery burst of energy came down from the skies, called down by the will of a holy fighter, and struck your character down. Weakening you, it sapped your strength and left you singed, struggling to continue the fight. Your character is at +1 difficulty when using rolls involving Stamina.

Momentum Trigger: Every time this Condition affects Stamina rolls.

Resolution: Begin a new scene.

SOCIAL PARIAH (PERSISTENT)

Mericans don't understand social cues or personal space. Unless talking to another Merican, this character has a 1 Complication of *Whatcha Talkin' 'Bout* to all rolls in the Social Arena — the Merican may inadvertently offend or insult the target unless the Complication is bought off.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character's social awkwardness causes or exacerbates a problem.

Resolution: None.

SOLEMN OATH

Your character is bound by more than flimsy honor, but by the Nuclear Family's power. Whatever agreement you came to with another participant, you chose to seal it as a solemn oath so that neither of you could walk away so easily.

Momentum Trigger: Every time you're inconvenienced by the agreement you made.

Resolution: The passage of one year and one day, or fulfilling the oath in its entirety, whichever comes first.

SPLIT-MINDED

When a psionicist uses Necrokinetics to form a psionic crystal through the ability Crystallized Mind, they are literally removing part of their psionic potential and creating a tangible manifestation of it. The result is a highly useful focus, but comes at a lasting cost, as the psionicist is more susceptible to the ravages psionic abilities have on the mind. A Split-Minded psionicist is functionally the same as any other, but their innate tolerance for the weight of psionic manifestations is lessoned. Such is the price of power.

During the duration of Split-Minded, the psionicist loses one Troubled Injury Condition Slot.

Momentum Trigger: The character falls to Burned Out.

Resolution: Split-Minded lasts until a psionic crystal is reabsorbed, the psionicist's crystal is destroyed, or is used to Awaken Morgue.

STARVING

For every day a character has this Condition, they take one Stress Condition. Further, the character must roll Stamina + Resolve, difficulty equal to the number of days they've had the Starving Condition (maximum 5). If the roll fails, the character takes an Injury Condition as well.

If the character is Burned Out, each additional day the survivor goes without food incurs an Injury Condition, as if the Stamina + Resolve roll failed.

Momentum Trigger: Every day in which the character does anything more than rest.

Resolution: Character must eat a meal worth at least two dots to remove this Condition. Meals of only one dot allow the survivor to recover one Stress Condition and gives +1 Enhancement to the Stamina + Resolve roll.

STOLEN POTENTIAL

An Egokineticist who turns their will upon another not only drains them of their Resolve, but also leave their targets feeling mentally fragile. One survivor, Rusty Sabri, described it as "realizing all of your small failures in life are the result of your own inability to comprehend how insignificant you are in the world. You just want to lie down and not exist for a while as you think of how small you are." This is not a mindset conducive to survival in the wastes, and if it weren't for his friends, he surely would have died.

For the duration of the Condition, Skill Tricks require an additional Momentum to spend.

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to use a Skill Trick in a situation.

Resolution: The target clears all her Stress Conditions (p. XX).

TAKEN OUT

The character may be dying, trapped underneath the ruins of a platform, or simply knocked out. The character in question is no longer able to fight and cannot take any further actions for the remainder of the scene in which the character acquired this Condition. Any successful hit in a later scene has the same effect until the Taken Out Condition is resolved.

When a survivor is Taken Out, that does not necessarily mean the survivor is dying. Even in the harsh world of **Dystopia Rising**, the Storyguide must be able to read the tone of the game as it is in progress. While death is easy in the wastes, it should not be so severe and imminent for a player to be discouraged from playing. If the Storyguide determines the character is in immediate danger of dying, see Death and Dying, p. XX.

Momentum Trigger: Add three Momentum to the pool when first Taken Out, and for every time a definite lack of the character's presence harms their companions.

Resolution: Medical attention or when conditions change so the character is no longer Taken Out. The injury that caused the character to be Taken Out, while no longer incapacitating, gets in her way in a later scene, adding +3 difficulty to an action.

THRILL KILL

Known by the complex moniker of Severe Anti-Social and Narcissistic Personality Disorder, this dangerous illness makes a subject take sadistic pleasure from the harming and killing of living things. The subject will seek out anything alive, from raiders to animals and other people to maim, torture, and kill. This illness becomes the single focus of their life, stripping away all other interests until the hunt and the kill is all that brings them pleasure. Commonly caused by Bad Brain, the subject will devolve until they can feel no other pleasure than the thrill of the kill, and the more pain the subject inflicts, the better.

Momentum Trigger: The character is unable to kill to soothe themselves.

Resolution: Therapy, as detailed on p. XX.

TROUBLED

They've had a rough day.

Momentum Trigger: The stress gets in the character's way, adding +1 difficulty onto an action.

Resolution: Psychological attention or a good night's sleep.

VERTIGO

A nearby Toy Box is beginning to shift the laws of reality and feed on your willpower. Every five minutes, you suffer a splitting headache and must roll Integrity + Resolve against difficulty 2 to prevent yourself from falling to the mercy of the Toy Box. If you fail, you immediately succumb to the will of the Toy Box and cannot distinguish between what is real and what is mere illusion.

Momentum Trigger: Every time the sufferer takes damage or is fooled by the illusions.

Resolution: Defeat the Toy Box or leave the Field.

Flaws

As with Conditions, you are encouraged to create additional Flaws, using these as a guideline.

BROKEN

It's busted. Gummed up. Trashed. The item doesn't work and won't until it's fixed.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character wants to attempt an action with the piece of gear in question but must fail or otherwise get into worse trouble because the item won't work.

Resolution: Fixing the item, either with a Tier 1 crafting roll (p. XX) or through some other means, like finding a particular part.

CONTAMINATED

The gear has so many rads that it's functionally useless. The gear also gains the Broken Flaw (if it doesn't have it already), and the Broken Flaw cannot be resolved until the Contaminated Flaw is.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Contaminated gear.

Resolution: The gear is decontaminated (p. XX) using a Decontamination Kit.

FUEL/AMMO HOG

The item requires more fuel or ammo than usual. Whenever a roll using the item is a botch, it stops working until more fuel or ammo can be found.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character botches and the item runs out of fuel or ammo.

Resolution: The gear is given more fuel or ammo (temporarily removing the effects) or the Flaw is removed through repair.

GUN'S EMPTY

The ranged weapon cannot be used again until more ammunition is purchased.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever being able to shoot something would resolve a problem.

Resolution: The weapon is reloaded.

IRRADIATED

The gear has taken on too much radiation, and it don't work so good. It loses 1 Enhancement (down to 0) while it has this Flaw.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Irradiated gear.

Resolution: The gear is decontaminated (p. XX) or gains the Contaminated Flaw.

NEEDS BATTERIES

The item in question has run out of power.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever being able to use something would resolve a problem.

Resolution: A new power source is provided.

NOXIOUS

The item in question tastes or smells disgusting. Every time the item is used successfully (granting effects and/or Enhancement), the user must roll Survival + Stamina, difficulty 1, or take a Stress Condition due to nausea.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character takes a Stress Condition from the item's use.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

ON THE BLINK

The gear randomly loses effectiveness. On a successful roll using this item, roll a single die. If the die is even, the item generates one less Enhancement than normal.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character loses Enhancement at a critical moment.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

OUT OF GAS

The vehicle will no longer run until fuel is acquired.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever driving the vehicle would resolve a problem.

Resolution: The vehicle is refueled.

STICKY

The gear gets caught on things easily. When the item is used on another target (such as putting a sword into a zed), the item is stuck until the user succeeds in an Athletics + Might roll, difficulty 1, to remove the item.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character loses the object at a critical moment.

Resolution: The Flaw is removed through repair.

WEATHER-WORN

The gear has been battered by the elements, losing some effectiveness. It loses 1 Enhancement (down to 0) while it has this Flaw.

Momentum Trigger: Whenever the character fails in an action using the Weather-Worn gear.

Resolution: The gear is dried out (p. XX).

DYSTOPIA RISING EVOLUTION

NAME: _____

PLAYER: _____

SERIES: _____

STRAIN: _____

SKILLS

Academics:	○○○○○	Lore:	○○○○○
Athletics:	○○○○○	Medicine:	○○○○○
Close Combat:	○○○○○	Persuasion:	○○○○○
Culture:	○○○○○	Pilot:	○○○○○
Empathy:	○○○○○	Science:	○○○○○
Firearms:	○○○○○	Subterfuge:	○○○○○
Integrity:	○○○○○	Survival:	○○○○○
Leadership:	○○○○○	Technology:	○○○○○

ATTRIBUTES

Force	Intellect	●○○○○	Might	●○○○○	Presence	●○○○○
Finesse	Cunning	●○○○○	Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○
Resilience	Resolve	●○○○○	Stamina	●○○○○	Composure	●○○○○

PATHS

Strain: _____ ○○○○○

Role: _____

Society: _____ ○○○○○

ASPIRATIONS

Short: _____

Short: _____

Long: _____

SKILL TRICKS

CONNECTIONS

☐ Bruised _____ +1
☐ Bruised _____ +1
☐ Injured _____ +2
☐ Injured _____ +2
☐ Maimed _____ +4

Taken Out

☐ Troubled _____ +1
☐ Troubled _____ +1
☐ Distraught _____ +2
☐ Distraught _____ +2
☐ Haunted _____ +4

Burned

EDGES

_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○
_____	○○○○○	_____	○○○○○

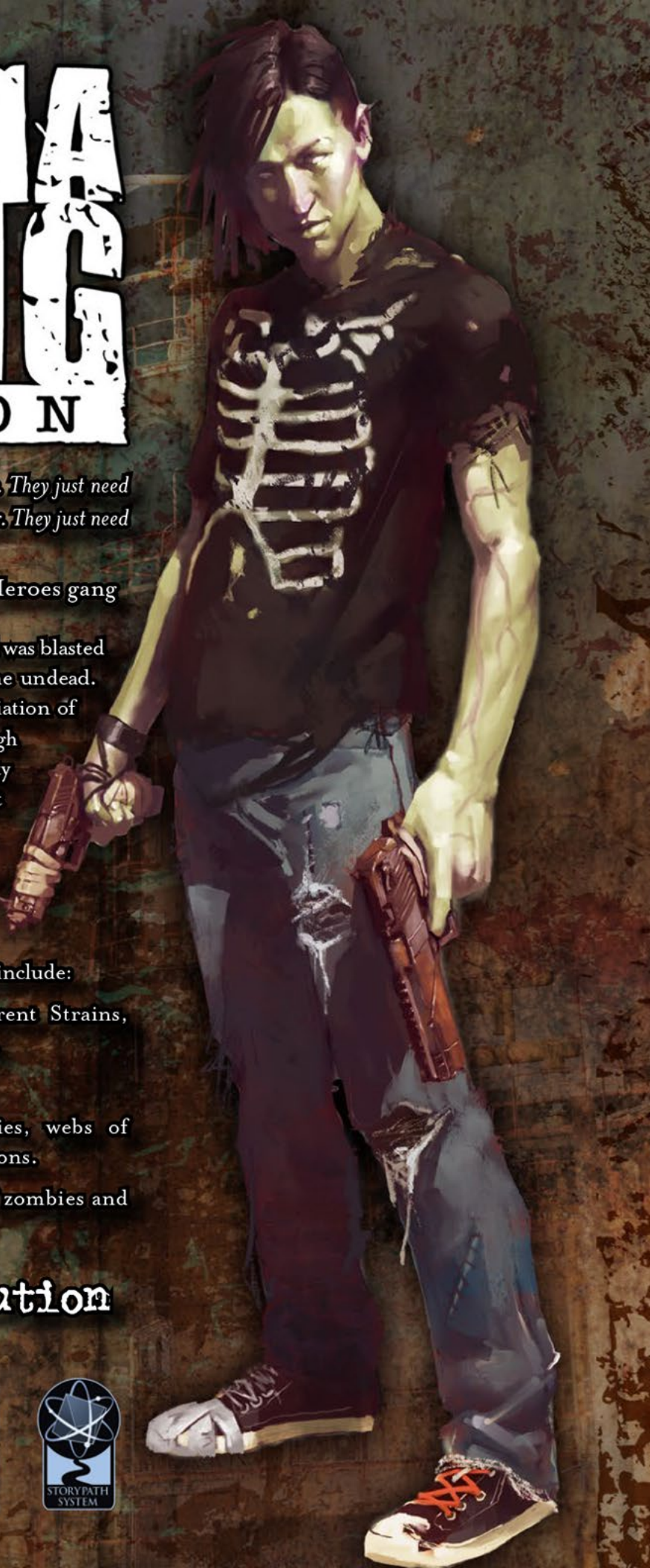
Weapon: _____

Armor: _____

Gear: _____

Experience: _____

DYSTOPIA RISING
EVOLUTION



"People don't need a reason to be awful to each other. They just need to survive. But people don't need a reason to survive, either. They just need each other."

— Tribeca Rockaway, sniper of the Dead Heroes gang

No one knows how long it's been since the world was blasted with nuclear radiation and became infested with the undead. The survivors of the Fall were the first strain of deviation of the human condition and were able to make it through the rapidly spreading epidemic. Finding a community of decent size in this world is rare; finding one that has any concept of equality or morality is rarer still.

Oh, and people have the unnerving ability to come back from the dead, regrown from the very virus that destroyed the world.

Some highlights of **Dystopia Rising: Evolution** include:

- Rules for creating characters for 24 different Strains, variations on humanity that survived the Fall.
- Details on the powers of faith and psionics.
- Advice on running action-adventure stories, webs of personal intrigue, and procedural investigations.
- Dozens of antagonists, including a variety of zombies and raiders to use in your series.

Welcome to the Evolution

DRE001

ONYX PATH PUBLISHING

STORY PATH SYSTEM