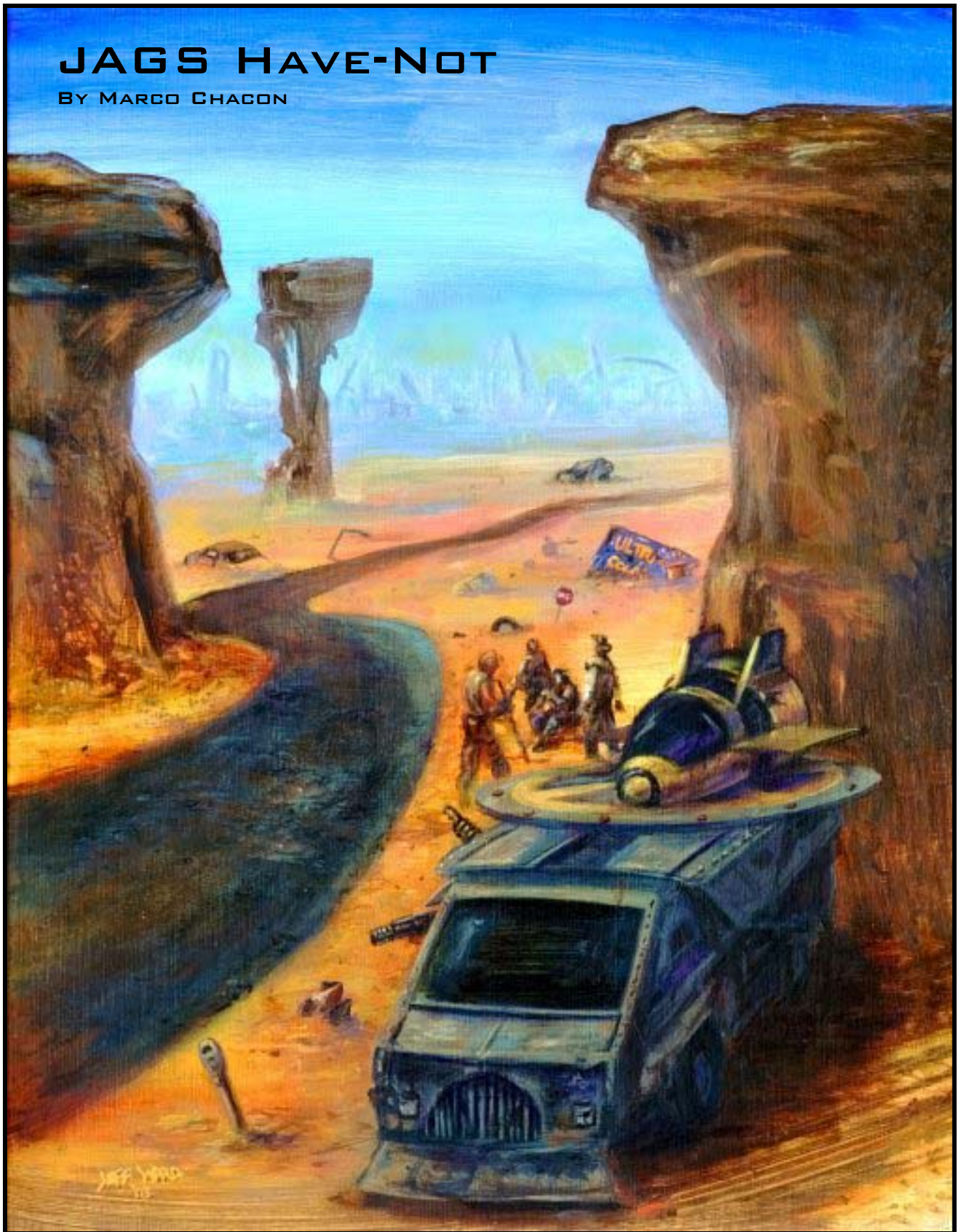


JAGS HAVE-NOT

BY MARCO CHACON



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Have-Not: It's a nice place to visit—but I wouldn't want to live there.

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JAGS: Have-Not

A wind whistles across a desert-dry plain. A river, crystal clear, but its banks choked with dead grass from the poisons it carries, gurgles west towards a hundred yard cliff down to vast expanses of sand where the Pacific Ocean used to be. An eerie song of a mutant bird echoes for a moment—and then things are still again. Were you in an aircraft rushing over the land at the speed of sound, you would see a light in the distance—a glow as though from a smoke-stifled fire. Closer you would see a city—a nightmare megapolis of blackened skeletal buildings with the grim shapes of heavy bore guns pointing out at the land and sky. The city has lights though—frenetic lights—fire-fights on the freeways, arson in the warrens, massive moving billboards with flickers of gladiatorial combat and industrial zones belching plasma and smog.

Then you'd be past it, arcing out at an impossible rate of travel over the land around the city—a poisoned swamp—a vicious hyperactive carnivorous ecology that devours and devours and ... it's gone too—a green ring—towns, villages—roads and farms below. And then, all too fast, that is gone as well—another wasteland speckled with a few strange dying empires. You'll be past those in a second, heading east across a magnificent expanse of continent—but there is nothing else: there is nothing more to see. You've already passed over the last dying embers of civilization. This is all that remains. Welcome to Have-Not.

JAGS HAVE-NOT

Welcome to Have-Not, a post apocalypse far future mutants-and-machineguns world book. Have-Not is all about rolling into a small dusty town in armed vehicles and laying the .30-cal smack-down on an evil sheriff. It's about getting your friends together and heading into the Denver Ruins to brave the death machines and the bio-horrors left over from the Age of War to bring back bounty from another era. It's about being an intelligent, telepathic Bengal Tiger with a cybernetic rocket launcher or Cyborg with a built in rocket launcher—or a mobile telepathic plant—or maybe just a human, gun slinging bad-ass.

Have-Not is about exploring a world that's been touched by a miraculous technology (controlled by the *Haves*, who are now *gone*) and then abandoned. It's about setting things right or seeing what's broken or just getting rich and powerful—or any of those things. It's about a world that's complex, that's got a lot going on, and has secrets to discover. We hope you enjoy it!



Long Story Short

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VEHICULAR HELP FROM Wintermute.

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It's over, but it ain't got the decency to lay down and die. It knows it's finished but it keeps on fighting. It don't make no sense but it's given up tryin'. The world caught fire a few hundred years ago and it's still burning. You can see the flames—you can still smell the smoke. Some people are fool enough to think they can make a difference ... goin around, maybe they don't even know it—but they're thinkin'—they're dreamin'—they're goin "maybe ... just maybe ... I could put it *out*."

Have-Not is what happens when *winner takes all*. It's what happens when all the good and comfortable and happy belongs to

someone else and they *leave*. It's bitter and it's unfair and it reeks of industrial waste. But there you are. So here ya go.

In Have-Not you might drive an armored car with co-ax .30-cal machine guns on top. *We built those*—after the collapse. You might carry a plastic handgun that fires a condensed plasma beam: *They built those—and there are still a bunch left*. Radiation can riddle your body with cancer, blind you, and make you bleed out through your—well, never mind *that*. *That's our reality*. But *They* left us with "*alternate-stability-zones*" in our bio-genetic structure and the mutations might just as easily be tentacles or a third eye or ... telepathy. *That's their little game*.

They are what we call (called) the *Haves*. A long time ago they ran the world and it was an *Age of Wonders*. Self-repairing super-highways crisscrossed the continents. Supersonic transports arced through space. Medicine was instant and TV was hypnotic and addictive and just made you feel *wonderful*.

And then. They. Left.

And Then. It. All. Stopped. And there was war that you couldn't imagine—and after that there's this. One city, one real city left. Two far-flung empires so warped as to barely be sane at all, both dying. A narrow ring of civilization under assault from mutation, monster, and machine, and that's ... about ... it.

Animals talk, some of us can move things with our minds, and *everything* can kill you. It's that kind of world and it ain't getting better all by itself. Welcome to Have-Not.

Long Story Long

The End of the Information Age

The Information Age came to a close with what has become colloquially known as *The Breakthrough*. The Breakthrough was a discovery of such magnitude, a realization of such importance that it changed *everything*. Science in *every discipline* went from an exploration of a difficult yet map-able terrain to a wild ocean where reason and the scientific method were lost causes. Not only did we

THE AGES OF MAN

The Stone Age ended at about 3000 BC when mankind discovered metals—before then, the most valuable commodity was, as the name implied, *stone*.

From 3000 to 1300 BC man learned to use fires to forge Bronze—a soft metal by some standards—but a vast improvement over sharp rocks and wooden sticks. Bronze was the "coin" of the day—the standard by which societies lived or perished.

At 1300 BC the forges learned to tame Iron—and after 300 BC, steel. The age of metals had come to a close. When next the paradigm shift happened, it was the creation of *Industry*.

The Industrial Age gave way to the modern area: is it the Space Age? The Atomic Age? The Age of Flight? At this point we have accepted that we live in the *Information Age*—but what lies beyond that? What indeed ...



have information—but we had information in *over-abundance*. Mankind had reached the limits of its biological capacity to *comprehend*.

The Dawn of the Age of Understanding

The end of the Information Age left a gulf in man's ever-onward quest for knowledge. Fragments of greatness were within our grasp but the deeper mysteries could be hinted at but *not* understood. We knew what we were destined to lack. Most of us did, anyway. The dawn of the new age came with in-Utero manipulation of the human genome. A technique of *great* expense was developed to grow children with additional lobes of the human brain. The significance of this was poorly understood at the time—and even less so the ennui and arrogance that would cause the mega-wealthy to experiment on their children so—but it was done. These people were what would later become known as *the Haves*.

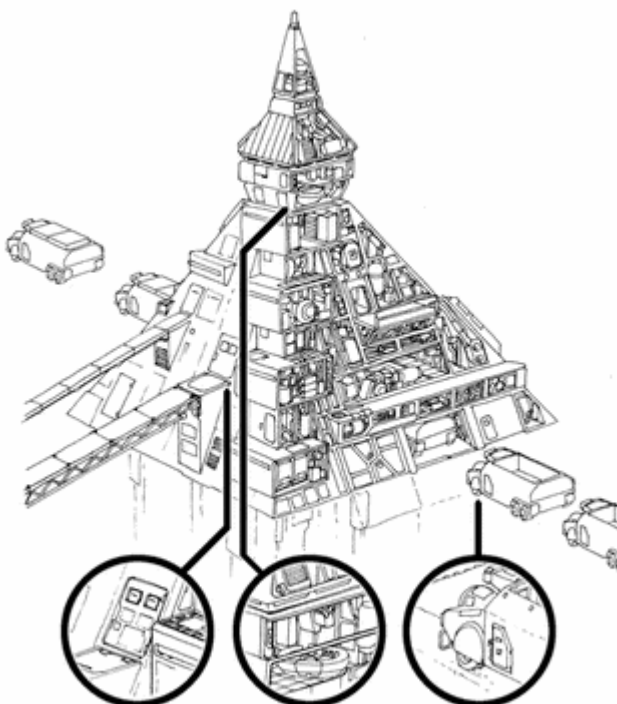
The Age of Understanding: Dismantling the World

The *Haves* tested higher on IQ tests—but that wasn't the significant factor—the "singularity"—the thing that changed the world. *The big deal was that the Haves could understand the Breakthrough*. The *Haves* at first dabbled in the new sciences and then began a perfectly ordinary rise through the ranks of power—never in charge, always as advisors. It was not, as some thought, a coup: it was a natural occurrence—a natural separation that came on so slowly that it was almost invisible. Corporations re-aligned. Nations borders became more porous and then mere formalities. Over time, the *Have* think-tanks regulated the global economy, nation-building, and emergent technologies. Wars became scalpels of necessity against the intransigent. Education, language, and media became standardized. In time, even national identities began to fade. Finally, the world was the consumer ... the *Haves* were the corporation.

Distro-Points

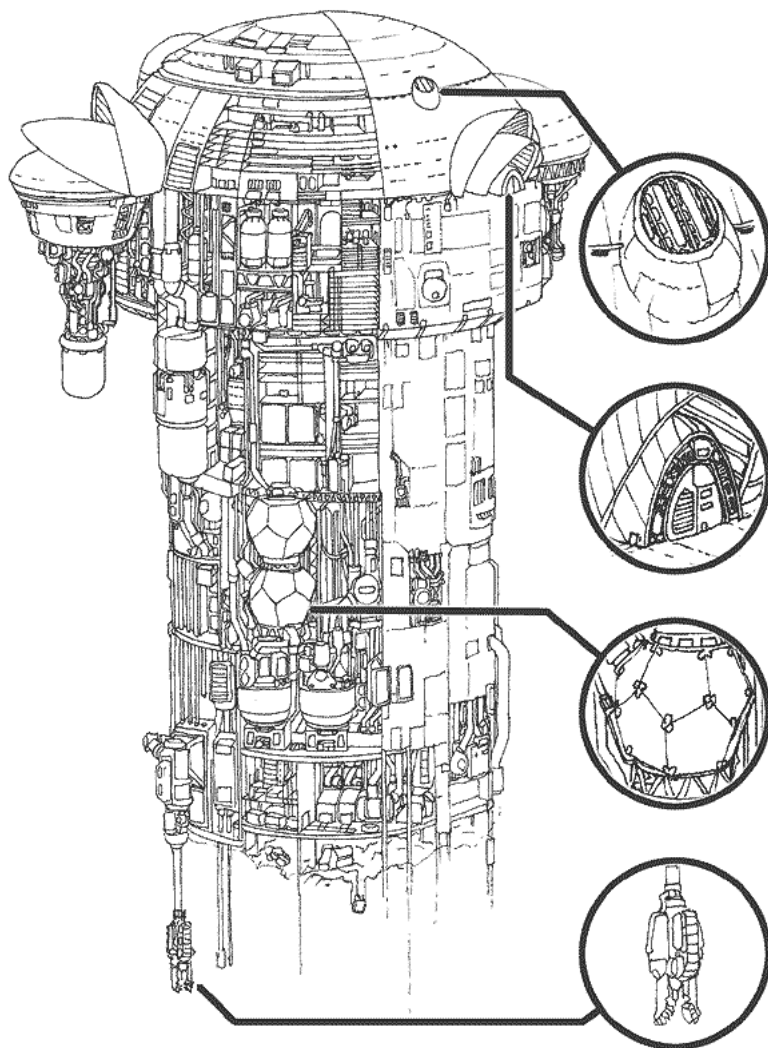
Have-Not life in the Age of Wonders was based on Distro-Points. Every bit as inscrutable as the Domes, the Distro-points were the arrival location for all goods, chemicals, clothes, fuel, and everything else the society consumed. The city planners could program in what was needed and next cycle (a few days, hours, or even minutes later) it would arrive.

In the Age of Wonders, Distro-Points were differentiated *only* by capacity. It was not possible to truly enter the points—but there were several control nexi on the outside. It is believed the goods and power arrived via tubes running under the mantle to the Have-Dome Network. But nothing is really known for certain. Perhaps nano-technology constructors were used to assemble soups of raw materials. Perhaps massive conveyor belts ran from underground factories buried beneath the crust of the planet.



The Dawn of the Age of Wonder: The Habitats

And then it happened. The *Haves* organized their retreats. No longer were more children being born to the population with the modifications. The world was ordered and civil. The *Haves* brought unbelievable advances: miracle drugs, beamed power, complete genetic manipulation, quantum computing, cybernetic neural interfaces, self-repairing systems, nano-enhanced technologies, and stable energy-field creation. In addition to bestowing the wonders on the rest of man through a complicated network of "*Distro-Points*" (looking, mostly, like giant white mushrooms from which a constant stream of consumer durables, medicine, and high-technology spare parts flowed). The *Haves* burrowed deep into the earth, running conduits through the mantle. They built habitats in space—and they built the Domes—the Retreats.



The Have Domes

The Have Domes are wonders of engineering: totally sealed and impregnable they appear egg-shell white and, during the Age of Wonders, seemed to glow with a soft inner luminance. Although several miles across above the surface of the earth (and there were habitats in space, on the ocean floor, and the continent of Antarctica—as well as in normally inhabited human climes) they extended far deeper beneath it.

The exact nature of the technology is unknown: the white material they are made from is unbreakable—immune even to point-blank nuclear detonation. Extensive underground chambers extend "root" structures that burrow and grow through the earth extracting resources through micro-pores.

The citizens of the world never entered the *Have* domes—and for their part, the *Haves* rarely exited—their pronouncements came through the media or intermediaries. The (few and ultimately unreliable) reports of those who did enter are often nonsensical: waterfalls running uphill, great secrets of the universe revealed but seemingly mundane when communicated, and in one case, a journalist who had been granted entry—and left with nonsensical tapes of incomprehensible sounds (and memories that evaporated as though from a dream):

*"And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil
seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean"
--Kubla Kahn, Coleridge (of course)*

New Species

The *Haves* were adequate *caretakers* for the race of man—but they *experimented*. Humans could be warped into other forms—other *phenotypes*—and they did, with wild abandon. Populations were created in the image of animals—fully talking or telepathically gifted ones. Gene therapy could reshape the human form and open new possibilities and new capabilities (humans who could live under water, men born with armored shells or with resistance to radiation or toxins). Where this was going or why they experimented thus was, as with everything else, unexplained. In the end, perhaps, they just wanted to see if they could do it.

The Exchange

The Exchange is the term for a nuclear *spat* between the *Haves*. At some point more than a century into the era known as the Age of Wonders, two of the Domes (or two committees—or perhaps two individuals—no one is certain how *Have* society was organized) had a nuclear disagreement. It took the form of *massive* robotic nuclear bombers unleashed from a far north habitat against a dome on the European continent. The civilian casualties were in the hundreds of millions—the target dome itself, although the ground was literally melted out around it, suffered not a scratch. What the argument was about—nor if it was ever resolved was never established. At this point mankind had become too dependant on the steady flow of anti-depressants, hypnotic Telecast, and arcade-entertainment to muster enough outrage to make a difference. In fairness, it is not known if humankind *could* have made a difference—the opportunity was probably already too far gone.

The Plunder of the Eco-Sphere

The *Haves* wielded unimaginable power—but the wonders they bestowed upon man were only partially in the form of completed consumer goods. Also supplied were raw materials (*neonium wonder-metal, spools of room temperature super-conductor, nano-morphic super-polymers, etc.*). These were then processed by massive refineries to supply man with his never sated-desire for *wealth* and *comfort*. This did damage of almost unimaginable proportions—and while the domes glowed the *Haves* were always there to clean up the mess. But they too changed the face of the planet on an almost inconceivable scale: What used to be the Pacific Ocean became a seemingly infinite desert. Were cyclopean dams built to contain an *ocean*? Rivers were diverted. Volcanoes made active—and harvested for power—all of this experiment and hubris for the Cool Fusion power cores which the *Haves* buried in the heart of Earth herself still run today with no sign of stopping. The cities of the time—the Have-Not cities—boasted massive air-purification towers and vast water-and-waste automated scrubbing facilities.

The Collapse

About five decades later, the unthinkable happened: at once across the world and into space, the domes 'went dark.' Fifty percent of the major distribution points ceased functioning. Those that did became unreliable. The Age of Wonders had come to an end. The Age of War had begun.

Almost immediately there were police actions and security force response across the globe. The forces, having access to *Have* technology weaponry, had an unimaginable edge against the citizenry—against each other was another matter. For weeks chaos reigned. Massive populations were cut off from their addictive drugs and suffered traumatic withdrawal. Riots raged. Collective suicides and

THE BREAKTHROUGH? A NEW KIND OF SCIENCE

[Stephen Wolfram](#) is a real guy (you may know who he is and where we're going with all this—but if not—keep reading): He's a genius who got his Ph.D. from Cal Tech when he was 20, created the definitive scientific computer program *Mathematica*, and became fascinated with something called cellular-automata.

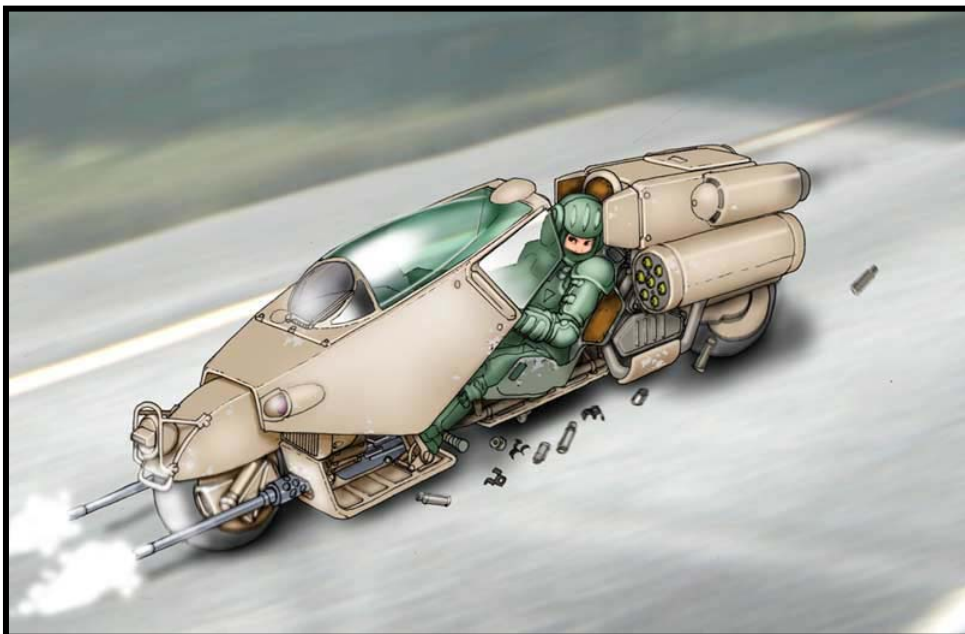
After garnering acclaim, he retreated from the publishing field for several years and returned, on May 2002, with a 1200 page book: [A New Kind of Science](#). To quote from his website:

"Almost all the science that's been done for the past three hundred or so years has been based in the end on the idea that things in our universe somehow follow rules that can be represented by traditional mathematical equations. The basic idea that underlies A New Kind of Science is that that's much too restrictive, and that in fact one should consider the vastly more general kinds of rules that can be embodied, for example, in computer programs."

If Wolfram is right, and nothing is saying he is—yet, this could be one of the cornerstones of the end of the Information Age.

It would have to be something like this: a revelation sparking a multidisciplinary paradigm shift of massive proportions.

It is the kind of thing for which we as a technological species and an intellectual organism ... are completely unprepared.



collapse of food and health networks resulted in megadeath. Disease spread—and worse—the reigning security forces became aware that as the days passed the *Haves* were possibly—and still unthinkable—*not coming back*.

Where possible, still-working Distro-Points were programmed to produce component parts for 20th century industrial technologies. Refineries were built. Mines were dug with robot digging machine. Munitions factories were created—and the survivors held their breath—waiting for the other shoe to drop.

The Distro-Points Fail: The Age of War

Drop it did. Reports came via telecom that around the world, one by one, the remaining Distribution Points "went dark." Almost at the same time, those that *did* still run, changed: they would no longer produce anything you asked for—they produced a limited, random, number of items—and variations on those themes. This last straw broke the back of society entirely. Where some of the survivors could only produce kitchen wares, others could produce Shrike Missiles and powered assault armor. In what may have been definitive of the ugliness of human nature, the forces that had access to the most devastating weapons made war to seize the remaining working points. Humanity was plunged into two hundred and fifty years of constant, total, surreal war.

The war was not nearly symmetric. Forces that couldn't produce energy weapons relied on assault rifles. Those that couldn't do that used overloaded medical lasers or poison gas or even stranger things. All you can get are robotic clothes store mannequins? They can "see" but can't target a gun or rocket? Fine—outfit each of them with twin curved katana like blades and send them on foot: silent, lethal in close combat, and utterly, utterly patient. Need more soldiers? Use psycho-tech to build helmets that overwrite the personalities of your "peasants" with combat-modes and soldier skills. It's horrible—but hey, it's survival. Cities became at first fine-gems to be taken and then corridors of death as military robots, plague bombs, and radiological weapons were used to war over them. The destruction, in human terms was almost total—*almost*.

Armed Vehicles

Travel is dangerous: scorpions the size of SUV's roam the deserts, plague-bearing wolves prowl the hills. If the monsters don't get you the radiation will—and if that fails your fellow man (or intelligent beast) is always ready to hunt you down.

Where in the past there was war, now there is a sort of slow-boil chaos. The solution the need for control is armed transport.

The warlords of The Age of War took civilian vehicle models and requested them with armor and weapons (something many of the distro-points could provide—even if they couldn't provide the force-field shielded hover-tanks that a fully armed *Have-* technology force would have had).

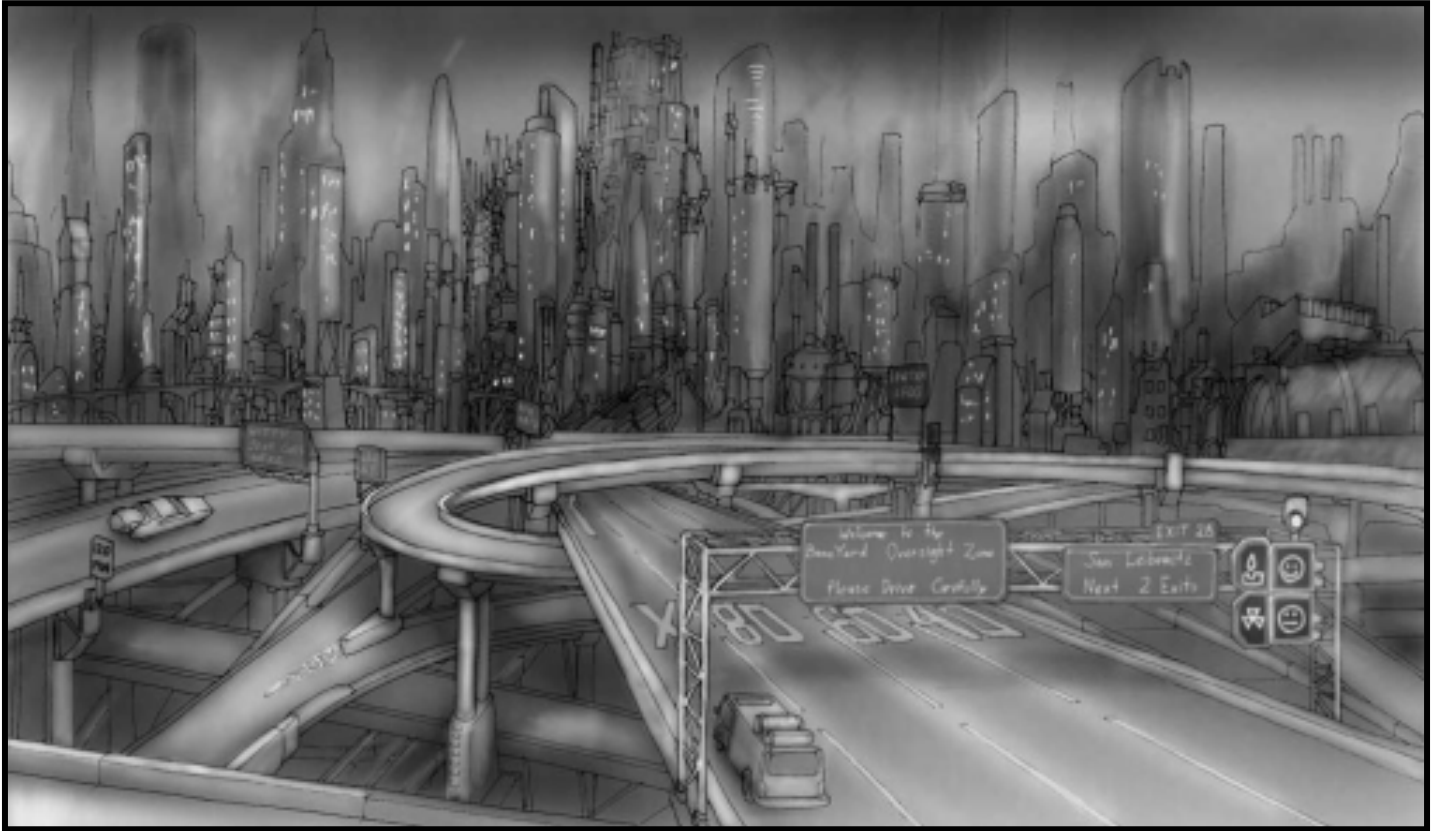
These are the steeds of the new age: horse drawn carriages still exist, yes—but the real travel—travel for miles over hostile terrain—is done by militarized vehicles. Hook yourself up.

I was dreamin' when I wrote this
Forgive me if it goes astray
But when I woke up this mornin'
Coulda sworn it was judgment day
The sky was all purple
There were people runnin' everywhere
Tryin' 2 run from the destruction
U know I didn't even care
'Cuz they say two thousand zero zero
party over
Oops out of time
So tonight I'm gonna party like it's 1999

--1999, Prince

Almost. The genocidal/suicidal global war destroyed almost everything. In its wake were sterilized continents, genetic malfunctions, poisoned skies, scorched forests, and landscapes crawling with tiny death machines. The end of war came not from peace—but from annihilation.

The NOW: Welcome To The BoneYard. Have-Not.



What is left is a world confined to a few hundred miles of radius. Beyond that is poison and chaos and nothing but noise on the ham-radios. What is left is a world that has fallen almost completely apart. How exactly a group calling itself *The Hierarchy* pulled itself out of the mire—to take, and hold, the last city with working power is just not known. But the city, known as The BoneYard has more than power—it has the last working Distro-Point—and a high capacity one at that. Now the 'Yard dominates the landscape. They have rivals: The Pharms to the south (with massive Age of Wonder-tech chemical refineries and societies based on drugs). There is the Kingdom of IZ to the east (with its miles and miles of industrial complexes still running as its people die off). Just below the 'Yard is the Church of the Congregation—the last remaining religion with its own storehouse of secrets and small elite army.

But the BoneYard is pretty much it—a smoking, burning, vomiting industrial powerhouse that sits in hundreds of miles of mud and jungle and swamp so toxic—so aggressive—so deadly that were it not for the self-repairing superhighways left by the *Haves* none would be able to reach it. The jury is still out on whether the 'Yard will manage to rise above the decay—or is simply prolonging the lingering death of mankind. The bookies are still taking bets. The ghosts in the Vegas Ruins are paying attention. What do you think?

The State of the World

Looking Down

To the satellites, hung in the sky like ice-crystals waiting to drop, the world—the last habitable bit, anyway—looks like this: out in a desert on the western half of the North American land mass is a city. Its inhabitants, out of an irony so deep that they don't even recognize it as such, call it the BoneYard. It is a vast, dark metropolis with ruined skyscrapers and industrial engines running day and night. Around that city is a two hundred and fifty mile toxic zone so poisoned that it churns with the ultra-violence of a mutant eco-system rabidly devouring itself—and anything else it can catch. This zone of bubbling smoking pools and wrecked machines and poisoned predators is called the Inner Wasteland. There are superhighways that run through this madhouse of radioactive mudflats and alien plague-ridden heavy-metal poisoned jungle—superhighways built by the *Haves* that repair themselves constantly so that even at the end of the world they look clean and brand new.

But the Inner Wasteland doesn't expand forever—when the poisons more or less run out, there is still desert—the land and sky were still scorched by the Age of War and the wastes of man—but beyond the Inner Wasteland—for another scant 250 miles in all directions, things *can* grow. And here here's life. Small towns, ranches, dirt roads and conventional highways ... old craters, scattered ruins, and people. All kinds of people. People given the forms of animals. People fused with machines. People born with alterations of the brain and body—and, of course, people who look just as they did a thousand years ago—but people all the same.

For another two hundred and fifty miles—this ring around the Inner Wastes expands—and then the civilization that clings there begins to thin—and then die out altogether ... often violently. For this zone of habitability is called the Middle Ring—and beyond it—further up the expanse of North America, past the ruin known as Denver in the north, down past the ruin of Tijuana in the south, is what the survivors call the Outer Wasteland.

This vast stretch of land—this lonely expanse goes on forever and ever (as far as anyone knows). It isn't as utterly *toxic* as the Inner Waste, no, but there are other reasons why human life has not taken hold there. That far from the BoneYard supplies are too thin, but also, that far into the unknown the world itself is too dominant, too dangerous, and too strange.

There *are* some people out there—in the Outer Waste—and, if you make it far enough, there are two mysterious empires (each in decline, none matching the magnificence of the Yard—or even its feeble level of hope). In the Outer Waste to the South are the Pharms—great ancient engines of chemical plants—drug creation complexes ruled by Overlords whose people are nearly living automats, driven by the chemical desires they are fed.

To the West, across the ruddy stretch of sand called the Red Desert, are the Onion Empires (enclaves who live in the weird ruins of the desert and use hydroponics to grow food) and further west, the kingdom of IZ, a huge network of industrial machines all of which seem to be slowly running down.

And finally, there's the Church of the Congregation, the most politically powerful entity save for the rulers of the Yard itself. They're sitting on the only *open Have* artifact—a space elevator—a structure so impossibly tall it vanishes up into the

The Sagittarian

During the Age of War there were multitudes of warriors and warlords, would-be messiahs and end-times prophets. Amongst these, almost three centuries later, one stands out. One is remembered.

He came from the east, traveling westward towards the power-center that would become The BoneYard. He crossed the deserts which, then, were populated by death machines, warring dying societies, and psychotic generals of the apocalypse. He called himself the Sagittarian, although no one knows what, exactly, his affiliation for that sign of the Zodiac implied.

He never claimed to be a prophet. There is no record of him claiming to be a messiah but he was taken for one anyway (and today, his believers can be executed for heresy by the Congregation in some places). As he traveled, as he came from one war-zone to the next, he met with the leaders—with the insane Cyborgs, with the diseased psychopaths, with the fighters of a world war with no point save a few more days of survival. He spoke with their leaders in private and with the men in public—his vast personal magnetism is a matter of historic record. He cut a swath of peace through the world.

He convinced the men he spoke with, it is said, that he (and they as they joined him) were part of a grander plan—a plan that had come about when—and *because* the *Haves* had *left*. He told them that he did what he *had to do*—and they believed him.

sky, reaching stable orbit. The Congregation believes (or says they believe) that the *Haves* left because we were *wicked*. Their tracts, their influence, and their power stretch throughout the Middle Ring, and even reach into the Yard where their Grand Cathedral, with psycho-active hypnotic two-story high moving plasma-screen-'stained-glass-windows,' draws throngs of supplicants to its evening services.

In a world where hope is on life support, people seem ever hungry to be told they're *bad*—and how to *atone* for it. With each season, as life seems to get harder and harder and more and more dangerous the influence of the Congregation grows and spreads and feeds off the desolation and dread of nightfall and death.

Getting Closer (The Ring)

If you're alive and healthy this is probably where you start: life is rough, often cheap, and never taken for granted, but at least it's usually *sane* here in the towns ... well, in some of them. The dry desolate landscape is buffeted by sandstorms and shaken once a season under the roar of the thunderheads when they sweep through bringing rain, but the daily rhythms (most of them) are those of farm life or town life or the regular metallic beat of the mines.

Here, in the Ring, people hide within their towns, waiting for the next convoy from the Yard to come rumbling through with its escort of armored vehicles and compliment of guns. They guard their water (because it's rare), they conserve ammo, (because the world is dangerous), they buy fuel, (because the distances between towns can be far and the terrain is too dangerous for common people on horseback), they stockpile medicine and rad-pills and anti-toxin (because the world is diseased and polluted and bombed). They have superstitions (but also many have seen things you wouldn't believe).

And when the town ends? Even here, in the Ring, no one's quite sure what might lie or lurk outside it. They live in the shadow of the shattered towers of the ruins—still too dangerous to enter or to reclaim (too dangerous to pass by, if you ask most folk). After the severe rain of the thunderheads, they are careful as to what may have been uncovered. Many things better left untouched were buried in the past age to be found in this one.

Stories in the Ring

Most of the stories of the people of the Middle Ring are the stories of those who are born, lived, and died there. Usually all within 20 miles. They are stories of hard work and hard times. Sometimes they're stories about farming or mining, the inexorable passage of the seasons, the rhythm of the ongoing excavation. Sometimes they end in violence. These are simple stories about men and women clinging to existence in a desolate world.

But there are other stories in the Middle Ring about other kinds of people.

If you have ambition, a sense of adventure, or curiosity, your path will eventually leave the towns—and may take you back through the Inner Wasteland to the BoneYard. This is the narrative that plays out again and again for the young, the romantic, and the restless. It is, the old townsfolk say, the same story as that of the moth that incinerates itself in the campfire: the Ring is a dangerous place to travel, but The Run, the pedal-down, guns-ready race through the Inner Wasteland is madness (some say differently, but that's not the *conventional* wisdom), and if you do survive the Inner Waste, then you reach the Yard.

The Sagittarian

The exact nature of his meetings have never been disclosed. Perhaps he had some mutation that compelled men to believe him and follow him (although psionic jammers and telepathic blockers were common at that time). Perhaps the men who formed his convoy and gave him safe passage across the desert were engaged in some deeper game against each other with the Sagittarian as the fulcrum of their plots. Whatever the case, he correctly assessed that the then powerful—but not definitively dominant BoneYard would be the sole survivor of the Age of War. When he arrived at their gates, he brought a message: "*I hold the key to the eventual—the final—salvation of mankind. Meet with me. Hear me speak—and I am satisfied.*" He had come with an army—a personal cadre of hundreds of men—who at the time could have threatened the nascent Hierarchy of the Yard itself. At the gates he disbanded them, and entered, and vanished.

History does not tell what happened thereafter. Many believe he was executed for making threats against the Hierarchy. Some believe that he left the city in private, in disguise on some personal mission. Still others believe that he was preserved and exists today in some vault or tomb. Whatever the case, the Hierarchy is silent (and when they are not silent, they point out that while the meeting happened, their records of it themselves are inaccurate and incomplete).

But his legend—and the legend of his secret message remains an enigma.

And then the Yard consumes you: its urban-nightmare predator-prey fire-lit/soot-black maw devouring all those who come to it from such a humble place as the towns. The Yard is 24-7 always-on high-speed cybernetic sink-or-swim convoluted dog-eat-dog all-kinds-of-hungry. It might be humanity's last hope to hang on to the world, the old folks say, but it's just waiting to take a bite out of *you*.

And they're right. Mostly.

You see there's another narrative that gets told sometimes, usually by the young, but also by some of the stranger folk, some of the travelers who've been a lot of places and seen a lot of things. In that story things work out a little differently. The Ruins, those people say, aren't an object lesson in the folly of *leaving the set path*. The Yard isn't a final, terminal destination that eats you whole. The Run isn't madness. In that story, the quiet story that gets you laughed at if you're young, or shunned and ostracized if you're old, the world's just waiting, *waiting* with its treasures and its glory and, yes, its wonders, for anyone with the brains and skill and talent and toughness and, yes, even luck, to come and take it.

In that story, it's a stranger world that you can imagine, and more dangerous than you think, but it's out there—and it's *glorious*.

And maybe, just maybe, you've got what it takes to see it.

Welcome to Have-Not. Proceed With Caution.

Welcome to Have-Not: Approach Section

Hi there, thanks for downloading, and welcome to JAGS Have-Not. It's our third world book (or fourth if you count the *Fast Company* adventure book) and we've been trying to do it better each time. Here we've got a world full of mysteries, monsters, and loads of cool stuff. We've played around in it and we've had a great time visiting. We hope you do too.

This what we're calling the Approach chapter. At first it didn't exist ... then we were gonna call it "How To Play Have-Not" but that wasn't right either. So we've settled on "Approach." This chapter describes what we were thinking and how you might want to approach a Have-Not game as a GM and as a player. Or you can skip it and get straight to the juicy stuff. Whatever you do: Welcome to Have-Not. Please Drive Safely.

Heroic Science Fantasy Adventure

Have-Not evolved over a long time (over a year—and it draws on games we ran as far back as high school) so even for *us* there's no "one" way to do it. However, we've bounced around some ideas for what we think might make for a good game—and we're going to share them with you. These are things we've considered during the creation of the rules, the world, and the playtest games we ran. Our current thinking is that JAGS Have-Not is a world of heroic science fantasy adventure. Here's what we think that means:

Heroic	Science	Fantasy
Have-Not is heroic. In this context it means that the default assumption is that the characters will grow in power from relative nobodies to earth-shaking heroes who may very possibly crack the secrets of the world and then, maybe, "save it." This is in opposition to the assumption that the PC's are "normal Joes" in the world.	There's a background for science for some of this but, erm, here what we're really talking about is the props: it's not "magic" it's "mutation." Those "wands" are some sort of technical device. You might ride horses—but you might, just as easily ride a hover-bike.	Have-Not is <i>absurd</i> . It's got a sort of a sense of humor infused into the text—and we hope, into the world itself. Yes, there are some <i>reasons</i> for the absurdity—but really, when you boil it down, it's a romp (the whole Pacific ocean is <i>missing</i> , for cryin' out loud). Maybe a black comedy—but if you take it too seriously: it's at your own risk.

Dispensing With All This: Alternate Takes

The world we've presented "is what it is." You don't need to use all of it as we've presented it, but even if you did, how you *interpreted it* could be way different than how we did. Here are some takes on Have-Not that we think are not only valid but some of them go right along with the "standard" one, just be aware of some potentially different focuses:

It's a Tragedy	Mankind already lost: the universe is proven incomprehensible to anything recognizably human. The eco-system has been destroyed and all that's left is a bleak future with no "ascension" save to reject the central core of humanity. The <i>Haves</i> may have gone to the stars— <i>Man</i> never will.
The Triumph of Humanity	Humankind is down, but not out, and we have not yet begun to fight. Are they <i>Haves</i> coming back? They better be ready for us. The world's going down? Not on <i>my</i> watch. Evil men have done bad things, but most of us (through most of the Age of Wonders) were simply, and merely <i>weak</i> . Well, we aren't weak any more. The world had better be ready for us. Bet it's <i>not</i> .
A Question of Human Nature	The collapse of the Age of Wonders was <i>The Fall</i> in more than just an allegory. Now, in the bloody aftermath, it's time to choose sides: are you on the side of the <i>angels</i> ? Or not. If this is the focus then the true leanings of the power-brokers will be important as the PC's get strong enough to choose a side and make their decisions count. And maybe there aren't any <i>truly</i> easy answers.

The Three Ethos' of Have-Not

Have-Not is part of the post-apocalypse genre: there was a world—it ended, you're in the rubble. But after refining it and playing around in it a bunch, we've come to the conclusion that it's not quite that simple—or at least it doesn't have to be. There are three *modes* of Have-Not that in some places intersect and in some places diverge. It's helpful, when reading about the game, to keep these in mind.

Post-Apocalypse

In (what we think of) as the Post-Apocalypse genre you are *in the ruins*. Society has *fallen apart*. There is no law, there is no civilization (maybe tribes—perhaps small towns—but pretty much each area has to be self-sufficient to survive). While there are outposts in the desert that are little machine-gun guarded enclaves, that's not the case for much of Have-Not as a whole. Sure, places are lawless—sure, society *did* suffer a hell of a fall—but over all it's not a complete collapse. Of course a trip across the countryside will show burnt out husks of buildings near the roads—massive broken towers of ruins further back. Often the law is what you make it and trials are basically witch-hunts. There are nomads that move across the desert and lawmen who cruise the highways handing out what justice they can. But also—there *is* civilization and while it might be a weak flame—it's one that needs to be tended. If you really want to play this up, re-set the game in the late Age of War and play where there is no BoneYard and there are masses of disease ridden hopeless refugees moving desperately across a blasted landscape that's being fought over by the lasts of the warlords.

“This is Angry Bob – The Man with the Industrial Dick! Coming to you loud and clear on W-A-R Radio. Rise and shine, folks! It's a beautiful day. Just look at that sky—it's a *work of art*! Hunh! Nature never knew colors like that! And a friendly reminder: If you look at it—be sure to *wear your shades*! The radiation count's waaay up and the heat wave ain't expected to let up either. Weather Control tells us it'll probably hit one hundred and ten downtown before nightfall.

As for the good news ... there is no fucking good news! So let's *rock* with one of our golden oldies!”
--Future DJ Angry Bob giving the morning report, Hardware

Cyberpunk

The Cyberpunk genre is often defined by themes of alienation in the face of technology, of a hopeless future, and by the loss of essential humanity in the fusion of man and machine. While Have-Not certainly fits, the BoneYard itself is the definitive Cyberpunk element in the world. There *is* civilization (at least after a fashion) in the 'Yard. There are corporations, there's a computer-net, there are cyber-salons and hover-cars (at least in some places). There's plenty of alienation and a whole lot of humanity got chucked in the name of survival—these themes bleed out of the 'Yard too: traveling executives with portable data-terminals might sweep through a town. A sick child might be "cured" through the use of cybernetic infection and that might result in a different personality when the kid wakes up.

If you want to focus on the Cyberpunk aspects, start the game in the BoneYard—and try to survive in the seething death-culture that exists there.

The Western

Finally, our experience and examination suggests that Have-Not carries a good deal of the tropes (and perhaps the themes) of the *Western*. There's frontier all around you. There may well be men who fight for a cause without wearing the colors of an army. There's rough (and necessary) justice. There's reciprocal violence of man-vs.-man and often the people in power are the worst sort—the sort that can be counted on to abuse that power. Finally, there's plenty of dust, lots of revolvers, and more than enough saloons to give it a western feel. Sure—a lot of the traditional danger comes from the world itself—but if you want to play the Western game, there's plenty of bad men up at the 'Dry Gulch Power Farm' to keep the plot moving. And we think that also feels right at home in Have-Not.

The Basic Game Structure

The basic game, as we see it, starts with the characters in a township somewhere in the Middle Ring. They're (probably) talented, ambitious, and filled with a lust for adventure. They're not ready to take on the BoneYard yet, and might not have any real interests there anyway, there're ruins to be explored, buried installations to be excavated, and plenty of good old fashion man-vs.-man, man-vs.-nature, and man-vs.-what-the-hell-is-that? battles to contend with.

But eventually, all roads do lead to the BoneYard and once the PC's have made a name for themselves in the Ring, they can try their fates where the big decisions get made. It's a whole 'nother climb to the top (sure, when the PC's roll into town, they've probably got a lot of armor and weapons, but in the Yard *no one* can fight city hall and just win—at least it hasn't happened *yet*.)

Finally, some end-game conditions come into play: can you manage to reverse the massive ecological damage? What really did happen to the *Haves* and is it relevant? Will there be a war with the Pharms or the Kingdom of IZ? Can the Hierarchy be challenged? The Banks? The Bitch Queen? Should they?

And it's a wrap. The game doesn't have to end—but if some of the major questions that started driving the interest of the participants get resolved then maybe it's time to try it all over again ... from a different perspective.

But It Doesn't Have To Be That Way

But that's just a default assumption. It doesn't *have* to go that way. Maybe the characters all start out as students in the University. They attend *classes* and are *horrified* at what goes on beyond the walls—until it becomes *relevant to them*. Maybe they're interested in smaller challenges than the heroic "saving the world" stuff. Maybe they want to get rich and successful running a trucking outfit—or making sure the medicine gets through to a stricken town is heroic enough.

How Do I Figure This Out?

Optimally everyone playing says "hey, I like these factors" or "I'd like to see the game kinda go like *this*." But even if everyone looks at the GM and says "you figure it out," there are some things to keep in mind that'll make this easier.

1. The PC's can start small but still be important. In one playtest the characters were fulfilling a *prophecy* from long ago. In another, they were all a bunch of young guys working for a wise, aging gunslinger with a good idea of what needed to be "set right" in the world. Both were open for a lot of eventualities.
2. Start all the PC's with some relationship to each other and have the players discuss what it is—it could be anything: blood relations, shared goals, a shared past neither knows they share with the other—any of these are good for cohesion that works well for team play and especially for the kind of heroic adventure of Have-Not.
3. If we've done our job right there's a lot of exciting stuff to see and do around Have-Not. If the players are interested in checking this out, go wild.

New Combat Rules

JAGS Have-Not comes out at the same time as the new combat rules (check the 1.5 file under Basic Game). The reason we did this was simple:

We've been playing JAGS for a while and we knew, even when we put it up, that it wasn't perfect or finished. Hell, the day we published it we were making changes to the Archetype rules ... so we're committed to doing things we see as improvements.

Have-Not uses a lot of autofire. A lot of explosives. A lot of ultra-sharp weapons and other stuff like that. Armor and weapon balance is very important—and very touchy in Have-Not. So we wanted to get it all as close to "right" as we could.

That meant using some new rules. We found these rules either simpler (the autofire rules) or just plain "making more sense" (the Armor Save re-work). We hope you'll agree.

If you wanna use the old rules, though, go right ahead. Drop us a line and give us some feedback—we'd love to hear it.

JAGS₂ and Have-Not

At the same time we've been working on Have-Not we've been testing JAGS₂—a rules-liter version of JAGS. We've even done some of the playtest of Have-Not with JAGS₂ and we like the results. If you find JAGS is a bit cumbersome for you—or otherwise not suited to your preference, you might find JAGS₂ more to your liking. If you like Have-Not and want to try something faster to pick up and less picky about special cases, wait for JAGS₂!

Choosing Game Focus

Have-Not is in the post-apocalypse genre and that means that the characters are tearing around a blasted fallen landscape with (in this case) loud engines, wild mutations, and energy weapons. But getting a closer look ... what does that mean?

Well, it means this: if you're going to run Have-Not or play in it, we suggest all the participants get together and talk about elements of Game Focus. This means, in a general sense, what you'll all be expecting to be doing in Have-Not. There are elements below that the players and GM alike should discuss and agree on before making characters: if everyone else is playing a road-warrior on an armed bike and you bring in a 2-ton intelligent elephant you're gonna get left in the dust. That's just one of the problems that might crop up—so iron this out before you start.

The Vehicles Game

We've got rules for vehicles and vehicle combat. It's honestly a bit complex (as we're writing it, we're trying to simplify things) and it's not *necessary*. We think armed cars are super cool (and we have some cool pictures) but other than a way to get around, the game doesn't *have* to focus on them.

More Vehicle Focus: The group has vehicles or there's one "team vehicle" and characters can have roles such as Mechanic, Driver, Gunner, etc. The group expects to be highly mobile and move around a lot.

Less Vehicle Focus: The PC's don't especially revolve around vehicular roles and if someone does have a vehicle it isn't how the whole group gets around. Maybe you're at an outpost with a lot of stuff going on—or prospecting in the mountains ... but you all tend to ride horses or link up with convoys.

The Ammo, Fuel, Credits, and Water Game

In Have-Not everything is scarce (and life can be cheap). Water is a measured commodity. You conserve ammo. You prize fuel when you can get it and steal it when you can't. Credits are jealously guarded. It's all about that big score—it's about staying alive but also *managing your stuff right*. Maybe you're all a private enterprise trying to turn a profit. Maybe your base of operations is pretty safe—but your *range* for exploration is limited by material. Whatever the case, you count credits, measure water, and watch the fuel gauge carefully. Or maybe you *don't*. Maybe the game is all about adventure and action and while you probably measure *something* (how many grenades you have—how far out into the real *Wasteland* you can go on a full tank) you aren't *that concerned* about getting it right.

More Resource Focus: Make sure the players all know this is going on. The GM has to do work to make sure the economy is kept at a proper keel (a big score too early will take a lot of the fun of "making it" out of the game). Travel time and distance is important. This is hard to do but can be very rewarding if everyone's into it. We've done some work to help ensure the rules will support at least some form of this. How exact you get, though, will depend on how much work everyone's up to.

Less Resource Focus: Just track really rare things (grenades, Stim-sub-derms, SHOK ammunition, etc.). Money's still probably important—but day-by-day burn-rate isn't such a big deal. Assume you have enough water unless you decide to walk across the desert. Stuff like that. You might get hit with a cash shortage to cover major repairs, but for the most part the focus is elsewhere. This was, for the most part, how we played for fun (vs. testing the economy stuff).

Dizzy: Nuke York's only 3 days away.

Stretch and Zip: Gonna take us six days. We only got half a car left.

--*Rock and Rule* (1983)

The Exploration Game (vs. the Mysteries)

There are mysteries in Have-Not. There's a planet in the intensive-care ward that might not make it. There are ruins and ancient installations and buried warlord's citadels and all kinds of great stuff like that to go poking around in. What are you waiting for? Well, we think it's a good idea if before starting you all find out how interested everyone is in discovering what happened to the Haves, where the Pacific Ocean went, etc. A game could revolve around raiding ruins and singing drinking songs in the town tavern. It could involve political climbing in the BoneYard. It could end with a Dome opening—or it might never get to one. What do you want as a long term goal? Or is it up to the GM and you want to be surprised? Everyone should have some input.

More Meta-Plot Focus: The PC's expect answers eventually and want to move in that direction. This doesn't mean it all gets figured out in the first three sessions (or maybe ... well, you decide)—but it does mean that's where it's going. A Meta-Plot Focused game will quite possibly start in the Ring, lead to the Yard, and then up through the ranks until the characters are major players. We have some notes for that in the Revelations book. Check 'em out if you're GMing.

Less Meta-Plot Focus: You might find out what happened to the *Haves* but who cares if you don't. It's about exploration. It's about riding around in the badlands and bringing justice to the lawless or maybe lawlessness to the civilized areas—whatever.

You aren't trying to save the human race—someone else is doing that. You're just trying to save yourself.

Hazards

The world of Have-Not is poisoned. There's radiation in the air and poison in the water and plague in the forests. If the monsters don't get humanity—the ecological damage just might. How this is represented in the game can be important and should be discussed prior to play so that everyone knows what to expect.

Hazards as Color

Yes, the world is trashed. We know. Now let's have some *fun*. In this mode there are *places* you don't wanna go, and you're always gonna be popping some Rad pills, but for the most part the disease and decay and facial cancers are just part of the scenery. As *color* you still don't wanna go hang out in Vegas (it was Neutron bombed so bad it's still toxic) and you should carry your toxin-meter because, well, you never know. But it isn't a *constant* and persistent problem for the characters. We played in this mode most of the time we play-tested. It's mostly trouble free and even "dialed down all the way" there's still plenty of danger from hazards that are emplaced specifically to be problems.

Six o'clock - TV hour. Don't get caught in foreign towers.
Slash and burn, return, listen to yourself churn.
Locking in, uniforming, book burning, blood letting.
Every motive escalate. Automotive incinerate.
Light a candle, light a votive. Step down, step down.
Watch your heel crush, crushed, uh-oh, this means no fear cavalier.
Renegade steer clear!
A tournament, tournament, a tournament of lies.
Offer me solutions, offer me alternatives and I decline.

It's the end of the world as we know it.
It's the end of the world as we know it.
It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine.

--*It's The End of the World as We Know It (and I Feel Fine)*, REM

Hazards as Barriers

Don't go down Main Street in the LA ruins—you'll die of the viral hyper-encephalitis that they hosed the place down with a hundred years ago. Don't try to hike across the Inner Wasteland and if you wanna go road-tripping look out for those craters. In this mode, the GM is carefully circumscribing where you can go. There are a lotta ruins that look good from a distance ... or even real close. But once you get there ... ack, gasp! ... rattle... In this mode Hazards are a "don't go here" symbol. We're not sure what the value of this is *specifically*, but we wanted to bring it up because it was batted around a lot during playtest.

Hazards as Focus

If you're playing a "save the ecology" game or just want a really *harsh* reality the GM will play Hazards to the hilt. Everything is poison and if you've got a room in the 'Yard you might get cancer from the local night club next door. In this mode the PC's will be decked out with bio-suits and medicines and they'll need 'em. Clean water is hard to find on the road—so make sure your stocks are checked ... and track your usage. We don't recommend you do this lightly: trying to survive in a world that's fallen apart is bad enough without the *air* trying to kill you too.

Encounter Tables

We've given you some "roll the dice" and figure out what you run into encounter tables. These have a *very* specific use in the game:

If the participants are okay with the use of random-encounters to either "simulate" the world or "because it's cool," or for whatever other reason, then go ahead and use them. They are provided for *that* purpose only. If the participants wish to play in a more thematic game where those rules are not in effect, then you needn't use them at all. Stated again: these are purely optional to the group as a whole.

In some modes of play every encounter is up to the GM to arrange. In other modes of play the players might take turns rolling, enjoying the sense of gambling. In some cases the GM might roll the dice behind a screen and maybe omit rolls he doesn't like. These are decisions for your group to make amongst yourselves—we included them because we found them fun.

In our mode of the play it's probably, commonly, up to the GM as to what's specifically out in a given area—if the decision wasn't already made prior to the start of play, I'd very likely roll ... out in the open. Your Mileage May Vary. Welcome to Have-Not.

Treasure

Roleplaying is probably the only chance most of us will ever get to find treasure. A lotta people find it an undeniably cool part of play and we've got tons of it here. From stuff you can pretty much buy (but you gotta have serious *money*!) to things you gotta dig up and unearth all kinds of cool post-ap and hyper-tech goodies. How that gets managed bears some discussion. Let's talk about Gear.

The McGuffin

When I looked at the Artifacts file I got from Eric I went "I can't introduce this stuff into a game as normal gear—a heart that beats like a nuclear weapon!?" I called up our chief editor and asked him about it. "It's a serious McGuffin," he told me. And I think he was right. There's a buncha stuff in the Artifacts book that represents the outer-edge of PC-power in the game-world. If a person has all off it (the Goliath Battle Suit, the Californium Rifle, the Abnegated Heart, etc. they're beyond the scale of *most* things in the world ... period). And that's okay. Some of that stuff is there because it's cool. Some of it's there as an adventure seed. Some of it ... anyway. Okay, because the guy who did it has a weird sense of what should go into a book like this, but we decided to leave it. Anyway. If you're deciding what's in the game (traditionally this means you're the GM, but we're not gonna stand on tradition) be aware that some of that stuff just plain isn't meant to introduced into a game without seriously warping the campaign around it.

"I know what love is: a boy loves his dog."
--Solo Vic, *A Boy and His Dog* (1975)
[Said after feeding his girlfriend to his telepathic dog
Blood, to save Blood's life.]

Life In the Middle Ring

The Middle Ring is, more or less, "what's left." It's a zone about 250 miles across that extends outward from the Inner Wasteland. To the west that puts a lot of it in the Pacific Desert (which isn't habitable) but the rest of it is a place where people can live ... sort of. Out beyond it are a couple of near-legendary distant empires, some desert enclaves, and ... nothing. Nothing civilized at least. There are toxins in the Middle Ring and radioactive craters too, and monsters and bandits and armed militias and all sorts of things like that. But when you get far enough out from the BoneYard's supply of ammo, weapons, and medicine, you start getting into truly *wild* territory—territory that civilization *can't* survive in. That's called the Outer Wasteland—and it's another topic.

Things are going to slide,
Slide in all directions
Wont be nothing
Nothing you can measure
Anymore
The blizzard, the blizzard of the world
Has crossed the threshold
And it has overturned
The order of the soul
When they said, they said REPENT
REPENT
I wonder what they meant
-- *The Future*, Leonard Cohen

What's it Like?

The Middle Ring is highly varied. From the desert outposts with their sandbags and minefields and anti-vehicle wire to the aristocratic villas of the Garbage Mines, it couldn't be more diverse or more different from place to place. Most people have never left their village much less gone half way "around the clock"—and the whole place hasn't even been *explored*. There are ruins smack in the middle that people don't enter. There are ridges and valleys that are far enough off the major roads that people don't venture there. Once you leave your town, you're in an area that isn't as relentlessly and environmentally hostile as the Inner Wasteland, or as untamed as the Outer Wasteland, but is still very mysterious and dangerous. If we were to make some generalizations, we would say The Middle Ring is:

Dry. Some of it's for-real desert. A lot of it is just dry. There are areas of forest (up north, especially) but water (and more importantly, clean water) is hard to come by for a lot of people. There are dust storms and sagebrush and cacti (both of the really dangerous mutant variety and the more usually type).

Hard. Living in the Middle Ring means, for most people, having to do without. Outdoor plumbing is a given—but medicine isn't so easy to get hold of (the traveling medicine show still works because of this) and manual labor—hard manual labor—is part of the equation whether you're digging for artifacts in an ancient land-fill or planting crops or moving the fuel cells around a power farm.

Poor. Chances are, if you're in the Middle Ring, you're a nobody. You're a migrant dirt farmer or a garbage miner or you work with the Hammerhead herds. In town there are a few clerical jobs to be had (behind the counter at the bank, the general store, or the saloon), but mostly it's manual labor or nothing. The best jobs are the ones that'll put a gun in your hand.





Violent. Not all the time, but when it comes it really comes and the threat hangs over the place like a dull heat. A lot of people get by in this hard, poor land by robbing (the common terms are 'Raiders' or 'Bandits'). And a lot more get into debt or a bad argument in a bar, or just lose it one day, and then take it on the road, running until justice (or what passes for it in the Middle Ring) catches up with them. A lot of regular people are usually caught in between. They're just trying to get by, hoping to find cover when the storms come.

Indebted. A lot—a *lot*—of what's out in the Ring holds a very real monetary debt to one of the banks in the 'Yard. Township's incorporation papers (which means a convoy of goods, ammo, fuel, and medicine will come your way) are granted by the bank. The bank gets to assign posts of city government, and the town has to pay on its loan ... or else. Often "or else" means a dispatch from the bank shows up and the town council pays up. Sometimes it means the guy who was in charge gets taken back to the Yard for some "discussion" and someone else winds up running the place. A few, very, very rare times it means making an example of a township and black smoke and scorched earth is all that's left. Trouble is: you can never really tell which category your town will fall into. Very few towns are *free holds* (meaning they've paid off

their papers) and if they are, they're usually very picky about who they let in.

Suspicious. Travelers are fairly few in the Ring. Some people get around a little but most people don't get around a lot. That means if you come rolling into town you might get some *traditional* hospitality, but also a good healthy dose of *getting-to-know-you* suspicion ... and if bad things are afoot you might be executed by some of that ingrained *superstition*.

Hot. The Middle Ring is desert. That means rainfall of less than 1" (1.5 cm) per year and temperatures average between 20 to 25 degrees Celsius, getting as hot as 50 degrees and as cold as 18. With the disappearance of the Pacific Ocean, this land would be completely arid without violent storms that come through in the summer months and dump most of the rainfall that *does* occur. These storms come from the north and are terrifying, if necessary.

Living in a vast desert means you're always thirsty (not enough to drink), always grimy (not enough water to wash with) always covered with a thin coating of fine road dust (because it gets everywhere) and always in a bad mood (because you live in a desert where you're always thirsty, dirty, and covered with dust...)

Dusty and Rocky. As far as they eye can see, as they say. The terrain is vast and hilly. It can look deceptively flat all the way out to the horizon, and then as you approach you notice that the ground is shattered, opened up and broken into deep fissures that weren't visible before you go there. And those little ridges you saw from miles away turn out to be labyrinthine foothills with sheer cliff faces 20 meters high and small, dark cave networks. The desert can play tricks on you. On one hand, you can see for miles and miles and miles... and on the other, it's frighteningly easy to go out into the deep wasteland, get lost, and never be heard from again.

Smells like Ash and Death. The wasteland has a scent to it. You won't notice it most of the time. For people who have grown up there, they *never* notice it. But the entire terrain smells a *little* like burnt rubber. A little like tiny raindrops of mercury. A little like ash and smoke. The wide-open spaces of the Middle Ring are faintly and indelibly *tainted* by what happened here centuries ago, and they say that the Earth has stopped renewing herself. Whether that's true or not is hard to tell; it's unquestionably true that the scent of death remains.

Traditional. For the people who've grown up there, coming out of two-and-a-half centuries of war, still having to put up with refugees (who can often come bearing the gift of plague), and living in a world where so much isn't understood by the *scientists* The Ring breeds a certain tendency to follow one's traditions. Many places are sexist (women are expected to tend shop, maybe teach kids, and keep out of civil government)—but many are not (some places need every pair of hands firing a gun and the more accurate those hands are, the better). But most places that have *any* history guard it jealously.

Superstitious. Of course while tradition may mean remembering and honoring where you've come from (even if that means having bad ideas about how much someone can contribute to society), superstition is the dark side. Mass hysteria, illogical beliefs, and dangerous memes make places in the Middle Ring unusually, and sometimes, incomprehensibly dangerous. There's a town out in the desert with a big dish-antenna array. They think their broadcasts keep the sun rising each day. There are also dark reports of burnings, lynching, and other such executions for reasons that often have no basis whatsoever in provable fact.

Desolate. A lot of the Middle Ring is just *empty*. You can hear the wind whistle across the plains. And engines sound lonely and far away. There's *distance* out there. Distance between towns. Distance between outposts. Distance to from the 'Yard. When you're in town, it feels comfortable and close. But walk to the end of Main Street and look out in *any* direction, and you can see nothing all the way to the horizon. *That* makes you feel small.

People don't like to look out into the badlands. Instead, they huddle together around the things that give life: the wells, the fires, the strong men who promise to protect them. They come together for company because if you face the *nothing*, you see how very *far away* you are.

And you can see that loneliness in some folk's eyes. Look into the face of a prospector or a merchant—someone who spends a lot of time *Out There* and you'll see a certain reserve. A reticence. These are people who spend a lot of time in the empty. A lot of time face to face with the fact that, very likely, they will die out there, alone.

In the day, it's bad enough, but at night it gets even worse.

Dark at Night. They say there used to be more stars. They say the moon used to light up the whole desert with clear, crystal, brilliant light. They say that the world has gone dim, and that today, the world is darker than it used to be. Maybe that's because there's a haze in the upper atmosphere that keeps the dim, distant glow of the universe from getting in. Maybe that's because the stories about the past *always* make it sound grander and more illustrious than it really was. It *can't* be that the universe is already dying can it? It can't be that the lights really *are* going out...

Night, in the desert, is cold, lonely, and very, very dark.

Weather in the Middle Ring

There's two kinds of weather in the Middle Ring: No Weather and Bad Weather. No Weather means hot and clear, with a slight breeze, maybe. Bad Weather means trouble.

Dust Storms

Your basic dust storm is blinding and irritating, but not overly *dangerous*. High winds and clouds of dust make targeting at a base -2, and *quarter* all ranges (so a rifle with a 100 yard range drops to -1 / 25 yards). Dust storms can also damage equipment that's not prepared for it, cause weapons to jam, and generally degrade the performance of all machines involved.

Traveling in a dust storm is particularly hazardous. Going short distances causes a tactical hazard (add an additional -2 to any driving rolls you have to make) and going long distances greatly increases your chances of getting lost.

Dust storms usually last about 1 hour, but can be much shorter or longer (double the duration for every point of roll above 13; half duration for every point of roll below 7).

Toxic Dust Storms

Near the Inner Wasteland, storms that come from the interior can be a bit more of a problem. When the winds carry the toxins of the Inner Wasteland with them the storms become poisonous. People who live on the border (and telling exactly where the border is can be far more of an art than a science) carry protective gear with them (at least a scarf to cover one's face with). Visitors can be caught unawares.

A typical Toxic Dust Storm acts as a Power 12 toxic hazard that does 6 Base Damage. Effects may be felt immediately or after a few hours. Some are *far* more dangerous, however (and the average one could decimate a whole town without too much difficulty).

- Staying indoors or in a mostly covered vehicle gives +2 to CON rolls.
- A sealed vehicle is immune—most vehicles give a +3.
- A gas mask will usually prevent any damage. A filter mask gives +4 to CON rolls.
- A common anti-toxin will give +3 to CON rolls (inoculate the animals)—you usually have to have a couple hours notice.

The Thunderheads

Dust storms are wind. The thunderheads come in the High Summer. The world gets hot, and the ground bakes and the last bits of green shrivel and die, and then the air gets quiet and still as it waits for the Thunderheads.

When they come, they come fast. They roll out of the North and the West. They come down like the wrath of God. They turn like great hurricanes, howling over the landscape, sending down vast funnel clouds that can, if you're very unlucky, make you disappear from the face of the earth.

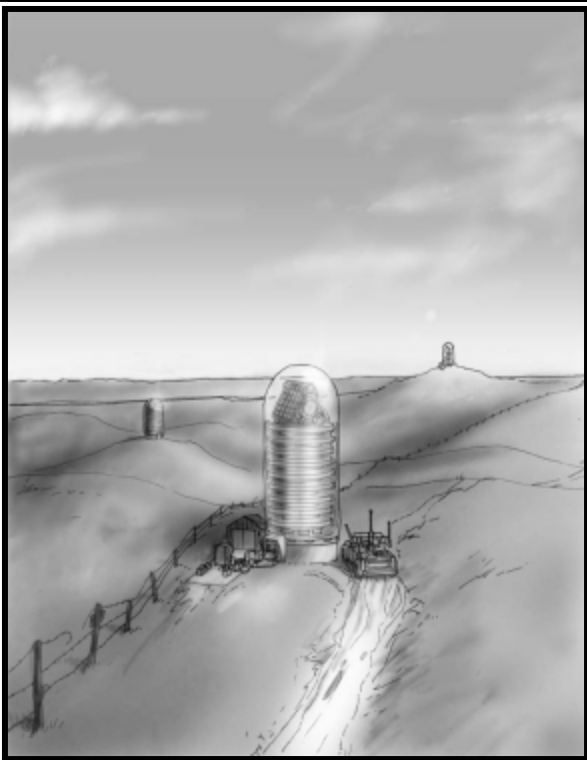
The Thunderheads are rain storms. They dump 12 to 30 inches of rain on small areas, and lash the plains of the shelf and the Inner Ring with brutally powerful winds. They pass in days (or weeks), and then they're gone.

In their wake, the land is reconfigured. Things that were visible have been buried (or blown away, or drawn up into the sky). Things that were long buried have been uncovered—the desert gives up her bounty. For weeks after the storms come through, the ground is wet in places that have been blessed with water. Reservoirs are filled. Dry streambeds flow. For a clock-tick, the desert blooms, and then the calm eternity of the Middle Ring settles back again.

Aurora Season

Whatever they did during the Age of War, they damaged not only the earth—but the sky as well. Aurora Season comes sometimes in the hottest months of summer and sometimes in the dark of mid-winter. It's unpredictable and considered a time of bad omens. During this time the night sky is alight with aurora borealis and radios and telecommunication is choppy and of limited range. The communications network that holds the Middle Ring together goes in and out and sometimes for a few days a town can "disappear" off the network entirely.

What Goes On in the Middle Ring?



What happens in the Middle Ring is what has always happened on the frontier: people try to survive, to build themselves up, and to provide a better standard of existence to the next generation. In this case, in a lot of places, that ain't saying much. Here are some of the types of places you might find in the Middle Ring.

Fortress Towns

At most of the major exits from the Inner Wasteland, and several of the places where a caravan of travelers from one of the *outer empires* might come in, you get a Fortress. They're usually crewed with some heavy weapons teams courtesy of the BoneYard and they often have perimeters with mine fields (smart mines they can turn off), towers with rocket launchers, and they run patrols within a certain perimeter. Make the wrong kind of trouble within striking distance of a Fortress and they *will* come out after you. Frontier justice is usually served at hyper-velocities and the "trial" consists of hauling your body back.

Factory Towns

Every town needs a mechanic and every mechanic needs spare parts. The Middle Ring buys a lot from the Yard, and when sprockets and 12-gauge pipe just shows up at the distro-point, the price is hard to beat. Still, when you add shipping costs and uncertainty, there's a narrow profit to be made making and selling manufactured goods. And so there are factories. A lot of what gets made are parts for vehicles and weapons. Gas engines, radios, and rubber goods are also common. Factories tend to be ancient, gothic places with huge assembly lines and great, cathedral-like roofs with catwalks and moving platforms. These things *eat up* raw materials (coal to drive the great engines, metal ore to be smelted down and re-formed). They operate on volume, and so it's always faster! Work harder! It's never enough!

Water Towns

All towns have enough good water to drink, usually from wells (the 'big guys' have their own private wells, and then everyone else has communal wells they draw their daily water from before sunrise). Some towns have a surplus of water and they export, usually to outposts, encampments, and other places that *don't* have adequate sources of ground water. A few even have particularly famous *springs* and can export valuable, crystal clear water to the Bone Yard.

Oil Towns

The American Southwest didn't *use* to be a primary source of fossil fuels, but maybe there were a lot more... fossils ... after the Age of War. Or maybe standards have just gone way down. Either way, gas is a nice big export. Even a single oil well is enough to keep a few thousand people happily employed (this includes the

refinery and *bottlers* and so-on... it's not just about getting crude out of the ground). Gas and gas generators are valuable commodities in the Middle Ring.

The gas pump, itself, is usually a frighteningly Victorian piece of machinery with gears and pipes and tubes. They aren't mass-produced (there's not enough of them), so there's always an *engineer* who designed and built the damned thing (or maybe his father built it, or his master, whom he apprenticed under...) The engineer keeps the well working and pumping – sort of a court magician, who guards his secrets from his employer...

Gas Towns are "rich" by Middle Ring standards. Once the pump and the refinery and everything are set up and paid for (and a lot of this happened decades ago, in the Age of War), the profit margin is *high*. This means there's money for decent roads, mercenary barracks, and so forth. The big banks and other Hierarchy interests tend to have their branch offices in Gas Towns.

Coal Towns

Another fossil fuel. Gas is pumped; coal is *mined*. Mining could be done by robots (theoretically), but it never is. It's done by people who go down into the earth, and plunder its riches until the mine runs out. Coal mining and processing is labor intensive work, and the profit margins are *low*. This means a lot of poor people working. These towns tend to be rowdy and dismal with lots of guards and guns to keep everyone in line. And coal mining is *dirty* business. Metal ore (used in manufacturing) is also valuable (although less so than coal). In most cases, it's not profitable to mine metal ore unless you're also mining coal...

The Garbage Mines

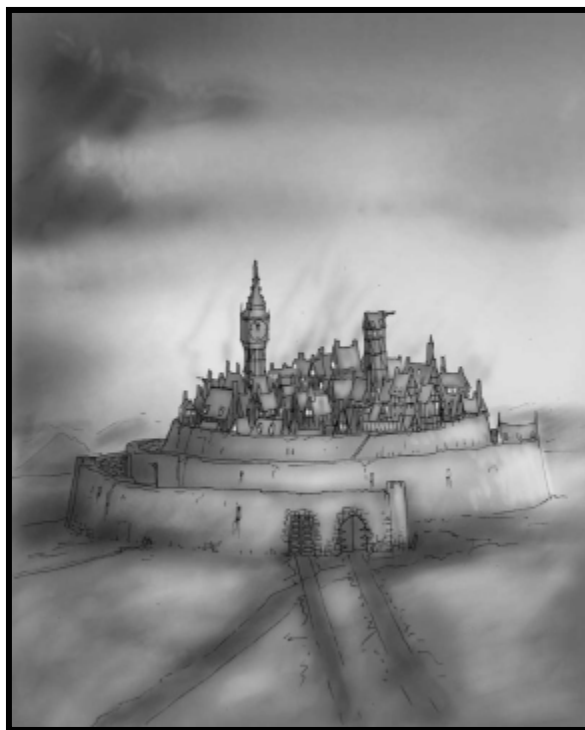
Coal, oil, and water, aren't the only things you can pull out of the ground. In the Age of Wonders, consumer goods were produced, sold, used, and discarded by the *billions*. All that garbage had to go somewhere, and instead of smokelessly incinerating it or creating microorganisms that could break it down into carbon dioxide and sodium chloride, the *Haves* just buried it.

There are *massive* veins of garbage deep under the surface. There are great, covered chasms full of gigatons of empty cases and gum wrappers, and all kinds of other things that just haven't degraded. In its day, it was trash. Today, it's mostly *still* trash. But every once in awhile... and so they mine.

Garbage Mines send their steel columns deep into the earth and churn up great mountains of trash that flow like a waterfall into deep trenches. The 'miners' pan the flow – search through it, looking for nuggets of value (something that was thrown away unused... something that was re-usable).

The most common thing to find are spent batteries – little ones (about the size of a dime) that powered the tiny electronics that were woven into everyone's clothes, or sat behind the labels on the stuff in the store. These batteries are re-chargeable, so if it's worth your while and you have *enough* of them (volume! Volume! Volume!), you can make money at a garbage mine. And of course, everyone dreams of finding a working smart gun and retiring.

Most garbage mines work on a profit sharing model – the miners pay the owner a fee to mine (closer to the source, you pay more), and the owner buys the finds from the miners at a steep discount (called 'Right of First Bid' in Middle Ring legal terms). For batteries and micro-antenna, and all the other 'common things' this is just a simple transaction held at the end of each day or week (called "cashing out"), but for more exotic goods the *assessor* is brought in. Assessors are men in tweed suits with utterly un-charming accountant-like features. They are "experts" in history and science (uh-huh) and can recognize and tell the value of unusual goods. Since their salaries are paid for by the mine owner, the most common words out of their mouths tend to be, "It's broken. It's



worthless. I'll give you a quarter credit for it." Assessors are *hated* by the garbage miners, who always imagine that their 'worthless' find is really a shining artifact of the past.

Power Farms

A lot of towns farm vegetables. A few farm enough to export to other places that aren't so fertile, or even the BoneYard. But the Age of Wonders left us with a Tesla-Grid: a world-wide network of invisible beamed power that, mostly, stopped. But *mostly* is the key. In some places people, built PowerMills that can suck energy out of the ghost of the old grid and fill batteries. These places have a whole field of things that look like a cross between giant light bulbs, fifteen-foot tall vacuum tubes, and metallic spindly windmills. Even the BoneYard, which has quite a lot of working power, still exports drained power cells to some of these places: if they sit on a good grid-line, they can charge them up "for free."

Good Land

Most of the land is *waste* land: not good for anything. Land that can be used is good land and it breaks down into farming land and grazing land; (usually both). Good Land is land that has decent ground water, actual soil, and isn't toxic. In rare, beautiful places like that, grass grows. You can plant tubers (potatoes), wheat, maybe even corn. You can also raise animals, herds of Hammerhead cattle for instance, or more interesting delicacies like Rock Lobster. Farming is cyclical and tends to be migrant work. Herding is more of a full-time job, but there are fewer jobs for cowboys than there are for farmers.

Subsistence farming is a little different. Here and there are patches of good land large enough to support a single family or small group. In this case, there won't be a town as such (not enough produce for export), but if you've gotta live in the desert, having a little postage stamp of greenery is a blessing...

Dinosaur Ranches

Okay, we're cheating: there are a lot of places that ranch things less sexy than dinosaurs, but if you've ever seen one, with Brontosaurus grazing in the artificial wet-lands (they're killed with specially engineered viruses), you'll never wonder why they get their own heading. Most ranches have nothing more exotic than Hammerhead Cattle, which, when you think about it, is pretty exotic.

Ranch towns are characterized by Range Riders, probably the strongest archetype in the Ring. Out on horses (or other, more exotic, riding beasts) the Range Rider is part cowboy, part gunslinger, part survivalist, and part monster-hunter. They're also the *posse* for whatever master they serve.

What's In Your Average Town?

All a town *really* needs is its natural resources, apartments or dormitories for the workers, barracks for the security forces, and a great house, up on the hill, where the landlord can look down on his domain... ah, but it's never that simple is it? There need to be trucks and caravans to bring raw materials in and ship product out. There need to be roads for those trucks and mechanics to fix them when they break. And an inn for travelers to spend the night in. And a saloon for visitors (and the locals) to enjoy themselves. And then there's a general store because people need to buy food and clothes...

And suddenly you've got a real town, clinging to the earth the way a plant in some hostile terrain might: its shallow roots holding it in place against the strong winds. Here are some things you'll find there:

- Auto Shop – The town mechanic, his apprentice, and maybe a couple of helpers. A big town might have two or even more mechanics, but usually only one shop (competition would hurt *everyone*).
- General Store – You can buy clothes, tools, necessities, and even common weapons here (hunting rifles, hand guns). The general store is usually where the married women meet as they go about their errands.
- The Well – The well is near the center of town, and drawing water from it is a *chore* for young women and teenage children. Before dawn, it's the center of cultural life. During the day, it's deserted. Anyone unknown hanging out by the well is treated as very suspicious. In some cases it's *guarded*. Be careful of

these places: they usually fear conspirators that will poison it. In some cases that's justified. In others ... check out the section on superstition.

- The Saloon, the Tavern, and the Cat House -The first two of these are in the center of town and cater to visitors – truck drivers, merchants, traveling salesmen, and the like. The ones near the edge of town (down by the factory) cater to the locals and are much cheaper, much dirtier, and way more wild.
- The Undertaker – It's the whole circle of life thing. Sad, but necessary.
- The Pharmacist – Most towns aren't lucky enough to have their own doctor. They probably do have a pharmacist (some only have a bartender). If you need medicine, that's where you go. Pharmacists are also good at splinting broken limbs and stopping the bleeding. Most charge a nominal fee to locals.

These are the local businesses. There are usually a few branch offices in big towns as well.

- The Bank – A small town will have its own bank. A big town will have a branch office of one of the *real* banks. These places are walled up (like little fortresses), have their own security, and usually drive commerce. They also broker bounties and rewards (so if you're looking for work, you might visit the *branch office* and see who's wanted this week).
- The Union – That's the *Teamster's Union*. The *Trucker's Guild*. The supply chain is held together by people willing to drive big, valuable targets through god-forsaken wilderness from one little town to another. They're expensive, bad-tempered, no-nonsense, and absolutely necessary. The Teamsters, their shotgun security details, and executives are considered *cool*. They're all about business and all about danger. The Union is also usually the only place in town to buy gas.
- The Chapel – Been bad lately? Need to atone? The Chapel oversees the spiritual life of the town. For people who buy into it, it's a source of community and a drain on money. For those who don't, it's a source of annoyance. Either way, the Congregation is there.

Finally, there are a few local services most towns have as well.

- The Tower – The Radio Tower, in this case. The dusty wasteland of the Middle Ring, does *not* have an Internet. Instead it has a wireless network of radio stations—transmitters and receivers—that connect the tiny dots of civilization together. Most towns have a tower that broadcasts on a couple of frequencies and serves a few purposes
 - Checking in: It's considered good manners to call ahead and let them know you're coming. Most towns' radio office is manned 24/7 and calling ahead will avoid a chilly reception (or worse).
 - Checking out: Towns don't generally care when you leave but if you call out, they'll dutifully make a record of it. This can be useful when you're broken down in the wasteland and you're hoping for a rescue.
 - Registration: You can sign up for a callsign at any place on the network. Call sign information is one of the few *data* transmissions that the towers deal with. Once you've *registered* the radio operator can look you up on a dim green screen that'll tell things like when you registered, what kind of car you drive, and if you're wanted or not. Note that your car *probably* has an automatic-VIN transmitter that registration can associate with you, your bank account, etc.
 - Warning Notice: When things get bad, the Tower transmits a warning notice. This can be a bio-quarantine, a warning about raiders in the area, or any other hazard that folks in town might need to know about.
 - Log/Lat: The Towers serve as navigation beacons that endlessly broadcast their location and identity at low power. This can be helpful if you're lost.
- The Sheriff's Office – Towns have sheriffs and deputies and jails. Big towns have courthouses and small towns send their criminals there for sentencing. Most places do *not* have prisons. Sentences tend to be things they do to you and then let you go. Or things they do to you and then bury you.
- Watch Tower – Stereotypically an old water-tower. In some cases they just build a hut on stilts. Either way, the watch looks out on the main roads and maybe even a few back-roads. They've got an alarm and a .30-caliber machine gun up there. If you don't call in when they contact you, the town militia (whatever it consists of) will be waiting.
- A Road Sign – It's not a service per-se, but townships take it very seriously. Usually a sign, and often one of those metallic green and white reflective highway signs on a metal joist, will be a sign that there's a town a few miles up the road.

Rules in the Middle Ring

Travel isn't usually all that dangerous if you have an armed vehicle (unlike the Inner Wasteland). While there *are* things that'll attack an armored convoy, they're considered horrifying aberrations rather than 'yeah, we expected that.' That still doesn't mean a traveler in the Ring can let their guard down.

Mostly, if you're driving, you're the only car on the road (until you get to some place where something big is *happening* then there's a traffic jam of armed vehicles!). If you're going from town to town, here's an encounter table. Roll once for *any trip*—but roll again for each 3 hours of travel.

The positive modifiers are location based.

- Driving near either edge is +2 usually. However make another roll: on a 15+, it's a bad time to be near that edge and roll 1 dice and add 1 for the positive modifier.
- Driving near a ruin is +1 to +5.
- Driving in the Freq Corridor is +5. Near the outer edge of the Freq Corridor is +7: but the highest you get is a bunch of Freqs (21 is the max).
- Bandit activity will give a +1 to +4 but the usually maximum is 19 (although more sophisticated bandit outfits *do* exist).

Encounter Roll

Roll	Danger
0-16	Not dangerous to mounted characters
17	Harass a car
18	Something that could take on a car ("serious")
19	Something that could harass a light convoy
20	Something that could take on a light convoy
21	Something that could harass a heavy convoy
22-26	Something that could take on a heavy convoy
27	Something that could harass the Bone Yard

Life in the Inner Wasteland

Rudy's on the midway
and Jacob's in the hole
the monkey's on the ladder
the devil shovels coal
with crows as big as airplanes
the lion has three heads
and someone will eat the skin that he sheds
and the earth died screaming
the earth died screaming
while I lay dreaming of you
-- *Earth Died Screaming*, Tom Waits



Why? The ecology of Wonders

Was the Age of Wonders called that because the predominant emotion was *awe*? No. The predominant emotion might have been *greed* or it might have been *envy* but it wasn't *awe*. The Age of Wonders was so full of miracles nobody cared anymore. It's called the Age of Wonders because that's what it was – an Age of Wonders.

The Wonders were what the *Haves* gave to us. They, themselves, used technologies as far beyond the Wonders as the Wonders were beyond our understanding of conventional technology.

Each dome, it is said, held a stable fusion reaction. Not for power, for they simply sucked power out of void itself—but because the idea of a captive star pleased them in an artistic sense.

It is said that their very communication itself risked havoc with the laws of time and causality, and that that they didn't *care*. But whatever the case was for *them* what they gave *us* was toys to play with.

Raw materials came out of the Distro-Points (as well as complete goods and foodstuffs). The great bulk of material that came out had to be processed. The processing took place in vast above ground and underground robotic factories, assembly plants, and refineries.

The wonder metal Neonium was milled. Spools of Superconductor were pressed into sub-micron circuitry boards. Kinetic inducers were fitted with nuclear-bonding processes to the devices they would act as hover pods for. This was done by robot, but it was managed by man. Perhaps the *Haves* simply gave us something to do.

Between the BoneYard and the Middle Ring lies the Inner Wasteland. It's a roughly (very roughly) circular area about five hundred miles in diameter. The Inner Wasteland isn't just a poisoned desert (it is that, too) it's the stain on the world that's the price the Bone Yard makes *everyone else* pay to keep the tiny, dull flame of the Age of Wonders from going out entirely.

Welcome to the Wasteland. It...

Stinks. The air smells like heavy oil, burnt rubber, and strange indescribable chemicals. It smells bad, and your body knows it's no place for a living creature. Some people vomit when they first smell it up close. No one ever forgets it.

Seethes. Empty? Devoid of life? No. Devoid of natural life, but the Inner Wasteland is full of *alternative* ecologies. The *things* that grow in this God-forsaken place leave no doubt that something *horrible* has happened here. The plants are ugly. The animals (if you can call them that; most folks would say *monsters*) are vicious. Life is cheap and violent. In the nightmare ecology of the Inner Wasteland, death is a mercy. The evolutionary strategy that most Inner Wasteland life forms take is breed fast and consume *frantically*. Things in the Inner Wasteland *swarm*; they hunt *hysterically*, as though they're born ravenous and they *know* time is limited.

Hisses. Literally. The ground is unstable. Sinkholes open unexpectedly and swallow whole convoys (off road ones). The mudflats shatter and steam (not *water* steam, but bilious, white, chemical fumes) rise up through them in the sweltering summer months. The ground *sounds* mean and it is.

Consumes. Much of the air, the gravel, the sand and the rocks are *acidic*. In some places, there are even lakes of acid, rivers of corrosion. Metals, even advanced metals, tarnish and rust. Stop moving for a few weeks, and vines grow over you. By the next season, there's nothing left. Corpses found after a few days appear *burnt*. The Inner Wasteland *devours*.

But it *consumes* in another way as well. It grows, slowly, as the stain of its existence spreads through the world. Each year, the twisted weeds are found a little further in the Middle Ring. Each year the poison clouds that roll out of it on hot, harsh winds come a little closer. The folks in The Ring who live next door to it will tell you—it's hungry and it's getting *bigger*.

Burns. A lot of the chemicals that flow into the Wasteland are flammable. Many more *become* flammable when they're processed by the bizarre, chemosynthetic life forms that thrive there. In some places a spark can ignite a raging ground fire or even a *fire storm* that rolls over the landscape, taking everything in its path. On almost any night, if you look out at the horizon, you'll see smoldering flames belching heavy black smoke into the night sky.

It burns *invisibly*, too. The Inner Wasteland is *radioactive*. The ambient energy is about 10,000 mrem/year (10,000 mili-rem per year). This is a *chronic* dose, meaning it comes at you constantly, but at a low level. Your body has a chance to recover and repair. Radiation in the Inner Wasteland isn't a *Zap! You're dead!* kind of deal. Rather, it's a slow process that burns your body from the inside out.

Why? The ecology of Wonders ConT'D

And we did—we did in excess of what the initial plans had called for. Did the Distro Points fail? No.

They did worse: They were a never-empty cornucopia of material, consumer goods, and food. In the Age of Wonders, humanity pushed as hard as it could and the Distro-Points (and their *Have* creators) simply *gave*.

But there was a consequence: The working of the material was *industrial*. Refineries bled smoke and poison and heavy metals. Perhaps when the *Haves* envisioned this they considered that mankind might simply restrain itself. Perhaps they thought they would be around to clean it up (it is believed they could, in the event of eco-catastrophe simply "reboot" the biosphere). Maybe they knew what would happen but did not care.

In any event, the industrial machine ran day and night and in the end at the time of collapse, the seas were slate gray with pollution, the air was purified for the cities, but columns of ash curled in the upper atmosphere and the land gave birth to straggling mutations. Had the domes not gone dark, humanity might have pressed on.

The last refineries of Wonders in the world exists in and under the BoneYard. The wastes that are produced, vomited out of the subterranean tubes and belched into the sky, are the last poisoned gasps of the Age of Wonders.

And they are the toxic "life's blood" that flows through the hellscape of the Inner Wasteland. The Hierarchy, sitting on the vast resources of dominance and power, runs the systems day and night and their domain struggles on under a smog-darkened sky and around them the earth itself writhes in the flow of poison.

The Ecology of the Inner Wasteland

In terms of climate (temperature, annual rainfall, latitude) the Inner Wasteland is a *desert*. But in terms of *biomass* (the amount of "living" material in a region), it is a *jungle*. Within the known world, there is no other place with so much *life*.

But the life forms of the Inner Wasteland are *perverse*. They are unnatural, hostile, even sadistic in their own idiot way. And *alien*. The Inner Wasteland is a squirming cauldron of monsters – hostile to each other, but even more hostile to "natural" life that might wander in.

This is not to say that they have no *purpose*. It would be wrong to say that the life forms of the Inner Wasteland were engineered (they were not) but they do provide a necessary and important service.

They are dependent on the flow of toxic chemicals. Their biologies consume heavy metals, plastics, and radiation the same way that ours process protein and water. As hostile as their ecosphere is to us, our ecosphere is to them.

Chemosynthesis

Most of the animals of the Inner Wasteland are capable of processing the poisons in their environment to produce energy and other, far less reactive (and less toxic) byproducts. Chlorides are broken down into carbon dioxide and salt. Methane compounds are decomposed into nitrogen gas. These biological processes are dependant on large amounts of complex, artificial chemicals. These creatures need the poison geysers and sludge-filled rivers to survive.

Ergovorics

There's a lot of energy floating around the Inner Wasteland, most of it in the form of ionizing radiation. While ionizing radiation is harmful to natural organisms, the life forms of the Inner Wasteland absorb it and consume it the way plants use sunlight. Acute dosages of ionizing radiation are still deadly to *any* biological organism; the radiation energy tears apart the chemical structures that create and sustain life. But for the beasts of the Inner Wasteland, chronic dosages that would kill a human sustain them.

Carnivorous

Of course it isn't all clean-up duty and powerconsumption. If you're meat out there, you're dead meat. The food chain has several peaks out there and even the things that don't metabolize proteins will still kill you for fun. It's that kind of place.

'Cause it's the new Mother
Nature taking over
It's the new Splendid Lady
come to call
It's the new Mother Nature
taking over
She's gettin' us all
She's gettin' us all...
-- *No Sugar Tonight*, Burton
Cummmings

Making The Run: Getting Through the Wasteland

The Run is 250 mile stretch of screaming terror between the 'Yard and the Middle Ring. The Run is what the convoys and their scouts make to bring life-giving supplies from the Distro-Point to the towns and outposts that still cling to life in the desert. The Run is how the 'Yard maintains real, physical contact with the outside world. Maybe the 'Yard *could* exist without the Ring or anything else, but a lot of people think that the day the 'Yard stops looking outward is the day it starts dying.

The Run has a reputation. If you've made it, people respect that. If you've made it a lot, people look at you a little differently. Most people wouldn't even attempt it. People who do, and don't do it right, tend to die. Even experts don't always come out the other side.

The Run means different things to different people. If you're a small group no one's ever heard of, it's still dangerous (and making it through is still respected), but statistically, it's not suicide – *most* of the people who try it get through. Hell, *most* of the people who try it don't even run into trouble. But in the Inner Wasteland, when trouble comes, it comes on hard and it's ruthless and merciless and hungry. When you're making the run, you're taking a risk and if you're even a *little* unlucky, goodbye.

If you're *somebody*, though, The Run is a little different. There are a limited number of *approaches* to the Yard – the major highways – and a vast amount of *wealth* flows along them. Everything from the Distro-Point that makes it to the Middle Ring runs along those highways. It's the Convoys and the Bandits that give The Run its near-mythical status.

Making the Run One-on-One

Technically, any time you drive through the Inner Wasteland in either direction, you're "making the Run." They call it "the run" rather than "the drive" or "the trip" because people who want to live through it tend to maintain an average speed of around 120mph the whole way. As you approach the edge of the "safe zone" you put the pedal down and make time.

There are other defenses, of course, other than speed. You can count on being tough enough to absorb whatever's thrown at you. You can count on shooting first and hitting decisively. These are good approaches, but they're almost always secondary. If you make the run *regularly*, you want speed – and *intelligence*.

Random Threats

If no one's gunning for you (more on that later), what you've got to worry about are "random threats." They're not *really* random, of course, but they seem that way. The Insurance Conglomerates in the Yard figure it this way: a nobody has about a 1% chance of running into trouble *per hour* spent cruising on the *major highways* in the Inner Wasteland.

Sample Encounters In the Inner Wasteland

Not everything you could meet in the IW is a fight, but a lot of it is, and it's never too easy to tell when that broken down motorist is for real or is just someone trying to get you to stop.

Things and people you might meet:

Executive Transport: Two vehicles—one heavily armored "luxury model" and one Humvee with a rocket pod and a laser gun spells executive transport. Don't expect them to stop if you're broken down (they *might* radio back for help). Chances are any attempt to flag down a BoneYard executive who has the displeasure of doing business outside the city limits will give the order to fire.

MINA: Motorist In Need of Assistance (also pronounced Minor). Sometimes it's a trap, sometimes is a person in desperate need of a pickup. Sometimes if you're the motorist, the guy who stops and tells you to approach his vehicle empty handed plans to kill you and sell your ride for salvage. Hard to say, y'know?

Refugees: People make the journey to the Yard for a number of reasons. Sometimes you see an unarmed, barely running mini-bus loaded with gear doing the best it can (65mph) down the center of the road. Those people are refugees who've split the Middle Ring probably because they've been told they can get work in the 'Yard. It's almost always a scam, but if you escort them in, you'll stop them from dying on the road.

If you're off road, the odds go up. If you're poking around in the ruins (especially Falstaff), the odds go way up. If you're on foot, or whatever, forget about it. Different odds, different kinds of trouble.

But if you're moving fairly quickly and you look like an armored car, you have a pretty good chance of going right through.

What Random Threats Look Like

Your basic threats are Monsters, Robots, and Bandits. Since these things don't make their *lairs* in the middle of the road and we're assuming they're not laying in wait for you (see below), if you see them during the run, it means they're out *wandering* about.

Here's a table that suggests the odds of running into random threats of varying degrees of danger. The danger rating assumes you're a couple of "technicals" – civilian vehicles outfitted with light weapons (machine guns, lasers) and small amounts of armor.

If you're tooling around in a main battle tank with a fully operational force field, an "ultra lethal" encounter might not even be an inconvenience.

Two Rolls

	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-20
0-4	Ultra Lethal	Dangerous	Dangerous	Ultra Lethal
5-10	Deadly	Average	Average	Deadly
11-15	Deadly	Average	Average	Deadly
16-20	Ultra Lethal	Dangerous	Dangerous	Strange

Wandering Monsters

Every so often, the local flora and fauna will take an interest in the highways. Mostly, they respect them; even animals can sense that the *Haves* built those roads, and are smart enough to stay away. But not always. Most of the animals in the Inner Wasteland are smart enough *not* to attack a big metal thing moving at 60+ miles per hour. They'll wait in the bushes by the roadside and hope you have a flat-tire.

So if you *do* run into a monster it means:

- 1) It thinks it can take you, or
- 2) It's the sort of thing that thinks a car might make a good meal

As dangerous as the Inner Wasteland is, most of the animals in it don't fall into both of those categories.

One Roll

Examples	Dangerous	Deadly	Ultra Lethal
0-4	Omnivores	Rad Serpent	Greater Terror
5-10	10 Mass Sludge	Lesser Terror	300 Mass Sludge
11-15	HCL Swarm	Lesser Terror	Cyber Terror
16-20	Lesser Terror	C-Rex	Greater Terror

Sample Encounters In the Inner Wasteland Cont'd

Pilgrims: The Church of the Congregation doesn't exactly *want* people to come to its Holy City. For one thing, a lot of them die en-route. For another, when you get there, it's a massive, *massive* garbage dump and disease ridden outdoor camping grounds. There are *too many* of the faithful there already. But folks just want to make the journey anyway.

The kinds of outfits that take people there are iffy to begin with. There's a lot of *pilgrim dumping* that happens down south, and you sometimes run into the survivors. There's also some good old-fashioned breakdowns and predator-prey stuff (the pilgrim busses are usually poorly armed) going on.

Freelance: You'll see a moderate number of vehicles making the run solo (or just about) with professional radio call-sign and pretty good arms. These are usually freelancers of some sort and it's good to give them a check-in before you pass 'em. Mainly people on their own business don't want trouble, but do want to know who's coming at them at 120mph.

Ano: That means *anomaly*. You'll hear about it on the radio. Sometimes there's a never-before seen machine in the middle of the super-highway—non-aggressive, just sitting there calling for maintenance on ancient channels. Sometimes you get a damaged entertainment robot that's wandered out of the ruins up onto the road. Anomalies can happen anywhere. Just don't trust them.

Wandering Robots

Robots are like monsters, but a little less random. The robots in the Inner Wasteland tend to be relics from the Age of War. There were a number of significant battles fought in and around the Yard (especially toward the end, when it became clear that the Yard was going to be the Last Distro-Point standing), and many of the armies out there are still fighting it.

Robots tend to see everything as a valid target, and at their worst, they launch coordinated attacks from the wilderness.

One Roll

Examples	Average	Dangerous	Ultra Lethal
0-4	Mech Turtle	5 Mech Turtles	Crawler Robot
5-10	2 Mech Turtles	Combine	Slaughter Pod
11-15	Rocket Turtle	5 Rust Soldiers	Cyber Terror
16-20	1 Rust Soldier	2 Combines	Mech-abomination

Bandits

Almost *no one* lives in the Inner Wasteland. Almost no one operates in there on a regular basis. It's just too damn dangerous. When bandits go in, they usually go in for a reason—to lay an ambush for a specific convoy (see below).

If you run into bandits "randomly" it could mean they're there for another reason and you're a target of opportunity, or you might just have gotten unlucky. Bandits are usually reasonable fellows with a rock-solid profit motive. If you look dangerous, they might just send you on your way or engage in a little friendly extortion. Even if they're pretty sure they can take you, they might just let you roll on through to avoid giving themselves away.

One Roll

Examples	Average	Dangerous	Ultra Lethal
0-4	Scavengers	Vehicular Ambush	Convoy Ambush
5-10	Scavengers	Vehicular Trap	Psychotics
11-15	Highwaymen	Vehicular Trap	Psychotics
16-20	Highwaymen	Vehicular Ambush	Convoy Ambush

Ambush

What really gives The Run its name is the fear of ambush. When the 18-wheelers roll out, heading for the Water Baronies or Congregation City, they're loaded with stuff. Valuable stuff. Necessary stuff. If you're a bandit, "the" big score, the score of a lifetime is a convoy. It's something every bandit dreams about and its something a lot of them feel is worth dying for.

To really understand what The Run means to a *convoy*, you need to look at it from a Bandit's point of view.

Convoys come in different shapes and sizes, but your basic convoy holds about 100,000 credits worth of goods and materials, and some convoys carry as much as one *million* credits. You can't sell it for that much, of

Bandits

There are a few trends in the Bandit business. It's hard to make any *real* generalizations, but here are some rules of thumb.

Scavengers: Scavengers won't attack you to stop you, but they will move in and brutally massacre you if you already *are* stopped. Sometimes these guys will kill you for your tires.

Highwaymen: The term for small time bandits with a lightly armed vehicle that make a living relieving refugees with *unarmed* vehicles of their rides and goods. They usually don't need to slaughter their prey. They just leave them by the roadside and the Inner Wasteland does the rest.

Vehicular Ambush: One step up is an armed vehicle with a decent driver and gunner that tries to either extort a *toll* or just *take* incoming vehicles. If you're damaged from a previous fight you're even tastier prey. Usually the vehicle is in the 4000c range.

Vehicular Trap: Lay some wire down on the road or some mines. Maybe "snipe" with a rocket launcher. Whatever the case, these guys are laying in wait just down an off-ramp (not too far down) and they plan to get you out of your ride. If you see a rusted wreck of a bus blocking 3 lanes, ask to yourself how it got there since it's obviously an old hulk. It was towed.

Convoy Ambush: Run into one of these and you come under combined arms fire, multiple vehicular guns, and section commanders who want you dead before you can squeal.

course, if you're a Bandit, but even a fraction of a million credits is the last payday you'll ever need.

Convoys are dangerous. All that loot is protected by big guns and experienced guards. But where there's a will, there's a way.

The "basic strategy" is not to try to take down the whole convoy, but, rather to plan on crippling one or two of the big rigs. The convoy's insured, and once the rig's stopped, they'll probably evacuate the survivors (the driver, the gunners) and leave it to the wolves.

Less modest bandits go for the "big play" and try to take down the whole thing in an apocalyptic firefight to the death.

The Basic Strategy requires about 30 very well armed people to have even a reasonable chance. For a big play, you want a battalion.

These numbers assume your basic ambush. Your firepower is spread out along the highway, back about 20 yards, laying low until the rigs thunder into view. They assume you fire at the right time and at the right target, and they assume you're going to take some casualties.

Theory and Practice

The jury's still out on the best way to lay an ambush. Some folks say you set up a roadblock on the blind side of an overpass. Of course, if someone *does* see it coming, it's a dead giveaway, and the ambush might turn around before they're in position.

Other folks say that you concentrate *all* your fire on the rigs and ignore the entourage cars. This has the advantage of quickly crippling a truck. It has the *disadvantage* of letting the security forces fire back at you unmolested.

Some folks say it's best to fire at the wheels and engines. Take out the machines, let the people go. Others aim for a high kill ratio; if they don't surrender the goodies, make them *pay*.

Surviving the Ambush

The Bandits argue about "how to do it" in their seedy bars and saloons and hideouts. The Teamsters have no difference of opinion: If you're in an ambush, being shot at, you've done something wrong. For them, it's all about prevention. Sure, they *can* shoot their way out, and often do, but once the bullets start flying, anything can happen.

Counter Intelligence: The First Line of Defense

If you don't want to be ambushed, don't let anyone know when you're leaving, what route you're taking, or what you're carrying. Loose lips and all that. What's a ship? Of course, keeping secrets is *hard* and there's a lot of people paying for data. So for the really big shipments, expect that someone's going to leak.

Bandits Cont'd

Psychotics: There's actually a term for people of a certain bent who live to fight on the roadways. Most of these people are cult-leaders and have a great deal of money at their disposal. They often style themselves after the ancient warlords of old, and they have the *rides* to make that stick. If you run into a Psychotic, you are in a telecast battle against a wealthy expert driver with a *deadly* machine. His disciples are back in the 'Yard cheering him on. But you, you usually gotta high-tail it out of there since the war-machines the Psychotics drive are often more than a match for a standard battle vehicle.

Talking Your Way Out of an Ambush

The good news about running into a Psychotic or a Convoy Ambush is that if, say, you're a Refugee, you stand more of a chance than a moderately powerful vehicle with a lot of sensors. Psychotics and Convoy-style ambushes don't waste time gunning down refugees, and even if you spot the convoy-ambush, they'll rarely just kill you out of spite.

On the other hand, if the Vehicular Ambush goes down and 'Dark Star' has just pulled out behind you and raised the electronic Jolly Roger, and you respond by asking him what he'd like on his tombstone—and you're convincing—he might choose easier prey. Persuade and Intimidate rolls can be very helpful for talking one's way out of an ambush. And really, more than one scavenger has discovered that even a bunch of skilled experienced killers from the Middle Ring can have their truck break down, that doesn't mean they've forgotten how to shoot.

Intelligence: The Second Line of Defense

Knowing what's coming is usually all it takes to avoid trouble. Putting together an ambush is a lot of work. Very few *clubs* (what Bandits call their outfits) can put together a major one by themselves. Spies, bribes, and signal intelligence goes a long way toward keeping things safe. If you know what they're planning, you simply go around, And the 'Yard might dispatch a security team to teach them a lesson.

But even keeping your mouth shut and your ear to the ground isn't enough to ensure safe passage. So when you run, you need real-time look-ahead intel, and the way to get that is with a *scout*.

Scouts: The Last Line of Prevention

Up ahead, maybe a mile, maybe less, of the Convoy, there's a small, sleek car running quiet and running *fast*. It's a scout, and it's looking and listening. It's loaded with sensors, some passive (listening) and some active (scanning) into the jungle and up the road ahead. Laser arrays and radars probe the foliage for hard, reflective surfaces (armor, metal). Scanners probe the radio spectrum looking for encrypted broadcasts. Infrared cameras search the sky for heat rising from idling engine blocks or exposed power sources.

The Scout's job is to see trouble before it's too late. If it does, if the Scout makes out the Ambush, then the convoy captain can decide what action to take. Fight? Run? Hold back? With a scout up ahead, the game changes considerably.

A Scout's Life

Scouts play an integral role the life of the 'Yard and the Middle Ring. They reduce the risk of running convoys through the Wasteland to the point where it's profitable to do so. In return for this, they're envied and worshiped. Scouts live fast, get paid well, and (often) die young.

When your job involves driving into an ambush designed to put a dent in, or take out, a major convoy, you're really playing with your life. Scout cars are loaded with defensive and offensive options as well as state of the art sensor gear. But if you've spoiled their ambush, they're going to try hard to kill you. To survive, scouts rely on a few factors:

- Speed. Scouts drive fast normally, but once they've spotted trouble, they *blaze*. You're harder to hit at 200 mph, and the less time spent in the "kill zone," the better
- Sensors. Life is good if you see the ambush before you get there. Sensor output analysis is about 80% automated (computers observe the radar and IR readings, looking for trace evidence of something out there), but the 20% 'human element' can be a real life saver
- Backup. Big Rigs carry big guns and (often) artillery and over-the-horizon rockets. Scout sensor arrays can hook into the rig's firing systems and transmit coordinates back to the convoy. There's nothing like dropping heavy cannon fire on an ambush as you fly past at top speed to make you smile.

Scout's Honor

The dark side of the scouts is the convoy's trust and reliance on them. A compromised scout could lead a convoy into an ambush blind. If someone even *thinks* you've taken a payoff, your career is over and maybe your life is too. Playing hard, being proud, even being a big-headed jerk are all forgivable (and even expected), but if your reputation for honor is compromised, you'll never work again.

Scout's Pride

Being a scout costs a lot of money (it's all about the car, baby), and the really high-paying gigs are rare. Most scouts get by leading VIPs in and out of the Wasteland or shepherding independent merchants. That pays the bills, but doesn't leave much for the high life that most scouts feel they're entitled to.

Getting a job running point for a super-convoy means being one of the best. At any given time, there are, maybe, 10 top-talents in the 'Yard. Those "top ten" get the best jobs, the best treatment, and the best money. How do you get into the Top Ten?

Mainly, you take small jobs and prove your way up, but you also *race*. Being a Top-Ten scout is a lot about skill—driving skill, skill with sensors, and so on. Scouts regularly run against each other in the dense urban traffic of the 'Yard. That, by itself, is crazy (a lot of Scouts die that way), but being crazy and taking huge risks, and making them pay is what being a Scout is all about.

If you're *not* Top Ten, you live to *run* against one. You issue challenges. You boast. You talk shit. Anything to get his attention. And when you've got it, you've gotta beat him.

If you *are* Top Ten, you hang on to it. That means taking challenges that matter. The ones that people might wonder about if you didn't.

Sensor Rules

To see a bunch of Bandits standing in plain view at the side of the road, you don't even need to make a perception roll – you just see them. It's rarely that simple though.

Hiding and Camouflage

Setting up an ambush means hiding. Here are some common modifiers

- Time. One hour +1, 8 hours + 2, 24 or more hours +3
- Size. Hiding cars gives a -3
- Basic cover (hiding in the bushes) – no bonus or negative. Your basic roll assumes you're hiding in the bushes. This usually means being 10 yards or more from the road.
- Deep cover (hiding way back in the bushes) – if you're more than 30 yards from the road, you get +2 to your camouflage roll
- Netting. If you have camouflage netting you can get a quick +2 to your roll. This does *not* stack with time bonuses; in 8 hours, you can cover yourselves with mud and get the same bonus.
- Numbers. If *any* members of your ambush are in cars, you get -3 (this is the size modifier listed above, not an additional -3)

Flora and Fauna

In the category of things you really don't want to meet, the Inner Wasteland is pretty much the grand champion. It's not that everything is so vicious (assault robots are vicious). It's not that everything is so *deadly* (a C-Rex is pretty damn deadly), It's that everything that lives there is either poisonous or infectious or radioactive. There's no way to cover all of it. Here's *some* of it.

Guide to bio-Hazards






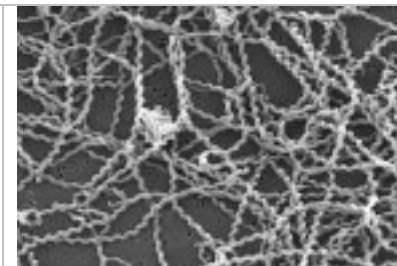





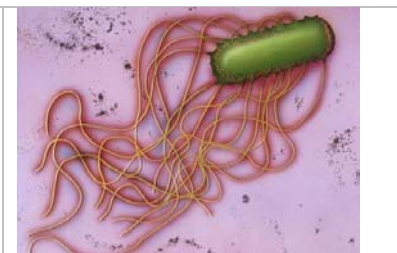
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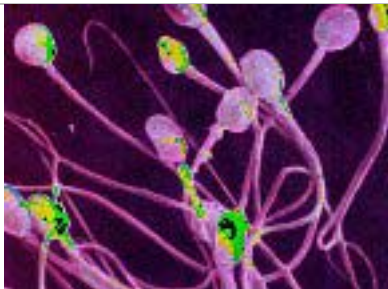




Bio-Hazard



Radiation

Ozone Grass 	<p>Possibly the <i>least offensive</i> of the things you'll find out in the Wasteland is the Ozone Grass. They're really more like purple ferns and weeds. They don't use the sun for most of their energy—and where it gets dense, the Ozone Grass can grow like twisted multi-canopy trees. Don't eat it: it'll kill you.</p>	
Sulfur Dioxide Vines 	<p>These ubiquitous twisty vines more like little spiny tentacles of razor-wire. And yes, they sweat a blood toxin. Their flowers, if you take a good whiff, will do you in too.</p>	
Lead Trees  	<p>The Lead Trees grow up like purple clusters with "leaf-like" nodes at the top. They get 40' tall and they can be almost indestructible. They're loaded with heavy metals so don't touch them. But even worse, the microbes in the pods are extremely hazardous. They're also pressurized, so if you puncture one of them (and they're easy to puncture, so watch where you're going) the whole area is covered in an explosion of toxic microbes.</p>	
Hydrogen Chloride Crawlers  	<p>Now we're getting somewhere—closer to the top of the foodchain, anyway. The HCl crawlers are about 1-3 yards long, not including tentacles, and a swarm can have a few <i>hundred</i>. They'll eat through your hull if they can reach you and then ... then you're lunch.</p>	

Nitrogen Oxide Worms	The NO Worms are sometimes harvested for their use in making racing machines, but they're volatile, flammable, and hostile so it's not recommended. They can burrow through the mudflats and sometimes sun-themselves on the lower roadways and exit ramps. Don't puncture one: They vent a flammable gas in an explosive fashion. And they bite, hard.	
 		
Cadmium Eels	Cadmium eels are about 9 inches long and live and swarm in the streams of toxic waste that flow above and under ground. They do not bite, but contain powerful radioactive cores. When they detect movement above the liquid they swim in, they "pulse," generating a flash of deadly radiation. A large school can cook a person.	
 		

The BoneYard: Life in the Big City

It's the world's last megapolis, the city to end all cities—black and gray, towering into its own soot-blackened, fire-scarred sky and dominating the toxic mega-wasteland of the Inner Waste around it. It's the seat of a dubiously moral superpower and home to a violent, predatorily capitalist ecosystem. It's everything you were ever afraid of in a city—to the nth degree. It's also, probably, humanity's last hope for survival.



The Emmerson Grid-Way Overpass. One of the many entrances to the driving zone known as the corkscrew, a mathematical zone of hyper-lethality. See SA-Spike analysis. Psy-Op Factors: Fear, Confusion, Distraction, Sensory Overload, Single-Eye Targeting Optical Illusion, Cell-Com Units, Narcotic/Depressants.

Major Statistical Hazards: Vehicular Weapons Fire, Running an Armed Toll, Duel with Traffic Authority Gunship, Driving Too Slow in the Fast Lanes.

Life in the BoneYard is ...

Confusing. From the notorious corkscrew highway nexus where you can fall to your death (and right into somebody's junkyard) just for driving too slow in the fast lane to the Byzantine toll plazas where inexperienced drivers get killed by machine gun fire for winding up in the wrong toll-road, it's hard to find your way around. It's a 3-D Escher style maze of catwalks and crosswalks and intersecting roads and rat-warren apartments and condemned buildings. Even seasoned citizens can get turned around in the underground bazaars or get lost in the twisted industrial corridors that run through the city.

Dangerous. Oh yeah. It's dangerous. When you step out of the Inner Wasteland, people start sizing you up. You might be a disease ridden, smaller-than-bite-sized, not-even-a-snack to a megavore in the Inner Waste—but you're a refugee with a medi-card once you get out of processing and that means someone wants to be your "friend."

Fast. Life in the Fast Lane? Everyday, overtime? That's the Yard. It's sink or swim and the undertow is strong and the bottom's full of razorblades. The 'Yard doesn't sleep because everyone's running too fast trying to stay awake, trying to stay alive. They say getting downsized is as statistically dangerous as getting shot. That's because a lot of the time getting downsized means getting shot.

Pragmatic. They say there's no superstition in the 'Yard. They'd sacrifice virgins if they thought it'd help, but mostly they stick to tried and true methods of screw or be screwed. You look like a footstool with one tentacle, an eyestalk, and you smell strongly of rotten fish? Get out of here! What good are you? Oh, you can read crypto as though it were plaintext? You're hired. Executive Suite. Just be careful. Our competition will now try to kill you.

Toxic. Yeah, right. Everything's toxic, but the 'Yard has soup for air. Smog warnings start at Level 3 and go up to 8 (full pro-suit, evacuate lower stories of buildings). Wear a visor for the acid rain (the hydro-pumps have enough condensate that it does rain in the 'Yard). Steam coming out of a sewer? Careful, it might be nerve gas. Everyone in the 'Yard is on antibiotics, anti-toxins, anti-rad, and anti-depressants.

Stratified. There are heights to climb and a long way to fall. Some say it's the difference between *Street* and *Corp* (and if you're *Corp* there are places down there you don't want to be caught and vice versa), but really it's more than that. Even among criminals there's an order. Amongst the corpors there's a hierarchy. Everyone has a bigger predator looking for them, and they're on the lookout for easy prey. If you come in tough, people'll check you out to see if you're for real. Better to come in on a corporate ticket where you've got hired protection. They know how tough that is.

High-Tech. The 'Yard is a wonderland of technology compared to everywhere else. Holograms shimmer in store windows, hover cars fly in the Lightning District, guards carry laser guns and everyone uses cell-coms. You don't dress in overalls in the 'Yard. You wear

I went walking in the wasted city
Started thinking about entropy
Smelled the wind from the ruined river
Went home to watch TV
And it's worse when I try to remember
When I think about then and now
I'd rather see it on the news at eleven
Sit back, and watch it run straight down
Run straight down

...
First the water and the wildlife go
Pretty soon there's not a creature stirring
'Cept the robots at the dynamo
And it's worse when I try to remember
When I think about then and now
I'd rather see it on the news at eleven
Sit back, and watch it run straight down
-- *Run Straight Down*, Warren Zevon

Another industrial ugly morning
The factory belches filth into the sky
He walks unhindered through the picket
lines today
He doesn't think to wonder why
-- *Synchronicity II*, The Police

Welcome to the jungle
We've got fun 'n' games
We got everything you want
Honey, we know the names
We are the people that can find
Whatever you may need
If you got the money, honey
We got your disease
-- *Welcome to the Jungle*, Guns N Roses

shades and slick black trenchcoats, accessorize with atomic clocks on your wrist, and joke about carrying guns smarter than you are.

Violent. Blood and Circuses. Oh, and bread. Yeah. You can see moving billboards with gladiatorial combat piped in from the 8-Track Arena. There are Saturday night-firefights on the Tn Overpass. You can get TV, but a V-chip would shut the thing down entirely. If you don't pay your bill at *Sez Who?* the local bar, expect to get your leg broken. The 'Yard isn't kind.

Under Contract. Despite the violent churning chaos that is the Yard, it isn't *lawless*. Quite to the contrary. There are all sorts of laws, and depending on who you are, they get *enforced*. Contracts are electronic. Barristers are artificial intelligences. The Justice Drome broadcasts trials and their punishments live on television. The Justice machine of the 'Yard comes armed with chainguns. Make sure you read the fine print.

Happening. The 'Yard consumes people whole—and yet, it's also the place where things might just come back from. The movers and shakers (the Hierarchy, mostly and some of the Corps) know they need to keep the Middle Ring alive. Make it grow even. The process is slow—but it's not stopped. There are historians there who are trying to solve the mysteries of the past. There are scientists who know the *Haves* had ways to address ecological damage. There are doctors who want to reclaim the super-anti-plague serums to wipe out disease. All of this in the frothing, seething, snake-biting-its-own-tail, industrial-disease hell hole that is the BoneYard.

Society in The Yard

Getting In

If you come in your own vehicle, you go through a checkpoint and you get an ID card. If you're going to stay long, you get a medi-card (you'll need it) and you're on the streets. Come in as a refugee and you get scanned for disease. If you've got it, you go to a medi-ward. They either fix you up, or things don't look good. If you come with a truck of stuff, you'll pay an import tax or they'll confiscate it. (This doesn't apply to personal gear, even a lot of it, but to bulk goods for sale) the roadways in have great big cannons poking out of the retaining wall, so don't mess with them.

Getting Around

Well, even with a map, you'll get lost. You can get directions at data-kiosks, but getting out of a vehicle is risky if people tag you as a newbie. Obeying the traffic signs is even harder. If it's got an arrow flashing it means that road's one-way right now. Listen to it. If it's got a frowny-face, that means there's a toxin warning of some sort in effect. Watch out for it. If the road itself has arrows or words, read them. And remember, most people drive whatever speed they feel like. Going too slow is a sign you're prey.

Corper Punks: Sharp dressed young professionals out for a bit of the ol' ultra-violence. The last thing they want is a fair fight, but with the kind of techno-backup they can have, they're often not in too much danger of that from the kind of prey they usually seek.

Loners: Loners are solo-psychopaths who wander the streets. They're not a group, per-se, but they are a trend. Loners tend to be cybernetically enhanced or have mutations that aren't obvious. They're a fact of life in the lower levels of the 'Yard and people give thickly clothed funny-smelling types a wide berth.

Zoners: Zoners are small gangs that have no franchise exactly, but defend and extort money from people in a given zone. Usually a really nasty one (an industrial corridor between two residential blocks). They're usually hungry, desperate, and mean. They keep their cachet by tackling just about *anyone* not driving an APC or wearing Arm insignia that enters their zone. There's usually a 'Flag' (a graffiti insignia) that they'll point out meaning you shoulda known you'd be asked to pay.

Ramp-Trolls: In the worse areas of the city, off-ramps are feeding tubes of money and gear. When a car gets off on the wrong place they wind up facing an abandoned building re-worked with armor and some kind of heavy vehicular weapon, or a band of concertina wire, or a land-mine zone ... anything to stop a vehicle long enough for them to try to pry the occupants out of it.

Fear-Sniffers: Technological advances in psychology and telepathic resonances have created the Phobometer, or Fear Sniffer. Also called a Victim Wand. They're expensive black-market devices (even the apathetic city defense forces look dimly upon a device used to sort out who's a victim and who isn't) that use AI body language evaluation and a passive telepathic scanning array to find who in a crowd is most afraid. You can sometimes see a group of Ferrals laughing raucously, chasing a solo-fem with beeping Phobometer clicking away as they close in. Satisfyingly, however, the technology is rather unreliable and they're known to get false positives against some very dangerous types that might, for example, happen to be a bit shy but heavily armed.

For people who have lived most of their life in the Yard, navigation is a MEM roll at +2. For anyone else, finding your way around is a MEM or RES roll at -5. If the roll is blown by 5 or more, roll on the Wrong-Turn encounter table adding the amount you missed by above 5 (so a miss by 6 adds 1 to the table).

Improving this roll is done by buying a Normal Skill. (Knowing a District of the Yard is a Trivial Skill) At the higher levels, rolls can be made to add +2 (Lvl3) or +4 (Lvl4) to Streetwise and Surveillance rolls, to find really good dining or parking, etc.

Going Out

They say that to survive in the 'Yard you gotta have style. That's being glib, but in a place where they've got *devices* that smell fear, and predation is all but *sanctioned*, having aplomb and carriage is good. That means you hang with your group, you show the colors, you "keep it real." Sure, there are plenty of people who hole-up in the mega-towers and pray that the gangs that roam the halls won't stop at *their* door next, but if you want to do *well*, you need ta hit the scene.

In the 'Yard, people will have a rep that tends to follow them. Back down or hole-up and you get tagged as *prey*. If that happens, a lot of the security forces might stop you from getting *killed* (if they're even around), but they won't stop you from getting *mugged*. (Call it trickle down). On the other hand, if you're selling *tough* and backing it up, you'll get respect. (But then you become a target for people who want to boost their rep).

Etiquette in The BoneYard

There's massive wealth built atop massive poverty. In some buildings there's no power, bio-warfare monsters grow in the ventilation system, and door locks come with plastic-explosive charges that detonate if they think someone's trying to pick them. In other places there's still just a little working Tesla power and air-cars hover overhead and you can look down from a massive translucent plastic window at the city while breathing designer air (scented like *used* to be) and being serviced by a pleasure-bot. Depending on where you fit into this will depend on what you can expect.

Ferrals: Ferrals are stereotyped as animalistic mutants (or actual mutant animals—like Hyena gangs), but it's really a state of mind more than a look. Fetishes, tattoos, body mutilation, and cyber-enhancements (like Saber-Teeth) are all part of the Ferral gig. The Ferrals know how to party, but they take the foodchain seriously. They might not hate you, but if you're in their territory they could very well eat you.

Razor Girls: Black and chrome isn't just a look for this clique, it's a lifestyle. They mod their bodies like the Scouts mod their cars (they're not alone in this, but it's a visible trend). Razor Girls are mid-strata--successful enough to afford cyber-mods, but too Street to work an office job. They're often debt collectors, evictors, service-personnel bodyguards, or "equalizers" brought along as hired muscle to just about any event. Their defining trait is the metallic cyber-skin and a nearly impenetrable slang that's really hard to follow. They've got a rep for being tough (and they are) but while a pack of Razor Girls might look scary, so long as you're not looking for trouble, they're probably less dangerous than the drunk young execs.

Phages: Phages are scary. Ferrals have, at times, been known to eat people or at least drink their blood (which is a major health risk in the 'Yard). Phages are worse. They're infected with one of several breeds of engineered parasites and their intent is to infect others. The science of parasitology suggests that such organisms can exert a frightening amount of control over their hosts and that seems to be the case here. Phages are usually spread through a transfer of blood, but in the case of a phage gang, it's one that's not consensual. They'll injure you, hold you down ... and transfuse you. And then, when you're healed, you'll start to get this craving--this lust--to spread the disease.

Rules in the Yard

Medical Care

The 'Yard has acid rain and poisoned smog. It's got carcinogens in the air vents and heavy metals in the water. It's got radioactive clouds and plagues. All of this requires constant, up-to-date medical care. When you come to town, if you check in, you get a medi-card. This is good for free health care at the local clinics. Beyond that though, you need to pay.

Cost	Care
0c / Mo	Spend 4-24hrs per week waiting in lines at the Medi-centers or make a CON roll. If you fail it, your CON drops 1pt until you can get 30c worth of care (1 day check-in) and you've contracted some disease (decide on gruesome symptom).
60c / Mo	Spend 2-12hrs per week at the medi-Center. Make a CON roll or evidence some symptom of bio/chem/or rad poisoning.
191c / Mo	Spend 2hrs per week at a private clinic. No symptoms.
2500c/Mo	You're not even really <i>aging</i> . You get +4 to any CON rolls against specific threats.

Paying the Toll

Wherever you are, you gotta pay for protection in the 'Yard (you can "provide it yourself," but this has other issues). About the minimum fee that'll keep you out of trouble is 30c/month. If you can't make that, the gangs that patrol the area you're in will make you someone else's problem. (They certainly don't gun down *every* dead-beat, but if you aren't paying you're in danger).

Moving On Up

You're not the only person out there looking for a big break, but you might have some things going for you. The 8-Track Arena holds Fight Night: Gladiatorial combat in armed, unarmed, unarmed vs. armed, and vehicular categories. That might get you noticed. If you're good, you can command *cred* on the street. If you're really good or smart you can get an audience further up the food chain and maybe go *Corp*.

Evangelists: It's your fault the *Haves* left and condemned us to this hellhole of a world, and you haven't been repenting enough. They use tools that *hurt* (and sometimes a *lot*, they'll leave you brain-damaged from pain if they have the gear or the time). Areas where they're active tend to be low crime-rate zones (they're fanatic, at least moderately well-armed, and have no tolerance for other thugs), but while that seems like a blessing at first, think again. They'll show up at your apartment and want to search it, check your computer, whatever. Run a Story-Disk Rental? Not in their neighborhood (it's all perverse). Like to sing or listen to music? Bad idea. And they'll make one example after another after another.

Security Forces: Legitimate security forces are given a franchise by the city. This means they can call on help and keep calling all the way up. When a gang or company gets a franchise, they're pretty entrenched. How they deal with problems varies widely. Some units have negotiators on staff. Some just fire mustard gas canisters into a building until the unrest "quiets down." Whichever, they can call on big hover-tanks or flying fortresses if they need to. You don't want to be in a block they've decided to pacify with heavy pulsars.

Wage Slaves: It's miserable, unstable, and often degrading, but a certain number of people from the *street* need to go to work in the *Corp* buildings to answer com-calls, serve food, clean floors (the robots are always on the blink), and other such things. Human *analysis* is valuable too (the big guys talk about Total Artilect Analysis), but most corps have a boiler room full of young guys at terminals using their relatively cheap brain to spot trends and analyze data instead of fancy electronics. Wage Slaves get treated bad by the *Street* scene—and get no respect from the *Corp* scene (but at least they aren't targets for Corper Punks).

Street Merchants: You can see them clustered down there in the smog, guys with a table with something to sell (sometimes dubious foodstuffs, "wonder tech," narcotics, and stolen gadgets).

Survive the Yard on 12 Credits Per Day!



Welcome to the BoneYard. You are officially screwed. It's a charming city with more AA batteries than traffic lights. Of course, come to think of it; the AA guns get a lot more respect than the lights do anyway. (You thought I meant *power cells*? *Man*, you're gonna get eaten *alive*). There are microbes in the water and poison in the air and the garbage trucks have 170mm smooth bore turrets forward and mounted .30 calibers to the rear.

The BoneYard, the whole city, is a monument to what we've got left after the *Haves* left us. Its hundred-story, fire-charred, half-skeletal high-rises soar into a smoke smudged sky and the refineries run day and night venting plumes of flame. It's nice and homey.

Of course it isn't all bad. If you ever get a Helo ride, you can look down on the executive enclaves and palatial plazas with their sparkling blue fountains and lush green gardens. (And those big guns tracking you? That's the welcoming committee.) There's business done here—big business, small business, black, white, and gray market. Some say the BoneYard is all *about* business, and many would agree. But it isn't, really. Ultimately it's about power ... and survival.

We're listening to the satellites, we're monitoring the airwaves and we haven't heard anything but us. Sure, the radius is big. Thousands of square miles, uncharted, mutated, strange ... but there's no other global broadcast source. There's nothing coming out of Europe (which presumably still glows a lovely cobalt blue). There's nothing out of China or Russia. South America and Africa are silent. Australia has a few point sources that we can pick up with relays. There are outposts down there getting eaten by dinosaurs when the wind is wrong and by predatory amphibians the size of blue whales when the wind is right—but there aren't any *cities*. There isn't anything big, and as much as there is here. (the Inner Wasteland, the Outer Wasteland, the Pharms, the Kingdom of IZ, the Pac-Rim—it's all riding on the BoneYard.) The patient has cancer and it ain't clear that he's getting any better.

So come on in. The beast needs to get fed and we can always use some more fuel in the fire. Welcome to the Bone Yard. Hey, you might get killed. You might get rich. Which do you think is more likely?

Welcome To The 'Yard

Welcome to the BoneYard. Your first view is very likely to be that of a smudge-black mountain, crackling with fire, at the end of a stretch of highway that looks like it was built yesterday. As you approach the mountain, it becomes clearer: A mass of darkened sky-rise buildings, crumbling monorail lines, smokestacks, raised viaducts, the giant "vase" shape of old-fashioned nuclear reactor tanks, and, hurtling into this industrial nightmare, the highways. Raised above the simmering jungle, the highways are magnificent wide-open, 12-lane interstates with asphalt that's unfaded by centuries of sun and wind, bright yellow and white lines that shine like they were painted yesterday, and green and white road signs marking exits to nowhere that stand out above the roads like nothing ever went wrong with the world.








The BoneYard is very much a walled city. Approaching on foot from most directions would involve hacking through toxic mutant jungle and then scaling a forty-foot concrete wall. Atop the wall one would find a maze of rusted metal pipes and vents dumping caustic waste into the surrounding land. It isn't a wall meant to keep out invaders: the BoneYard's presence within a 500-mile radius wasteland does that. It's where the city that once existed was meant to hook into the rest of the industrial complex that once existed. Centuries of weather, war, decay, and change have turned that surrounding area into the ultra-hostile biome that now exists. The only ways in to the city are to fly (which almost never happens) or along one of the eternal highways (so-called because they were built by the *Haves* and self repair ... they always look new).


Inside the 'Yard is divided up into "districts." These range in size from a block to over 5 square miles. A district is defined by some common trend in its architecture, contents, or atmosphere. The Rain District, for example, exists under the massive condenser towers and is constantly wet with a drizzle of artificial precipitation. The Gold District boasts towering skyscrapers and each of the three major banks has a building there.

Transportation between districts can be tricky. Although streets connect the entire city, leaving one section and entering another is often like crossing over from one gang's territory to the next. Checkpoints where the local authorities are asking for "donations" (especially from people from other districts) are hardly uncommon. Going from a poorer district to a richer one can meet with armed searches and barricades.

There are two tramsystems in the city (consisting of electric buses, monorails, and subways). These, the Orange and White Lines service most of the industrial places people work. There are also several highways and fly-over roadways that criss-cross the city. Although patrolled by the Traffic Authority (with hover-gunboats boasting heavy energy weapons), these are far from safe. Exits into more lawless areas are great places to launch

A Citizen's Handy Guide to Env-Warnings

Warning	Meaning
	Contamination! Microbes in Water!
	R-Smog Warning: high-roentgen dust cloud
	Arial Blister-Agent: Cover exposed skin.
	Chemical Spill: Looking for warning lights.
	Class 5 Air Alert: avoid street level activity.
	Toxic Mutant Insects: apply Category 12 Pesticide to skin and home.
	Outbreak: infectious disease. See block medical team immediately.

 **Warning:** Unstable Mutations are Everyone's Problem. If you are or are aware of an unstable energy-active mutation, please report to the Public Security Division of Mutant Control.

ENTRY PROCESSING

①	INPROCESSING Genetic Stamp, ID card issued Bio-Toxin/Disease Screen Search of vehicle/Person Random Contraband Screen
②	CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION Check against wanted database from middle ring Declaration of skills
③	ISSUE Medi-Card Food Card Block Assignment Work Permit

armed-vehicular ambushes from and roadway duels are a fact of life for purposes of ego or defense of right-of-way.

So most districts are self-sufficient. They have a few neighborhood clinics (there are always lines), a food and sundries depot (where armed trucks take supplies in once a week—also long lines), and blocks of private or subsidized housing. Garbage pickup, power, and water are often spotty.

Life in the 'Yard can be short and brutal if you look like prey to the myriad groups of predators in it. Even if you have "nothing," your medical access card is worth 60 cred on the black market, your food card is worth 15, and your Work Permit is worth 5.

A Citizen's Guide To Common Scams

Many citizens of the 'Yard are working angles. Keep these wallet sized cards handy to check against common con jobs, scams, and setups. You can also find more of them in specially marked QuikSnak™ Packs of sweets from the local neighborhood distro-point. Collect them all!

The Insurance Job

You are approached and asked for your Medi-Card number. When it is processed, you are told that while you are covered for weekly visits to the Medical Salons, you are *not* covered for invasive surgical procedures (if you have children, the seller will tell you they are at risk). You are offered "gap" coverage. This "Gap" agreement is a binding agreement with the local authorities. But it doesn't cover the local hospitals but rather applies to facilities outside the 'Yard with questionable facilities. Be careful what you sign.

The Triple Rent Scam

Unscrupulous landlords may rent apartments to more than one family, especially if you list employment as *shift work*, which many do (so long as the persons are not on the same shift). These agreements are binding so be careful to look for Solo clauses in the agreement. Also: ask if the previous and current occupants of the building are listed as missing in action, present location unknown, temporarily incarcerated, potentially incinerated, or "not responding to phone calls."

The Work Agency Shuffle

Employment is often difficult to find and employment agencies will offer to help. Never leave your work permit with an agency (although they will cite regulations that make copying them illegal). Once an unscrupulous agency has collected enough permits it will vanish and sell them to altered-identity criminals on the black-market.

Shopping in the 'Yard

Here are some shops you might pass on the street in the BoneYard.

Arti-Pets: "Guaranteed Real Looking Electric Animals! An Arti-Pet is the **ONLY** friend you can trust!"

Sleep Bar: "Safe, Secure, and Relaxing. Nocturna's slumber pods are the only way to *guarantee* an 8-hour uninterrupted rest. Tuesday Night Special: Free dose of *Dream-Lock* to ensure nightmare-free repose."

Simul-Sex Booth: "Exotic, Dirty, and Clean." (Yes, the last is a lie. No, they're not trying to be contradictory).

Osirus Cyber-Acoustics: brain-jack interfaces, neural-stim speakers, opti-nerve light-shows.

Auto-Mat: The place working stiff's go to eat. Robot-cooked meals served in the friendly style of a vending machine. Yes, there's probably a guy back there somewhere. No he doesn't want to talk to you.

Drive-Thru Confessional: Because the Church of the Congregation says "You're never sorry *enough!*" Penance Valu-Pak .30c Discount.

Segmentation Fault Arcade: System-Shock gambling games (audience pays to see you get shocked when you lose).

The "Word" Approach

A scraggly man holding a Congregational Holy Book approaches you asking you to repent. Within the book is a space for a .75 cal auto-pistol. Beware of approaching fanatics. Either cross the street, seek assistance of the nearest peace officer, or give a standard "three yard warning" before opening fire.

What's What?

"Incoming Refugee Transport, this is 'Yard Traffic Authority. Please move to the intake station and stand down all weaponry. Searches and Health exam will commence directly. If randomized health checks detect Quarantine Grade 1 infectious organisms, entire transport will be sterilized. You are considered warned. Have a nice day."

--Standard greeting for refugee intake

Welcome to the BoneYard. We like to say it's the most beautiful city in the world. That's because it's the last. Most of The BoneYard looks like the back-lot of a train station: rusted metal with sharp edges, stained and cracked concrete covered with graffiti, and hulks of vehicles and abandoned buildings with the window glass knocked out. Mutant weeds grow through some of the cracks, but the downtown areas are still in the ever-present shadow of the skyscrapers. These are some of the places you might go and the sights you might see.



Cyborg Corper and his Escort Bots.

A Visitor's Guide to the BoneYard



Radioactive Hazard. Seek anti-rad treatment after visiting.



Bio/Chem Hazard present. Wear environmental gear.



Medical Facilities close by/available.



Electrical Power is reliable.



Vehicular transit/combat is common.



Fees charged: have currency handy. Failure to pay is dangerous.



Mutants welcome!



Historical Site: take pictures!



Telepathic assistance available (mind your thoughts)



Computer Virus Zone. Sensitive systems and cybernetics should exercise safe data-sharing.



Danger-Zone: keep your weapons handy.



Fine Dining available: bring a date!

Court TV



When justice doesn't come swiftly, it comes with lights, applause, and valuable prizes. Visit the Central Magistrates Pavilion and purchase tickets to the Judgment Drome where plea-bargaining citizens get to try their hands at solving the Labyrinth of Justice, their fate at Spinning the Penalty Wheel (from electro-flogging to execution for an unlucky player), or matching wits with The GrandMaster: an unbeaten chess AI.

The 8-Track



Those giant moving-picture billboards all over the city are called MoveBoards™ and 80% of them are hooked directly into the BoneYard's automotive combat arena. In the upper deck enjoy fine dining, private bullet-proof skybox seating, and a perfect view of the figure-8 shaped mile-long track. In the lower decks you can get ring-side seating at the two "inside" Coliseums where gladiatorial combat, games and sports,

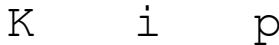
and the once-a-year Circus takes place. Be aware that lower price seating is sometimes subject to errant fire from the track.

The Queen's Tower



A sixty story cylindrical tower with three story metal security walls around it, the Queen's Tower is hard to miss from anywhere in the western arc. Daily tours show the metal gates and still-armed cyclic machine gun nests that defended the Queen at the beginning of her rise to economic power in The BoneYard. Also visible are the surgical-steel pneumatic spikes on which she used to impale her enemies. It's a charming history tour of one of the BoneYard's most unique citizens.

The Lightning District



At night there's nothing more spectacular than a walk down Electric Avenue. The crescent shape road runs within the broad-cast power zone of the Lightning Tower, the largest remaining broadcast power station in existence. Here you'll find no light unlit, power-weapons fire without having to re-cycle their charge, and air-cars use the plentiful invisible beams of energy to soar through the sky. It's a great place to buy and sell either electronics, information, or just take a good look at the revitalized old-style two-story tall Security Walkers!

Low Quad



It's not a place for the kids but if you're looking for the right kind of *merchandise* and don't mind a fire-fight, the Low Quad is a place to go where no one cares who you are. That's usually because if you live there eventually you become "Mr. Cancer-Face" no matter who you were when you came in. There are many dives in the city but the Low Quad is unmistakable in the shadow of the 200 yard high Industrial Wall and bathed in the wash from the Waste Pipes that run through it. This charming collection of shanty-towns, cardboard and plastic-bag housing, and junk-choked gutters hosts authentic knife fights, colorful "crazy" street minstrels, and some of the most heavily mutated organisms in the remaining world.

The Hard Luck Café



A one-of-a-kind dining establishment, the Hard Luck hosts pictures showing all of humanities falls and foibles (exploding blimps, undersea pictures of mammoth ancient ocean liners, massive dual-skyscrapers consumed in smoke, and nuclear fireballs over Europe are just some of the fine décor pieces). Don't miss the

awesome *Gun Metal Moon*—an "Art Deco" display piece of the guidance system of one of the robotic nuclear bombers used to destroy Europe during the Exchange. Mind your manners though. The Hard Luck is un-forgiving when it comes to trouble.

The Burning Gates



About half the first-time visitors to the BoneYard come in through the Burning Gates and it's worth their while! Quite a sight to see. The road runs between two hundred-story smoke-stacks from the Primary Industrial Refinery and as it runs 24/7 so do the flame vents from the top. Bring breathing gear as the heavy fall out from the stacks resembles gray snow ... so you don't want to breath it.

Utopia Farms



All through the city you'll see big, bright, cheery advertisements for Utopia Farms—usually in the form of a giant billboard showing a gray-jumpsuit wearing man and woman with big smiles on their faces. Behind them, in the background are rolling green hills and a rising sun under blue skies. The legend says Utopia Farms—Food, Medical Care, Shelter. Free Room Board Overnight. Exit 121. *Under no conditions should you stop there. No matter what.*

NetShoppes



Unlike the rest of the world, the BoneYard has a working prevalent "network." Even in some of the darkest corners of the 'Yard you can find Data-Terms for Net-Access. Some of the more stable areas have NetShoppes with gear that allows interactive games, virtual-realities, and searching the various libraries that are available. Note: although there is a great deal of linkage, there are over 100 individual networks across the BoneYard—each with different systems and protocols. It can take a Byzantine knowledge of these different systems to access them correctly.

The Rain District



Off the South-Access Highway is the Rain District, the collection of shantytowns and low-rise buildings that exists under the Condenser Farm. The Condenser Farm is a collection of sixty-story buildings that act as some sort of heat-exchange and vent for the underground systems. It is also a major source of water for the BoneYard Reservoir. The city beneath it is in constant shadow (from the massive, rusted-metal colored fins from the condenser towers) and

constant rain. Even in the driest climates of the BoneYard's summer the Rain District is awash in foul tasting water. It is also a major high-way nexus and site for unlicensed no-arena automotive combat: drive carefully.

The Art District



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Even in the decay of the BoneYard, artists can find their patrons. The Art "District" is a 1.5 block stretch of plaza with buildings well over 100 years old. It is one of the few places in the 'Yard that's considered "attractive," with gabled roofs, two-story town houses and tiny clumps of bungalows (surrounded by security walls and Severe Tire Damage entry-prevention systems)—and, indeed, if the landlords charged rent the prices would be astronomical. But the cost to live here is the production of art that appeals to the patrons: The Corpus Cognito. The Corpus are a group of Telepaths who are some of the richest denizens of the 'Yard. Each month new artists are reviewed and challenge the latest works of the older ones. The losers are moved out to outlying housing of a far inferior nature ... and if the lose a few more times, out all together. Thus the cut-throat world of the Art District produces, by Darwinian pressure works of great and enduring beauty that can often be seen by invitation only in private collections. But it's a great place to see a performance of one of the last remaining live bands!

Dry Docks



The city imports things from the ring of civilization outside the Inner Wasteland: crops from the straggling farms (although the Distro-Point supplies a great deal of food itself), recharged batteries from the energy mills, and raw materials from the mines. From further out, it imports exotic drugs from the Pharms and machineparts the Distro-Point will not provide from the Kingdom of IZ. The Dry Docks are a collection of truck-stops and loading zones. Robotic arms sweep overhead, pallets of goods and tanks of fluid are moved across the vast, cracked, concrete floors. It's a good place to look for low-wage work and the first time many of the trucking crews get to see when they disembark.

Gold District



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The center of banking for the world. Three towers (the tallest is Great White's, the most lavish is Hammerhead's) stand amid glittering shops and ultra high security. The trust the banks have for

one another can be seen in the smooth-bore artillery that protrudes from the sides of the buildings that face their rivals.

The Congregational Cathedral



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The Congregation is the largest remaining religion. Based in the "holy city" of the Needle, several hundred miles south of the 'Yard, the Congregation maintains its Grand Cathedral near the heart of the Bone Yard. The liquid-crystal ten-story stained-glass windows crawl with animated stories of the Congregation's parables. Inside each pew has a view of a wide-screen high-definition TV and thundering 3D sound system. During one of the six daily services throngs of beggars, degenerate mutants, and onlookers crowd around the massive building to listen to the sermon of our abandonment by the *Haves* for our unworthy, bestial nature. Expensive Box Seating (seasonal passes available in the lobby past the gift shops) gives a great view of the Mortification of the Penitents in the great central arena (electro scourges are a real crowd pleaser)! Please be sure to bring sufficient credits to cover admission and a few extra in case of any accidental transgressions that result in fines.

The Academy

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The group of Telepaths that hold power in the BoneYard, The Corpus, have no public meeting place—but if there is a center of power for them it is the Academy (usually called *The Academy*). It appears as a building from another age: stone facades in the front, towering columns, and automated machine guns hidden behind snap-open firing ports in the bas relief. It is the training place for nascent telepaths—when a young telepath of notable power is found, he or she is brought here and trained: most never find a place in the Corpus, but do find positions of wealth and power with the Banks, the Hierarchy, or other power-brokers. Although you can't go inside unless you have legitimate business (and believe me, they'll *know*) it's a great place to take pictures of!

The Food Chain: Who's Who in the 'Yard

Somehow you made it in the big wide world
And you're absolutely home and dry
You got away from a one horse town
And the only way out was to fly

...

You sign a deal that's been etched in stone
It's absolutely cut and dry
That's when they got you in the danger zone
And the only way out is to die

-- Alan Parson's Project *Vulture Culture*

Welcome to the BoneYard. Let me tell you a story about predation. Once upon a time, in the seas (before the ozone layer burned away and the UV radiation killed off the top twenty feet of eco-system and the waves became a sort of frothy slate-gray they called a *Strangelove Ocean*) there were fish. Right? And the little fish were eaten by the big fish and the bigger fish ate the big fish and the sharks came and ate the bigger fish and so on. I dunno where I was going with all of this except that it seems to correlate somehow with the statistics that say that within 72 seconds of leaving the orientation station, 12% of all incoming

refugees get robbed and that within 96 hours over 80% are under the control of an organization that will, erm, *extract* payment for "protection." Somewhere upwards of 50% *can't pay* and those that can often get the 'Vig by robbing the rest. So without further analogies, apologies, or ado, here's the list: the Who's Who of the BoneYard.

The Hierarchy

Who: The rulers of the Bone Yard.

Style: You never see them directly. Everything is an intermediary—if you do reach them, they are a broad "royal family" as eccentric as they are ruthless and pragmatic when it comes to defending what is theirs. It is said they wear ornate, ornamental robes and head-dresses and often use telepathic rigs to "speak" through their retinue of servants. It is said each is "wired" to an ancient assault robot which is never far away, ready to rain death on an attacker.

Where: The western road-nexus called the Spiral. Their stronghold is a former corporate complex that still has the lush gardens and broad sparkling avenues that it used to. It's defended with nuclear-fueled smart-lasers, *Have-*technology force fields, and killer robots.

Claim To Fame: An army. The last remaining Distribution Point. Lots and lots of ancient artifacts. Power-Weapons. Arcane things you've never heard of. A penchant for thinking long-term that means they almost always fight when *they* want to. Paranoia.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A Megladon (prehistoric shark that can swallow a family of 5 and their Volkswagen)

The Arm: The Military of the Yard

Who: Over a Thousand men, women, and mutants—all conditioned to be suicidally loyal and all trained constantly for war. They do *not*

patrol the city or the wastelands—they train constantly for war—for attack, defense, or retribution. Like the Hierarchy that commands them, they are almost never seen by the rank and file.

Style: Matt-Black weapons. Sleek uniforms with high-tech web-gear. Armored visors with night vision and cybernetic targeting. A razor-crisp "How High?" attitude. Real professionals that scare the hell out of everyone else's barbaric ad hoc militia.

Where: Six walled armories within the city and six hidden bolt-holes just outside.

Claim To Fame: Ancient armed hover-vehicles with energy siege cannons. Robotic drones. Tactical Neutron Bombs. Cybernetic soldiers.

If They Were a Fish They Would Be: A Swordfish. It doesn't eat all the fish in the sea, but if you mess with it, it's got a chainsaw.

The Traffic Authority

Who: The large-scale police force that enforces order, especially against armed vehicles. There are "Eye in the Sky" helicopters and video-robots. The Traffic Authority guards the entrance gates to the city and deals with any *large scale* vehicular mayhem (usually by destroying everything in the area). They also handle revolts or massive riots (the same way).

Style: "*Unidentified Vehicle, you are in violation of Code 187.1.2-C. Power down engines and weapons and exit the vehicle. You have 12-seconds to comply.*" The Authority is almost never seen in "person." Their voice is a

computer-simulated female sounding signal broadcast from their central control tower (a 70-story windowless cement tower with a glass-lined “command complex” at the top that glows a hellish red.

Where: The tower is central. There are two “Armories” (North and South) with the flying hover-craft and ground vehicles.

Claim To Fame: They use short range anti-gravity hover-gunboats lined with Heavy-Pulsar Energy guns that can pulverize a block (these are perhaps the last flying assault force left in existence). On the ground there are armed Humvees with .50 caliber machine guns.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A Killer Whale. What? That’s not? Well, it’s big and it eats lots of fish right? Right? There you go.

The Corpus Cognito

Who: The “Body of Thought,” a private (some would say *secret*) council of Telepaths of immense power. They were instrumental in the early rise of the BoneYard and have maintained their place. They *advise* the Hierarchy (using precognition, telepathic espionage, and a few brilliant strategic minds). They regulate power amongst the banks. They keep a close eye on any powerful telepaths in the city.

Style: *Hello. You can’t see me. I’m in your head. Stop looking around like that. It looks silly. A council of minds—powerful minds—wants to talk to you. No, umm, no. You can’t say no.* They are a would-be praetorian guard. They fight amongst each other, play chess with the less powerful members of the BoneYard society, and further their own ends. Each member takes the name of an ancient city (Tokyo, Manhattan, HongKong, etc.)

Where: Some members are “public” meaning that other powerful people know where they can be found. Most are very hard to get to. There is a building called The Drome where the mental avatars meet and where they bring people to talk to them “officially.”

Claim To Fame: Lots of Telepathy and Precognition. A scary network of informants, guys with deeply implanted directives, etc. Scheming that would make Machiavelli queasy. Pacts that ensure that if you kill one of them, the rest will at least make a real *attempt* to get rid of you.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A deep water, super-toxic lion fish with barbed spikes. That is if the Lion Fish would sometimes come up to the surface and eat a skindiver for reasons no one could understand.

The Bitch Queen

Who: A long lived extreme mutant who was there when the BoneYard became the world’s preeminent power and created the monetary system the world uses today. She is a massive semi-human being, bloated with constant pregnancy and giving birth to monsters she controls.

Style: A Queen. An Empress. She has retinue of her men and her “children” (each different and manufactured for a specific set of attributes). When she has an audience, she speaks in the royal “We” and her voice has an eerie reverb. She wears multicolored silk robes over her massive bulk.

Claim To Fame: She created the concept of the “Credit”—a triangular piece of metal with a crypto-chip in it that prevents counterfeit. She runs her own Order of Knights whose purpose is to collect debts owed and to ensure that her currency is taken. She is infamous for having her enemies (deadbeats, enemy bankers, mayors of towns who didn’t pay up) impaled on pneumatically activated steel spikes outside her tower. In addition to her own order knights, and her small force of monsters, she has a seventy-five-man personal security force with armored vehicles.

If They Were A Fish The Would Be: A Barracuda.

Bank: Great White

Who: The largest of the three major banks, Great White is known for its ruthless enforcement of contracts and predatory lending techniques. On the street level, Great White operators always have a loan plan they’ll accept and will chop you up for spare parts if you don’t pay.

Style: That of a drug pusher. Great White has humans who carry out the decisions but the policy is run by a machine—a massive computer that calculates risks and odds and orders those whose risks get too high terminated.

Where: The Gold Block (where all three main bank offices face off with assault cannons pointed at each other’s high-rises). Regional offices and operators are *everywhere*.

Claim To Fame: A 200-man private army and a core of elite cybernetically modified shock troops (“the sharks”).

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A man-eater, plowing through schools of smaller fish and consuming them.

Bank: Black Tip

Who: The second bank (and equal rival with Hammerhead). Unlike Great White, at the top is a single personality: a gunslinger named Colin

Wayatt. He's said to have killed over 30 people in duels with his twin Lews .45 over-loaded six-guns. Black Tip takes risk and has a history of taking those who can't pay and making them work-off their debt (for the rest of their lives). Black Tip specializes in putting up loan money for bounties.

Style: Cowboys. Wheeler-dealers. Black Tip does a lot of work outside the 'Yard. Many townships out in the ring of civilization past the Inner Wasteland got started and still owe interests on Black Tip loans. The sight of a small convoy of custom armed vehicles bearing the Black Tip logo and arriving in a plume of dust clouds bodes very ill for a mayor who has not been meeting his payments.

Where: The Gold Block with the other banks.

Claim To Fame: The Range Riders—a group of highly trained “mercenaries” (many whom owe debts to Black Tip they will never pay off) that enforce Black Tip's law. These are ruthless gunfighters who take pleasure in riding out in heavily armed convoys to enforce their patron's contracts.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A big one, just a little smaller than Great White and eyeing it closely.

Bank: Hammerhead

Who: A second-tier bank tied with Black Tip in size and reach. Hammerhead specializes in business loans and is also known for funding exploratory missions for a cut of the findings.

Style: Hammerhead maintains a private data-library with thousands and thousands of cross-indexed facts. The central board tries to know what's going on in the city before the Hierarchy does—or even the Corpu's Precogs. They specialize in selling and trading corporate stocks, Yard bonds and other financial instruments. Their agents reek of mathematical genius misapplied in the pursuit of power.

Where: The Gold District. The Hammerhead building is lush with gold designs built into the black-marble floors and hanging gardens fed by hydroponics systems.

Claim To Fame: A small collection of assault robots that can be used to back up their agents. A no-nonsense security force that includes and expert team of mutant snipers.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A moray eel. Look, I'm doing this okay? I *know* an eel's *not* a *FISH!* They lay in wait and then dart out, consuming their prey with multiple rows of razor sharp ... what? Ok. With *single* rows ... a *SINGLE* row of sharp teeth. Anyway, they're sneaky and calculating. The fish thing doesn't

The Congregation

Who: The Congregation is the largest religion in the world and has a 24/7 broadcast to all available video receiving units. With a large number of adherents in the BoneYard, they are a force to be contended with. The Hierarchy despises them (more for their power than their rapacious hypocrisy) but maintains agreements and treaties.

Style: The Spanish Inquisition. If you run a foul of them (which can easily happen by finding out too much about the *Haves* or by plying into their secrets, or by making statements about the past that their history disagrees with) they can come for you. Their clerics wear high, shiny, curved head-dresses that taper to points giving them a look of a semi-medieval cleric.

Where: The Grand Cathedral is the seat of power. There are smaller missions everywhere.

Claim To Fame: They control a massive broadcast network, the Space-needle (which the Hierarchy would dearly love to take command of someday), and adherents both on the street and (more secretly) in high levels of government. They have a military ... and it is said, trained assassins as well.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: One of those ones with the light in front that draws you to it (pretty)—and then it has *GIANT FREAKING FANGS*. That fish.

City Grid: The Power Brokers

Who: Power flows from the Spiral where the Hierarchy is (in the lightning district there is a small zone of *Broadcast* Power, but there are no working relays and most of the city can't take advantage of that). Through the 'Yard, connections are maintained by the City Grid—an “incorporated” entity that sells power to everyone.

Style: If you're big, they're a utility—impersonal and pretty efficient. If you do something like blow up a major relay they'll send the Public Security Force or maybe even the Traffic Authority after you (and if it, say, serviced the Bitch Queen or the Gold Districts others may want you too). If you are small though, or in an area with spotty power, you deal with a Wireman. A guy with a limited number of outlets or a daily delivery of charged batteries and wires to run. If you run a street-side Sex-Stim-Booth, you have to pay your wireman off each day. That gets dirty fast. Usually the Wire-Men have small gangs of protectors and will try to control business within a given block

Where: Everywhere. The office is in the east of the city. It has two three-story forks outside that crackle with bands of lighting.

Claim To Fame: A writ for the Hierarchy to distribute power. A personal interior security force (but backed up by the Authority).

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A bunch of small fighting fish (the wire-men) looking for a kickback from those they can squeeze.

Central Water

Who: The Hierarchy may not care about any *individual*, but they do care about the health of their empire as a whole. Central Water maintains the pipes that get water through the BoneYard from the main reservoir.

Style: They're a utility. If you mess with them, you answer to the Traffic Authority and the Public Security Forces.

Where: Everywhere. The Reservoir is in the Rain District.

Claim To Fame: They're quick to call for backup, and they get it. No questions asked.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: A big lazy fish that doesn't eat much but no one messes with.

The Octopus

Who: Organized Crime. The Hierarchy does not like competition and although crime is a constant, organized crime is usually institutionalized (the Power Brokers, the Public Security Force). Still, the Octopus remains occulted in the shadows. It is sort of a thieves' gild, sort of a network of fences.

Style: I know someone who knows someone. The Octopus is subtle and secretive. If you've stolen something from the Corpus, the Octopus could help you fence it. If you have secrets to sell about Hammerhead's security, the Octopus is buying, but it's very low key.

Where: Everywhere and nowhere.

Claim To Fame: Some very high level people and a variety of organizations are hedging their bets and backing up their power-plays by joining.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be A: fast black one that is rarely seen—but has sharp teeth when it attacks from surprise.

Public Security Forces

Who: The "police." They're corrupt as cops go—but not so corrupt as to be worthless. They cruise the streets in lightly armored fuel burning vehicles and squash anyone who they think they can take who's making trouble. That's what they want: no trouble.

Style: Laconic and jaded—if you are poor. Snappy and responsive if you're rich. They aren't incompetent though—the attack en-mass and don't like being humiliated. Usually if you get caught purse-snatching on an average block they'll haul you down town, beat you, write you up, break your arm, and throw you back out on the street.

If you have a successful business, they expect a "bonus" but really do protect you more if you pay it.

Where: Upper middle and high-class districts (also seen in transit). In the lower class areas there are a few—but deputized gangs are more common.

Claim To Fame: Armed with .9mm handguns and full-auto SMG's they are fairly well armed for most of the populace. Their cars tend to have a .30 cal on top and light armor. They make good use of radios and tend to look after their own more than their citizens.

If They Were A Fish? Corrupt Cop Fish—that's what they'd be.

The Orders

Who: The Orders are groups of Road Knights who have taken vows to help try and keep the world from falling apart. Although 90% of their work is done outside the BoneYard, there are chapters within and individual knights conducting their business.

Style: Varies but think of the armored bad-ass in a tank-like vehicle, who has trained from a weelad or lass to kick your ass. You just broke their personal code ...

Where: Chapters tend to have offices in poorer blocks (the Orders are respected by their friends and feared by their enemies—but they don't spend their precious money on nice digs). Knights can be found anywhere.

Claim To Fame: Armed vehicles, power weapons, elite training.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: I don't know? Warrior Knight Fish? Is that a fish? I think I've seen it on the menu.

Deputized Gangs

Who: In the middle and low class districts order is maintained by gangs that have been given a *writ* by Public Security. They tend to be brutal and violent—but they do keep out other gangs and they don't want to get their writs revoked so they have to keep things kinda quiet.

Style: That of the fox guarding the henhouse. You gotta pay your 'vig to the deputies—and if you don't you *will* get the big shakedown. They

have badges but behind the badge, it's nothing but mutant thug.

Where: In the middle and low-class districts. If you travel through one you may run into a toll-collecting check-point.

Claim To Fame: A badge, some weapons, and a bunch of tough guys.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: Piranha!

Criminal Gangs

Who: Gangs that aren't deemed socially conscious enough (i.e. profit motivated and semi-organized and smart enough to know where their interest lies) are just criminal gangs. It's usually live and let live unless the gang crosses a customer who's paying for good protection or decides to move up the food-chain.

Style: Knives, chains, cheap guns, mutant abilities, leather jackets, wild haircuts, and loud music.

Where: all over—but mostly the bad parts of town.

Claim To Fame: A Zip gun.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: An Oscar. Eats guppies. Gets eaten by larger Oscars.

Loners, Zoners, and Grifters

Who: The predatory underclass is alive and healthy in the 'Yard. From the "Taxi Driver" who takes you on a one-way trip to "robbed-and-dead-ville" to the psychopathic drugged up knife-fighters that wander the streets looking for "action" to get the next fix, the street is full of predators looking for prey.

Style: Even in the nice parts of town you travel with security or look over your shoulder. Women on the trams travel in packs with concealed weapons incase the wrong person comes up to them. If you look like a scary mutant you may be shot before you even get a chance to prove you're not psychotic.

Where: Everywhere ... BEHIND YOU! Really, anywhere on the street.

Claim To Fame: anything from a switchblade to a mutant optical blast. Mostly a desperate need for money or food or both.

If They Were A Fish They Would Be: Rabid fish ... frothing at the mouth. Don't bother me any more—I'm done with the fish thing.

Life in the Outer Wasteland

Starting at the toxic outer edge of the Middle Ring, drive 250 miles in any direction where there's still land and you'll reach the nominal end of civilization. The Middle Ring is no paradise: towns fall, diseases and toxins take their toll, Freqs raid and the ruins that speckle the landscape remain mysterious and dangerous. But when you get about 500 miles from the BoneYard, the world takes over—and humanity runs out of steam (well, almost—there are some distant points of civilization, but getting there's a gamble).

Welcome to the Outer Wasteland. It is ...

Deserted. In a way even the Middle Ring doesn't manage to be. Out there are more monsters than man—and more empty space than both. You can drive for the rest of your life and never see another human being if you head north.

Weird. The Outer Wasteland is bizarre in ways that don't immediately or obviously relate to its status as ground simply too dangerous to inhabit. There are forces at work out there that don't venture closer (for whatever reason). There are things out there with perspectives we may *never* understand. The laws of physics themselves aren't necessarily all that intact. People who venture out there report pre-cognitive dreams and terribly possibly-lethal nightmares.

Dangerous. The Outer Wasteland contains things that could, frankly, just devour a convoy. We're not sure what they are—but they're out there. Massive nuclear powered war machines? Mobile masses of hostile psychic energy? Holes in the ground with no known bottom? Sure—all that and more. The basic *monsters* (9-foot tall invisible hopping fungi) are bad enough—but the Outer Wasteland isn't just a numbers game: people who live on the edge know, in a very real sense, when they've gone too far out and its time to come back.

Unexplored. At one time there were complete down-to-the-foot satellite maps of the planet (they say)—and certainly a few hundred years ago society spread across *everything* (and up into the sky and down into the earth)—but now it's a different story. Be it the vast forests of the north to the deserts of the east or the toxic jungles of the south there are places no one—and that includes the distant empires has been. Traveling out there means seeing stuff that hasn't been seen before by any living member of any generation. Sometimes even 100 miles from home (if you live right on the edge) down a pretty decent stretch of remaining road-way gets you places you'll *know* you're the first one to look at.

Recovering. Maybe. People who have ventured out say that the eco-systems are, maybe, coming back ... sort of. There are reports of massive nuclear craters filled with tangled green forests. There are reports of mountain tops covered with snow

Can you picture what will be, So
limitless and free
Desperately in need...of
some...stranger's hand
In a...desperate land
Lost in a Roman...wilderness of pain
And all the children are insane, All
the children are insane
Waiting for the summer rain, yeah
There's danger on the edge of town
Ride the King's highway, baby
Weird scenes inside the gold mine
Ride the highway west, baby
Ride the snake, ride the snake
To the lake, the ancient lake, baby
The snake is long, seven miles
--*The End*, The Doors

The Ruins

People don't *live* in the Ruins—to the west are the Grand Ruins—the remains of the great city that stretched along the North American Pacific coast—and they still stand—gray, dusty—silent—but not quite empty. Not quite. And very, very deadly. To the North East is the ruin of Denver. And there's Vegas with the lights still on and the slot machines still working—sterilized by still deadly radiation.

The Ruins aren't discussed here—they're not exactly part of the Outer Wasteland (many are right at home smack in the middle of everything)—but. But. But ...

The Ruins may not be far-flung from *where people live*—but they're as distant from *civilization* as the Outer Wasteland. They share the same ethic—the same sense of deserted strangeness—the same sense of *wrongness*. So if you're thinking about a never-to-return journey to the Outer Wasteland: take a look at Ruins. It's the Outer Wasteland ... closer to home.

and housing glimmering flying things that swoop and rise on the air-currents. There are reports of massive herds of animals (of never-before seen types—but all of roughly the *same* type). Some people say the earth is coming back—and the earth is coming back *angry*.

The Ecology of the Outer Wasteland

The Outer Wasteland is, geographically, like the Middle Ring. The differences are more subtle than a simple change in terrain. That, however, doesn't mean there aren't differences.

Nightmare Storms

Where there are thunderheads in the Middle Ring and toxic sand-storms in the Inner Wasteland, periodically something—something *bad*—will sweep down from the north. This thing—this *phenomena*—is called a Nightmare Storm. Clinically, it is said to be a massive discharge of semi-stable negative psychic energy whose source is unknown. Physically it looks a bit like a blizzard (and is accompanied by unseasonably cold temperatures). In nightmare storms waves of fear and panic gust like the high winds. People vanish—towns disappear, and hollow pleas are heard on the radio in the call signs of the gone decades later. Nightmare Storms are thankfully rare—and seem to avoid populace areas as a one storm-front may curve around another—but out in the wasteland they can come—and you'd better avoid them when they do.

The Behemoths

There are some *big* animals in the Middle Ring. Down Death Alley are the Gila Monsters. There are nuclear powered Crawler robots in the ruins. There are toxic abominations in the Inner Ring (some cybernetic). These are all *big*. Out in the Outer Wasteland are reports of things on a scale with mountain ranges. The Iron Warlord (fact or myth, you decide?) is reputed to be over 300 yards of black metal armor. The Machine Herds have members over 100 yards long—how big do they get? Down in the Pacific Basin there are rumors of things even bigger: land dwelling tentacled things the size of *cities*. Who knows—but you don't want to be the first to find out if they're hostile.

Lost Areas

Another reputed phenomena of the Outer Wasteland are reports of *lost* areas—spots (which may move—there certainly are no maps to any) that are *blind spots* on the planet—places where your radio doesn't work—where your natural sense of direction just leads you further *in*. Lost Areas are said to be places where you can go one step in and turn around and it's 100-steps to get *out* (meaning back to where you were) or worse. People who've traveled the Outer Wasteland—even hard-bitten ones, treat this as something perhaps more dangerous than superstition. All kinds of weapons were used in the Age of War. What if one of them simply took porous chunks out of reality altogether?

Now it's been 10,000 years
Man has cried a billion tears
For what he never knew
Now man's reign is through
But through the eternal night
The twinkling of starlight
So very far away
Maybe it's only yesterday...
-- "In The Year 2525 (Exordium
& Terminus)," Zager and Evans