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NECROPOLIS DIARIES

BY DOMINIC COVEY

This article marks the first in a series that will look at the various cryptic locations and struggling communities situated among the ruins of Los Angeles, better known simply as the “Necropolis” by the inhabitants of the Twisted Earth. A broader overlook of the Necropolis is given in the *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* rulebook. These articles will attempt to focus on a specific adventure location, monster lair, or a community clinging to survival among the ruins.

Note: The details of this article are based on the outcome of a play by e-mail game run in 2000 set in the Twisted Earth setting of *Darwin's World*. Originally titled “Necropolis”, this game pitted a group of players against one another in a grueling competition to take several impoverished groups of survivors and build viable communities among the burnt-out and radiated ruins of Los Angeles.

However, the locations portrayed here aren't necessarily limited to Los Angeles; with only a little modification you can port the locations and monsters to virtually any post-apocalyptic environment.

ANAHEIM

Anaheim, once known as the home of Disneyland and a wealthy population, is now little more than a dead husk, a wind-swept labyrinth of old streets, dusty ruins, and dangerous rubble. Whatever weapons swept the great Necropolis during the Fall apparently were focused elsewhere when they hit, but here the effects of radiation, fire, and holocaust were no less severe. Panic, riots, and flight from the city by tens of thousands of inhabitants let the fires go out of control, consuming much in their prolonged burn. The collapse of civilization, and the eventual death of man, spelled a lonely doom for this once magnificent part

of the ancient city.

Anaheim today is but a hollow, ghostly wasteland of broad avenues, block upon block of burned-out ruins, and built-up stonework where pricey hotels and apartment complexes once stood magnificently along the skyline. In areas the streets, flanked by tall buildings, become eerie channels for the wind, creating a chilling moan that can be heard for miles.

In recent years, these ruins were the stomping grounds of a violent and powerful gang of raiders from beyond the mountains, who came to the Necropolis to escape their many enemies in the deserts of the outside world. Braving the legendary dangers of the San Gabriels, and penetrating this far into the ruins, they found the empty streets and craven savages (wild men) dwelling in the rubble to be easily cowed into submission - and made to serve. Though a violent and savage society, these former raiders began a burgeoning agriculture among the dusty landscape and even built a monumental stockade from which to command the surrounding miles.

But their presence, however cruel and brutal, has vanished from the city.

THE RAIDERS

The raiders of the Necropolis were one of the most savage groups to rise – and fall – during the city's grotesque history. Born from the battered, broken, and scattered remnants of various raider gangs dwelling east of the San Gabriel Mountains among the Deadlands region of the Twisted Earth, these vile and savage refugees retreated from the open, unforgiving terrain of the deserts to the seeming security of the Necropolis' tall, silent towers and endless ruins.

The leader of these shattered gangs was a particularly barbarous young prince (aptly named “Kruel” by his followers) and a former underling of a vast tribal coalition's greatest king. Having survived the shattering of their great raider band at the hands of the Rangers, Kruel gathered the most powerful

LEGEND OF THE NECROPOLIS

It is well known that the world is a great, endless desert, and sand the only thing that holds up all life and all creation. A great rolling sea, the deserts of the twisted earth stretch on forever, from the farthest north to the most distant south, from east to west. Old rivers and great highways of concrete may have once crossed this ugly, godforsaken terrain in the time of the Ancients, but now it is all but a great dust bowl.

But legends sometimes contest that which is common knowledge, and the legend of the fabled Necropolis is no exception – in fact, it is a story known to nearly all who wander the wasteland, as far east as the wind-swept Far Desert, and north into the rugged, bleak territory of the Foundation and their stark monastery-fortresses among the mountains. Though their litany of somber chanting and pining for Ancient glories drowns out the violent winds between those northern mountains, this tale is something they, especially, will never forget.

Somewhere to the south, over the San Gabriel peaks – whose own dangers of mutant life are foreboding enough to make them a barrier worthy of respect and isolation – the desolate dry heights give way to a place only a handful have ever seen. A dreamland to some and a horrible nightmare to others, it is said that over the mountains lies a lost city, a dead, lifeless megaplex stretching from horizon to horizon, it's towering maze of mile-high 'scrapers covered in a layer of grayish dust, with shadows streaking across hundreds of streets for as far as the eye can see.

Those few who have seen it, have seen it from afar, on high, from the great San Gabriel mountains, often silhouetted by the eastern sun in all its coppery glory; or by night, when the blue moon

casts its haunting cerulean light over the miles and miles of untouchable landscape so far below in the Valley. Observers skirting the mountains say that the city is alive, that noise can sometimes be heard echoing miles within its twisted, glass and concrete heart – echoing hoots, the distant clang of metal, and *screams*. It is no wonder that outsiders from the wasteland have shunned this haunted, dead place for generations – and let the San Gabriel Mountains lie as a virgin barrier to the great ruins beyond.

But it is this place, the great Necropolis that persists in legends and myths to this day. Stories quickly vanishing into the haze of memory tell of a city that stretches on for days in all directions, confined only by the great San Gabriels to the north, bleak desolate heights to the east, and the beginnings of the dark and ugly sea to the south and west. Here, it is said, the streets and even the buildings themselves, rising so many leagues into the sky, are coated in a layer of choking, powdery ash – ashes that stories say are the remains of those millions of Ancients who once lived in the Necropolis, and were incinerated when the bombs fell and turned the labyrinthine streets and lighted boulevards into a chaos of fire and brimstone.

Whatever the truth, the city is dark, lonely, and forbidding. It is seemingly limitless in size. Clusters of towering skyscrapers, burnt-out, blown-open, and skeletal in their ruined state, stretch in enormous, awe-inspiring rows like the dead husks of a lost civilization that sought to reach into the sky and conquer the gods. Beneath them, avenues and roads, some as wide as major riverbeds, lie blanketed in rubble, snaking caravans of abandoned cars from before the Fall, and, of course, all of it covered in that same, unsettling *soot*.

- From Darwin's World 2nd Edition

remnants of his former tribe under his singular leadership, leaving the rest behind to die in the deserts while he and his cohorts fled over the forbidden mountains to the legendary ruins of the Necropolis.

The hungry, capricious men and mutants of his people desired glory, conquest, and domination of the Necropolis. But the going would not be easy. They made quickly for a place near the city's heart, where they hoped the enemies they had fled from in the desert could never possibly pursue them. Finding a suitable place they erected a fort, the lord of the bandit clans ordered his men into the ruins to begin a new campaign of glorious expansion.

Numerous finds were uncovered in the first week. A variety of food sources were located, and the warriors indulged themselves grotesquely like kings for days.

In these first weeks the streets of Anaheim echoed with the sound of gas powered vehicles and gunshots. Though rivals emerged to challenge Kruel and carve out parts of the city as their own, all were ruthlessly cut down and butchered by the Bandit-King and his loyal cadre. Soon, all the people would genuflect in his presence, and fear his name throughout bandit territory.

Weeks passed, until at long last a strange event occurred – something that would presage a terrible fate to befall all of the raider people. One day, a giant buzzing “locust”, larger than any ever before seen in the radiated ruins of the city, landed near to a raider patrol somewhere north of their newly constructed fortress. The creature, sleek, green, and with emotionless black eyes, fluttered it's wings momentarily in the dry dusty air, made a few strange signs and gestures with its articulated limbs, and buzzed into the air once more before the confused and frightened raiders could chase it off.

The visit by the gigantic insect was lost on the raiders, who didn't know what to think of the strange visitor or it's “message” (which was, ironically, a warning against expanding north into parts of the city

already occupied by a race of giant mutant insects). It certainly would not halt raider efforts at colonization of the ruins. Though its message was cryptic and ultimately unheeded, Kruel's men were unshaken in their efforts to conquer more territory. Each day was seeing more and more vagabonds from the desert following the raiders into the city, attracted to Kruel's banner, and lured by the promise of spoils – women, wine, and *power*. Each day the raider community grew larger and larger, and more and more noisome, the sounds of its vehicles echoing like haunting thunder through the old city. At night, men celebrated with the spoils they ransacked from the ruins, and indulged in the women and captives they stole from the few feeble mutant ruin-pickers that cowered in fear before their awful presence. Armed with firearms and muskets, they were unmatched by those few creatures that skulked in the shadows of their great fortress.

A few minor setbacks struck the raiders in their early expansion, but nothing to halt their arrogant and glorious campaign of conquest. Exploration south into an old bombarded airport left several of men dead from radiation sickness; later, a rare urban-dwelling *mutagon* ate two scouts before retreating effortlessly away from the guns of reinforcements. Many men were disheartened by their inability to stop the thing as it tore their comrades limb from limb, but this dip in morale was short-lived. Later, scouts discovered a large library left intact in the ruins. Although they were met by a small community of peaceful religious survivors living in the ruins of the library since the time of the Fall, the raiders merely mocked them and slaughtered them to the last within minutes. Not a man was lost, and their sanctuary of knowledge was readily ransacked for the community's gain.

Soon Kruel's wild and growing community of misfits and blackhearts was visited by an unscrupulous merchant who followed them in from the desert, and whom sold the raiders nearly a dozen beautiful slave

women for safe passage through bandit territory. Morale was more than recouped by indulging in their more "base" desires.

Rather ominously, on the last night of the second month of the raider campaign, scouts burst into Kruel's private tent with unnerving news – strange bonfires were seen to the west – tell-tale signs, some older raiders said, that *ghouls* – a race of night-dwelling cannibalistic mutants - lived in the ruins nearby.

Only a few days later Kruel The Bandit-King was personally attacked by a mass of ghouls as he took a large scouting party and explored areas to the west of their bandit-fortress. Though armed with rifles and shotguns, and mounted in roaring metal vehicles, the ghouls were just too numerous, emerging at night from manholes, nearby buildings, and from every street to slaughter the raiders as they camped. Men were butchered left and right - some even being dragged off into the night alive and screaming - but not before Kruel could escape with his life, taking with him a burning hatred for these new, unexpected adversaries.

While Kruel nursed his wounds with his followers in camp, he secretly began planning a series of defenses to protect against the possibility of a ghoulish incursion. No doubt the ghouls had long dwelt in the Necropolis, and the noisy arrival of Kruel and his gallivanting in the ruins had attracted their evil attentions. He knew that now that the ghouls were aware of his people's presence, relentless night attacks would begin. Like clockwork nightly raids began, raids that only grew in intensity as the days passed and frightened even his most valiant servants and warriors to the bone.

Though the people cried out for Kruel to abandon the raider efforts, those who spoke in public were brutally killed to make examples for the rest. Kruel had become obsessed with his self-made "bandit enclave." Though his people showed terror at the idea

of being eaten alive by the packs of green-skinned mutant ghouls from the darkness of night, he refused to give up without a fight.

Despite the talk, there was little to do except begin erecting a series of questionable defenses along the east – clearing large areas of the ruins for a killing field around the fortress, withdrawing the slave workers into the fortress at night. Sentries were doubled, and the size of exploration parties was increased substantially. But an air of unease hung over the heads of all – the ghouls, they all knew, were watching each and every effort, and planning a way through to strike them as they slept.

Amid these efforts, a *massive* sandstorm, never before seen in such magnitude, was seen approaching the entire Necropolis basin from the deserts to the east – visible as a dark cloud, horizon to horizon, over the jagged, inhospitable mountains. Kruel knew this could spell disaster for food-gathering efforts for the next week or so, and he decided to settle his people down and prepare to pick up the battle against the ghouls once the storm passed.

The great sandstorm hit harder than expected. Many of Kruel's subjugated people were killed when a makeshift shelter for a dozen families collapsed under tons of sand. As the winds began to pick up mid-week, and showed no signs of stopping, some slaves took advantage of the chaos to flee their captors. The civilians, many eunuchs and little more than rabble, began to rise in riot against their raider masters in an attempt to garnish food and water for their own selfish needs before fleeing east. The rioters were easily put down, and their bodies, riddled with bullets, were crucified for the entire community to learn from.

Yet more misfortune struck the community during this first week of the great storm. A small scouting party, moving along the northern frontier, vanished completely into the ruins. Their three stripped-down vehicles were found by a rescue party, half-buried and apparently abandoned. They were completely flooded

with sand and proclaimed a total loss. The men's tracks led north for about ten yards before vanishing entirely. No bodies or other signs were found that might have given a clue as to how they went missing.

One day, as the sand clouds whirled ever more angrily throughout the city, the missing group of raiders sent north *reappeared!* They were not altogether healthy, and in their deluded state were confined to the dismal hospice erected by the bandit-king for his best soldiers. All of a sudden, as they were laid to rest in cots and given abundant wine to ease their fevered madness, the men were wracked with hideous pains and convulsions. Guards and slave servants poured in to assist the screaming warriors, only to be the victims of voracious mutant bugs that exploded from inside the men's bellies. Gore and bits of bone erupted all over the chamber, and stunned in horror, those present were slaughtered by the many-armed "baby bugs" carried within their unwitting comrades. Half a dozen men were killed before a Molotov cocktail thrown into the room immolated the three insects.

It was obvious that the men were impregnated by mutant insect larvae, probably after having collapsed from exhaustion during the sandstorm.

Kruel was horrified by the graphic news, and the idea of such an alien horror having gotten inside his much-boasted fortress. Then, even worse news - terrified scouts were sending messages from the north by garbled radio, speaking of an "army of giant mutant bugs" that came effortlessly through the whirling sand storm to strike at their undefended work camps. Almost everyone in the bugs' way - man, woman, and child - was taken captive and marched off to the north.

The raiders' first real war had begun in earnest. Kruel rallied his people through lies, promises, and strong-arm tactics. Words of vengeance began to drip from the lips of fellow warriors in the clans, culminating in a collective war cry among the gangs

that easily drowned out the tearful protests of the subjugated civilian populace in their dismal squalor. To those who wanted escape, Kruel gave it to them - through a bullet in the head. Riding out in their metal machines - motorcycles, armored sidecars, roaring sedans and convertibles - the Raiders drove north to do battle with their unfeeling, inhuman enemy.

Kruel had spoken, and the gangs answered with a united brotherhood. The roar of gasoline engines thundered through the Necropolis as dozens of men and savage warriors gathered for the blooding of this unfeeling, cold-blooded insectoid enemy.

Leading his men north, gathering supporters from the outlying camps as they went, Kruel chose the time and place for this fateful encounter. It was under the blinding white-hot sun of mid afternoon that the raiders struck back at this strange "insect" enemy, hoping that in the sunlight the enemy might somehow be weaker or at a disadvantage. Moving through territory eerily silent and empty, the cars, trucks, and motorcycles of the collected gangs moved north to reclaim what was theirs.

Up ahead among the ruins of numerous buildings the combined army saw their foe - a pair of truly *gigantic* insects, each larger than a bus, covered in massive armor plated chitin and bristling with serrated limbs and antennae.

Kruel decided to take no chances and ordered his men into battle, racing ahead on steel-clad choppers. Bullets and lead shot ricocheted harmlessly off the two foot-thick chitin at a distance, but undeterred by this minimal effect, Kruel motioned with his finely-tuned pistol for his alliance of gangs to move forward in their cars and begin the real assault. The pair of massive bugs skittered forward as if suddenly brought to life at the sight of the enemy's full might, the ground shaking and cracking under their tremendous weight as they came.

Kruel threw everything at the bugs at the last moment before melee was joined. The rest of his

army came up the middle, down the street, opening with fully automatic fire at the monster beetles.

When the smoke, dust, and exhaust cleared, the effect was clearly evident - both gigantic bugs lay dead in the street, their thick armor pierced by nearly five hundred tiny little holes. Each giant body was surrounded by whitish-green goo that began to stink within minutes of being exposed to the hot mid-day sun, attracting flies from the nearby sewer openings.

Bolstered by success, Kruel ordered his men to continue north. It was just before dusk when he and his virtual army came roaring through the city streets into bug territory. Ahead Kruel spotted what appeared to be a large hole in the earth, leading down to God knows where. A horrible smell emanated from within, and a telltale slimy residue could be seen on the tunnel walls going below. Skulls and small bones littered the exterior.

Abandoning their cars and cycles outside, the raiders were forced to descend on foot. Though several warriors protested out of fear and better sense, Kruel pointed his gun at the dissenters and prodded them along from behind.

Tunnels were found to lead deeper and deeper into the ruins beneath the Necropolis, until at long last strange noises began to answer their heavy footfalls in the deep, unnatural darkness. From the inky blackness of the gooey tunnels and burrows came gigantic mutant bugs, some the size of men and even cars, skittering across the slimy tunnel floors with nimble dexterity.

At once Kruel ordered his men to open fire, without a moment to lose. The unprepared giant bugs were killed by the overwhelming automatic fire and tenacity of their human attackers. Kruel personally led the men forward, attacking with axes, clubs, and chainsaws these huge armored monsters. He personally dodged one attack followed by another, until his two bodyguards were scooped up and shoveled into the acidic maws of a pair of gigantic

beetles, melting before his eyes.

But the battle proved too much for the bug outpost, even under the ground in their own prepared fortifications, and Kruel and his men withdrew, victorious. The bandit leader ordered the equipment of his fallen men loaded into their vehicles, and they pressed on to another suspected “bug hole” on the horizon, in the ruins of Compton.

Here the tunnels and passages seemed to have made use of the old sewer system; old gang graffiti covered many walls, while the stench was almost overpowering, even for the most destitute of Kruel’s primitive warriors.

To their great horror, as Kruel and his men descended into this hole, the remains of human beings were found dangling from slimy stalactites on the ceiling of subterranean caves, their bodies ruptured from within as if they had given violent birth to some insectoid hosts. Remembering the fates of their own recently slain scouts, his soldiers cursed their cold-blooded enemy and pressed vigilantly on.

Further they descended into the bug fortress, until Kruel and his men finally came to a chamber filled with more and more ruptured human bodies. In this massive vaulted cave awaited more than a dozen large ant-like bugs, smaller than the “tank bugs” seen before but hideous in their own right. Each wore armor made from flayed human skin, wielding bone axes and clubs and brandishing spears with fragments of human skull at their tips.

The battle with these newer, smaller, but more intelligent bugs was fast and bloody. More modern weapons easily cut the black-carapace creatures down, sprinkling the slimy cavern with their pasty white innards. Kruel and his men managed to clean out the burrow with minimal losses, but already his army had dwindled from its former strength to a mere handful. Kruel decided it was time to pull back and dig in.

The raider prince and his men set out to reach a place of tactical superiority and construct makeshift

defenses. Surprisingly, however, as the beat-up cars and cycles came thundering into the area, a small force of giant insects that had come with an uncanny foresight to ambush them. There was an immediate clash as the two vied for control of the ruins.

Kruel and his men fired from their speeding vehicles, their combined weapons sprinkling off the hide of these new giant bugs. The raider leader and his men had never seen anything like them before, like giant beetles with elongated armored antennae towering over their heads and shells.

Though the volley of raider fire was intense in the first few minutes, the forces under Kruel were suddenly taken off-guard as the beetles lined up and raised their antennae into the air. There was an electric buzz that crackled amongst them, almost loud enough to drown out the sound of the smoking vehicles, followed by brilliant flashes of energy.

Each giant beetle that still stood generated between its huge antennae a fireball that leapt the distance between them and the raiders. In an instant one car, then two, were incinerated in violent explosions all over the ruined battlefield.

Kruel fell off his command car as it careened out of control and exploded in a ball of flames – the bodies of his driver and personal guard turned to ash in the hit. The raider prince survived, but was wounded. Wiping blood from his split forehead, he looked up to see a motorcycle go out of control as it ran right into the inferno created by a giant beetle’s fireball. It didn’t even come out the other side. Terrified at the capabilities of these “fire beetles”, Kruel gathered what survivors remained at his side and fled the scene.

It was just a half-hour past dawn when Kruel was roused from his sleep by the trembling of the earth. At first he expected to see reinforcements from the newly created draft come to aid in their fortification of their new border territory, but the cries of his mere handful of fellow raiders made the reality all too clear.

Leading the counter-attack against the human

infestation into their own lands was a hideous giant bug covered in grotesque bumps and whipping coils of antennae, its bloated ugly form skittering along on burdened tiny millipede-like legs. Before it came a vanguard of plodding giant fire beetles, already beginning to hum and glow as they began to generate their murderous fireballs.

Kruel and his handful of raiders scurried for cover inside their cars, taking shots as they climbed quickly in, hoping to start the engine and escape. The charismatic raider leader was the last to flee, screening his men as they climbed inside, but he was himself blown clear as the entire vehicle was hit by a concentrated volley of fireballs. Kruel was badly burned, his handsome face half-melted off by the searing flames. His men, and their equipment, were utterly consumed in the fire. Kruel barely escaped with his life, to rejoin other groups of warriors along the northern frontier.

News reaching Kruel’s subordinate leaders left to defend the fortress and its laboring population was less than welcome; a costly war had taken many brave members of the community, and Kruel insisted on remaining away from home, unable to answer charges of cowardice and poor leadership.

What was formerly strong support for the campaign against the insects to the north turned into unrest and civil violence. Slowly but surely, the dumb, slow bugs were massing their numbers and rumbling south from the ruins of Compton, emerging from the dying sandstorm in sprawling armies. Huge “tank bugs” rolled over fortifications and broke through hastily-erected raider barriers; alongside them walked giant mutant “ants” bearing muskets and firearms scavenged from the ruins! It became all too clear that Kruel and his people have misjudged the bugs as mindless, animal things; they were, it was all too obvious, capable of a cunning intelligence...and adaptation.

Victories were turning into drastic defeats. These defeats left the people disillusioned towards the

entire war. Only a week after being injured in battle, Krueel returned to his great fortress to execute those who spoke against him, including some of his best generals. But by the time he was done, the bugs had once more amassed a terrible force, and began sweeping down from the north to counter continued raider probes into their territory. With cold, calculated attacks they crushed all defending forces, even the bravest and most savage raiders, and were now making a *direct* line towards Krueel's citadel.

Krueel had been watching the last remnants of his self-made society of bandits, raiders, thugs, and killers slowly unravel for the last few weeks. Now, holed up in their mighty fortress under the shadow of old Anaheim's crumbling skyscrapers, they had come to make their last stand. Krueel was faced with the grim reality that his dream of a unified Raider empire spreading across the old wrecked Necropolis would never be.

Clouds of black smoke rose like pillars into the sky. Women and children could be heard screaming and lamenting somewhere outside, as precious foods, powered heaters, extra blankets, and other essentials for survival were deliberately burned in a series of great bonfires. Krueel was intent on fulfilling a last-ditch plan: to destroy everything he and his men could not take with them in their final strike into bug territory.

Just then, as his armies gathered at the front gates of the fortress to start their drive, there was a shrill whistling in the air. Krueel growled bitterly, realizing now that even this last raid would never take place, the bugs had followed his army in its retreat, and had finally turned the might of the swarm to wipe the raiders out once and for all. Artillery shells from some distant site, no doubt uncovered and resurrected by those remarkably cunning insects, began exploding all over the fortress-grounds, lighting up the air in an aura of burning, abyssal light.

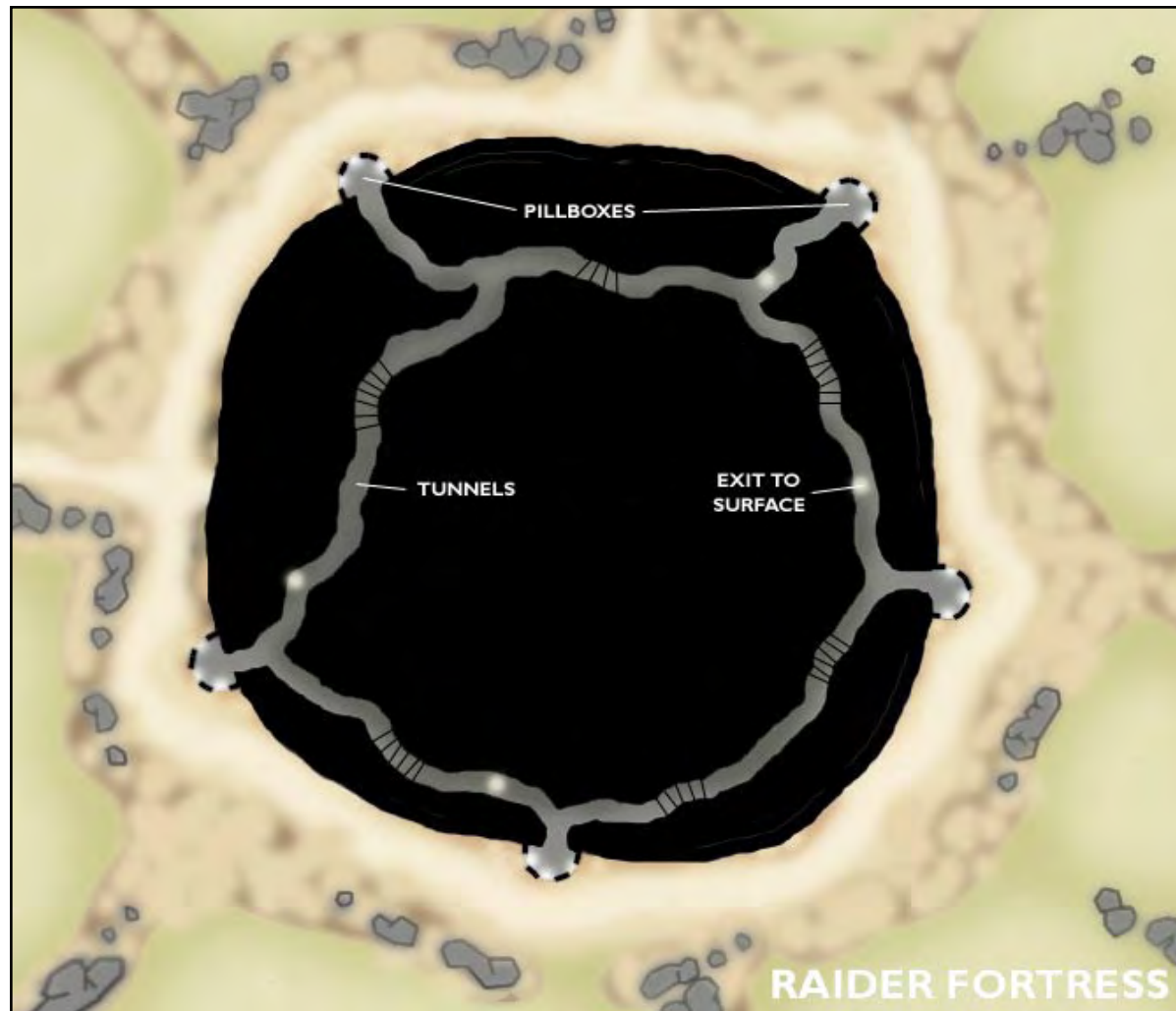
Krueel turned to his men, who had already begun to



flee, running back into the compound. Krueel ducked and fired his huge-caliber pistol towards the advancing wall of gigantic mutant bugs. From the parapets of the burning fort, his men took shots with their sniper rifles, while others leapt into bunkers to fire automatic rifles out from the walls at the advancing horde of giant mutant insects.

After several long minutes of hard, brutal fighting, the bugs begin to press forward. The front gates fell, as did large sections of wall all around the compound. Krueel pulled back towards the central bunker, leaving his stricken personal guardsmen in the courtyard to face the approaching bugs alone.

Krueel fired his last bullet, and then turned to slip



into his bunker. But the door was found to be locked shut. His eyes widened, and he looked up to the slit in the huge iron door, where the face of some battered, beaten woman stared vengefully back at him. Beside her were another, and another - all women, the very beauties he had once installed in his personal harem. Former captives he forcefully made his own ... now,

engaging in the ultimate treachery.

One of them managed to spit in his face through the slit before it was slammed shut.

Kruel turned defiantly to face his fate. A smile crept across his face. At least he wouldn't become an incubator for those goddamned bugs... He threw himself forward to attack with his electric sword, and

was consumed in a ball of searing fire.

Though Kruel died valiantly, his people did not. No one will ever know the ultimate fate of the civilians and wounded warriors who once made up the Necropolis' great raider community. It is said that the fortress was largely leveled in the final attack by the great swarm, and any survivors likely marched off to become incubators for their larvae...

ANAHEIM ENCOUNTERS

Encounters in the ruins of Anaheim are infrequent, especially since the extinction of the raiders who once terrorized the region as their own petty domain. In their absence (and after their crushing destruction at the hands of the "Hive" from the northern reaches of the city), the city has fallen into even worse decay.

The majority of encounters in Anaheim will consist solely of a handful of wild animals, having escaped the lands of the Hive. Most are skittish and will flee on sighting any bands moving through the area. At night, however, the region is even more unsettling, for lone ghouls every now and again move this far out to prowl through the ruins for possible prey. A small (but relatively powerful) band of ghouls does live in the ruins of the ancient raider stockade, but they prefer to keep their activities and presence as clandestine as possible, to avoid drawing the unwanted attention of the lair.

THE RAIDER STOCKADE

One of the most dominant features of the abandoned cityscape of Anaheim is an ashen, crumbling *stockade*. The stockade, which looks something vaguely reminiscent of an old-style slave fortress from the colonial period, stands out because it rests in the middle of a large expanse of land cleared all around it. This land, once used for growing modest crops by the raiders' slave subjects, has all but deteriorated into a choking dustbowl.

The raider stockade was made from scavenged brick and stonework from throughout the locale, brought back by slaves and erected with the blood and sweat of the same. The fragile framework was covered in whitish clay drawn from the sewer tunnels crisscrossing the area (before these were eventually collapsed; the raiders discovered ghouls in the area neighboring to the east and took measures to prevent further subterranean attacks) that still burns with a soft glow when the sun catches it. But the stain from smoke and fire and other signs of some devastating attack reveal that even the fort's tall ramparts did little to save it in the end.

GM's Note: Parties that approach the stockade risk being seen by its current inhabitants (see below), for they must cross nearly 100 yards of flattened terrain to get to the foot of the walls. Allow the ghoul sentries in the *Raider Village (Area B)* and in the *Tower (Area H)* a Spot check, at DC 15, to notice the party coming. If they are spotted, the ghouls will quietly alert the whole pack and wait in ambush for their new prey.

A. DEVASTATED CROPLAND

From the edge of low, broken buildings surrounding the area of the compound, you can see a broad flat area apparently cleared for crops long in the past. Whoever once tended the fields surrounding the compound apparently perished (or deserted) long ago as well, for now only dust and rubble can be seen between where you hide and the stockade ruins some hundred yards distant.

The cleared terrain consists of shallow dry soil, once unsteady cropland, and now utterly barren. Wind erosion has made bare the efforts of countless slaves. A Search check (DC 15) by anyone in this area will uncover the broken remains of human/humanoid skeletons here and there, marking the spot where

dead defenders were dragged to be eaten by their Hive attackers. Still, anything of use has long been scavenged.

B. RAIDER VILLAGE

The only sound to meet your ears is that of your own collective feet crunching on barren soil, kicking up dust as you go. Here, the great gates of the embattled stockade lay broken open by some tremendous force - and beyond lies a hidden village filled with skeletons and rubble like some graveyard of horrors. As you enter under the cool shadow of the towering walls overhead, you see an open area large enough to keep almost a thousand people safe from attack - but littering the grounds, standing like ebony monuments to destruction, are the fire-blackened shells of cars, trucks, and entire buildings. Once a small town fit neatly behind these walls, but some tremendous battle here left the entire settlement utterly destroyed.

All is quiet. All is still.

As if the sight of the decaying stockade wasn't enough, entry into the central courtyard beyond the imposing walls is even more eerie. Under the shadow of the tall, crumbling walls can be seen the refuge of the long-dead raiders; a huge, barren, rubble-strewn "town" lies, littered with the burned-put husks of cars, motorcycles, and even a truck or two among its narrow streets. All appear to have been destroyed in some catastrophic battle, and skeletons can be seen in driver seats, on roofs, and all over the place. It is a scene of startling carnage and eerie desolation.

This place is the scene of an eleventh hour chaos - it is where the raiders made their last stand when the Hive finally came to eradicate them for transgressing arrogantly into Hive lands. Fortified behind their walls the raiders thought themselves safe, but the

overwhelming power of the enemy was too great even for their ruthless soldiers.

The raiders fought a quick, desperate, and ultimately futile battle here. All of their remaining vehicles were used, and from the walls they focused inwards to shower the invaders with weapons fire. They fought among the streets, hiding in their shelters. The effort cost the Hive a number of their own, yet in the end the raiders were slaughtered to the last man, and the town all but burned-down.

GM's Note: For most of the day, among the ruined trucks, buildings, and other debris, a single ghoul will be found lurking in town. The ghoul keeps an eye out on the approaches to the compound, as well as the streets of the walled town, and immediately goes to alert his fellows if living beings are seen or heard. Short of a force from the Hive, the ghouls will prepare for an ambush to garner new food reserves for the coming weeks, either here among the streets or in the tunnels below (see *Area C*).

👁 **Ghoul (1):** HP 12.

C. BUNKERS/TUNNELS

A number of low, squat, concrete "bunkers" and "pillboxes" sit at the base of the great walls, and even inside the courtyard itself. Each of these seems poorly constructed, but effective nonetheless in their purpose - to provide cover for their occupants while giving an overlapping view of the approaches to the raider fort.

Getting into a bunker is almost impossible from the outside, since they are only pierced with narrow firing slits. Each slit has an iron hatch that can swing over to cover it completely, though many of these have fallen off or rusted away. Attacking someone within the bunker would be quite hard, as the bunker affords *nine-tenths cover*.

A series of tunnels, dug beneath each bunker, connects the pillboxes to the interior of the compound (see map). Each tunnel is barely five feet high and two feet wide, permitting only single-file movement

in absolute darkness. Turning around in a tunnel is difficult because they are so narrow, requiring a move action to accomplish.

The ghouls of the compound sometimes retreat to these tunnels during the day to avoid the painful effects of the sunlight, and if the party comes by day the enemy may well be encountered here instead of elsewhere.

👁 **Ghouls (6):** HP 18, 15, 15, 12, 12, and 10.

Treasure: The bunkers are each found to be empty, except perhaps for the shattered remains of some poor unfortunate or two who fought to the end within. There is a 10% chance that any bunker will contain a skeleton still armed with a *black powder rifle* (but only one in the entire complex). *The ghouls have not taken these for they lack the intelligence to use them!*

One or two of the underground tunnels may also still contain a crate or two of gunpowder for the defenders' muskets (another 50% chance of 10-100 shots of powder; only two such surviving caches at most).

D. WALLS

Old walls, cracked and crumbling, stand over the entire stockade. From their summit can be seen the entire vicinity surrounding this lost stronghold – the deserted cropland below, and the beginnings of the ruined city beyond.

The walls of the stockade are accessed via broad stairs on each of its walls, wide enough for four men abreast to ascend at a time. The walls have suffered from attack, fire, and decay, however, and in many places have crumbled or collapsed so badly as to prevent movement along the ramparts.

From their summit, one can see anywhere in the compound's field of vision.

E. RUINED STRONGHOLD

Central to the village, built on a low rise, stand the remains of what must have once been a strongpoint, a last line of defense for those who died here. A large squat bunker, destroyed by fire and crushing force, surveys the deserted village around it in silence.

This was an additional bunker, but stocked with supplies and arms for the raiders to retreat to should their walls be compromised. The battle for the raider compound didn't last long enough for a pitched battle here, but the bandit prince (Kruel) attempted to escape here in hopes of evading certain death. He died outside without ever reaching safety.

In the end, even the bunker's strong stone walls were no match for the fireballs produced by the massive Hive beetles.

Characters searching the charred ruins find little more than the remains of an old strongpoint – fire seems to have ignited a cache of gunpowder stored here, causing the bunker to literally explode; anyone or anything that had been within disintegrated completely in the blast. Nothing remains.

F. COMMUNITY GARAGES

Here the cool shadow of the overhead wall masks a large building erected long ago. Three huge "bays" pierce the building's front, revealing only darkness beyond. The entire area seems clear of human remains, but the wreckage of vehicles lie scattered all about.

This huge building was built by the raiders for the maintenance of their fleet of vehicles that they brought with them from beyond the mountains, or otherwise scavenged from the ruins of the Necropolis. Having a number of mechs with some appreciable skill among

their ranks, this was no doubt the center of their power.

This place, as elsewhere, is a ruin. What used to be a huge workshop capable of supporting and repairing a dozen vehicles at once is now merely a dusty cavern. Skeletons in badly rotted leather armor lie strewn about; the rusted hulks of two or three armored-up autos sit idly in the shadows. Cobwebs hang over nearly everything. Old banks of tool chests, tables, and work areas are destroyed – as if thoroughly plundered by some unknown force long before the party's arrival.

Treasure: A Search (DC 15) of the entire garage, taking 1d3 hours, will allow some scavenging of what little remains. There are enough tools remaining scattered throughout the rubble (apparently overlooked) to comprise a full *mechanical tool kit*. In addition, one of the "destroyed" vehicles could in fact be salvaged with a successful Repair check. This vehicle is a *Ford Crown Victoria*.

G. COLLAPSED FORTRESS

A cathedral-like ruin stands here, mutely glaring back down at those who transgress into the deserted compound. Ash-blackened outer walls, and collapsed inner walls, tell a story of fiery destruction that left the place a shattered ruins.

This place was once a grand fortress (by raider standards), where the best warriors of the raider clan made their home, along with their raider prince, the now deceased Kruel. A church before the Fall, the raiders desecrated the ruin further by turning it into a stronghold with buttressing, reinforcement and their very presence. The bodies of disobedient slaves were crucified outside; beneath the place, in collapsed tunnels, they kept their harems of captives, all of who died when the building burned down and the entire citadel came tumbling down.

GM's Note: Among these prickly, dangerous ruins, a Search check (DC 18) will reveal a number of well-concealed tunnels that lead into the earth and under the walls to connect the various bunkers throughout the area. Searching above ground has a 10% chance, per person per round, of causing some kind of minor collapse that will alert anyone and everyone in the compound to the party's movements (no Listen check required).

H. TOWER

Towering over the compound is a single, ramshackle wooden tower (covered), which no doubt permits a grand view of the entire compound and ruins. A ladder, sheathed in piping (to prevent the climber from being sniped-at, no doubt) leads up to its summit. The entire structure creaks unsoundly in the wind.

Climbing to the tower top takes a full three rounds. At its summit the tower is found to be a creaking, unsteady structure, barely 20 feet by 20 feet. Narrow shuttered windows run the length of each side, however, permitting 360 degrees vision from an unprecedented height, allowing a full view of the raider village within the walls, as well as the cropland beyond.

GM's Note: At any given time there will likely be a ghoul reluctantly stationed here to keep a lookout. This ghoul will descend from this perch if the alarm is to be raised, or if fighting is heard elsewhere in the compound.

☠ **Ghoul (1):** HP 10.

THE GHOULS

The ghouls living in the ruins of the old raider stockade are survivors of the ghoul enclave that once infested the city ruins to the east, but which was shattered by the onslaught of the great Hive in their drive to dominate the city of Necropolis. Though the once-mighty ghoul "empire" was crushed and forced underground, many fled their people's ruin to live out a dangerous, savage existence on the fringes of Hive territory.

The ghouls living here are a band of escapees that have clung to a pack organization purely for survival. If they cannot secure food in this locale they will eventually move on, ever eastwards, towards the hills, searching for prey while evading Hive patrols in the area.

If and when the PCs are discovered in "their" stockade, the ghouls will attempt to gather their numbers before ambushing the enemy. If it is day, they will retreat to the tunnels in the *Bunkers* (see map) to ambush unsuspecting PCs if they come down after them. Alternatively, they wait here until nightfall to emerge and take anyone camping among the ruins by surprise.

If it is night, the ghouls gather en masse and emerge in a pack to confront the enemy, moving between the party and the compound gate to prevent escape.

In general the ghouls will fight until only about one-third of their original numbers remain; at which time they will escape if possible (they value nothing among the stockade ruins and thus will not hesitate to flee if seriously threatened).

☠ **Ghouls, Post-Apocalyptic Hero 2 (8):** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2; HP 18, 15, 15, 12, 12, 12, 10, and 10; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 11 (+2 Dex, +1 class); BAB +1; Grap +1; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, claw); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, 2 claws), +1 melee (1d6+1/19-20, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Necropoli Lore; AL none; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will -1; AP 3; Rep +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 3.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Tribal.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Read/Write (Unislang), Search +2, Spot +6, Speak Language (Unislang), Survival +4.

Feats: Alertness, Primitive Technology, Multi-Attack, Weapon Finesse (claws, bite).

Mutations and Defects: Albinism, Cannibalism (x2), Claws, Sensitive Sight, Serrated Dental Development.

Possessions: None.