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NEW WORLD ORDER v1.1

BY

DOMINIC COVEY AND CHRIS COVEY

COVER: J. LONGENBAUGH

ART: J. LONGENBAUGH

CARTOGRAPHY: DOMINIC COVEY

EDITING: ANDY RAU

LAYOUT: CHRIS DAVIS

PLAYTESTING:

**CHRIS COVEY, MIKE GUILD, CHRIS JOHNSON, JOHN SHAW,
SHAWN WINTERS, CHRIS DERNER, CHRIS HOOVER, RYAN
KELLEY, ETHAN RIPPLINGER, AARON WIGGINS.**

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NEW WORLD ORDER

INTRODUCTION

The New World Order is a complete adventure for the *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* roleplaying game. This adventure picks up mid-course in a three-part campaign in which the PCs, originally hired to defend the coalition of the Three Towns (*Bazaar*, *Dry Fort*, and *Spilunk*), find that a threat even *greater* than the Wastelords is growing beyond the Trade Lands.

The New World Order is best suited for a group of four to six characters of levels 5-8. A typical party of this size should have accumulated enough experience from part one of this series, *Against the Wastelords*, to reach 5th level; if you are playing this adventure as a stand-alone campaign, either have players create characters of the appropriate level or run them through another adventure first to bring them to the recommended power level.

In addition to these requirements, PCs with Gather Information, Listen, Search, Spot, and Survival skills will be essential. The Track feat will also come in quite handy. Bluff, Decipher Script, Demolitions, Diplomacy, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Gamble, Intimidate, Investigate, Knowledge (Twisted Earth), Repair, and Sense Motive

will find some use, but are not necessary to success. Finally, having a balanced mix of skilled melee and ranged combatants will be extremely useful, if not essential, to the party's success.

GETTING INVOLVED

The New World Order presents two optional introductions to the adventure; the first (**Introduction A**) picks up where the first part of the series, *Against the Wastelords*, left off. In this introduction, the PCs have just fought a desperate battle against the Wastelords to save the last armies of the Three Towns Alliance and keep a nuclear weapon out of the raiders' hands. Though the battle has been bitterly won, Wastelord reinforcements have just arrived, forcing the PCs (and the Three Towns) to re-assess their decision to resist their cruel overlords.

Introduction B is designed for players and GMs who are not continuing from *Against the Wastelords* and are instead using *The New World Order* as a stand-alone story. This alternate beginning introduces the PCs as mercenaries hired by the Wastelords to help defend their holdings beyond the mountains against the mysterious and terrible "Enemy."

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Before beginning this adventure it is important for you, the GM, to understand a little background about the New World Order and the ambitions of the mastermind behind it. This introductory section briefly outlines the basic history of the New World Order and its plans, and gives a glimpse of the unique entity that drives it.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The so-called "New World Order" is the brainchild of a unique being—an artificial creation of Ancient man in his last days. Since the Fall, it has patiently awaited the dawn of a new era in which to introduce itself. Yet the being in question is not some insane robotic artificial intelligence, as one might expect from the Ancients; it is a creation of an entirely different kind, one whose abilities in many ways overshadow those of the dreaded "metal gods."

This being is a *macro-organism* of unimaginable complexity and proportions. Originally developed as a super-biological weapon, this macro-organism was a complex amalgam of biomaterial literally *grown* from a microscopic biomass into a colossal entity with substance, form, and (most remarkably) *sentience*. The pinnacle of Ancient-era bioengineering and viral science, the macro-organism was intended to be a "final word" response, a doomsday weapon that could be transported via ICBM warhead to target cities anywhere on the globe. Once released, the organism would spread its contagion, contaminating all other life forms with which it came into contact—infecting over time not only the targeted population center, but entire nations.

The project was researched and developed in an ultra-secret government disease laboratory built under the small



town of Center in southern Colorado. Here, using cutting-edge techniques, an army of human scientists, and the most sophisticated thinker androids of the time, the Ancients were able to create no less than five of these “city-eating” macro-organisms. Each was contained in a magnetically sealed warhead and shipped off to be used in the coming war.

A sixth macro-organism was still being raised to maturity in the facility’s deep laboratories when the Fall came... and with the Fall came the unthinkable: in the chaos of the collapse, a considerable energy fluctuation at the research laboratory permitted the macro-organism to free itself. It spread rapidly through the laboratory, claiming the lives of over a hundred scientists, technicians, and security personnel in a matter of hours. Though a facility-wide alarm was raised and the androids and surviving humans on site were able to contain most of the macro-organism’s mass within the underground facility, they were too late to stop the contagion’s spread. Some of the survivors of the initial encounter with the macro-organism fled from the bowels of the base to the surface world, only to infect the emergency workers that came to assist them.

As on-site response teams struggled to contain the outbreak, their own numbers were slowly becoming infected. The macro-organism had been designed to take over the minds and bodies of creatures it infected, turning them into seemingly unaffected thralls through which it could spread its contagion undetected. By the time it became clear that all survivors who had escaped the underground facility to the surface would have to be contained or killed to control the infection, it was too late.

The contagion spread faster than first imagined, and the infection of base personnel reached well over 50%. During a brief but savage exchange of gunfire between uninfected security and a mass of infected thralls, one of the disease containment buildings was damaged to such an extent that a large portion of viral bacteria samples were released into the air. A flood of plagues—anthrax, brucella, tularemia, and others—infected defenders and attackers alike.

When this biohazard release was detected, the surface facility’s computers put into effect a last-ditch emergency measure to prevent the spread of disease at all costs: the release of VX gas throughout the town to kill off anyone left alive.

While their human comrades died off in the gas release, the facility’s remaining androids were able to halt the macro-organism’s spread through sheer tenacity. Unaffected by the biological plagues or the VX sterilization measures, the androids held strong. The macro-organism was sealed underground, cutting it off from its thralls except for a weak telepathic link.

As the world was engulfed in war, the thinker androids of the facility struggled to keep the creature in place. In the last days, an emergency CDC team (bolstered by a special unit of soldier androids, the 303rd Military Police) was sent to help the containment efforts, but the humans involved began to desert when the full implications of the worldwide Fall became clear. Most fled into the desert to take their chances

there, not caring what happened at the secret facility.

When word of this predicament reached the A.I. war planners deep inside the mountain bunker at Cheyenne Mountain, a single B-52 bomber was dispatched to destroy the facility from the air with a nuclear strike. Unfortunately, fate had another trick in store for the Ancients: the EM pulse of detonations in Denver and Pueblo caused the bomber to crash, ditching its undetonated cruise missile in the mountains more than fifty miles from its target.

The thinker and soldier androids, however, stayed at their posts. Operating independently of the remote networks that linked most robotic formations to the cyborg command (see *Metal Gods* for more information), they were all but forgotten. They did not turn on their human masters, nor did they abandon their last directive—to *maintain the quarantine at all costs*.

For over two hundred years, a sizeable contingent of androids has remained at the facility, desperately maintaining the quarantine and thwarting the macro-organism’s every attempt to break out. But battle damage and age are steadily thinning their numbers, and it is inevitable that some day soon their ability to contain the being will degenerate.

THE LAST GOD

The macro-organism, technically designated “XBM-06,” was developed not only to be cognizant of its surroundings, but to think. Created to be *intelligent*, the macro-organism would awaken upon arrival at a target site, adapt to its surroundings, and manipulate its environment in an ongoing mission of destruction. Its ability to think, reason, and plan made it far more potent than any traditional biological weapon. Secondly, the macro-organism possessed telepathic abilities with which it could unite infected subjects (“thralls”) into one enormous “over-mind” that could spread its influence efficiently over a larger area.

Unable to fulfill its mission due to its imprisonment in a steel and concrete tomb beneath the Colorado desert, XBM-06 went somewhat *insane*. Combining the worst elements of its original mission—to spread out over a large area and infect everything it can—and its own slowly developing megalomania, it has come to believe it is, in fact, a *god*.

XBM-06 wishes to be free of its tomb to spread across the world as originally intended. However, it no longer simply seeks to *destroy*; it genuinely wants to nurture, protect, and “care” for those it infects. It is aware of the Fall of mankind (it has no reason to doubt the success of its “brother” organisms, the other five XBMs that presumably were used during the apocalyptic exchange), and realizes that humanity is in a shambles, in need of direction, purpose, and a guiding hand. XBM-06 wants to be that guiding hand. To this end, it envisions a “new world order,” one in which it shepherds lost remnants of humanity and is worshiped as a god by legions of loving followers.

Whatever noble intentions it may have, the “Last God” is undeniably monstrous and mad; it aims to control all living creatures within its domain, either by infecting them directly or by dominating them through fear. While it might,

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION

An important thing to keep in mind throughout this adventure is that while the PCs will encounter a variety of infected foes, they are essentially fighting the *same creature* in different forms. The New World Order's agents, soldiers, and node mothers aren't so much individual elements in an army or faction as they are collective cells of one enormous organism. As further detailing of the Last God will show, everything infected by the super-weapon becomes a very real part of it. Though infected creatures may have bodies of their own, and can wander far and wide, they all become part of the greater organism when they succumb to the contagion. They are of one mind and one will.

As a result, it is important to consider how the Last God views the PCs. Because each and every thrall in the New World Order is linked to one enormous over-mind, everything its thralls see, hear, and do is witnessed by every other infected member of the macro-organism's brood—including the main mass of the Last God trapped beneath Center.

By the time the PCs arrive at Center in the third part of this adventure series (*The Last God*), the macro-organism will already know much about them, their tactics, and their capabilities...

if given the chance, attempt to peacefully convince others of the rightness of its vision, it will tolerate no dissent and would meet refusals with cold arrogance and tremendous wrath. Despite its powers and abilities, XBM-06's mindset is decidedly childlike: it desperately wants to do good and to be loved, but its inexperience and its inability to look past its own paranoia and self-importance means that it will only harm those it claims to love.

For the past two centuries, the Last God has remained sealed within the underground depths of the facility, forgotten to the world of men. Deprived of living organic matter (except for the hosts it claimed during its original accidental release) through which to replicate or expand, it has only grown through a slow *mitosis*. Even at a reduced rate of growth and expansion, in the two hundred years since its "birth" it has increased in size and volume to such an extent that it occupies several levels of the facility, entire laboratory blocks, and even whole buildings.

But the Last God is not merely content with growth—it desires freedom. Its telepathic awareness has increased along with its physical size, and so XBM-06 has gradually been able to extend its mental reach beyond the confines of its prison. It has probed and prodded the android quarantine, searching for weaknesses to be exploited. It has investigated and explored its "cage," scouring its confines for a way out.

Several years ago, an opportunity for escape presented itself when the Last God expanded into a section of the subterranean base that contained still-functioning computers. Calling upon skills bred into it by its creators, the Last God worked through these computers to access the intranet still operating in parts of the facility. Clever manipulation of the base's computer systems triggered a power failure that allowed it to free a part of itself once again, this time using an old, forgotten ventilation chute leading to the surface. Sending forth a host of its "seedlings" (the animated remains of Ancient scientists and soldiers long ago infected by its biomass) and dispatching a pair of "node mothers" (special servitors that would act to extend its consciousness to the surface) to make sure the way was clear, its vast bulk began to move—just as its android keepers realized what was happening.

A handful of androids managed to reactivate an old blast door that dropped and severed one of the Last God's "appendages." As the androids moved in to eradicate this "extension" with lasers and flamethrowers, the Last God realized its attempt to escape had been foiled. Unwilling to accept failure so easily, it quickly ordered those thralls that had escaped to make a mad dash for the desert. Most were killed as the androids closed in, but a few escaped detection and fled into the heart of the wasteland.

The Last God was again contained, but even with only a handful of seedlings and node mothers it had at last managed to gain a foothold *outside* of the facility. The escaped thralls fled in all directions away from the base, driven by a single-minded purpose: to spread the infection to every living creature they found... and to build an *army* for their imprisoned god.

A handful of these thralls shambled out of the desert and were taken in by the tribals living at Saguache. In only a matter of hours, the seedlings infected the entire population, transforming every man, woman, and child into seedlings or zombie-like *shamblers*, all devoted to their inhuman master's will. Other seedlings spread out across the desert in search of prey, and over time the infection spread to the isolated villages, settlements, and even animal life of the San Luis Valley.

The Last God seeks to build an army from the people and animals of the San Luis Valley for a reason: they will provide not only the biomass it needs to continue to grow and spread over the earth, but also the material it needs to build weapons capable of overcoming the robots of the quarantine. It also hopes to build, from scratch, the components needed to create a fully-operational computer system that, when brought back to Center by this army, will allow it to "hack" directly into the androids that keep it imprisoned.

To this end, the Last God directs its seedlings to spread the infection wherever possible, in time building an army—and a war machine—powerful enough to return to its prison under the town of Center, overcome the defending androids, and *set it free!*

RECENTLY

The first infected seedlings and shamblers began attacking the periphery of the Wastelord empire a few years ago. At first they came in small groups, but over time the small groups became mobs, which became massive waves. Some of the attackers resembled tribals (infected members of the community at Saguache), and so for a time the Wastelords remained ignorant of the true threat against them. But when infected animals and zombie-like shamblers began to approach Wastelord towns and villages, it became clear to the Wastelords that they were fighting an enemy of alien purpose and capabilities. Although they had dealt with tough mutants and defiant subjects before, the Wastelords had never seen anything quite so disturbing as a *zombie*.

For the first few months, the Wastelords fought several decisive battles defending their territory, but the onslaught of creatures never seemed to abate. One by one, outlying Wastelord communities began to fall. Those civilians who survived were quickly infected and inducted into the ranks of the Last God's New World Order.

Just when things started to appear hopeless, a seedling was captured alive at the frontier town of Hooper attempting to infiltrate the settlement's water supply. When it was brought back to Shelter City, Kyren, the Wastelord's leader, ordered it examined by his top doctors and thinkers. Though at first they were at a total loss to explain what it was (short of saying it "looked human"), after a few experiments in the city's underground hospital they deduced that the "human" was merely the host receptacle for a unique form of *virus*. When the specimen almost escaped (claiming the lives of two Wastelord guards), the scientists were able to observe how the creature infected the guards and turned them into duplicates of itself, eager to spread the contagion.

Aware that, unlike most of his foes, this new Enemy would not be easily terrorized into submission or defeated in open battle, Kyren seriously considered abandoning his empire and fleeing to more secure lands. By a stroke of luck, however, a heavily damaged android appeared outside of Hooper a few days later. The android, one of several soldier models sent to pursue the node mothers and seedlings that had escaped into the desert during the power failure, was fired upon and almost completely destroyed by the Wastelord warriors who first saw it. When Kyren heard of the android's ill-fated arrival, he knew that its appearance in the wake of the infected attacks had to be more than just a coincidence; he had the remains brought immediately to Shelter City for examination.

Although most of the android's systems were beyond repair, the Wastelords were able to pry enough information from the android's memory banks to confirm that it had been pursuing the seedlings, and even to pinpoint the source of the trouble—the old town of Center, on the far side of the valley.

Kyren immediately organized an expedition, led by one of his most loyal followers, to lead an attack on Center—but neither his trusted general nor the entire army of more than 100 warriors returned. Fearing such a bizarre and seemingly invincible foe, Kyren withdrew the remainder of his troops

to towns under his control and pondered how to act against an enemy he could neither anticipate nor understand.

Eventually Kyren realized that a purely defensive response—waiting and fending off the tireless onslaught of the Enemy—was a hopeless strategy. For all he knew, there might be hundreds if not thousands of the Enemy lurking out in the wastes. His own manpower reserves were dwindling; though he had drafted almost every able-bodied man in his own lands to fight, his army was suffering irreplaceable casualties.

Kyren then decided on a plan of action: to send raider parties into the lands across the mountains, there to acquire materiel for his war—not only supplies such as food and water, but also captives to fight as "slave soldiers" and janissaries against the Enemy. If he could build a sufficiently large army, he might be able to counter-attack and retake the lands he had lost.

Once again, luck played a part in Kyren's plans. When his Wastelord scouts found an old intact *cruise missile* on the other side of the mountains in the Trade Lands (ironically, the same Ancient nuclear warhead meant to destroy the Last God centuries ago), it was as if his prayers had been answered. Kyren knew this weapon could very well put an end to the Enemy once and for all; he knew the exact location from which the Enemy originated, and with a nuclear weapon, he could destroy it utterly.

However, Kyren was not aware that the people of the Trade Lands, tired of being victimized, had formed an alliance to finally resist him. In their time of greatest need, the Wastelords were beaten by a coalition of just three primitive towns... and a handful of heroes in their employ.

Their attempt to secure the nuclear weapon and use it against the town of Center thwarted, the Wastelords have only one option left—get those same heroes to finish the job... *manually*.

STARTING OUT

If used as a continuation of *Against the Wastelords*, *The New World Order* begins with the PCs capitulating to and signing up for service with the Wastelords (see the *Denizens of the Twisted Earth* chapter of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* for details on this raider faction) at the close of hostilities in the Trade Lands. Because of the PCs' actions, the Wastelords have ultimately failed in their bid to find a weapon powerful enough to destroy the facility at Center, and have seemingly lost their last chance to destroy this monstrous threat to the world.

However, there is one last chance for salvation, and that chance has come in the form of a small group of adventurers—the same adventurers who devastated the Wastelord army and brought about this whole mess in the first place!

AGAINST THE WASTELORDS AND THE LAST GOD

The New World Order is the second phase of a three-adventure series that began with *Against the Wastelords*,

continues with *The New World Order*, and concludes with *The Last God*.

It is possible to run *The New World Order* without first playing *Against the Wastelords* (or without playing *The Last God* afterwards). This adventure provides an alternate introduction in case you want to skip *Against the Wastelords* and simply “jump into” the game.

In *The New World Order*, the PCs now work for their former enemies, and get a chance to see that life among the Wastelords, while predatory and ruthless, isn't much different than it is anywhere else on the Twisted Earth. In addition, their travels may bring them into contact with numerous people within the Wastelord community who might become important allies should the PCs ever again fight the Wastelords once the “truce” with the Three Towns Alliance ends.

The enemy in *The New World Order* is also quite different than “normal” wasteland foes; instead of a brutal gang of mutant raiders led by one or two cunning leaders, the enemy in *The New World Order* is a single being made up of many cells, something that at first may seem beyond comprehension. The enemy mastermind here is nothing short of a true “super-being,” a creature of bizarre properties and colossal powers that, even throughout the course of the adventure, the PCs only encounter through its interconnected network of thralls and go-betweens. For the time being, this enemy is beyond the means of the PCs to defeat on even terms; in the final installment of this series, *The Last God*, the PCs will enter the great enemy's lair and see firsthand the true threat it poses to all life on the Twisted Earth.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins with one of two different introductions, which you as GM must select when introducing the group to play. **Introduction A** is intended for PCs who have just finished *Against the Wastelords*; **Introduction B** can be used if you are playing this scenario by itself.

INTRODUCTION A

As if bending beneath the mighty threat of the Great Weapon, the last vestiges of the raider army begin to retreat, then break into a rout. Within five minutes, all that remains is a swirling dust storm in their wake—and a long reprieve in which friendly forces can count their dead.

The raiders have been defeated. But as they retreat over the dunes and out of sight, there is a loud BANG from the Great Weapon, as the entire contraption—roped together with bundles of wire—falls apart in a pile of junk.

One of the surviving warriors from Spilunk turns and grins, finally able to let you in on his community's private joke.

“The warhead was a dud all along. We found that out after we brought it here. We tried to fix it but... but it saved the Alliance nonetheless.”

The bluff—an unbelievable stroke of bravado—seems to have worked.

As you search the area in the aftermath of the Wastelords' retreat, a loud buzzing sound catches your attention. Following the noise, you soon come to the wreckage of an armored vehicle. Sitting on the seat next to the dead driver is a knobby metal box covered with dials and wires. The buzzing appears to be coming from the small round screen set into the face of the artifact. Soon, the buzzing gives way to a crackling, and then a voice booms out, “Yup, heard ya. We're coming.”

Looking to one another, you listen further as another voice continues: “Yeah, passed through the riverbed a while ago. Mopped up some pathetic resistance. We're almost there. We'll be there in about five minutes.... There's about a hundred of us... (pause)... You hear me? ... (pause) ... Dammit! Answer me, scumbag! .. (pause) ...

“Ahhh, I see. Well, well, well. I guess you savages won. If you are listening... there's no escape.”

Staring at one another in wide-eyed disbelief, you realize that the raiders must have called for reinforcements, a force far larger than the Alliance ever imagined. Those reinforcements have broken the bottleneck at the dry riverbed and are almost upon you.

You quickly gather your gear, but you know the victorious but battered alliance armies don't have a chance of surviving another wave of attackers.

The huge dust cloud soon reveals a large group of raiders, many more than you just defeated. The Wastelords close in around you, forming a crescent that slowly encircles the whole of Dry Fort. So far no one has fired, and your surviving allies slowly lower their weapons, hoping for mercy in the face of this huge force. The fact that the raiders have not yet engaged you seems to indicate they have something else in mind...

The Wastelords approach, alert and heavily armed. The new reinforcements possess a number of armored vehicles, including four motorcycles with sidecars, three sedans, and a minibus. All are heavily modified with armor plate, mesh window armor, spikes, and ram-plates. Two of the sedans have open roofs and ring mounts equipped with flamethrowers. Wary-looking Wastelords point these heavy weapons at you, the group nearest their lines.

As they come to an unexpected stop, one of the raiders jumps down from the last sedan's hood and walks towards you. He raises his hand, and the other raiders seem to relax—a little. It seems this one wants to talk. Looking at the unrealistic odds, you decide to hear what he has to say.

“Well, well, well. What a bunch of bronze. Kinda ruined my little operation here, didn't you? No problem,” he says, taking a long, slow breath from a

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wrapped up, stinking weed in his mouth. “Guess you guys are good.”

It is obvious this well-armed and armored individual is sizing you up. “Damn! I gotta give it to you guys. How the hell did you kill Kyren?”

“What about Big Bert?” says one of the raiders, casually holding a pump-gun.

“Hell yeah. Big Bert too,” says the Wastelord leader. Then he looks over to the remains of the Great Weapon, crumbled and broken.

“Looks like you ruined our one big chance...”

“Here it is. Seems we got the same problems, you and us. Can’t say sorry or anything about being a raider—you know how it is. Anyways, you guys have earned my respect. You’re lucky I don’t just kill you; you’re in no shape to fight back.

“So I got a prop for ya. Since you destroyed our weapon, you gotta solve our problem... “manually.” Not only will we let ya live, we may even pay you when you’re done. Whaddya say?”

With that, a number of the raiders cock their weapons and level them at you. The sight of more raiders flanking the settlement of Dry Fort makes the sheer futility of resistance sink home.

Still in shock, one of you speaks up. “What about the Great Weapon? If not for destroying us... what was it for?”

“Handling our ‘little problem.’ What, you chuckleheads thought we went through all of this to conquer your puny tribes? Ha! Not a chance. There are a hundred villages like yours on the other side of the mountains that we could prey on. No. We’ve got bigger fish to fry...”

It should be obvious now that the PCs have no choice but to accept the Wastelords’ proposition. As GM you should make it clear that further resistance would be tantamount to suicide; there is a force of Wastelords (and vehicles) equal to if not greater than the first wave (see *Against the Wastelords* for an idea of what that battle would be like) already closing in.

If the PCs demand a count of the enemy before making a decision, inform them that the second “wave” includes the following:

- 80 Low-level Wastelords A
- 16 Mid-level Wastelords
- 8 Battle Cars (armed with M60 machineguns and flamethrowers)

In the event of a fight, the PCs face only 1/4 of the enemy army (the other three-fourths attack different parts of the Dry Fort defense perimeter), but be sure to remind the PCs that they are wounded, that any fallen allies will not be replaced, and that they do not have fresh reinforcements like the raiders do...

Understandably, players may have a hard time accepting



their situation; the idea of having to surrender their gear or otherwise submit to the deprivations of victorious raiders may inspire them with a suicidal defiance at this most desperate point. If this is the case, play up the surprising “civility” of the Wastelords; always keep in mind that they are here for a very desperate reason, and are willing to forego their usual “rape and plunder” if only to secure the cooperation of the Three Towns in defeating the New World Order.

The man looks you over for a long moment.

“Don’t worry. We want to talk, that’s all. This fighting... well, I guess it’s all futile now.” He breathes deeply on his cigarette before moving forward and surprising you all by extending his hand in an awkward attempt at making peace.

“I’m Kyren. The real Wastelord. That’s right, the guy you killed wasn’t me—he was one of my followers. Just one of several look-alikes that often take my place when we’re on campaign. Makes the locals more afraid if they think I’m there personally. Anyway, he was a tough son-of-a-bitch, and I’m impressed you killed him.

“Now, you want mercy? You want a truce? You want to spare these people any more bloodshed? Then we’d better talk.”

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Kyren lights up another cigarette, takes a long drag, and exhales deeply. He then moves forward and calls out to the defenders watching warily behind the walls of Dry Fort.

"You there, you savage monkeys! You're a lot tougher than we imagined! Anyway," he takes another drag, the smoke dissipating quickly in the strong desert wind, "it's over. No more fighting, okay? It's a waste of time. You've made your point. But we've obviously won. Now open your gates so we can talk... face-to-face. Your leaders, and me. What do you say?"

There is a tangible apprehension in the air. Kyren's words hang heavily in everyone's minds; seconds stretch into long minutes of silence. Then, the bloodied figures of Warlord Thrakas of Dry Fort and Elder Vilic of Spilunk appear together on the ramparts. Thrakas speaks:

"Open the gate!"

Negotiations between the Alliance of the Three Towns and the Wastelords stretch on well into the night. Though at first hesitant, the leaders of the Three Towns know they have little choice but to hear Kyren's demands. In a remarkable show of trust—or perhaps a sign of fearless arrogance—the handsome raider prince goes almost unescorted into the citadel of Dry Fort to discuss a possible cease-fire with the leaders of the coalition.

It has been several hours since the negotiations began, and the withering heat of mid-day has waned with the drawing of the cool curtain of night. Womenfolk from Dry Fort move with a handful of robed Spilunk healers to tend to the wounds of the fallen; the sounds of misery, suffering, and men on the very doorstep of death echo across the battlefield. The gleaming chrome of the Wastelord army, poised in a vast semi-circle as if ready to sweep all vestiges of resistance away with but a signal, begins to fade as darkness blankets the valley floor.

But they are out there, to be sure. Watching. And waiting.

Torches are lit all about the fort, illuminating masses of dead and wounded, revealing in dim smoky light the true face of war: countless dead and dying mixed in with those who will live on to remember this day with sorrow and bitterness, and in nightmares for years to come.

At long last, a party emerges from the citadel—looking for you.

Captain Ulz approaches, a serious look on his face. He looks each surviving member of the party over before motioning for you to follow him into the citadel to the place of the negotiations.

Eventually you find yourselves arrayed before the meeting table of Warlord Thrakas, lord of Dry Fort, and what few representatives of the other Alliance members could make it. Elder Vilic of Spilunk looks out

from beneath his hood to regard each of you favorably, as if seeing you alive after the tremendous battle is a comfort to him. Trademaster Gorgel of Bazaar watches nervously as you gather.

Warlord Thrakas sighs before speaking.

"The Wastelords have offered peace. Kyren, the 'lord' of their empire, is willing to call off his armies if we agree to his terms."

At this, Trademaster Gorgel wrings his hands; Elder Vilic seems to study each of you with even more scrutiny, as if trying to anticipate your reactions.

"The Wastelords are fighting an... enemy of their own, over the mountains. They need... warriors capable of handling a... delicate problem. They were impressed by your fighting skill... they want you."

Warlord Thrakas lets those words sink in for a moment.

"You have fought for the Trade Lands and its people, and if you refuse, we of Dry Fort will protect you against whatever reprisals the Wastelords have planned. Even to the death."

That statement is a grave one, considering the massed army outside, but it also speaks volumes of the honor of Warlord Thrakas and his people.

"But if you do accept," says Thrakas, leaning forward and placing his hands on the rough stone table in front of him, "the Wastelords have agreed to a lasting peace. They are willing to grant the Trade Lands a reprieve from their raids for ten years."

"This is most desirable," says Gorgel, his voice betraying his obvious approval of the plan. "Ten years of peace—ten years to rebuild, ten years to prepare for the future—"

"Ten years to ready ourselves for their return..." Elder Vilic interrupts, giving voice to the obvious implications of the Trademaster's words.

There is a moment of silence.

"Nevertheless it is a good deal," Warlord Thrakas finally concludes. "One that will spare many lives in the Trade Lands. Ten years of peace is better than death today."

"But the choice is yours, brave warriors."

Once more the fate of the Trade Lands is in the hands of the PCs, but this time their choice is relatively simple: either leave the people of the Alliance to the mercy of a desperate raider army, or answer the call and save the Three Towns from sure destruction.

Once the PCs agree to the plan, the Alliance leaders deliver the group to Kyren in accordance with the peace agreement. Before they hand them over, however, the Alliance leaders provide the PCs with a few resources that they hope will prove useful in the days to come. These include:

- From the traders of Bazaar, 500 corium pieces (to be split among the party members);

DEALING WITH DEAD PCS

If you've played the first part of this adventure series, *Against the Wastelords*, it is entirely possible that one or more PCs died in the epic "war" in the Trade Lands. If this is the case, the party may be too under-powered to deal with the challenges of *The New World Order*. You can remedy this in a number of ways; here are a few suggestions:

Allow a player to make a new character. This is the most obvious choice, which lets the player make a new character to join the existing party. With the word of war in the Trade Lands spreading, it is possible that mercenaries from afar, seeking fortune and glory, arrived at Bazaar just as the war came to an end. Finding any chance of making it rich dry up before their eyes, they may jump at the chance to join the PCs on their special mission "over the mountains."

Allow a few NPC henchmen to join the party. Since the PCs are considered "heroes" of the Trade Lands, it is not unreasonable to assume they might have followers similar to "cohorts" (even without the Leadership feat). Good examples of followers might be a proud tribal warrior from the Terminal Village, a fierce horseman from Dry Fort, or even one of the mentalists from Spilunk, sent to aid the PCs in their greater mission. Alternatively, you could let a player who lost a character in the war design a *new* character from one of these communities and take control of him or her as a full-fledged PC.

Allow a player to control a Wastelord. Since the PCs are now working with the Wastelords, this might be a good time to introduce that raider character one of your players always wanted to use. The new Wastelord character could be loyal to Kyren throughout the adventure, or he could be swayed during the course of his adventures with the original "heroes" to drop his allegiance and pursue a new life outside the Valley.

Wait until they arrive in the Valley. The section detailing the camp outside Shelter City includes a few NPCs who might be persuaded to join the party. Either allow the players to control these personalities (as player characters), or have them join the party as hirelings.

- From the warriors of Dry Fort, two full water skins (filled with pure uncontaminated water) and one desert horse (with all the necessary trappings) for each party member;
- From the peaceful mutants of Spilunk, a single pair of working shock gloves and a fully charged power backpack (given to the party leader).

In addition to helping them survive the coming weeks, these resources are intended to reward the PCs for their bravery in the campaign against the Wastelords.

Once they have been outfitted, proceed to *A Fragile Peace* (below).

INTRODUCTION B

As sandwalkers and mercenaries, your party has traveled far and wide in search of employment, working for petty desert tyrants one day and helping defend rebellious subjects the next. The flow of corium pieces through your hands in recent months has been like water in a stream; you've squandered your spoils on good liquor, fine furniture, and other amusements almost as quickly as you've earned them. There is never a shortage of demand for well-armed mercenaries in the wastelands of the Twisted Earth, and today is no different.

It was the rumors finally reaching the trade routes of the Forbidden Lands that first attracted your attention. Whispered reports of war in some backwater corner of the wastes known as the "Trade Lands." Stories of a coalition of oppressed villages "rising as one" to fight off raiders who annually plundered their settlements

and carried off their women. Pretty typical stuff, the kind of endless warfare that happens daily all over the Twisted Earth. But other men's tragedy was always your doorway to fortune; each new trumpet heralding war is just an opportunity to earn corium veiled behind the disguise of blood and battle.

You have traveled a great distance across the desert and through the torturous Forbidden Lands to this sheltered valley of struggling villages and tyrannical raiders. Quietly you have lurked in the villages, listening to reports from the war and to speculation about who seems most likely to win. It never pays to work for the losing side, and so you've watched and waited for the right opportunity to introduce yourselves to the likely victor.

Yesterday you found yourselves in the camp of a group known as the "Wastelords," their tents erected among the ruins of a recently conquered village. You have watched this group in action; you have seen them fight on the field of battle. Well armed, well equipped, and most importantly, well led. You have seen the primitive villagers fold and crumble beneath their boots, and it has dawned on you that these are the ones to whom to offer your services.

Today you met their "king," an intelligent and ambitious raider-prince named Kyren. You have heard stories that the war in the Trade Lands is but a precursor to an even greater struggle on the other side of the mountains. No one will say much more, but the lure of pay is too great to ignore. Kyren seeks to rebuild his army with professional men—men like you—and return to deal with whatever enemy his gang faces back home.

NEW WORLD ORDER

Today you went forward and pledged your service to the raider-prince... for a price.

Due to recent losses in the war against the Alliance of Three Towns, the raider prince Kyren is indeed looking for new men to fill out the ranks of his army. In addition to desperate recruits from the Trade Lands (scavs and others), mercenaries of skill and experience are very much in demand...

Judging them by their skill, confidence, and general appearance, Kyren is willing to hire the PCs for more than reasonable pay: 5,000 corium apiece for a month's work, paid when the campaign "over the mountains" is over.

This deal should be quite appealing for characters of the appropriate level (5th). But beyond vague rumors whispering of the war and an "Enemy," there is little to be learned from combing the Wastelord camp for information about the coming battles...

A FRAGILE PEACE

You strike out across the desert and into the mountains in the company of the Wastelords. Loaded into trucks, you find that you are not the only ones recruited by the Wastelords during the war in the Trade Lands; with you are several dozen men taken from the fallen towns of Ebb and Sandyville, as well as a handful of willing mercenaries laughing and bragging of the conquests that await beyond the mountain range.

The Wastelord soldiers accompanying you in the trucks are a rough and despicable bunch, bearing trophies of "kills" and "conquests" won while on campaign here in the Trade Lands and elsewhere. Severed heads, scalps, locks of hair from countless women. Though powerful and fearsome, beneath the surface they seem no better than the predatory raiders of other lands, and you sense the already perceptible gulf between you and them growing larger and larger. Wary eyes watch you at all times, and whispers hint that you are neither wanted, nor trusted.

At least you are permitted to carry arms, and with a weapon in hand you feel somewhat safer.

Every now and again you have gotten a glimpse of your leader, Kyren, and some of his lieutenants. To your surprise, they are totally unlike their subservient peers; Kyren and the commanders of the army aren't quite so savage or barbaric. They're smart. They speak intelligently. They smoke cigarettes and read old magazines from before the Fall in their off time. They pass out books with titles you can barely read, on subjects ranging from the art of war to classic poetry from centuries past. And they seem well prepared. They don't act interested so much in the primitive pursuits and entertainments of their followers; they seem detached, each watching over his personal command like some arrogant "god" studying his flock.

Intellect is power. Once or twice you have heard that phrase spoken in camp, or while sitting in the back of a dusty truck on the rocky trail through the mountains. You understand now what makes these men so deadly, so feared, wherever they go: compared to the primitive communities of the Trade Lands, these men are highly advanced. Instead of spears and muskets, these men wield automatic rifles and grenades. Instead of leather armor and hides, they wear Kevlar from the time of the Ancients. Instead of duels of honor or contests of skill to settle disputes, these men fight decisive war to make entire regions obedient and servile to their will. These things—arms, armor, and political strategies—take brains to devise, and by the looks of it, the Wastelord leadership has brains in excess.

But you hide your thoughts and assessments and pretend to simply march along with the rest of them. Once or twice you have received suspicious looks as your eyes wandered, and you know they don't like the idea of you appraising or analyzing them. You'd better move on.

Eventually, night falls and the Wastelord army stops high in the mountains to camp for the evening. Individual Wastelord platoons separate into small camps, their meager campfires providing dim illumination to contest with the light of the starry sky. Feeling like outsiders, you find yourselves gravitating towards the edges of one camp or another as the hours pass. Being almost completely ignored, however, you are able to observe your new "masters" in more detail without fear of raising their ire.

Occasional fights break out as the men laugh and share stolen bottles of beer and whiskey. Some of these battles are merely rough; others are downright brutal. You watch, keeping your distance, as the savage raiders entertain themselves by brutalizing one another for hours, until it seems they've vented every last bit of aggression.

When the sounds of violence begin to die out, and half-drunk men collapse here and there from exhaustion, Kyren and his circle of lieutenants—who have been watching with indifference—finish their drinks in the back of Kyren's command truck. One by one they split up, moving about camp to make sure unnecessary fires are extinguished, oversee the storage of equipment, assign sentries, and attend to other duties.

The darkness closes in around the camp like a cloak, but you know tomorrow will be another day full of surprises...

THE MOUNTAIN ROAD (EL 5)

The first encounter occurs the next day, a few hours after the Wastelord army sets out again along the dry riverbed through the mountains. The morning passes uneventfully until around noon, when the convoy encounters a seemingly innocuous creature along the riverbed's course:

NEW WORLD ORDER

The army moves slowly through the dry riverbed, which soon expands into a canyon. You can see now why the raiders chose to use this route to cut through the mountains—it's a relatively shallow rise covered in a bed of hard-packed sand and dust. Only a handful of rocks and boulders lie here, and most of these are clustered on what used to be the banks of the river.

One of the men sent ahead to reconnoiter returns in haste on the back of an oily black motorcycle. He exchanges quick words with Kyren, who motions for a few of his lieutenants to follow as he climbs a nearby boulder to get a better look at what alarmed the scout.

Curious, you also move to see the source of all this interest. There, in the distance, the lumbering shape of a bear is visible skirting a nearby rise, staring in the direction of the Wastelord army as it moves down the canyon. It looks sickly and weak, like many desert animals, but instead of being scared off by the roar of engines and the chatter of many men, it seems remarkably inquisitive.

You wonder why Kyren seems so interested in the animal lingering in the distance. As he looks through his binoculars in its direction, the bear continues to stare at the war party, and for a moment there seems to be a strange glimmer in its eyes—far from the normal look of hunger in a bear's predatory eyes, it seems to hold a special interest.

For whatever reason, the bear remains on the far bank, just watching.

"It spreads..." Kyren says to one of the lieutenants standing at his side, but he does not explain this cryptic statement. Instead, he passes the binoculars off and then turns to your group.

"You see that bear?" he says, pointing in its direction. "Follow it and kill it. That's an order."

If the PCs fire on the bear, it immediately takes to the ridge and drops behind it, and begins to work its way at top speed down to its lair—a small natural cave along an old dried-up tributary of the river. The bear hides there and lets the PCs come to it, at which time it attacks once the range between hunter and hunted has closed considerably.

Tracking the bear should be a relatively simple task (Survival check, DC 14; no roll is required if the PCs keep the bear in their sights at all times). Once the PCs corner the creature, read to the players the following description of the beast:

Up ahead you see the bear, closer now than before. So close you can see its sickly, matted fur, the patches of lucid skin peeking through in places, and its tortured face. It slavers at the mouth, with long strands of gleaming saliva oozing off its maw, but its eyes are what really chill you to the bone. They are black and vacant, like empty voids, but the way they watch your every move... it's as if you weren't looking into a bear's

eyes, but rather through a window at something inside, something that controls the body of the bear like a puppet.

Kyren's intuition is right—the bear is an infected seedling of the New World Order. The PCs do not know that, nor do they have any idea of the true danger they are in.

Having feasted upon the diseased flesh of one of the Last God's fallen spawn several weeks ago, the bear became *infected*. As more and more of the Last God's amoebic form grew within the animal, a psychic link between the Last God and the bear developed. Though this link is weak due to the distance between the Last God and the beast, the bear is now effectively the Last God's "puppet," and moves ever eastwards in a desperate attempt to cross the mountains and spread the Last God's contagion beyond the San Luis Valley. The PCs' running into the infected animal is thus quite a stroke of luck.

The seedling bear fights to incapacitate as many PCs as possible, hoping to drive the rest of the attackers off by sheer force. Once it is alone with the fallen, it will attempt to infect them (see the *contagion* ability).

♥ **Bear Seedling (1):** hp 65 (see Appendix 2).

Once the bear is killed, read the following:

With the last of your attacks, the bear shudders and collapses with a thundering crash. Dust swirls violently about the banks of the dry riverbed, but the creature is dead at last.

Behind you, several of the Wastelords have caught up. A few point their rifles nervously at the dead bear, while a single individual bears an old rusty flamethrower on his back. Kyren stands at the top of the ridge, watching wordlessly.

The man with the flamethrower approaches and sets the bear on fire. As soon as it ignites, he and the others scramble to get away from the choking black fumes that rise from the corpse.

Apparently satisfied by this curious ritual, Kyren returns to his army on the other side of the hill.

Even if the PCs persist in asking, Kyren will not explain the need to torch the bear—or even why he demanded it be killed. If the PCs continue to question him, Kyren assures them that once they arrive at Shelter City everything will be explained in due course.

HOME COMING

The rest of the journey across the mountains to Shelter City, the capital of the Wastelord "empire," is uneventful. By roughly three o'clock in the afternoon the Wastelord army reaches its destination:

Eventually the treacherous terrain of the dry mountains gives way to a new landscape on the other side of the range. You've been watching the signs of a gradual change for hours from the back of the Wastelord truck;

the searing sun has vanished behind ominous gray clouds, and the wind's ferocity is unchallenged in these heights.

As the Wastelord convoy crests the mountains, you get a full panoramic view of the unsettling sight beyond.

On the far side of the mountains lies a desolate valley shrouded from the sun. The landscape is swept by rain, which is brought on by huge clouds that blot out the sky and leave the entire land cloaked in an eternal twilight of bleary hues. The terrain itself seems to have been drained of color, bleached by ash and dirty rain until all that remains is a wasteland of uniformly gray soot and ruin.

Thunder rolls in the distance, and the black horizon-spanning cloud layer ripples with strokes of lightning that only momentarily light up the landscape. But even this brief illumination cannot dispel the gloom that hangs over this forgotten "valley of death."

Kyren stares out over this bleak landscape and speaks—half to you and half to himself. His voice is almost drowned out by the noise of the truck's engine.

"It wasn't always like this... we brought life to this valley through our efforts. The elders of Shelter City called me mad when I sought to lead our people from the underground into the light. They exiled me. But I returned, and I made them listen. I made them give up the old ways. Together we turned this desert into farmland, into a place where livestock and crops could be raised.

"But then the Enemy came, almost overnight. They turned our empire into this—this "bowl of dust." Constant war. That thunder you hear—that is the sound of artillery on the battlefield. Even now the Enemy presses on our frontier, hoping to break us."

He surveys the grotesquely deformed scenery, and you note the grim determination in his stare. But he says nothing more.

The truck convoy continues its descent into the valley. For hours you skirt the bottom of these mountains, at the edge of the desert, until at long last you come to your destination: there, in the side of a mountain, stands a gaping crevice, an enormous jagged hole apparently blown out of the mountain by powerful explosives long ago. Through the darkness you see that a city, teeming with life, has been hollowed out of the underground spaces. Lights, distorted heavy metal music, and the sounds of commerce echo from this "grand cavern" out into the desert and up the trail from which you come.

You sense a notable improvement in the attitudes and morale of your Wastelord companions. Bearing the scars of their battles in the Trade Lands, they long to be home again. With more enthusiasm they begin the last leg of their journey, making straight for the hollow mountain and the sprawling camp outside.

In front of the mouth of the enormous cave, occupying most of the rain-swept and muddy slope, is a city

of temporary shelters and tents bivouacked for the interment of hundreds of soldiers. As Kyren leads his defeated Wastelord army through this sprawling camp, you realize that these are not raiders like Kyren and his kind, but rather hundreds of people like yourselves—warriors and adventurers from lands near and far, pressed into service. Many bear the scars of recent defeats at the hands their new Wastelord masters; some resemble slaves given spears to fight, while others look like seasoned pit fighters hired for coin. Even more resemble the valiant defenders of towns crushed beneath the Wastelord boot, given a chance to live on the condition that they pledge their service to Kyren and his empire in this time of need.

You realize now that Kyren's campaign is a far greater struggle than you or the people of the Trade Lands imagined. The emperor of the Wastelords is preparing for a major war.

The trucks come to a stop and a few Wastelord soldiers disembark, herding war captives out of the convey and pushing them into the camp. Your truck is next, and as the hatch comes down the assembled crowd roars with a cacophony of mockery and insults, reminiscent of the ritual greetings received by new arrivals at some Ancient-era prisons.

Kyren jumps off of his command car as it comes to a stop nearby. The entire assembly of several hundred warriors quiets down as he stands to address them.

"Listen up, you dogs! Welcome your new comrades with a little more respect—they've each earned their place on the field of battle!"

The crowd roars. Kyren walks down the long line of captives before stopping in front of your party.

"Rest, get drunk, carouse, or train like your life depended on it. It's up to you. In a few days' time you'll be marching out with the rest to face the Enemy in battle."

The PCs now have the opportunity to secure accommodations in the camp (see below) and rest, train, or explore. Kyren takes his leave and returns to Shelter City with his entourage, but the PCs and other captives are left to their own devices for a time.

If they've gone through *Against the Wastelords*, the PCs can use this time in a number of constructive ways. First and foremost, they can visit Shelter City's markets and sell off any artifacts they've found in the course of their adventures; with any money gained (and with the corium pieces given to them by the leaders of the Three Towns Alliance) they can restock medical supplies, ammunition, or possibly even get a good deal on new equipment more befitting of their power level.

Secondly, the PCs should be well aware that though they are currently "allies" of the Wastelords, this is a temporary arrangement at best. If they have any loyalties to the Three Towns Alliance (which may or may not be the case, depending on how the PCs came to view the Alliance

THE CRIME BOSS

Tanner will first approach the PCs as a fellow gambler (his Gamble skill bonus is +11). At some point he will begin to bet against them, at first for small stakes and then for ever greater stakes.

If despite his skill the PCs *still* manage to win a lot of corium off of Tanner, he is impressed rather than sore—but being a businessman, he is intent on getting his money back. Instead of strong-arming the PCs, however, after their bout of friendly competition he invites them to a round of drinks “on him.” Here, in the privacy of a booth overlooking the fights below, he informs them of his secondary “trade”—he is the premier *arms-dealer* of the valley—and he is willing to barter with the PCs. Since arms-dealing is officially against the law (the Wastelords hoard all arms to themselves), the PCs should realize that Tanner is a potential source of useful items. Of course, Tanner only reveals this if he doesn’t think the PCs are completely loyal to Kyren. Feel free to role-play the conversation; if he comes to believe the PCs are just mercenaries without deep loyalties to the Wastelords, he’ll make his offer. If they stand by their reputation as Kyren’s “trusted agents,” the offer never comes up.

Assuming the PCs agree, Tanner takes them to his “warehouse,” one of many non-descript tents in the camp (see *Tanner’s Warehouse*).

during the war), they may think to use this time to gather *intelligence* on the Alliance’s enemies. Since they are, after all, staying in the very headquarters of the Wastelords, anything the PCs learn about the Wastelords—their strengths, their weaknesses, and the civil strife lying just under the surface of Shelter City—may be of great use to the Alliance in the future.

If you aren’t playing this adventure as a continuation of *Against the Wastelords*, this downtime might prove to be a bit dull for players itching for action. However, even though their main mission has been put on hold for a few days, there are still opportunities to poke around Shelter City, get to know the locals, and perhaps get involved in minor plots—for instance, getting in fights with local Wastelord guards, gambling on the games held at the Pits, or doing small jobs for some of the technical personnel in the City (hey, it never hurts to have a thinker as a friend, and the best way to make a friend is to have him owe you).

THE CAMP

Until they prove themselves, the characters are quartered in tents along with the countless other warriors drafted by the Wastelords when their communities were conquered. The enormous camp outside Shelter City is their temporary home; it’s a squalid settlement where old community rivalries die hard. Since the camp’s inhabitants come from a wide variety of backgrounds (many are slaves), fighting is common as old allegiances are reborn in the town’s ethnically divided quarters. To keep the peace, the Wastelords dish out a fair amount of brutality—but other methods are also used, including giving slave women to the male population to keep the latter happy and productive.

Though everyone here is essentially in the same boat as the PCs (captives taken from their homelands), many have formed “gangs” and “clans” of like-minded or related people. These clans generally occupy one of several distinct parts of the encampment, as described below.

In addition to giving a brief description of each part of the camp, the following location summaries also include one

sample NPC that characters might encounter while visiting that area. These NPCs can be included merely for flavor, as elements in minor encounters designed by the GM, or even as hirelings (or possible cohorts, should any of the PCs acquire the Leadership feat during the adventure) in the event that the PCs need some extra muscle.

A. GENERAL BARRACKS

These serve as living quarters for the majority of Kyren’s slave army. This area is filled with a vast number of simple tents and lean-tos inhabited by various people conquered in Wastelord campaigns.

The PCs can fairly easily find a tent here, but there is a good chance they will have to share quarters with at least one other person. The GM can use this as an opportunity to introduce new PCs or an NPC with information (see *Rumors in Camp*).

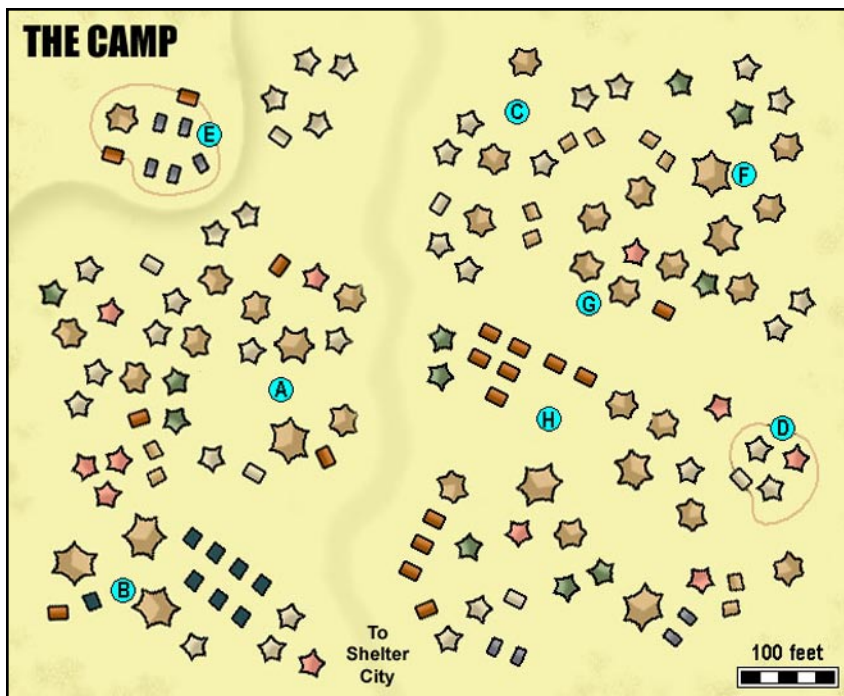
GM’s Note: If the PCs get into trouble here, assume most soldiers they encounter are *Slave Soldiers A* (for details, see *Character and Creature Statistics* at the back of this book).

B. THE HOLE

If the PCs decide to explore the camp by night at any time during the adventure, they find that the encampment has a rowdy after-hours nightlife. Among the biggest draws in camp are its notorious *cockfights*, brutal and bloody games involving a pit, two roosters, a large crowd, and a whole lot of gambling. PCs up after dark have little chance of missing a game (a Gather Information check, DC 13, will point them in the right direction), and the highest-stakes games are held at a local drinking hole appropriately called the Hole.

On any given night, the Hole is crowded with over 150 people—a good portion of the camp’s fighters and support personnel. Low-quality alcoholic drinks exchange hands freely here (one of the benefits of working for the Wastelords is free booze); fights over the results of games often spill out into the spectator’s area, making the possibility of a spontaneous brawl quite high.

Gambling: While at the Hole, PCs can try their hand at



betting on the cockfights. In game terms, each participant must choose a number between 1 and 20 before the start of the match. The GM then rolls d20; the result is the winning rooster. If the number rolled corresponds to a number picked by a participant, that character wins the pot. Players may choose the same number if they like; if they both win, the pot is split evenly between them.

Characters with the Gamble skill can, with a successful check (DC 15), identify and pick the best cock before the fight, which makes the likelihood of winning a little higher than it would otherwise be. In game terms, if a character succeeds at this check, she can modify the d20 roll to bring it closer to the number she picked. The amount by which she can modify the roll is equal to the margin by which she succeeded at the Gamble check.

For example, before the match, the character picks the number 8. She also succeeds at the DC 15 Gamble check, rolling a total of 17 (including modifiers). The margin of success is 2. When the GM rolls the die to determine the fight results, if the result is 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10, the character wins (since all of these are within two steps of the number she selected).

There is generally a betting limit of 50 corium pieces for each match. PCs can use Bluff (DC 16) to raise the stakes up to 100 corium pieces (maximum) per match. Once the PCs win 150 corium pieces or more (between them), they attract the attention of Tanner, the Hole's owner and operator and one of Shelter City's best-known underworld figures (see sidebar)...

C. CORIUM MINER BARRACKS

Many of the people quartered in this part of the tent city are former corium miners, bought wholesale by Kyren from the ruthless slavers of Lil' Vegas (see *Death by Corium Light* for

more details on that wretched town). PCs who wander this area will be met by the sickly stares of malnourished men of all ages, many of whom are in the advanced stages of radiation sickness. Peering from tents or clustered around pathetic campfires, these "walking dead" present startling evidence of the true desperation of Kyren's war.

PCs who try to mingle in this area will generally be met with undercurrents of hostility. The corium miners here do not appreciate outsiders tramping through what they consider to be "their" part of the encampment, but short of giving the party the cold shoulder they will be reasonably tolerant of trespassing.

☠ **Telgar, Miner:** hp 19 (see Appendix 1).

D. AMAZON BARRACKS

This part of the encampment is a separate stockade composed of tents within a fenced-off area. People passing by the gate generally see no one inside the fenced area, but a single Wastelord sentry guards the gate anyway. If anyone asks, the guard says he is "guarding the sisters" and has orders to shoot anyone trying to sneak in.

Inside the stockade lives a handful of Amazons captured by Kyren during one of his raids. The Amazons now work for Kyren, fighting for his army in exchange for the promise of eventual freedom. So far the Amazons have been spared the atrocities usually reserved for women in this part of the world—a fact that has underscored to them Kyren's desperation.

Male PCs are prohibited from entering this area, but female PCs will be invited (i.e., pressured) to live with the Amazons to avoid "causing trouble" in the other parts of camp. If they agree to do so, they find the Amazons relatively welcoming but constantly wary. Most of the women are former tribals who distrust technology brought into their compound. Other than that, however, they treat any new female arrival as a comrade.

GM's Note: If the PCs get into trouble here, keep in mind that the guard is a *Low-level Wastelord A*, and that there are a dozen *Amazons* in the tents who will defend their compound against intrusion.

☠ **Amazons (12):** hp 17 (see Appendix 1).

☠ **Mara, Amazon:** hp 15 (see Appendix 1).

E. ENTROPIST BARRACKS

This area, built atop a small rise, resembles the stockade of the Sisters (see above), but is even more isolated. The triangular blue flag of the Entropists waves above the stockade (for information about this bizarre faction, see *Darwin's World 2nd Edition*).

Though the PCs are unlikely to find out about this until later in the adventure, the Entropists have sent a small force to assist the Wastelords against the Enemy. The Entropists believe that the sudden appearance of the Enemy in recent years is a sign that the “Disease” affecting their lands has spread to the San Luis Valley. They have come to help fight this insidious infection for the good of the whole planet.

The Entropist compound is patrolled by 2-4 Entropists at any given time. Another 16 Entropists live in the tents and barracks. The Entropists seldom leave their compound (they fear catching anything the slaves outside their walls might be carrying), though they secure needed supplies from Shelter City through an agent named Motak. Needless to say, he is a rather colorful character...

🔪 **Mid-level Entropists (20):** hp 48 (see page 239 of *Darwin’s World 2nd Edition*).

🔪 **Motak, Entropist:** hp 25 (see Appendix 1).

F. TANNER’S WAREHOUSE

This tent resembles most of the other large pavilions spread throughout the camp, and thus doesn’t stand out from the many rows of others like it. However, anyone watching the tent (for any amount of time) will notice an inordinate number of guards keeping an eye on it day and night.

This tent is in reality a secret “warehouse” operated by a man named Tanner, the closest thing the people of Shelter City have to a black marketeer. In addition to selling better-quality booze and other forbidden luxuries out the back door, Tanner keeps (and occasionally sells) weapons his minions have scavenged, constructed, or outright stolen from their Wastelord masters in this tent. These weapons include:

Weapons	Qty	Normal Price	Tanner’s Price
Colt M1911	5	600 cp	900 cp
Gauss Pistol	2	20,000 cp	30,000 cp
M16A2	11	900 cp	1,350 cp
MAC Ingram M10	6	600 cp	900 cp
Pipe Rifle (.22 LR)	10	150 cp	225 cp
Remington 700	9	1,100 cp	1,650 cp
Ruger Service-Six	7	400 cp	600 cp
Sa.23	3	1,300 cp	1,950 cp
Sawed-off Shotgun	2	600 cp	900 cp
Uzi	7	1,500 cp	2,250 cp
Zip Gun (.38)	12	75 cp	115 cp
Zip Gun (.44)	1	100 cp	150 cp
Explosives	Qty	Normal Price	Tanner’s Price
C4	4	900 cp	1,350 cp
Detonator (radio)	1	200 cp	300 cp
Detonator (timed)	3	100 cp	150 cp
Fragmentation Grenade	8	900 cp	1,350 cp
Smoke Grenade	3	100 cp	150 cp

Tanner also has connections that allow him to easily produce *Molotov cocktails*, and can get his hands on virtually unlimited supplies of ammunition (except for power sources) for every type of gun he sells. These items sell for normal price. Other item prices are *not* negotiable.

GETTING IN GOOD

Smart PCs with ambitions of removing the Wastelords from power and freeing the people of the Valley should realize that Tanner, as despicable as he is, could potentially be their greatest ally. Though not especially interested in freeing his fellow citizens, his illegal store of arms could provide the tools necessary for a future war of liberation. Of course, the PCs would have to pay through the teeth to arm even a small army, but if they strike so much as a passing friendship with Tanner they may be able to give the people of the San Luis Valley a real fighting chance.

Should the PCs try to double-cross Tanner or steal from him, keep in mind that Tanner’s tent is well guarded by his henchman, a few of whom are actually Wastelords on his payroll (assume that there are two *Slave Soldiers B* per PC, along with three *Mid-level Wastelords* comprising his bodyguards, in addition to Tanner himself).

G. MILITANT BARRACKS

This part of town is similar to the *General Barracks* area, in that there is a wide variety of people living here, but this part of “town” is usually much more violent and dangerous. Here the strongest warriors from various conquered communities (mostly tribals) make their quarters, and they defend their place here through threats of violence. Contests of skill and strength are commonplace in the muddy streets here; each day some new arrival tries to rise to prominence in the slave army through challenges and duels to the death.

Most people in camp refer to the residents of this part of town as the “militants” due to their warlike nature and general inability to get along peaceably with others. Though they hail from a wide variety of backgrounds, the people who find a place here typically respect war, skill at arms, and the general ideals of the Wastelord empire. They are the slaves most loyal to their Wastelord masters.

The Wastelord presence here is superficial. If nothing else, Kyren admires the aggression of these tribal people, and lets them enjoy their savage rituals of leadership without interference.

GM’s Note: If the PCs get into trouble here, the soldiers they encounter will be *Slave Soldiers A* (see Appendix 1). For every five men in an encounter, however, one of these will be a *Slave Soldier B* instead.

🔪 **Lord Hethris, Knight of Route 66:** hp 54 (see Appendix 1).

H. TRAINING FIELD

During the day, these areas are overrun with men of all ages—new recruits—training for war. Under the supervision of a handful of trusted Wastelord guards, these raw draftees are taught how to fire guns, fight in hand-to-hand-combat, and otherwise survive on the field of battle.

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RUMORS IN CAMP

If the PCs specifically mention that they are trying to gather rumors, allow each a Gather Information check at DC 13. Each success nets the party one of the following rumors (roll randomly or choose the most appropriate for the character in question):

1. I hear the Enemy are metal men—*robots* from ancient times. Rumor has it that some guardsmen at Hooper killed one of their number a few weeks ago and it was brought back to Shelter City for examination. It's still there somewhere, deep under the city. Who knows what they learned from it?
2. I don't know what you've heard, but the stories I've been hearing say the Enemy are just masses of mindless zombies. When the last village fell they say every last man, woman, and child was eaten alive!
3. I hear the Entropists have allied with Kyren to fight the Enemy. They have their own separate barracks here in camp. I don't understand why they would travel so far for such a hopeless campaign, though. If you go looking for them, however, I'd be careful—those crazy bastards do *not* like being touched.
4. Where are you fellas from? I'm from Midway, myself—a merchant by trade. I got captured in a Wastelord raid as my caravan was going south towards Tucumcari. There are lots of people here like me—things must be desperate if Kyren is kidnapping people from other lands to fight this war.
5. □
lives in Shelter City with his “inner circle” of cronies, a cruel and savage lot. The original inhabitants of the City were either killed off in his Great Purge or were forced into slavery. Any questions?
6. Believe it or not, there are Amazons here in the camp! Kyren captured a few of their kind and hopes to use them as elite troops in the coming war. He's even given them their own quarters here in the encampment. But be warned—they attack on sight any man who tries to enter their part of town.
7. I hear Kyren and his “inner circle” know more about the Enemy than they're letting on. Why are they being so tight-lipped? Because they don't want us to know how bad the situation really is!
8. The outlying towns come under attack every day. I was doing perimeter patrol the other night and we encountered a dozen of them near Hooper. Zombies, I tell you—the walking dead! Not ghouls, but clumsy zombies with rotting skin and everything. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.
9. The rumors are true, the Enemy are zombies. And not just men—the animals too. It's as if this whole valley was cursed, cursed by some terrible magic that turns man and animal alike into unthinkable monsters!
10. Kyren's second-in-command is Qwan, a dangerous officer if ever there was one. So long as his position isn't threatened, however, he's a great general to serve under. Women and spoils for everyone!

Because of these relatively complete facilities, the PCs should be allowed to level-up at any time during the adventure, so long as they return here to train regularly.

SHELTER CITY

Though they are essentially “foreigners” for the time being, the PCs are free to visit Shelter City if they like—the army camp sits just outside the subterranean city's massive cave entrance, and slaves pass freely in and out to trade, secure “companionship” for the night, or watch the games held at *The Pit* (see below) each night for entertainment.

HISTORY

The community known as Shelter City is the capital of the dreaded Wastelord empire—but more than just a citadel of their power, it also houses the ruins of an Ancient-era vault that has withstood the test of time remarkably well.

One of only a handful of ancient vaults that can claim to have operated “almost as planned,” Shelter City (originally known as “Civil Relocation Program Shelter CO6”) was dug into the side of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains, just one of a series of pre-Fall contingency plans under which “relocation shelters” were erected in mines and national parks all across America. Originally intended to house important elected officials from the major cities of the nearby region (Colorado Springs and Pueblo) who would be transported by helicopter to the relative security of the vault before the bombs began to hit, the vault was miraculously spared any direct nuclear strikes—and thus its integrity was never put to the test.

The original inhabitants of Shelter City, whoever they really were (there is some speculation that many locals living in the valley knew of the construction project in Great Sand Dunes National Park and fled there to demand a place in its underground shelter), survived the nuclear holocaust that ravaged the rest of the world. In the relative safety of the shelter's concrete bowels, they lived and died for generations

without any contact with the outside world. Cut off from any outside contact by decades of atmospheric interference and other post-Fall phenomena, Shelter City's people were forced to deal with the harsh realities of life underground and await a future day when they could emerge on the surface.

As radiation levels subsided, the shelter's massive computerized doors opened and the occupants of Shelter City were faced with the challenge of exploring a new world. Already many of their children had been born with noticeable defects and early forms of *mutation* (proof that the vault's seals had not been without flaws), and with water and food supplies running low they were forced to send a mission out to the surface to secure resources.

An intelligent and charismatic young member of the shelter's citizenry named Kyren was the first to volunteer to lead a party into the wilderness. When he returned weeks later with only a handful of men left and little to show for his expedition, he was prohibited from undertaking further forays until the elders could formulate a better plan to keep their men alive. When Kyren went against their will and led another expedition out in search of food and water (an expedition that ended disastrously with only Kyren surviving), he was imprisoned upon return, put on trial, and eventually sentenced to exile for the irreparable damage to the community's resources.

Somehow, however, Kyren did not die. Instead, he wandered through the desert and over the mountains, finding villages out in the wasteland where men were willing to listen. He found a cruel and punishing world, but one that he knew he could deal with—and control. With his superior intelligence and education, he impressed locals wherever he went, gaining new recruits in every village he found. Masterfully plotting, pitting former raiders against one another to keep his position secure, Kyren eventually acquired so much power that he saw within his grasp the object of his lifelong quest: to return to Shelter City and wrest control of his former home from the hands of “fools” and “cowards.”

Kyren did return—with an army of raiders, murderers, and thugs to back him. After several days of brutal fighting, he broke into Shelter City, defeated its defenders, and brought about the unconditional surrender of its inhabitants. Styling himself the new ruler of Shelter City, he set about remodeling his former community to suit his vision of the future.

The *Wastelords* (as Kyren calls his “army”) operate from the security of Shelter City; its subterranean nature provides it with natural defensive traits, while its location—far enough from the Forbidden Lands to remain unknown and undetected by potential enemies—is close enough to allow the raider army to ride out each year to ravage the communities of the lands beyond (see *Against the Wastelords* for a more in-depth look at a typical Wastelord foray). Kyren brought power, respect, and wealth to his raiders, and his natural cunning and brilliant mind brought the Wastelords a sense of superiority that is rivaled by few.

THE ROLE OF ORIGINAL CITIZENS

Those who lived in Shelter City before Kyren's takeover are often referred to as “originals” (usually with a sneer from Wastelords and the wasteland trash they brought with them to re-populate the vault); most either died fighting to defend their home against Kyren's return or surrendered and were forced to live under his new regime.

Some of these men and women have found unexpected boons from giving in or sucking up to their new masters; most, however, have chafed under the yoke of Wastelord rule. A few of these figures are still quite prominent in Shelter City (after all, many were quite well educated, and their skills were useful enough to warrant a stay of execution), and might prove interesting to PCs who care to explore, scout around, or learn more about the goings-on of the city while they are here.

DOC

The aging physician known only as “Doc” to the citizens of Shelter City has been a part of their community for countless years. He was here when Kyren took over, and though vocally resistant to his coup, Doc was ultimately unable to avert the inevitable.

In the immediate aftermath of Kyren's victory, Doc (and his two medical colleagues, both also accomplished physicians with similar areas of expertise) was treated as a prisoner, but over time he was forced to give up trying to escape and accept his fate. In return for an “improvement” in his attitude, Kyren removed many of the restrictions placed on his everyday life (for almost a year, the three elderly men were prohibited from leaving the dark recesses of the Infirmary) and even compensated Doc and his two associates by giving them free access to many luxuries (among them better food and non-essential books for their private enjoyment).

Of the three remaining doctors at Shelter City, Doc is the most interesting personality; he is still a proud, good-natured man who believes in helping others (he often quotes his medical creed, something he takes seriously), but one who has given up all hope of ever getting away from the Wastelords. He may help PCs even if it is against the wishes of his masters (perhaps by slipping them some needed medical supplies free of charge), or he may share restricted information with them. He is certainly willing to speak candidly about conditions in Shelter City when his Wastelord guards aren't present; he can share with the PCs the sentiments of the civilians who suffer under the rulership of the Wastelords, and can relate the stories of other pre-Kyren citizens (such as those listed below) and their gripes against the current regime.

HANSON

Master mech of the foundry, Hanson is a tortured man held hostage by guilt and fear. He surrendered to Kyren when the raider threatened to have his daughter Larla raped years ago, only to watch Kyren raise her instead to be just like

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him and his cronies—a cold, evil woman. Because Hanson still loves his daughter, he has blinded himself to the wretch she has become. A tragic character, he could either see the stark reality of his daughter's nature at the last moment and save the day, or he could remain obsessed with saving his daughter from harm—no matter what—to the detriment of the PCs and their plans.

HERIA

A schoolteacher, Heria is an original citizen of Shelter City who hates the Wastelords and all they represent. However, she has seen too many women her age stripped, raped, and thrown into the harems, and has learned to swallow her pride to avoid a similar fate. Kyren found a use for her in educating the children of the city (part of his philosophy that education breeds superiority over the outsiders in the wasteland). Though she would otherwise be loathe to participate in his plans, she could find solace in the possibility that, through teaching, she might be able to secretly educate the young about the dark side of their Wastelord rulers. Heria is a strong-willed woman who might well be the first to be swayed to help the PCs if they were to move against the Wastelords.

LARLA

Though not technically an “original,” Larla is the daughter of Hanson, head of the city's foundry facility. Larla is nothing like her father, however; raised among the brutal Wastelords her whole life, she considers her father a fool and delights in the debauchery and devil-may-care lifestyle of her “friends.” It is entirely conceivable that, some day, Larla may be the one to kill her own father.

MORTON

Perhaps the oldest member of Shelter City's dwindling educated elite, Morton was the keeper of the Archive for 55 of his 70 years. Though he doesn't approve of many of the books and magazines the Wastelords have stockpiled, he has only ever muttered his anguish in private. Somewhat eccentric in his advanced age, Morton remains detached from the suffering of his fellow citizens (largely due to the fact that he is a virtual prisoner in the Archive, but also because he retreats to the fantastic stories in books and old pulp comics to dull the horror of what he knows has probably befallen his fellow citizens outside the Archive).

POG

Pockmarked and homely, Pog runs the Communications Center for his Wastelord masters. Pog was an original member of Shelter City society, one who took his duty to the people seriously. When Kyren attacked, he helped defend the city, but when Kyren won he also realized there was no further use in resisting. For his levelheaded decision (to save the lives of his subordinates by surrendering the Comm Center), Pog was allowed to live and continues to do his job (running the Comm Center) unquestioningly. Because

he is quiet and unassuming, Pog is often taken for granted and overlooked. However, while he will not turn against the Wastelords directly (that is, raise a hand against them in violence), if it seems his fellow citizens will benefit from a change in leadership, he may get involved in any clandestine move for power by hampering radio traffic, jamming signals, or disrupting Wastelord operations in other indirect ways.

THOR AND TAUR

Twin thinkers, these two are mechanics of the first order and are trusted with maintaining the Wastelords' army of vehicles. Since both have benefited greatly from Kyren's takeover (before the coup, they were second-class citizens; now, the ability to fine-tune a car is vital to the community's survival), neither wants to see the power of the Wastelords eroded. Many of the original citizens consider them to be Quislings, “lap-dogs” of the Wastelord regime who are not to be trusted.

ZAP

An original Shelter City citizen of great importance, Zap was cast out into the desert for defending Kyren. Vowing revenge, he returned with Kyren to re-conquer the city. Though no one else knows it, Zap made sure that all the technicians who knew how to run the power plant were killed in the battle, leaving him the sole authority on its maintenance and operation. This knowledge has ensured Zap a position of power, one which he often abuses. He is despised by many of the city's other original citizens.

KEY TO SHELTER CITY

The layout of Shelter City is similar, if not identical, to that of many pre-Fall bunker complexes constructed during the twilight of the Ancients. Characters familiar with other Ancient-era vaults may recognize the general layout and basic features of Shelter City.

ENTRANCE CAVERN

An old concrete tunnel once connected the interior vault with the outside world, with a single two-ton doorway with overpressure seals to prevent contamination of the shelter. This massive computerized system, linked to a battery of surface sensors located more than two miles away, worked like a charm in releasing the inhabitants of the shelter years ago—before burning itself out.

For some time, the door stood as a contingency for the inhabitants of Shelter City, who hoped that should they be forced to do so, they could always re-seal the door to keep outside threats at bay. However, upon his return from exile, Kyren had the huge door removed and the entire passage excavated with dynamite. Though the tremendous amount of steel and mechanical equipment salvaged from this undertaking was certainly useful in repairing his fleet of vehicles in the wake of his conquest, the act was more a visible reminder to his new subjects that the old days were gone—that there was no going back to living as troglodytes



in the bunker.

The entrance to Shelter City is a monumental cavern, full of activity day and night. People from desert communities visiting the city are often required to camp in the huge cavern, setting up tents or other temporary shelters (such as old trailer hitches pulled by horses or oxen) until their business in the city is concluded.

The inhabitants of Shelter City have erected a huge neon sign that arches over the cavern, with the words “Welcome to Shelter City” bathing the cavern in pink and purple light 24 hours a day.

GM’s Note: Overlooking the entire scene from the crumbling, exposed second level above are sentry posts erected by the Wastelords to keep watch over the masses below and to guard against attack at the “front gates.” These guard posts are detailed later (see the *Overlook* entry), but they provide a full panoramic view of the entire cavern and the narrow strip of desert leading to it.

SLUMS

Located just east of the cavernous entrance to Shelter City, these vast vaulted halls were once reserved as quarters for the original inhabitants of the bunker. Located on the lower level of the vault, these chambers were almost completely abandoned when their structural integrity became threatened by natural subterranean runoff. However, when Kyren returned (and when his attacks did extensive damage to the upper levels of the facility), these had to be re-opened and immediately put to use to house the survivors of the city’s

fall.

Today, these old eroded stone hallways serve as congested living spaces for the city’s poorest inhabitants, which include destitute workers from the camps outside, captives from the Wastelords’ various raiding campaigns, and even former vault citizens who did not readily support Kyren’s return to power. Punished by being stripped of all wealth, possessions, and influence, they have been crammed here with countless others in horrendous conditions.

Each of the seven massive chambers that comprise the slums is a huge vault of concrete that has been further sectioned off by wooden partitions, stone walls, and even whole “shacks” built like the shanty homes of some pre-Fall *barrio*. Water runoff still threatens these areas; the sound of dripping water falling from high, cracked roofs above and hitting the many dark pools below is enough to drive most men mad. Small pools of this brackish water are common—in fact, inhabitants of this area often fight for the right to build a home close to such a ready water source.

MARKETPLACE

This large section of the old vault was converted into a marketplace at the behest of Kyren, who sought to stimulate trade in the city and bring in new wealth. Though unsuccessful at first (most merchants were afraid to come and do business under the guns of the Wastelords), Kyren used rather heavy-handed techniques to make sure the people understood his plan for the betterment of the valley. Now, under threat of “sanctions” (in which the Wastelords cut a

village off from all trade, allowing it to wither and die), each village within the Wastelords' domain sends merchants to bring goods, trade, and tribute to the coffers of their masters.

Though originally constructed under a dismal cloak of tyranny, the markets of the city in fact bloomed within a few years of their creation. Though individually the villages in the Wastelords' domain were relatively poor, as a collection of "allied towns" they stood a far better chance of surviving by banding together and sharing resources. Produce from each village (foodstuffs, clothing, and handicrafts) are freely traded here between representatives of each conquered community, so that a fragile but stable balance of resources was struck, and all prospered.

The markets of Shelter City were at one time an example of efficiency, undeniable evidence of the Wastelords' ability to rule intelligently and profitably. Now, as the war against the Enemy continues, the number of goods coming into the market has waned due to the fall of many frontier villages and communities. Despite these losses, however, the marketplace of Shelter City remains perhaps the best place to find rare goods in the Wastelord empire.

GM's Note: Feel free to populate these shops with a wide variety of equipment, even in these hard times. As a general rule, Shelter City should be portrayed as economically better off than other desert communities (even the trade nexus of Bazaar), and its markets should reflect this. Most general equipment is available, but all weapons and armor are hoarded (and not traded) by the Wastelords, by law, to keep the threat of rebellion insignificant and to equip Kyren's growing army. The PCs may be able to trade for ammunition, however, at the GM's discretion. A 3,000 cp limit (for any one item) is suggested.

Inhabitants: Because each shop in the marketplace is run by a different individual, there is potentially a wide variety of skills and abilities available at each establishment. The "streets" of the market are patrolled regularly by 3-5 Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords B*); any sign of trouble causes them to raise the alarm, which brings more men from throughout the complex.

THE PIT

This large central vault was used for communal gatherings well back into the history of Shelter City, even before its great doors opened years ago. Unable to suppress the community's need to share ideas and socialize, the Wastelords continue to respect "the Pit" as a place where the citizens of the city can gather for recreation, debate, and social interaction.

The Pit serves many purposes, hosting everything from recreational sports contests to slave auctions to public gatherings where citizens of the empire can offer suggestions to the Wastelord "inner circle" on how to meet their needs. To those unaccustomed to Shelter City, it might seem strange for raiders to accept such verbal criticism, but Kyren believes that a variety of ideas and viewpoints make a stronger army. Though much of the attention the Wastelords pay to dissenters is only lip-service, it has worked wonders

in making the populace *feel* they play a part in the empire's plans.

Inhabitants: The Pit is usually crawling with people after dark, when gladiatorial fights, non-lethal slugging-matches between rivals, and mud-wrestling become communal recreations. Betting is frequent, as are arguments, but violence (outside of the Pit) is rare.

Six to eight Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords B*) patrol the Pit to make sure no one gets out of hand, and that arguments remain reasonably "civil." The Pit plays host to 50 to 100 people (or more) on any given night, depending on the evening's entertainment.

VEHICLE GARAGES

Off-limits to most visitors, this extensive string of cavernous vaults houses the impressive fleet of vehicles used by the Wastelords to rule over their domain. These include motorcycles, sidecars, trucks, and an armada of cars—all souped-up, armed and armored, and decorated in the fashion of a true raider army. Each fully-equipped garage area is large enough that an accomplished team of mechanics can work on almost any size of vehicle.

Inhabitants: The garages are overseen by a pair of identical twins, Thor and Taur. Both are nearing 50 years of age, and each is a master mech (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3/Dedicated Hero 8/Mech 7) in his own right. Thor and Taur are original citizens of Shelter City who saw the wisdom in joining Kyren's side when he returned to conquer the city. In reality, they are terrified of their masters, but enjoy enough privileges that neither willingly complains or would ever make a move against the Wastelords.

Though not especially well-loved by some former citizens (many of whom now live in the slums as punishment for resisting Kyren), they are trusted members of the Wastelord army. Because their role in the Wastelord army—maintaining the vehicles and making sure they run when needed—is so vital, Thor and Taur are assisted by a large pool of lesser mech assistants (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3/Smart Hero 8/Mech 1) and upwards of fifty unskilled laborers.

FOUNDRY

The foundry is a huge vaulted chamber where metal parts and salvage from all across the Wastelords' domain are sorted, worked, and brought back to life in the service of the army. Stacks of sheet metal, old oil drums, rusted metal pipes, sections of lamp post, underground sewage pipes, and other pieces of salvage all vie for space in this towering facility.

Most of the metal here is put to use shoring up Shelter City's subterranean passages, or finds new life as armor plating for the Wastelords' fleet of armored vehicles. The Wastelord foundry also has a *machine shop* where metalworking tools (lathe, press, welding equipment, etc.) scavenged from ruined desert communities permit skilled smiths to construct the vital engine components, precision instruments, tools, and other parts that maintain their armory

of vehicles and firearms.

As if this wasn't impressive enough, the foundry also features a small room in which old shell casings are hand-loaded with gunpowder and capped with lead shot—giving the Wastelords the capability to recycle ammunition for their myriad weapons.

Inhabitants: The foundry is overseen by a single master mech (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3/Dedicated Hero 8/Mech 5), a man named Hanson, and his two high-ranking assistants (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3/Dedicated Hero 8/Mech 1). A large number of unskilled laborers are used for grunt work. Hanson is an old man (nearing 60), a member of the original Shelter City population; though he resisted Kyren's take over, he capitulated and switched allegiances when Kyren threatened to have his only daughter raped and killed. Though his daughter has grown up to become just like Kyren and his men—a firm believer in the notion that “might makes right”—Hanson is secretly wrought with guilt over his surrender and his failure to protect his daughter from the Wastelord lifestyle. So long as his daughter lives, however, he will not act against his masters.

Only Hanson and his assistants know how to safely reload old shell casings, while more than a dozen of the lesser workers have acquired the skills necessary to use the foundry's impressive metalworking tools.

FUEL STORAGE

Gasoline scavenged from the wastes, along with methane from the power plant, is stored in this bunker-like vault away from potential hazards (such as fire and sabotage).

GM's Note: No exact figure is given for the amount of fuel kept here, but the many rows of 100-gallon drums are sure to keep the Wastelord vehicle fleet in operation for years to come.

OLD POWER PLANT

The ancient fission power plant that once lay at the core of Shelter City, providing for its power needs, ran out of nuclear fuel almost ten years ago. By that time, the original inhabitants of the vault were already making plans to switch from fission power to something less sophisticated (methane); upon taking control of the city, Kyren made the creation of a stable community power source his top priority.

Thanks in no small part to Kyren's ruthless efficiency, Shelter City now has *electricity*; though city lights sometimes flicker and temporary blackouts are not unknown, this steady source of power has permitted the Wastelords (and their subjects) to enjoy a level of prosperity and comfort known to few communities in the wasteland. Electric-powered devices—lights, radios, machine tools, and a working intercom/telephone system—are just the beginning. Given time, Kyren hopes to extend the phone system beyond the confines of the vault and out to the villages that dot his domain, along with a unified power grid powerful enough to have supported a small pre-Fall *city*.

The power plant is a decaying concrete bunker set deep within the mountain itself, well out of sight of the city's

daily goings-on. The original power plant's machinery and electronic equipment, including its computers and reactor core, were scrapped in the years before Kyren's return to power; they were disassembled and buried in deep pits far outside the mountain to prevent contamination of the local water supply. Though Kyren excavated and recovered much of this machinery to use for scrap or to put to other purposes, the old power plant could not be returned to its former greatness no matter how much effort and skill was put to the task.

Failure to completely restore the power plant is a only minor setback for the Wastelords, however; the low-tech power plant they have constructed in place of the original nuclear reactor meets the needs of the city well enough, and continues to provide the gang with the resources needed to extend and maintain their rule over a large area.

Inhabitants: The daily operations of the power plant are overseen by Zap, an ingenious engineer (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 2/Smart Hero 9/Mech 2) who originally conspired with Kyren and suffered with him in exile. Since Kyren's triumphant return, Zap has enjoyed considerable privileges as a reward for his loyalty (and in recognition of his value as the mastermind behind the methane plant), and his favored status has gone to his head. He is known to be somewhat cruel and arrogant to those “below” him, and rumor has it he is especially brutal to the women of the Wastelord harems.

Zap oversees more than a dozen unskilled laborers who operate the plant and manage the animals (more than one hundred pigs) and their pens. The entrances to the power plant are typically guarded by 2-4 Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords B*); one or two additional guards have the unenviable task of patrolling the latticework of steel walkways over the pig pens to watch for fire hazards or workers who get stampeded trudging through the muck.

WASTELORD BARRACKS

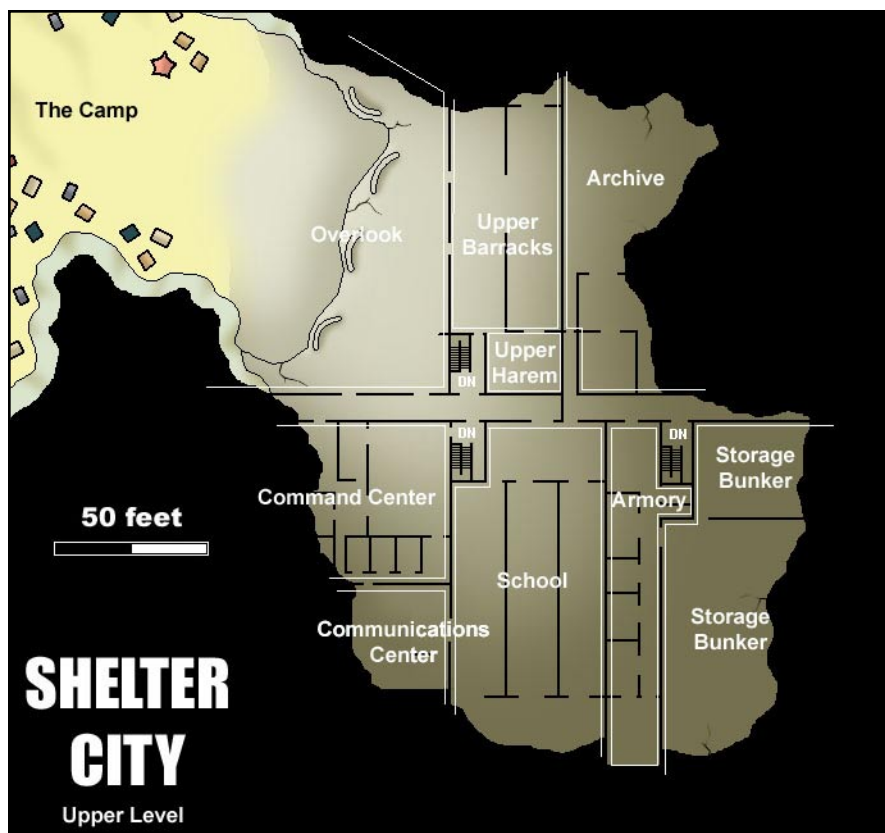
The Wastelords quarter themselves in the old residential chambers of the vault (those who didn't capitulate when Kyren gave his ultimatum were thrown out or executed, leaving a lot of prime real estate for his loyalists). Despite their underground location, these are relatively luxurious chambers (they were cleverly decorated to resemble pre-Fall surface homes to reduce the threat of “cabin fever” over the years), though they are more often than not cluttered with equipment and possessions like an unkempt military barracks.

Inhabitants: Each barrack vault is home to 25-40 Wastelords of varying levels. Those quartered on the lower level of Shelter City are less experienced; trusted and veteran soldiers are quartered on the upper level, closer to the Command Center.

HAREM

This dismal place has been converted into a harem for the entertainment of Wastelord soldiers. Many women captured from resisting communities—or given as “tribute” by threatened settlements hoping to avert Wastelord attacks—have spent their entire lives within the hellish confines of

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this space, serving the needs of the raider army.

There are 20-30 women here (none of any appreciable level of ability), all concubines whose will to escape has either been beaten out of them or drowned in booze and drugs. Few, if any, remember their former homes, families, and lives, and those that do find it all the more reason to stay intoxicated and high all day long. At any given time 4-8 *Low-level Wastelords* are here (without equipment and weapons, of course) enjoying the company of these slaves.

The large number of women here requires a constant vigil by 6-8 armed Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords B*), who make sure the women do their job without resistance or disruptions. Breaking arms, slapping faces until they are bruised, and threats of worse usually suffice to keep order.

PRESIDENTIAL WING

What is now known jokingly as the “presidential wing” was long used as living quarters by the officials who administered Shelter City before its doors opened to the outside world. A council of elders elected by the vault citizenry convened and resided here in relative luxury.

After Kyren’s conquest, this wing was converted into a personal “palace” for the Wastelords’ “inner circle,” complete with sumptuous apartments for Kyren, a private harem for the leader of the gang (with three or four girls hand-picked from all over Wastelord lands), quarters for the other members of the “inner circle,” a guardroom and quarters, and a chamber for the accommodation of special

guests (if the PCs make a good impression on Kyren during the adventure, they may be quartered here in relative comfort).

Inhabitants: In addition to Kyren, his personal lieutenants, and a number of harem women, eight *Mid-level Wastelord* guards reside in a guardroom. Four of these guards are always on duty guarding the entrance passages (from the *Harem* and the *Wastelord Barracks*).

OVERLOOK

A jagged tangle of broken concrete, deformed metal supports, and cracked steel reinforcement hangs from the crumbled edge of this precipice, where the outer wall of the vault was blown away during Kyren’s “remodeling” of the facility. The second level (directly above the main entrance to the vault) all but collapsed in the poorly-conceived string of demolitions, but the wreckage has proved useful as an overlook. The jagged rock outcropping is now used as a lookout post—a battlefront from

which Wastelord sentinels can look down on the approaches to Shelter City.

A number of sandbag revetments are set up along the edge of the crumbling overlook to provide cover and a safe firing position for guards should they come under fire from enemies approaching the cavern. Each revetment is fitted with a tripod-mounted M2HB machinegun with 200 rounds of ammunition for sustained fire.

Inhabitants: Patrols consisting of 3-4 Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords A*) regularly monitor this area, while another 2-4 guards of the same caliber are stationed in the small room just outside the huge cavern (playing cards or snoozing off). Any gunfire in the entrance area attracts immediate attention from the entire upper level of the city due to the nearness of the barracks, command center, and other Wastelord facilities.

UPPER BARRACKS

This area is identical to the barrack blocks on the level below, but fighters kept here are generally more experienced and better trained—and well-paid by the “inner circle” to keep them loyal and devoted to the protection of the command center, archive, and other important structures.

Inhabitants: These barracks house the higher-level members of the Wastelord faction, some 30-40 in number (most of these are treated as *Mid-level Wastelords*).

UPPER HAREM

Like the harem on the lower level, this communal recreation space is kept well-supplied and provides entertainment for the Wastelords' fighting men. The quality and appearance of furnishings here are generally better than in the barracks of the lower facility. This upper harem more closely resembles a "gentleman's club" than the "slave pen"-style harem on the lower level.

Inhabitants: The harem is off-limits to anyone not a recognized member of the Wastelords' fighting elite; the girls here know most of their masters' faces, so intruders are easily detected and thrown out. The harem is guarded by 2-4 Wastelord guards (*Low-level Wastelords B*); another 2-6 *Mid-Level Wastelords* are present at any given time engaging in recreational activities with the "furniture."

The women (some 20 in number) are slaves taken from conquered wasteland communities. "Native" Wastelord women (women born and raised by Wastelords or by the original inhabitants of Shelter City) are free citizens, and share an equal place with men in Wastelord society.

The overseer of the harem, Larla (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 4/Raider 2)—a loud-mouthed, foul-tempered, and overly muscled young woman—is a native of Shelter City and quite loyal to the Wastelord regime. She keeps her harem girls in line by terrorizing them almost daily, and by enjoying their "company" almost as brutally as the men of the faction.

Larla is the daughter of Hanson, the chief mech of the Foundry.

COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

This important communications center pre-dates the Fall; though it is no longer as sophisticated as it once was (certain high-tech features, like its satellite uplink computers, were rendered useless by the devastation of the Final War), it nonetheless serves as the vital nerve center behind the Wastelords' power and control.

At any given time the comm center is staffed by a dozen or so men (mostly mechs and tinkers) trained in the operation of the communications equipment still preserved here: a number of two-way radios (scavenged from the wasteland or from the old communications center), a microwave communications set for long-distance communications, and a bank of computers linked to the Wastelords' fledgling "Net." The Wastelord Net is a rather remarkable development, considering the state of the world and the technological depths to which life in Shelter City has otherwise fallen; Kyren plans to link each of the villages in the Wastelords' domain together within its digital reach. All villages must first be outfitted with a computer—a daunting task in a technology-starved world—but the end result will make it easier for local garrisons to alert Wastelord command at Shelter City of uprisings, civil disturbances, and other local emergencies.

Currently two of the eight computers here are non-functional and undergoing repairs, while another three are currently being used by the center's programmers (former members of the vault's educated population) in

their ambitious efforts to create the Net. The other three computers are used to compile databases tracking Wastelord water shipments, profit projections, and other logistical concerns.

In addition to the radio sets and dusty computers sequestered here, an old record player (the only one of its kind in the entire region) is hooked up to the facility's intercom system. An old wooden shelf nearby holds a number of well-preserved vinyl records, including works by Wagner, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Alvin and the Chipmunks (the latter is a favorite of the Wastelords' less intelligent subjects, much to Kyren's chagrin).

GM's Note: All locations in the Wastelord base are interconnected through an extensive intercom system, which is regularly maintained (there is only a 1 in 6 chance a given intercom will be broken). In addition to using them for instant communication between different parts of the vault, the Wastelords often blare their favorite music over the intercom systems—a useful way to keep their people sedate, on edge, or excited, as the situation demands.

Inhabitants: At any given time, a dozen skilled men (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 1/Smart Hero 1) are here monitoring radio traffic, their activities overseen by a single supervisor, Pog (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 1/Smart Hero 2/Tinker 1). Pog personally reports notable events and radio broadcasts to members of the "inner circle." The room is typically guarded by 2-3 Wastelord guards (*Low-level Wastelords B*).

COMMAND CENTER

Along with the communications center, this facility is used by the Wastelords to coordinate their resources and armies, and to monitor the daily activities of their subjects. The banks of computers here (many salvaged from the wreckage of the old vault) allow a staff of ten or more mechs and tinkers to monitor the cameras on the lower level and agro center and to oversee and manipulate power production levels in the power plant.

The Wastelords' efficient power grid system is designed in such a way that the computers in the command center have top priority when it comes to power; in the event of a catastrophic power failure, any energy reserves at the plant are directed here so that emergency computer control can be maintained even in a crisis.

An elevated stage behind the banks of computers is set up like a classic strategic "war room," with an illuminated map table around which the "inner circle" of high-ranking Wastelords plots their activities and army movements.

GM's Note: The heavy, immovable map table itself is something of a curiosity; in addition to providing illumination (it lights up like a projector for map transparencies laid out on its surface), the table has a built-in computer system that stores and recalls digital maps for easy reference by the facility's commanding personnel. This pre-Fall database currently contains topographical maps of the states of Colorado and New Mexico, showing major highways, rail routes, waterways, emergency evacuation routes from nearby cities (such as Denver and Santa Fe), and

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other information meant to coordinate emergency efforts during the Fall.

Inhabitants: As in the communications center, at any given time a dozen skilled men (Post-Apocalyptic Hero 1/ Smart Hero 1) are stationed here monitoring the computers. The room is typically guarded by 2-3 *Low-level Wastelords B*.

SCHOOL

This old barracks area was refurbished as a school for the children of Shelter City at the order of Kyren himself. In line with his philosophy—that education is the key to overcoming one’s enemies—Kyren established an education system in which classes are held here five days of the week, teaching a wide range of subjects.

Although outsiders might not realize it, the placement of the school so close to the Command Center serves a dual purpose: first of all, Kyren wishes the children to see their leader (Kyren) on a daily basis so that they will grow accustomed to his presence and authority; secondly, Kyren wants to make sure that any attempt by his subjects to kill him (for example, by bombing his command center) will have the consequence of also killing their children...

Inhabitants: Classes are taught by Heria (Smart Hero 4), a Shelter City native who, though distrustful of the Wastelords and their brutal policies, cannot argue against the need to keep education alive. She is often at odds with Kyren, who tries to instill in her students a more “accurate” portrayal of the Wastelords’ role in their community’s history and ongoing existence. Heria oversees a number of assistant teachers (each a Smart Hero 1), who take over classes when she cannot dedicate her full attention to teaching. She also has access to the *Archive* (see below) and its wealth of educational materials.

On any given day there are 20-30 students (ages 4-14) present in the school.

ARCHIVE

The Archive was once the central computer repository for the vault, a cavernous chamber in which books, holodisks, and other media for recording and preserving information were kept for the recreation and education of vault inhabitants. Over time, much of this legacy of information has been lost (to wear and tear and unfortunate accidents), but a considerable portion of the archive remains. It is one of the most valued treasures of the Wastelords, playing to their elitist belief that they are superior to the “ignorant savages” of the wasteland.

At first glance, the Archive is nothing but a dark and dismal concrete bunker, but old embroidered rugs, salvaged wooden furnishings, and even couches and comfortable Victorian-era reading chairs fill out the gloomy spaces and lend to the complex a certain ordered appeal. Elegant green-tinted glass lamps on ornate wooden stands provide illumination for reading as in the fireside study of some eccentric millionaire’s pre-Fall home.

In addition to original educational and recreational material, the archive contains many books and texts looted by the Wastelords during their raids on both sides of the mountains. These include many notable and unusual pieces of literature (*Huckleberry Finn*, *Oliver Twist*, *Pride And Prejudice*, *Animal Farm*, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, *Mein Kampf*, and even a King James version of the Bible), a vast collection of well-preserved children’s storybooks, read-along books, and pop-up books, a number of dictionaries, and three extensive sets of encyclopedias geared for children, young adults, and serious students respectively (though some volumes are missing). There are also countless dog-eared romance, science-fiction, and fantasy novels (some well-kept and others on the verge of crumbling).

Those items preserved from the original vault generally occupy Archive shelves; books taken from outlying communities as “tribute” are lucky to find storage space in boxes or haphazard piles, where they await proper categorization. Various practical manuals and books are also kept here, but the most useful are often referenced by Wastelord mechs and tinkers and are usually dispersed throughout Shelter City.

GM’s Note: Those who defected to Kyren’s side during his coup understood the value of education and information, seeing it as the fine line separating civilization (and power) from savagery (and weakness). The Wastelords use their precious books to teach the privileged young (usually the sons and daughters of Wastelord soldiers), to acquire and preserve knowledge about mechanics and machine operation... and to keep that knowledge out of the hands of their subjects.

Inhabitants: The Archive is overseen by a single man named Morton. With his long wispy beard and tiny cracked spectacles, Morton looks almost like a comical ghost haunting the library, but he is in fact very much alive. A non-combatant, Morton was spared death when Kyren took over and was allowed to continue his work as the caretaker of the Archive. Here he remains, prohibited from leaving the library—partly because he is so valuable, and partly because the Wastelords secretly fear he knows too much and might spread undesirable knowledge to their subjects. His only companion is Heria (the school teacher), who visits on an irregular basis, and his lazy friend of a cat, affectionately nicknamed Heathcliff.

A security monitor scans the entire archive chamber 24 hours a day, and is linked directly to the Command Center.

ARMORY

Whatever its original purpose, this area currently serves as an armory in which the Wastelords’ arsenal of ammunition and weaponry is stored. Each room has been reinforced with stone to contain explosions (though whether or not these precautions work as planned is left to the GM’s discretion).

Inhabitants: The entrance to the armory is guarded by 2-4 Wastelord guards (treat as *Low-level Wastelords A*) at any given time; keys are possessed only by Kyren, his second-in-command Qwan, and the Wastelord general Hammer.

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The armory itself is stocked with a huge number of M16A2 assault rifles, shotguns and pistols of all kinds, *gauss SMGs*, fragmentation and concussion grenades, and armored vests.

Two security monitors are placed at strategic points around the armory, one outside, overlooking the entrance door, and the other inside, scanning the inner hallway. These cameras link directly to the computers in the Command Center.

STORAGE BUNKERS

These massive vaulted areas are still used as storage spaces for emergency supplies, regularly replenished and stockpiled by the Wastelords. Lined up in ordered rows are crates of preserved supplies, including building supplies, canned rations, ready-meals, and emergency medicines (ranging from fever-reducing medicine to pain killers; there are no futuristic medicines here).

Kyren's decision to build this stockpile has effectively doubled the Wastelord's available resources. Together, these vaulted areas extend the survivability of Shelter City's considerable population (in the event of a siege, or the need to quarantine itself from the outside world in a time of plague) by several months.

GM's Note: Since the entrance to the storage bunkers is through the armory, the bunkers themselves aren't actually guarded. However, security monitors linked to the Command Center keep vigil on each storage chamber 24 hours a day to prevent theft and sabotage.

GUARD AREA

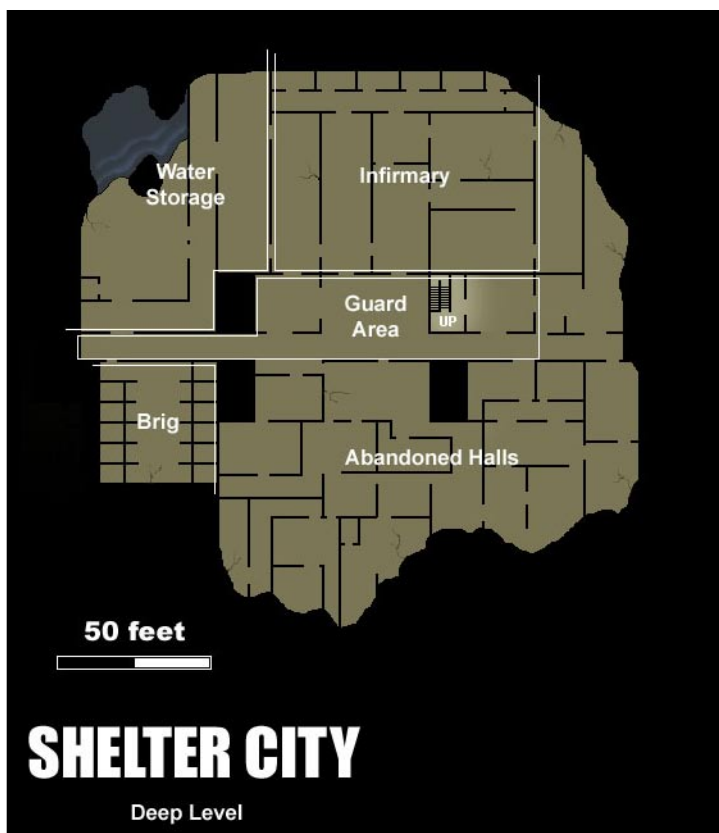
The staircase from the level above leads to a number of icy cold chambers and crumbling halls, now occupied solely by Wastelord guards. These men (and women) are charged with defending the brig, community water stores, and infirmary block.

Inhabitants: This area is regularly patrolled by a number of Wastelord guards with standing orders to shoot (or apprehend, if at all possible) trespassers. At any given time, a total of eight guards (a mix of *Low-level Wastelords A* and *B*) are on duty here: two patrols of two men each, with the other six remaining in the center chamber playing cards, relaxing, or listening to a cherished cassette player.

GM's Note: The central chamber in this network of tunnels is monitored by a security camera linked directly to the Command Center.

BRIG

The former vault brig (reserved for rogue elements of vault society who went crazy or refused to obey rationing restrictions), this miserable area now serves as a prison for the most important Wastelord prisoners (most who surrender are either executed outright or forced into slavery).



A number of 10 ft. x 10 ft. cells run the length of this area, all overseen by a single guard station from which guards can see into every cell. A console/computer panel at the guard station has a direct intercom link to the communications center, and a flick of a switch at this same panel can electrify all cell doors so that anyone trying to escape is shocked (1d4 points of damage per round to anyone in contact with the bars of a given cell; Reflex save at DC 14 for half damage).

Inhabitants: The prisons are observed at all times by three *Low-level Wastelords*: two at the panel and one making rounds through the cell block. None are armed except with bludgeoning weapons (in case prisoners do overcome the guards, they won't then have lethal weapons to use in their escape).

In addition to the guards, a few prisoners can be found here languishing in their cells. One is Tabos, an elder of the vault who was part of the council that decided to exile Kyren years ago. Though his peers were executed, Tabos was too popular to kill (Kyren feared an uprising) and is forced to spend his days here. Another individual sentenced to an indefinite stay is Kearg, a deeply-tanned old man covered with old scars from battle and ritual combat; formerly the chief of Crestone (see that town's description for more information), he was taken as a hostage to insure that his people would continue to work the gravel mines without rebellion. Kearg will likely remain here for the rest of his life.

INFIRMARY

Much of the vault's old hospital facility was destroyed in Kyren's coup, and now the place looks like something out of a claustrophobe's nightmare—a dark recess deep beneath the earth with shattered concrete and bent support beams hanging from the fractured ceiling. One doesn't know what to fear more—the oppressive darkness, or the creaking, crumbling roof that seems ready to collapse at any moment.

The flow of electricity here is sporadic, working in a few chambers but leaving others completely in the dark. The sound of water dripping is an incessant background noise, along with the faintly audible hum of electric conduits struggling to provide illumination to fight off the darkness.

Though it doesn't look like much, the Wastelords have brought the old infirmary back to life, if only to treat those soldiers injured in raids (or, rarely, civilians with life-threatening conditions). Priceless medical supplies scavenged or taken during Wastelord raids are stockpiled here and kept under guard (including a huge store of narcotics, used to reward Wastelord soldiers when women and liquor aren't enough, or to pump them up before battle). Several old sick bays remain operational (and lit); in them wounded warriors can recuperate away from the general populace. Equipment here includes life support machines, iron lungs, and a single *regen tank* (though this requires so much power that it is seldom operational).

There are two operating theaters here, both of which are currently occupied by "patients." The first is a seedling of the New World Order which was captured at Moffat (see the adventure introduction for more on this); the Wastelords were able to move it here and keep it under observation. However, their experiments with the creature have turned up very little information (see later for details).

The second is an android that also showed up near Shelter City just a few days after the seedling did. Badly damaged, the android was brought here for repair, but sadly not even the Wastelords' extensive resources were able to preserve it. The only thing recovered from the android was a *memory module*, now in the possession of the Wastelords (see later for more on this important source of information).

Inhabitants: The infirmary block is guarded by only three Wastelord guards (treat these as *Low-level Wastelords B*): one who patrols the old darkened chambers alone (with a flashlight), and two others who assist the city's three medical doctors. The eldest of the three doctors is fondly referred to simply as "Doc." Doc is a highly-skilled professional who cherished the old ways before the coup. Though Doc resisted Kyren's takeover, Kyren refrained from killing him (a mercy not granted to most of his enemies) for fear of losing the one man he could trust to treat his men.

WATER STORAGE

This area is unusually damp, as water runoff from throughout the damaged ruins of Shelter City drains here through innumerable cracks and fissures. The water here is not necessarily drinkable "as is," so the Wastelords have set up water purification systems (taken by force from various

desert communities on both sides of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains) to de-contaminate the water. These water purification systems range from clunky old military purifiers to sleek home models, and are generally left to run night and day. Purified water is collected and bottled in steam-cleaned jars and glass jugs (a precaution that has reduced parasite contamination by more than 75%) which are stored in the cold dark hallways just off the main cistern chamber.

Inhabitants: This area is usually guarded by 3-6 *Low-level Wastelord B* guards, who oversee the workers purifying and bottling the water supply. The workers are all children aged 6-12; the reasoning behind using child workers is that children are less likely to tamper with the water supply (especially when supervised by armed men). Kyren believes this will cut back on the chance that civilian saboteurs might contaminate Shelter City's water to cripple his regime.

ABANDONED HALLS

What once constituted a sizeable part of the Shelter City vault are now little more than caved-in, collapsed, or flooded tunnels. Most of these subterranean spaces are all but condemned, having sustained tremendous structural damage during Kyren's coup. Because the threat of further cave-ins is still very much a concern, civilians and guardsmen alike are forbidden to enter this part of the vault's deepest level.

Anything of value was looted from this area long ago—first by Kyren's men (working "suicide duty" and forced into the wrecked tunnels by the threat of punishment), then later by desperate civilians trying to sneak past the cordon to get food, valuables, or lost mementos of life before Kyren's regime. Some of these Kyren had whipped; others died when tunnel sections collapsed, sealing them inside.

Anyone entering this unstable area has a chance of causing a cave-in or significant collapse; roll D10 every round and see the table below:

D10	Effect
1-2	Nothing happens.
3-6	Small rocks fall from above, and the floors/ceiling tremble. Though nothing else happens, add +1 to the D10 roll next round.
7-8	A few rocks fall from the fractured roof, followed by a cloud of rock dust. The dust cloud obscures the immediate area (and quickly expands to fill a larger area) just like a <i>smoke grenade</i> .
9	Heavy rocks fall from above; everyone in the immediate area must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or suffer 2d6 points of damage.
10	Cave-in; a section of passage (or room) 1d6x10 ft. long (and 10 ft. wide) collapses, sealing the tunnel shut. Anyone trapped beneath the cave-in suffers 8d6 points of damage (Reflex save, DC 15, for half damage). Those who fail to save are trapped underneath the rock until excavated.

GM's Note: Now that the halls have been essentially "mined out," neither Wastelords nor civilians come here anymore, fearing the unimaginable fate in store for those who get trapped under tons of rubble.

THROWING OUT THE WASTELORDS

This adventure doesn't lay down a framework for an actual confrontation with the Wastelords; they are, after all, *allies* of the PCs (albeit tenuous ones) in this part of the story. However, though at present the PCs must bury their grudges just to get along with their former enemies, any time spent in Shelter City (or in towns under Wastelord control) will probably convince the PCs that when the threat of the Enemy is eliminated, something must be done to alleviate the suffering of Kyren's legacy.

The most likely solution involves the PCs confronting the Wastelords head-on and helping to free the communities of the valley from their rule. If the PCs look hard enough, they'll find people sympathetic to the idea of overthrowing these tyrants; Shelter City itself has numerous former citizens (the so-called "originals") who remember what life was like before Kyren and his gang took over, and might lend their aid to an effort to depose the Wastelords.

Once the war against the New World Order is over, it's up to the players to decide whether they want to resume their fight against the Wastelords or cut their losses and move on. As stated before, this adventure doesn't detail a campaign against the Wastelords, but there is enough information herein (in town and community descriptions) to provide a feel for what might happen in such a conflict.

MEETING THE ENEMY, FACE TO FACE

Once you are satisfied that the PCs have settled in—they've gotten to know the general atmosphere of their quarters in camp, have had a chance to buy and sell equipment in Shelter City, and are beginning to learn their way around—it's time to get back to the action. Events have already been put in motion that are leading to a confrontation with the Enemy, whether the PCs are truly ready for it or not.

BASIC TRAINING (EL 3)

The next few days are spent in hard training, undergoing a simple but effective physical regimen which the Wastelords have devised to transform its army of slave soldiers into a suitable fighting force. This training is far from comprehensive, but as the days pass you are each taught how to use a gun ("If you don't have a gun, wait until the man with the gun dies. Then pick up his gun and start firing! Always keep the man with the gun in your sights!"), how to run and keep your heads down, and how to fight in hand-to-hand combat. The training is brutal, with new recruits pitted against each other or their Wastelord instructors with real weapons. More than a few recruits are badly injured in the process, but this only reinforces the lessons they are learning.

Late afternoon on the fourth day, you are rounded up along with several dozen other slave soldiers from regions across the mountains and are brought to a muddy, fenced-off area near the training fields. Your companions are men of various colors and creeds, all gathered with spears, axes, and other weapons. In the distance, you hear the sounds of new arrivals training as you did when you first came here; for a moment you find yourselves staring off in their direction and wondering how long they too will last.

"Today you have been brought together for your last lesson—a lesson in teamwork," says the Wastelord drill instructor, walking through the fenced-off pen. "I want

volunteers..."

He points at your party.

"You will do. Grab some melee weapons and get in here. Your objective is simple—kill the beast."

With that, the sergeant climbs over the fence... just as the gates on the far side open and an enormous mutated hog, bristling with quills, comes racing into the ring!

To prove themselves worthy soldiers of the Wastelord army, the party must enter the fenced-off area and kill the creature, a rather large specimen of snuffle hog.

The rules are simple: the PCs can only use melee weapons, but otherwise can try to kill the enraged animal any way they choose. The idea here is to promote teamwork, because while against a lone character a snuffle hog is a deadly opponent, against a team it can be defeated (if you feel the party has too few people to defeat this enemy, you may round them out with one or more of the NPCs described in *The Camp*).

During the fight, onlookers lining the fences cheer the fighters on; if the PCs have made rivals already, they will be there cheering for the animal, while others will be placing bets on who will fall first (or, if the PCs are good, how quickly the snuffle hog will be slain).

🐷 **Snuffle Hog (1):** hp 44 (see page 316 of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* or Appendix 2).

AFTERMATH

Assuming the PCs succeed in slaying the snuffle hog, read the following:

The crowd cheers as the enormous animal is brought down by your repeated attacks. The Wastelord sergeant doesn't grin, but merely gives you a respectful nod, as if you have finally proven yourselves as warriors in his eyes.

An hour later, those who have survived the day's tests are treated to a welcome meal of steaming gruel. After everyone in your platoon has eaten, your Wastelord

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sergeant appears with a handful of guards in tow.

“You men did good today. Those of you who survived the final test are stronger for it. Kyren wishes to show his appreciation for your valor.”

The sergeant raises his hand and the guards bring forward a number of slave women taken from foreign lands. The rowdy crowd roars with excitement as the women are thrown to them.

“Enjoy the night!” the sergeant yells over the noise, “Tomorrow we ship out for the front!”

In addition to other rewards, recruits wounded in the day’s trials are given medical attention on a first-come first-serve basis. If any of the PCs were wounded and seek healing, roll D6 for each wounded character; on a roll of 5 or 6 they manage to procure a single dose of *stimshot A* from the Wastelord quartermaster. Any other roll indicates medical supplies are short and the PCs receive no extra healing today.

BATTLE IN THE TRENCHES

The next morning the PCs are awakened at dawn for their first combat duty. Already the camp is buzzing with activity, reverberating with the sound of numerous transport trucks revving their engines. Soldiers and slaves are moving out for a major operation.

You gather outside under the morning gloom just as it begins to drizzle. The sky seems as colorless as before, the landscape just as dismal as ever. A large group of men is gathered outside, and a whole line of old military trucks pulls up. The Wastelord sergeant assigned to command your platoon emerges from a nearby tent, prepared for battle. He motions for his men to board the trucks.

“Good morning, gentlemen,” he says, addressing the crowd. “Today we get the chance to prove ourselves to Kyren, our great lord and master. Our mission is to relieve our Entropist comrades currently garrisoning the

front. The Enemy has managed to push them back from the trenches east of here and there is only a small force stubbornly holding out against a total breakthrough. They’ve called down an artillery barrage in an attempt to delay the Enemy until we arrive.

“I know that for many of you this is your first mission. Many of you are new here. Many of you have never seen battle before. I don’t care. I don’t care if you were husbands, or fathers, or furniture where you came from. Today you are Wastelord soldiers, and today you fight with me.

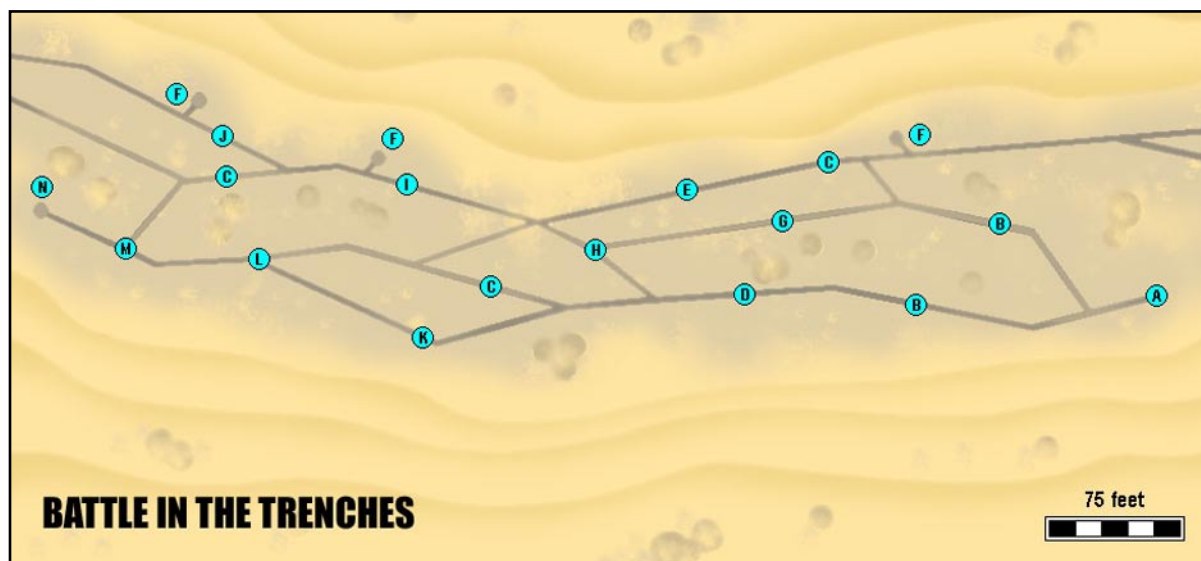
“I’m sure by now many of you have heard rumors of what the Enemy is. Let me put those rumors to rest. Today you’ll meet the Enemy on the field of battle, face to face. You’ll know the Enemy by his black eyes; man, wolf, or any other creature under the sky, they’re all the same. Always look for the eyes!

“Now get on those trucks! We have a bumpy ride ahead!”

Sitting in the back of your transport, you watch the encampment outside Shelter City vanish behind you. Within minutes the road deteriorates into a rough and rugged trail, which the trucks strain to follow due to the mud and recent rains.

Already you can hear the distant hammering of artillery. You know that in the coming hours it will only get louder...

An hour or so passes before the monotony of the drive is finally broken up. The convoy of trucks stops at one of what you assume to be several artillery firebases set up in the middle of the wastelands. Built on a gentle rise, barely higher than the surrounding terrain, the firebase consists of a number of rusted, Ancient-era artillery cannons surrounded by a line of sandbags and a trench. From your vantage point on the road, you can see a few half-naked men operating the cannons.



NEW WORLD ORDER

The sergeant and a few others dismount just as the cannons go off again, the deafening sound thundering through the sky and even shaking the trucks where they stand. A few less-experienced members of your platoon stare in awe at the enormous cannons as they belch flame and smoke towards the heavens like chimneys of fire and brimstone.

Someone from the firebase emerges from the trenches and engages your sergeant in conversation, which you cannot hear over the din of the bombardment. After a few minutes, their conversation seems to turn into an argument, until at last the man points to the west. Your sergeant nods, motions for his men to board the trucks, and once more the convoy starts to move.

For the next half-hour the truck passes slowly through shelled terrain—what once may have been a coppery sea of sand dunes but is now little more than a no-man's land of death and desolation. The sound of artillery shells exploding grows ever louder as the convoy presses on, until at long last the explosions are almost deafening.

Abruptly the trucks come to a halt. Wastelord soldiers dismount like well-trained commandos, and the sergeant leaps from the command vehicle to shout back at the rest of the convoy: "Everyone out! Make your way to the command bunker! It must be relieved!"

Leaping from the truck, you quickly find yourselves mired in ankle-deep mud. The half-rotted corpses of countless dead lie strewn everywhere. A heavy mist hangs over the battlefield, the residual smoke from the day's near-constant bombardment. Huge columns of smoke rise in the distance over a battlefield only illuminated by fiery explosions as artillery shells land less than 100 yards away from your position.

A system of deep trenches can be seen up ahead, stretching away in both directions. The Wastelords leading the charge seem to vanish in the fog, but you spot a few running down ramps and earthen stairways into the ditch at various points—followed by frightened tribals and others like you. The Wastelord sergeant draws his pistol and leaps fearlessly into the trenches somewhere down the line, just as artillery shells begin to land all around you.

If this is what an average day in the Wastelord army is like, you wonder how long you will survive!

This series of encounters is meant to introduce the PCs to the horrors of the Wastelord war.

The PCs enter the trenches at the area marked **A** on the included battlefield map, with allied forces appearing at various points along the trench line. There is no cohesive battle plan here; the operation is a desperate and unorganized attempt to prevent the trenches from falling into the Enemy's hands.

The Wastelords' (and PCs') immediate objective is to fight their way through the trenches to the command bunker to relieve the forces pinned down there. This encounter is

relatively linear, allowing the PCs to sweep towards their destination from one end, clearing the trenches as they go. As they proceed, they will encounter enemy stragglers and grisly scenes of carnage, and come to the aid of other Wastelord fighters in trouble.

General Note: Because there is an *artillery barrage* in effect on this part of the battlefield (a desperate attempt to prevent the Enemy from exploiting the collapse of friendly forces in the area), if the PCs leave the trenches at any time there is a 50% chance that as they emerge they are struck by shrapnel. If this is the case, all characters within 30 feet of the targeted character suffer 8d12 points of damage from the explosion (a Reflex save at DC 15 halves this damage).

In addition, note that while all trenches are 10 feet deep (protecting those inside from artillery shrapnel), they are also only 10 feet wide.

B. COWERING SOLDIERS (EL 2)

Up ahead you see several men cowering against the wall of the trench, clutching their weapons as if their very lives depended on it. When they see you coming they look terrified.

There are 1d4+1 *Slave Soldiers A* in each of these spots, all forcibly drafted into the Wastelord army from other lands. These men arrived at the battle with the PCs' convoy, but each has been thoroughly broken by the psychological effects of the artillery bombardment. Each group of men has decided to stay here and wait for the fighting to end. They will not move; as a result, most will probably be shot as cowards when the battle ends.

The PCs can try to get these groups of men moving, but doing so requires a difficult Diplomacy check (DC 18). Trying to motivate the men by convincing them that they'll be killed for cowardice requires instead an Intimidate check (DC 15). (If the PCs slap them, point their guns at them, or otherwise threaten them physically, the DC of the Intimidate check drops to 13.)

GM's Note: If the PCs manage to get these men moving, award them a story bonus of experience points as if they had defeated them (EL 2).

C. CAVE-IN (EL 1)

As the party makes their way down this part of the trenches, roll 1d6 for each character, starting with the character in the lead and moving back down the line. On a roll of 1, the trench walls collapse as that character passes through, instantly burying him or her in a violent slide of mud.

In the event that the trench wall caves in, everyone within 5 feet of the collapse suffers 1d6 points of damage and is trapped until dug out by comrades (an action that takes 2d6 minutes).

If the trench collapses at this point, it becomes impossible for the PCs to continue along this trench (and anyone who made it through before it collapsed is separated from the rest of the group). The party will have to backtrack.

D. COLLAPSE

As you rush down the trench, ducking to avoid shrapnel overhead and being careful not to trip over the numerous dead bodies underfoot, there is a sudden deafening explosion up ahead. The force of the blast throws you to the ground, as loose soil and splinters of wood shoring go flying everywhere in a cloud of debris.

As the choking smoke clears, you see that the artillery shell landed directly in the trenches up ahead, completely collapsing the trench walls and preventing further passage down the line.

The trench is blocked at this point. The party must either backtrack and try another route or take their chances climbing out of the trench to move around the collapsed area. If they try the latter tactic, see the note about the dangers of shrapnel above.

E. UNEXPLODED SHELL

Lying in the middle of the trench up ahead is a half-buried, unexploded artillery shell. Steam still rises from the mud where it landed.

The artillery shell is not large, but it sits precariously in the center of the trench. The shell is a dud, and will not detonate—but don't let the PCs know this. They may consider the risk too great and decide to go another way!

F. SNIPER NEST

Up ahead you see a small pillbox made of concrete. A hand-excavated tunnel along the side of the trench leads underneath it. The pillbox's narrow viewing slits seem empty.

Several of these pillboxes are scattered along the trench line; they are used by Wastelord snipers to watch for (and fire at) advancing Enemy forces.

The PCs can enter a sniper nest by using the tunnel, which leads to a small (5 ft. by 5 ft.) concrete enclosure, half-buried in the ground. Only the top foot of the pillbox rises above the ground, presenting a very small target for enemies to shoot at. All four sides of the pillbox feature narrow slits from which observers can watch the approaches to the trenches.

All the sniper nests are abandoned, their defenders having either been killed or driven back. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a given sniper nest will still have a pair of *binoculars* inside, however.

G. MASSACRE

Up ahead you see what appears to be the scene of a recent massacre. There are bodies strewn everywhere,

with blood pooling in the muddy channel created by the driving rain. You recognize many of the faces of the men lying all around, fellow soldiers with whom you rode to battle today.

As if the sight of so many dead wasn't enough, you see no signs of whoever—or whatever—did this.

There are a dozen dying men here, all fellow Wastelord soldiers and slaves. All of them are beyond help.

Any character who makes a Survival check (DC 13) finds tracks leading from the massacre site to *The Beast* (see below). The tracks seem to indicate an extremely large creature.

GM's Note: Note that since the DC of the Survival check is over 10, only PCs with the Track feat can actually locate and follow the trail.

Treasure: If the PCs search the bodies, they find that most have already been scavenged, but a few items were left behind. A Search check (DC 13) uncovers two M16A2s (with full clips) and a single *concussion grenade*.

H. THE BEAST (EL 5)

As you make your way down the trenches, wincing and ducking instinctively as artillery fire explodes overhead, you hear a terrible roar from farther down the trench. The baleful bellow echoes through the trenches in every direction.

Just as you begin to take cover, you see a lumbering shape coming down the trench towards you. It is huge and bestial, but unlike any animal you've ever seen.

The creature rushing down the trench may have once been a bear, but its huge furred body has warped into a single shapeless mass from which sprout numerous clawed appendages that support its weight like table legs. The animal's fanged head rises up from this central mass on an elongated trunk, which sways back and forth in the air as it scuttles forward. Its eyes are completely black.

The creature is a transformed bear seedling which has been wreaking havoc on Wastelord forces in the chaos of the battle. Moving through the trenches with inhuman ferocity, it has torn apart everything it's encountered—and it now moves to destroy the PCs as well. See the appendix at the end of this book for more information on this type of new creature.

🐾 **Bear Seedling (Transformed) (1):** HP 68, down to 56 due to wounds (see Appendix 2).

Treasure: Scattered around this area are a number of people killed by the bear seedling in the recent fighting. A Search check (DC 15) uncovers a Beretta 92 (no clip or ammo), an M16A2 (with 9 shots remaining its its clip), and three more M16A2s (no ammo).

I. BARRICADES (EL 7)

From somewhere ahead of you you hear the sounds of fighting. You arrive just in time to see a band of Wastelord soldiers scattering for cover as a number of makeshift barricades collapse under an onslaught of unseen attackers. As the barricades fall, a mass of black-eyed men begin pouring into the trench. But these are not ordinary men; they are badly rotted, and in places their bones can be seen through their viscid flesh. They stumble forward like zombies, swarming around anything in their way.

Though the sudden appearance of these “zombies” has you reeling, what soon arrives behind these animated corpses really turns your stomach.

These new arrivals appear to have once been not men, but wolves—but they’ve been changed. Instead of rushing along on all fours, these creatures run upright on powerful, deformed legs, their heads extended on long sinuous necks of pulsing, naked musculature. They snap their jaws repeatedly at the air around them, threatening to tear into anything that comes near.

As these new “shock troops” rush forward, they let off a string of twisted and pained howls which echo through the trenches like the mad baying of tortured dogs.

The party has arrived just in time to help a squad of Wastelords and slave soldiers which has been cut off from the rest of the army during the fighting. The Wastelords are glad to see the PCs, and will welcome their assistance in the battle.

Surging through the barricades is a band of infected shamblers, followed by a force of infected wolves which have already *transformed* (new monsters are described at the end of this module). They attack everyone in the vicinity with intent to kill.

● **Low-Level Wastelords A (2):** HP 7 each (see Appendix 1).

● **Slave Soldiers B (2):** HP 2 each (see Appendix 1).

● **Mutant Shamblers (4):** HP 15, 15, 13, and 7 (see Appendix 2).

● **Wolf Seedlings (Transformed) (5):** HP 30 each (see Appendix 2).

The shamblers and wolf seedlings continue to fight until all are destroyed. Once the Enemy is defeated, any surviving Wastelords will remain with the PCs in the trenches for the remainder of the battle.

J. SHELLSHOCKED (EL 2)

As you move down through the trenches, you spy the command bunker getting closer and closer in the distance. Yet the adrenaline is racing through your body—you know that the enemy could be anywhere, even around the next corner.

Suddenly, the crack of gunfire rips through the trenches ahead, and white-hot tracers zoom by, just



inches from your heads.

The PCs have stumbled upon a small group of demoralized and panicked men, members of the original force guarding this part of the trench line. Cut off during the Enemy assault, they have resorted to firing at anything and everything they see. They are not expecting reinforcements, and thus assume the PCs are just more of the Enemy!

When the encounter begins, assume the men have the advantage of a surprise round. They begin by firing at the PCs, and will continue to shoot at them until pacified (see below).

● **Low-Level Wastelords A (4):** HP 3, 3, 2, and 2 (see Appendix 1).

GM’s Note: The PCs can only talk the men down through a Diplomacy check (DC 18). The panicked men must be able to hear the PCs shouting to them over the artillery bombardment; if the PCs emerge to make hand signals, the men will immediately open fire at them.

On any given round, roll 1D6; on a roll of 4-6, the noise is too loud for the PCs to be heard. Any other roll indicates a break in the explosions during which the PCs can attempt a Diplomacy check to convince the men that the PCs are not enemies.

NEW WORLD ORDER

K. CORPSE (EL ½)

Lying on the trench floor up ahead is a man's body, covered in blood. Rivulets of water cascading from the eroded trench walls have buried him in mud.

If the PCs come close (perhaps to search the body or try to administer first aid), the “man” —really a shambler only temporarily immobilized by a nearby artillery blast—suddenly animates and attacks!

☛ **Mutant Shambler (1):** HP 12 (see Appendix 2).

L. WOUNDED SURVIVOR

Through the smoke of a recent barrage emerges a staggering figure, grasping at bleeding wounds all over his body. The man, obviously one of the defenders you've come to relieve, looks utterly disheveled and disoriented, as if he's been cut off from friendly forces for days.

When the man sees you, his eyes widen in fear, but he quickly realizes who you are. He slumps against the wall and speaks.

“The Entropists... they retreated to the Command Bunker. They're still holding it. They won't let anyone in—they've left us all to die!”

With that, the man expires.

The man's wounds are too serious to be healed in time to prevent his death.

Treasure: If the PCs search the man, they find he is still clinging to a Beretta 92 with only a single shot remaining in its clip.

M. AMBUSH (EL 6)

Lying on the ground up ahead and covered with blood is the familiar form of your Wastelord sergeant. A number of other soldiers lie scattered around, but all of them appear to be dead, torn apart in battle.

The sergeant lifts his head weakly as he sees you approaching. He raises his pistol.

“Get... get... away! It's a trick...”

The sergeant is correct; the scene is an ambush. Depending on which direction the PCs are coming from, a force of transformed wolf seedlings and mutant shamblers lurk in a nearby trench, out of sight. The Enemy hopes to surprise and overcome the PCs when they approach to help their injured comrade.

What happens depends on what the PCs do. If they hesitate, the sergeant fires at one of the ambushing seedlings, but this act incapacitates him and causes him to begin bleeding (keep track of how many rounds the battle takes; he may bleed to death unless the PCs get to him in time). In this event, the enemy attempts to finish him off before

attacking the PCs. If the PCs do *not* hesitate, and instead immediately rush to his aid, they may be able to save him (through treatment), but they will likely be surrounded when the enemy emerges to ambush them.

☛ **Mid-Level Wastelord “Sergeant” (1):** HP 61, currently at 0 (see Appendix 1).

☛ **Wolf Seedlings (Transformed) (4):** HP 19 (x3), and 7 (see Appendix 2).

☛ **Mutant Shamblers (3):** HP 12 each (see Appendix 2).

Once the PCs defeat the Enemy, the sergeant mutters a few words:

“The bunker... just up ahead... be careful... Enemy is just outside... Entropists are firing at everything...”

The PCs can take the sergeant with them, or they can leave him in the care of any NPCs they have brought with them.

N. COMMAND BUNKER (EL 6)

After a long and torturous advance under heavy artillery fire, you finally see your objective ahead—a large bunker made from solid concrete, with firing ports on all sides and surrounded by a ring of trenches and barbed wire. A tattered Wastelord flag flies overhead, ripped and torn from the days' fighting.

As you approach, you spot a number of zombie-like shamblers converging on the bunker, lurching forward on half-rotted limbs or dragging their severed torsos through the mud with grasping hands. As they close in on the bunker, they are cut down one by one by withering fire from the defenders inside the complex, but there seems to be no end to the numbers of enemy.

When the party arrives, the bunker is under attack by no less than fifteen shamblers, all converging on the command pillbox in an attempt to overwhelm the Entropists inside. When the PCs come into view, the shamblers shift their attention away from the bunker and move on the party instead.

There are four Entropists inside the command bunker manning the firing ports and shooting at anything and everything in sight. They have held the bunker for more than a day and believe that their main forces have been completely overrun; thus they are subject to the same paranoia as the *Shellshocked Men* (see encounter **J** above).

☛ **Mid-Level Entropists (4):** HP 11, 10, 10, 9, 8, 8 (see page 239 of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition*).

☛ **Mutant Shamblers (15):** HP 6 (x6), 5 (x2), and 3 (x7) (see Appendix 2).

If and when the PCs manage to convince the Entropists to stop firing, the haggard defenders open the door to the bunker and emerge:

Once the last shamblers are killed, the sound of exploding artillery shells fades as the men sealed inside the bunker finally call off the barrage.

NEW WORLD ORDER

The single pitted iron door to the bunker opens with a labored clang. From the dark doorway emerge a half dozen men—Entropists, by the looks of their white uniforms and shaved heads—all weary-eyed and brandishing their submachine guns warily.

When they see your faces, they seem relieved. Finally, one of Entropists, apparently the commander of this part of the trench fortifications, forces a grin onto his normally humorless face.

“Much obliged, gentlemen. I do believe things had gotten somewhat out of hand there for a while.”

By the time the PCs relieve the command staff at the bunker, the rest of the Wastelord relief force has managed to fight back the Enemy and retake the trench line in this area. Its attack thwarted, the Enemy gives up the assault and vanishes into the mists to the east.

The PCs, for their part, are rewarded with some downtime in the rear area of the trenches. A few hours later, they are loaded back onto the trucks (along with any other remnants of their platoon), and taken back to the slave camp outside Shelter City.

THE FIGHTS (EL 5)

When the PCs return from the front lines, they find themselves with downtime in which to rest, train, and re-equip. If the PCs haven't done so already, they can use this time to visit Shelter City or interact with the NPC personalities in the camp.

Eventually, as the sun begins to set, the PCs are drawn by the sounds of a commotion in camp:

You arrive back at the camp outside Shelter City under a torrent of rain. After your first day in the field, even the drab and miserable conditions of the encampment seem welcome. Already you see other companies returning from the front, gathering at the mess tent for hot food served from open troughs by Wastelord guards. Though you wonder what exactly is being served, right now anything sounds good.

The camp is unusually rowdy today, the muddy streets crowded with soldiers returning from the day's fighting. More abundant than usual, however, are the numbers of Wastelord regulars mingling among the slaves, and at the center of the camp there appears to be some kind of commotion. You push your way through the crowds, struggling to get a good view of what is going on.

At the heart of the camp, the Wastelords have constructed a gladiatorial pit, and crowds are gathering to watch a match. However, this doesn't look like any ordinary pit game...

In addition to dozens of soldiers (including captured tribals, mercenaries, Entropists, and even a few Amazons watching from a safe distance), some Wastelord bigwig is apparently here. A woman, strikingly beautiful and clad in inappropriate but eye-

catching leather, sits in a position of honor, watching the proceedings with fickle interest from behind a wall of well-armed guards.

Shortly, a man enters the pit to explain the proceedings to the assembled crowds. “Today a platoon sergeant was badly injured, and his place now stands vacant! By Wastelord tradition, any man can challenge to take his position and command!”

There is a roar from the crowd. You watch as groups of slaves begin arguing over who would make the best candidate for their particular faction. You know that the position would bring responsibilities, but also favor to the victor's faction. It could also be the fast track to becoming a trusted member of the Wastelords...

A few brawny warriors step forward, shouting for all to hear that they will fight for the right to lead. The crowd cheers.

Then another man steps forward. He is not armed, but his wiry body is covered in scars, the signs of countless years fighting as a tribal raider across the mountains.

“My faction will fight for this right. Our champion will be... Skag!”

The crowd cheers even louder. The other warriors seem to reconsider, then one by one they bow out.

The last man standing merely smiles, confident that an easy victory is assured.

The PCs would be fools to miss this opportunity to rise in rank—and improve their position in the Wastelord army. If the players don't think of stepping forward themselves, remind them that this could be an opportunity to get in closer with Kyren and his “inner circle.”

Allow the player characters to choose one of their number to represent the party in the match. The rules (explained to them by the announcer) are as follows:

1. Only one contestant may fight; no one may help the contestant once he is in the pit.
2. Mercy is for the weak; the match is to the death.
3. Contestants may only fight with a melee weapon (or unarmed); no ranged weapons are allowed.
4. Contestants may wear armor if they choose.

Once the PCs choose their “champion,” it is time to determine who will be the next sergeant!

As the crowd roars with excitement, someone lurches into the pit. A muscular brute of a man, hunched over with some genetic deformity, his body covered in the telltale signs of past beatings and torture, a life of slavery and servitude. His massive arms are bound by huge spiked bracers, and dragging behind him is an enormous spiky flail that leaves a deep furrow in the ground. It must weigh fifty pounds!

If you have already played part one of this series, *Against the Wastelords*, the PCs may recognize the individual standing before them—it is Skag, the feral pit fighter they battled in the gladiatorial games of Ebb prior to the war in the Trade Lands. Captured by the Wastelords when Ebb fell (see *Against the Wastelords*), he was brought here and thrown in with the rest of the Wastelords' captured warriors to fight in Kyren's war.

Skag has done remarkably well in the company of the Wastelords; though he is little more than a dumb slave to them, he has never really known any better treatment, even before his captivity. At least here, his martial skills earn him privileges he has never before known—including ready access to *women*.

Skag's skills were not lost on his fellow captives either, and those who rival the PCs for leadership of the platoon have elected him as their "champion."

♣ **Skag:** hp 50 (see Appendix 1).

The militants in the crowd roar with approval as the warrior Skag stands tall, whirling the flail over his head. With an ear-splitting bellow his muscles tighten and he charges forward!



If the PCs killed Skag in *Against the Wastelords*, Against the Wastelords, replace him with a pit fighter of similar skill and ability.

A WOMAN APPRECIATES STAMINA

Whether or not the PC in question actually wins the match, the party will have earned an admirer among the crowds—the attractive "woman in leather":

As the match comes to an end and the crowd continues to cheer, you are still coming down from your adrenaline high when the woman in black leather walks up to you. The crowd parts as she and her Wastelord entourage close in.

The woman looks you and your companions over before finally speaking.

"You fought well, warrior. Do you know who I am? My name is Lena, and I am the favored consort of your master, Kyren."

She lets her words hang there for a moment before speaking again.

"Men with your skills are wasted on the frontlines. You could be far more useful serving my lord, Kyren, in a more "special" role."

Once more she looks you over, the twinkle in her eye betraying more than just an appraising stare.

"Let me invite you to a party being held tonight in Shelter City. It is an official function—the elections we hold once every few years to determine if Kyren will continue as our leader. He has only one rival this year. It should be quite entertaining. Shall I expect you?"

GM's Note: If you want to introduce one of the NPCs described in *The Camp* (Telgar, Mara, Motak, or Lord Hethris), you may have him/her also be present watching the match. If the PC wins, the NPC will approach and offer his/her services. Alternatively, other NPCs from Shelter City may be present watching the fights as well—perhaps one of the "originals" is on an errand outside the subterranean city. This is an opportunity to not only role-play, but also to introduce the player characters to information about the Wastelords and the overall conditions of the people under their rule.

THE BIG PARTY

That night, the PCs find themselves in Shelter City—guests of "Lipstick" Lena, Kyren's favored consort. The characters have little trouble getting into the city (any guards they encounter have been told to expect them; besides, there are a lot of people in the city and the PCs don't exactly stand out), and soon arrive at the height of the festivities.

Even if you've been down in Shelter City before tonight, you've never seen it like this before. Tonight the underground city is packed.

After having lived among the tribal people of the Trade Lands, dwelling in their small sun-baked trade

communities, you find this overcrowded underground city bewildering and disorienting. There are more people here than you can count, far more than in the Trade Lands, all living in cramped conditions like troglodytes in a dank stone cavern. In the Trade Lands, each day was a struggle for water or shade from the unrelenting sun; here, underground, it is uniformly cool and dark—and damp. Water seems to be everywhere here; dripping naturally from cavern walls, flowing from burst Ancient-era plumbing pipes and collecting in tepid, murky pools used by bathers and drinkers alike.

It is remarkable how many people the Wastelords manage to cram into their city, from wretched slum-dwelling slaves to merchants from the distant settlements of their “valley empire.” Some areas are tight and confined like a claustrophobe’s nightmare; others are huge, wide-open caverns... but all are overseen by well-armed raider guards wielding automatic rifles and festooned with tattoos that mark them as members of the Wastelord elite.

The benefits of Kyren’s enlightened era of rule are apparent in everything you see and hear. The marketplace, which occupies an entire cavern, is overflowing with goods produced by the various villages conquered by his army. There is fresh food available at all times, and an abundance of water in even the poorest family’s hovel. Obviously, the wisdom and fair hand of Kyren’s rule has allowed the villages in his empire to prosper, giving them a better life as a collection of unified communities that they would ever have known individually.

And the wonders don’t end there. Steady illumination in the dark underground city is provided by old bulbs and emergency lightning scavenged from the ruins of the vault and brought back to life by the Wastelords’ cadre of thinkers and mechs. There is even crude air conditioning and recycling, which keeps the deepest recesses of the city from becoming rank with the odor of men and their unwashed animals.

Like everyone else, you cannot help but be impressed by the sight of this bustling community... but after only a few days living under their rule, you have already come to see a darker side to the Wastelords. You know that the markets overflow only because they are fed more by the Wastelords’ raids than by the meager voluntary efforts of the people; the goods sold here were bought in blood, wrenched from the hands of oppressed people across the mountains. Everyone speaks the same language here because Kyren outlaws other tongues, because one language is better for trade and civil unity—not because the people want it. A whipping or an on-the-spot execution are the means by which the Wastelords enforce their rules.

That miraculous flow of electricity does more than illuminate subterranean caverns... it casts a revealing light on Kyren’s brand of “civilization.”

You slowly make your way towards the Pit, where tonight’s events will be held. The Pit is a central communal area where the people of the city meet with their rulers, on those rare occasions that the lords of the city deign to mingle with their subjects. You move among the packed masses, drawn to the commotion and revelry as much by the promise of free beer and hot food by the prospect of rising in the Wastelord ranks.

The Pit is overflowing with people by the time you find your places near a back wall, under the reddish glow of an old emergency light. Crowds of people dance chaotically to heavy metal music blasting from a bank of speakers, their wild movements resembling the worst scenes of biblical Sodom. For one night, and one night only, it seems as if the class divisions so painfully obvious (and brutally enforced) in Shelter City have been forgotten.

You are somewhat surprised when Kyren’s woman, Lena, finds you among the party-goers. As before, she is dressed to kill in form-fitting clothing that leaves little to the imagination. A broad grin sweeps across her face when she senses your reaction.

“I’m so glad you could make it. I hope none of the guards gave you any trouble? Excellent. You’ve arrived just in time to witness the results of the election.”

Lena turns to watch the central stage without another word. At the same time, the crowd parts like a sea of rats before an exterminator. Kyren, followed by a pack of well-armed Wastelord bodyguards, steps out onto a stage where all present can see him.

As the crowd cheers, Kyren throws his arms into the air, holding a sawed-off shotgun in one hand and clenching a fist with the other. The music cuts off abruptly. The steady sound of whispers and murmurs from the onlookers is like the buzz of a hornet’s nest.

Another raider stumbles out from behind Kyren, in chains and badly beaten. You don’t recognize him, but he must be one of Kyren’s less popular rivals, for the entire crowd roars in disdain.

Kyren kicks the man to his knees and, with a single pull of the trigger, blows his head off. A shower of gore sprays out over the first few ranks of onlookers.

Before the man’s body even hits the stage, the entire assembly begins chanting “Kyren! Kyren! Kyren!”

Apparently the “election” results are in. Kyren is still the leader of the gang.

With a raise of Kyren’s hand, the music starts once more, the headache-inducing rhythms drowning out the sound of your departure.

The characters have now had their first real taste of Kyren’s perverse version of “civilization” —order at the cost of liberty, peace enforced by violence, and free “elections” where competitors and rivals are executed if they fail to win.

The PCs can stay if they wish; soon Lena excuses herself (to “congratulate” Kyren on his victory) and the PCs are left to their own devices.

A MERRY CHASE

Eventually, the PCs will leave the Pit for the night. When they do, allow each member of the group to make a Spot check at DC 12. If any of the checks are successful, read the following:

As you wander through the dimly lit underground halls and away from the riotous noise of the party at the Pit, you spot something strange in the shadows up ahead. Expecting to see some drunk raider stumbling into an alcove to urinate or vomit, instead you are surprised to see a dead body, neatly dragged into the shadows of a small niche just out of sight of the main corridor.

Upon examination of the corpse, it is obvious the body is that of a Wastelord guard; his hands still grip a rifle, suggesting that he never even got a shot off. His throat has been cut, and the blood flows like water from the terrible wound. It is fresh, perhaps only a minute old...

Any PCs present can attempt to find the trail of the guard's killer by making either a Search or Survival check at DC 11. A single set of bootprints leads away from the corpse, suggesting a solitary attacker. If any of the PCs have the Track feat and make a Survival check (DC 11), they can track the bloody prints to their ultimate destination.

TRACKING

The killer's tracks lead east from the entrance to the Marketplace, and then turn north past the stairs and into the Slums.

Once in the Slums, the tracking gets a bit more difficult; most inhabitants have gone to the celebrations at the Pit, and those few left here are almost all either drunk or asleep. Only if they get lucky (a roll of 1 on 1d6) will the PCs pass a semi-conscious person, and only if they vigorously question him (Gather Information check, DC 12) will they get a response. When asked if someone passed this way recently, the groggy raider/slave/bum merely points north, towards the *Vehicle Garages*.

If the PCs pass through the Slums and into the Vehicle Garages, they find only a dark vaulted cavern where the dim silhouettes of cars and motorcycles stand cold and asleep. A Wastelord guard, casually making his rounds, hails them. If he is asked if someone went by, he shrugs, saying he was doing his rounds and didn't see anything.

Another Survival check (DC 11) allows the PCs to find the trail again. It leads east along the southern wall of the Vehicle Garages, as if whoever made them was deliberately hiding in the shadows to avoid being detected by the sentry.

The trail goes all the way to the end of the Slum block, where the killer seems to have headed back south and into those crowded warrens. Here the trail goes cold.

If the PCs head into the Slums here, they find a place where whole buildings of corrugated iron converge to make a maze of narrow alleys and overhead walkways. A few women wait up for their husbands in the upper stories of a

few of these structures, and as the PCs go by they shut their windows, not wanting to get into any trouble. If pressed, one admits to having seen someone pass by just a few minutes ago ("the only thing I saw was a crouched fella moving quietly down the alley here, heading towards the Pit").

If the PCs head back towards the Pit they must pass through the stairwell leading down to the subterranean level of the City. Here, in almost total darkness, with the cheering and heavy metal music drowning everything else out, they have a chance to hear movement on the stairs below (Listen check, DC 15).

THE DEEP LEVEL (EL 7)

The killer dashed down the stone stairs to the Deep Level of Shelter City; if the PCs make the Listen check, they hear the sound of the killer's boots on the steps as he runs.

If the PCs follow, read the following:

As you descend, you hear shouting, followed by the report of two or three automatic rifles.

As you reach the bottom of the stairs, turn the corner, and enter the guard area, you see three Wastelord guards standing by a card table, M16s at the ready. When you emerge into the dim light of their card game, the three men almost jump out of their skins, spinning on their heels to train their rifles in your direction.

The three men are prepared to gun the PCs down where they stand; it takes some time to talk them out of their aggressive posture.

If the PCs attempt to calm the guards, call for a Diplomacy check (DC 12). If the check fails, the guards remain wary of them and demand that they drop any weapons they are carrying and surrender (or suffer the consequence, an immediate firefight; treat the guards as three *Low-level Wastelords A*). Even if the PCs succeed at their diplomacy efforts, there is a certain amount of delay, as the Wastelords only slowly come to trust the PCs' story:

Success by 0 (total roll of 12)	Three-round delay as the guards demand an immediate explanation and discuss amongst themselves whether or not PCs are telling the truth
Success by 1 (total roll of 13)	Two-round delay as the guards demand the PCs explain who they are and what they are doing here
Success by 2+ (total roll of 14+)	One-round delay as the guards realize the PCs are chasing the killer that just ran by

If asked, the guards confirm that *someone* just ran by—they shot at him, but he darted off to the south into the *Abandoned Halls*. The Wastelord guards tell the PCs to hold off on following him into that dangerous area (see the area description for details on the hazards there) while one of their number runs off to alert Kyren.

If the PCs wait, Kyren and an entourage of guards leave the Pit immediately upon receiving the news and arrive here

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in 2d6 rounds. Upon his arrival, Kyren is quickly filled in about what just happened; convinced that the killer is in fact an infected Enemy, he orders the PCs to go in after him...

GM's Note: The number of rounds the PCs are delayed in this confrontation is important, because the killer (a seedling of the New World Order) makes its way as deeply as possible into the Abandoned Halls in an attempt to lose its pursuers; it moves at its full movement rate each round until it is well out of hearing range. The seedling then attempts to hide and remain out of sight, and to evade any pursuers. If successful, the seedling emerges later (perhaps days later) and tries to infiltrate the Infirmary to free its imprisoned "comrade," so that together they can cause greater disruption in the City.

If the PCs follow the seedling, however, it plays a game of cat-and-mouse with them, trying to ambush the party (focusing first on PCs separated from the rest of their party) whenever possible among the old creaking tunnels. Keep in mind that there is an inherent danger in moving through these tunnels (see the description of the Abandoned Halls for details).

It will, of course, fight to the death.

🗡️ **Wastelord Seedling:** hp 70 (see appendix 1).

Much to everyone's surprise, the seedling looks and moves just like a Wastelord. However, if the PCs make a Spot check (DC 20) while fighting the creature, they notice that it has *all-black eyes*.

The seedling-in-human-form was sent to Shelter City to infiltrate the citadel and free its trapped comrade (see below), and together they were to contaminate the city's water source. If not stopped, they were then to go on a suicidal spree—infesting everyone they could before being found and destroyed.

AFTERMATH

Once the seedling has been killed, read the following:

As the seemingly human guard finally collapses to the ground, you hear movement behind you. You turn to see Kyren moving cautiously forward with some of his men in tow. When he sees the corpse—finally dead after so many wounds—he doesn't even need to speak; his men produce a can of gasoline, douse the corpse, and light it on fire in a well-practiced routine.

Kyren turns to speak to you and seems impressed by your actions. "Good job," he says in a measured tone, as if re-assessing you. "What are your names? I'll see to it you're rewarded for your actions."

After a moment of looking you over, Lena appears at Kyren's side, apparently concerned about his disappearance from the election party. She seems surprised to see the spontaneous cremation, but then she whispers in Kyren's ear.

Kyren nods. "Ah yes, the janissaries from the Trade Lands. I knew you were different the moment I laid eyes on you. Hell, you killed some good men and thwarted my plans—something that few wastelanders can claim.

You're not like the others, those nameless rabble out there in the rain. You're special. And around here if you have that special "something" it means you're going places.

"How'd you like to get away from the frontlines for a while? Get away from the artillery and the blood and all the dead? I need a few men to do some special jobs for me, and I think you guys may be just what I'm looking for:

"Tomorrow report to the vehicle pool instead of your normal platoon. There's some trouble brewing in Crestone, a small town north of here. Whatever it is, the people are refusing to work, and I can't have that. Crestone isn't along the front, so I don't think the trouble is too serious, but I want you to check it out just in case. I'm giving you a transport truck for your party and equipment, and an escort of, say, two of my best men. They'll take care of the driving. You take care of the problem."

JOURNEY TO CRESTONE

The morning after the attempted infiltration, the PCs are met at the vehicle pool of Shelter City by an escort of two *Low-level Wastelords A* and an old military transport truck (treat this as a *moving truck*). The truck will prove useful in providing transport—and protection—in the desert.

CRESTONE

The tiny town of Crestone lies right smack dab in the middle of the wastes, far from the old highways of the San Luis Valley. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains rise like an impenetrable wall to the east, framing the low dust-caked buildings of the town with the color of their rocky peaks and snow-frosted mountaintops.

Crestone has been inhabited by primitive tribal folk since before the Shelter City vault opened years ago. Now the Wastelords use those people to mine the town's one and only important resource—its old gravel pits.

The Wastelords have set up a small gravel mining operation here, part of a vital plan to help repair roads and villages damaged or destroyed in the war against the Enemy. The mine is little more than an open pit, but it employs every single native seven days a week. Though the locals would once have chafed under the rule of the brutal Wastelords, they have fared relatively well as a direct result of the gravel pit's importance to the Wastelord empire (and the kidnapping and holding hostage of their tribal chief in far away Shelter City has convinced them that resistance is unwise).

INHABITANTS

Crestone is inhabited by just under 50 people (a mix of men, women, and children), who—due to the precarious position in which they find themselves—are trusted to govern themselves. There is no Wastelord garrison in town, though a tribal representative keeps a two-way radio in his

hut allowing him to communicate with Shelter City in case of emergency.

GETTING THERE

Though Crestone is far off the beaten path, the journey there proves relatively eventless. The trail to the small desert town is a single-lane back road from the time of the Ancients; the Sangre de Cristo Mountains loom into the eastern sky like a wall separating the valley from the civilized lands beyond.

Within a few hours of turning off of Highway 17, the truck enters the outskirts of what appears to be a small, nearly deserted town:

As the truck pulls into the rain-soaked town, you sense a palpable tension in the air. The only signs of life are a few lingering faces peering from the filthy, cracked panes of old windows in the village's scant remaining buildings. Miserable villagers, their faces masks of indifference, stare out as if trying to determine whether you are friends or foes.

As you dismount from the truck, a thin, deeply tanned man of indeterminate years emerges from a nearby hut with a spear held warily in hand.

Keeping a safe distance from you, the man speaks:

"We have told you before—we cannot pay tribute this month! Go back to your Wastelord masters and tell them there is nothing left!"

If the PCs approach the old man, he is wary of them but will speak (he has no other option at this point). He introduces himself as Karn, elected by the village to be their liaison to the Wastelords.

Though his is an unenviable job, Karn takes his duties seriously, knowing that he is the only instrument his people have to deal with their overlords; tact, diplomacy, and the ability to swallow one's pride in the face of insults are vital to his people's survival.

If the PCs ask Karn what he is talking about, or tell him they've come here for other reasons, he suddenly realizes that the PCs aren't, in fact, Wastelords. This realization brings about a totally different attitude in him (he expects the Wastelords to make an example of him to show the villagers their masters mean business); confident that the PCs are not Wastelords, he is more than willing to discuss further the problems his village faces.

"Did not your masters tell you? Ah, I see. Perhaps you have saved me from becoming an example for my people. You see, my village has been unable to meet the Wastelords' production quota this month."

Seeing the confusion on your faces, the man grins, revealing a full set of peg-like yellow teeth.

"Our village mines stone so the Wastelords can rebuild the towns and villages that are burned in the war. We are expected to mine one ton of material each month—no less. But this month, the workers... the workers have been afraid to enter the mines. But our

masters, they do not listen. A ton of rock is a ton of rock to them... whether or not it is stained with the blood of our people."

Karn explains that three weeks ago, a small dog—a favorite pet of the village children—went missing. Then, just two weeks ago, a pair of young girls, neither older than six, went into the old water tunnels beneath the village to pursue a ball that one had lost while playing. Hearing a strange shuffling sound, the girls believed they had found the dog—only to encounter something *terrible* in the old tunnels.

Karn explains that only one of the girls came out, panicked and pale as a ghost. She was covered in blood—not her own, but (according to the child) that of her friend. The elders (Karn included) attempted to glean more information from her, but she was hysterical.

"A few days passed, and the people were afraid to mine. There are many holes around here where the creature—whatever it is—could come out and snatch any one of us away. The people are afraid to leave their children unattended. The people are afraid to work."

Obviously Karn and the people of Crestone have a serious problem. It should be blatantly obvious to the PCs, however, that the Wastelords are completely unsympathetic towards the villagers' problem with the "creature," because the Wastelords won't help, a solution to the villagers' problem rests solely in the PCs hands.

It's up to the PCs to decide whether or not to offer their help, but if they do not, the Wastelords will send a patrol in the next few days to "make an example" of Karn. They will then leave, returning two or three days later to see if the people have met their quota—before finding someone of whom to make another example.

If the PCs offer to help, Karn merely nods and motions for them to follow him.

The old man leads you away from the muddy roadway to a hut down a nearby alley. Pulling back the dried leather of an old hide that serves as its only door, he reveals inside a small home.

A worried-looking woman, perhaps 20 years of age at most, turns suddenly with eyes wide, expecting to see angry Wastelord henchmen intruding into her home. Karn raises a hand as if to say everything is okay, which seems to suffice.

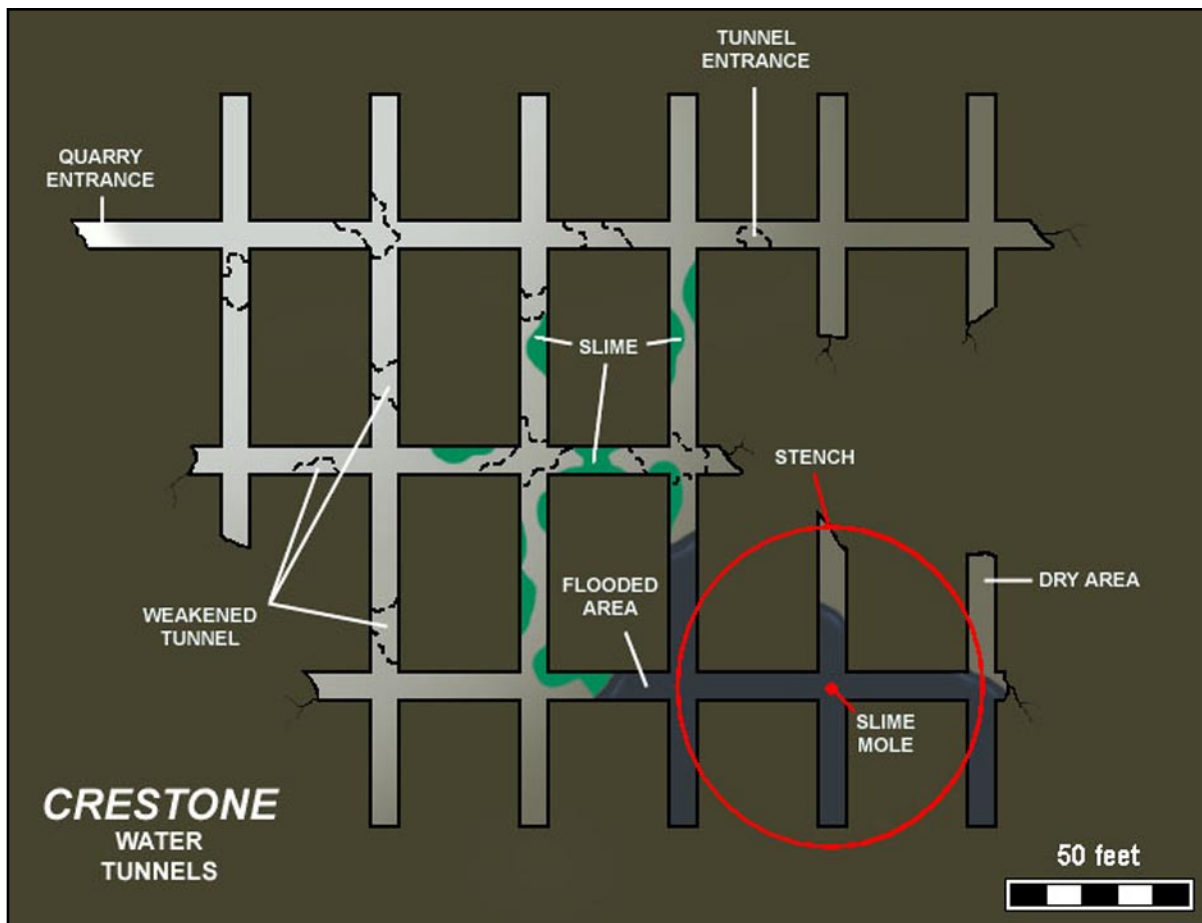
Playing on the floor is a small girl, her hair braided in two long tails. She stops singing her innocent children's song when she realizes someone has come to see her.

"This is Yai," Karn says, "She is the one who survived. Yai, tell these warriors what it is you saw."

The girl looks to her mother, who reassures her with a nod.

"We went playing... Ameer and me... and her ball fell into the ground. There was a hole. Ameer went down

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and so did I.” For a moment the girl seems distracted, cradling a battered, colored ball in her small hands. Staring at the ball seems to trigger memories that her family has worked hard to bury.

“It smelled terrible down there, like dead things. I coughed up, but Amee said she saw something. She went to look, and I followed. It was awful dark, and the ground seemed to crumble underfoot. Then, all of a sudden, we heard a... sound.”

“What did it sound like?” prods Karn in the soothing voice of a kindly grandfather.

“Like a puppy crying. So I said to Amee, maybe that was the puppy. Y’know, the one that ran away. We thought it might be him. Maybe he was hurt. Maybe he was hungry.

“Then, when we got closer, it moved. It wasn’t a puppy. It was bigger. Much bigger. It was scary. And it ate Amee right up in its big old mouth. I ran away.”

The little girl, eyes wide, goes back to bouncing her ball, oblivious to the looks of horror on the faces of her mother and grandfather.

Karn and his daughter allow the PCs to ask Yai questions. If asked about the beast, Yai describes it as “big and pink,” like “someone without clothes on.” It smelled terrible, she says (wrinkling her nose in disgust), and was “all sticky with goo.” Beyond that, however, she cannot produce any further

details about the creature.

If the group asks how she got away, Yai says she ran as fast as she could. She couldn’t get back up the hole they came through, so she headed towards a light down one of the tunnels. When she reached the light, she emerged in the gravel quarry.

The creature pursued her when she began to run, but apparently it stopped chasing her as she reached daylight...

If asked, Yai can indicate the hole she and Amee used to enter the tunnels, as well as the exit she used to escape (see map).

KEY TO CRESTONE TUNNELS

TUNNEL ENTRANCE

Just a few dozen paces from the edge of the village, well within sight of the huts, a seemingly innocuous pothole from the recent rains seems to have turned into a small sinkhole.

Nothing but pitch darkness is visible inside the hole, but the sound of dripping water issues forth from within. An awful stench, perhaps worse than anything you’ve ever smelled, assaults your nostrils, making everyone present wince in disgust.

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This is the hole the two girls went through to reach the old water tunnels. It is just large enough for one character at a time to descend (requiring an Escape Artist check at DC 12 to pass through). Due to the collection of debris at the bottom, the drop is only five feet and incurs no damage.

The PCs can enter the tunnels here, or through the *Quarry Entrance* (see below).

QUARRY ENTRANCE

Here, in the muck of the shallow gravel quarry, work tools (shovels, picks, and hammers) lie in disorganized piles, abandoned when the workers fled in the wake of the girl's horrifying story. One of only several holes in the area, this one seems large enough for men to pass through.

As you approach the crumbling entrance, you are assailed by a monstrous smell that almost sends you toppling down to the quarry's rubble-strewn bottom.

The “monstrous smell” is the lingering stench of the slime mole (see below). Because it has retreated deep into its underground lair, however, there is no need to check for nausea.

The PCs can enter through this entrance, or through the *Tunnel Entrance* (see above).

SLIME

The stone here seems to literally gleam in the dim light; there is an unsavory collection of moisture on the walls on either side of the passage. The smell here seems stronger than before; as you watch, the moisture oozes down the wall and sloughs off in long strands of grotesque slime.

These areas mark places through which the slime mole has recently passed, leaving a trail of slime on the ground and along the tight tunnel walls. The slime itself is harmless.

WEAKENED TUNNEL (EL 1)

Your passage here seems to set in motion a dangerous crumbling of the earth above. The ancient stones shudder momentarily, causing dust to drift down in telltale puffs, but the curved roof of the tunnel seems to hold. As the dust settles, beams of murky light from the cloudy sky above pierce through cracks and tiny openings in the weakened tunnel roof, weakly illuminating the murky darkness of the tunnel.

Areas indicated on the map as being *weakened* have fared far worse than the rest of the tunnel system. Any creature Small-size or larger moving through such an area has a chance of causing a collapse, which results in a cave-in of the weakened ceiling.

Size	Chance of causing collapse
Small	10%
Medium	25%
Large	50%
Huge*	75%

* Nothing larger than Huge can fit in the tunnels.

This chance decreases by 25% if the creature in question takes a full round action to move *cautiously* through the weakened area.

Any creature causing a collapse suffers 1d6 points of damage from falling stone (Reflex save at DC 20 for no damage). A collapse does not seal the passage in question, nor does it trap the creature that triggered it, though the creature is knocked *prone*. It does, however, cause *natural light* to reach down into the tunnel system (assuming it is daytime)...

GM's Note: If the PCs are aware of the weakness of the slime mole (specifically, its vulnerability to natural light) they may use these weakened areas to their advantage. For every patch of natural light that the slime mole must pass through while pursuing the PCs, it suffers 5 points of damage. Therefore, leading the slime mole through as many weakened areas as possible will improve their chances of killing it when they can no longer run.

If the PCs think of this strategy, they can deliberately cave in these areas ahead of time. Doing so will save them from suffering damage from a collapse during their encounter with the slime mole (and will also save them the unpleasant experience of getting knocked down while being chased).

Each weakened section the PCs successfully bypass should be considered a CR 1 trap.

FLOODED AREA

At this point, the darkness of the tunnel grows appreciably deeper, the last remnants of light giving way to an inky blackness that can only be the beginnings of a body of subterranean water. The water isn't still, but rocks with a lullaby motion, now and again churning up thick strands of greenish ooze that bubble and sink back down into the blackness before your eyes.

The sound of dripping water echoes off into the depths. Wherever the filthy water reaches dry ground there seems to be an unusual accumulation of the slimy stuff, like foam on the breakers of waves. The pervasive stench of rot is gut-wrenching.

The water here is not deep; it begins less than half an inch deep, and at its deepest point (at the area marked by the *red dot* on the map) is only four feet deep. Characters entering the water find it quite awful-smelling, but it is neither too cold nor too filthy to wade through.

STENCH

The stench becomes almost overwhelming, causing everyone in the group to choke. It is a noxious blend of dead flesh, spoiled milk, sewage, and unimaginable filth. With knees weak from nausea, you ponder whether to continue.

The red circle on the map indicates the 50 ft. radius of the slime mole's *stench*. When the PCs reach this radius, they must each succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 16) or receive a -2 morale penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws for the next 10 rounds.

If the PCs have ever dealt with a slime mole before, the stench is immediately recognizable.

GM's Note: Any loud vomiting or other noises attracts the attention of the slime mole (see below); it can see out to 60 feet with its darkvision (up to the extent of its stench effect, and 10 feet beyond).

SLIME MOLE (EL 7)

The location marked on the map by the *red dot* is where the slime mole usually resides, immersing itself as much as it can in the water. What the PCs experience, when they arrive, depends on whether or not the slime mole detected their approach.

If the slime mole failed to detect them, read the following:

The water swishes with each movement of your limbs. Each step is a struggle as you press on through the thick, slimy pool.

Up ahead, the monotonous drum of water droplets on the surface of the waterway is broken by a chilling, inhuman noise. It sounds like a sick, tormented animal, almost pitiful—like a beast cruelly treated by wicked masters and left to die by starvation. Its whines are deep but garbled, as if produced by some half-formed mouth of tremendous size and shape.

If the slime mole was warned beforehand, however, it will have submerged under the water in preparation for an attack. If this is the case, read the following:

The water here seems to get deeper and deeper, until before long you are chest-deep in water. Ribbons of semi-congealed slime float past in the dark waters, as if following some unseen current. Or, perhaps, kicked up by the movement of something beneath the surface...

In any event, when the PCs arrive at the intersection, the slime mole moves immediately to defend its lair. If it hasn't been warned of the PCs' presence in the tunnels, roll for initiative normally. If it has been warned, however, it is hiding (roll against the PCs' Spot checks, using its Hide bonus of +4) beneath the water, waiting to attack from surprise.

FIGHTING THE SLIME MOLE

Killing the slime mole, while difficult, will go a long way in improving relations between the Wastelords and their subjects in Crestone; though this is probably not the PCs' primary concern!

Still, killing the creature will prevent future deaths at its hands—and at the hands of the Wastelords, who would no doubt punish the people for failing to meet their production quotas (which will continue to happen so long as the creature lives).

In addition to these positive repercussions, there is a more immediate reward for killing the slime mole: *experience points*. It is important that the PCs be of adequate level before facing the later dangers of the New World Order, and each and every challenge they overcome along the way is vital to their future survival.

☠ **Slime Mole (1):** hp 103 (see page 315 of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* or Appendix 2).

The slime mole attacks viciously (as any pained, starving animal usually will), and will pursue potential prey out of the flooded area and into the tunnels. Having outgrown its ability to feed itself (a steady diet of rats doesn't cut it), the slime mole will single-mindedly chase the PCs for a decent meal. This means it will risk exposure to the light of the surface world (from weakened sections of tunnel) to get its quarry, and will stay to fight even against overwhelming odds. It will not, however, flee out into the open (outside of the tunnel system), since that would be certain death.

DRY AREA

The waters diminish here, revealing something of a beach. Bones, bits of ragged cloth, and other detritus left over from the creature's feedings lie scattered about. Thick strands of ooze connect these like some miasma of disgorged filth.

This area is where the slime mole "passes" digested materials.

Treasure: PCs willing to search through the refuse find the remains of a partially digested puppy, a child's ball stitched from leather, the bones of a little girl (Amee), more than a dozen broken beer bottles, and three *chemical light sticks*.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs withdraw in the face of the challenge the slime mole presents, their Wastelord escorts will take them back to Shelter City to report and recover. The villagers, broken-hearted by their inability to kill the creature, prepare for the worst (the inevitable Wastelord reprisal). The events of any future confrontation are up to the GM—but it's unlikely the locals come out with the upper hand.

If the PCs killed the creature, the villagers have much cause to be thankful. They offer the PCs beer (Karn has a few old bottles stashed away) to celebrate the death of the beast. Though this is a small reward, and the lives of the villagers have only improved by a tiny measure, it is enough to make them happy for a long time to come. More importantly, however, it gives the PCs a chance to learn about Crestone and the fate of its chief (see *Shelter City* for details), and possibly provides the impetus for the PCs to negotiate a release of the chief from Kyren in the future.

When the PCs return to Shelter City, Kyren authorizes them to replenish their ammunition, free of charge, from the Wastelord armory. He also reimburses the PCs for any meds they used (up to one *stimshot A* or a single dose of *superegen* per PC if they can prove they used some of their own stock of medicine on the mission). This is not only to show them his gratitude, but to reinforce in everyone's minds that those who serve him faithfully are rewarded.

He then tells the PCs to get a good night's sleep—he has another mission for them tomorrow that will take them to the vicinity of the frontier town of Mosca.

COOL RECEPTION

Sometime between their return to Shelter City and their departure for Mosca, the characters have an encounter with an interesting local figure...

You're walking through camp when all of a sudden a group of Wastelord guards bearing automatic rifles come out of nowhere and surround you, blocking your path.

A tall, muscular man walks up; the others instinctively shy away from him. This new arrival stands a full six feet tall, broad at the shoulders like a man who has trained his entire life for war. His skin is deeply tanned and his head is topped by sun-bleached blond hair, short enough to reveal a number of deep scars on his otherwise striking face. His blue eyes are utterly penetrating.

"You gentlemen seem to have Kyren's favor these days," the man says, "or at least his mistress Lena's... I saw you at the party last night; perhaps you saw me? No? Yes, well, I usually remain out of sight, in the shadows, as it were. My name is Qwan, Kyren's second-in-command."

He crosses his arms and looks at each of you one by one, letting the subtle insinuation of power (and blackmail, if the PCs have pursued Lena) hang unspoken in the air.

"But I'm not one to threaten. So instead, let me give you a little advice. As Kyren's second, I cannot afford to allow anyone—outsiders or Wastelord citizens—to compromise my place as his successor. Kyren thinks you are achievers. He loves achievers. And he often rewards achievers with rank.

"I suggest a mutually beneficial arrangement. Do what Kyren asks, be his little errand boys. For now.

After you've done a few jobs, ask for a transfer away from Shelter City. I'll make sure you're assigned somewhere far from the front, far from the fighting—maybe even guarding the harems. What do you say?"

He forces a grin, but the attempt does nothing to dispel the effect of his icy stare.

"Think about it. But whatever you decide... I strongly suggest you say yes."

With that, he and his men depart, leaving the PCs to ponder how far Qwan is willing to take this threat.

SIGHTING NEAR MOSCA

The next day, the PCs are summoned to the command tent of the encampment outside Shelter City. Here they are met by a senior battalion commander, who has been briefed by Kyren on the party's new role as his "special forces."

You are met at the tent entrance by the battalion commander, a grim-faced man of considerable age who appears to have seen more than his fair share of battles in the Wastelord army.

"Kyren has another mission for you men. I'm surprised he's chosen you over regular Wastelord troops, but then again I suppose the nature of some of these missions might require a little... subtlety.

"Anyway, here is the situation." He points to a map on the table, indicating the town of Mosca, just a few miles from the trenches.

"This is Mosca. It's one of the major food-growing areas in the valley, even with the war. Just two days ago, a few laborers there claimed to have seen 'something' moving through the desert near town. They feared it might be the Enemy operating behind friendly lines, and so alerted the town guard. Kyren thinks the sighting is more than just a coincidence. He wants someone to go and check it out.

"Get your gear and head out immediately. Find out if there is anything behind the sighting, and if so, deal with whatever it is. Report to me when you're done. Good luck."

MOSCA

Mosca was once an important agricultural center for the valley, despite its location in the middle of a desert. Water shipped in from Moffat was used to irrigate the land here, where a significant crop was farmed and harvested by both local and foreign labor. Though the landscape is badly scarred from past incursions by the Enemy, the people of Mosca still manage to produce a significant portion of the Wastelords' domestically-grown agriculture.

Mosca itself is a rather nondescript settlement composed of old Ancient-era buildings, cross-streets, and a palisade of junk salvaged from the wastes (concrete highway dividers, compacted auto wrecks, barbed wire, etc.). Because of the war, the civilian population has been evacuated from

the ruins and now lives in long barrack-style housing centrally located near the heart of the old pre-Fall town. The Wastelord garrison patrols this part of town regularly, operating from an old 1950s-era movie theater near downtown.

In response to concerns about worker morale, Kyren dedicated some resources to reviving the old theater, playing movies from old reels for the entertainment of Mosca's civilian workforce. Every Friday and Saturday night around dusk, the workers are rounded up and packed into the rotting theater annex to watch films such as *Casablanca*, *Bambi*, and grainy newsreels from the 1940s and 50s. The effort has paid off; Mosca's production of edible crops for consumption by other settlements (including Shelter City) have increased 150% since the theater was put back in operation.

INHABITANTS

Mosca's population consists of roughly 300 people, most of whom were at one time inhabitants of other lands but who were brought here against their will to serve as slave labor for the Wastelords. A few locals were once original inhabitants of Shelter City whose unwillingness to bow to Kyren resulted in their being forced into slavery.

The Wastelords garrison the theater with 10 *Low-level Wastelords A*, with another three *Mid-level Wastelords* and a single *High-level Wastelord* (Marzan) as garrison commander. In addition, a detail of soldiers regularly oversees the workers; by day in the fields, at night by patrolling the barrack houses while the workers sleep. This detail includes another 10 *Low-level Wastelords A* and four *Mid-level Wastelords*.

Finally, Mosca's commander has four *Low-level Wastelords A* at his disposal whom he dispatches on motorcycles to patrol the settlement's outskirts and the highways near town. These men are charged with keeping an eye out for anything strange (fires in the fields, escaped slaves, or the rare Wastelord truck convoy that has broken down and needs assistance).

GETTING THERE

Though the PCs ride in a rickety military-style truck as old as the Ancients themselves, the road to Mosca is in remarkably good condition, expediting their journey immensely. As they arrive at Mosca, they form their first impression of the town:

From a distance, the town of Mosca seems much larger and more imposing than other settlements you've seen in the Wastelord homeland; flanked by rugged cropland on one side (the fruits of which were no doubt wrested from the war-torn wasteland by slave labor), and wide open plains on the other; the town sits like a frontier outpost along the wind-swept nakedness of a pre-Fall asphalt highway.

Tired, malnourished workers in the fields look in your

direction; an equal distribution of otherwise healthy men, women, and children, young and old, tending to their masters' crop. They don't seem surprised or alarmed by your arrival, but instead of approaching to speak, they merely watch you roll down the road with expressionless faces.

Further along the road, the gateway in the wall of junk surrounding Mosca stands open, a few Wastelord sentries stationed on the walls. The truck comes to a grinding halt, and a few armed figures come forward to greet your party.

"Greetings," says the oldest, his tired face lined with scars from long-ago battles. He extends a bony hand and salutes like an old-fashioned soldier, revealing Maori-like tattoos up and down his arms.

"I am Marzan, Wastelord administrator of this town. We received word by radio that your group was coming to solve our little "problem." Consider the people and garrison of Mosca at your disposal."

By the looks of respect given him by his men as well as by the local garrison, it is obvious that Marzan is a man who has earned the trust and confidence of the townsfolk through his years of bravery and, recently, his level hand as an administrator. Because he is still a Wastelord (with a long history of raids and campaigns under Kyren), the PCs may instinctively distrust him, but they soon learn that Marzan is nothing like the wild raider of his youth; he is now a calm and responsible elder.

Regardless of how they feel about him, Marzan is prepared to follow Kyren's instructions and give the PCs whatever aid they need to solve Mosca's problem—including filling them in on what has happened recently:

Just a few days ago, a group of women and small children working the fields on the outskirts of town reported seeing a mysterious figure moving along the horizon. According to the women, the figure was just barely visible in the late afternoon fog. Worried that the "creature" might be somehow related to the Enemy, the women reported the sighting to the Wastelord garrison. To be safe, Marzan ordered his workers to remain within sight of the walls of Mosca for the time being, until a party could be sent from Shelter City to investigate and deal with this enigmatic threat.

Marzan tells the PCs that he and his men are at their disposal, but has no other concrete information to offer. Because the possibility of an Enemy presence here is obviously a serious matter, Marzan will not get in the PCs' way while they conduct their investigation.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Because locals know the PCs operate under the authority of Kyren (word travels fast), the PCs will not be harassed or denied any information while in Mosca. The locals, somewhat afraid of the PCs because they have Kyren's favor, generally remain silent and unseen unless spoken to or called out; but if asked, they provide honest and accurate

answers for fear of being punished (even if the PCs come off as friendly and benevolent, the locals still fear reprisals by their Wastelord overseers once the PCs leave Mosca). As such, PCs receive a +2 circumstance bonus to all Gather Information checks while in town.

With a successful Gather Information check (DC 13), the PCs can easily find and interview the women and children who saw the creature in the fields in the first place. The women and children convey very little information short of being able to say the creature was obscured by the fog, and that *it moved from the northeast to the southeast, never actually coming near town, before disappearing.*

If specifically asked if they saw anything else unusual, the women remember a “gleam of metal” but little else. They can, however, take the PCs to the eastern field where they saw the creature, and from there the PCs can attempt to find its trail.

TRACKING THE INTERLOPER

PCs searching east of town may find the tracks of the creature if they succeed at a Survival check (DC 13). The search takes 1d4 hours, but upon success they locate what appear to be *hoofed tracks* moving towards the southeast, parallel to the town. From this distance, Mosca is barely visible in the haze to the west.

Since the DC of the Survival check is over 10, only PCs with the Track feat can actually locate and follow the trail. However, even if the PCs lack this feat, they may try to locate a competent tracker from among the population of Mosca. There is a 1 in 10 chance that one of the locals has the Track feat; a 1 in 8 chance if the PCs ask among the Wastelord garrison. If the PCs tell Marzan about this need, he orders the worker (or Wastelord guard) to do as the PCs say and to serve as their tracker until the creature is found and dealt with.

The trail goes on for five meandering miles to the southeast, requiring five consecutive Survival checks (all at DC 13); any failure means the trail is lost. The tracker may attempt to pick the trail up again only after 1 hour has passed.

DON QUIXOTE OF THE DESERT (EL 3)

Once the trail is located, the party’s Wastelord escorts insist on accompanying them (they are under orders to guard the PCs) by truck. They argue that the party can cover greater distances if they travel by truck, and will only catch up with their quarry if they put the “pedal to the metal.”

After five miles (and five successful Survival checks), the PCs arrive at the campsite of the creature:

In the distance ahead you see a strange sight; in fact, it seems so out of place here in the war-torn wasteland that at first you rub your eyes to make sure it isn’t some kind of mirage.

Sitting there in a broad sandy depression is a tent-like pavilion, with a colorful violet banner overhead flapping

crisply in the cold morning wind. A horse with a saddle blanket stands quietly nearby, watching you approach with total disinterest.

A man sits on a mat under the protective shade of the pavilion, out of the light drizzle that has already begun to fall. As you approach he calls out:

“Hold there! Let a fellow warrior don his armor and then we shall talk!”

If the PCs attack him, the man (“Sir Goodyear”) is surprised—he is expecting to *parlay*—but will defend himself appropriately. See below for his statistics; generally speaking, on his first action he will run into his tent to retrieve his weapon and then return to kill the PCs. Since they are unwilling to fight “fairly” (that is, let him first don his armor), he assumes the PCs are dishonorable raiders worthy of death.

If the PCs are the least bit curious (which is likely), and allow the man to don his armor as requested, read the following:

The man returns to his pavilion and emerges almost ten minutes later clad in gleaming plate armor like a knight of the ancient past. And like some prehistoric chevalier he carries a “lance”—in this case, an assault rifle decorated with violet pennants—which he slings at his side as he mounts his horse.

Before you can ask what his purpose here is, or if he has seen the creature you’ve been stalking, the man cuts you short. He speaks loud and proudly, as if he was expecting the coming speech to knock you flat.

“I am Sir Goodyear... I come from the Ultraviolet Empire, a great kingdom over the mountains and far to the north. I am a knight-errant of his majesty, King Ultraviolet himself...”

He lets his words hang there, as if expecting all assembled to be impressed. When no one so much as blinks, he continues.

“Word has reached us that the noble people of the Trade Lands are readying for a war with the vile raider scum known as the ‘Wastelords.’ His Majesty has deigned to send one of his great knights to assist the righteous people of this land in their war of liberation.”

The man sits back on his horse, a proud smile forming on his face.

The comedy of the moment seems utterly lost on the man; here he is, in the heart of the country controlled by his sworn enemy! Even your Wastelord allies, sitting on the truck, begin to grin and snicker.

“I say,” he says, “the Trade Lands seem less... “populated” than I was led to believe. Well, that doesn’t matter, I suppose. I take it, then, that you all are representatives of the Three Towns Alliance?”

With that last bit the Wastelords break into uncontrollable laughter; either they find him too funny to kill, or else they appreciate the bizarre circumstances of the situation enough to let him live—for now.

SIR GOODYEAR AND LORD HETHRIS

An interesting situation will arise if Lord Hethris (see *The Camp*) is already part of the character's party. Since both Hethris and Goodyear see themselves as "knights" of a sort, they will both leap at the chance to do battle. Lord Hethris will immediately identify himself as a Knight of Route 66, while Goodyear will announce himself as a Knight of the Ultraviolet Kingdom. Having established their identities, both men challenge one another to battle; Hethris to prove himself against such a famous group of knights, and Goodyear because of his vow to fight raiders wherever he goes.

Trying to talk Lord Hethris and Sir Goodyear out of a duel to the death should be extremely difficult; they represent totally opposite ideals. In the end, the PCs may be forced to pick one over the other...

The "knight," for his part, is utterly confused by the behavior of the PCs, who he assumed were representatives come to welcome him, and turns to them for an explanation of what is "so funny." After all, from his point of view, he has ridden a long way to offer unconditional aid to an oppressed people; when he finds out that he is too late (the Alliance already fought their battles with the Wastelords in part one of the series, *Against the Wastelords*) and that he is in fact addressing the *Wastelords* and not the Alliance, he is speechless—and crestfallen.

The PCs' Wastelord escort would rather kill the foreign knight than worry about what to do with him. He has, after all, declared himself an enemy of the Wastelords, has called them "scum" to their faces, and is a trespasser in their territory.

Sparing Sir Goodyear may take some effort by the PCs, requiring Bluff and/or Diplomacy checks both to soothe the savage bloodlust of the Wastelords and to convince Goodyear to drop his prejudice against raiders in general and to join in the fight against the Enemy. The DC of these checks depends on a number of factors, including how the PCs have gotten along with the Wastelords (if they've tried to swallow their pride and work like professionals, DC 12 to 15 might be appropriate; if relations are strained and they've often come to blows struggling to work with their "allies," the DC should be higher—18 to 20), and how they've presented themselves to Sir Goodyear.

If the PCs fail to convince the Wastelords to back down, there will certainly be a fight; if they fail to convince Goodyear, he will simply refuse to join the expedition and will head to the Trade Lands to "see for himself" if the war is truly over. If the PCs succeed, however, and manage to convince Sir Goodyear to *join* their expedition rather than *fight* them, his statistics are provided here so that the GM can control him as an allied NPC from this point on.

♥ **Sir Goodyear:** hp 40 (see Appendix 1).

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

The PCs should now realize that the beast they have been tracking is, in fact, Sir Goodyear and not some monstrous creature. Instead of a fight, they have a chance to participate in some rather awkward (and amusing) diplomacy.

At this point the PCs have the opportunity to make an unusual ally, one whom they can actually *trust* (unlike their other "allies," the Wastelords, whose behavior and track

record with the natives leave a lot to be desired). The PCs can approach Sir Goodyear in a number of ways; first of all, if they are survivors of the first part of this adventure series, they can tell the *truth* (about the war, the nuclear weapon, the battles against the Wastelords, and the tentative, shaky alliance struck with Kyren to fight a "greater evil") and try to win his friendship that way. Goodyear is a brave knight, and stroking his ego or convincing him to fight against the Enemy to save "more than just the Trade Lands" would certainly appeal to his chivalric ideals. If the PCs are smooth talkers, they may have him believing he'll come out of this a greater hero than he ever imagined.

Alternatively the PCs could *lie*, pretending they are in fact members of the Three Towns Alliance and that the Wastelords have always been "friends" of the Alliance. This isn't entirely untrue, and it will go a long way to preventing Sir Goodyear from looking down on the Wastelords for the rest of the adventure (if he ever realizes that these are the Wastelords he originally came to fight, he will certainly re-evaluate not only his traveling with them, but also the motives of the party as a whole).

AFTERMATH

Once the PCs realize that the villagers's "creature" was actually Sir Goodyear wandering the desert, there is little else to be done here. The PCs can salvage the time they spent tracking this false lead down by recruiting Sir Goodyear to their cause, but apart from that opportunity, the journey has been a false alarm.

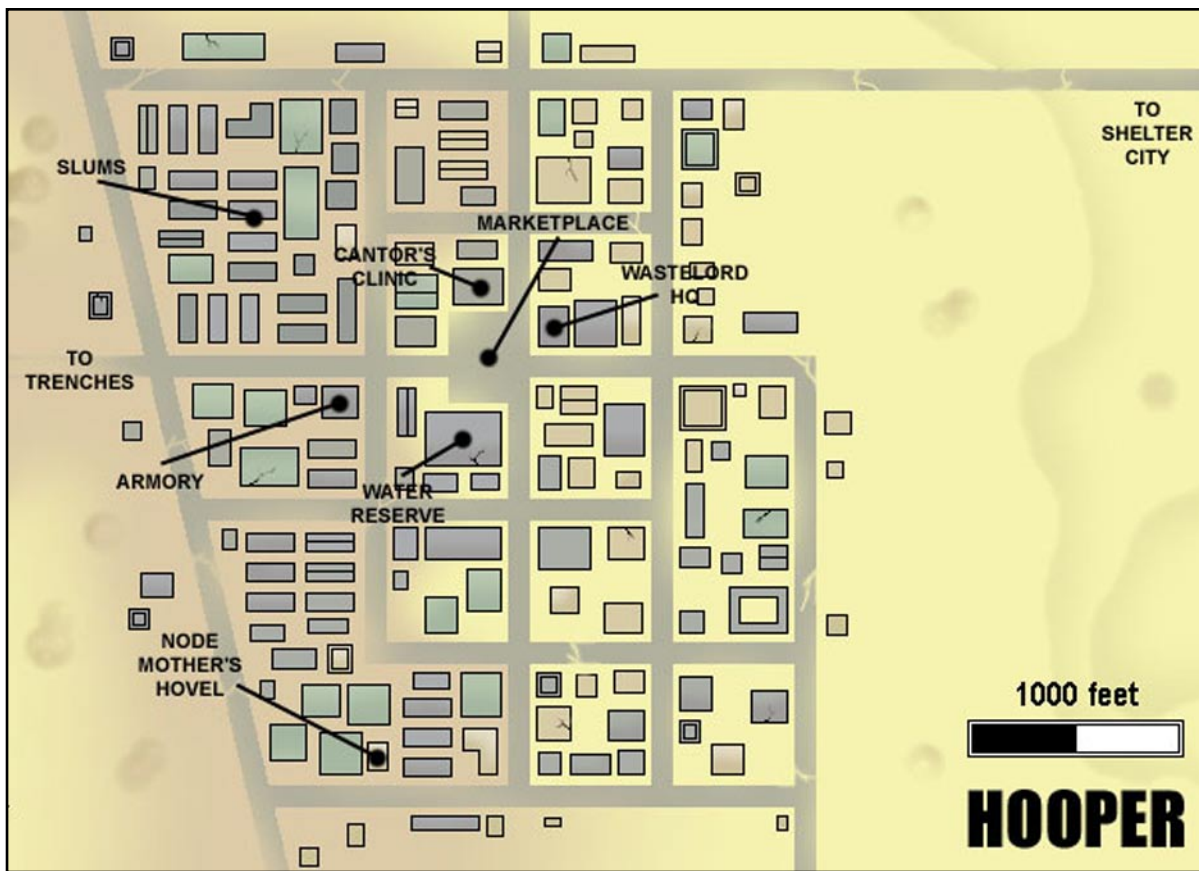
If the PCs return and brief their commander in Shelter City, he grudgingly welcomes Sir Goodyear into the army. Though the air is certainly tense and awkward (on both sides), Goodyear's commanding presence and obvious allegiance to the PCs (who are by now widely recognized as the trusted agents of Kyren) ensures that no "incidents" occur while the noble knight is in their company.

INTRIGUE AT HOOPER

The next day, the PCs are informed they are due for another mission.

The next day you are summoned once more to the command tent of your battalion leader, but today he is not alone. Kyren is there, looking as giddy as a school

NEW WORLD ORDER



boy. When he sees you enter the tent, his face beams.

“Ah, there they are! We were just talking about you. I trust you had a good night’s sleep? No? Well then, commander, make sure these men each get a woman for company tonight.”

He turns and looks at your group with a smile.

“And you gentlemen are going to deserve it after this mission. I have an important job for you again. Since you seem to be the most capable men in my empire, I want you to go to Hooper and deal with a little problem we’ve got going on there.

“As you can see,” he says, motioning to the commander’s map, “Hooper sits right on the front lines. The town is under attack almost night and day. Normally we repel the attacks with ease, but lately our scouts have been reporting some pretty strange behavior. Instead of assaulting the walls, the Enemy puts up only a token effort, as if they were only prodding us, pretending to keep up the momentum, while conserving their strength just out of rifle range.

“I trust my gut instincts. I have a feeling the Enemy may have already infiltrated the town, and these half-assed attacks are meant to keep us looking in the wrong direction until whatever plan they’ve got is hatched. I want you to go to Hooper and find out.”

Kyren notices the incredulous looks on your faces when he suggests the Enemy might be up to such a clever and insidious plan.

“I know what you’re thinking. Impossible, right?”

You’ve fought the zombies before, what the soldiers are calling “shamblers.” Yeah, most of the men out there have only ever fought those mindless buggers. Not capable of a cunning plan, right? Is that what you’re thinking?

“Well there’s a lot more to the Enemy than those men out there realize. Things we wouldn’t dare tell them, or there’d be mass desertions. Maybe if you do a good job, prove yourselves trustworthy... I’ll let you in on a little more of what we know.”

HOOPER

Hooper is a decrepit town on the edge of Wastelord lands, a major center of food processing. Leather from cattle slaughtered in Moffat is also sent here to be treated and turned into leather armor for Wastelord armies. Despite the war just beyond its gates, the whole town has the air of an industrious community—but boiling beneath the surface is a real and dangerous undercurrent of strife and resistance. Hooper is home to a small “freedom movement” comprised of young men and women disgusted with Wastelord rule who seek freedom from oppression at any cost. The town has a small garrison led by a cruel and ambitious man named Harris, but even the cruel Kyren wouldn’t think to make such a hot-tempered man his only representative to these unruly people. He also employs a former Shelter City citizen, a *doctor*, as a liaison with these people, hoping to present a gentler face.

INHABITANTS

There are over two hundred people in Hooper, living in overcrowded conditions that are perfect for breeding dissent against the Wastelords. The liaison between the locals and their Wastelord masters is a man named Cantor, formerly a doctor and original citizen of Shelter City. A bit too vocal for his own good, when Cantor criticized Kyren's rule he was punished by having both legs amputated. However, Kyren recognized the value of Cantor's skills and spared his life, equipping him with a rickety old wheelchair and exiling him to Hooper, where he will likely spend the rest of his days.

In many ways Cantor, bitter about his exile and his wheelchair-bound condition, has given up on life. However, the people of Hooper truly *need* his skills, and he has grown fond of the town's small population (he still despises the Wastelords, however—with a passion), knowing many of the local slaves and workers by their first names. He has treated injuries, diseases, and even delivered the babies of an entire generation here in Hooper, and though he won't readily admit it, he feels more strongly attached to this community than he ever did to his old home in Shelter City.

Cantor was (and still is) a good friend of Doc (see the *Infirmery* in Shelter City), and if he learns that the PCs know Doc, he will be favorably disposed towards them. The benefits of his favor can range from the PCs receiving more accurate and honest information from the old doctor to gaining access to his well-stocked medicine cabinet.

GETTING THERE

When the PCs arrive at Hooper, it has already reached the boiling point. The town has been under near-constant siege from the west for weeks. In addition, the appearance of an android near town just recently (detailed elsewhere in this book) has dramatically increased the level of general tension.

To compound matters, a group of young men in Hooper are playing on the fears of their fellow townsfolk in an attempt to seize control from the Wastelords. Having suffered under the harsh wartime rule of their "masters" for too long, these headstrong youths are brash (and desperate) enough to commit the capital offense of *treason*...

After a long journey through the wastes along a weathered supply route, your truck finally enters the outskirts of Hooper, an embattled town on the frontier of the Wastelord empire. The sound of artillery can be heard in the distance, and the line of trenches comprising the frontlines of the war are clearly visible running right up to the town's walls. Old dilapidated buildings, riddled with bullet holes from weeks of fighting, reflect a depressed atmosphere that is mirrored in the eyes of the enslaved citizens who stare from the side of the road as you pass by.

One of the Wastelords in your truck points out the front window as you bring the vehicle to a noisy halt in front of a small two-story building at the center of town.

"That's Cantor's place," says the driver, "he's our liaison with the people. Goddamned cripple..."

You jump out of the truck to see a man in a wheelchair emerge from the bottom floor of the building. He has no legs—they've apparently been amputated or lost in some past accident. He wears an old felt cowboy hat, shielding his rugged and bristling face from the slight drizzle. In his free hand he uses a fancy fan woven from reeds to keep himself cool in the humid heat. A double-barreled shotgun lies in his lap.

"You must be the scum sent by Kyren? It's still Kyren, right? Or has someone deposed that son-of-a-bitch by now? Anyway, follow me. I was told to make you feel at home."

With that the man turns his wheelchair around and goes back inside.

Cantor leads the PCs inside his clinic, which also serves as the town's administrative building (since he is basically the "governor"). Cantor is left to his own devices out here, and the PCs find that he is alone in the old house. He does away with the shotgun once he realizes the PCs aren't here to intimidate him.

If the PCs comment or ask about his legs, Cantor is quite forthcoming about the "accident." He casually explains that Kyren had them chopped off for his disobedience before exiling him to the frontline aid station here in Hooper.

As the PCs talk, a woman and her small malnourished child enter the building, instantly falling silent out of respect for the strangers. However, Cantor interrupts the PCs to speak with the woman and her boy. For a few minutes he ignores the PCs, checking the child's temperature, using a stethoscope to monitor his breathing and heart rate before giving the mother a few pills to help combat the child's headaches. Only when he is finished with his patient (and they leave) will he return to his conversation with the PCs:

Kyren thinks the Enemy may be operating in your town. Do you have any pertinent information?

"A better question would be: Does Kyren have any pertinent information?"

What do you mean?

"I mean Kyren knows more than he's letting on. This isn't the first time Hooper has been infiltrated."

Oh? Tell us more...

"It happened before, just a few weeks ago. Some scavs coming in from scavenging near the front were allowed shelter here. No one thought twice about them—a lot of locals turn to scavenging to get by—until that same night they were caught trying to break into the Water Reserve. A few Wastelord guards fired at them and

brought one of them down, but the other one escaped with wounds.”

Is the water source okay?

“Yes. They never made it past the fences around the water tanks. I did some microscopic examination of the water since, and it seems clean.”

What’s the Water Reserve?

“It’s a building across the square. You can see it outside. It’s where the Wastelords keep the town’s fresh water. It’s piped from there to virtually every home in town, including this clinic and the Wastelord HQ. It’s been under lock and key ever since the infiltration attempt.”

What happened to the Enemy that was killed?

“Heh heh. That’s restricted information. But what the hell, I hate Kyren and his bunch so I’ll tell ya. It didn’t die. After they brought it here for examination, it got back up. I was preparing to identify the body when it simply got up off the operating table. The Wastelords shot it up pretty good again, knocking it out just long enough to cage it. That very night they shipped it to Shelter City. That’s the last I saw of it.”

Can you tell us anything about it?

“Well, I only did a cursory examination before it re-animated. It wasn’t like any shambler I’d seen before—you know, like the zombies you see on the frontlines. No, this was different. It looked alive, like you or me; no rot, no deterioration. If I had to hazard a guess—and mind you, this is only a guess—I’d say the Enemy has more than just zombies in its arsenal.”

How many scavs were there?

“Three. But when they tried to infiltrate the water reserve, the third one wasn’t present.”

Have there been any strange occurrences in town since?

“No, not that I know of. That’s why I wasn’t too concerned. Until Doc sent me his findings, that is.”

Who is Doc?

“Doc’s a friend of mine who lived in Shelter City before Kyren took over. Kyren keeps him a virtual prisoner in the hospital block deep beneath the city—he’s too valuable to kill. We share information now and again, whenever we get the opportunity to get coded messages through to each other. We have various go-betweens

that keep us in touch, people that owe us for past favors.

“Anyway, Doc slipped word to me that the shambler captured here in Hooper ended up on his operating table beneath Shelter City. He told me he examined the body and found out some interesting things. He theorized that they’re connected—and controlled—by some kind of psychic connection. He reported that while examining the creature over a period of several hours he would always develop headaches. He imagined the headaches were a result of some kind of constant telepathic activity involving the shambler, and that led to his theory.”

Why did this concern you?

“Now that’s the million dollar question. I’m a doctor, and I keep track of my patients. Over the past few weeks I’ve noticed a startling number of men, women, and children complaining about headaches. Coincidence? I think not.”

What does it mean?

“Take a guess. Unless I’m mistaken, the Enemy is in town with us.”

GM’s Note: As stated before, if the PCs make a good impression on Cantor (GM’s discretion) he may offer them some supplies. He will take them to his “secret stash,” which he has kept out of Wastelord hands and uses to help the truly needy people of his town. This includes three *ready syringes*, a bottle of *stimshot A* (nine doses remaining), and a bottle of *superegen* (three doses remaining).

SUDDEN ATTACK (EL 7)

As their conversation with Cantor comes to a close, there is a sudden explosion outside, followed immediately by the crack of gunfire.

Apparently used to this kind of thing, Cantor immediately takes cover, but if the PCs move to the front door (or to any of the shuttered windows) they see a battle raging outside. A cloud of smoke from a hand grenade explosion obscures some of the marketplace, but it appears a group of young men have ambushed a handful of unaware Wastelords wandering the square. The grenade killed two of the Wastelords, but there are three more under heavy fire.

Allow the PCs to react however they choose. If they come to the aid of the Wastelords (which may be likely, if the PCs don’t know what is going on), they can probably overcome the terrorists rather quickly. Doing so will hurt the PCs’ reputation with the people of Hooper, but it will go a long way towards making friends with the Wastelords—and reinforcing Kyren’s trust in them.

If the PCs wait and ask Cantor what the hell is going on, the bitter old man simply says sarcastically: *“Welcome to Hooper!”*

THE RESISTANCE

PCs asking around town and succeeding in Gather Information checks (DC 22) can also make contact with the underground resistance. The resistance is led by Homer (Tough Hero 2/Charismatic Hero 4), a young crusading visionary who is leading others his age in their clandestine fight against the Wastelords. PCs making Bluff (DC 18) or Intimidate checks (DC 20), or otherwise passing around bribes worth no less than 300 cp, will eventually find out who he is and where he resides in town.

The PCs might single out Homer during their visit for a number of reasons. First, he is the source of the resistance raids, and getting rid of him could earn the PCs future favors with Kyren. Second, his behavior might make him a suspect as one of the Enemy (he's not, but the PCs might believe otherwise). Thirdly, the PCs might in fact seek him out in the future if they themselves rise up against the Wastelords to free the people of the Valley (see *Throwing Out the Wastelords*).

Homer is not detailed here, but he is a determined character, not one to be trifled with or underestimated. Though young, he is clearly willing to die for the cause of independence. He despises the Wastelords, and PCs wishing to sit down with him for a reasonable discussion had better be prepared to distance themselves from their "employers"—or else risk triggering an unpleasant encounter with Homer and his gun-toting young radicals.

GM's Note: The five young men are all "resistance fighters," disenchanted young workers who have chosen to risk death rather than suffer another day living under the Wastelords' tyranny. They are attacking to kill the Wastelords in the square and no one else; they will not fire on other civilians, nor will they attack Cantor (he is considered a friend of the people). If the PCs emerge from Cantor's clinic, however, they become fair game (after all, they are perceived as trusted agents of Kyren). If the PCs stay hidden and merely watch, the young men try to kill as many Wastelords as possible before reinforcements arrive (in 3d6 rounds another 2d6 Wastelords shows up). The resistance fighters then retreat "underground" to strike again another day.

♥ **Resistance Fighters (5):** HP 12 (x3), 10 (x2) (see Appendix 1).

♥ **Low-Level Wastelords A (3):** HP 10, 8, 7 (see Appendix 1).

If the Wastelords are victorious, they crucify each dead resistance fighter in the square and leave the corpses to be plucked at by vultures. Any survivors are tortured for the identities of the resistance's ringleaders, but all of the young men die before they reveal their secrets. Furious, Harris, the leader of the Wastelord garrison, then orders that these men be dragged by motorcycles around the marketplace until their bodies fall apart.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

What the PCs do from here is up to them. If they undertake a forceful search of Hooper, they will be stepping on the toes of a lot of resentful people, leading to possible confrontations (especially if they helped kill the resistance fighters in the surprise attack on the market square). There are over fifty buildings in town, some with more than one level, possibly requiring several hours, if not days, of searching. Many of the buildings are abandoned; the Enemy infiltrator(s)—wherever it is—could easily move from an unsearched building to a searched building once the PCs

have deemed it "clean" and moved on.

If the PCs exploit their growing reputation as Kyren's agents, they may be able to convince the local Wastelord garrison to round up the entire population of town for "tests." Whatever test the PCs think will work, allow them to give it a try. Examining each and every person in town for signs of infection will be extremely time-consuming, however, requiring at least 1d3 days. In addition, the PCs should soon realize that even this methodic search could well fail to find Enemy agents—any infected townspeople could just as easily be hiding out, avoiding the examination altogether.

The best course of action for the PCs would be to step back and think: if you were infiltrating Hooper, where would you go to do the most damage? Although the creature could be anywhere in town (and in anyone), its apparent goal was to pollute the tanks of the Water Reserve. With that in mind, the PCs should probably move to keep that place under close surveillance, and wait until the Enemy makes its move.

A PSIONIC DISCOVERY

Unbeknownst to the PCs, there *is* a surefire method of finding the Enemy in Hooper—but one only available to characters with neural mutations. Due to the Enemy's *Psi-Inhibition* power, which constantly radiates a "dampening field" 500 feet around the node mother, PCs with any neural power may be able to track the infiltrators down with relative ease.

Though the PCs likely have no way of knowing this in advance, any psionic PCs in the party will at some time during their stay in Hooper experience the effects of the *Psi-Inhibition*. At some point during their investigations of the town, read the following to any psionic characters in the party:

As you walk through the crowded streets, wary of the inhospitable stares of the districts grubby inhabitants, you are suddenly overcome by a dizzying sensation.

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You stumble for a moment to get your bearings, but the feeling only grows stronger, now accompanied by a buzzing in your head. None of your non-psionic companions seem to be affected, and they, like everyone else on the street, seem confused at your behavior.

The sensation doesn't go away until you head back the way you came—at which point it ceases, allowing you to regain your senses. But as soon as you rejoin the party you are again overcome, as if you had just wandered into the radius of an invisible energy field only you can sense.

By judging the relative strength of the field (through increasing dizziness and headache), the psionic PC can in fact lead his comrades towards the source of the psionic disruption—the very hovel in which a New World Order node mother is laying low, waiting for its opportunity to strike.

NODE MOTHER'S HOVEL (EL 8)

The node mother's hovel is a dilapidated two-story building that has been condemned for some time. It is located in a densely populated part of town (and quite possibly a dangerous part of town as well, if the PCs have made enemies with the anti-Wastelord resistance), but otherwise resembles any abandoned structure typical of a slum-like district.

The neighborhood itself is not mapped. If the PCs do locate the building, they find it to be rather simple in layout—a rubble-filled bottom floor (totally scavenged by transients) with a narrow stair leading to the second level. The second level is detailed below (see map).

KEY TO NODE MOTHER'S HOVEL

A. SIDE/BACK ROOMS

These rooms are completely empty except for cracked walls, bare wiring, and small pieces of debris. Carpeting, if any is present, is stained with unmentionable liquids from various transients over the years.

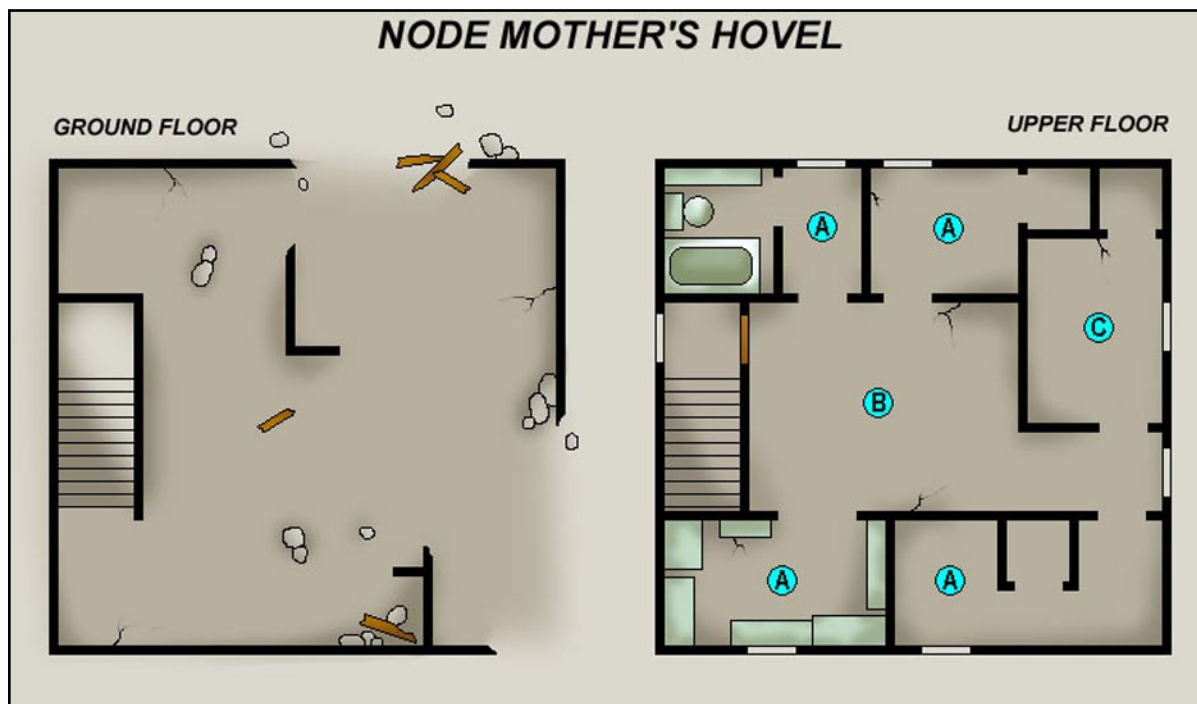
The node mother and its shamblers are dispersed throughout these rooms as the GM sees fit. If the PCs attack the house, the Enemy emerges from different directions in an effort to surround and overcome the PCs, permitting the seedling to move in and infect the struggling party members.

Treasure: In one of the back rooms is an old cardboard box filled with cheap sunglasses. The node mother and its thralls use these to hide their all-black eyes when they leave the building. There are enough sunglasses here to outfit another two dozen thralls (these are for future “converts,” though the PCs might not know this and assume there are many more infected people in town...)

B. LIVING AREA

This looks like any old living space, stripped of furnishings and littered with crumbled bits of the ceiling, old rotten trash, crushed and discarded beer cans, and other wreckage.

During the day the seedling injured in the earlier attempt on the Water Reserve stays here, recuperating. Unless called upon by the node mother to act (as in the defense of their makeshift lair), the seedling remains here waiting for prey to be brought to it. In fact, just a few days ago the node mother went out and used its guise as an old woman to lure a local townsman here in the middle of the night. The poor man was overcome by the node mother and forced in front of the seedling, which promptly infected him. He is now a



shambler. The process was repeated the next night, and thus the node mother now has two additional shamblers at its disposal.

C. COMPUTER ROOM

This room contains an odd collection of old computers and associated parts, including laptops, larger computers, motherboards, wiring of all lengths and colors, entire hard drives, fan assemblies, and clusters of processor chips. Though many are dusty and appear to have been literally saved from the dump, all seem to have been brought here for a very definite purpose. What that purpose is, however, is anyone's guess.

GM's Note: These computers and other electronic parts have been deliberately scavenged by the node mother and its new batch of thralls from various neglected parts of Hooper. This is part of a long-term plan of the XBM macro-organism to create advanced weapons with which to overcome the android defenders of the Center quarantine. The Last God has only just begun to compile the parts to arm its entire army of thralls, but this stockpile (and the one in Saguache; see that town's description for details) is a start.

Treasure: This collection of parts might be worth 1,000 cp to an ignorant buyer; to someone with the appropriate Craft skills to build computers and other electronic items, the value would be up to ten times that.

GM's Note: The seedling that escaped capture during the failed move on the Water Reserve eventually found its way back to this hovel, where it has remained, healing its injuries. With this seedling, the node mother has been able to quietly rebuild its follower base; in the guise of a beggar, it has been going out into town and luring others back here to be infected by the wounded seedling. So far they have made a handful of "converts."

If the PCs come to its door, the node mother immediately assumes that its operations have been found out. However, the PCs may be expecting some terrible monster, and not a harmless-looking little old woman, so "she" may get the jump on them when they bash down her door. The node mother attacks PCs as soon as they enter its home in an effort to stun and infect them. Once it has engaged the PCs in battle, the node mother's thralls emerge from side rooms to attack from all directions.

For the statistics of the node mother and its new group of thralls, see *Playing the Battle* below.

SECOND RESISTANCE ATTACK (EL 8)

Assuming the PCs have not yet found the node mother, at dusk on the day after their arrival, the remainder of the Hooper resistance fighters make another move on the market square. This time they plan to wipe out not only the Wastelords occupying the square (now under heavy guard, bolstered by a number of new slave soldier recruits), but also Harris, the leader of the Wastelord garrison. This move by the resistance also has a third and final objective: to recover the crucified bodies of their comrades so they can be buried

with dignity.

Keep track of where the PCs are when this attack occurs; if the PCs haven't thought to stake out the Water Reserve, they are probably shackled up in Cantor's clinic (or are engaging in house-to-house searches). If they are near the central square, they will be present for the attack.

GM's Note: The attack begins as night falls and daily market activities start to peter out. A large group of young men and women moves into the square from two sides, trapping the Wastelords out in the open in front of their headquarters. They immediately open fire.

♥ **Resistance Fighters (8):** HP 12 (x3), 9 (x4), 7 (see Appendix 1).

♥ **Resistance Fighters (4):** HP 12 (x3), 7; as above, except these fighters are armed with stolen M16A2s and Molotov cocktails instead of the standard armament (see Appendix 1).

♥ **Low-Level Wastelords (4):** HP 10 each (see Appendix 1).

♥ **Slave Soldiers B (4):** HP 4 each (see Appendix 1).

♥ **Harris (1):** HP 62; treat Harris as a *Mid-level Wastelord* (see Appendix 1).

STREET BATTLE

Because the Resistance attack takes place in the market square while people are still conducting last-minute business, there is a chance that stray bullets hit innocent bystanders. For the first three rounds of the battle, roll on the table below for every attack that misses its intended target:

D6	Innocent Bystander
1-3	No one is hit.
4	A trader is hit while closing down his shop and expires within seconds, a look of surprise still etched on his face.
5	A panicked man or woman is struck dead while trying to flee the marketplace.
6	A child, wailing for his/her mother, is killed instantly by stray fire.

After the third round any remaining traders have fled in panic, and thus there are no more bystanders to be hit in the crossfire.

INFILTRATOR

Two rounds after the resistance ambush on the market square begins, several figures moving through the cool blue darkness of dusk make their way towards the back of the Water Reserve building. Because all attention has been drawn away from the reserve by the battle between Harris and the resistance fighters in the square, the figures (the node mother and her thralls) have chosen this time to make their move on the town's water supply.

PCs involved in the battle outside will be too engaged to notice the Enemy thralls entering the building through the back door (see map). If the players specifically state that their characters are keeping an eye on the building, or have

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taken up positions in the Water Reserve expecting the Enemy to show up there, allow them to make Spot or Listen checks as appropriate to detect the thralls' entrance.

KEY TO THE WATER RESERVE

FRONT ENTRANCE

The front entrance to the Water Reserve is a plain metal door, painted black. It is generally padlocked from the outside, but cannot be locked from the inside (unless the PCs rig up some method on their own). A single Wastelord guard is stationed outside to prevent villagers from stealing water.

GM's Note: Harris, the leader of the Wastelord garrison, has the only set of keys to the padlocks on the two entrances of the Water Reserve building. The PCs will need his permission to stake out the Water Reserve if they want the keys. If they try to break in, the Wastelord guarding the door will attempt to stop them, raising the alarm if possible.

If the PCs come here with Harris' permission, they will have keys have free reign of the building.

♥ **Low-Level Wastelord B (1):** HP 7 (see Appendix 1).

BACK ROOM

In addition to a number of looted crates and cartons, this room contains several fire axes and shovels, an old fire hose, and a few other mundane items. The node mother and its thralls will proceed here to arm themselves.

Because this room is completely dark, all Hide checks made here receive a +2 bonus.

OLD OFFICES

These areas were ransacked long ago; nothing remains except for deep shadows. All spaces are completely unlit, providing a +2 bonus to Hide checks.

MAIN FLOOR

This area is lit by bare bulbs hanging from ceiling wires, which cast deep shadows throughout the building.

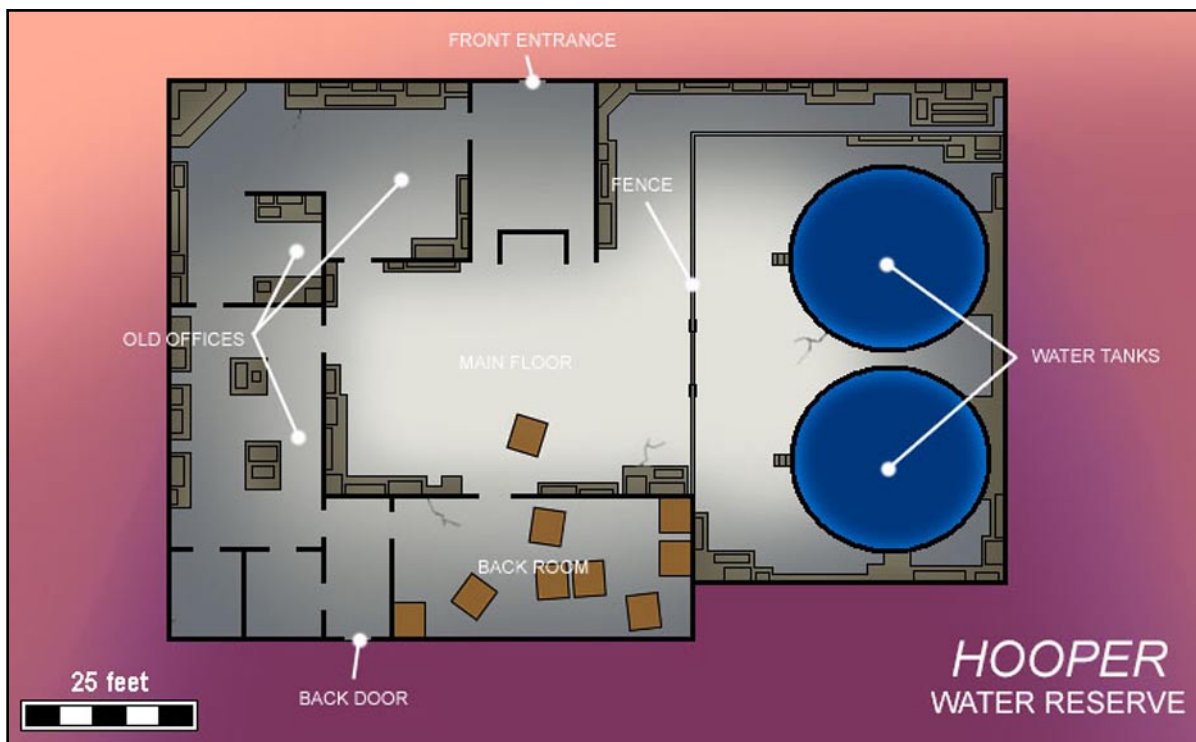
FENCES

The main floor is divided here by a chain-link fence that stretches from floor to ceiling. The fence has a single entrance, a man-sized gate kept locked with a sturdy padlock. The fence is too sturdy to break through without making a great deal of noise.

WATER TANKS

Each of these gigantic metal tanks contains several thousand gallons of fresh water, shipped in regularly by Wastelord supply trucks. The tanks stand upright, providing a small degree of water pressure to various places throughout town (public spigots in the main marketplace, as well as in the clinic and the Wastelord HQ building), and can be refilled with standard truck-mounted refueling hoses.

Each tank also has a small pressure-sealed port where technicians can test the water every few months for parasites or stagnation. It is through this port that the Enemy biomass will attempt to slip into the town's water supply (see below).



BACK DOOR

This emergency exit, once painted bright red, is now covered with peeling paint. It provides access to a dark alley behind the Water Reserve. The door itself is padlocked, but the lock is badly rusted (break DC 10). The hall leading from the back door is extremely dark, providing a +2 bonus to Hide checks.

PLAYING THE BATTLE (EL 8)

The node mother and its thralls enter through the back, trying to be as quiet as possible. Upon entry, they remain by the back door for one full round, listening for sounds of anyone else in the building. Unless the thralls detect the presence of the PCs (compare individual Listen checks against the PCs' Move Silently rolls), they then proceed immediately through the cover of shadows to the fenced partition separating the water tanks from the main floor and move in to contaminate the water.

If the PCs watch, they see the whole group take up positions on the main floor. Read the following:

You're sitting in the darkness of the empty warehouse, listening to the sound of creaking pipes. The only light comes from a few naked bulbs hanging from a latticework of old wires, leaving much of the interior of this place steeped in a thick curtain of darkness.

Suddenly, a small group of people emerges quietly from the shadows. The light illuminates all four of them: an old woman and three men. The wild silvery hair of the old woman—a disheveled bag lady—glints as she passes under the first of the bulbs. She looks malnourished and is caked with dirt, and you might otherwise pity her... except something about her chills you to the bone. The sunglasses she wears to cover her eyes look oddly comical, yet she has absolutely no emotion on her face. The woman looks around for a few moments, as if scanning the warehouse, before the other three follow her into the room.

The others are a middle-aged man and two tall, thin thugs. All of them wear identical sunglasses, which also seems odd at this time of night.

As you watch, the entire group begins moving towards the water tanks...

If not stopped, the two shamblers move to hack down the fence door protecting the water tanks. Then the seedling moves forward to the tanks and falls to its knees.

If the PCs continue to watch, the seedling begins "vomiting" a living heap of biomass. This mass resembles a pliant pile of off-white goo which immediately begins slipping towards the tanks. If it isn't stopped, the biomass makes it to the tanks and slips inside, contaminating the town's entire water source.

The PCs can stop the New World Order infiltrators by attacking and killing them all (including the biomass, which is itself an animate creature). The node mother will defend



its thralls to the best of its abilities, including using neural attacks.

When the PCs first encounter the node mother, they may not suspect it for what it truly is. If this is the case, the GM should have it exhibit one of its psychic powers (such as its Psi-Pulse) to let them know that this is no mere "bag lady." You may even want to embellish what happens when it uses the ability; for example, while using its Psi-Pulse its head might expand and contract like a pulsing heart, its skull might vibrate with a high-pitched sound, or any other obvious clue that it is not a normal human being.

♣ **Node Mother A (1):** HP 76 (see Appendix 2).

♣ **Human Seedling (1):** HP 11 (see Appendix 2).

This seedling looks like a bony middle-aged man (it is in fact the re-animated remains of a scientist who "died" at the secret facility under Center more than 200 years ago) with all-black eyes, which it covers with sunglasses to avoid unwanted attention. When it begins to belch forth the biomass carried inside of it, however, the seedling's unassuming appearance changes completely—its head expands unnaturally (accompanied by the sound of breaking bones), its jaw falls slack, and the awful ooze comes pouring out like a stream of animated vomit.

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♣ **Biomass, Small (1):** HP 24 (see Appendix 2). *For this battle biomass has the following talents: Damage Reduction 3/-.*

♣ **Civilian Shamblers (2):** HP 17 each (see Appendix 2).

Each of the shamblers resembles a local inhabitant of Hooper; skinny from malnutrition, covered in filth, and generally unhealthy in appearance. As with all New World Order thralls, solid black eyes round out their terrible appearance (though these are generally concealed by sunglasses).

GM's Note: The New World Order creatures employ different tactics during the battle. The shamblers first break open the fence door, and then attack to block the PCs. The seedling first produces the biomass and then joins the battle with its stun pistol, hoping to incapacitate the PCs before moving to infect them (using its Contagion ability). The node mother tries to stun and kill any PCs who resist the seedling (after all, there can't be any witnesses to tell the rest of the town that the water is polluted). The biomass, of course, moves immediately to contaminate the town's water.

If the node mother is killed early on, control of the thralls here reverts to the small biomass. If the biomass is also killed, control reverts to the nearest controller (which in this case is the node mother in Saguache). Due to the distance, the skill groups of all creatures present drops by one step (see *New Creatures*).

AFTERMATH

Once the infiltrators are killed, the sounds of battle from the Water Reserve attracts attention throughout town. If the battle with the resistance is still going strong in the square, the resistance fighters now decide to give up and run away. Harris (if alive) orders his men to forget the terrorists and instead converge on the Water Reserve.

By the time the Wastelords arrive, the PCs have already neutralized the enemy threat. When they explain what happened, Harris is shocked—and more than a little humiliated that the Enemy was able to infiltrate “his” town, right under his nose:

Once you explain the situation to Harris, he seems overcome with humiliation for having let the Enemy infiltrate his town. He moves over to one of the dead men, bends down, and removes its sunglasses.

“Damn,” he says, “sunglasses. They were here among us all the time. Hiding their eyes... clever. Very clever.”

When the PCs report to Kyren by radio from their truck, he is elated to hear of their success:

“That's excellent news,” Kyren says, his voice clearly recognizable despite the tremendous amount of static over the airwaves. “Your hunch seems to have paid off—it sounds like the Enemy was trying to get at the water supplies for a reason. Tell me, what did the

Enemy look like—did you notice anything... different?”

As you describe the strange old woman and her followers, including the strange ooze that one of them seemed to “vomit,” you get the distinct feeling that you are telling Kyren something he already knows. As you finish describing the encounter, you can hear him whispering to someone on the other end, as if discussing this turn of events with someone in the command center.

“Get Harris to pack that ‘old woman’ up into a truck and have his men bring her here to Shelter City immediately. That corpse could provide us with some vital information. I've got a few hunches of my own that she just might prove right—or wrong.

“As for you men, I promised you some downtime. Enjoy yourselves when you get back. Over and out.”

ATTACK ON BORROW

While en route back to Shelter City after the conclusion of their investigation in Hooper, the PCs receive an urgent radio transmission. The brief message is being broadcast by one of the impoverished citizens of Borrow, a small village in the south part of the Valley (see map). Guided by a quirky and prophetic leader, this community has long been considered too poor and insignificant to merit Wastelord attention. The broadcast is thus entirely unexpected.

The silence of the long drive back to Shelter City from Hooper is suddenly broken by the crackling of your truck radio. The voice on the other end is unfamiliar, and speaks in a deliberate and self-righteous tone:

“To the people of the wasteland, know that this is the End! The Enemy marches upon us at this very moment, and know that we will not be the last. Though my people will survive purely by the strength of their faith, know that the fate visited upon you and your kind will be most terrible! Repent now of your evil ways! Repent now of your allegiance to the demon-prince Kyren and his wicked gang of thieves! For too long have you bowed to Kyren's will and relinquished your rights as humans! Repent, before it is too late!”

The preacher's sermon is suddenly drowned out by the sound of gunfire and the screams of men, women, and children. After a moment his strong voice can be heard again.

“Do not panic, my people, the Lord is with us! Gather your weapons, for the End of Days is at hand! Defend yourselves, and your souls!”

At that the radio message cuts out.

Allow the PCs to react to this message any way they want. If they try to respond via radio, they hear nothing but static. If the PCs contact Kyren for orders, read the following:

You immediately radio Shelter City hoping to get a hold of Kyren. However, as soon as your message is received

at the communications center, someone else picks up the line. You recognize Qwan, Kyren's second-in-command.

"This is Qwan. Kyren is busy at the moment and has put me in charge for the night. What is this about?"

You quickly describe what you heard on the radio. Qwan is quiet for a few moments.

"Ignore the message. Borrow is an insignificant community; the people contribute nothing to the empire. The man you heard is Moses, their leader—a demagogue and mad preacher who keeps his people under a spell. We won't waste troops defending that madman and his pathetic flock. That's my final decision. Return to Shelter City immediately! Out."

If the PCs ignore Qwan and try to head to Borrow anyway, they'll have to Bluff (DC 15) or Intimidate (DC 17) their driver. Assuming they do, they can get to Borrow in a matter of hours.

BORROW

The tiny community of Borrow is actually one of the longest continuously inhabited settlements in the San Luis Valley. Originally founded by Ezekial Trust (a colorful local Valley figure known to be a bit off his rocker), the town has survived nuclear war, the devastation of the world, decades of total isolation, and the appearance of raider gangs like the Wastelords.

Ezekiel believed himself to be the Messiah returned—and remarkably, he wasn't alone in this belief. When word of impending war filtered to the Valley, he promised that those who followed him—abandoning their lives and joining him in the desert—would survive the impending apocalypse. A handful of disenchanting people, numbering about 30, put their faith in him and abandoned their jobs, taking only their families and Bibles with them to his desert compound. They arrived to find that Ezekiel was indeed prepared—he had bought some old property off of Route 17 and built a small stockade and walled community with his own hands. Here they settled, waiting for the inevitable End.

Ezekiel and "his people" listened to the nuclear war unfold over their community radio set, and when word reached Borrow that many cities were being destroyed, his small band of followers thanked Ezekiel for his wisdom. When the world was overrun by madmen and mutant savages in the aftermath of the war, they thanked Ezekiel again for keeping them far from the cities where the chaos was brewing. Over time they came to almost deify him, and upon his death this legacy of reverence was passed on to his descendants.

Today the community at Borrow is lead by a man named Moses, a direct descendant of Ezekiel Trust. Moses is just about as eccentric as his ancestor, believing himself to be a reincarnated Christ-figure charged with keeping "his people" (the people of Borrow) safe from harm. He has altered Ezekiel's teachings somewhat (now that the nuclear war is over, Moses must use some other threat of destruction to keep the people faithful) and is a bit paranoid (another trait shared by his long-dead ancestor). He often sees



portents in the most unusual things—sand storms, weird cloud formations, unusually long-lasting rains, or even early winters. He keeps his people constantly drilled and prepared for what he calls the "Endings of the World," a cycle of apocalypses that he alleges sweep the world every few years to cleanse the madness.

INHABITANTS

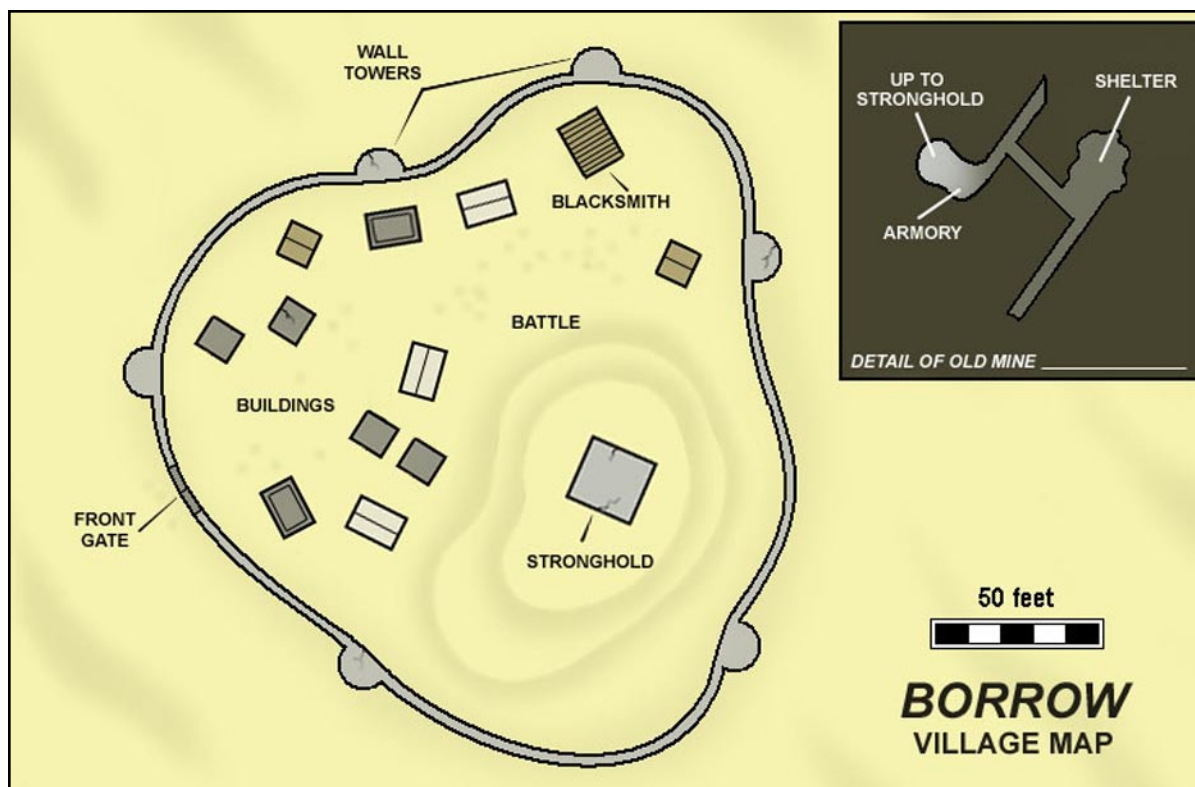
Moses has managed to keep Borrow out of the hands of the Wastelords by pledging friendship to them. The Wastelords searched Borrow for valuable goods, but found none (Moses' weapons and secret cache of food were too well hidden; he also hid his daughter in the Old Mine to keep her from being taken as a harem girl), and thus left in disgust. They now leave the town of Borrow pretty much alone.

KEY TO BORROW

FRONT GATE (EL 4)

Through the rain ahead you see what could only be the small frontier village of Borrow. You can't believe this place even rates as a "town" in the Wastelords' estimation. What you see of Borrow is little more than a small cluster of buildings surrounded by an old stone wall. The sounds of gunfire can be heard over the

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growing thunder.

A curious sight awaits you at the town entrance: a solitary man standing confidently at the village's destroyed front gate, with a bear and a wolf at his side. As your truck pulls up, all three turn in unison to face you.

This is clearly not an ordinary man, nor are those ordinary animals with him; as they turn, you see that each is twisted and malformed, glaring at you through all-black eyes with an unimaginably alien intelligence.

These three specimens are latecomers to the attack on Borrow. They include an infected tribal from the village of Saguache (see later for details on this ill-fated community), an infected bear, and an infected wolf. All of these are slow-moving shamblers. They will turn to engage the PCs as soon as the party comes within sight.

- **Bear Shambler (1):** HP 81 (see Appendix 2).
- **Wolf Shambler (1):** HP 29 (see Appendix 2).
- **Mutant Shambler (1):** HP 16 (see Appendix 2).

The entrance to Borrow is a pair of large metal double doors, one of which features an armored viewslit that can be shuttered. Under normal circumstances, the doors are barred with an all-metal brace; now both the doors and the brace lie broken and useless.

WALL TOWERS

These small turrets are currently abandoned; the defenders of Borrow have retreated to the Stronghold. Each tower is built solidly into the outer wall; the tower tops can be reached by climbing a series of rusted rungs embedded in the walls.

The tower tops provide an excellent vantage point from which to observe and fire upon attackers, and are covered by corrugated iron rooftops. They provide no cover, however.

BUILDINGS (EL 6)

Beyond the walls you find a pitiable encampment consisting of small hovels, some of which look as if they pre-date the Fall itself. The sounds of battle continue, resonating loudly from the center of the village.

As you enter, keeping to cover whenever possible, a horde of shambling zombies converges on your location, pouring into the town streets from every direction! As they slowly plod forward, arms outstretched, they stare at you with haunting, all-black eyes...

The shamblers, alerted to the party's presence by the fighting at the front gates, attack immediately.

• **Mutant Shamblers (8):** HP 16 (x2), 10 (x6) (see Appendix 2).

GM's Note: The buildings of Borrow are a motley collection of pathetic hovels gathered or constructed in the community's early days; one is even an old RV trailer. Most of these were constructed by the community's first inhabitants, all of whom were cult members who believed in Ezekiel's doomsday prophecies and moved to the desert to be closer to him. None of these homes is particularly interesting, containing only simple adornments and furnishings.

BLACKSMITH (EL 2)

A small stone shack stands here. A few bullets from the ongoing battle have shattered its front windows.

This small stone building is where any metalworking required by the community is done, and is filled with an assortment of appropriate tools: hammers, tongs, and heavy crowbars. The building has no windows—just the front entrance—and is notable for being almost completely fireproof (no wood went into its construction).

A pair of shamblers is rummaging around inside this building; they attack any PCs who enter the shack.

☛ **Mutant Shamblers (2):** HP 14 each (see Appendix 2).

GM's Note: This small stone building is where any metalworking required by the community is done, and is filled with an assortment of appropriate tools: hammers, tongs, and heavy crowbars. The building has no windows—just the front entrance—and is notable for being almost completely fireproof (no wood went into its construction).

Treasure: Beneath the anvil is a small pit in which the villagers normally keep an old shortwave radio. Typically this would require a Search check at DC 25 to uncover; at present the anvil has been moved aside, however, revealing this pit. The radio is on the anvil, apparently recently used. It is an early 1950s-era model, and could use some maintenance, but remarkably is still operable. The villagers typically use the radio to discreetly tune into Wastelord radio communications. Moses allows this because these transmissions reveal all too clearly the extent of the Wastelords' wickedness, and this prevents his people from thinking about leaving Borrow in search of greener pastures.

BATTLE (EL 7)

The sounds of battle—gunfire, screams, and panicked shouts—grow louder the closer you move to the village center. There, at the base of a rocky hill, a group of men, women, and children are clustered, trying to reach the safety of the bunker atop the mound. A mass of shamblers closes in around them from all directions.

Leading the villagers in their last-ditch flight to the stronghold is a tall, striking man in a plain brown robe, a defiant grimace etched deeply across his face as the enemy continues to press forward. He has a long white beard and a head of all-white curls; his face is crisscrossed with cracks from years spent under the sun's harsh stare. His eyes, however, project a powerful and hypnotic defiance.

The man holds his wounded body up with a shepherd's crook in one hand, firing a submachine gun at the oncoming zombies with the other. He is joined by several other villagers, most younger, who share his look of defiance and bear similar weapons.

MOSES' ABILITIES

Note that Moses uses his class abilities to maximum effect during any final defense of the Stronghold. He begins by inspiring his followers with the *Coordinate* and *Inspiration* abilities (giving them a +2 morale bonus to saving throws, attack rolls, and damage rolls, and a +1 morale bonus to skill checks). If he has time, he then spends an Action Point to further inspire his followers (using the *Lead Followers* ability) with *Greater Inspiration*, giving them an additional +1 morale bonus to saving throws, attack rolls, and damage rolls (for a total of +3). On top of this, all of his followers are considered *Zealots*, gaining a +2 morale bonus to all attacks and skill checks when operating on his behalf.

If everything goes as planned, this means his followers will operate with a total bonus of +3 to saving throws, +5 to attack rolls, +3 to damage rolls, and +3 to skill checks!

By the time the PCs arrive, Moses and the remaining villagers have been cut off from the Stronghold, to which they were retreating (see below). They are making a last stand here, surrounded by a pack of mutant shamblers and infected animals.

If the PCs come to their aid and attack the shamblers, Moses sees their intervention as an opportunity to begin fighting towards the Stronghold. If the PCs manage to hook up with the group of villagers during the running battle, Moses will take them into the Stronghold as well, there to make a more fitting stand against the Enemy.

☛ **Moses:** HP 45, down to 27 due to wounds (see Appendix 1).

☛ **Tammy Faye:** HP 27, down to 22 due to wounds (see Appendix 1).

☛ **Borrow Villagers (5):** HP 8 each (see Appendix 1).

☛ **Mutant Shamblers (8):** HP 8 (x9), 6 (x2) (see Appendix 2).

☛ **Wolf Shamblers (3):** HP 15, 13, and 10 (see Appendix 2).

After three rounds of fighting at the base of the hill, the battle takes an interesting turn. As the PCs get caught up in the battle unfolding around the Stronghold, a fresh wave of shamblers arrives at the front gate. They immediately begin to move towards the PCs in an attempt to sandwich the party between themselves and the force surrounding Moses and the other villagers.

Alert PCs will realize what is going on and try to fight their way to Moses, helping him get his people to the safety of the Stronghold before it's too late.

When the second wave appears, read the following:

From behind you comes the sound of more creatures heading your way. You turn to see a second group of shamblers lurching toward you from the direction of the town gates... and behind them is a creature far more grotesque.

Scurrying along on all four legs is what may have once been a coyote, but has been transformed into a nightmarish monstrosity. The animal's skull has ripped open like some kind of budding flower, revealing an enormous fang-ringed mouth where the head should be. A ropy tongue lashes out from this gaping maw, whipping around in search of prey to latch onto. The animal's eyes protrude from the ruined skull on long antennae-like stalks, looking in various directions as it moves forward.

The “coyote” is in fact a transformed seedling. It attempts to engage characters already swamped by the shamblers in an effort to grapple and infect them. The shamblers attack whoever is nearest to them.

♣ **Mutant Shamblers (3):** HP 14 each (see Appendix 2).

♣ **Coyote Seedling (Transformed) (1):** HP 30 (see Appendix 2).

STRONGHOLD

This building is a simple cinderblock stronghold, squat and square, without any decoration whatsoever. Two small windows on each side of the building allow those inside to fire out at anyone in the village yard.

The interior of the building is exceedingly spartan in accordance with Moses' bizarre brand of Christianity. A few soiled sleeping bags lie strewn about the floor, along with a tiny wooden table (with a few glasses and a plastic bottle of water on it), a deck of well-used playing cards, and other miscellanea. The only books here include a few ancient children's storybooks (Moses got these for his daughter Tammy Faye, but she has long outgrown them), and a Bible with more than half of its pages missing.

Despite its shortcomings, this musty place is home to Moses and his grown daughter, and serves as a place to which the villagers can retreat in times of emergency. At Moses' insistence, the entire community has often rehearsed a retreat to this “inner keep” in anticipation of an attack by the Wastelords or other enemy.

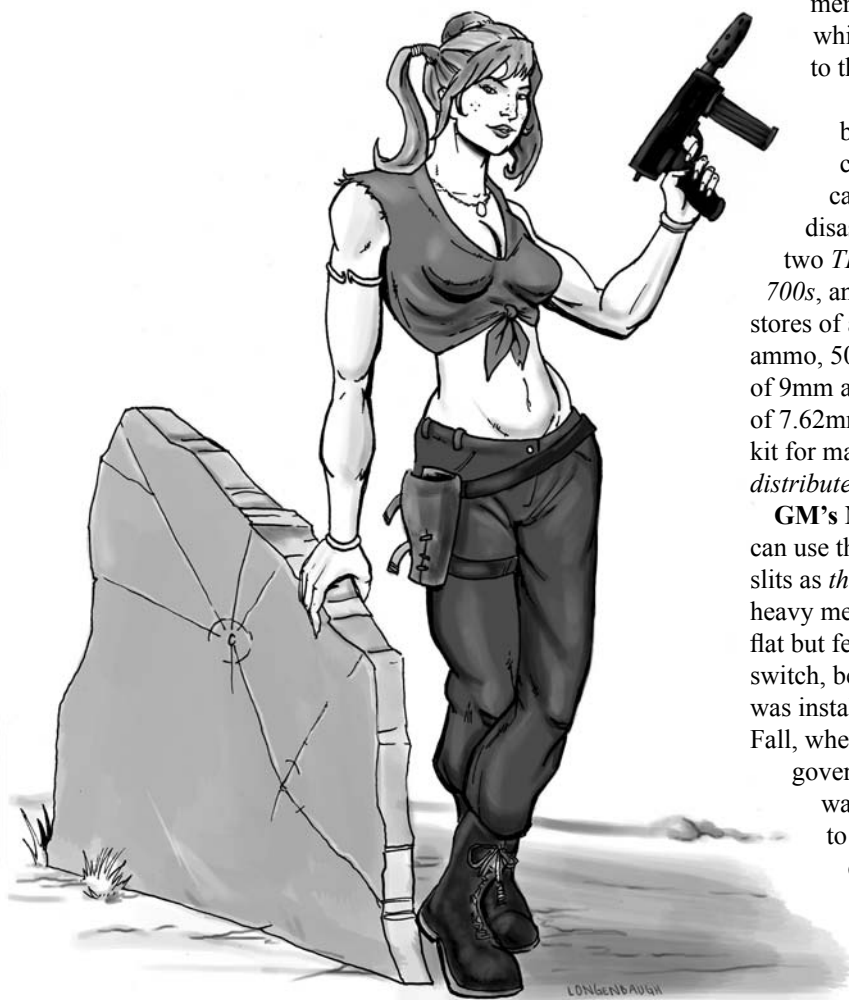
Though the interior room appears quite mundane, there is more to the building than meets the eye. A false cement block (Search DC 30) that looks like a part of the concrete floor can be removed by two or three moderately strong men to reveal a short drop into an old earthen pit, which leads down into a cool dark tunnel branching off to the east. This false panel is open during the siege.

The tunnel leads off to the Old Mine (see below), but the bottom of the pit also contains a cache of weapons left by Moses' ancestors. This cache includes two *AR-7 Explorers* (currently disassembled), a *Remington Streetsweeper*, four *Uzis*, two *TEC-9s*, four *Mossberg* shotguns, twelve *Remington 700s*, and five *pipe rifles* (.22 LR). There are also plentiful stores of ammo in this hidden armory: 80 rounds of .22 LR ammo, 500 rounds of 12-gauge shotgun ammo, 440 rounds of 9mm ammo, 100 rounds of .22 LR ammo, and 96 rounds of 7.62mm ammo, as well as a comprehensive cleaning kit for maintaining these weapons. *These weapons will be distributed among Moses' followers as appropriate.*

GM's Note: Characters firing from inside this building can use the narrow windows for cover (treat these narrow slits as *three-quarters cover*). The front door is made of heavy metal and can be barred from the inside. The roof is flat but features two armored vents that, with the flick of a switch, begin to circulate air out of the bunker. This system was installed by Moses' ancestor Ezekiel well before the Fall, when he feared his cult might come under attack by the government; the fans were put here in the event tear gas was used to smoke out the bunker's defenders. Due to their great age, these vents now have only a 50% chance of working.

OLD MINE

Ezekiel Trust founded Borrow on this isolated site for a reason—the cinderblock Stronghold actually sits right atop the entrance to an



old abandoned mine. Everyone in Borrow knows about the mine (Moses, following his philosophy of “always be prepared,” has drilled them so many times that most could find their way to it with their eyes closed), which has been used in times past to weather what Moses or his ancestors perceived as “signs of the End.” These “signs” have ranged from unusual auroras on the horizon to particularly severe sandstorms—all naturally occurring phenomenon that the crackpot leaders of Borrow have mistakenly interpreted as symbols that the world is about to end.

Under these disturbing circumstances, Moses has always brought “his people” here to hide. The false panel leading into the tunnel from the Stronghold can be easily put back in place from inside the tunnel, keeping the mine completely concealed. The mine itself is not very deep (only about forty horizontal feet of the original mine passage remains; the rest caved in long ago), but it is kept well stocked with four lanterns (battery-powered to conserve oxygen), enough food and water to sustain 30 people for 40 days, more than a dozen rolls of toilet paper, a few buckets, two dozen sleeping bags preserved in zippered plastic bags—and a dusty old Bible.

GM’s Note: If during the attack on the Stronghold Moses and his people appear to have no chance of surviving, Moses orders his followers into the mine. If the PCs are present and have made a good impression on Moses, they are invited to “wait out the End of the world,” if they decline, Moses leaves them to face the storm themselves. Once the PCs have gone underground, however, Moses refuses to open the concrete block to the surface until 40 days have passed (citing a misremembered Biblical verse that claims “if Jesus had to survive 40 days and 40 nights of turmoil, so must we,” or another such religious reason). If the PCs ignore the village leader and try to escape before 40 days have passed, Moses will prove his dedication to prophecy by brandishing his gun and blocking the exit physically.

AFTERMATH

The Enemy continues to assault the Stronghold until either Moses flees underground, or until every last shambler and seedling is killed.

Once the fighting is over, Moses leads his people out of the Stronghold to survey the damage. He then immediately leads his people in a prayer service to thank the Lord for “His mercy,” with numerous references to the PCs as “His instruments of justice.” In the end, Moses thanks the PCs and instructs his daughter Tammy Faye to treat any wounds they may have suffered during the battle.

When the PCs return to Shelter City after the attack on Borrow, Kyren is eager to find out the reason for their delay. When he hears the full story (including Qwan’s refusal to send help), Kyren agrees with their decision to go out on a limb to help the citizens of Borrow. At the very least, he reasons, it makes the Wastelords look capable of defending their own. He also promises to speak with Qwan and to “correct him” for his “error.”

Kyren also rewards the PCs for their actions in both Hooper and Borrow. Any ammunition used in the course of their adventures is replaced, as are any meds (up to two *stimshot As* for each character, but only if the PCs used up some of their own medicine).

He also rewards the PCs by sending to their camp a few women from the harem (with which the PCs may “do as they please”), as well as a crate of fine Kentucky bourbon—a treat usually reserved for the enjoyment of the Wastelords’ “inner circle.”

MIDNIGHT VISIT

Concerned by the party’s continued string of successes, angered at the speed with which they are earning Kyren’s favor, and humiliated by the events earlier that day, Qwan has decided to get rid of the PCs once and for all.

That night, Qwan sends a handful of his most trusted men to infiltrate the party’s camp and attack them while their guard is down. Qwan is counting on the women and bourbon to have taken their effect; hopefully the PCs will be unarmed, unarmored, and possibly even half-drunk...

THE ATTACK (EL 10)

The extent to which the PCs enjoyed Kyren’s generous reward will play an important role in this encounter. If the PCs are indeed pre-occupied with the women or have gotten themselves drunk, their reduced state of awareness during the attack might be reflected in one or more ways:

The PCs may be undressed and do not have their weapons handy.

The PCs may be drunk (treat inebriated PCs as *shaken*).

The PCs may be *fatigued* or even *exhausted*.

The PCs may be asleep (treat sleeping PCs as *helpless* until awakened).

The assassins consist of three of Qwan’s most trusted conspirators, as well as “Roadkill” Rick, Qwan’s personal henchman. The men attempt to slip into the PCs tent(s) using Hide and Move Silently skills to the best of their ability. If they are not detected, they attack with surprise.

🔪 **Mid-level Wastelords A (3):** HP 48, 48, 45, armed with combat knives and Glock 17s with suppressors instead of M16A2s (see Appendix 1).

🔪 **“Roadkill” Rick,** hp 50 (see Appendix 1).

GM’s Note: The harem girls are not party to Qwan’s plans, but will not fight against his men for fear of angering the wrong side. If there is a clear victor, however, they may assist that side by throwing objects, trying to distract or grapple combatants, or otherwise interfering in the battle.

Once the assassins are killed, it should be clear to the PCs who did this: Qwan. “Roadkill” Rick is notorious around camp as Qwan’s right-hand man and lackey; if none of the PCs realize this, an NPC in their employ or any other personality around camp can tell them.

DUEL TO THE DEATH

By the next day, word has gotten around camp that the PCs were the target of an assassination attempt. This, and the fact that they were able to fight off their attackers, has the camp viewing the party in a whole new light. If the PCs hadn't already made contacts in camp, now would be a good time to have one or more of the NPCs approach the party and offer their services. Others approach the PCs to ask who was behind the assassination attempt, and if they plan to confront him (Qwan) about it.

As if in answer to these questions, Lena finds the PCs sometime during the day. She has an offer for them that she hopes they won't refuse...

With all the talk about last night's assassination attempt floating around camp, you're not surprised to see the familiar face of Lena, Kyren's overly amorous consort, peering through your tent flap. Rousing yourselves to show some respect for such a powerful woman, she



comes in with a slinky walk and a sly grin on her face.

"Gentlemen, I heard about what happened last night. Assassins? They're saying Roadkill Rick was one of those killed. He's Qwan's lap-dog... looks like Qwan's hand had a part in this..."

She plays with the leather horsewhip in her hand for a moment before letting a gleeful smile slip across her face.

"I think we can turn this to our advantage.

Assuming, that is, you're interested..."

Lena fills the PCs in on her plan to deal with Qwan once and for all. Since he obviously dislikes the PCs and wants to see them dead, she thinks she can arrange to settle things for good.

Lena tells the party that one of them must challenge Qwan to a duel of honor—a public fight to the death. It is the only way the PCs, as subordinates, would be able to get away with killing Qwan (according to Wastelord tradition, attacking a superior officer on any other terms is grounds for immediate execution). Because Qwan is sure of himself, he will almost certainly agree to the duel.

If the PCs ask her why she's so interested in seeing Qwan taken out, she considers for a moment before telling the truth: Kyren can't live forever, and when he dies she will likely be inherited by the next emperor. She despises the conspiratorial Qwan, and would do anything to take him out of the line of succession—even if that means killing him.

BATTLE IN THE PIT (EL 12)

How the PCs bait Qwan into agreeing to a duel of honor is up to them, and you as GM should use this as an opportunity to role-play. By and large, Qwan is a cool customer who isn't easily provoked by idle threats or insults. Only with a well-planned and cleverly role-played strategy will the PCs be able to convince Qwan to accept their challenge.

If the party secures Qwan's acceptance to a challenge, the match is declared publicly before the people of Shelter City in accordance with Wastelord tradition. With fanfare rivaling that of the greatest public festivals, the two challengers are expected to meet in the Pit, the subterranean "coliseum" of Shelter City:

Tonight Shelter City is crowded with what must be at least 1,000 or more people from the vault and the slave camps outside. Here, in the coliseum-like cavern that is the Pit, you gather to put to rest the treasonous backstabbing of Qwan, Kyren's second-in-command.

In addition to countless city civilians, slaves, and even some fellow warriors from the camps, a good number of Wastelord guards, soldiers, and even their elite have gathered to watch this match. Most have put their money on Qwan, an experienced killer who has no compunctions about slicing an opponent's throat.

Kyren is there, watching from a position of honor; he

has a strange gleam in his eye as he looks down at your party and Qwan. You are not sure which contestant he favors.

Kyren's woman, Lena, keeps her distance until the last moment, at which point she approaches to explain the rules...

The rules of the match are essentially the same as for the fights in the camp:

1. Only one contestant may fight—no one may help the contestant once he is in the pit;
2. Contestants may only fight with a melee weapon (or unarmed)—no ranged weapons;
3. Contestants may wear armor if they choose;
4. The match is to the death.

Lena approaches the PC before the contest, ostensibly to present him to the crowd with a flourish of showmanship, but in reality she has another agenda. Through sleight of hand she gives the PC a rag soaked with rattlesnake venom (see page 54 of d20 Modern for statistics for this poison) for his weapon. If the PCs asks what the rag is for, Lena simple smiles and says “to even the odds”, and makes a motion with her hands suggesting the PC wipe his blade with it between attacks.

A character can apply a dose of the poison to his weapon simply by wiping the blade across the rag. Doing so is a move action. The rag is soaked with the equivalent of four doses. Keep in mind that there's nothing in the Wastelord rules that says poison can't be used in such a match, and Lena is hoping it will be just the edge the PC needs to weaken Qwan, enough to tip the balance in the character's favor. If the PC really doesn't stand a chance against Qwan, you may have Qwan automatically fail his save when struck by the poisoned weapon.

Once the PC is ready, the fight begins!

☠ **Qwan:** hp 90 (see Appendix 1).

VICTORY

Assuming the PC wins the duel of honor and Qwan is killed, read the following:

The crowd roars with bloodlust as Qwan is brought down at the climax of the fight. Hundreds of men, women, and children shriek for his blood all at once, filling the vaulted Pit cavern with a tremendous thunder. You sense the frenzy behind their cries for death is an outlet for their hatred of the Wastelords, and with their approval you deal the killing blow.

Once Qwan is no more than a lifeless heap, Lena climbs on stage, takes your hand, and raises it in victory. The crowd continues to roar.

Kyren, who has been watching without so much

QWAN'S ABILITIES

Qwan's performance in this fight should make the most of his impressive abilities. Prior to the fight, during the wind-up and announcement (as he and his opponent stare off), he begins to use his *Plan* ability, hoping to get a bonus for the first few rounds of the fight. Thus, when the battle begins, he may possibly receive a bonus to his skill checks and attack rolls (though this will slowly deteriorate as the fight goes on).

Next, if possible he will use his *Bloodthirsty Cry* to shake up his opponent, making the fight all that much easier. Note that because he has the *Intimidating Strength* feat, the DC to resist this is 18.

Whether or not he successfully manages to shake up his opponent, Qwan then engage with his knife, using his *Streetfighting* feat to inflict additional damage with each attack. Note that he also has the *Heroic Surge* feat, and uses this liberally to get extra attacks in early to keep his opponent on the defensive.

as blinking, finally stands. You wonder if he fully appreciates the audience's glee at seeing a Wastelord killed in front of them. In any case, the crowds soon fall silent.

“We have our victor. By Wastelord tradition, let the fighting end here.”

With that Kyren departs, the remaining members of his inner circle close behind.

INTO THE FOLD

In the aftermath of the duel, Kyren views the party in a completely new light. Now that they have effectively proven themselves (not only as his agents, but also against a man he thought second only to himself), he is ready to share with them a great deal of privileged information about the Enemy—and to trust them with a mission of utmost importance.

When the PCs leave the Pit, one of Kyren's guards approaches them and informs them that Kyren wishes to see them immediately. He leads the PCs to the Deep Level of Shelter City, past the guard post, and into the Infirmary...

The guardsman leads you down into the deep bowels of Shelter City, well beyond the levels inhabited by the city's population. He guides you down numerous dark passages until you pass through an old crumbling doorway marked “Infirmary” in Ancient-era stenciling. The faded paint of a red cross barely peeks through the darkness.

Beyond this door, he leads you into a mess of collapsed tunnels, caved-in halls, and what might have once been well-stocked hospital wards. Finally, you arrive in a large operating room—cold and isolated so

far underground—illuminated solely by the dim lights of a computer console and a single overhead lamp.

Standing at the computer is Kyren, looking out of place in such a deep and dangerous locale. Beside him is a much older man wearing the disheveled remnants of an old lab coat—a doctor of some kind. The thick lenses of the glasses perched on his nose distort the light coming from the computer screen, making his eyes appear to glow with a weird greenish light. At the doctor's side is yet another man, thin and bony as if half-starved, a belt of screwdrivers and other tools at his waist—perhaps a mech?

As you enter, Kyren looks each of you over before dismissing his guard. He then steps forward to address you.

“You’ve done well for yourselves these past few weeks,” he says. “You’ve yet to fail me. Fighting in the trenches, killing that beast under Crestone, taking out the threat to Hooper. Saving those villagers at Borrow. And killing Qwan... now that was something.”

Kyren continues to look you over:

“It is my philosophy in life that knowledge is the key to power. Only the strong deserve that knowledge. You have proven yourselves strong. Because of that, I have decided to let you in on what we know.

“This is Doc,” Kyren says, motioning to the elderly man, “our best physician. The younger one is Stinker, one of our best technicians.

“I think it’s about time we explained who—or what—the Enemy is. Or at the very least what we think it is.”

As before, the following lists the most probable line of questioning the PCs will pursue. If your players do not come up with these questions on their own, either improvise or have Kyren (or Doc and Stinker) offer this information to them in the course of conversation.

Let’s start at the top... (Kyren)

“A few weeks ago, at the frontier town of Hooper, a few desert scavengers wandered into town. Quiet, didn’t say a word—not uncommon for the kind of crazy men who make their living picking the pockets of corpses along the front lines.

“Anyway, what the guards at Hooper thought were just a couple of quiet scavengers turned out to be something else entirely. That night, the scavengers were caught trying to tamper with the town’s water supply. Needless to say, the guards opened fire, but the scavengers almost seemed to refuse to drop, even after taking a dozen or more gunshots each.”

Then what happened? (Kyren)

“One of them escaped, despite its injuries, while the other was presumed dead. It was only later, when Cantor—the doctor in Hooper—was performing an

autopsy, that the thing proved to still be alive. When it woke, what had seemed at first like any other human turned out to be a raving monster. When I heard the story, I ordered Harris, the garrison commander, to box it up and send it here. I had Doc here examine the creature. He ran a whole battery of tests, before coming up with his analysis.”

What was your analysis? (Doc)

“The creature, or ‘Enemy’ as our leaders fondly refer to it, is nothing short of a miracle—or nightmare—of biological science. With the limited tools we have here, we’ve been able to determine that the scavenger’s human body is merely a host, a “vessel” if you will for a viral infection unlike any I’ve ever seen.”

A viral infection? (Doc)

“That’s correct, a disease. The Enemy is nothing short of an army of infected creatures.”

You said “unlike any infection you’ve ever seen.” In what way? (Doc)

“For one, the actual body is dead; I imagine in the case of the creature we captured, it had probably been dead for a hundred years by the time it showed up at Hooper. The corpse is literally animated, through the properties of a unique form of disease that, for all my knowledge, I am unable to categorize or name. The organism spreads throughout the body, infecting individual cells and whole tissues as it goes, using them almost like tendrils with which to control the body like a puppet. Once it has control, it generates a curious enzyme that appears to preserve the host body for, well, hundreds of years.”

Any PC with Knowledge (Twisted Earth) can now make a check (DC 17). If successful, she remembers a similar “disease” reported to infest the Mountains of Misery region of the Twisted Earth. This sickness is said to affect animals and humans alike, turning them into mindless hosts controlled by the voracious parasite within (see the entry for the Marionette Worm in Terrors of the Twisted Earth). A second check (DC 19) recalls legends referring to this disease as a biological creation of the Ancients, used as a doomsday weapon during the Fall.

That sounds similar to the disease affecting the Mountains of Misery... (Kyren)

“Bingo. Interestingly enough, when a few of our scouts made contact with an Entropist group in Trader Pass, we were able to negotiate an uneasy alliance. That’s why the Entropists are here, helping us fight this war.

NEW WORLD ORDER

It seems the Entropists believe our little virus is a new outbreak of the same disease that affects their corner of the world."

Is it really the same disease? (Doc)

"If I were to guess, I'd say no. Though reports from their part of the world are scarce, I believe the scourge of the Mountains of Misery is different on a number of levels. Still, both do seem to share some curious traits..."

Such as? (Doc)

"Both are extremely virulent, and are passed through fluid transfer. Both turn the host into a "thrall" controlled by the disease itself. The spread pattern, the rate of contagion we've observed... it's quite possible that both are, or were rather, once weapons developed by the Ancients. Biological weapons, designed to infect vast numbers of people."

Why have they only begun to appear now? (Kyren)

"We don't know. The Entropists have been dealing with their problem for generations. But this new disease... the Enemy seems to have come out of nowhere in only a few years' time."

How contagious is it? (Doc)

"As far as we know, the infection is spread through a special form of fluid transfer. We had the chance to observe the phenomenon in action when two careless guards here at the Infirmary entered the room containing the shambler specimen without adequate safeguards. Both men were infected when the creature attacked them and knocked them unconscious, and literally... vomited... into their mouths. We managed to seal the cell just in time before the guards rose and joined the first specimen in trying to bash down the door."

"Eventually we killed the two guards and burned their bodies—that seems to be the only real way to kill the lingering bacteria in the infected tissues. The original specimen is still in that cell over there."

If the PCs move over to look through the thick glass in the cell door, they see a single figure inside. Instead of some nightmarish monster, however, all they see is a naked old man sitting in the cell, utterly still, just staring back at them through the glass. As they peer through, the seedling suddenly lurches forward, stopping just inches from the glass, looking directly at them as if summing them up. It has no expression whatsoever on its face, but the PCs notice that its eyes are completely black—and seem both cold and alien.

Am I imagining things, or are its eyes completely black? (Doc)

"You're quite right. The eyes are completely black—a strange side effect of the infection process that I am at a loss to explain. Quite curious, really, but at least it allows us to identify which men and animals are infected, and which are not."

Who was he? (Doc)

"That's an interesting question. I did an examination myself, and Cantor's pre-autopsy findings bolster my belief. That's the body of a pureblood human. And as you know, pureblood humans are a rarity these days."

What does that mean? (Kyren)

"We thought long and hard about that. We couldn't figure it out until the frontier had another visitor..."

Oh? (Kyren)

"Just a few days after the shambler appeared at Hooper, we had a stroke of luck. Some of our guards at Hooper shot what appeared to be a 'metal man' heading towards town in the middle of the night. Though it was badly damaged, they eventually brought it back here where one of my mechs, Stinker here, went to work immediately trying to bring it back to life."

What was it? (Kyren)

"An android—an artificial life form created by the Ancients. Apparently this one was an old military model. It was already badly damaged from some earlier battle, and by the time my trigger-happy soldiers got to it, it was nothing but scrap. But Stinker here was able to put the pieces together well enough to get into its brain and extract some information."

At this, Kyren steps back and lets Stinker explain the rest:

At a glance from Kyren, the technician, "Stinker," realizes it's his time to speak. He motions for everyone to follow him down a darkened hallway to a cool dark room. Inside is a computer console affixed to a metal table, upon which can be seen the badly-damaged remains of a metallic figure... an android.

Stepping forward with a jingle from the tools and devices hanging from his belt, Stinker explains.

"I basically just hooked the junked remains of the android here to an old minifusion cell we salvaged from the City's ruins. Using the cell as a power source, I was able to interface with the android's internal memory through the computers we brought from the Command Center."

“It was bit tough at first to decipher the old military code, but after sifting through a lot of corrupted data—and evading some nasty security protocols built into the robot brain—it was only a few hours before we hacked into its memory.”

Stinker leans forward, hooks the shattered remains of the android to a few power cords, and stands back as it hums with renewed energy. Almost immediately, the computer screen attached to the wheeled dolly blinks on, displaying a mess of confused computer code.

Stinker types away at the keyboard for a few seconds, then steps back, rubbing his runny nose, as more code comes flashing on the screen.

“Okay, so here we’ve got it up and running again. The message is a bit garbled... but it says... uh... okay, yeah, it says...”

“Its point of origin,” Kyren interrupts, finishing the tech’s sentence.

“Yes,” the tech continues. “It gives coordinates for something the android refers to as its ‘point of origin.’ And it goes on to state that the android here must complete its ‘mission’ and ‘return to base’—its point of origin—to help reinforce a ‘quarantine.’ That’s how we knew it was from the same place the disease originally came from...”

Kyren lets you marvel at the investigative skills of his men for a moment before speaking.

“We realized the android must have been sent to track down the infected scav. The word ‘quarantine’ seems to suggest the androids there are aware of the contagion, and are trying to fight it at its ‘point of origin.’

“Armed with this information, I raised an army and sent it to attack the area at those very coordinates. It turned out to be a small town named Center, maybe 30-35 miles west of here, deep in the desert and completely unknown to any of us. We received an initial report from the field commander describing it as deserted... and that’s the last anyone heard from the army. No one returned.”

Again he allows you a moment to digest that information.

“Needless to say, I wasn’t going to send another army just to vanish off the face of the earth. I wanted to nuke the place—but the high price of our battles in the Trade Lands nixed that plan.”

Doc, who has been silent this whole time, now speaks up.

“We believe the pureblood human must have come from the same place. I suspect it was one of only several men killed centuries ago by the disease. Kept in place by the quarantine, it remained unchanged for generations. Now, however, something apparently happened at the ‘point of origin’—and these infected thralls escaped.”

“Interestingly,” Kyren says, with a tinge of something like enthusiasm in his voice, “the android also had other

information. Stinker, call up the other data...”

Within a few minutes Stinker manages to call up a virtual storehouse of information hidden but still salvageable deep in the robot’s brain. Kyren moves forward, his eyes working overtime to read every bit of text flashing down the screen.

This new information is presented as *Handouts #1* and *#2*. Give them to the players to look over before continuing.

“Yes... okay, here’s what I’m talking about. This data talks about how the disease is expected to infect every life form it comes into contact with—even animals. And it even gives us information about how the Enemy is organized.

“Here’s where Doc’s genius really comes into play. Because those ‘scavs’ infiltrated Hooper twice, I figure they were seedlings. All the zombies on the front, those are shamblers. We haven’t encountered these so-called ‘integrators’ yet. But the node mother...”

“Based on some observations of the seedling we had here, Doc has a theory that all of these are telepathically controlled. This data confirms it. It’s the node mother that acts as the controller, keeping them all coordinated, united.

“You know that old woman you killed in Hooper? Doc, tell them.”

“Well,” Doc says, “I performed an autopsy on the body and found that the brain was almost twice normal size, and had been slightly re-arranged. Obviously the disease had transformed the old woman’s brain for a specialized purpose.”

“She was a node mother,” Kyren explains. “The old lady was a node mother. But why weren’t the Enemy falling apart? I mean, you cut off the head, the rest of the body dies, right? So why isn’t the war over?”

Kyren gives you a moment before explaining.

“Because there’s another node mother out there. And that’s where you come in...”

WHAT’S NEXT?

All this information is fine and good, but the PCs are probably wondering what Kyren wants them to do about it. Of course, the answer to that question should be blatantly obvious...

With this new information, Kyren has determined his next move: to send the PCs to the frontier of his lands to find and eradicate the second “node mother” that is keeping and controlling the Enemy army. If they find and kill it, the threat to Kyren’s empire will end once and for all.

If the PCs ask where to begin, Kyren has a few ideas:

Alamosa. This town is not occupied by the Wastelords. Superstitious locals believe the ruins are inhabited by an “animated garbage heap,” an angry spirit of the ruined town that eats all who trespass. Kyren doubts this is related to the Enemy. The stories of this alleged “monster” go back for generations in the valley, well before the Enemy first

NEW WORLD ORDER

MYOELECTRIC SYSTEM FAILURE!

BACKUP SYSTEMS	CRITICAL
DAMAGE CONTROL	CRITICAL
DIAGNOSTICS	CRITICAL
IFF	CRITICAL
INTERNAL POWER	CRITICAL
LOGIC UNIT	CRITICAL
MEMORY MODULE	ACTIVATED
MYOELECTRIC POWER	CRITICAL
SECURITY PROTOCOLS	DEACTIVATED
SENSORS	CRITICAL
TARGETING SYSTEMS	CRITICAL

ASSESSMENT

IRREPARABLE

UNIT BRAVO 6

MISSION INFORMATION

MISSION TYPE: SEARCH & DESTROY

OBJECTIVE: PURSUE INFECTED CARRIERS

MISSION PARAMETERS:

- **ACQUIRE MISSION ARMAMENT AT SURFACE ARMORY**
- **FIND AND FOLLOW TRAIL OF ESCAPED CARRIER(S)**
- **ENGAGE WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE**
- **RETRIEVE CORPSES OR (IF NOT POSSIBLE) INCINERATE ON SITE**

■ **UPON COMPLETION OF MISSION RETURN TO QUARANTINE ENFORCEMENT AT POINT OF ORIGIN (LAT 37.753° N LON 106.108° W)**

CLICK FOR MISSION DETAILS

appeared.

Blanca. Kyren tells the PCs a trip to Blanca is probably not worth the effort. This town had been an important Wastelord base for years (used to mount raids into the Forbidden Lands), but with the rise of the Enemy it was abandoned so that the troops stationed there could be put to use guarding more important Wastelord towns closer to home.

Center. Kyren is leery about the prospect of a visit to Center. An entire Wastelord army was wiped out there, and despite the information gleaned from the android, little of practical value is known about Center. Kyren tells the PCs to avoid this town at all costs until the Wastelords are prepared to confront the Enemy head-on (this town is detailed in the third part of this adventure series, *The Last God*).

Del Monte. Kyren knows nothing of this town, other than that no Wastelord has ever been there due to its isolation on the far side of the valley.

Moffat. Moffat is an important cattle town, one of the major suppliers of food in the Wastelord empire. It's a relatively cooperative town, so the PCs might get some answers there.

Monte Vista. Another town the Wastelords never settled. Kyren has little information about it.

Saguache. Kyren knows little of this distant town, but according to stories, it has long been abandoned.

The PCs have five days to investigate sites throughout the valley. Because they will be operating alone behind enemy lines, Kyren has authorized them to take any (or all) of the following equipment:

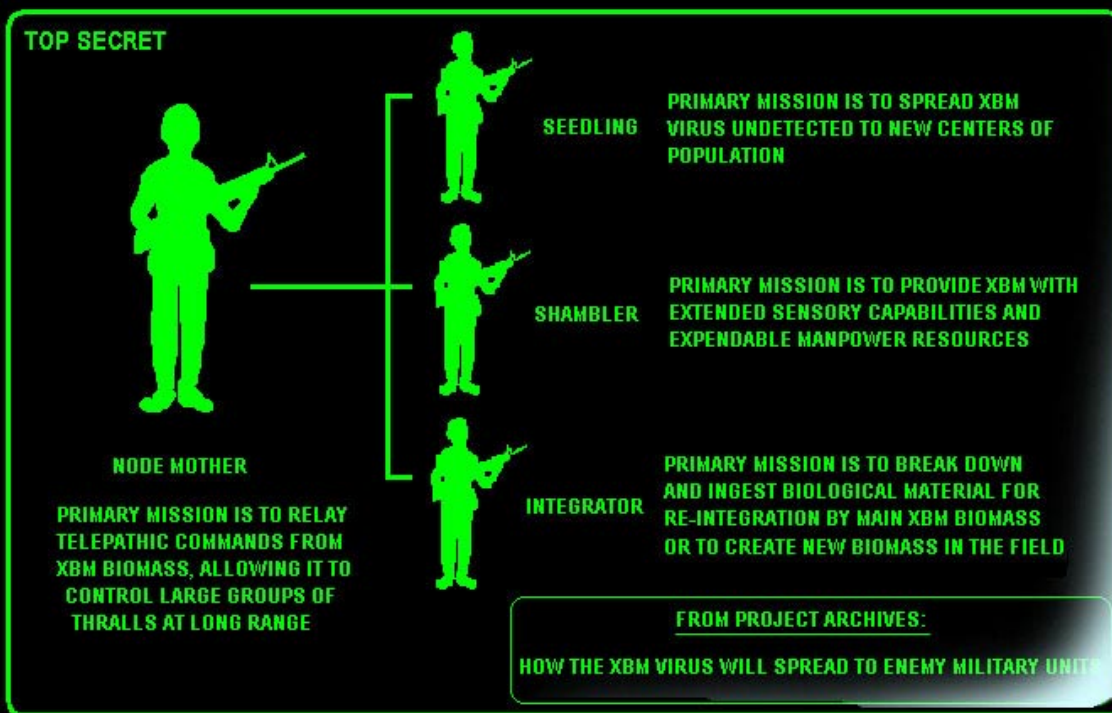
NEW WORLD ORDER

MISSION INFORMATION (CONT.)

PROBABLE ESCAPE OF ONE OR MORE INFECTED CARRIERS FROM FACILITY. DUE TO THE NATURE OF THE MACRO-ORGANISM, IT WILL MOST LIKELY HEAD FOR THE NEAREST INHABITED AREA TO BEGIN DEVELOPING A CHAIN OF INFECTION (AS EXPLAINED BELOW).

DUE TO THE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS NATURE OF THE MACRO-ORGANISM, THE INFECTION MAY HAVE ALREADY SPREAD FROM ANTHROPOMORPHIC CARRIER TO ANIMAL CARRIER. ALL UNITS MUST EXHIBIT EXTREME PREJUDICE AGAINST ALL BIOLOGICAL LIFE ENCOUNTERED.

PREVENTION OF TARGET(S) FROM REACHING POPULATED AREAS IS PRIORITY ONE, TO AVOID CONTAMINATION OF EXISTING BIOLOGICAL CENTERS.



Wastelord truck

2 *Low-level Wastelords A* (driver and escort)

Sufficient gas for for five days of travel in the truck

Sufficient K-rations for all members of the scouting party

A two-way CB radio

One M16A2 for each character in the party

Three clips of ammo for each M16A2

One light duty vest for each character in the party

Once the PCs have had time to prepare (including healing all injuries and training for new levels), proceed to the next chapter, *Scouting the Valley*.

SCOUTING THE VALLEY

With their new mandate, the PCs now face the open wilderness of the San Luis Valley, a rolling badlands devastated in the Wastelords' war against the mysterious Enemy.

In this part of the adventure, the PCs are free to travel about the valley in any manner they wish. Because some of their travels may occur behind enemy lines, they will want to avoid entanglements with enemy patrols, but encounters are possible (see below).

This section is organized differently than the rest of this adventure, in that each location is presented separately. There is no linked story here leading the party from one location to the next. The PCs can visit the locations below in any order or manner they choose. Eventually, however,

NEW WORLD ORDER

after they have visited the forgotten town of Saguache, their activities will provoke the Last God into making a decisive attack against the Wastelords—leading to an epic confrontation.

TRAVEL THROUGH THE VALLEY

In addition to the region's own shady history (as the location of a top secret bio-warfare laboratory), the valley once used to be home to Great Sand Dunes National Park, a swath of desert landscape that gave birth to some of the tallest sand dunes in North America. The remnants of these prehistoric dunes still stand, though many have been destroyed or displaced by the constant wars ravaging the Valley; in many cases, only endless tracts of bare soil and rubble remain.

Before the emergence of the Enemy, however, settlements in the valley prospered due to the shallow water table (the depth to ground water is less than 12 feet in some areas). While the surface is dry and dusty for much of the year, water does exist underground, making it possible for settlers (with the will to dig) to cling stubbornly to life in the valley.

Before the people of Shelter City emerged from underground, many of these Valley communities consisted of small clan-like groups (textbook cases of *Tribal* communities). During Kyren's exile, he visited some of these, and later—after he built an army of raiders and other outcasts—he conquered them all, along with the vault of his origins.

Though some of these settlements have since fallen in the war with the Enemy, most of these ancient communities remain part of the Wastelord empire, each an integral piece of the delicate balance of economy and trade. In addition to labor, goods, or agriculture, all settlements in the valley contribute recruits for the Wastelord armies. Because they have been part of the empire so long, most have lost any sense of individual identity; the message from Kyren is clear: *united we stand, divided you fall*.

The Wastelord villages of the valley are connected by Ancient-era highways that have by and large weathered the ages remarkably well. Simple two-lane highways, they permit motorcycles, cars, and trucks to move quickly through the valley—keeping scattered communities in contact, assuring the flow of trade goods, and most importantly, cementing Wastelord control over the entire region.

Though the Wastelords prefer to drive along the few remaining roads, their military trucks (including the PCs') are capable of off-road travel through the badlands. Though the going is often somewhat slower, it is not impossible.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Encounters in the San Luis Valley are rare, due in no small part to the ravages of the current war between the Last God's New World Order and Kyren's Wastelord empire.

Because the valley is so desolate, roll for encounters only once per day. Use the first encounter table for encounters

within Wastelord-controlled terrain; use the second once the party leaves the Wastelord empire and slips behind enemy lines:

Wastelord Controlled

D20	Encounter
1-5	Monkeys
6-8	Wolves
9-13	No event
14-15	Mechanical trouble
16	Rainstorm
17-18	Truck convoy
19-20	Wastelord patrol

Non-Wastelord Controlled

D20	Encounter
1-8	Enemy patrol
9-14	No event
15-16	Monkeys
17	Wolves
18-19	Mechanical trouble
20	Rainstorm

Modifiers (Wastelord controlled Only)

-2 if the party is on *Highway 160* or *112*

+2 if the party is on *Highway 17*

+5 if the party is on *Highway 150*

ENEMY PATROL (EL VARIES)

The movement of the party's truck through the area attracts the attention of a group of shamblers and seedlings scouring the desert for any signs of life to infect. Sensing new prey, they immediately move to attack the truck and its occupants.

An enemy patrol usually consists of 2d4 unarmed *Mutant Shamblers* (these won't be able to stop the truck, though they may wander into the path of the vehicle and damage it if rammed), as well as one or two *Mutant Seedlings C* armed with rifles captured during the war.

MECHANICAL TROUBLE

A sudden *clang*, followed by an awful grinding noise and then a sputtering of the engine, precedes the sudden and unexpected stop of the PCs' vehicle. Getting out, their Wastelord escorts give the vehicle a thorough inspection before declaring that the truck must stop for repairs.

The DC for the repairs is 20 and requires 1d8 hours of work. The Wastelords have enough spare parts to make the repairs, so there is no cost in raw materials. If the PCs do not have the skills to repair the vehicle, assume one of the Wastelords has enough know-how to do the job (but double the time required).

Once the vehicle is repaired, the PCs (and their Wastelord escorts) can go on their way.

MONKEYS (EL 2)

Hiding in the shade of a dead tree right out in the middle of the wasteland, or in the upper story of a ruined building (if the PCs are in a town), a group of rhesus monkeys watches

VALLEY HIGHWAYS

The San Luis Valley is crisscrossed by five major highways and a few back roads worthy of note:

Highway 17

Highway 17 serves as a convenient marker of the edge of Wastelord territory; all places west of it are unknown and uninhabited, while all places east of it (to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains) are firmly in Wastelord control.

The highway itself is in relatively good condition from Mosca to Moffat; it is regularly maintained by gangs of slave laborers. This highway work has allowed Highway 17 to remain open despite being more than two centuries old. The Wastelords use Highway 17 to ferry supplies, food shipments, and troops by truck from one town to the next and to keep the outlying trenches connected to supply centers.

Highway 112

Highway 112 runs through the heart of the San Luis Valley, and thus has remained almost completely forgotten for many years. As it runs through a featureless wasteland with few worthwhile resources, the Wastelords (like the tribals before them) have never seen a need to explore it.

The small town of Center lies near route 112 at its far western end, just within sight of the highway. This town is at the heart of the mystery surrounding the great Enemy of the Wastelords, and is detailed in part three of this series, The Last God.

Highway 150

This highway connects Shelter City with the rest of the Wastelord empire. Though small, the road sees regular maintenance by slave crews working out of Shelter City, and is thus in generally good shape year-round.

Highway 160

The remains of old Highway 160 are used to convey entire armies of Wastelord raiders to the Trade Lands on their annual predations. Its great length means the Wastelords cannot realistically maintain it, and as a result entire sections (some up to a mile long) have fallen into decay.

In general, Highway 160 remains in relatively good condition east of Blanca, only showing signs of decay as it begins its descent into the Forbidden Lands. West of Blanca, the highway begins to deteriorate much more rapidly, making the going a little slower (but the road is still unbroken); after Monte Vista it almost completely vanishes, reclaimed entirely in some areas by the wastes.

Highway 285

Neglected Highway 285 is still intact, despite having been almost completely forgotten for over two centuries. It is not used, however, since it lies well outside the Wastelord sphere of influence.

the PCs from a safe distance. These monkeys are descended from test animals that escaped during the chaos at Center during the Fall; their presence is highly unusual in a place like southern Colorado. The monkeys generally avoid the party, but if they are threatened they will attack to defend themselves. They are *not* infected with the XBM macro-organism (or any other virus), but the PCs don't know that...

If the PCs observe these animals and track them, the monkeys will eventually lead the PCs to their lair (see later for details).

● **Monkeys (12):** hp 4 each (see *d20 Modern* or Appendix 2).

RAINSTORM

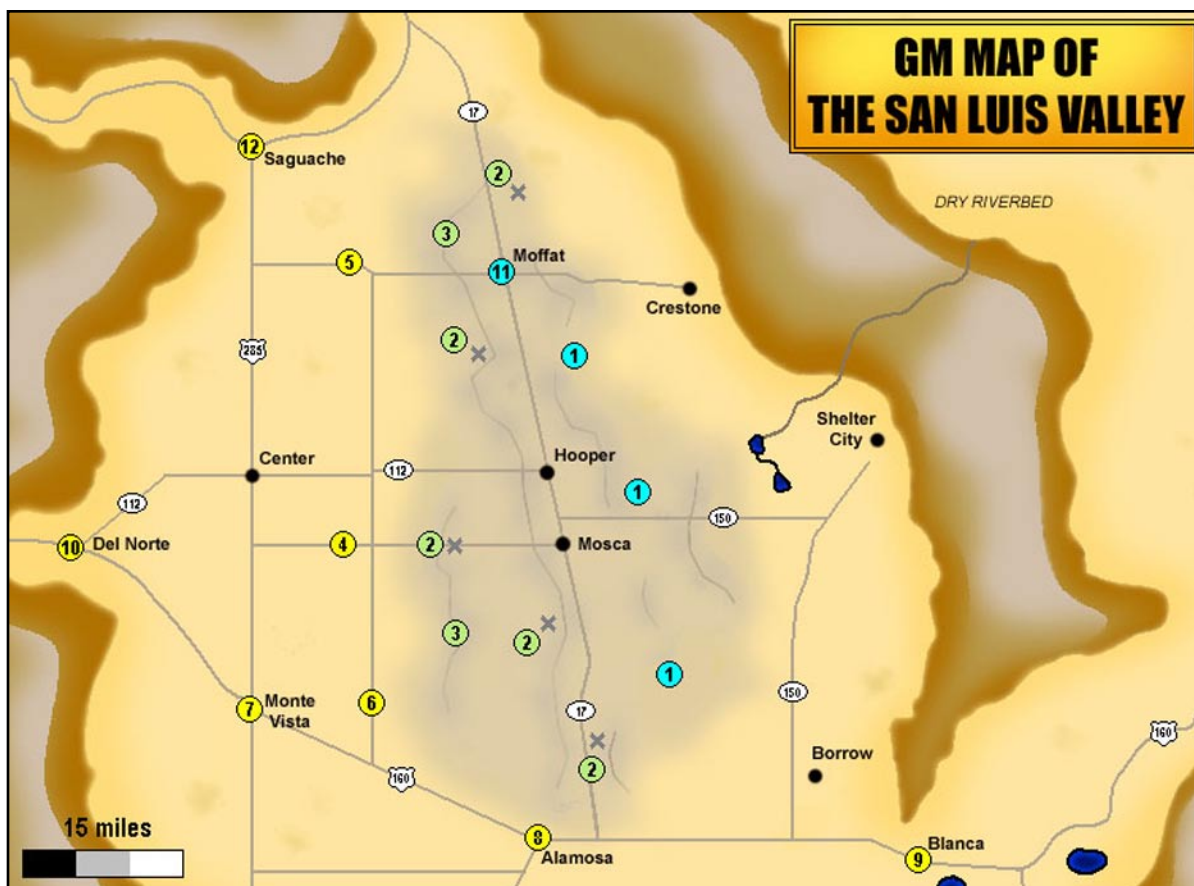
Because the PCs are in the San Luis Valley during its brief rainy season, they run the risk of being caught in a freak rainstorm. During these quick and unpredictable squalls, water washes over the flat roadways, turning the sands of the

wasteland into gray mud and causing the old arroyos of the desert to overflow and flood entire regions.

A rainstorm in the valley slows highway movement to 40 mph (30 mph offroad). You may call for Drive checks on occasion, with failure indicating the party's truck has gone out of control, bogged down in the mud, or driven into a rain-swollen arroyo and become immobilized for several hours (at least until the rain stops).

TRUCK CONVOY

The PCs encounter a convoy of 2-3 cargo trucks heading along the highway (if this encounter is rolled off-road, ignore it and roll again) from one Wastelord town to another. The convoy trucks contain food, fortification materials, or other mundane supplies, as well as 2d10 slaves being transported to various worksites. The trucks stop if hailed, and can provide some assistance, but they will be eager to be on their way. None of the men are armed; if they are so inclined, the



PCs could conceivably hijack any of the trucks, their food, or even free the slaves with little trouble.

If the PCs have had mechanical trouble and the convoy shows up while they are in the midst of repairing their vehicle, the men of the convoy can expedite the repairs (halve any remaining repair time). They then drive on.

WASTELORD PATROL

The PCs come across a Wastelord patrol consisting of 2d3 *Low-level Wastelords* riding in an old-style army truck (treat this as a *moving truck*; it is essentially identical to the one given to them by Kyren). Once the PCs identify themselves as agents working for Kyren, the Wastelords become friendly, and will give water, food, directions, or other assistance to the PCs if asked.

If the PCs have had mechanical trouble and the patrol shows up while they are in the midst of repairing their vehicle, the men of the patrol can expedite the repairs (halve any remaining repair time). They then drive on.

WOLVES (EL 5)

A pack of famished wolves prowls just within sight of the highway, their hungry eyes glaring in the party's direction. The pack consists of several animals native to the region who have fallen on hard times; local wildlife is dwindling due to the recent spread of the macro-organism in the valley. The animals have lost a few of their number to the infection and are thus wary of all strangers in their territory; however,

to avoid dying out, they are forced to take *some* chances...

If the PCs seem weak or vulnerable, the animals try to intercept them and attack; otherwise they merely watch pitifully from a safe distance as the PCs go by.

🐾 **Wolves (4):** hp 13 each (see *d20 Modern* or Appendix 2).

1. ARTILLERY FIREBASE

The roar of artillery crashes like thunder in the distance. Up ahead, on a low rise in the otherwise featureless gray desert, you see a network of trenches surrounding a sand-bagged emplacement—an artillery firebase. A number of rusted howitzers fire continuous volleys into the sky, creating the incessant thundering noise heard across the valley day and night.

Each of these locations is essentially identical: a fortified artillery firebase situated either out in the open or on a small rise in the otherwise flat desert landscape. These firebases are built to protect their small complement of long-range artillery pieces—light field guns scavenged by the Wastelords over the years and put back into service bombarding the Enemy whenever it pushes against the frontier.

If the party visits any of these firebases, they will generally be met with professional courtesy, but because the forces stationed at these outposts are often overworked and

undermanned, the PCs won't receive any real assistance. A typical local garrison consists of 6 to 12 Wastelord soldiers and a few slave warriors trained in the operation of light howitzers, but beyond that there are limited supplies and no useful information to be gleaned. The PCs can stop at such a place to rest (with a reasonable guarantee of security), to use the garrison's radio to communicate with Shelter City, or to commandeer extra ammunition for their firearms from the firebase's small armory—but little else.

GM's Note: Under no circumstances can the PCs commandeer artillery pieces or re-direct artillery fire from a firebase. The Wastelords are facing acute ammo shortages for these weapons and use their howitzers exclusively to prevent enemy breakthroughs along the frontline; they will not squander their reserves on the party's whim.

2. DESTROYED VILLAGE (EL VARIES)

Rain washes over the dismal desert terrain, creating a low fog that creeps along the muddy plain. Up ahead through the mist you see the dilapidated remains of an old village, its wooden outer walls collapsed in places and its collection of huts sagging miserably.

Each of these locations marks a village or town lost to the encroachment of the Enemy in recent years. Former tribal communities subjugated by the Wastelords in their conquest of the desert, most were abandoned or destroyed during the war and now lie far behind enemy lines.

The party's Wastelord escorts suggest giving these places a wide berth. If the party insists on stopping in one of these deserted villages, a search may (at the GM's discretion) turn up a few mundane items worth scavenging (common household goods, perhaps a few weapons left behind on dead men, etc.).

In addition, there is a chance that searchers will encounter small groups of the Enemy inside the village. Roll on the following table to determine what (if any) Enemy force is present:

D6	Enemies
1-3	None
4-5	1d4+1 <i>Mutant Shamblers</i>
6	As 4-5 above, but also with 1d2 <i>Mutant Seedlings C</i>

3. ABANDONED TRENCHES

The terrain here is marked by an elaborate web of trenches which seem to stretch on endlessly into the distance. Huge craters pit the earth everywhere, providing sinkholes in which rain gathers into large pools of brown water. Erosion has damaged large sections of the defenses, turning entire trenches into water-logged streams. Countless skeletal remains dot the landscape, exposed by the falling rain.

While trench warfare is generally anything but fluid, the Wastelords have on occasion found it necessary to abandon forward trenches to pull back to more defensible positions in the rear. These areas mark elaborate networks of trenches and fortifications that the Wastelords abandoned to the Enemy before creating a stable front line (as evident on the map).

Because the trenches have collapsed in many areas, leaving them flooded, they are not occupied by the Enemy. In addition, searches uncover little of value (anything scavenged is likely badly rusted or waterlogged).

4. CRASH SITE

A few dozen yards off of the highway ahead of you, in the middle of the desert, you see the wreckage of an old automobile, an SUV of some kind. Light reflecting off the dirt-caked mirrors first drew your attention, but its isolation well off the road seems unusual.

As you approach, you see the bleached remains of a skeleton half-buried in the sand only a few dozen paces from the wreckage.

This vehicle (a badly rusted SUV) was commandeered by deserters from the Center facility during the "accident" there over two hundred years ago. Taking what weapons they could, they fled the facility, hoping to make it to the rumored vault in the Great Sand Dunes national park before the doors closed. So desperate were these former soldiers to avoid being killed in the coming nuclear war that they planned to gain admittance to the vault by force if necessary. The vehicle still holds a large cache of weaponry.

GM's Note: PCs making an Investigate check (DC 25 due to the amount of time that has transpired since the vehicle went off the road) can deduce that the car veered off the highway when someone in the back seat attacked the driver. The attacker (actually a security guard who had slowly transformed into a seedling) strangled the driver, causing the car to careen away from the road. As it came to a stop, there was a struggle, during which the same attacker overcame all but one of the men before being doused with gasoline from one of the jerry cans and immolated. This last survivor wandered only a few dozen yards from the burning wreckage before dying of wounds incurred in the crash.

Treasure: A search of the wrecked car uncovers a yellowed map of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, four light duty vests, two *laser pistols* (empty power clips), two Colt 635s (all empty), a *Benelli M1* (with one round inside), and several jerry cans of gasoline (just under 20 gallons remaining).

If the PCs search the half-buried body nearby they find the shredded remains of a uniform. In the shirt pocket is an identification card labeled "Sgt. James Boxer, Surface Security." This is fact a *graphite access card*, which may prove important when the PCs go to Center in part three of this adventure series; until then, it has no apparent value.

5. ABANDONED TRUCK

On the shoulder of the highway is an old military transport truck not unlike yours, badly rusted with much of its old olive paint peeled off by decades, if not centuries, of sand and rain storms.

If the PCs stop to investigate, the truck proves to be almost identical to theirs (a typical pre-Fall military truck used to transport squads of men). Judging by its terrible condition, it must have been abandoned here over two hundred years ago and forgotten. If they ask their Wastelord companions about it, they are simply told that no Wastelord truck was ever lost this far north.

Any character who makes a Investigate check (DC 17 due to the time that has transpired) finds clues that suggest the truck's engine overheated, forcing its crew to stop. No serious damage was inflicted to the vehicle engine, however—suggesting that whoever abandoned the vehicle must have been in a hurry (otherwise the crew would have remained and tried to cool it down).

A search of the back uncovers nothing; it appears the truck was thoroughly scavenged before or after its passengers and crew abandoned it. Since these trucks usually carried heavy equipment, PCs investigating the scene can assume they transferred their gear from this truck to another one (the abandoned truck was probably only one of several in a convoy).

GM's Note: This truck was abandoned during the evacuation of the San Luis Valley during the chaos of the Fall. Stationed at the Del Norte roadblock (see that town's entry for details), the military unit eventually abandoned their post and tried to make it to Great Sand Dunes. When they realized they were too late, they headed north, hoping to reach rumored rendezvous points in Salida (to the north, beyond the campaign map). When this vehicle overheated, they merely abandoned it, jumping onto another truck in their hurry to hook up with friendly forces.

These men were never heard from again, and this abandoned truck serves merely as curious evidence of their passing.

6. MONKEY LAIR (EL 2)

The highway seems to stretch on forever. Bracing yourselves for another few hours of monotony, you suddenly wonder if you've gone crazy as you see a small furry monkey squatting on the side of the road. As your truck approaches, the monkey lets off a panicked screech and leaps off the highway, disappearing into a drainage ditch on the other side.

This is the lair of a pack of twelve rhesus monkeys, the descendants of escaped test subjects from the Center facility. The PCs may have encountered these monkeys before (as a random encounter), as they roam far and wide across the

valley by night searching for things to eat. Alternatively, they may have heard about the monkeys from Ben and Betty, the administrators of the town of Moffat (see *Moffat*).

The ancestors of these creatures were healthy (not infected by the macro-organism), and thus these monkeys pose no real threat to the PCs. If the PCs try to invade their lair, however, the monkeys will jump on them and claw them in a frantic effort to defend their home.

Their lair consists of nothing more than a large cement storm drain running beneath the highway. There are openings on both ends; the monkeys live close to the center of the tunnel (underground and out of the wind). The drain is large enough for a Medium-size creature to crawl into (treat any PC doing so as *prone*), and is filled with all manner of rotten fruit, the hollowed-out shells of bugs, and profuse monkey droppings.

Statistics for the twelve monkeys can be found in the Random Encounters section.

Treasure: If the PCs Search the storm drain (DC 17) they find, buried in all the refuse, a *green access card*. Like the graphite card at *Area 4*, this peculiar item may be useful when the PCs eventually go to Center in part three of this series, *The Last God*; this particular card is keyed specifically to the *Animal Containment Building*.

7. MONTE VISTA (EL 8)

The ruins of Monte Vista are a quiet, isolated place at the southwest end of the San Luis Valley. Monte Vista lies in the shadow of the San Juan Mountains, far from settlements populated by the Wastelords and their subjects.

This encounter, while not necessary for the completion of this adventure, has far-reaching repercussions if solved successfully. In the town of Monte Vista lurks an insidious danger, a contaminated *watering hole* that infects all animals—and men—who drink from its waters.

As explained in the adventure introduction, several seedlings managed to escape the android quarantine during the recent power failure at Center. One of these, badly injured by android laser fire, struggled to stay alive as it traveled directly south looking for a new host to infect. As the seedling wandered, it found only desolate highways—until at long last it came across the ruins of Monte Vista.

But the ruins were empty; the town had been abandoned long ago during the Fall. Too badly injured to carry on, the seedling plunged itself head-first into a watering hole near the center of the ruins, hoping to at least pass the contagion to a healthier and more fit animal (or traveler) that might drink from it.

And that is exactly what happened. A group of Cartel scouts, sent to investigate reports that the valley was the secret home of the Wastelords, recently camped in Monte Vista before moving on. The Cartel men unwittingly refilled their canteens at the infected watering hole in which the dead seedling lay before heading back to their base at Blanca.

While in Monte Vista, the PCs have a chance to learn about the Cartel scouts, and with a bit of luck, can follow

them back to Blanca to warn them before the infection of the Last God spreads outside of the valley...

Your hopes of finding anything useful among the ruins Monte Vista seem to go up in smoke as you approach the outskirts of town. This place is desolate. The old buildings of the small pre-Fall town have seen better days; most lack roofs, and those that had more than one story have collapsed in on themselves, leaving only the empty shells of houses, stores, and other structures neatly arranged along the sides of broad sun-baked streets.

For almost a full half hour, you search for any sign of life, but the ruins seem almost completely empty.

Up ahead, however, you see a welcome sight: a crater pitting the hard pavement of a street intersection, where an old underground water main must have burst and filled the depression with water. A few wild dogs congregate near the edge of the watering hole, but as you approach, the animals rise and walk warily away, taking up positions some fifty feet distant.

The animals just stand there amidst the rubble of broken buildings, watching you. Apparently afraid of tougher predators, they have backed down from defending their claim to the watering hole—at least until you move on.

The animals linger among the ruins, watching the PCs from a distance of 50 feet or so. They appear to be merely wary of the PCs' intrusion, but in fact they are carefully observing the party's actions.

A successful Sense Motive check (DC 20) by one of the PCs suggests that something strange is up, and that the behavior of the animals is not normal. If any PCs succeed at this check, read to them the following:

The animals continue to keep their distance, but the way they are staring at you seems unnatural—and uncanny. Instead of being afraid of you, it seems as if they were in fact watching you, as if in reality they wanted to you to drink from the water...

The animals are in fact infected seedlings, having drunk from the same pool of water only days ago. Taken over by the macro-organism, they have remained near the oasis to observe and infect any men or creatures that approach the pool.

PCs at the edge of the pond can make a one-time Spot check (DC 15) to notice what appears to be the ragged remains of a corpse at the bottom, just barely visible through the murky water. The body is badly decomposed; bits of its flesh are missing, having flaked off and mixed with the oasis water. It lies face down, its fleshless, skull-like face buried in the silt at the pond's bottom.

If the PCs do not replenish their water (or if they discover the corpse underwater), the animals bare their sickly yellow teeth and growl angrily. A few seconds later, realizing that

the PCs aren't going to drink from the infected water, the animals charge towards the party and attack.

☠ **Dog Seedlings (7):** HP 20, 16, 16, 13 (x4) (see Appendix 2).

Treasure: If the PCs haul the carcass out of the water, they find it clad in a badly rotted white coat (a lab coat) and ragged slacks that almost disintegrate at a touch. A plastic nametag over its breast pocket reads "Dr. Lacey, Center Facility." The body has nothing else of interest on it.

SEARCHING

If the PCs Search the vicinity around the watering hole (DC 11), they find telltale signs that another group was recently here before them. There are six sets of footprints and evidence that they arrived and departed in a motor vehicle (probably a sedan or something similar).

A Survival check (DC 11) reveals that these vehicle tracks head southeast along Highway 160, towards Alamosa.

8. ALAMOSA

The ride to Alamosa is uneventful; you have a good few hours to stare off at the clear mountains to the south, where the beginnings of forest begin to take shape. To the north lies only bleak and unending desert.

Eventually the Wastelord truck nears Alamosa, at which point your driver pulls off at the exit ramp leading into town.

"Can't go in there," the man says, looking over his shoulder so you can hear him in the back of the truck. "They say that place is haunted."

If the PCs found the human and vehicle tracks in Monte Vista, they may have followed the trail to Alamosa. The party passes one or two pre-Fall gas stations along the way, but a quick stop and look around proves that their quarry—whoever they are—bypassed these and continued without stopping towards Alamosa.

Once they reach the old highway exit to Alamosa, the PCs can get out and look around. If they do, allow each to make a Survival check (DC 12). With a successful check, they notice that the tracks they are following also bypass Alamosa and head directly east along Highway 160, towards the distant town of *Blanca*.

GM's Note: If the party has not been to Monte Vista already, they can still make the Survival check here to notice the tracks and realize that someone came past here recently.

THE TOWN

Once one of the larger towns in the San Luis Valley, Alamosa unfortunately did not survive the Fall untouched. In the immediate chaos following public announcement of the coming nuclear attack, many citizens of the sizable town fled for the rumored government shelter up in the Great Sand Dunes National Park. In the anarchy, a vital downtown gas pipeline was ruptured by a panicked motorist trying to get



out of congested eastbound traffic, setting off a massive explosion and firestorm that burned Alamosa to the ground in a matter of hours.

The Wastelords came to Alamosa years ago hoping to find usable supplies but found only broad, wind-swept avenues and block upon block of hopelessly burned ruins. Much to their dismay, the town's once-impressive hospital had burned to a cinder; Adams State College (in downtown Alamosa) also burned down during the firestorm, leaving nothing to be gained. As if these reasons weren't enough to warrant moving on, the downtown area proved to be inhabited by a monstrous heap turtle that claimed an entire Wastelord armored car. Since that scouting party vanished, the Wastelords have not returned.

THE HAUNT (EL 9)

The heap turtle still makes its home at the center of town, living in the caved-in ruins of one of the town's larger buildings. Since many buildings at the heart of Alamosa collapsed years ago, the colossal mutant beast could conceivably live in any one of them.

Rumors of the heap turtle's presence and the threat of the Enemy so far from the established frontlines have prevented settlers from returning to the ruins of Alamosa. The town is thus deserted.

🐢 **Heap Turtle (1):** hp 208 (see page 294 of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* or Appendix 2).

9. BLANCA

The small town of Blanca, located in the rugged pass connecting the San Luis Valley with the Trade Lands and beyond, lies like the last gateway to the known world, a portal through which the valley's oppressed inhabitants can see that cruelty and savagery are not unique to their condition, but afflict even the world Outside.

Until recently, the ruins of Blanca were used as a major staging area from which the Wastelords would mount campaigns into the Forbidden Lands and Trade Lands. Each

year, major war parties would strike out from Blanca on fleets of oily black vehicles, headed down into the lowlands beyond the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to rain terror on the inhabitants of the desert. The seasonal trade villages and towns beyond the mountains witnessed displays of the Wastelords' tenacity (perhaps an attack or two on an unsuspecting town), paid suitable tribute, and the Wastelords would return with cars full of loot, water, and women. Their price in bloodshed and tribute paid, the Wastelords would return across the mountains and leave the people of the low country alone.

During their last campaign in the Trade Lands (against which the PCs played a major role in *Against the Wastelords*), however, severe losses forced the Wastelords to abandon Blanca, albeit temporarily. With so many of his forces deployed in the Trade Lands (putting down the Alliance of the Three Towns), Kyren desired more troops to guard Shelter City and the other communities against the incessant threat of the Enemy. The garrison at Blanca packed up and left the town empty in its wake.

GM's Note: Though the Wastelords do not realize it, Blanca has been taken over by a scouting force from the Cartel (see *Denizens of the Twisted Earth* for details on this major faction) on a two-pronged mission: to search for potential customer-communities with which to trade in the future, and to secretly scout for the rumored "hold beyond the mountains" from which the dread Wastelords are believed to operate.

Arriving uncontested, the Cartel scouts set up a small base at Blanca and have begun to explore the San Luis Valley, looking for communities and any sign that this valley is, in fact, the secret home of the Wastelords.

GETTING THERE

The following assumes the PCs picked up the trail of the Cartel expedition in either Monte Vista or Alamosa, and followed it down Highway 160 to Blanca. If the PCs came here without any prior knowledge of the mysterious Cartel

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scouts, you may need to adjust the reactions of the Cartel men to the PCs' presence.

In any event, read the following if and when the PCs approach Blanca:

The highway leads higher and higher into the hills, heading towards the southern pass leading out of the valley. The distant sounds of the war in the valley are lost here, drowned out by the raging wind.

The countryside up here becomes dry and barren, with the highway skirting old cliffs that plummet into winding arroyos and old lakebeds. A few dead trees, blackened as if burned, can be seen on nearby ridges, but no other vegetation can be seen for miles.

A roadside sign ahead identifies the off-ramp to Blanca.

If the PCs continue on (either by foot or by truck), continue reading:

Just off the highway is a cluster of pasty white concrete buildings with bright orange roofs that stand out against the drab colors of the desert. Just outside town is a camp ringed with a number of canvas tents, at the center of which sit two rusted old sedans.

As you draw near, a number of figures scramble and run for cover, grabbing rifles and taking up defensive positions.

HANDLING THE SITUATION (EL 5)

If the PCs have been tracking these men since Monte Vista, their pursuit ends here—this is the camp of their “quarry,” a group of Cartel scouts sent to the San Luis Valley to find the Wastelord homeland. Since they are under orders avoid discovery by the raiders, the scouts are alarmed by the sudden appearance of strangers.

However, the Cartel scouts won't attack indiscriminately (that's bad for business); they open fire only if they see and identify either the Wastelord truck or individual Wastelords with the PCs. The Cartel scouts have no compunction against attacking Wastelords on sight. And since the Wastelords are *raiders*, after all, the Cartel men wouldn't trust anything the PCs had to say anyway.

Because of their defensive positions, the Cartel scouts have *one-quarter cover*.

● **Cartel Scouts (5):** hp 42, 42, 40, 35, 35 (see Appendix 1).

The sixth Cartel scout, “Howie,” quietly flees if there is fighting, slipping into the cluster of buildings to lure the PCs after him (see below).

Treasure: In addition to their personal gear, the Cartel camp includes five tents, a small store of ammunition (twelve more boxes of 5.56mm ammunition), two sets of binoculars, an old pre-Fall map of the valley (there's nothing too revealing on the map, as it is merely the kind of roadmap once purchased from gas stations all around the valley), and a pair of Dodge Neons (vehicles) with enough gas for several

more trips around the valley and a return trip to Cartel Outpost 7 in the Forbidden Lands (see *Campaign Map*).

GM's Note: If the PCs came *alone* on foot (for example, after leaving the Wastelord truck behind and out of sight on the highway), the Cartel scouts may be willing to talk. Convincing them not to fire requires a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15).

If the PCs convince the Cartel soldiers to talk, they maintain their defensive posture (taking cover among the tents and other nearby terrain), but their leader will answer questions as follows:

Who are you?

“Not that it's any of your business, but we're scouts for the Cartel.”

What are you doing here?

“We were sent to this valley to look for signs of Wastelord habitation. Our commanders have reason to believe the main base of the Wastelords is somewhere around here. We came through the southern pass only to find this town abandoned, so we decided to make it our base of operations. Since then, we've been striking out along the highways on regular scouting forays.”

Have you found anything?

“We checked out Alamosa—but we lost one of our men to something living in the downtown area. Don't know what it was, but he never came back. We've been giving the town a wide berth since then. Just recently we went on to Monte Vista, but that proved empty too. Have you seen any signs of raiders? The Cartel would be more than willing to compensate you for any leads...”

GM's Note: At this point, the PCs could conceivably sell out their Wastelord allies by tipping the Cartel scouts off to the location of Shelter City. The scouts are willing to pay up to 250 corium pieces for reliable information about the location of the Wastelord main headquarters. Check the scouts' Sense Motive against any Bluff attempts if the PCs provide false information; if the PCs are caught lying, the scouts immediately attack.

Did you know one of your men might be infected?

If the PCs journeyed to Monte Vista and uncovered evidence of the contaminated pond there, this is probably their most pressing question. If the PCs explain that the Cartel expedition may have come into contact with contaminated water at Monte Vista, and explain the horrific results of *infection*, read the following:

“What are you talking about?” the Cartel leader yells from behind cover. “Contaminated water? We always use halazone tablets to purify our water. Isn't that right,

Jim?”

“Of course we do, we’d be idiots not too,” comes another voice from the opposite side of the camp.

“Right, guys?”

There is a round of agreement from the Cartel camp, a collection of voices confirming that the Cartel men took adequate precautions.

“Hell,” says their leader, “even Howie ain’t that stupid. Are you, Howie?”

“Howie?”

“Hey, where’d Howie go?”

FINDING HOWIE (EL 7)

As soon as it becomes clear during the negotiations that the seedling’s secret has been exposed, Howie (the only Cartel soldier to have been infected), slips off, retreating into the Blanca’s maze of dilapidated buildings. Rather than be rooted out and killed, the seedling seeks to draw the PCs after it so it can kill as many humans as possible before being “put down.”

If the PCs head toward town, they must make a Diplomacy check to convince the Cartel soldiers that Howie is no longer one of them, but rather an infected seedling. The Cartel scouts don’t know what a “seedling” is, so it will be difficult to persuade them (DC 18). Even if the PCs manage to earn their trust, the Cartel scouts want no part in hunting Howie down.

If the PCs fail their Diplomacy checks, however, the Cartel scouts don’t believe their story and think the PCs are trying to trick them. They immediately open fire. If this is the case, resolve the battle here first; Howie remains in the maze of buildings waiting out the battle (giving him time to *transform*); if anyone tries to find him, he plans to kill them as they come.

🕒 **Howie, Cartel Scout:** hp 42 (see Appendix 1).

GM’s Note: During the battle with the Cartel scouts (or during any negotiations) Howie slips away and tries to find a safe place to hide in the old cluster of buildings nearby. Here he will begin to *transform*, a painful process that takes 1d4 rounds. During the change, the organism inside him literally rearranges his body, dispersing his vital organs so that he is much harder to kill or incapacitate. The end result is a spider-like monster made of re-arranged human body parts and limbs, barely recognizable as the man it once was.

If the PCs catch Howie while he is still undergoing this transformation, they are in for quite a surprise:

Your light falls upon what you assume is the infected individual you’ve been chasing after. However, its current appearance makes you stop cold and raise your weapons instantly.

The Cartel scout is backed up against a stone wall, sweating profusely. As you watch, his sunglasses fall away, revealing all-black eyes that are all too familiar. At that moment, every muscle in the man’s body seem to suddenly spasm, and there is chain of grotesque noises that can only be the sounds of bones dislocating and

breaking all throughout his body.

As you stare dumbfounded, the poor infected man’s body is reshaped before your eyes. His skin becomes little more than an outer covering, as the bones beneath are moved around by powerful and unnatural forces within. His head instantly shrinks down against his torso, collapsing like an empty balloon as his brain is withdrawn into the ribcage. Only his pitch black eyes remain, jutting forth from the collapsed sockets on stalks composed of rigid optical nerves.

His legs also begin to shorten (accompanied by a gut-wrenching crunching noise), as the thigh bones are withdrawn and forced out of his back, giving him a four-legged, centaur-like stance that is apparently designed to give him greater speed and agility.

A low, ungodly moan rises from deep within the thing, vibrating through the inflated belly like the diaphragm of an enormous voice box...

FIGHTING IN TOWN

The maze of buildings here is a perfect place for a game of cat-and-mouse. Dusty, decrepit, and ready to collapse, these structures are dangerous relics of the Ancient past.

Whenever anyone enters a building, roll on the following table to determine its contents:

2D6	Building	Special
2-3	Empty building	No appreciable cover available
4-6	Old shop	Storefront features (mannequins, display cases, sale signs, etc.) provide one-quarter cover and add +2 to Hide checks while inside the building
7-10	Warehouse	Old crates, stacks of boxes, and rusted machinery provide one-half cover and add +5 to Hide checks while inside the building
11-12	Condemned	Roll again; no matter what is rolled, there is a 25% chance per round, per person inside the building, that a substantial part of the roof collapses, injuring everyone inside for 2d6 points of damage

For the sake of drama, you can assume that Howie knows the layout of the complex well enough to avoid dangerous buildings (or to lure PCs into them).

If the PCs remain together in a group as they move through town, Howie will continue to move (using back or side doors) to remain out of their way, even moving back into buildings they’ve already searched to keep them confused. If the PCs split up to find him, he’ll try to sneak up on and attack the smallest group first, retreating after one or two rounds so that the rest of the party doesn’t show up and overwhelm him. He continues his hit-and-run tactics until the PCs die, give up, or kill him.

GM’s Note: If Howie manages to incapacitate a PC and no other characters are there to stop him, he’ll give up

running away in an attempt to infect that PC through his *contagion* ability. He will only do this if no one else is around to interfere.

KILLING HOWIE

The outcome of this encounter can have different repercussions, depending on how the PCs handled themselves during talks with the Cartel scouts. If they manage to convince the Cartel to drop their weapons and talk, they may have avoided a large fight, but the hunt for Howie should be a challenging one. Once they kill him, the Cartel soldiers will be surprised to see the PCs set his body on fire (though the danger of communicable diseases is common on the Twisted Earth, diseases that turn your friend against you are not; seeing their old pal burned to a crisp is an unsettling experience).

The Cartel scouts will demand a more thorough explanation of what just happened, who the PCs are, and more details about whatever “disease” Howie contracted. If the PCs are forthcoming with their answers, the Cartel men are shocked but grateful. They thank the PCs and head back to the Forbidden Lands later that night.

Though the PCs don’t know it, their honest answers may have unwanted long-term effects. The scouts report to their Cartel bosses all they’ve seen and heard, including what the PCs told them about the Enemy and the “disease.” Fearing a situation similar to the one facing the Entropists in their corner of the world, the Cartel declares the San Luis Valley under “quarantine”—anyone or anything coming from the mountains will be shot on sight if they come near a Cartel settlement or outpost. This may lead PCs into unexpected conflict with Cartel in the future...

If the PCs failed to convince the Cartel scouts, they face a hard but winnable fight. Howie still leads them on a chase through the town, but once he is killed the PCs can pack up and leave, knowing they’ve stopped the spread of the Enemy beyond the confines of the San Luis Valley.

10. DEL NORTE

Lying at the base of Del Norte Mountain (12,400 ft.), the town of Del Norte was the “gateway” to south-central Colorado during the time of the Ancients. Connecting the small towns on the far side of the San Juan and La Garita Mountains with Denver and Pueblo (via the San Luis Valley), it was through this town that much truck and train traffic passed, linking Colorado with New Mexico and Utah.

The scars of the Fall still linger heavily here. As the End unfolded and rumors of war on American soil spread throughout a panicked nation, thousands of residents from beyond the mountains (Durango, Grand Junction, and even as far away as Provo in Utah) came via Highways 149 and 160 in search of the rumored vault in the Great Sand Dunes National Park. As the influx of outsiders piled higher and higher, and the secret location of the Great Sands vault (now Shelter City) came close to being compromised, the government stepped in to do something.

A military roadblock was set up at Del Norte, sealing off the only entrance into the San Luis Valley from the east. Thousands of motorists in cars, RVs, buses, and trucks were turned back, warned away, and eventually fired upon to prevent them from overwhelming the military cordon in their mad flight to the National Park.

The ruins of Del Norte, now quiet except for the sound of the roaring mountain wind coming down from snow-capped peaks, speak of a time of unimaginable chaos and panic. Though the eastern part of town (including the highways) is largely empty and clear, the western approaches (specifically along Highway 112) are clogged with literally *hundreds* of ancient vehicles—filling both east- and westbound lanes—headed towards town. These vehicles include standard cars, station wagons, pickups, SUVs, and even whole RVs stocked with the rotted remains of their long-dead occupants’ last possessions.

Del Norte is now completely abandoned. The Wastelords have no knowledge of the town (other than that it exists, a fact confirmed by any road map of the San Luis Valley), and have never ventured this far from Shelter City.

THE RUINS

The PCs can get to Del Norte any way they wish, but its close proximity to Center (and the fact that it is quite far away from the Wastelord frontier) should be reason enough to stay away. However, if they do manage to arrive here during the adventure, read the following:

At the foot of the towering mountain range that skirts the western edge of the San Luis Valley stands a small town. Like a gateway to the mountains, the old highway passing through town seems to snake higher and higher to elevations well out of sight.

But what stands on the road is what stuns you: over one thousand vehicles, including a vast number of civilian cars, trucks, RVs, and eighteen-wheeled trucks all lined up like one enormous traffic jam frozen in time. At the head of the sprawling congestion (which must go on for at least ten miles, well into the mountains) lie the remains of a military roadblock, just within the Del Norte town limits. The roadblock consists of concrete barriers blocking the highway, with spike strips along the sides of the road to discourage off-road escape attempts.

A few military transport trucks (in a familiar olive drab color) sit off the road, beyond the barrier, but these appear to be empty and too rusted (or clogged with mud and sand) to salvage. What appears to be a tank also sits behind the roadblock, burned-out and abandoned long ago.

PCs looking through the armada of rusted civilian vehicles find an inordinate amount of unclaimed goods in many of them, abandoned during the Fall. These include sleeping bags, tents, kerosene lamps, an abundance of road maps of

the valley and Great Sand Dunes National Park, a few old newspapers or magazines hinting at the “alleged vault” under the Park, portable TV sets and all manner of civilian radios (for listening to news reports of the war as it developed), portable video cameras (brought along by people wishing to record one last glimpse of the surface world before going underground for the rest of their lives), dozens of cell phones and PDAs, children’s toys, hundreds of articles of clothing for men, women, and children of all ages (in suitcases on luggage racks or stashed in trunks), photo albums (filled with all manner of memorabilia), wedding rings, and other mundane goods.

PCs engaging in a more thorough search (requiring up to six hours and a Search check at DC 22 for each item) may find more interesting articles as well, such as fully-stocked first aid kits, boxes of survival foods (including *ready meals* by the dozen), survival manuals, flashlights, various civilian pistols and hunting rifles—even a *Geiger counter* or two (power cells are likely to be drained, however)—as well as a vast amount of Ancient-era *cash* (many people falsely believed they might be able to secure a place in the alleged vault by buying their way in).

GM’s Note: Further investigation shows signs of what appears to have been a riot here, hundreds of years ago. A few burned-out car wrecks—still containing the burnt skeletons of their passengers—lie on and off the road, where they were destroyed by cannon fire from the single armored vehicle guarding the roadblock: an *M2A2 Bradley* armored personnel carrier, now badly rusted and burned. The vehicle appears to have enforced the roadblock well (at least until the mass of people abandoned their vehicles and ran back to the mountains) before it slipped a tread while backing up over some rubble. Immobilized, the crew sabotaged it before fleeing with the rest of the garrison to parts unknown.

11. MOFFAT

Moffat is the site of a large cattle operation set up by the Wastelords on the grounds of a small tribal village. Though originally the inhabitants of Moffat did maintain small herds of their own (raised for local food needs only), Kyren saw in these small-scale agricultural efforts the seeds of something grander: a town where food for all of the communities in his empire could be raised, and from which beef could be shipped all over the Valley to keep his subjects fed and content.

Moffat is now a burgeoning town, but it still maintains something of a “frontier” attitude. The people are kept in line by the looming presence of the Wastelords, but their general acceptance of their harsh masters has prevented the kind of sadistic reprisals sometimes visited on other, less “cooperative” towns.

BEN AND BETTY

Though the Wastelords are very much in control here, civilian affairs are managed by a middle-aged couple named Ben and Betty. These two good-natured people were former

citizens of Shelter City who were out in the desert scouting for samples of mutated life when Kyren sacked the vault. Though both were horrified when they learned of the fate of Shelter City, they decided to disappear (by blending in with the local villagers here in Moffat) to avoid being hunted down and murdered. When Kyren eventually came to conquer the mutant communities spread through the valley, Ben and Betty negotiated a peaceful surrender, sparing many lives. Not realizing who they were, Kyren was impressed by their determination and appointed them to the position of village liaisons.

Though they are far more intelligent than their fellow Moffat citizens, Ben and Betty truly care about the people in town and use their negotiating skills as best they can to ensure that trouble doesn’t arise (and, if it does, that any hard feelings are quickly swept under the carpet). Unbeknownst to most, Ben and Betty are both experienced field biologists; though unable to do much fieldwork these days, they have learned much over the years about native life from listening to the locals and from the odd encounter with roving desert beasts. They maintain a secret lab beneath their home in town.

GOING TO MOFFAT

Moffat is relatively far from Shelter City, so it isn’t likely the PCs will come here early in their investigations. By the time they arrive here, they should be surprised by the pleasant reception they receive from the town’s two administrators, Ben and Betty.

The community of Moffat is a sprawling one, though the town itself is little more than a few clusters of buildings at the heart of a larger complex of cattle pens. The sound of an enormous cattle herd drowns out almost every other noise within the town limits, and the smell of manure hangs heavy in the air.

After asking directions from a local Wastelord sentry, your driver cuts through town and eventually pulls up outside a small dilapidated building at the edge of town. Out front stands a small shaded porch with a few neatly arranged potted plants and a simple swing chair rocking in the breeze.

Sitting on the swing chair is an elderly couple, squinting to make eye contact with you as you approach. The old man stands, brushes off his dusty burlap clothes, and steps down off the porch to approach and extend his hand in welcome. His wife counts with her finger the number of people in your party, turns, and fills a few cups with tea from a waiting porcelain kettle.

“Welcome to Moffat,” the man says, shaking the hand of whichever of you looks to be the leader, “my name’s Ben, and this is my wife Betty. We’re the administrators of this town.”

Betty stands and invites your group to sit in the shade and enjoy some warm tea. Seeing the look of hesitation on your face, Ben just chuckles.

“I think these men are here on business, Betty. And

that's just what we wanted to talk to you about. Kyren sent us word you were coming, and—well, we have connections and friends of our own, so we know what it is you're looking for. We really don't want a panic here, but we might have some information that'll make your search a lot easier and save us an outbreak of hysteria at the same time.

"But let's go inside to discuss this," the old man says, "the locals get a bit fearful when they hear talk of the Enemy."

Ben and Betty invite the PCs into their home, a small two-story structure on the outskirts of town overlooking the cattle pens. Ben and Betty explain that they chose this building because it allows them to be near the livestock; they admit to some small scientific skill, which they regularly put to use checking the herds for symptoms of disease (such as anthrax), as well as to treat injured or sick animals in the hopes of bringing them back to health.

Both Ben and Betty are good-natured people who truly care about the citizens of their town. If the PCs ask, the couple gladly tells the PCs how they came to Moffat, how they've managed to remain "unseen," and if the PCs listen, they go on to talk about some of the "fascinating" things they've seen in their time out here on the frontier. It appears these two, unlike many who suffered at the hands of Kyren, have made the best of their lot and settled into at least a tolerable niche in life.

GETTING TO THE POINT

When the PCs finally come around to asking what "evidence" the couple has for them, the two seem excited and wary at the same time, as if unsure quite how to put their knowledge into words. After settling down, Ben shoulders the burden of explaining to the PCs what the couple has recently uncovered.

Just a week ago, Ben and Betty found a stray coyote during a foray into the desert. They were out investigating strange local rumors that some of the natives had seen *monkeys* a few days beforehand. At first Ben and Betty thought this had to be a mistake, but various reports from unrelated villagers confirmed it. Asking the villagers to describe what they saw, Ben and Betty eventually deduced that the creatures were rhesus monkeys, a kind of small primate once used frequently in scientific experiments.

They never found the monkeys, but instead were followed by the coyote for several hours. Ben tried to lure the coyote into a friendship, but it didn't seem interested. As dusk fell and they prepared to go home, loading their truck up for the night, both Ben and Betty were surprised when the coyote appeared suddenly behind them, as if it wanted to go with them.

They captured the coyote using a stun pistol and a secure cage, taking care not to get bitten or scratched. They put the coyote in their kennel in Moffat pending a more thorough examination.

What happened next causes both Ben and Betty to remain

silent for a moment, as if they're still questioning what they witnessed. That night a commotion in the kennel woke the couple from their sleep downstairs. Heading upstairs and peering through the window to the kennel room, they saw something neither could believe.

Inside the kennel they saw the coyote standing in front of another animal's cage—a dog they had been treating for an injured paw. The coyote opened the cage with its mouth—unusually intelligent behavior for a wild animal—and attacked the dog inside. "It attached itself to the other's mouth," Betty says, "and we were stunned. The dog panicked, tried to get free, but the coyote just clamped down. Then... then its whole body began to *shift*, as if it were transferring something from inside it to the trapped dog.

"I couldn't stand there and just watch as it killed that dog. I went to open the door to the kennel, but—"

"But I slammed it shut immediately," Ben interrupts. "We watched through the kennel window as the coyote..."

Ben seems unable to say it. Betty speaks up. "It 'drained' that poor dog. Somehow it *liquefied* it. The animal's body deflated almost like a balloon, until all that was left was its skin. The rest of it the coyote sucked up inside of it like a vacuum."

"Then," Ben continues, "the coyote fell over, sick and bloated. It must have swollen to twice its original size. Its stomach rippled and pulsed, almost like the heartbeat of something inside. Like the animal's body was just the skin of some creature we had yet to see.

"We watched as the coyote's head expanded and split open. From the cavity came a large mass—white, fluid, and pliant. Like an amoeba, I suppose, a protoplasmic life form of a kind science surely has never seen before."

"Instantly Ben and I knew what it was," Betty says. "It was the thing the coyote had transferred to the first animal, only bigger. It was almost twice its original volume. It's as if the coyote was just a host, and by transferring the slime to another body it had liquefied the animal's biological substance, using it to grow bigger."

"It's fascinating, really," Ben says, sitting on the edge of his chair. "You see, the coyote we had encountered had been carrying only a small part of the creature inside it. When it was isolated with the other dog, it probably tried to get out but couldn't. That was the commotion we heard. So the creature, the 'ooze,' tried to double its mass by consuming the dog. Once it had grown, it tried again to bash down the door.

"As it began to rattle the lock with its repeated slamming, we decided we had seen enough. I curse myself for doing it—oh, the loss to science!—but I was close to panicking. I picked up a tank of kerosene and some matches and had Betty pull the door open a crack. It immediately tried to slither out, but I pumped fuel all over it, causing it to sink back. It suddenly sprouted a long pseudopod, as if to strike at me. But before it could, I managed to strike a match and light the thing up like a bonfire. Betty closed the door right after. We watched through the window as it burned. It was... terrible."

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Ben and Betty then go on to relate their post-mortem findings. A few days after the incident, they mustered the courage to re-enter the kennel. They examined the coyote's remains and found that much of its remaining tissue, though outwardly normal in appearance, had been decaying for several weeks. The couple concluded that the dog had already been dead, even before they met it, and was merely being *animated*. They go on to suggest that the "ooze," which they never had an opportunity to examine, was perhaps some kind of "super-viral" material that kept the dog alive and animated.

Unless the PCs stop them with information of their own, Ben and Betty go on to propose a theory very similar to the one described by Doc at Shelter City: that the creature intended to harm them and the townsfolk of Moffat.

If the PCs ask the couple where they found the dog, they produce an old USGS map of the Valley and point to a location only about five miles northwest, between Moffat and Saguache.

The couple has one more interesting tidbit to share with the PCs: Betty explains that she and her husband have made it a hobby of theirs to monitor the migration patterns and territorial boundaries of many animals in their part of the valley, including coyote. However, in recent weeks they have noticed a decrease in the animal populations of the desert and mountains, which are ordinarily home to bears, bison, coyotes, wolves, and other creatures. They all seem to have vanished in some inexplicable exodus.

GM's Note: Ben and Betty encountered a new type of Enemy thrall, an "integrator." These infected creatures are used to create new biomass for the macro-organism, literally liquefying living creatures and transforming them into protoplasmic mass. This mass can then either be used to create a new free-floating biomass, or can join with an injured (or depleted) biomass elsewhere.

The PCs will get a chance to encounter integrators in the future.

THE "LAB"

Ben and Betty are among the few people to take a liking to the PCs after just one meeting. If the PCs have hit it off with them exceptionally well (GM's discretion), they even step out on a limb for the PCs by showing them their special "lab." The facility is set up on the second floor of the building, an airy space that seems poorly suited for a science laboratory. Ben and Betty shrug, claiming it's the most suitable place they could find.

Scattered about the room are old pieces of scientific equipment; any character with a technical or scientific background will recognize a pair of microscopes, a few Bunsen burners, used and unused strips of litmus paper, test tubes and beakers, and other instruments common to a well-equipped lab. There are also a few animal cages; most are empty, but some contain creatures: birds recovering from wing injuries, a badly-malnourished kitten, and even a pair of rats the couple "adopted" and named after themselves.

Shelves around the room also display a collection of

jugs, bottles, and cans of chemical supplies, including hydrochloric and sulfuric acids, acetone, alcohol, ammonia, mercury, and potassium.

Ben and Betty give any interested PCs a tour of the place, showing where they treat animals for injuries and where they perform tests—they've even got a complete dissection table. A small refrigerator (powered by a *power pack*) leans against one wall, inside of which the couple keeps blood samples and a handful of veterinary medical supplies (useless to the PCs).

GM's Note: Ben and Betty are willing to let the PCs have free run of their laboratory so long as they replace any supplies they use up. PCs with appropriate Craft skills could conceivably use this work area to make bombs, poisons, drugs, or other chemical/pharmaceutical goods, given adequate time and privacy. The couple has access to about 6,000 cp in raw materials they are willing to lend the PCs for any construction projects.

Ben has been undertaking a pet project of his own: making a backpack-portable *flamethrower*. After the couple's encounter with the integrator, he believes having such a weapon on hand may be a good idea. If Ben is allowed to continue with his work he will complete the flamethrower (with a full tank of napalm fuel) in 1d2 days. He may be convinced to give the flamethrower to the PCs, if the GM feels they have impressed him enough.

FROM HERE

Assuming the PCs hit it off well with Ben and Betty and heard all they had to offer, they now have a strong clue as to the node mother's likely location: the small town of Saguache to the northwest.

12. SAGUACHE

The small desert town of Saguache is the *ultimate* destination of the PCs—it is the home to the final node mother responsible for controlling the New World Order forces operating in the San Luis Valley. Though this node mother maintains a telepathic link with the still-imprisoned Last God, its destruction will deal a decisive blow against the Enemy, possibly removing the threat against the Wastelord empire once and for all. But first the PCs must pinpoint its location by entering the ghost town of Saguache, an act that triggers a reaction beyond their control...

THE OLD TOWN

The original town of Saguache was abandoned during the Fall; the town of today is a shadow of what it once was, the county seat and a tourist stop on the road to the Great Sand Dunes National Park.

Many of Saguache's original inhabitants, scoffing at rumors of a vault in their backyard (the national park), fled into the wilderness, hoping to avoid the fallout of the coming war. Unsubstantiated rumors of "Communist paratroopers" landing all over the Rockies proved the proverbial final nail in the coffin; thereafter Saguache became a true ghost town.

The ruins of Saguache were populated again only a decade or so ago by a group of tribals who descended from the high mountains. Starving in the barren high country, they came here looking for a land of opportunities. Unfortunately, what they found was a Valley devastated by the Wastelords.

The tribals here remained isolated for years, vaguely aware of the Wastelords (and later, of the fact that they were at war with some unknown enemy), always hiding from them and keeping to their corner of the valley. These pacifists were not discovered during that time, and as a result remained free of Kyren's tyranny while many other communities succumbed.

Their peaceful way of life, however, came to an abrupt end several years ago, when a handful of infected thralls of the Last God arrived at Saguache just days after the power failure at Center (for more on this event, see the introduction to this adventure). Though at first they feared these newcomers were Wastelord scouts, the naïve tribals made one serious mistake: they let them in. They erroneously assumed the quiet new arrivals were refugees on the run from their mutual raider enemies, the Wastelords. Without realizing the consequences of their kindness, they allowed the Last God's thralls free entrance to their underground community, inviting them to stay and enjoy their hospitality. Sadly, the trusting locals had no chance of resisting the seedlings as they immediately began to spread the macro-organism's contagion in a night of sheer terror.

Saguache's tribal people are now completely infected, one and all. The former tribals constitute perhaps the largest manpower pool in the Last God's New World Order; they number dozens of thralls of various kinds which the Last God continues to throw against the frontier of the Wastelord empire.

The node mother that directed the infection of the village still lurks here and now controls the infected tribe, relaying the Last God's commands to its growing army of mutants and desert animals.

HOW TO PROCEED

The sheer number of thralls dwelling beneath Saguache makes a frontal assault an almost guaranteed exercise in suicide. Alert and intelligent player characters will quickly realize this when they begin to explore the underground portions of the old tribal village (see below).

The ideal outcome for the PCs here is for the party to locate the Enemy's nerve center (personified in the node mother itself) and provoke it into action. Once the Enemy realizes the PCs (and thus the Wastelords) have found the base from which it operates, it will rouse its forces to begin an all-out attack on the Wastelord frontier. This attack will mark a turning point in the war, in which hopefully the Wastelords will stop the Enemy's hordes of zombie-like thralls for good.

Saguache and its environs are hauntingly quiet, and you should play up the ominous silence at every opportunity. Gunfire from the PCs will likely be heard all across town, alerting the appropriate sentries and patrols. The node

mother here has also stationed a few extra "eyes and ears" (in the form of infected animals and humans) in various parts of the town, but apart from acting as observers to keep the node mother alert, they try to remain unseen.

If the node mother comes to suspect that outsiders are in town, it will react by sending wolf seedlings (patrols similar to the one encountered at Area B) to their location to hopefully find, subdue, and infect them. It will send a total of two waves of patrols in an attempt to stop the infiltrators, but failing this it will merely stay put, using its preserving its army's strength and using its minions merely to keep a watch on the group.

Keep in mind that the node mother (and as such the Last God as a whole) has a surprising degree of patience. It will allow the PCs to scout out the town, even enter its underground abode, if only to give them a chilling impression of how futile humanity's resistance is. If the PCs merely explore, avoiding fights with thralls they accidentally stumble across, they will merely confront thralls who watch and follow them - seemingly avoiding further confrontations in favor of observing and shadowing the group.

If the PCs get overconfident and overambitious, however, and use the Last God's "lenience" to get in and strike while its guard is down, they are in for a surprise. Though it allows them a great degree of freedom, if they start harassing its troops, destroying its stockpiles (as in Areas L through O), or otherwise threatening it (including entering Area P), it will fully mobilize its forces, surround the PCs with sheer numbers, and obliterate them without any further delay.

ARRIVING IN TOWN

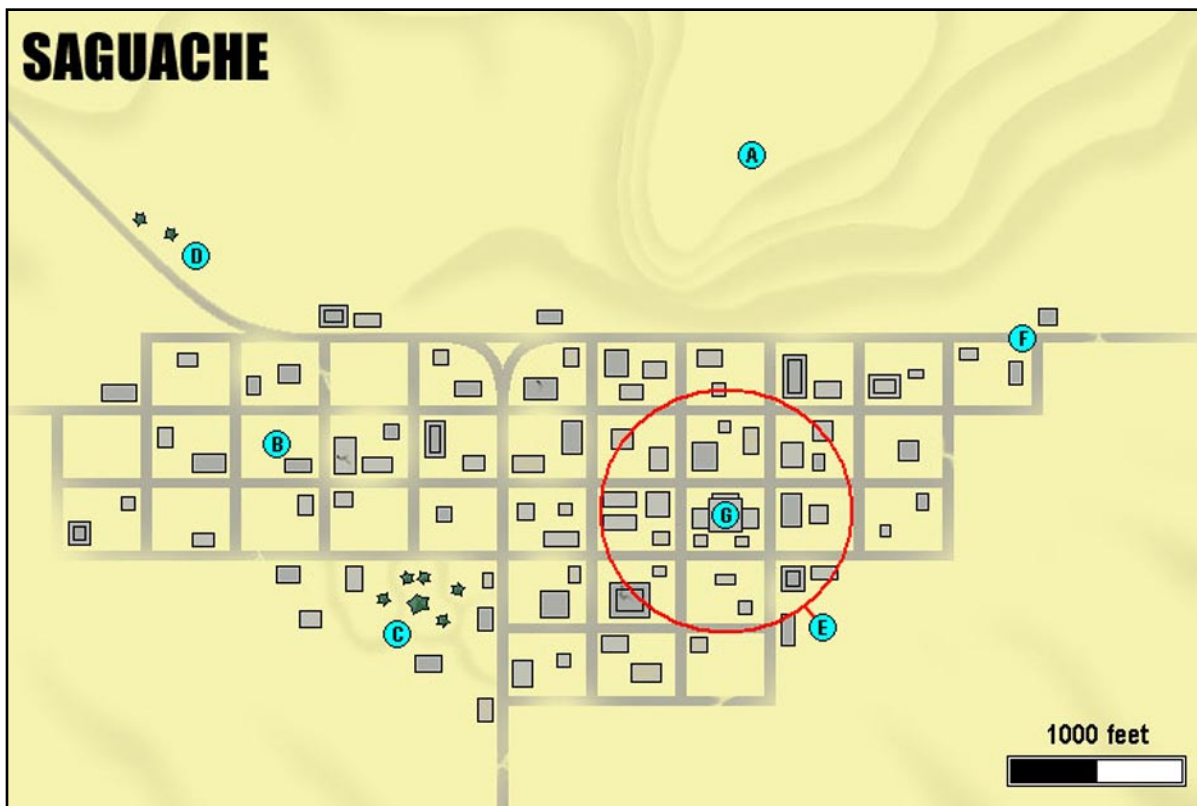
You arrive on the outskirts of Saguache at dusk—or at least it seems like dusk. The mountains ringing this corner of the valley cast deep shadows over a small town spread out at the foot of the desert hills like a long-forgotten wasteland oasis. The rain has petered out; all that remains is a sky of roiling black clouds that stretches off towards the horizon.

Even as you watch the town from far away, you can sense something very ominous about this place. Something truly terrible lives here...

The PCs can set about exploring the small ruins of Saguache from any direction they like. Keep in mind, however, that the town is being watched by sentries on the *Mountainside* (see below). If the PCs came here by truck, give the sentries a +2 bonus to their Listen checks (DC 15; because the town is almost utterly silent, the truck's passage is easily noticed). The PCs can only avoid this by declaring beforehand their intention to leave the truck at least three miles from Saguache; in this event, they'll need to hike the rest of the way on foot.

GM's Note: Clever PCs will attempt to scout Saguache from afar before attempting to infiltrate the town. By using binoculars, for example, they may spot the coyotes on the

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mountainside (Area A) and deduce they are, in fact, sentries. With that knowledge they can then wait and approach at night, a smart tactic that will prevent them from being detected as they move into town.

KEY TO SAGUACHE

A. MOUNTAINSIDE (EL 8)

From this bare, wind-swept mountainside one can see a full panoramic view of the town below, its buildings small and insignificant from this height. However, the wet sandy slopes are not completely deserted. A group of sickly coyote lie all about the hillside, their heads scanning the horizon from side to side in a methodical, almost mechanical manner....

Because this mountainside provides a good view of town, the node mother has directed some of its thralls to remain here indefinitely, keeping an eye out for intruders who might compromise the New World Order's secret base in Saguache. The thralls here are all infected desert coyotes, who merely sit or stand motionless for hours on end, watching the town from on high.

When the PCs approach town from any direction, allow these sentries a Spot (or Listen) check to notice the group. If the sentries detect the PCs before they manage to reach the cover of town, the node mother instantly knows where they were seen, how many PCs there are, and which direction the intruders are heading.

The coyotes are clearly visible from anywhere in town,

so alert PCs may deduce their purpose as sentries and avoid them accordingly.

🐾 **Coyote Seedlings (11):** HP 15 (x5), 13 (x4), 9 (x2) (see Appendix 2).

B. WESTSIDE (EL 7)

The wind blows through the empty streets in this part of town, creating a hollow sound that is sinister and disquieting. Dilapidated homes, old mailboxes, and the rusted remains of antiquated cars are all that remain of a once-pleasant small-town neighborhood.

This quarter of town is filled with old dilapidated homes—some with porches, others with small yards, and most featuring aluminum siding and cheap country construction. Old cars in the streets, long-faded picket fences, and shadowy porches with dead and dying trees provide an abundance of cover (+4 to Hide checks when moving through these neighborhoods).

At some point during their movement through this area, allow the PCs to make a Listen check (DC 16). If they succeed, they hear the sounds of creatures coming their way. Allow the PCs to look for cover and hide before reading the following:

As you scramble for cover, you hear the light sound of padded feet on asphalt. Peeking around a corner, you see something that just doesn't seem right: a pack of wolves, their coats filthy and matted, prowling up and down the street. They certainly don't behave like real

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animals in search for food—but rather like desiccated sentries, patrolling these eerily empty streets over and over again for any sign of intruders. The wolves move as one without so much as a single stray among them, all united as they stare off in different directions or raise their heads to sample the air.

As you watch, terrified of these unnatural beasts, you catch a glimpse of one of the creatures' eyes. They are all black, deep and vacant, like windows through which each animal's unseen master watches from some place far away.

If the PCs took cover, roll Spot checks for the animals (or Survival, if they are deliberately tracking the PCs). If the PCs remain undetected, the pack slowly moves on after 1d4 agonizingly suspenseful rounds, off to patrol another street a few blocks down.

If they detect the PCs, however, the animals remain on the scene, just *staring* at the group; if the PCs run, the wolves follow, but do not attack. Their sole intention is to keep their eyes on the PCs so that the node mother can direct her forces to them with all haste. If fired upon, the wolves take cover, but still shadow the PCs wherever they go.

🐾 **Wolf Seedlings (5):** HP 20 (x3), 18, 16 (see Appendix 2).

C. OLD MILITARY CAMP

Near in the center of this eerie town you see a large, sprawling camp of olive-colored tents and pre-fabricated buildings; some have collapsed over time and others have rotted in place, while a few stand defiant even to this day. A large number of crates stamped "US Army" are arranged in neat rows almost everywhere.

A camp of this size seems totally out of place in this small desert town.

This location contains a great deal of information pertaining to the history of the valley, as well as a few hints related to part three of this series, The Last God.

This area was set up as a temporary headquarters by military forces in the San Luis Valley just prior to the Fall. The camp consists of several tents in various states of decay, small vehicle-portable pre-fab buildings, and hundreds of supply crates abandoned here long ago.

If the PCs take the time to investigate the area, allow each character to make a Search check (DC 12) to uncover one object from the following table:

2D6	Finds
2-6	Small items (nothing of real value)
7-10	1d4 <i>ready meals</i>
11	1d100 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition (overlooked by the node mother's thralls)
12	1d2 <i>power clips</i> (overlooked by the node mother's thralls)

Furthermore, a conspicuously larger trailer fills the heart of the camp, still standing despite the passage of years since the Fall. It appears to be a sturdy, military command post on wheels.

PCs entering headquarters trailer find an accumulation of sand and dust on a number of rusted machine consoles arranged around command post, along with folding tables and chairs. A central plotting table in the center of the tent still has a military-grade map of the San Luis Valley rolled out on it (this might be worth 3,000 cp to the Wastelords or Cartel), but pieces that once indicated the movement of various military units are scattered all over. Pinning the map to the table is a large military *radio* set, still switched on, though the battery burned out long ago. There is also a *laptop computer* and printer (though the laptop appears to have been smashed apart by a blunt weapon). Papers lie scattered everywhere, some faded or soiled, others still bearing vividly printed orders from the time of the Fall.

Although its purpose is not immediately clear, this was an emergency command center set up by the regional commander of military forces a few days after Saguache was deserted. Only vaguely aware of what was going on at the top secret facility beneath Center during those final days, the regional commander had been charged with maintaining the blockade at Del Norte to prevent civilians from flooding the valley and compromising the shelter in the Great Sand Dunes National Park. When reports of escalating war outside of the valley became too widespread to suppress, the commander was forced to try to escape the valley with as many men as he could. They stopped here briefly to set up a command center in an effort to re-evaluate their situation before all discipline collapsed and they dispersed.

Characters searching the papers will find among them transcripts of orders and reports sent back and forth from this temporary command post. They provide a chilling and mysterious account of the events that occurred in the valley during the Fall. See *Handouts #3, #4, #5, and #6*.

GM's Note: For every ten minutes spent in this area, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the roving patrol of wolf seedlings (see *Area B* above) comes here looking for signs of intruders.

D. ABANDONED VEHICLES

On the side of this old road you see a number of old trucks and cars, covered in a thick crust of ages-old sand and dirt.

The vehicles abandoned on this side of town were towed here for repairs long ago; at one time a small quartermaster's station here was charged with scrounging for repair parts and bringing the military unit's transportation pool back to full capacity. Although their efforts were admirable, the troops here were forced to abandon several vehicles when they fled Saguache during the Fall.

Treasure: There are three vehicles here: two military transport trucks and a Humvee. One truck has had its

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COMMUNICATION LOG ENTRY 04

9/10/11, 0800 HOURS, TRANSMISSION RECEIVED

TO BATTALION COMMANDER

PROBABLE FIRST STRIKE TARGETS IN YOUR AREA INCLUDE DENVER, COLORADO SPRINGS, ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL, AND PUEBLO ARMY DEPOT.

MAINTAIN BLOCKADE OF HIGHWAY 112 AT DEL NORTE, AND HIGHWAY 160 AT NORTH LA VETA PASS AT ALL COSTS. CIVILIAN TRAFFIC MUST BE CONTAINED TO PREVENT POSSIBLE COMPROMISE OF CIVIL RELOCATION PROGRAM SHELTER CO6.

CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP WILL ARRIVE FROM PUEBLO MEMORIAL AIRPORT AT SHELTER CO6 PROMPTLY AT 2000 HOURS. ALL REMAINING MILITARY PERSONNEL MUST PULL BACK TO SHELTER CO6 BY 2100 HOURS BEFORE DOORS CLOSE INDEFINITELY. DOORS WILL NOT OPEN AFTER 2100 HOURS. THOSE UNABLE TO MAKE IT TO SHELTER CO6 IN TIME ARE ADVISED TO TAKE SHELTER WHEREVER POSSIBLE. ALL UNITS OUTSIDE ARE ADVISED TO STAY TUNED TO M-BAND 036 FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING ANY POSSIBLE EXCHANGE.

COMMUNICATION LOG ENTRY 05

9/17/11, 0800 HOURS, TRANSMISSION RECEIVED

TO BATTALION COMMANDER

NO FURTHER TRANSMISSIONS FROM CENTER FACILITY. PRESUMED ALL ORGANIC PERSONNEL DECEASED. 303RD MILITARY POLICE (ROBOTIC) MAINTAINING QUARANTINE DESPITE 20% CASUALTIES.

UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORT OF XBM ORGANISM ATTEMPTING TO INFILTRATE MILITARY COM NETWORK THROUGH SOME SORT OF DIRECT LINK. IS THIS POSSIBLE? AS A PRECAUTION CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN HAS SEVERED ALL LINKS WITH 303RD MP (ROBOTIC), LEAVING THEM ISOLATED FROM GLOBAL NETWORK.

LAST DIRECTIVE: MAINTAIN QUARANTINE AT ALL COSTS.

COMMUNICATION LOG ENTRIES 06 & 07

9/18/11, 1623 HOURS, TRANSMISSION RECEIVED

TO ALL COMMANDERS

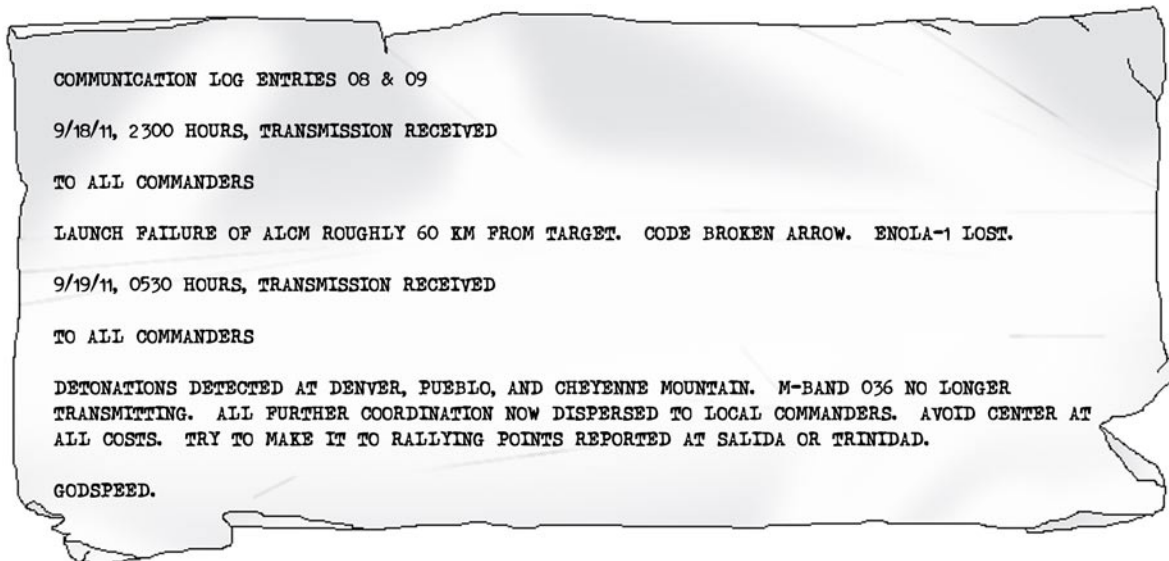
REPORTS OF LARGE-SCALE DESERTION. ROAD BLOCK AT DEL NORTE ABANDONED AFTER UNSANCTIONED INCIDENT INVOLVING CIVILIANS, OVER 50 DEAD. REPORTS OF RIOTING AND FIRES AT ALAMOSA AND MONTE VISTA. MILITARY TRUCKS STOPPED IN TRAFFIC JAM AT ALAMOSA OVERTURNED AND SOLDIERS KILLED.

9/28/11, 1730 HOURS, TRANSMISSION RECEIVED

TO ALL COMMANDERS

IMMEDIATE ORDER TO EVACUATE SAN LUIS VALLEY AREA. PROBABLE GROUND ZERO FOR TACTICAL ALCM STRIKE AT APPROXIMATELY 2310 HOURS. TARGET IS CENTER. APPARENT LAST DITCH CONTAINMENT MEASURE. ALL REMAINING MILITARY TRAFFIC AVOID HIGHWAY 160 AND IMMEDIATELY PROCEED NORTH ON 285 OR 17 TO RALLYING POINT AT SALIDA.

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engine removed (and is thus inoperable), while the other is so badly damaged it is down to only 4 hit points. The Humvee is down to 10 hit points and has a mounting for a heavy machinegun on its roof, but the weapon intended for the mount is missing (though if the PCs have a machinegun, they might be able to install it using the tools present here). None of these vehicles has any fuel, and all tires have flattened over time.

E. PSI-INHIBITION FIELD

The radius marked on the map here shows the limit of the node mother's psionic inhibition field. Characters with any sort of neural mutation who pass this point begin to feel dizzy and hear a painful buzzing in their minds—telltale signs that a node mother is near (PCs who encountered the first node mother in Hooper will likely realize this).

GM's Note: Any character attempting to use neural mutations or abilities within this area must make a Concentration check at DC 18 to do so. On a failed roll the character is overcome by the psi-inhibition and cannot manifest the ability.

F. LONE SENTRY (EL 3)

Up ahead you see a strange sight, totally unexpected here among the streets of an old ruin. Standing in the middle of the road is a solitary bison, a majestic animal more commonly seen running in herds on the open plain, rather than wandering alone inside abandoned towns.

If the PCs have been seen by the bison, read the following:

The bison merely stands there, staring at you. Its wet nostrils flare slowly, as if it's breathing were deep and labored. Yet its all-black eyes never shift their gaze away from you; they remain locked in an unblinking stare.

The bison doesn't move from its spot because it is acting as a "window" through which the node mother (and every creature connected to the Last God's "overmind") can see and hear. Because the PCs are now being "seen" through the bison, the node mother can watch and adapt to their action appropriately (see How To Proceed).

If the PCs attack the bison or run away, it tries to keep the PCs in its sights long enough for a patrol of wolf seedlings to arrive and assist.

♥ **Bison Seedling (1):** HP 49 (see Appendix 2).

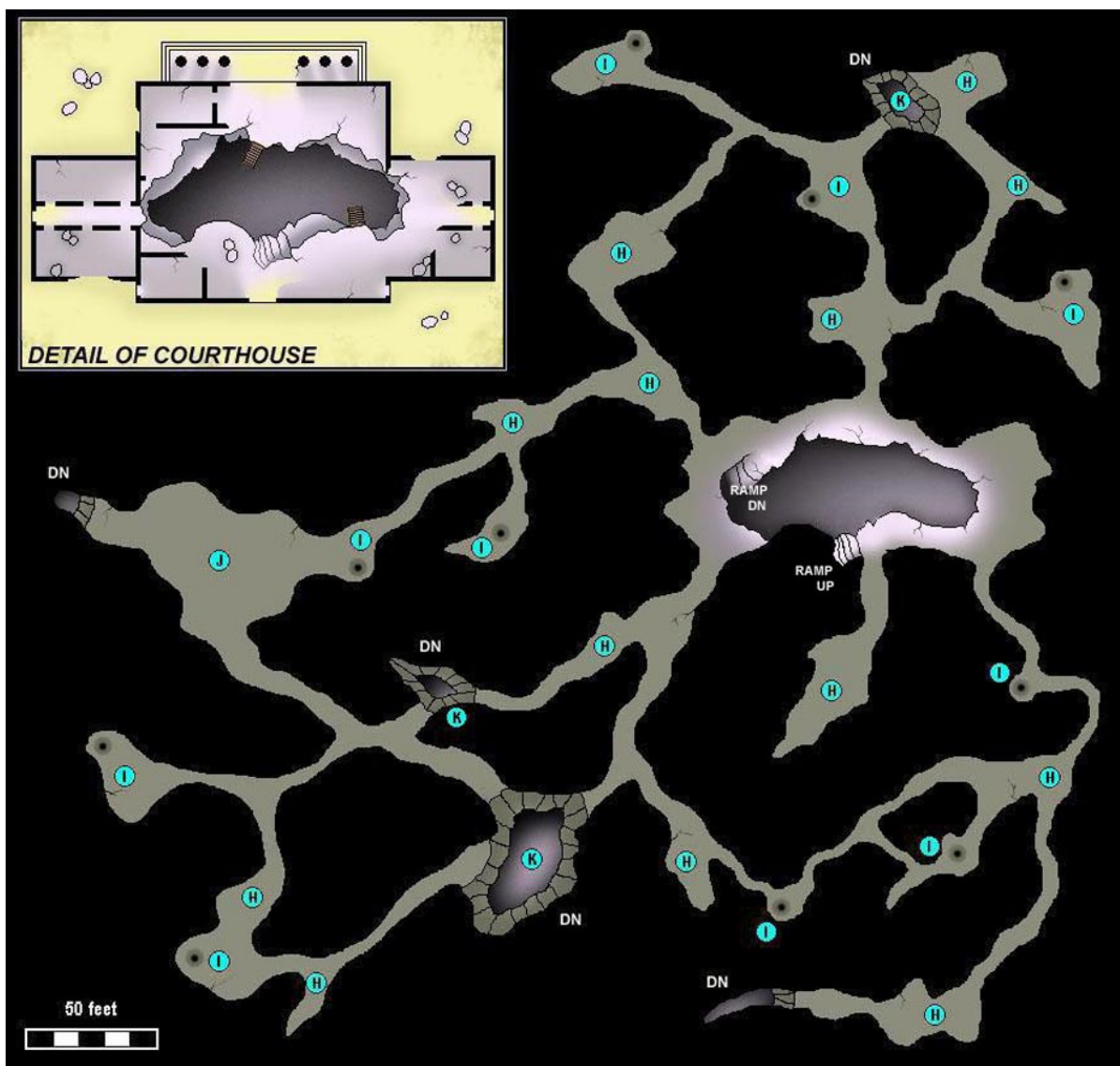
G. COURTHOUSE

Standing above the center of town are the ruins of what might once have been an important building. The grand marble façade is decorated with crumbling pillars and strange statues whose heads and outstretched arms have been worn down to nubs by centuries of wind erosion. A large hemispherical dome tops the building, lending it a certain quiet majesty despite extensive damage wreaked by wind and rain. The wind blowing through town is channeled by the gaping holes in this grand building, creating a low and menacing moan...

This place was once the Saguache County Courthouse, but time has erased any memory of its once-grand and important purpose. Already badly damaged from years of neglect, when the tribals who came to Saguache found the building here, they decided to tunnel beneath it to make a new home. Because the building was so huge, they could work night and day *inside* it without attracting attention from outsiders who might otherwise notice such a large-scale construction project.

As a result, the people constructed a small "city" beneath the grand building that became their home, a community hidden beneath the old courthouse...

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If and when the PCs enter this building, read the following:

You are totally surprised upon entering the interior of the building: instead of finding even so much as a relatively intact interior, what now occupies the entire bottom floor is a huge gaping hole that falls deep into the earth. Old marble statues sit at the edge at unnatural angles, ready to fall into the pit and vanish into the darkness below. The beams of hazy moonlight (or daylight, if the PCs came by day) that pierce the colossal dome overhead barely illuminate the walls holding the dome up, and do not penetrate down into the unfathomable depths of the pit.

A terrible smell rises from the pit, a mix of human and animal sweat and other unmentionable odors. A wet earthen slope descends into the darkness below.

The villagers who inhabited Saguache long ago used this huge pit to access their underground dwellings. A system

of wooden “elevators” (just large enough for two men) suspended on heavy ropes was used to raise and lower people to and from the tunnels below, or to the surface for (rare) hunting forays. The system was rather ingenious in construction, requiring only a single man to operate the hand-crank on each elevator.

Most of these elevators no longer work. The New World Order thralls constructed an earthen ramp to connect the lower levels so that infected animals, otherwise incapable of operating pulleys and hand-crank, could access the deep parts of the settlement unobstructed.

GM’s Note: If the PCs are wary of descending on the ramp, they can try the elevators. Only two people (of Medium-size or smaller) can sit in an elevator at a time, and raising/lowering requires one person to operate the hand crank on this level (thus one person must stay behind). It takes one full round to travel 20 ft. in this fashion (if the operator lets go of the crank, however, the descent is *much* quicker...).

There is a 1 in 20 chance per round of operation that

the rope supporting an elevator breaks. If it does break, the wooden elevator plummets to the deepest level below, dealing appropriate damage depending on the distance.

KEY TO UNDERGROUND AREAS

H. HOVELS (EL 1)

Each of these rugged alcoves was once the communal home of a small family group (grandparents, parents, and their children), all members of the greater tribal community of Saguache. Each hovel is nothing more than a small cave carved from the earth by desperate hands and shored up with wood or stones scavenged from the surface town. Though cramped and claustrophobic, they nonetheless serve as primitive but effective shelters from the sun, wind, sand- and rainstorms, and valley predators.

PCs who enter any of these places find them abandoned. Wooden bowls, cups, and dirt-encrusted glassware (cracked Coke bottles, ashtrays, etc.) lie scattered here and there. Skins being prepared for tanning or food long rotted in pots and cauldrons seem suspended in time, as if the people using them simply vanished overnight. A Search check, at the GM's discretion, may turn up a few javelins, spears, or stone axes if the PCs take their time.

GM's Note: Each time the PCs enter one of these hovels, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, a patrol of three wolf shamblers enters the area. Quartered in these dark subterranean tunnels for some time, these mangy, decrepit creatures bear only a passing resemblance to real wolves. The PCs will have to Hide (or Move Silently) to avoid detection as these patrols walk up and down the old corridors looking for intruders. If the PCs are discovered, the entire network of inter-connected creatures here in Saguache will be alerted (see How To Proceed for information on where to go from there).

🐾 **Wolf Shamblers (3):** HP 40, 33, and 29 (see Appendix 2).

I. CISTERNS

At each of these locations, a deep pit has been dug in the earth and lined with a low wall of brick at the top (to prevent children from falling in). Each pit resembles a well, and roughly 50% of them are in fact cisterns once intended to store water for the community's future. The other 50% are deep, cool pits in which food was once lowered to store for long periods of time.

All of the food storage pits are now empty, but the cisterns are anywhere from 10% to 30% full of fresh water. Other than a few rocks and maybe one or two coppery coins thrown in for luck (a curious custom carried on since ancient times), the water is relatively safe to drink.

J. SHRINE

The rough earthen walls of this chamber are decorated with painted images of hunters, herdsman, and scenes from daily tribal life—evidence of a community forever lost to the

Last God's mad vision of a New World Order. Colorful red, yellow, and black handprints adorn the walls and ceilings, hollow reminders of the people who once lived happy, peaceful lives in these caves.

The pictograms on the walls are arranged in "panels," with each large depiction occupying several feet of each cavern wall.

If the PCs stop and take the time to examine these depictions, they yield the following interpretations:

The first panel shows a city being destroyed in what appears to be a nuclear blast. Succeeding panels show a group of people leaving the ruins to wander the desert, until they at last find shelter in a canyon with strange pillar-like formations of rock (for characters who have gone through part one of this series, Against the Wastelords, this canyon is easily identified as the site of Spilunk).

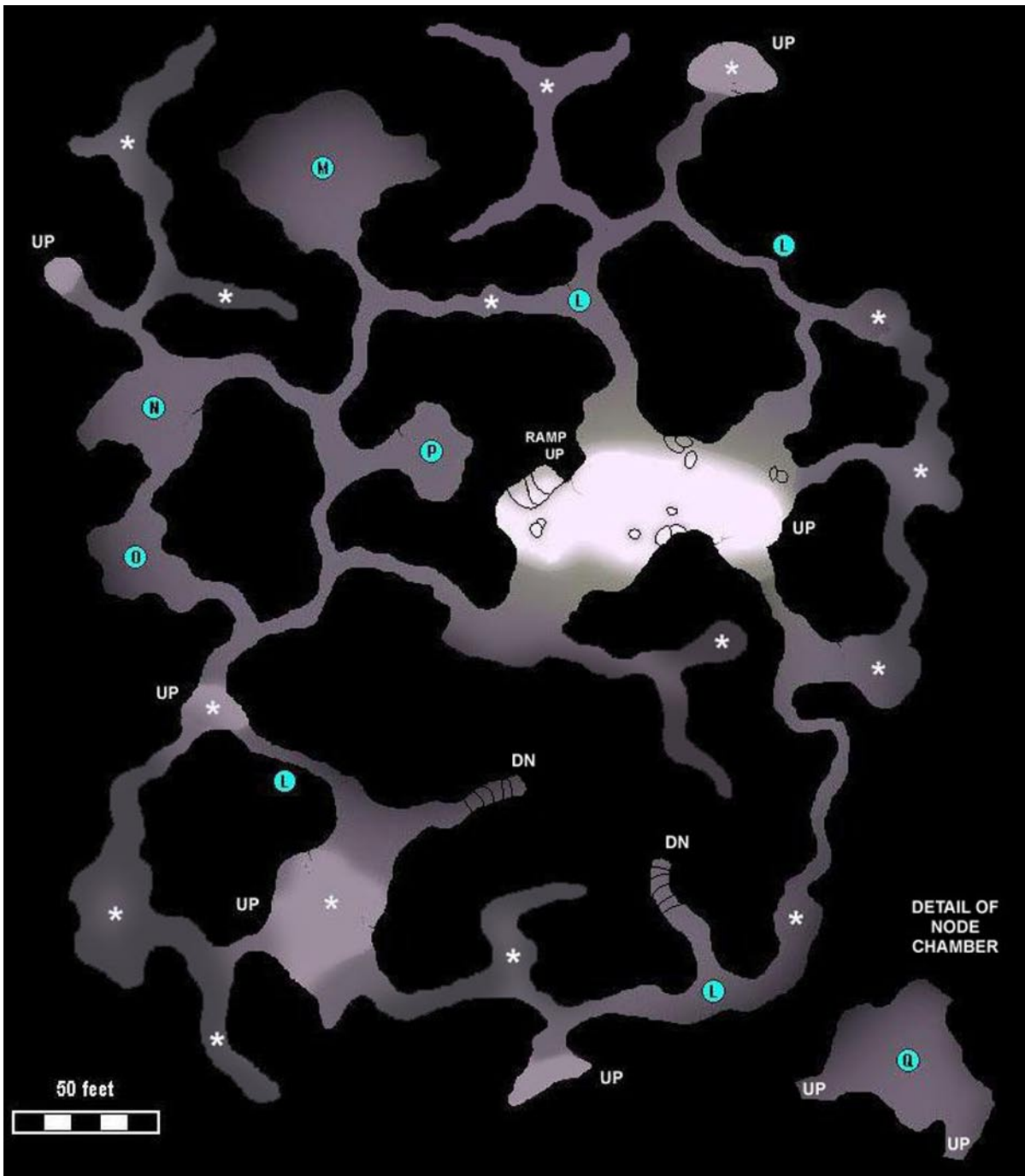
The next stretch of wall depicts what is presumably later history. A few men with spears return from a foray, carting a gigantic animal carcass. A number of men, bearing flowers instead of weapons, appear to be rebuked as they attempt to get a share of this great catch for their families. The panel depicts an argument breaking out, with the warriors and hunters pitted against those who carry flowers in place of weapons. Eventually a figure with an ominously glowing hand (actually a shock glove, coincidentally the same one given to the PCs by Elder Vilic at the close of Against the Wastelords, since the item was a painful reminder of that village's more savage history) casts the "flower people" out, much to the joy of the hunters and warriors. Discouraged and hungry, the outcasts can only leave; the next panel shows them leading their families into the mountains.

The final images show an exodus through the high peaks, until at last a new home is found for the peaceful "flower people" and their families—the town of Saguache and the tunnels beneath its courthouse dome.

GM's Note: If the PCs have gone through *Against the Wastelords*, they notice a startling similarity between the art here and the rock pictograms seen in the canyon near the town of Spilunk. A successful Decipher Script check (DC 10) allows a PC to more closely follow the story woven into the art, a tale that seems to suggest the inhabitants of these caves descended from the same people who inhabited Spilunk generations ago. According to the pictographic history, the original ancestors of both communities split over a past disagreement over food; one clan, led by the man with the "glowing hand," continued to rule Spilunk, while the other clan left, crossing the mountains until they eventually settled here.

If any of the PCs is from Spilunk, this history may be particularly poignant, for it is evidence pointing to the fate of their people's "lost tribe" - a tribe whose history has been

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deliberately forgotten out of shame by the people of Spilunk for over a generation. Even more tragic, however, is the knowledge that these distant cousins are now all gone, too late to be saved.

If the PCs eventually return to Spilunk with evidence of what they found here, the elders of Spilunk will be devastated—and yet also grateful. They hold a ceremony to honor the memory of their lost brethren, to officially forgive them posthumously and to publicly make amends for killing their brethren in the squabble. The PCs figure prominently in this ceremony, credited as the only ones able to finally settle the ancient feud that tore the two groups apart.

K (◁). OVERLOOK (EL VARIES)

Here the passages widen, turning into large shafts that abruptly drop to the level below. From this elevated point the PCs can see a rough ramp leading down to the lower level, but the quiet cavern at the bottom proves to be occupied by a crowd of thralls!

Crammed into the chambers below are dozens of thralls on “standby”, awaiting the order sent through the node mother by the Last God to move out. As such they merely stand, crammed in and cramped, like soldiers in a landing craft waiting to hit the beaches.

The PCs can observe the creatures from above without being seen. Even if they are detected (if they climb down,

make noise, etc.) the creatures here will merely observe them, without attacking. Only if the PCs provoke them (through violent action) will they move to attack.

GM's Note: See Area L below for details on what reserves might be found in each of these caves, in case there is a combat.

L (•). TUNNELS (EL VARIES)

These deep tunnels, whatever their original purpose, are now used solely to shelter and hide the growing New World Army army that continuously attacks the towns of the Wastelord empire.

The node mother resides deep down at the bottom of this level (see *Node Chamber*), using its psychic relay abilities to maintain constant contact with the main biomass of the Last God beneath the town of Center. The node mother here, like the one in Hooper, is literally the Last God's eyes and ears outside Center, an extension of one enormous, dispersed creature—the XBM macro-organism. While the first node mother was sent to secretly infect Hooper from within, this node mother's purpose is (and always has been) to continuously build up an army of thralls with which to topple the Wastelord empire—and convert their people into even more thralls!

As the PCs explore these tunnels, they have a very high chance of bumping into concentrations of infected thralls waiting silently in the darkness to be called to action. These include wolves, coyotes, bears, and mutant tribals (the original inhabitants of the town), all simply waiting, quietly, in these dark tunnels.

Since they are essentially on “standby,” all of these creatures remain utterly quiet and motionless where they stand. Unless the PCs directly attack them (or otherwise threaten them; for example, by setting up demolitions charges), the masses will merely watch the group as they pass by, making no overtly hostile moves. Characters will quickly get a sense that they are being watched, appraised, and carefully observed—for some unknown reason.

If the PCs elect to attack these concentrations of infected thralls, the creatures jump into action immediately. They mobilize to cut off and overwhelm intruders, hoping to overcome and infect them and add them to the node mother's growing army.

Areas marked with an * on the map of this level indicate major concentrations of thralls. For each concentration, roll the following to see what is actually present in that specific area:

D8	N.W.O. Reserves
1-2	2 Bear Shamblers, 8 Mutant Shambler
3-4	2 Wolf Shamblers, 8 Mutant Shamblers, 2 Wolf Seedlings, 2 Bear Seedlings, 1 Mutant Seedling A
5-6	2 Wolf Shamblers, 2 Bear Shamblers, 6 Mutant Shamblers, 1 Dog Integrator
7-8	2 Wolf Shamblers, 2 Bear Shamblers, 6 Mutant Shamblers, 2 Coyote Seedlings, 2 Wolf Seedlings, 2 Horse Seedlings (Transformed), 4 Mutant Seedlings A, 1 Dog Integrator, 1 Mutant Integrator

As before, if the PCs are detected, all of the creatures in the caves and on the surface are alerted at the same time, since they are all linked telepathically as one “super-organism,” seeing through each other's eyes and hearing through each other's ears.

M. STOCKPILE CAVERN

This entire cavern is filled with hundreds of dirty, dusty, dented, and rusted computer components, from keyboards to monitors to entire CPU towers, external disk drives, printers, and other parts normally seen only when a computer has been opened and looted for parts. The place looks like an enormous and chaotic storehouse, except that everything is old and obviously second-hand, scavenged from who-knows-how-many sites all across the wasteland.

This place is an important storehouse of computer parts and other electronics being hoarded by the Last God for a very special purpose. Because it was able to assimilate a large number of scientists and other technicians from the Center facility during the “accident” there during the Fall, the Last God has some very advanced technical and engineering skills at its disposal. With these skills, it was able to meddle with the computerized systems of Center just enough to bring down the quarantine containment measures there for a few minutes, allowing part of it to escape (see the adventure introduction for more information on this incident). Though the androids manning the quarantine detected the breach in time to stop the Last God from escaping completely (ultimately only allowing a few seedlings and the two node mothers to escape), the Last God has not given up on its plans...

In addition to attacking the automated systems of the facility with advanced weapons created using these spare parts, the Last God plans to use these computers, when salvaged and reassembled, to “hack” into the androids *themselves*—and shut them down long enough for the Last God to fully escape to the surface.

If the PCs destroy this stockpile (for they certainly can't take it all themselves), either by explosive or fire, they will have thwarted one of the Last God's major long-term plans, and unknowingly preserved the integrity of the quarantine keeping the macro-organism's main biomass trapped beneath Center.

For the time being, anyway...

Treasure: To most buyers, this collection of parts would be relatively worthless (perhaps 2,500 cp at most for the entire contents of the cavern), but to someone with the appropriate Craft skills to make computers and other electronic items, the value would be up to ten times that.

N. LABORATORY (EL 7)

PCs sneaking into this room are confronted by a strange sight: silhouetted against the darkness are several half-naked men, covered in dirt and wearing only primitive loincloths. The dark forms of these men are illuminated sporadically by sudden bursts of sparks that fill the cavern with an eerie blue light. These sparks come from an assortment of welding

and soldering equipment they are apparently using to build a number of complex electronic gizmos from scratch. These complicated devices look totally out of place in their hands.

These “men” are actually seedlings, infected members of the tribal community that used to call these halls home. United by the macro-organism’s “over-mind,” they have been put to work repairing computer components and making weapons from the materials gathered by the New World Order army. Because the numerous animals in the growing thrall army lack the fine dexterity (and opposable digits) of humans, these new “converts” are especially important to the Last God’s war machine, crafting weapons that will hopefully be a match for the androids enforcing the quarantine at Center.

GM’s Note: GM’s Note: The seedlings here are all busy doing their work, and do not notice the PCs unless the characters call attention to themselves or have already been spotted elsewhere. If the PCs are detected, the seedlings will continue working, apparently unconcerned by their presence. If the party attacks, however, they will defend themselves using whatever completed weapons are at hand.

In addition to any defense here, the PCs’ actions will trigger a violent response by the Last God, who now considers them a threat to its plans. As a result all thralls in Saguache will begin converging on the group’s last known position with only one thought in mind: hunting the party down and destroying them.

☛ **Mutant Seedlings B (4):** HP 34 (x3), 30 (see Appendix 2).

Treasure: The seedlings are currently in the process of making advanced weapons with which to arm the thrall army for its eventual return to Center. These weapons include masers, grenades, and EMP weapons, the latter being especially vital for their plan to destroy the robot quarantine.

The tables in this room are covered with weapons in various stages of completion. Finished weapons found here include one *EMP rifle*, two *maser rifles*, four *maser pistols* (the seedlings use these if attacked), seven *negation grenades*, and two *shock grenades*. Another *EMP rifle* and two *maser rifles* are currently under construction here, but are as yet incomplete (though a character with the appropriate feats and Craft skills could finish the work, requiring only 1d100 hours for each weapon; no cp expenditure is necessary since the raw materials are already present). There is another 35,000 cp in various raw materials being converted to weapon production, which could be taken and re-used by PCs seeking to make advanced weapons in the future.

In addition to these weapons, the seedlings have managed to stockpile five *minifusion cells*, eleven *power clips*, and two *power belt packs* in this cavern. All of these are fully charged. There are another 2d10 *power clips* and 1d4 *power belt packs* here, but each of these has only 1d8-1 charges remaining. Finally, two *deluxe electrical tool kits* sit on a separate table.

O. COMPUTER REPAIR (EL 9)

This place is as *Area N* above, except here the darkness of the caves is broken by the dim illumination of several flickering computer screens, in front of which stand the bony bodies of a few infected tribals. Their eyes, jet black and lifeless, reflect the streams of code flashed on the computer screens like perfect mirrors.

These former natives of Saguache are now used to run diagnostic programs on various bits of computer hardware salvaged and repaired by the macro-organism. These computers are the first of many systems that will, given time, be used by the macro-organism to hack into Center’s computer network and either bring it down completely or shut down enough androids to tip the balance in the Last God’s favor.

GM’s Note: Like the thralls in the Laboratory (see above), these seedlings are completely engrossed in their work and do not notice the PCs unless the characters call attention to themselves. If the alarm has been raised, however (for example, if the PCs attacked the workers in Area N), these thralls arm themselves with maser pistols and head into the tunnels to find the intruders.

☛ **Mutant Seedlings E (6):** HP 34 (x6) (see Appendix 2).

Treasure: Characters making a Computer Use check (DC 18) or Knowledge, Technology check (DC 21) here will realize that the computers being operated on appear to be undergoing modifications. A second check (DC 20 for Computer Use, DC 23 for Knowledge, Technology) allows the examining PC to realize that the infected creatures are building some kind of specialized computer system capable of hacking remotely into other automated electronics systems. It is far from complete, however, and it is obvious that many of the tools needed to complete such a machine are not present in the complex. The tools here, if collected, amount to a *deluxe electrical tool kit*.

P. EXPLOSIVES WORKSHOP (EL 6)

This place is as *Area N* above, except here the seedlings are hastily building explosives, using a wide range of chemical apparatus and treatment methods. These explosives will be fundamental to the New World Order’s ability to destroy both the Wastelords and the android quarantine at Center.

GM’s Note: The seedlings here are involved in their work and do not notice the PCs unless the characters call attention to themselves. If they do notice the PCs, they do not attack, but stand and stare at the PCs (alerting all other thralls to their presence and exact location). None of the seedlings will leave this room, even if attacked; if the PCs do engage them, the seedlings defend themselves with maser pistols.

☛ **Mutant Seedlings E (3):** HP 38, 34 (x2) (see Appendix 2).

Treasure: The New World Order has constructed a considerable stock of high explosives here. A full search of the chamber garners 20 blocks of C4, 30 sticks of dynamite, and 25 fragmentation grenades. All of these items are scratch-built and homemade, and thus have a 1 in 10 chance of being a dud when used.

THE WAR

Once the PCs trigger the Last God's alarm and provoke it into mobilizing, they had better rush back to friendly lines. If the PCs are anywhere near Saguache when the Last God decides to launch its all-out war at the people of the Valley, they are in for one of the strangest and most disturbing sights of their lives.

The seemingly peaceful, abandoned town suddenly erupts with life. The sounds of baying wolves, howling dogs, roaring bears, and hundreds of wild animal calls echo from the depths beneath the courthouse in one enormous cry that shakes the earth. In only moments a literal *river* of creatures begins streaming out from beneath the center of town, heading at full speed into the wasteland like crazed escapees from some nightmare zoo. By day, individual creatures can be discerned in this monstrous line—men, dogs, wolves, horses, and hideously twisted versions of natural animals—but by night, all that can be discerned are hundreds of irregular shapes, large and small, pitch-black and moving in a continuous line. In the feeble moonlight, this line resembles an oily black snake coiling out from the heart of town, heading towards the desert horizon.

Q. NODE CHAMBER (EL 11)

This large dark cavern is the deepest in the underground complex; all tunnels from it lead only lead up. The cavern has an additional unusual property to it: all sounds made in the tunnels above eventually find their way here, reflected and magnified to almost twice their original volume (in game terms, give creatures in this chamber a +4 bonus to Listen checks when listening for sounds made anywhere in the complex above).

The sonic properties of this cavern were not lost on the original inhabitants of Saguache, who believed this chamber had religious significance. Like the *Shrine* (see above), this place was a communal gathering place where the tribal people came when seeking guidance.

When the New World Order thralls first came here from Center, they were given sanctuary in the tunnels above. When the thralls began infecting their overly trusting hosts, the people of Saguache panicked, abandoning the upper levels to take refuge here. Gathering with their chief and spiritual leaders, they closed their eyes and engaged in fervent prayer, hoping that through the power of their chants they could ward off the infiltrators they had so foolishly allowed into their community.

Their prayers were never answered. As the sounds of more and more of their fellow villagers turning into shamblers and seedlings reached their ears, they made a fateful decision to commit suicide *en masse*. Taking weapons in hand, fathers killed their wives and children before turning on themselves until the room ran red with blood—and all of their bodies fell cold.

The node mother now makes its lair in this room, which is still littered with the bones of the countless men, women, and children who committed suicide rather than become integral parts of the monstrous Last God. Skulls, ribcages, and hundreds of bones make a grisly carpet for the creature, which rests roughly in the center of the room coordinating (through telepathy) the actions of its many thralls underground and on the surface. Barely concealed in the shadows are a dozen or so additional thralls, all lingering on the edge of the wierd light emitted through the viscid flesh of the node mother by its pulsing brain.

GM's Note: If the PCs are being followed peaceably by

thralls from elsewhere in the complex, the creatures try to prevent the PCs from going down to this vital chamber. They do this by baring their teeth, growling, moaning loudly, and even maneuvering themselves to physically block the party's passage, taking aggressive postures to show their intentions. If the party persists in trying to reach this deep level, the thralls drop the ruse and attack to defend the node mother.

If the PCs somehow managed to get here without raising the alarm, the node mother will probably sense them as they descend to the floor of the cavern. The thralls present in the chamber will then move to block and attack them, while the node mother itself will immediately use its telepathic link to call all nearby concentrations of thralls to the cavern in a hurry. If the PCs do not flee quickly, they may find themselves cut off from any possible escape!

If there is a confrontation remember not to play the node mother as a separate creature; it is, after all, just one "limb" of an enormous and unique life form with one unified consciousness. The PCs cannot try diplomacy, mind games, or reasoning with it. At this stage of the campaign, the Last God has not yet realized the potential the PCs have to free it (part three of this series, *The Last God*, details the macro-organism's "prison" beneath Center and possible ways the PCs might accidentally—or intentionally—free it) and views them as a threat (which probably turns out to be the case anyway); it will do anything to infect or destroy them before they can thwart its plans. The node mother will flee if necessary, if only to preserve the integrity of the Last God's control over the army here. Then, as more and more reinforcements arrive, the PCs will be forced to recognize the futility of the situation and pull out in haste.

♥ **Node Mother B (1):** HP 100 (see Appendix 2).

♥ **Mutant Seedlings B (6):** HP 34 each (see Appendix 1).

FROM HERE

Infiltrating Saguache, finding the secret tunnels beneath the courthouse, and killing the node mother in its lair will probably be next to impossible for the party. The sheer number of thralls serving as guards and sentries in town and

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in the tunnels should make a forced descent into the tunnels to the node mother's lair unlikely; similarly, any raising of the alarm will demonstrate to the PCs the total coordination of the New World Order forces—a level of organization and manpower which even a well-equipped party of adventurers cannot readily handle. Intelligent PCs will hopefully learn this quickly, and realize that they are probably unprepared to enter the “lion's den” with guns blazing any hope of coming out alive.

If the players are smart, they'll limit their activities here to information gathering and reconnaissance; if they are careful, their expedition will end with the characters at least getting a good idea as to the nature of the forces here. With this knowledge, the PCs can return to the surface and immediately warn Kyren by radio about what they have seen.

It is almost assured that the PCs will have been detected either entering or leaving Saguache and its underground tunnels. When this happens, how the Last God reacts depends on the PCs' actions. If they attack it reacts like any creature that becomes suddenly aware it is vulnerable: it strikes back. If they merely scout, it also takes the opportunity to observe them, making note of any unusual weapons, abilities, mutations, etc. It will use this information later, once they are gone, knowing full well that they must be leaders (or elite troops) to have come so far and so bravely; during the next chapter, as the war rages around them, it will target them specifically for destruction!

At this point, proceed to *A New Biological War*.

A NEW BIOLOGICAL WAR

This chapter details the final offensive of the New World Order against the towns and villages of the San Luis Valley. This offensive is the Last God's desperate push to destroy all that stands in the way of its vision of a New World Order—and to infect every last man, woman, child, and animal in the Valley.

The war begins when the PCs stumble upon the New World Order army base beneath Saguache, an infiltration that exposes the Last God's vulnerability and provokes it into taking action. Realizing that the humanoids of the Valley now know too much about it and its plans, the Last God decides to make its decisive move.

OBJECTIVES

A creature of alien intelligence and unimaginable power, the XBM macro-organism is an epic danger to the Twisted Earth, a super-powerful monster with physical and telepathic abilities that exceed anything yet faced by the heroes of the wastes. Currently trapped beneath the mysterious town of Center, just a few dozen miles from Shelter City, the main mass of the XBM macro-organism cannot yet exert its dominance over the world or pursue its monumental campaign: to become the world's last and only “god,” feared and worshipped by man and mutant alike.

To this end, the *people* of the San Luis Valley are the real objective of this final drive. Because escape from its prison is prevented by a powerful and coordinated force of androids, the Last God seeks a sizable army to return and breach the quarantine. Numerous attempts at defeating the androids by direct force (using the re-animated remains of men and women infected during the Fall) have failed; the Last God requires a much larger force, one made up of hundreds if not thousands of thralls.

If all goes as planned, the towns of the San Luis Valley will provide the manpower resources needed to build its mighty army. Once it has infected the populations of these towns, it plans to recall these new thralls to Center, there to overthrow the android quarantine and finally release it to bring its vision of a united (and infected) world to the people of the Twisted Earth.

Because the towns themselves are the Last God's goal, its New World Order army will concentrate its attacks on these populated centers.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Random encounters should be handled differently during this phase of the adventure. Since the New World Order army is virtually everywhere on the frontlines during the offensive, the PCs have a greater chance of encountering small parties of infected creatures in the course of their travels through the embattled region. In addition, because uninfected animals normally living in the valley are scared away by the “walking dead” of the New World Order, encounters with natural wildlife do not occur.

Below are some suggested encounters for use during the final Enemy push on the Wastelord empire:

STRAGGLERS

Groups of thralls may be encountered along Highway 17 (and later along Highway 150) during the opening phases of the fighting—stragglers crippled by deformity or decomposition and left to lag behind the main force. The PCs may run into groups of stragglers on the open road as they travel the wastes.

Generally speaking, upon spotting these bands of infected stragglers, the PCs can simply step on the gas and drive by, leaving these shamblers in the dust—but if they stop, they may be doing themselves a long-term favor. By trimming enemy numbers now, they will make their future job of hunting down every last thrall much easier.

A typical group of stragglers consists of 1d4+3 Mutant Shamblers, armed with spears.

AMBUSH ON THE HIGHWAY!

This encounter is similar to the one above, except that a number of armed seedlings accompany the straggling shamblers. They open fire on passing vehicles, attempting to force their victims to stop. Once this is accomplished (by reducing the PCs' truck to zero hit points) the shamblers then close in around the vehicle from all directions and

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incapacitate the crew (PCs included) long enough for the seedlings to move in and infect them.

This type of encounter involves 1d6+4 Mutant Shamblers and 1d3 Mutant Seedlings C, armed with M16A2 rifles (or, at the GM's discretion, 1d3 Mutant Seedlings D armed with grenades).

CHANCE ENCOUNTER (NIGHT ONLY)

As their truck races through the darkness (either along the highway or across the wastes), the only light the PCs have to navigate by is that of the truck's headlights. All of a sudden, something crosses into view: the headlights reveal sudden motion, the flash of creatures moving quickly to scramble out of the path of their vehicle. Any character making a Spot check (DC 13) sees the vague shape of several humanoids; one is clearly visible for a moment in the darkness. It is a half-naked man, wearing only the tattered remains of a long white lab coat. As their truck veers dangerously close, he looks up, revealing two all-black eyes and a mouth that hangs unnaturally limp like a gaping void.

In this chance encounter the PCs have come across a band of Enemy thralls en route to a Wastelord settlement. The PCs can drive right past without stopping (the thralls have no way to stop them); what makes this encounter interesting is the white-coated figure. The creature in the white coat does not resemble a valley inhabitant; it is one of the original infected scientists from the secret facility at Center (hence the ancient lab coat). Its odd appearance just might be enough to convince the PCs to stop and investigate.

If the PCs do stop, the pack of thralls shifts direction to converge on the truck, hoping to attack and infect the crew and passengers. The PCs have quite a fight ahead of them: this small band includes one Human Seedling B and 3d6 Mutant Seedlings C.

Searching the bodies of the thralls turns up some potentially useful information. The Mutant Seedlings are clearly the infected and animated corpses of tribal villagers from Saguache, but the coat-wearing human corpse is that of a genetic scientist who "died" centuries ago during the "accident" at Center. Searching its lab coat recovers a pink access card (keyed to the Main Research Laboratory at Center; see part three of this series, *The Last God*, for details). This item may come in handy when the PCs eventually travel to Center to stop the Last God.

STARTING THE WAR

Once the PCs turn back towards the Wastelord frontier, their Wastelord escorts insist that they report immediately via radio to Kyren in Shelter City. When Kyren hears about the PCs' discoveries in (and under) Saguache, he is concerned:

*After a few moments of silence, Kyren speaks up.
"Alright, you've done a fantastic job. You definitely found something important—maybe the main body of the Enemy army here in the Valley. This is important."
He is quiet for a few seconds as if pondering*

something. "But you say you weren't able to kill the node mother? Hmm... Well, you've done enough for now. Get your butts back to camp and get some R&R until we can come up with a plan for further action. Over and out."

The PCs can return to the camp outside of Shelter City before the next nightfall. Once back at the camp, they can re-equip and restock their ammunition supplies, and receive one *stimshot A* each to heal any injuries incurred in the field. After treatment, the party is debriefed by their Wastelord company commander, who demands a more detailed account of their scouting mission. Though this process takes two or three hours, once these formalities are behind them, the PCs have the rest of that day to recuperate.

THAT NIGHT

The PCs' "shore leave" is short-lived. That night, wherever the PCs are, they are awakened with a start:

You are roused from your sleep by a Wastelord sentry, who quickly informs you that Kyren is on the phone and wants to speak to you immediately.

You quickly converge on the Wastelord headquarters tent, where there is a frenzy of activity. Men are arming themselves and rushing out into the night, blowing whistles to rouse and mobilize the several companies of slave soldiers.

Your Wastelord commander holds up a direct line to the command center and motions for you to pick it up. On the line is Kyren, apparently taking time out from some frantic preparations to speak with you.

"Listen up, gentlemen—there has been an attack on Moffat by a large force of what appear to be seedlings and other infected creatures. Unfortunately, the garrison at Moffat fled rather than fight, leaving the civilians to fend for themselves, but they radioed enough info before they fell for us to figure there's an entire army out there in the desert heading our way.

"It looks like you really stirred up a hornet's nest by visiting Saguache. I was afraid that might happen—the node mother must be wary we'll get the jump on it, so it's making its move now, tonight. No more infiltration, no more probing—it's time to play hardball!"

Kyren is distracted for a moment, and you pause as he discusses incoming radio reports with his generals. He then returns to the phone.

"The attack on Moffat was probably only the first contact with the Enemy. They're probably marching on Hooper and Mosca as we speak. I've consulted with my generals and we've decided we can't fight this enemy with piecemeal garrisons, so we're evacuating all the towns to Shelter City, where we'll make our stand.

"However, we've got a bit of a problem in Hooper:

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the town's administrator, Harris, just radioed that his formation is delayed. He's asking for more men to help in the evacuation. I want you guys there to get his butt moving ASAP. We won't be sending any troops back for stragglers, so you'd better be out with the rest of the population when the town falls.

"You know the drill—get your gear and get on the next truck headed east on route 150. Good luck, you sorry sons-of-bitches."

RAID ON HOOPER (EL VARIES)

When the PCs arrive at Mosca, read the following:

You're on the open road again in less than an hour, moving east under the roiling black sky. You pass a mile-long convoy of trucks, wagons, mules, and civilians being herded down the highway in the opposite direction, towards Shelter City. In the distance, the small frontier town of Hooper can be seen, its orange street lights left on by the Wastelords in their haste to evacuate.

Suddenly the CB radio in your truck crackles to life, and the driver informs you that commander Harris is on the line. Picking up the receiver, you hear Harris' frantic voice calling for you to meet him at his command truck, which is just up ahead.

Your driver pulls the truck over in front of a pair of transport trucks on the shoulder of the highway. The line of refugees keeps moving, the frightened civilians hardly glancing in your direction as they hurry past.

Harris stands at the back of a truck with a handful of men, apparently in the middle of an argument. As you approach, the arguing dies down and Marzan turns to address you.

"You're the men we called for, yes? Can you be trusted not to speak a word of this... to anyone?"

Marzan looks at each of you with a cautious eye. Whatever he's hinting at, he apparently intends to keep it from Kyren's ears.

Once he secures your agreement, he fills you in.

"We have a serious problem. Some of my men seem to have "forgotten" their orders during their haste to pull out of town. They left an entire storehouse filled with weapons intact. Kyren will have my head if those weapons fall into enemy hands.

"I need someone to return to Hooper and take that storehouse out with explosives."

He turns and motions for one of his men to pull back the tarp in the back of one of the trucks. Sitting there is a bundle of dynamite.

"I want men who can be trusted not to talk. If Kyren hears about this, my staff and I could face serious consequences. I don't plan on dying that way. Do this and you'll be saving my life. I won't forget it."

The decision to return to Hooper is entirely up to the PCs; if they agree, Harris is in their debt (this has no immediate

benefit, but if the PCs ever need a high-ranking ally among the Wastelords, this little favor may put Harris in their pocket). If the PCs refuse, Harris is upset but does not act against them (he's already in enough trouble with Kyren); ignore this encounter and proceed to *Exodus to Shelter City*.

If the PCs agree to help solve his problem, Harris can provide them with five sticks of *dynamite* (enough to level a good-sized building if placed properly) and a timed *detonator*.

THE RAID

The PCs must be wary, as the New World Order has all but occupied Hooper in the wake of the evacuation. When they arrive, the town is being prowled by small patrols of shamblers and seedlings looking in vain for any stragglers or civilians left behind in the Wastelords' flight from town. The PCs must enter Hooper using stealth or risk alerting the entire enemy force to their presence (don't forget the Enemy army is effectively one being with shared senses).

The GM will need to play the raid by ear; individual encounters will be with small groups or patrols and not with actual "waves" of combatants. With successful Hide and Move Silently checks, the PCs may be able to avoid detection, observe the enemy's regular movements through town, and reach the armory without being detected.

The armory itself has not been discovered by the Enemy—yet. Once the PCs find the building (see map) they need to break in without drawing undue attention. Any noisy means of entrance (such as shooting the lock on the main door) draws immediate attention from nearby patrols, but a Disable Device check (DC 20) allows the PCs into the armory without a hitch.

Treasure: Inside the warehouse are the following items: 24 M16A2s, 1 *ramjet rifle*, 1 RPG-16, 1440 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition, 60 rounds of ramjet ammunition, 10 fragmentation grenades, 2 anti-tank grenades (for the RPG).

The PCs can "requisition" any equipment they want (within reason, since they can't conceivably carry it all), but most of the weaponry here will have to be destroyed—the PCs can't likely transport it all. The easiest way to destroy the armory is to use the explosives provided by their Wastelord patrons. Placing the explosives requires no skill check, but setting the detonator to go off as planned requires a successful Demolitions check (DC 10).

Once the charge is set, the PCs must make a hasty retreat employing the same level of caution they exhibited slipping into Hooper. If they are discovered, the entire Enemy force will converge on their position to capture and infect them.

ENEMY FORCES

Encounters with enemy forces here generally consist of chance meetings with the small patrols moving methodically through the abandoned streets in search of people to infect.

For every 1d4 minutes the PCs spend moving to (or away from) the armory building, roll on the following table to see what forces, if any, they encounter:

D6	Patrol	EL
1-2	None	0
3-4	5 <i>Mutant Shamblers</i> and 1d2 <i>Mutant Seedlings E</i>	7-8
5	5 <i>Mutant Shamblers</i> and 1d2 <i>Mutant Seedlings C</i>	7-8
6	5 <i>Mutant Shamblers</i> and 1d4 <i>Mutant Seedlings B</i>	7-9

All patrols take 10 on Spot and Listen checks as they move through the city streets. If they do not discover the PCs, they continue on, looking elsewhere for prey.

If the PCs are discovered, the Enemy attacks immediately. Reinforcements (in the form of another roll on the table above; a roll of 1-2 means no reinforcements show up in time) appear every other round to join the fight against the PCs. Unless the PCs manage to escape quickly, reinforcements continue arriving until the party is wiped out!

FAILURE

If the PCs fail to destroy the stockpile or decline to accept the mission in the first place, keep track of what weapons are left behind in the evacuation; they will directly affect the Enemy order of battle in the siege of Shelter City in the following manner:

For every M16A2 left in the armory, replace one *Mutant*



Seedling E in the coming battle with a *Mutant Seedling C*. For every two fragmentation grenades left, replace one *Mutant Seedling E* with a *Mutant Seedling D*. Either the *ramjet rifle* or the *RPG-16* will be wielded by *Node Mother B* (replacing its *maser rifle*) in the coming battle for Shelter City.

EXODUS TO SHELTER CITY

Once the PCs help Harris blow the armory in Hooper, the Wastelords begin a fast exodus towards Shelter City. When the PCs finally arrive outside the city, read the following:

Ahead is the familiar sight of the enormous crevasse that marks the entrance to Shelter City. Tonight you can only barely make out the contours of the camp outside, for a fog has rolled in from the mountains to cloak the desert in mist.

The darkness of this dismal night is broken by a mile-long crescent of electric lights, torches, and lanterns that is almost engulfed by this mist. But even in this weak light you can see hundreds of men, women, children, and animals converging on the subterranean city from the west, filling the highway with a mass of human bodies, carts, wagons, and trucks. It is like a great Biblical exodus, a flight from the path of the marauding Enemy to sanctuary within the underground tunnels of the ancient city. For a moment you can only stare in awe at this mass migration, acutely aware that this is an uncanny parody of Ancient times—when the vault of Shelter City was first stocked with desperate refugees during the twilight of human civilization.

People scatter out of your way as your truck rolls by. You see armed Wastelords trying to manage the crowds, chasing after stray animals or helping move broken-down vehicles off the roadway. Trucks and cars, their headlights still beaming, lie abandoned on the shoulder of the road, left behind in the Wastelords' haste.

Hundreds of people are packed together near the entrance to Shelter City, trying to force their way into the underground sanctuary. At the same time you see groups of soldiers separating men from their families, shoving weapons into their hands, and herding them towards makeshift defensive positions on the ground level or on the lookout posts above.

Only now do you truly realize how desperate this battle is going to be.

When the PCs arrive, they are immediately greeted by a Wastelord sergeant who takes them to a field hospital to have any injuries healed. The party is allotted six injections of *Stimshot B* as needed (if the PCs are fully healed, they do *not* get to keep unused medicine). If the PCs require any energy, 5.56mm, or 9mm ammunition, they are each also given two full clips (or one *power clip* and one ammo clip for those who use energy weapons) before being sent on their way.

Once they have been treated and re-equipped, the sergeant informs the PCs that Kyren wishes to see them immediately.

MEETING WITH KYREN

It is a strange relief to see the handsome and utterly ruthless face of Kyren in this time of trouble, and secretly you find yourselves relieved that he is here. Though he represents many things which you find reprehensible, knowing that a strong and intelligent leader is in command is somehow comforting.

You are escorted into Kyren's presence atop the Overlook (see map), where he has established a forward observation post. From this open area, he commands an impressive view of not only the approaches to the city and the abandoned camp outside, but also the desert nearby. Due to the heavy fog, the city lights do more than just light this narrow gorge; they reflect off the low-flying clouds to illuminate much of the desert. The mist has effectively extended visibility by more than a mile around the city entrance.

Kyren stands at a makeshift map table, planning with his number one general—a cruel thug known only as “Hammer.” At Kyren's side is his female gunslinger and bodyguard, a renowned hired gun called “Ace.” While Hammer discusses possible strategies with his lord, Ace watches you from beneath the brim of her hat with a steely, appraising glare, as if everyone—yourselves included—is a potential threat to the raider-prince. In her arms she cradles an impressive-looking rifle of futuristic design, ready to defend Kyren at a moment's notice.

“Ah, there you are,” says Kyren, “I'm glad to see you got out of Hooper alive. And just in time, it seems. The Enemy is almost at our doorstep.”

He motions to a map of the San Luis Valley on which

markers and pieces have been placed to represent Wastelord units and the last known locations of thrall armies in the field. All appear to be converging on Shelter City.

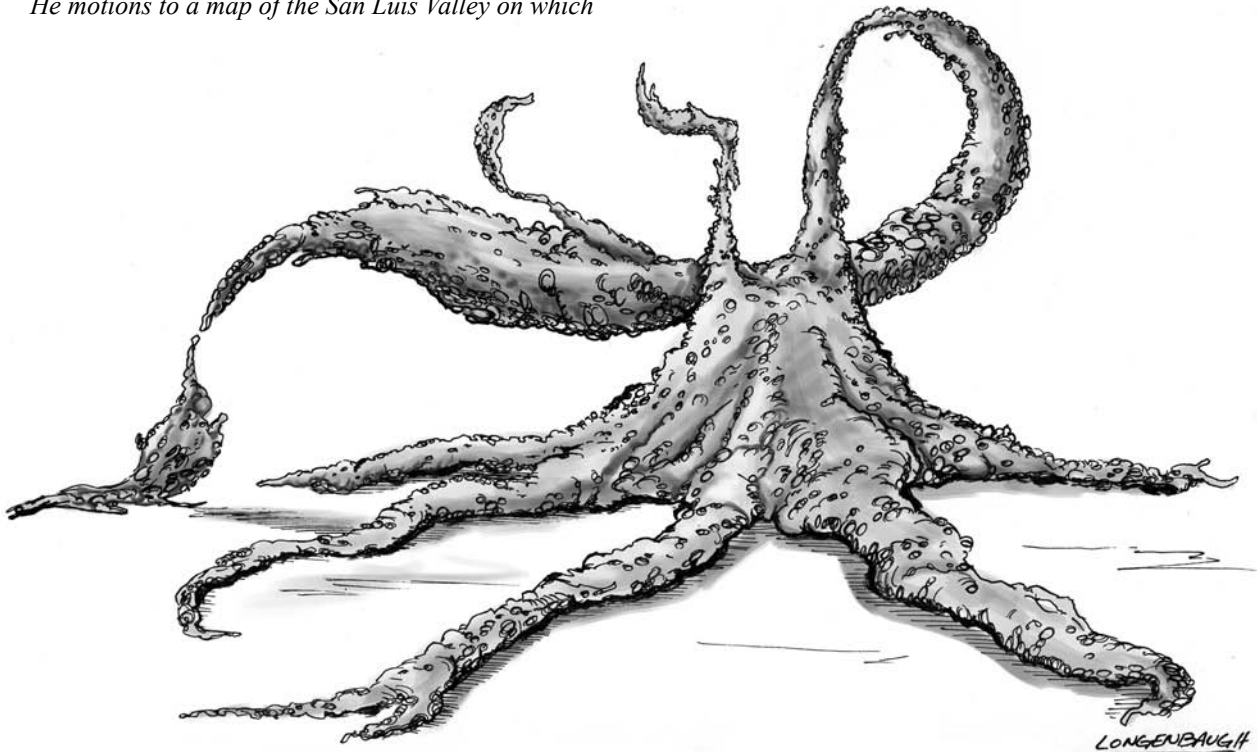
“As you may or may not know, Moffat was the first town hit. No one survived the attack, but the civilian administrators there radioed to us before they fell that an entire army of creatures was on the move. When we heard that, we figured it was better to be safe than sorry—so I ordered an evacuation of all towns in the path of their attack.”

“All remaining commanders report the evacuation has gone off without a hitch. Chalk up one decisive victory for our side.

“Now here's the current situation: everyone is gathered here, at Shelter City, where I plan to fight like a son-of-a-bitch until every last one of those zombie buggers is dead. There's gonna be no retreat, no falling back. This is where we make our stand. We have over one hundred Wastelords, Entropists, and amazons, another two hundred in levied militia from the city, and of course you and the other slave soldiers. The women and children will be looking after the wounded in town.”

Kyren stares at the impressive array of pieces on his map, but something in his eyes suggests he is ill at ease. For a few moments he is tight-lipped and quiet. Finally he speaks.

“What I can't figure out, however, is what they want. After all this, I still don't get it. Just to infect us? To turn us into mindless thralls? To eat us?”



NEW WORLD ORDER

If the PCs have seen the strange technology stockpiles in the node mother's hovel in Hooper or in the caves beneath Saguache, they may now tell Kyren what they've seen. If the PCs tell (or remind) Kyren about this, suddenly it dawns on him:

"It sounds like whatever this creature is, it's trying to build something. I'm not sure what—a great weapon of some sort? A nuke of its own? Hmmm. Maybe not. Maybe it's something subtler than that. You say there were lots of computer parts? Maybe it's trying to build a computer for some reason..."

For a few moments Kyren is silent. Then suddenly his eyes widen in realization.

"Holy crap. Computers... computers... that's it! It's building a computer to bring down the android quarantine. Remember, from the android's memory? That's got to be it! That cunning... whatever-it-is. It's smart—real smart. Don't you see? Whatever it is, it couldn't get out by fighting the androids head-on. So instead, it infected a bunch of thralls and sent them out through a "backdoor" to try and build an army beyond its prison. An army to gather parts and build a computer to crash the android quarantine. And to return in force to set it free!"

"What the hell are we dealing with?" Hammer asks, crossing his arms.

"I don't know," Kyren says, staring off into the night, "I don't know. But whatever it is, I have a feeling this... all of this... is just the tip of the iceberg. These armies... they're nothing more than fingers to it. Eyes, ears, hands. And for every man, woman, child, or animal that is infected, it gains more appendages. More eyes, more ears, more hands. It doesn't want us for food or for anything like that—it needs more zombie servitors to comb the desert from here to the Forbidden Lands for the things it needs to free itself!"

Give the PCs a moment to contemplate what Kyren is suggesting. If what he theorizes is correct, all of their efforts so far have only scratched the surface of this new threat to the Twisted Earth!

Shouts echo sharply through the mist, and everyone present turns toward their source. Hammer moves over to the edge of the flat roof and raises his arm, pointing directly to the west.

There, on the horizon, illuminated by the soft glow reflecting off the clouds, comes a horde of creatures storming along at top speed. Unhindered by fatigue, they must have run the whole way from Mosca, Hooper, and Moffat. Among them are countless humanoid creatures, including twisted mutants from the desert and warped desert animals, infected and turned completely against the natural order.

But yet more unsightly things follow close behind. Even from this distance, you can make out strange

spidery beasts, ghastly abominations that look like animals rearranged and thrown together again like the mythical creations of Frankenstein. Some sprout animal heads on long bobbing necks, while others propel themselves across the rocky terrain on multitudes of skittering and shuffling legs.

Hammer stumbles back for a moment, gripping his gun instinctively. Kyren stares, but quickly gathers his composure.

"They're moving on the entrance cavern! Send word to One-Eyed Jack to get ready! Hammer! You know what to do!"

Just then, a huge, lumbering creature emerges into the light in the distance. Far larger than anything else in the Enemy army, it defies description. It resembles an enormous, amorphous mass of living protoplasm, pulling itself along on tentacle-like pseudopods as masses of thralls march before it.

Hammer, Ace, and the guards on the rooftop simply stare in horror. Kyren grinds his teeth in defiance.

"Nix that, Hammer! Throw together a sally force and destroy that thing!"

Hammer motions for some men to follow, then stares directly at you.

HAMMER FALL (EL VARIES)

Though the New World Order is moving on Shelter City in a massed wave, the PCs will only participate in a small but key part of the battle: the tip of the spear. Hammer selects them to join the sally force to destroy the "thing" charging the city's front entrance. Because of the monster's immense size and alien appearance, the Wastelords rightly fear that this new entity might be able to crash straight through the outer defenses.

Once the PCs have gathered their gear and met Hammer in the entrance cavern, read the following:

You stand huddled under the vault entrance overhang along with more than a dozen well-armed and armored Wastelord soldiers, a few of whom sit on sputtering motorcycles, ready to race out of the cavern and into battle. The sound of shouts, screaming, and gunfire fills the air as defenders on the level above lay down a hail of covering fire. Suddenly the ground begins to rumble and shake. Something enormous is approaching ...

Hammer raises his plasma pistol, motioning for his soldiers to get ready. With a bellowing war cry, he sends his men into a fury, leading them out onto the battlefield in a solid mass of men.

Outside the battlefield is a plain of flat sand lit only by the weak orange lights of the abandoned slave camp reflecting off the low cloud cover above. But it is enough to see, close-up, the true size of the Enemy army converging on the city.

You are charging headfirst into the middle of the advancing enemy army's lines—the "spear tip."

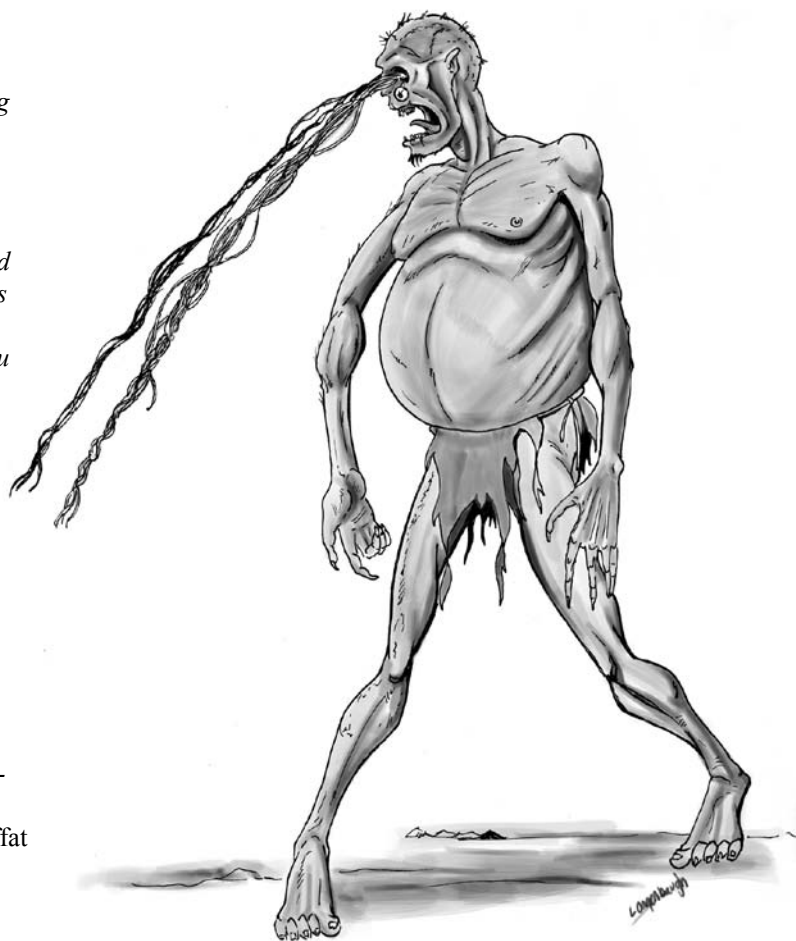
Covering fire from soldiers behind you cuts down one, two, four, and many more shamblers and humanoid seedlings that have already made it this far. Other creatures begin to move towards your location, sensing unprotected prey, but by the time they arrive you have closed more than half the distance to the “thing.”

There it is, just a few dozen yards ahead. It is enormous, a twelve foot mass of quivering “biomass” that even now begins to sprout additional tentacles and pseudopods to face Hammer’s sally force. It resembles an enormous amoeba, the color of spoiled milk and covered with brownish-purple blotches that remind you of gangrenous bruises. A terrible odor precedes it, and as it comes to a stop a troupe of zombie-like shamblers and seedlings soon catch up, brandishing weapons of all kinds to defend this new monster:

Hammer’s men seem ready to retreat in the face of this horror, but the intimidating general growls at them to stay their ground and attack.

The battle has begun; enemies are moving in from all sides, and you face a monstrous enemy of unknown ability. What will you do?

The “thing” the PCs have been sent to kill is a *large free-floating biomass*, created from the liquefied biomaterials accumulated by New World Order integrators when Moffat fell. Consuming the cattle trapped there when the town fell, the integrators reformed their biomass into a living organic creature of terrible strength and abilities.



FRIENDLY FORCES

Fighting alongside the PCs in this battle are Hammer, two *Mid-level Wastelords*, and 12 *Low-level Wastelords A*.

Another handful of *Low-level Wastelords A* are in the area, but these are riding around the perimeter on motorcycles making sure no more enemies arrive to overwhelm the sally force. Since their attention is elsewhere, they do not participate directly in the battle.

♥ **Hammer:** hp 82 (see Appendix 1).

ENEMY FORCES

The exact composition of enemy forces depends on a random die roll:

D6	Enemy Forces
1	1 Large Biomass*, 1 Dog Integrator, 1 Mutant Integrator, 1d2+2 Human Seedlings B, 1d4+2 Mutant Shamblers, and 2 Mutant Seedlings D
2	As above, but also with 1d4 Mutant Seedlings A and 1d4+2 Coyote Seedlings (Transformed)
3-6	As above, but with an additional 1d4+2 Mutant Shamblers and 1d4+2 Mutant Seedlings E

* For this battle the Large Biomass has these talents: *Damage Reduction 3/-*, *Plan and Tactical Aid*.

TACTICS

Hammer leads the charge against the biomass, but keeps distance between it and him as long as possible, trying to score damage with his *plasma pistol*. Hammer’s Wastelord men generally follow the same strategy, forming a circle if necessary to keep the biomass at arm’s length so they can continue to wear it down with automatic fire.

The biomass rolls towards whichever enemy (or enemies) looks to be the most formidable. If the Last God has reason to single the PCs out (for instance, if they “angered” it during their infiltration of Saguache), the biomass will move to attack them exclusively.

While the biomass fights, the shamblers, seedlings, and integrator (if present) engage the Wastelords one-on-one in an effort to distract and divide them long enough for the biomass to win against the enemy leader and shift its attention to the rank-and-file.

VICTORY

Once the biomass is destroyed, the immediate threat to the city gates has been neutralized. Hammer (or the ranking Wastelord still standing) leads the PCs and any surviving troops in an orderly retreat back to the front gates, just in time for a pair of armored buses (from the Wastelord vehicle pool) to come together to seal off the entrance behind them.

NEW WORLD ORDER

Once they have completed their mission, the PCs are given 2 injections of *Stimshot A* before the sudden and unexpected outbreak of the next encounter (see below).

DEFEAT

The Wastelords will break and flee if 1) Hammer and at least half the PCs are taken out of action, or 2) if they lose more than eight of their number (not including Hammer). If they flee, they leave all fallen comrades behind and head for the front gates. In this case, any Enemy forces that survived this battle will be present in the *Trojan Horse* scenario (see below).

TROJAN HORSE (EL 7)

Unbeknownst to Kyren and his Wastelords, a large number of the civilians evacuated to Shelter City during the chaos were in fact infected thralls, who infiltrated the refugee column and remained undetected as they were herded into the city. Now that they have cleared the entrance, the node mother outside (still in contact with them through its telepathy) causes them to transform and embark on a chaotic killing spree. The only thing that stands in their way are a handful of Kyren's Amazon allies and the PCs...

Once the party is safely back inside the city after the *Hammer Fall* episode, continue with the following:

As the two armored buses close off the cavern entrance behind you, you are whisked deeper into the complex. Men injured during the sally raid are ushered away for immediate treatment. Medics fight to get clear of the crowds, which cram the passages leading from the entrance cavern to the Slums; hundreds of civilians are packed into the enormous vaulted chambers, the wide-eyed looks on their faces betraying their fear and despair.

You now find yourselves catching a moment's rest within the overcrowded tunnels, standing eye-to-eye with many fearful refugees. Over the chaos you hear the sound of the ongoing battle outside, as soldiers manning the overlook rain automatic rifle and machinegun fire down on the oncoming Enemy hordes. But the Enemy is determined, and every now and again a defender on the upper level is fried by a stray microwave beam fired from the handful of well-armed thralls marching on the cavern entrance. And, though you sit safely inside, you hear the deafening detonation of hand grenades lobbed over the buses at the gate, killing defenders on the other side.

Dead bodies, both military and civilian, are beginning to pile up. Observing the course of the battle from his headquarters, Kyren orders his Amazon allies to escort the remaining civilians towards the Marketplace to avoid further casualties from stray fire. You watch as these tough warrior-women herd men, women, and children down the main street like cattle; soon you are swept up among them.

You are suddenly surprised by a multitude of terrified screams from the mass of children and elderly ahead of you. Turning and drawing your weapons, charging down the passage and into the market cavern, you arrive just in time to see the crowd erupt in an all-out panic.

There, at the center of the crowd, a number of civilians have suddenly "changed" into mutated thralls. The Wastelords have made a terrible mistake—some of the civilian refugees must have been infected in the course of the evacuations and came here carrying the infection, waiting for the right moment to reveal themselves.

As the people scramble in absolute horror, one of the thralls grabs a shocked Amazon warrior standing nearby in its rubbery arms. The thrall's entire chest ruptures in an explosion of blood, revealing a vertical maw almost three feet long and filled with jagged teeth. The Amazon stares in wordless horror as she is drawn to the maw and broken in half, her spine snapping with an awful crack that can be heard clear across the cavern.

But the murderous thrall is not alone—there are almost dozen others, even now changing into similar forms and already moving to cause as much chaos and bloodshed as they can!

The infiltration has begun. Sketch a map of the market cavern for the players (see the map of Shelter City for a guideline). This will act as an ad hoc battle map on which to play out this scene.

GM's Note: Though it is suggested that the battle be contained to the marketplace, it is possible that the thralls disperse and try to do more damage by splitting up. If this is the case, the encounter could quickly turn into a desperate manhunt, with the PCs splitting into small groups to hunt down individual seedlings running rampant through Shelter City and murdering anyone that crosses their path!

FRIENDLY FORCES

In addition to the PCs, there are four *Amazons* present. There are also 20 *Civilians* (see Appendix 1), but these latter are non-combatants who will generally try to flee the field as quickly as possible.

Every other round after the first, the PCs receive reinforcements in the form of two *Amazons* and two *Slave Soldiers A*. In addition, on each round the GM should roll 1d6; on a 6, a single *Mid-level Wastelord* also shows up to help quell the infiltrators.

ENEMY FORCES

The Enemy force consists of 10 *Civilian Seedlings* (Transformed). They are considered to have the benefit of a surprise round due to their sudden and unexpected transformation (skip the normal duration required for transformation; they are considered to have already transformed while part of the crowd).

NEW WORLD ORDER

One of the seedlings has already killed an Amazon guard (do not include this in the *Friendly Forces* totals above), and thus does not act on the first round. The other 9, however, can act normally.

Complication: While the seedlings participating in the “Trojan horse” ruse wreak havoc, any Enemy forces that survived the *Hammer Fall* scenario (if the PCs were defeated) will arrive at the marketplace cavern on the fifth round of battle. They try to crash through the buses, and if successful, they attack the PCs and their allies from the rear. If they cannot break through, they wait for the seedlings inside to come and open the gate to allow them entrance.

TACTICS

The Amazons try to contain and eradicate the infiltrators to the best of their ability; they will not run from this battle. The civilians will flee (you may want to use the *Collateral Damage* table, presented under the *Hooper* section, to determine if innocent bystanders are hit if the PCs attack before the civilians manage to escape from the marketplace), but will make tempting targets for the Enemy seedlings during the surprise round.

The New World Order forces are here to cause panic and disruption, and thus will generally disregard complex tactics. They are merely here to kill; they do not distinguish between civilians, Amazons, and PCs.

VICTORY

The PCs are only victorious if they kill every last infiltrator and prevent the “conversion” of other civilians into the Enemy’s ranks. However, victory is short-lived; as soon as the outbreak in the square is quelled, the PCs are called once more to Kyren’s side for a briefing (see below).

DEFEAT

If the PCs are overcome by the seedlings, they may still be saved, at the GM’s discretion. It is possible that escaping Amazons drag dying PCs away for treatment; though the supply of meds should not be unlimited, if the players have performed particularly well in previous battles, the Wastelords may consider the use of these costly items to heal the PCs a worthwhile investment.

BATTLE TO SLAY THE NODE MOTHER (EL VARIES)

Once the outcome of the battle in the market cavern has been determined, it is time to move to the final decisive engagement of the New World Order offensive. When the players are ready, read the following:

The unexpected infiltration of the city by the infected civilians has thrown the defenders into panic. Though the surviving Amazons try to quell the rout, people are running everywhere in panic. But at least the damage has been contained.

Still aching from your wounds, you go over to make sure the last thrall is dead. At the same time, a legion

of Wastelord mechs appears with heavy flamethrowers slung across their backs and goggles fixed over their eyes; they immediately get to work torching the dead bodies filling the cavern.

Though the situation here is under control, the battle elsewhere seems to have tipped in the Enemy’s favor. Looking around, you see a nearby Wastelord take a direct hit by a microwave beam fired by a maser-toting thrall not ten paces away; the impact throws him a few feet back as his body ignites in a stream of sparks. Though the intruder is quickly killed by a pair of nearby Amazons, you hear the sounds of battle spilling from the entrance cavern and into the labyrinth of tunnels of the city itself.

A nearby Wastelord grunt shouts to you that Kyren once again wants to see you. You leave the area immediately and manage to fight your way up into the safety of his command post overlooking the crevasse leading back to the city.

Men are scrambling everywhere as maser beams streak by, but Kyren, kneeling behind a sandbag revetment, looks unconcerned as he stares through binoculars to the northwest. He seems totally oblivious to the explosions, stray maser beams, and the sound of his army slowly being beaten on the lower level of the city.

Before you can report to him the urgency of the situation, Kyren raises his hand for silence. Then he points out into the distance, apparently at whatever it was he was watching. Instead of explaining, he merely hands his binoculars to you.

There, through the lenses, you see through the army of thralls and into the night. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of creatures out there, and you wonder what it is that has Kyren so transfixed.

Then, all of a sudden, you see a bright aurora of glowing color within the ranks of the enemy army. As masses of shamblers and seedlings move forward, you see behind them a single creature, resembling at this distance a man walking on all fours, his back split open in a giant deformed “maw.” The glow radiates every few seconds from the beast’s now-vestigial head, which pulses and expands like a weird heartbeat. Each time it expands, it lets off a subtle but noticeable glow, and with each “beat,” the shamblers and seedlings seem to act in response.

“The node mother,” he says matter-of-factly, “and quite possibly our ticket to salvation.”

For a moment, you wonder what on earth he is talking about.

“I’ve been watching it for five minutes now and it keeps repeating its behavior. It doesn’t move. It doesn’t attack. It’s just sitting there, pulsing and glowing. It’s like some kind of organic, living command center, a biological “switchboard” relaying commands from somewhere distant. Just like we learned from the android memory module.”

He takes the binoculars back for a moment, peering through them to confirm his suspicions.

“We have a chance to end the war right now,” he says. “If we take it out, we’ll be taking out the puppeteer that controls this whole army.

“That’s where you come in. We’ll need a small party to do the job—a big force will draw too much attention and scare it off. You’ll have to sneak up to get close, then take out it with everything you’ve got. Can you do it?”

Though the PCs have virtually no other option but to say yes, Kyren compliments them on their bravery.

To better outfit them for the daring raid ahead, Kyren has organized some advanced equipment here, which he puts at the party’s disposal. These items include:

- 2 gauss SMGs
- 3 power beltpacks
- 2 M16A2s
- 120 rounds of gauss ammunition
- 120 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition
- 1 magnetic shield A
- 4 tactical vests
- 2 fragmentation grenades
- 1 canister of wound-healing *medi-spray*

The PCs can divide this equipment in any manner they like before declaring themselves ready.

Once the PCs have suited up and are prepared for battle, they are immediately taken to the edge of the crumbling Overlook, where a few Wastelord soldiers attach ropes to the overhang. From here the PCs can rappel down to the crevasse floor, right into the middle of the camp. Since much of the fighting is now taking place inside the city (behind them), the PCs may be able to sneak away without being seen!

FRIENDLY FORCES

The PCs are on their own in this final encounter.

ENEMY FORCES

This final enemy force consists of the node mother and its immediate “bodyguard.” However, once it comes under attack, it begins drawing all allied forces to the vicinity to help fight the PCs. Thus, the PCs must kill the node mother quickly—before reinforcements arrive, surround them, and destroy any possibility of victory.

Each wave is divided as follows:

- 1 On the first round of combat, Node Mother B, six Horse Seedlings (Transformed), and three Mutant Seedlings A spot the PCs and attack.
- 2 On the third round of combat, 1d4+4 Civilian Seedlings (Transformed), 1d4 Bear Seedlings (Transformed), and 1d6+4 Mutant Shamblers arrive.
- 3 On the fifth round of combat, 1d2+1 Bison Seedlings, 1d2 Mutant Seedlings D, and 1d8+4 Mutant Seedlings E arrive.
- 4 On the ninth round of combat, another 1d6+10 Mutant Shamblers arrive.

If the PCs defeat the node mother on rounds 1-2, the EL of the encounter is considered 9; on rounds 3-4 the EL is 12; on rounds 5-8 the EL is 15; after the ninth round the EL is 18.

TACTICS

If you are using a battle map, the terrain for this battle is a completely flat desert expanse providing little or no cover. The node mother is at the center of the map surrounded by the horse seedlings, which act as a “shield” against attack and move to block enemies that near the node mother.

As more Enemy forces arrive (on the third, fifth, and ninth rounds of battle), they enter the field evenly distributed on all sides (north, south, east, and west).

VICTORY (THE ONLY OPTION)

Once the node mother has been killed, even if other thralls remain in the field, read the following:

As the node mother collapses under the weight of your combined attacks, its twisted and malformed body crashes to the earth without so much as a twitch, like a pile of body parts that had been held together by nothing more than some unseen entity’s powerful will. When it hits the ground, its mouth stretches open into an unnatural shape, and an utterly inhuman rumble emanates from within—like the exhausted, dying gasp of something truly unearthly that is unwilling to give up its precious grip on this “host.” Its eyes, glossed over and pure black, fixate on you for a few seconds, as if the will behind this great army, somewhere in the desert, was intent on remembering your faces for a long time to come.

Though the body it was using as its vessel can no longer function, whatever dwells behind the eyes seems to give the weak, mortal flesh one final command: the node mother’s grotesque mouth slowly twists into an eerie and alien smile, a grin that remains even moments later when the eyes lose their spark and the monster expires for good.

Now that the node mother has been destroyed, thralls all around the battlefield are thrown into chaos. Shamblers simply collapse like puppets that have had their strings cut, returning to lifeless corpses; seedlings scatter, no longer driven by the coordination of the node mother and now operating solely on their own survival

instincts.

For a few moments, the people of Shelter City stand silent and still, stunned by the sudden and total collapse of the Enemy army. Only moments ago they were fighting for their lives; now they rise on weak legs, nursing bloody wounds, to watch the Enemy stumble off in every direction like lost children.

AFTERMATH

Once the battle has been won, read the following to the players:

Once again you find yourselves utterly exhausted; wounded, badly beaten, recovering from the wounds of an epic battle. Shelter City, and indeed all of the towns under the rule of Kyren and his Wastelords, are saved. Even now, though the sting of battle is still fresh in your minds and evidenced in your bleeding wounds, the people emerging from the underground city realize they may yet see another day—and rejoice.

When after a time it is deemed safe for the refugees to emerge, a great cheer erupts throughout the city and the slave camp outside. People climb on top of abandoned cars and jump up and down with their hands in the air. People hug and laugh and cry all at the same time. Battle-weary Wastelord guardsmen, hesitant to join the celebrations with the slaves they so cruelly oppressed, cannot help but relax their grips on their weapons and give each other reassuring glances. The war is won!

All around you the people congregate, cheering, waving their arms about in celebration. Within moments you are swallowed up by the crowds, lifted over their heads and carried along like true heroes to the cavern entrance to Shelter City. Here women and children have emerged from their hiding places en masse, and are joined by tired-looking Wastelords of all ranks who watch with faint but undeniable smiles of gratitude on their faces.

Depending on whether or not you plan to play this adventure as part of the *Against the Wastelord* series, proceed with either Ending A or its alternate, Ending B.

Ending A provides a lead-in to *The Last God*, the third installment in this series and the epic conclusion to the events that have led the PCs so far from home.

Use **Ending B** if you have been playing *The New World Order* as a stand-alone adventure. Ending B wraps up the conflict with the New World Order and details the final rewards in store for the PCs.

ENDING A

Though the Wastelords remain wary, within a few hours it is confirmed that the Enemy has been dashed and that patrols have hunted down every last remnant within a mile of Shelter City. Overwhelmed with relief, the

entire city virtually bursts with revelry, a spontaneous celebration that will no doubt last for hours. As the people celebrate their new lease on life, Wastelord soldiers are busy gathering up the infected dead and lighting them up in huge conflagrations—leading to the citywide celebrations more than a dozen enormous bonfires around which frenzied celebrants dance.

From your isolation you see the celebrations as something else: a mixture of relief and morbid detachment from life. These people have just survived a living hell, and coming face to face with the dead countenances of their inhuman enemy has made them sane again.

As you stand in a dark room in camp, nursing your wounds and listening to the spontaneous festival outside, the door behind you opens. In step a few Wastelord guards, accompanying the all-too-familiar raider prince, Kyren.

Kyren moves to the window and also stares out, for a moment saying nothing. The firelight dances in his eyes, but you can already tell he hasn't come here to congratulate you.

Before you can say anything he turns and makes eye contact with you.

"The battle here is won," he says, almost poetically, "but the war is not yet over."

He allows a moment for these words to sink in. Then he motions for one of his men to bring over a map of the San Luis Valley.

Kyren points to a small dot on the map, labeled with a single word: "Center." He motions to a hand-written notation and a small red "X" over the town. The notation lists GPS coordinates.

"That is the point of origin," he confirms, "where the Enemy came from."

You suddenly feel a sense of foreboding, and you guess from Kyren's blunt manner what is coming next.

"We need you to go there and put an end to the Enemy. This war, this whole fight, is only the beginning. For all we know, it could come again. Whoever—whatever—keeps the Enemy trapped, it may not last forever. You have to go there and see that the job is done."

Kyren stares at each of you.

You know what you have to do.

Now that the Last God's desperate attempt to build a "super-army" from the people of the wasteland has failed, it is time to move against it in its own lair, beneath the town of Center at the heart of the valley.

With only a day or so to heal their wounds, the PCs are re-supplied and sent on their way, with only one goal: to go to Center, find a way through the failing android quarantine, and put an end to whatever creature lurks behind the menace of the New World Order.

The players are now ready to continue with the final part of this adventure series, *The Last God!*

ENDING B

For you the war is over. Your service here is done, and though the people celebrate you as heroes in the city and in the camp outside, before long you approach Kyren with expectations of payment. While the worship is flattering, it was corium that you came here for, and it is corium you expect to leave with—in abundance.

When Kyren meets you in his command tent the evening after the battle, he is nursing wounds of his own. He eyes you with a certain caution, as if wondering whether or not you and your companions have become a threat to him.

The tension is palpable. The raider prince stares at you, and for a few moments the terror, the necessity, and the camaraderie forged under fire seem to be stripped away. You find yourselves staring into the eyes of a raider, a murderer and thug, who could just as easily order his men to kill you and drag your carcasses from his sight as reward you.

Just when you start to reach for weapons, Kyren's face turns into a grin. He moves aside and there, sitting on the table behind him, are several sacks of corium divided into equal shares.

"Your reward," he says, "for a job well done. You've saved my empire. 5,000 corium apiece. A king's ransom in any part of the wasteland."

He is quiet for a moment, but his eyes linger on each of you.

"Of course, there are many vacancies in my army now, what with the war. I could use skilled men like you, as officers and generals. No man lives forever, and the empire I've built must pass into capable hands... with Qwan dead, I will eventually have to choose a new successor ..."

You only stare back at his gleaming eyes, not knowing how to refuse such an audacious offer. In the end he merely grins again, finally accepting the unshakable nature of your character.

"No matter where you choose to go," he says with a flourish, "you will forever be remembered as friends of the Wastelords—you need not fear our wrath in any land you travel."

With Kyren's promise lingering in your ears, you pick up your sacks and ponder their contents. Five thousand corium pieces is a great deal of money. You are set for a long time. You wonder if you should pry the sacks open and count the nuggets one by one. But then, Kyren has proven good on his word, and that is good enough for you.

With a curt nod you salute the raider prince, turn on your heel, and leave the service of the Wastelords.

FINAL REWARDS

With the end of the war, the San Luis Valley is saved, and Kyren is eager to reward the PCs; not only have they earned their pay, but the new emperor has a vested interest in showing outsiders that the Wastelords are trustworthy business partners.

Kyren rewards the PCs with 5,000 corium pieces each, and allows them to keep any material treasure (weapons, medicines, etc.) they received during their term of service. This latter reward is a gesture of goodwill, which Kyren hopes will go a long way to earn the PCs' friendship should he ever need them again.

This concludes *The New World Order*.

FROM HERE

If you're playing *The New World Order* as part of the *Against the Wastelords* series, **Ending A** provides a ready bridge to the third and final part of the series, *The Last God*.

If you're not playing part three of this campaign, you can still continue the action in the San Luis Valley—or move on. If you and the players want the PCs to remain in the Valley, there is still a lot of work to do. For one, though the New World Order forces have been shattered, Kyren and his inner circle of Wastelords now feel confident enough to mount a *counter-attack*. Simply defending their holdings against the Enemy may not be enough, since leaving so much as one seedling alive means this whole nightmare could happen again. As a result, the Wastelords must now actively press the weakened army of thralls, must destroy them one and all.

Of course, the PCs will play an important role in this counter-attack, serving as special reserve troops that Kyren will send wherever they are needed. You can continue the adventure by putting PCs in the role of "special forces," combing the desert hunting down rumors or reported sightings of seedlings in the next few weeks (and months).

Though the characters may find plenty of opportunities for continued action and adventure in the Valley, part three of this campaign really brings the threat of the New World Order, and the truly alien mastermind behind it, to an epic climax. If you own or plan to acquire part three, *The Last God*, it's now time to proceed to this campaign's ultimate conclusion!

APPENDIX 1: NPC STATISTICS

This section lists the game statistics for the various NPCs in the *New World Order*.

THE WASTELORDS

The Wastelords benefit from a large number of men and women trained for war, but at heart they are raiders, specialized in quick, highly mobile strikes against terrified (and often divided) communities of victims. As such, the Wastelords are not suited for defense against a united and dedicated enemy; it remains to be seen how they will fare against such a foe.

LOW-LEVEL WASTELORD A

Low-level Wastelords are soldiers of the raider empire who have yet to see extensive combat experience; while a select few may have been on campaign before, and may even have killed on behalf of Kyren or Qwan on occasion, none can really be considered “seasoned.” Most Low-level Wastelords are equipped with M16A2s.

☛ **Low-Level Wastelord A, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2; HP 7; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +1 class, +2 leather armor); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6+1, gun butt) or +2 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +2 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 1/-, Fast Healing 2; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AP 5; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Resurrector.

Skills: Climb +2, Drive +4, Intimidate +2, Jump +2, Read/Write (Unislang), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +2, Survival +2.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: M16A2, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, leather armor.

LOW-LEVEL WASTELORD B

As above, except Wastelords of this type are more specialized for guard duty; they are trained to use close-in weapons and tactics appropriate to indoor or (in the case of Shelter City) underground environments. Each of these Wastelords is typically armed with a Valtro PM-5-350 and a single *concussion grenade*.

☛ **Low-level Wastelord B, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2; HP 7; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +1 class,

+2 leather armor); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6+1, gun butt) or +2 ranged (2d8, Valtro PM-5-350); Full Atk +2 ranged (2d8, Valtro PM-5-350); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 1/-, Fast Healing 2; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AP 5; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Resurrector.

Skills: Climb +2, Drive +4, Intimidate +2, Jump +2, Read/Write (Unislang), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +2, Survival +2.

Feats: Post Apocalyptic Technology, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Room-Broom.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: Valtro PM-5-350, two boxes of 12-gauge ammunition, leather armor, concussion grenade.

MID-LEVEL WASTELORD

Mid-level Wastelords include experienced raiders, tougher and more ruthless guardsmen and bodyguards, and the administrators of some of the smaller Wastelord towns. A Mid-level Wastelord is usually equipped with leather armor, an M16A2, and a single *fragmentation grenade*.

☛ **Mid-level Wastelord, Tough Hero 4/Raider 2:** CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d10+12; HP 61; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +4 class, +2 leather armor, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt) or +8 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +8 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+1), Damage Reduction 2/-, Fast Healing 2; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +0; AP 9; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Resurrector.

Skills: Balance +2, Climb +3, Drive +8, Intimidate +5, Jump +3, Read/Write (Unislang), Repair +6, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +1, Survival +2.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Great Fortitude, Improved Autofire, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Strafe.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: M16A2, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, leather armor, fragmentation grenade.

HIGH-LEVEL WASTELORD

These are the most experienced and elite Wastelord raiders, ranging from seasoned garrison commanders to members of the Wastelord “inner circle.” They tend to be trusted members of the Wastelord hierarchy with a great deal of combat and leadership experience; unlike many of their lower-level underlings, these men (and women) actually know what they are doing in a fight.

A typical High-level Wastelord wears an *undercover vest*, and is equipped with an M16A2 and medicine for emergency medical treatment in combat.

☛ **High-level Wastelord, Tough Hero 4/Raider 3/Road Warrior 3:** CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 10d10+20; HP 90; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 24, touch 20, flat-footed 21 (+3 Dex, +7 class, +3 undercover vest, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +9; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2, gun butt) or +12 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +10/+5 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Boarding Party, Chaps and Chains (+1), Damage Reduction 2/-, Fast Healing 2, Offensive Driving; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +2; AP 11; Rep +3; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Resurrector.

Skills: Climb +5, Drive +14, Intimidate +9, Jump +5, Navigate +3, Read/Write (Unislang), Repair +6, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +1, Survival +3.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Great Fortitude, Improved Autofire, Intimidating Strength, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Strafe, Vehicle Dodge, Vehicle Expert.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: M16A2, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, undercover vest, *survival kit*, *ready syringe (stimshot A)*.

WASTELORDS OF NOTE

The gang known as the Wastelords is run by a group of high-level raiders and thinkers, a kind of “inner circle” whose membership is hand-picked by Kyren. Most of these elites are men and women who have proven their loyalty to the central concept behind the gang: that education, intellect, and ruthlessness are the keys to superiority over the wasteland’s myriad inhabitants.

The men and women who comprise this “inner circle” believe firmly in Kyren’s vision for Shelter City; they are committed to his philosophy of “might makes right” and share his belief that survival in the wastes requires a firm and powerful Wastelord presence. Some are former “originals,” natives of Shelter City, while others are wastelanders recruited by Kyren for their ability to “see the light.”

KYREN

Reasonably young, intelligent, handsome, and at times even likeable, Kyren is nonetheless capable of depthless duplicity and cold indifference. He is the visionary behind the Wastelord “empire,” which has transformed a xenophobic vault community into a powerful raider kingdom feared throughout the region.

☛ **Kyren, Charismatic Hero 6/Raider 6:** CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d6+6 plus 6d10+6; HP 84; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (+3 Dex, +2 class, +2 tactical vest, +2 chaps and chains); BAB +9;

Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d4-1, pistol whip), or +13 ranged (2d8, Desert Eagle); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4-1, pistol whip), or +13/+8 ranged (2d8, Desert Eagle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains +2, Horrifying Kill, Charm, Coordinate, Fast Healing 2, Fast Talk; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +6; AP 12; Rep +5; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Occupation and Background: Academic, Resurrector.

Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +8, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (ancient lore) +11, Knowledge (current events) +11, Knowledge (technology) +9, Knowledge (tactics) +12, Navigate +4, Read/Write (Ancient), Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Unislang), Survival +2.

Feats: Bull’s Eye, Double Tap, Frightful Presence, Hard-Eyed, Heroic Surge, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Precise Shot, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Weapon Focus (desert eagle).

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity. Immune-System Abnormality.

Possessions: Tactical vest, *mastercraft +1 Desert Eagle*, four boxes of .50AE ammo, four *ready syringes of Stimshot B*.

QWAN

Kyren’s second-in-command Qwan is a ferocious and cunning warrior, known for his skill both as a battlefield commander and a close-quarters combatant. Tall and rugged, Qwan is ambitious and smart, but his one true failing is his distrust for others—especially those who threaten his position. While Qwan is completely loyal to Kyren, he considers the throne of the Wastelord empire his “by right,” and will do anything to prevent someone else from stealing Kyren’s favor from him.

☛ **Qwan, Charismatic Hero 3/Smart Hero 4/Raider 5:** CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d6+3 plus 4d6+4 plus 5d10+5; HP 90; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 25 ft.; Defense 25, touch 17, flat-footed 23 (+2 Dex, +5 class, +6 tactical vest, +2 chaps and chains); BAB +8; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2, combat knife); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2, combat knife); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+2), Coordinate, Damage Reduction 2/-, Horrifying Kill, Inspiration, Plan, Savant (tactics); AL Wastelords; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +4; AP 12; Rep +6; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Military, Resurrector.

Skills: Bluff +4, Computer Use +6, Diplomacy +6, Drive +13, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +15, Investigate +9, Knowledge (current events) +8, Knowledge (tactics) +10, Knowledge (technology) +9, Listen +4, Navigate +9, Repair +9, Search +5, Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Trade), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +4, Survival +8.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Agile Riposte, Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Combat Expertise, Dodge, Heroic Surge, Intimidating

Strength, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Streetfighting, Weapon Focus (M16A2).

Mutations and Defects: Aberrant Endoskeletal Encasing. Sensitivity (poison).

Possessions: Combat knife, tactical vest.

STOGIE

Though the Wastelords have given him a good-natured nickname, “Stogie” is anything but a loveable person. An aficionado of expensive cigars, Stogie is a middle-aged man who comes off as a “gentleman” of sorts; behind his genteel veneer, however, Stogie is a sadistically cruel man turned into a monster by his own destitute upbringing.

A wastelander by birth, Stogie grew up in a number of communities where his skills were exploited by one cruel master after another. When each community fell, he was always spared and taken to another; his knowledge of trivia about a variety of useful subjects was the only thing that kept him alive. He saw loved ones die off and less-educated friends killed, but he always survived.

Descending into a cold sense of detachment, it wasn’t a big adjustment when Stogie finally joined the Wastelords. When they conquered his village in the Forbidden Lands and killed almost the entire population, he was spared because of his knowledge. Taken with them back to Shelter City as a slave, Stogie didn’t fight or resist in any way. His complacency impressed Kyren, and when Stogie almost single-handedly designed the Wastelords’ computerized communications network (see the *Communications Center*), he was elevated to the inner circle.

Though he always appears calm and collected, Stogie is a paranoid man desperate to hold on to what he has. He values the luxuries of his position, which include fine cigars, alcohol, furnishings, and access to books (books that increase his worth and further the Wastelords’ reliance upon him) more than anything else. He has little use for women and considers them a nuisance.

If Stogie’s status were ever somehow threatened, he would be a crafty and insidious foe, lashing out like a cornered rat fighting for its very life.

☛ **Stogie, Smart Hero 3/Tinker 8:** CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 11d6; HP 42; Mas 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +5 class); BAB +5; Grap +4; Atk +8 ranged (2d8, gauss pistol); Full Atk +8 ranged (2d8, gauss pistol); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ low-light vision, savant (repair), exploit weakness, jury-rig+4, tinkering, tech weapon, tinkercraft, smart weapon; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3 (-1 to disease), Ref +4, Will +10; AP 11; Rep +4; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Occupation and Background: Repairman, Resurrector.

Skills: Computer Use +19, Craft (electronic) +17, Craft (mechanical) +17, Craft (structural) +7, Decipher Script +5, Demolitions +11, Disable Device +14, Drive +8, Investigate +5, Knowledge (ancient lore) +9, Knowledge (physical sciences) +9, Knowledge (technology) +17, Navigate +4,

Pilot +3, Read/Write (unislang), Read/Write (ancient), Repair +22, Research +14, Search +11, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +0, Survival +0.

Feats: Advanced Technology, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Gearhead, Intuitive Mechanic, Mobility, Modern Firearms Discipline, Modern Vehicles Discipline.

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Immune System Abnormality.

Possessions: Gauss pistol, power backpack, two boxes gauss ammunition, two anti-tank grenades, mechanical toolkit, electronic toolkit.

“ONE-EYED” JACK

Scarred from countless battles in the wasteland, “One-Eyed” Jack was the former security chief of Shelter City. When Kyren conquered the city, Jack was given a chance to surrender and switch sides. No fool, Jack complied and began a career hunting down and executing the very people he had once sworn to protect.

If Jack has any shred of humanity left at all, none can tell. His disposition is icy and unnerving, and he works almost robotically when following orders. His only pastime is poker, at which he excels—in no small part due to his inability to form a grin or frown on his utterly vacant face.

☛ **“One-Eyed” Jack, Tough Hero 4/Raider 5:** CR 9; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 9d10+27; HP 81; Mas 16; Init -1; Spd 25 ft.; Defense 26, touch 15, flat-footed 26 (-1 Dex, +6 class, +9 forced entry unit, +2 chaps and chains); BAB +8; Grap +12; Atk +10 melee (1d6+2, combat knife), or +7 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2, combat knife), or +7/+2 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 2/-, Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+2), Horrifying Kill; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; AP 9; Rep +3; Str 14, Dex 9, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Military, Resurrector.

Skills: Climb +1, Concentration +3, Drive +3, Escape Artists +0, Gamble +6, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +8, Jump +3, Read/Write (unislang), Sense Motive +0, Speak Language (unislang), Spot +6, Survival +4.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Armor Proficiency (heavy), Burst Fire, Confident, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Power Attack.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Immune System Abnormality.

Possessions: M16A2 assault rifle, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, combat knife, forced entry unit.

“BIG” BERT

A huge and hulking mutant, Big Bert was one of Kyren’s favorite followers—and also one of his most trusted warriors. Feared and respected by the other Wastelords, Big Bert was originally a wastelander handpicked by Kyren to serve as a bodyguard during the bloody coup that overthrew the government of Shelter City. Big Bert was later elevated

to the rank of general, but was killed during the recent foray into the Tradelands (see *Against the Wastelords*).

☛ **Big Bert, Tough Hero 4/Raider 3:** CR 7; Large Humanoid; HD 4d10+12 plus 3d10+9; HP 55; Mas 20; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 class, +1 leather armor, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +6; Grap +14; Atk +10 melee (2d8+6, huge hammer, two-handed); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (2d8+6, huge hammer, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains +1, Remain Conscious, Second Wind; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +2; AP 9; Rep +2; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Tribal.

Skills: Bluff -2, Diplomacy -2, Disguise -2, Hide -3, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Navigate +3, Spot +3, Survival +4.

Feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Heroic Surge, Improved Damage Threshold, Power Attack, Primitive Technology, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Streetfighting, Sunder, Super Mutant, Telekinetic Shield.

Mutations and Defects: Gigantism (x3), Telekinesis. Bilirubin Imbalance, Sensitivity (acid, x2).

Neural Mutations: 5 Telekinesis uses per day.

Possessions: Huge hammer, leather armor, plush doll, one *concussion grenade*.

HAMMER

A wastelander, Hammer was once a member of the *Ravagers* mega-gang; he was cast out due to “failures” as a battlefield commander (in reality, he had been asked to conquer a *Cartel* community that he had no chance of taking). Though initially grateful to be spared a death sentence, he soon realized that he had little chance of surviving without the protection of the gang. Branded as a raider, he would be dead meat in a civilized settlement, but he had virtually no skills with which to survive out in the wasteland—he had spent almost his entire life *taking* from others instead of learning how to survive on his own.

On his last legs, dying of hunger and thirst, he was found by the Wastelords. On a lark, Kyren ordered one of his best men to kill Hammer in a pit fight, but when Hammer fought ferociously (despite being close to death already), Kyren spared him. Thereafter, Hammer has remained a loyal follower of the Wastelords and believes he owes his life to Kyren.

Hammer has proven to be a skilled tactical commander, and has risen to become one of the Wastelords’ most level-headed generals. Though he is not particularly likeable (he is, after all, a rugged personality who has lived his entire life as a raider), his ability to look past appearances and set aside personal biases may make him one of the few Wastelords the PCs can approach with ideas or concerns.

☛ **Hammer, Strong Hero 4/Raider 4:** CR 8; Medium Size Humanoid; HD 4d8+8 plus 4d10+8; HP 82; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 25 ft; Defense 25, touch 17, flatfooted 23 (+2 Dex, +5

class, +6 tactical vest, +2 chaps and chains); BAB +8; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+4, gun butt), or +11 ranged (3d10, plasma pistol); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+4, gun butt), or +11/+6 ranged (3d10, plasma pistol); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ melee smash, improved melee smash, advanced melee smash, chaps and chains +2, bloodthirsty cry; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 8; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 7.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Radical

Skills: Climb +2, Drive +10, Intimidate +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (tactics) +13, Navigate +8, Read/Write (Unislang), Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Unislang), Survival +3.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Combat Reflexes, Double Tap, Point Blank Shot, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Rip a Clip, Weapon Focus (Plasma Pistol).

Mutations and Defects: Regenerative Capability, Atrophied Cerebellum.

Possessions: Plasma Pistol, two minifusion cells, tactical vest.

ACE

“Ace” is a tight-lipped woman of no little beauty, once a native of Shelter City who recognized that the only way to survive under Kyren’s rule was to adapt. When two Wastelord gangers came to take her off to Kyren’s harem, Ace picked up a gun and shot them both dead. Ever since, she has continued to earn the respect (and fear) of her fellows by killing at even the slightest insult or threat. Though this murderous response has kept her alive and inviolate, it has certainly changed her inside.

Ace is not a likeable woman, nor she does she go looking for friends. She only wants to survive; Kyren understands this and exploits it. He gives her more and more freedom and privacy in return for her continued service as one of his best enforcers, cracking down on those whom he believes are plotting against him. Ace now believes she has so much blood on her hands that she cannot be redeemed, and so continues to slide down the slippery slope of self-hatred that will probably lead to her utter corruption or death.

☛ **Ace, Strong Hero 3/Raider 4:** CR 7; Medium Size Humanoid; HD 3d8+6 plus 4d10+8; HP 73; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 25 ft; Defense 18, touch 15, flatfooted 17 (+2 Dex, +4 class, +6 tactical vest, +2 chaps and chains); BAB +7; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +9 ranged (2d10, maser rifle); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +9/+4 ranged (2d10, maser rifle); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ low light vision, melee smash, improved melee smash, chaps and chains +2, bloodthirsty cry; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +6 (+2 diseases), Ref +5, Will +3; AP 7; Rep +2; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Radical

Skills: Drive +3, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +8, Navigate +3, Read/Write (Unislang), Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Unislang), Survival +4.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Double Tap, Hard-Eye, Point Blank Shot, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Rip a Clip.

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Immune System Abnormality.

Possessions: Maser Rifle, two power clips, tactical vest.

“LIPSTICK” LENA

The avaricious, self-important daughter of one of Shelter City’s ruling elders, Lena was only fourteen when Kyren laid siege to the city. Enchanted by the roguish conqueror, she betrayed her city by stealing her father’s access card and allowing Kyren entry to the city’s interior. She was “rewarded” for her part in the coup by becoming Kyren’s mistress for a time, with a seat on the Wastelords’ “inner circle.” Lena lives in relative comfort, enjoying security and privileges that make her an object of envy to other women of the city.

Now that Lena is older, she realizes that Kyren’s rule cannot last forever, and her adolescent fascination with him has begun to wane. Still, she remains his favorite concubine. Ordinarily, she would begin currying a relationship with someone in line for succession, such as Qwan, but she despises Qwan on a personal level and is thus currently without such a lover.

Lena is not merely a piece of exciting furniture; she is a vicious fighter (rumored to have up to a half-dozen blades concealed in her form-fitting latex clothing) and a more than capable plotter and planner. Having eavesdropped on many Wastelord meetings, she has a fairly good grasp of how (and how not) to rule, how to make allies (and keep enemies placated), who to anger and who to suck up to, and most importantly, how to *survive*.

☛ **“Lipstick” Lena, Fast Hero 4/Raider 3:** CR 7; Medium Size Humanoid; HD 3d8 plus 4d10; HP 41; Mas 10; Init +7; Spd 30 ft; Defense 24, touch 20, flatfooted 24 (+3 Dex, +7 class, +3 undercover vest, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +7; Grap +7; Atk +10 melee (1d6/18-20, rapier); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6/18-20, rapier); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ low light vision, evasion, uncanny dodge, chaps and chains +1, bloodthirsty cry; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3 (-1 diseases), Ref +7, Will +2; AP 7; Rep +2; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Occupation and Background: Furniture, Resurrector.

Skills: Drive +6, Escape Artists +6, Gather Information +12, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Move Silently +8, Read/Write (unislant), Sleight of Hand +9, Speak Language (Unislant), Tumble +6.

Feats: Archaic Weapon Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Combat Reflexes, Defensive Martial Arts, Elusive Target, Improved Initiative, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Immune System Abnormality.

Possessions: Rapier, Undercover vest.

“ROADKILL” RICK

(Post Apocalyptic Hero 2/Dedicated Hero 4/Raider 1):

While not exactly a genius, “Roadkill” Rick has secured a position in the inner circle through sheer *loyalty*—to Qwan. The butt of many cruel jokes while growing up (he has the dubious distinction of having run himself over with his own motorcycle), Qwan took him under his wing and, by treating him like a friend and punishing those who teased him in public, turned Roadkill into an unquestioning puppet. Rick is now a spy for Qwan, keeping an ear out for the whispered plans of rivals; many of the other Wastelords (even in the inner circle) know this and despise him because of it.

Roadkill mistakenly thinks Qwan has chosen him for the same reason Kyren picked Qwan—to become his successor. In reality, however, Roadkill is a simpleton just being used.

☛ **“Roadkill” Rick, Post Apocalyptic Hero 2/Dedicated Hero 4/Raider 1:** CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 4d6+4 plus 1d10+1; HP 50; Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +5 class, +1 leather armor, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +5; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, combat knife), or +7 ranged (2d6, Glock 17); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, combat knife), or +7 ranged (2d6, Glock 17); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Aware, Chaps and Chains (+1), Skill Emphasis (Hide)*, Wasteland Lore; AL Qwan, Wastelords; SV Fort +6; Ref +6, Will +3; AP 9; Rep +3; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Occupation and Background: Predator, Resurrector.

Skills: Bluff +1*, Disguise +1*, Gamble +8, Gather Information +2, Hide +10*, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Speak Language (Unislant), Spot +11.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Deceptive*, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Precise Shot, Room-Broom, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Streetfighting.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: Glock 17, suppressor, three boxes of 9mm ammunition, combat knife, leather armor.

OTHER NPCs

AMAZON

These represent the small contingent of Amazons the Wastelords managed to capture and force into their slave army. All of them are women. Though only armed with primitive weapons, they remain nonetheless an exceptionally fierce band of warriors who will fight bravely to earn their freedom at the end of the war.

☛ **Amazon, Tough Hero 2:** CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 2; HP 17; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +1

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class, +2 leather armor); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, spear); Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, spear); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Amazons; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Tribal.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Ride +2, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3, Survival +3.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Primitive Technology, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Streetfighting.

Mutations and Defects: Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity. Dyslexia.

Possessions: Spear, leather armor.

BORROW VILLAGERS

The inhabitants of Borrow are all basically the same; most are middle-aged, but there are a few children here and there, and even one or two teens. All are dedicated to their leader Moses (albeit bit leery of some of his more outrageous prophecies) and to their fellow villagers. They fear the Wastelords, but if the PCs offer to help them they will eagerly assist them in any way they can.

☛ **Borrow Villagers, Tough Hero 1 (28):** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 1; HP 8 each; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, unarmed) or +3 ranged (any one weapon); Full Atk +1 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, unarmed), or +3 ranged (any one weapon); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Moses; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Read/Write Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Spot +5.

Feats: Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Weapon Focus (any one weapon).

Mutations and Defects: None.

Possessions: Various weapons (see *Stronghold*).

CARTEL SCOUTS

Cartel scouts sent to the San Luis Valley to find the Wastelord homeland.

☛ **Cartel Scouts, Strong Hero 3/Guardian 3 (5):** CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 3d10+3; HP 42, 42, 40, 35 (x2); Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +4 class, +3 leather armor); BAB +6; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6, gun butt) or +9 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6 gun butt), or +9/+4 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Defender (+2), Extreme Effort, Improved Extreme Effort; AL Cartel; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 3; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Occupation and Background: Caravan Guard,

Resurrector.

Skills: Bluff -3, Climb +5, Diplomacy -3, Disguise -3, Jump +5, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Listen +3, Navigate +4, Read/Write (Unislang), Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3, Survival +0.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Combat Reflexes, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Strafe, Weapon Focus (M16A2).

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Bilirubin Imbalance.

Possessions: M16A2, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, leather armor, two juju potions (1d4+4), two *halazone tablets*.

CIVILIAN

The vast majority of Wastelord civilians are unarmed and unarmored, and only if armed by the PCs can they contribute to the war effort as soldiers... or as distractions and obstacles to delay or occupy the enemy until more skilled warriors can arrive.

☛ **Civilian, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 1 plus 3; HP 11; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3+2 nonlethal, unarmed); Full Atk +2 melee (1d3+2 nonlethal, unarmed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3, Survival +2.

Feats: Endurance, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Toughness.

Mutations and Defects: Varies.

Possessions: None.

HOWIE

The infected Cartel scout.

☛ **Howie, Strong Hero 3/Guardian 3 (1):** CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 3d10+3; HP 42; Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 30 ft. (40 ft. if *transformed*); Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +4 class, +3 leather armor); BAB +6; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d6, gun butt) or +8 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6 gun butt), or +8/+3 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Defender (+2), Extreme Effort, Improved Extreme Effort, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 3; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Occupation and Background: Caravan Guard, Resurrector.

Skills: *As Skill Set D.*

Feats: *As Feat Set D.*

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Bilirubin Imbalance.

Transformation: Additional Legs, Rearranged Vital Organs.

Possessions: M16A2, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, leather armor.

LORD HETHRIS

Lord Hethris is (or was) a Knight of Route 66, a minor gang of quixotic “knights” that prey upon merchant caravans in Trader Pass. Hethris was captured by a Cartel “Q” caravan (armed trucks filled with soldiers, disguised to look like an unguarded merchant convoy), and was going to be shipped off to Tucumcari for execution when he escaped. He eventually fell in with the Wastelords, hoping to make his way back to his people in Trader Pass.

Lord Hethris is an exceptional fighter, but his personality makes him difficult to deal with. Arrogant and elitist, he considers himself far superior to other warriors (PCs included). He does, however, respect valor and if the PCs demonstrate true skill or bravery, he may eventually view them (at best) as equals. He does not, however, exhibit kindness or mercy to those who do not deserve it, such as non-combatants.

☛ **Lord Hethris, Strong Hero 3/Raider 3:** CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 3d10+3; HP 54; Mas 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 17, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+4 class, +2 leather armor, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d8+5/19-20, longsword, two-handed); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+5/19-20, longsword, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+1), Improved Melee Smash, Melee Smash; AL Knights of Route 66; SV Fort +5; Ref +3, Will +3; AP 9; Rep +1; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Occupation and Background: Military, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Drive +3, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (current events) +2, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Survival +4.

Feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Cleave, Endurance, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Power Attack, Remove Defect.

Mutations and Defects: Increased Body Density.

Possessions: Longsword, leather armor.

MARA

Mara and her sisters are being held captive by Kyren and his Wastelords and currently have no means of escape. When, a few weeks ago, the Wastelords found their secret camp in the Forbidden Lands and surrounded it, there was no choice but to surrender. Kyren surprised them by giving them a choice—to fight alongside his men or suffer the usual consequences of being captured. So far, Mara and her

sisters have played along, but they are no fools. They know Kyren’s empire must be seriously threatened for him to extend such civility to their kind.

Mara is a strong and fierce fighter, like many of the women who call themselves Amazons, but she is also surprisingly shrewd and clever. She is always wary of innocent offers of friendship or alliance, and is standoffish even with those who fight at her side.

Mara will only join the party if it includes at least one other female.

☛ **Mara, Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3:** CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+6; HP 15; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +2 class, +2 leather armor); BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, spear, two-handed); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, spear, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Conserve, Wasteland Lore; AL Amazons; SV Fort +4; Ref +3, Will +0; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Guide, Tribal.

Skills: Hide +9*, Knowledge (mutant lore) +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +9*, Navigate +5, Ride +3, Search +3, Sense Motive +1, Spot +3, Survival +3.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Defect Adaptation, Heroic Surge, Primitive Technology, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Speak Language (Unislang), Stealthy*, Track.

Mutations and Defects: Shriek (x2), Negative Chemical Reaction.

Possessions: Spear, leather armor.

MOSES

Moses is a colorful character, to say the least; he looks like a Biblical prophet and acts like he’s destined to be the savior of the world. He isn’t a brain-addled wasteland maniac, however—he truly believes in what he preaches and prophesizes, and wants only to protect his followers from what he believes is an unending cycle of catastrophes destined to be visited on man by God for sins committed during the time of the Ancients. Though he is certainly a bit unbalanced, he only means well for his followers, and especially for his daughter Tammy Faye. If the PCs don’t jump to conclusions or form snap judgments based solely on his brand of religion, they may find Moses a dedicated friend and ally in the future.

☛ **Moses, Charismatic Hero 3/Demagogue 4:** CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d6+3 plus 4d6+4; HP 45; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 class); BAB +3; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed) or +4 ranged (2d6, TEC-9); Full Atk +3 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed), or +4 ranged (2d6, TEC-9); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Coordinate, Followers, Inspiration, Lead Followers, Zealots; AL Borrow (inhabitants); SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +9; AP 9; Rep +5; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

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Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +5, Listen +6, Perform (oration) +8, Read/Write (Ancient), Search +4, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Spot +6.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, Iron Will, Leadership, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology.

Mutations and Defects: None.

Possessions: TEC-9, 64 rounds of 9mm ammo.

MOTAK

Motak is an Entropist, one of a handful of elite warriors from that Twisted Earth faction sent by their leadership north across Trader Pass to the San Luis Valley. Motak is only vaguely aware of why he is here; he knows that the Enemy is more than it seems, and that it is possibly related to the *marionette worm* that infests his own homeland in the Mountains of Misery. He doesn't know much more than this, however.

Motak looks like any other member of his faction: shaved completely bald, wearing all-white clothing (so he feels "clean" at all times), and habitually wary of physical contact with strangers. Though he perpetually grooms himself and worries about ticks, lice, and other parasites, he is a tough warrior and a crack shot with his firearm.

☛ **Motak, Fast Hero 3/Skulk 2:** CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8-3 plus 2d8-2; HP 25; Mas 8; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 20, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (+2 Dex, +6 class, +2 leather armor); BAB +3; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (2d6/19-20, katana), or +6 ranged (2d8, FN P-90); Full Atk +3 melee (2d6/19-20, katana), or +6 ranged (2d8, FN P-90); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Improved Increased Speed, Increased Speed, Sneak Attack (+1d6), Sweep; AL Entropists; SV Fort +0; Ref +7, Will +3; AP 7; Rep +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Occupation and Background: Military, Radical.

Skills: Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (current events) +3, Knowledge (tactics) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +6, Tumble +6.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Burst Fire, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Speak Language (Unislang), Weapon Focus (FN P-90).

Mutations and Defects: Adrenaline Control. Phobia (germs).

Possessions: FN P-90, two boxes of 5.56mm ammunition, katana, leather armor.

RESISTANCE FIGHTER

The members of the Hooper "resistance" are men and women, mostly young, who have strained for too long under the cruel yoke of their Wastelord masters. Driven to violence, they would gladly trade their lives for a chance to strike back at the raiders who occupy their town.

☛ **Resistance Fighter, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 1; HP 12; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +0; Atk +0 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed) or +2 ranged (2d6, Sa.23); Full Atk +0 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed), or +2 ranged (2d6, Sa.23); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Hooper; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Slave, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Climb +2, Hide +2, Jump +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Endurance, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology.

Mutations and Defects: Regenerative Capability, Sickle Cells.

Possessions: Sa.23, two boxes of 9mm ammo (40 rounds each), *ready syringe (stimshot A)*, fragmentation grenade.

SIR GOODYEAR

Goodyear is a true "cavalier," a believer in the ancient codes of chivalry, nobility, and fair play. A loyal servant of the Ultraviolet Empire (see the *Gazetteer* section of *Darwin's World 2nd Edition* for more details on Mountain Home, the capital of this bizarre kingdom), a small mountain hold north of the Forbidden Lands among the Big Rocks, he is one of only a handful of elite warriors who model themselves after the legendary knights of King Arthur. A man who lives by codes and ideological principles instead of harsh realities and necessities, Goodyear's noble spirit and courage stand in stark contrast to the grim pragmatism of most wasteland dwellers.

☛ **Sir Goodyear, Dedicated Hero 3/Survivalist 2/Guardian 2:** CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 3d6+3 plus 2d10+2 plus 2d10+2; HP 40; Mas 13; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; Defense 21, touch 13, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +4 class, +8 plate mail); BAB +6; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d3, nonlethal, unarmed) or +6 melee (1d6, rifle butt); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed), or +9/+4 ranged (2d8, Steyr AUG); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Called Shot (+1d6), Defender (+2), Faith, Skill Emphasis (survival)*, Way of The Land* (general bonus); AL Ultraviolet Empire; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +4; AP 9; Rep +1; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 9.

Occupation and Background: Caravan Guard, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Diplomacy +1, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (tactics) +7, Listen +5, Navigate +9*, Ride +12, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +5, Survival +12*.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Armor Proficiency (heavy), Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Track, Weapon

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Focus (Steyr AUG).

Mutations and Defects: Interior Moisture Reservoir, Negative Chemical Reaction.

Possessions: Plate mail, Steyr AUG, 120 rounds of 5.56mm ammo, ten *salt pills*, horse (with necessary trappings).

SKAG

A feral pit fighter from Ebb prior to the war in the Trade Lands. Captured by the Wastelords when Ebb fell (see *Against the Wastelords*), he was thrown in with the rest of the Wastelords' captured warriors to fight in Kyren's war.

☛ **Skag, Strong Hero 5:** CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d8+10; HP 50; Mas 17; Init +1; Spd 25 ft.; Defense 16, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +3 class, +2 leather armor); BAB +5; Grap +8; Atk +9 melee (1d10+7, heavy flail, two-handed); Full Atk +9 melee (1d10+7, heavy flail, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Advanced Melee Smash, Improved Melee Smash, Melee Smash; AL None; SV Fort +5; Ref +2, Will +1; AP 7; Rep +1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 7.

Occupation and Background: Slave, Feral.

Skills: Balance +5, Intimidate +6, Listen +4*, Spot +4*, Survival +8.

Feats: Alertness*, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (light), Gladiator, Improved Damage Threshold, Improved Initiative, Primitive Technology, Weapon Focus (heavy flail).

Mutations and Defects: Extreme Resilience (x2), Multiple Stomachs. Atrophied Cerebellum (Wis), Hunchback, Under-Developed Organ (voice box).

Possessions: Heavy flail, leather armor.

SLAVE SOLDIER A

The majority of Kyren's slave army is made up of primitive folk kidnapped, enslaved, or bought from other lands. They are a diverse group, and in a single platoon one can find young boys and old men alike, hailing from a variety of communities all across the Forbidden Lands.

A typical slave soldier has only a simple weapon, such as a machete, sickle, pitchfork, or spear.

☛ **Slave Soldier A, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 1; HP 8; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+2, machete); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+2, machete); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3, Survival +3.

Feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Endurance, Post

Apocalyptic Technology.

Mutations and Defects: Varies.

Possessions: Machete.

SLAVE SOLDIER B

The luckiest slaves in Kyren's army have the privilege of carrying firearms into battle. Because the automatic rifles normally used by the Wastelords are reserved for the more experienced and trusted raiders, these slaves must make do with less impressive guns.

☛ **Slave Soldier B, Tough Hero 1:** CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+2 plus 1; HP 8; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, unarmed) or +3 ranged (2d8, pipe rifle); Full Atk +1 melee (1d3+1 nonlethal, unarmed), or +3 ranged (2d8, pipe rifle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Robust; AL Wastelords; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Ride +2, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +3, Survival +3.

Feats: Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Weapon Focus (pipe rifle).

Mutations and Defects: Varies.

Possessions: 5.56mm pipe rifle, 10 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition.

TAMMY FAYE

Tammy Faye is *nothing* like her father. She is young and vivacious, and though she loves her father very deeply, she knows he is somewhat demented in his old age. She doesn't believe in his prophecies or doomsday teachings, but she humors him anyway (partly out of a child's obedience, and partly because defying him in front of the other villagers would devastate him). Tammy Faye is Moses' pride and joy, and he would do anything to protect her; something he has proven often in the past by hiding her (and other village children) in the old mines beneath Borrow whenever the Wastelords came demanding "tribute."

Despite being conditioned to fear the outside world, Tammy Faye secretly yearns to leave Borrow and see it for herself. She is particularly grateful to PCs who not only save her village, but who also tolerate or even befriend her father instead of simply labeling him a "crazy cult leader."

☛ **Tammy Faye, Dedicated Hero 5:** CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d6+5; HP 27; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +3 class); BAB +3; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3-1 nonlethal, unarmed) or +5 ranged (2d6, TEC-9); Full Atk +2 melee (1d3-1 nonlethal, unarmed), or +5 ranged (2d6, TEC-9); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Cool Under Pressure (Listen, Search,

Spot)*, Faith, Skill Emphasis (Sense Motive)*; AL Moses; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5; AP 7; Rep +2; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Occupation and Background: Herdsman, Ritual Preservationist.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Hide +4, Investigate +3*, Knowledge (theology and philosophy) +3, Listen +11*, Move Silently +4, Read/Write (Ancient), Sense Motive +14*, Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Spot +11*, Treat Injury +9.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Alertness*, Attentive*, Burst Fire, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology.

Mutations and Defects: None.

Possessions: TEC-9, 64 rounds of 9mm ammo.

TELGAR

Telgar is a sight to behold—withered, hairless from radiation, covered in calloused gray skin, with eerie multi-faceted eyes like those of an insect. Telgar was one of over fifty slaves purchased by Kyren from the slavers of Lil’ Vegas in recent months. Like many others from Lil’ Vegas, Telgar was a corium miner by trade, drawn to that city by its promise of quick riches in the corium mines. Instead, what he found was ruthless servitude to Lil’ Vegas’ cruel overlord. Sent into the deep, radiated mine shafts, Telgar saw many of his fellows die a slow and painful death. He himself is mutated and thus somewhat resistant to the radiation that claimed so many of his companions, but his body still bears the scars of his ordeal there.

Telgar is a capable fighter, but his true specialty is working underground. He has good senses and his mutated eyes provide him with exceptional sight in dark places. He is unafraid of working in close or unlit environments (such as subterranean tunnels). Though sometimes humorless, he is a trustworthy comrade.

☛ **Telgar, Post-Apocalyptic Hero 3:** CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d8+6; HP 19; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +2 class, +2 leather armor); BAB +2; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, gun butt), or +3 ranged (2d8, black powder rifle); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, gun butt), or +3 ranged (2d8, black powder rifle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Survival Sense, Wasteland Lore; AL None; SV Fort +4; Ref +3, Will +3; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 6.

Occupation and Background: Corium Prospector, Tribal.

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +3, Knowledge (mutant lore) +2, Listen +10*, Move Silently +3, Profession (mining) +4, Search +8*, Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +12*, Survival +4.

Feats: Alertness*, Armor Proficiency (light), Endurance, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Primitive Technology, Simple Weapons Proficiency.

Mutations and Defects: Gamma-Ray Visual Sensitivity, Multi-Faceted Eyes*, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation, Pituitary Deformation, Skeletal Deterioration.

Possessions: Black powder rifle, 24 rounds of lead shot, leather armor.

APPENDIX 2: CREATURES

THE LAST GOD

Though more details about the Last God will be presented in part three of this series, the following section outlines the numerous abilities and species traits of the thralls of the New World Order.

THE BIOMASS “POOL”

The Last God is more than just a single amoeba-like organism imprisoned beneath the town of Center—it is a terrifyingly complex being designed to be immune to eradication by one attack or a single strike. It is a true “macro-organism”: instead of being just one entity with a single form, it is a collection of related bits of “biomass” (tissue, cells, and even microscopic particles) connected through a single telepathic sentience. While it was designed to begin life as a single organic mass (not unlike a giant amoeba), the Last God was also intended to spread itself to other carriers through contact with living creatures, which in turn dispersed its actual being over a wide area. So long as one infected thrall or free-floating biomass remains, the sentience of the creature persists.

This fantastic ability allows the Last God to exist in not just one place but in many, coordinating its “hosts” as if coordinating the limbs and extremities of one enormous body.

Currently, the Last God, as a single entity, consists of what amounts to 3,000 HD of assorted biomass. This represents the current limit of what the Last God can realistically control through actual physical impregnation (the passing on of some of its own mass to a new host).

Each time the Last God infects a new organism, it dilutes its mother mass beneath Center. The Last God’s physical body is finite, and it can only afford to spread to a limited number of thralls due to the constraints of its physical form.

Ultimately each creature infected by the Last God takes with it a part of the whole. Larger (and tougher) creatures are harder for the Last God to impregnate and control, requiring more of its physical mass to dominate than smaller, more insignificant life forms. In addition, the type of thrall to be made also affects the biomass requirement:

Original Size	Biomass Requirement
Tiny	1 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Small	2 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Medium-size	3 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Large	5 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Huge	8 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Gargantuan	12 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*
Colossal	17 HD worth of biomass (or the actual HD of the creature, whichever is greater)*

If the creature in question actually has more HD than its size would normally require (for instance, a bear is only a Large creature but it has 6 HD), the higher number is used. * *In the case of shamblers, use the base creature's hit dice before applying the zombie template.*

Type	Additional Biomass Requirement
Shambler	+0 HD worth of biomass (minimum 1 HD)
Seedling	+1 HD worth of biomass
Integrator	+5 HD worth of biomass
Node Mother	+10 HD worth of biomass

NEW BIOMASS

The macro-organism that is the Last God is finite, and killing any of its “appendages” (its seedlings, integrators, node mothers, and other thralls) permanently reduces the total HD of the creature as a whole. However, the Last God does have the ability to recoup these losses to its mass.

Integrators are parts of the macro-organism that are specifically designed to replenish its biomass supply. Integrators literally *consume* living creatures and add their tissue to the biomass of the Last God; each HD consumed adds an equal number of HD to the Last God's total, allowing it to recover from losses in war or battle—or to *grow*.

SHARED SKILLS (AND FEATS)

Because the contagion of the Last God links the minds as well as the bodies of all creatures absorbed into the macro-organism, it has a huge pool of skills and feats to call upon. Former scientists, security personnel, and soldiers all contribute not only an advanced grasp of various sciences and battlefield tactics, but also let even the most minor thrall use these advanced skills as a result of their shared awareness and sentience.

This skill sharing is not infinite, however. The sharing of more advanced skills and feats—those that involve complex mental capabilities—require close proximity to a biomass or a node mother, and thus thralls using complex skills are limited to a radius close to the greater macro-organism. Beyond this radius, these complex skills begin to diminish, and are replaced by more “instinctive” survival skills. As a

result, while New World Order thralls may possess amazing technical skills when close to a node mother (or a controlling biomass), the further they are from such a “home base” the less intelligently they behave, until at the most extreme distances they are reduced to an almost animal intelligence.

In game terms, all biomasses and thralls (except for shamblers, which are too primitive to function with higher mental capacities) share the same skills and feats. The number and rank of feats and skills depend on the distance between the thrall and the nearest biomass. Biomasses and node mothers have a constant set of skills and feats. Use the information below to determine the skills available to any given thrall:

Distance From Controller	Skills/Feats
Up to 2 miles	Skill/Feat Set A
Up to 5 miles	Skill/Feat Set B
Up to 10 miles	Skill/Feat Set C
20 miles or more	Skill/Feat Set D

SKILL/FEAT SET A

Skills (base ranks only): Bluff +6, Climb +10, Computer Use +15, Craft (chemical) +13, Craft (electronics) +13, Craft (mechanical) +13, Craft (pharmaceutical) +13, Craft (structural) +6, Craft (visual art) +4, Decipher Script +5, Demolitions +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +6, Drive +6, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +2, Hide +2, Intimidate +12, Investigate +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (ancient lore) +4, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) +13, Knowledge (earth and life sciences) +16, Knowledge (physical sciences) +13, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Knowledge (technology) +13, Listen +8, Move Silently +2, Profession +4, Repair +7, Read/Write (Ancient), Research +13, Search +4, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +7, Survival +2, Swim +3, Treat Injury +10.

Feats: Advanced Electronics Discipline, Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Pharmaceutical Discipline, Advanced Technology, Advanced Weapons Discipline, Alertness, Armor Proficiency (Light, Medium, Heavy), Athletic, Attentive, Builder (chemical, electronics, pharmaceutical, structural), Burst Fire, Educated (earth and life sciences, technology), Endurance, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Gearhead, Great Fortitude, Improved Autofire, Iron Will, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Post Apocalyptic Technology, Primitive Technology, Room-Broom, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Strafe, Studious, Weapon Focus (Colt 635), Weapon Focus (H&K MP5), Weapon Focus (pulse laser rifle), Weapon Specialization (Colt 635), Weapon Specialization (H&K MP5), Weapon Specialization (pulse laser rifle).

SKILL/FEAT SET B

Skills (base ranks only): Bluff +6, Climb +10, Computer Use +15, Decipher Script +5, Demolitions +6, Disable Device +6, Hide +2, Intimidate +12, Investigate +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +2,

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Read/Write (Ancient), Repair +7, Research +13, Search +4, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +7, Survival +2, Swim +3, Treat Injury +10.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Technology, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Gearhead, Personal Firearms Proficiency.

SKILL/FEAT SET C

Skills (base ranks only): Bluff +6, Climb +10, Hide +2, Jump +5, Knowledge (tactics) +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +2, Read/Write (Ancient), Search +4, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +7, Survival +2, Treat Injury +10.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Technology, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Personal Firearms Proficiency.

SKILL/FEAT SET D

Skills (base ranks only): Bluff +6, Hide +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +2, Read/Write (Ancient), Search +4, Speak Language (Ancient), Speak Language (Gutter Talk), Speak Language (Unislang), Spot +7, Survival +2.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Advanced Technology, Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Personal Firearms Proficiency.

Skill totals may be further modified by the creature's attributes and size.

N.W.O. TALENT LIST

Like skills and feats, the macro-organism has accumulated a vast number of talents from the various character types it has integrated into its mass. Because of the unified mind (and body) of the macro-organism, all thralls contribute their former talents to this central “pool”, from which other thralls can draw on to fulfill particular roles.

Upon becoming infected a thrall can exchange any number of its existing talents for replacements from this list:

Ancient Secret (ancient technology), Ancient Secret (ancient craft), Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+1), Confusing Tirade, Damage Reduction 1/-, 2/-, and -3/- (each step taken as an individual talent), Exploit Weakness, Gossip, Improved Critical, Improved Melee Smash, Melee Smash, Plan, Robust (all character levels count as Tough levels), Savant (computer use), Savant (craft, pharmaceutical), Savant (decipher script), Savant (knowledge, earth and life sciences), Savant (repair), Savant (research), Scientific Improvisation, Scientific Method, Tactical Aid.

TRANSFORMATION

An unusual adaptation of the macro-organism is its ability to literally *reshape* the bodies of infected sub-organisms. By rearranging components of the body, the macro-organism

can cause a thrall to grow new arms, sprout additional legs, or project its eyes out on long sinewy eyestalks for better vision. In essence, the body becomes a block of living clay that the macro-organism can rebuild and reshape. Though even during the time of the Ancients scientists were not clear how this ability functioned, it was speculated that this unique biological phenomenon is related to the process by which the XBM reduces living matter to an almost “mercurial” state.

All thralls except for shamblers can undergo transformation, a process that requires 1d4 rounds of inactivity. Since thralls can take no other actions while transforming, they usually only do so when alone or when they have time to prepare. Once transformed, the thrall can never again revert to its original form.

A transformed thrall may select any *two* of the following traits:

ADDITIONAL ARMS

The thrall's body sprouts additional arms, though these primitive appendages resemble tentacles, tendrils, or purely vein-like extensions of the thrall's body mass.

Benefit: While they do not provide additional attacks, a thrall with additional arms gains a +4 bonus to grappling attempts.

ADDITIONAL LEGS

The thrall's body splits open, sprouting additional legs on which to walk or run. Two-legged creatures now run on four legs in the manner of a dog or horse; creatures with four or more legs now scuttle about with a flurry of motion like some terrifying mutant scorpion or spider.

Benefit: This trait adds +10 to the base creature's speed.

DISLOCATION

Because it can rearrange existing muscles and form entirely new muscles at will, the thrall can dislocate any of its bones to provide greater flexibility.

Benefit: The thrall gains a +2 bonus to Climb, Escape Artist, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble checks.

ENLARGE MAW

The thrall's head and mouth is reshaped, with jagged bits of bone drawn from throughout the body to create multiple rows of serrated teeth.

Benefit: This reshaped mouth makes existing bite attacks deadlier. Damage done by the creature's bite attack increases by one step:

Old Damage	New Damage
1d2	1d3
1d3	1d4
1d4	1d6
1d6	1d8
1d8	2d6
1d10	2d6
1d12	2d8
2d6	2d8

2d8	4d6
4d6	4d8

EXTEND HEAD/LIMB

The thrall's body rearranges its mass, allowing the head (or a limb) to extend outwards on a long, sinewy tendril or trunk.

Benefit: The thrall gains +5 ft. of reach when attacking with a bite, claw, or slam attack.

EYESTALKS

The creature's eyes sink back into the head and it sprouts eyestalks on long ropy tendrils of muscle and sinew. These eyestalks give it greater visual capabilities.

Benefit: The thrall can see in all directions, receives a +4 bonus to Spot checks, and cannot be flanked.

LASHING TONGUE

The thrall's mouth expands, allowing a long snake-like tongue to strike out from inside.

Benefit: As a standard action, the thrall can spit this lashing tongue at a target up to 30 feet away (treat this as a ranged touch attack); if it hits, the tongue wraps around the target and initiates a grapple. The tongue deals no damage itself, but is considered to have a Strength of 20 for the purposes of grappling. Once a target is grappled by the tongue, the thrall can continue to act normally, but may not wander more than 30 ft. away from the grappled target.

The tongue can be cut (AC 15, hit points equal to 1/2 the creature's normal total, break DC 25), but it reshapes on the thrall's next action and can be used again.

REARRANGED VITAL ORGANS

A thrall with this trait has its vital organs moved, rearranged, or spread out throughout its body to make it far more resistant to weapons.

Benefit: The creature suffers only half damage from piercing and ballistic attacks.

TORSO MAW

The thrall's chest cavity splits open to reveal a grotesque oval-shaped mouth, complete with jagged "fangs" formed from fractured rib bones.

Benefit: The thrall receives a bite attack in addition to any other attacks it already possesses. If used in conjunction with other attacks the bite is considered a secondary attack. The damage done by the torso maw depends on the size of the thrall:

Size	Bite Damage
Up to Small	1d6
Medium	1d8
Large	1d10
Etc.	1d12

THRALL TRAITS

Unless specified under a creature's description, all New World Order sub-types have the following species traits:

Dominated (Ex): All thralls are an integral part of the greater macro-organism and as such become physically and mentally dominated by it—they function like individual parts of a larger body, acting unquestioningly at the whim of a single mind. Thralls lose all individual will and intelligence and become a working part of the "over-being" that is the Last God. All creatures of the New World Order act on the same initiative in combat (use the highest available base Initiative bonus).

Immunities (Ex): All New World Order sub-types are immune to sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, and mind-affecting effects.

Proximity Reliance (Ex): While the link between the macro-organism's "parts" is impressive, it is not infinite. The effectiveness of all abilities depends on the distance between the individual thrall and the Last God's main body (considered to be located wherever the largest concentration of the Last God's HD resides), or the nearest node mother or free-floating biomass:

Distance	Abilities Available
Up to 2 miles	Dominated, Immunities, Shared Skills, Telepathic Link, Transformation
Between 2 and 5 miles	Immunities, Shared Skills, Telepathic Link, Transformation
Between 5 and 10 miles	Immunities, Shared Skills, Transformation
Between 10 and 30 miles	Immunities and Shared Skills only*

* *At this distance the sentience of the macro-organism is only faintly connected to the thrall, though the thrall still operates with a vague recollection of its purpose (usually "spread the Last God's contagion").*

Shared Skills (Ex): All thralls and biomasses share a "pool" of skills—the combined mental abilities and experiences of all who have succumbed to the infection. The strength of this skill sharing depends on the distance between the thrall in question and its "controller" (a node mother or biomass).

Shared Talents (Ex): All thralls and biomasses also share a "pool" of talents taken from all the creatures integrated by the macro-organism. When a creature takes on the thrall template it can switch out any existing talents for another talent from the N.W.O. Talent List (see above). In the case of free-floating biomasses, the creature chooses talents depending on its size category: Fine no talents, Diminutive 1 talent, Tiny 2 talents, Small 3 talents, Medium-size 4 talents, Large 5 talents, Huge 6 talents, Gargantuan 7 talents, Colossal 8 talents. .

Telepathic Link (Ex): Because all thralls are a physical extension of the Last God, they are united with the greater macro-organism through a curious form of telepathic link.

All sensory information (sight, touch, sound, smell) collected by any thrall is shared by all—shamblers,

seedlings, integrators, node mothers, and the “main biomass” itself. A thrall’s sensory organs are not enhanced in any way, and function exactly like those of its host body (for example, a human thrall provides normal human sight and hearing, while a bear thrall provides normal vision as well as the Scent ability). This essentially acts like a form of *clairaudience* or *clairvoyance*, with the thrall’s eyes and ears acting as the “window” connecting the macro-organism’s unified conscience to distant locations.

Transformation (Ex): Because the bodies of thralls are only animated by the pliant biomass at their core, they can be physically reshaped—the biomass inside them can rearrange bones and internal organs in whatever fashion it desires. Transformation takes 1d4 full rounds; on completion, the creature can select *two* of the traits described under the *Transformation* section.

NEW TEMPLATES

The following are special templates that can be added to an existing creature to represent the ways that infection by the XBM virus has changed it into a thrall of the New World Order:

SEEDLING

Seedlings serve a dual purpose in the macro-organism that is the Last God: first and foremost they are carriers of the vast, infectious, communal biomass that is the Last God, and secondly they serve as extensions of the Last God’s senses. Seedlings are used not only to keep the Last God’s sentience dispersed (so that it cannot be killed in one single attack) and to spread the contagion to other creatures, but also to provide the macro-organism with hundreds of eyes and ears.

Seedlings generally resemble the creatures they were in life, and withstand the ravages of time exceptionally well (due to a special enzyme that is produced in abundance when a sizeable part of the biomass is present in a host). In some cases, a creature can be hundreds of years old and still resemble a normal specimen of its kind.

“Seedling” is a template that can be applied to any creature of the following types: aberration, animal, giant, humanoid, mutated beast, or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the “base character”). It uses all of the base character’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Mutations and Defects: All mutations and defects that affect the physical form, attributes, and abilities of the base creature are retained, but mental (including *neural*) mutations and defects are lost.

Special Attacks: A seedling retains all the special attacks of the base character. The seedling also gains the special attack listed below.

Contagion (Ex): All seedlings carry part of the Last God within them in the form of an amoeba-like mass within their stomachs. This mass is a part of the macro-organism that can be transferred to other “hosts” to infect them, grow inside them, and spread to make yet more thralls: more

seedlings, shamblers, or integrators (new node mothers can only be made by the main biomass of the macro-organism). On the following round, as an attack action, the seedling can attempt to *infect*.

Spreading the contagion requires the seedling to be in close bodily contact with a potential new host, and to literally *vomit* its internal corruption into the new host’s mouth. This is generally done by either incapacitating the target (such as by knocking him/her unconscious), or by grappling and immobilizing the victim.

The victim of an infection attempt may make a Fortitude save (DC 15) to avoid becoming infected. A failed save means the victim succumbs and acquires one of the three allowed New World Order templates—shambler, seedling, or integrator—within 1d4 rounds. The template assumed depends on what purpose the Last God has in mind for that individual. Creating any new thrall in this way degrades the biomass’ total strength (see *The Biomass Pool*).

The contagion can also be spread if a slain seedling (or any part of it) is eaten or ingested. Seedlings may even be mostly dissolved (such as by rot) in water or buried and spread to vegetation growing from the ground. The only way to completely destroy the contagious material is to subject it to intense heat—fire does the trick nicely.

Challenge Rating: Same as base character +1.

SHAMBLER

Shamblers are mindless, zombie-like thralls of the Last God. The main function of the shambler is to serve as a cheap and affordable extension of the macro-organism.

Unlike seedlings, shamblers do not carry a significant part of the Last God’s biomass and thus cannot create new thralls or spread the contagion to other hosts. Though shamblers by definition have been fully infected, only a small part of the Last God remains in their bodies to keep them under control (i.e. upright and able to walk).

Shamblers resemble the creatures they were in life, but lacking the enzymes that sustain seedlings (and other breeds of New World Order thralls), they generally rot and deteriorate much more quickly than other types of thrall. Most shamblers look like “zombie” versions of their former selves.

“Shambler” is a template that can be applied to any creature of the following types: aberration, animal, giant, humanoid, mutated beast, or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the “base character”). This template modifies the base character in the same way as the zombie template (see d20 Modern, page 267), except as noted here.

Mutations and Defects: All mutations and defects that affect the physical form, attributes, and abilities of the base creature are retained, but mental (including *neural*) mutations and defects are lost.

Special Qualities: A shambler retains all the base character’s special qualities, as well as those of the “zombie” template. It also has the species traits shared by all New World Order thralls, with the following exceptions:

Proximity Reliance (Ex): A shambler that travels more

than 30 miles from the Last God's main body (wherever the majority of the biomass' HD resides) or from a node mother is no longer under control and ceases to function; it immediately falls over and dies.

Shared Skills (Ex): Shamblers do not share skills and feats, as they lose all skills when they take on the *zombie* template. They do retain the Toughness feat, however.

Transformation (Ex): Shamblers do not have this trait.

Challenge Rating: As a *zombie* (based on size; Tiny or smaller 1/8, Small 1/4, Medium-size 1/2, Large 3, Huge 6, Gargantuan 10, Colossal 13).

INTEGRATOR

A specialized extension of the macro-organism, the sole purpose of the integrator is to consume living biological matter with which to replenish the Last God's biomass. Integrators typically prowl the battlefield searching for still-living prey to infect and consume.

The science behind the integrator's abilities is not clearly understood; it effectively liquefies living creatures through contact and reduces them to seething, formless "biomaterial" used to replace biomass lost to the macro-organism through combat or accidents.

Integrators typically retain their hosts' appearances from life, except when they are about to integrate a living creature into the Last God's biomass. When an integrator prepares to consume a creature, its body begins to swell until its stomach, face, eyes, and chest have expanded to roughly twice their original size. When this happens, the eyes fall out of their sockets and tendrils of biomass (a composite blend of internal tissues, musculature, and veins) emerge from the empty sockets to adhere to the intended victim and begin liquifying his entire body. This process is time-consuming and delicate, and generally requires a subdued or otherwise incapacitated subject.

"Integrator" is a template that can be applied to any creature of the following types: aberration, animal, giant, humanoid, mutated beast, or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the "base character"). It uses all of the base character's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Hit Dice: If the base creature possesses character levels, there is no change. Otherwise the creature gains +2 HD, including all associated benefits of advancement (if any). These added HD do not count towards the macro-organism's total biomass pool.

Mutations and Defects: All mutations and defects that affect the physical form, attributes, and abilities of the base creature are retained, but mental (including *neural*) mutations and defects are lost.

Special Attacks: An integrator retains all the special attacks of the base character. The integrator also gains the following special attack listed below.

Integration (Ex): An integrator can dissolve the physical body of a fallen enemy and turn it into semi-animated biomass that replenishes the body of the macro-organism. Once it has liquefied an enemy, it ingests the fluid, becomes

bloated (like a tick), and heads back to rejoin the nearest free-floating biomass.

Integrating any creature requires that the victim be immobilized (usually either by being knocked unconscious or grappled). During the integration process the integrator may take no other actions; it cannot move or defend itself.

During each round of the integration process, an incapacitated target takes a certain amount of acid damage depending on the base creature's size:

Size	Integration Damage
Tiny	1d4 per round
Small	1d6 per round
Medium-size	2d6 per round
Large	3d6 per round
Huge	4d6 per round
Gargantuan	5d6 per round
Colossal	6d6 per round

Since integration infects the victim with a strain of the XBM disease designed to break living tissue down into protoplasm, a Fortitude save (DC 18) can be made to resist this acid damage (special modifiers for characters with resistance to *disease* apply).

Despite the unimaginable pain (and horror) experienced by the victim of an integration attempt, a victim being integrated can attempt to break the hold as long as he or she remains conscious. However, if and when the victim is reduced to 0 hit points, it is considered "integrated" and absorbed into the integrator's hollow interior (requiring a full-round action by the integrator).

A creature integrated in this manner cannot be healed or brought back to life by any means known to science.

The benefit of integration for the New World Order is that the hit dice of any creature integrated is added to the Last God's total pool of biomass.

Challenge Rating: Same as base character +2.

NODE MOTHER

The so-called "node mother" is an important sub-unit of the macro-organism—one capable of extending the Last God's telepathic control over great distances. The node mother works like a psychic relay station or hub; as long as it remains in contact with the primary mass of the Last God (wherever the largest portion of the remaining biomass currently is, either in a host or as a free-floating amoebic blob), it can relay the main body's telepathic messages, signals, and domination to the extent of its own capabilities.

Node mothers are essential to the Last God's hopes for a "new world order." Though it is in itself a tremendous being of untold power and capabilities, the Last God cannot project its psychic influence beyond a relatively limited area. Node mothers allow the Last God to extend its telepathic powers over a greater distance.

A node mother extends the range of the Last God by an amount equal to its original capabilities (30 miles + 30 miles = 60 miles). Thus, by placing a node mother at the edge

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of its range, the Last God effectively doubles the distance covered by its influence. Two node mothers, linked together, extend this to 90 miles. Three node mothers extend this to 120 miles, and so on.

In this fashion, node mothers serve as “generals” in the Last God’s New World Order, spreading its influence, sentience, and senses beyond its normal limits. Yet at the same time these are not actually separate beings; infused with the physical matter of the Last God, they are merely semi-independent extensions of the whole.

“Node Mother” is a template that can be applied to any creature of the following types: aberration, animal, giant, humanoid, mutated beast, or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the “base character”). It uses all of the base character’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Hit Dice: If the base creature possesses character levels, there is no change. Otherwise the creature gains +3 HD, including all associated benefits of advancement (if any). These added HD do not count towards the macro-organism’s total biomass pool.

Mutations and Defects: All mutations and defects that affect the physical form, attributes, and abilities of the base creature are retained, but mental (including *neural*) mutations and defects are lost.

Special Attacks: A node mother retains all the special attacks of the base character. The node mother also gains the following special attack listed below.

Psi-Pulse (Ex): Once every 1d4 rounds, as a standard action, a node mother can produce a psionic “psi-pulse” that works almost exactly like an EM pulse except that instead of affecting electrical devices, it scrambles the transfer of electrical impulses in organic brains.

When the node mother creates a psi-pulse, all organic creatures within 50 ft. must make a Will save (DC 10 + node mother’s Wis modifier + ½ node mother’s HD) or be *stunned* for 1d3 rounds.

Special Qualities: A node mother retains all the base character’s special qualities. It also has the species traits shared by all New World Order thralls, as well as the following:

Proximity Reliance (Ex): This restriction works differently for node mothers; unlike other thralls, the integrity of the node mother’s traits do not deteriorate with range—they work out to a full 30 miles. If the node mother moves outside of 30 miles, however, its connection with the macro-organism is effectively severed (and it acts as if *confused* until it comes back within the 30 mile radius).

Psi-Inhibition (Ex): As a bi-product of its telepathic extension abilities (see description), the node mother continuously emits bizarre energies on a psionic wavelength that affects all psionic use within a broad area. This invisible energy field extends to a range of 500 ft., but anyone attempting to use neural mutations or abilities within this area must make a Concentration check at DC 18 to do so. On a failed roll the character is overcome by the psi-inhibition and cannot manifest the ability. This effect

is constant, and manifests as a dizzy feeling in psionic characters that gets stronger the closer they come to the node mother.

Psi-Relay (Ex): The main ability of the node mother is its ability to extend the awareness and “powers” of the macro-organism beyond its central physical location (wherever the “main biomass” is located). The node mother acts like a “psychic relay,” an extension that keeps seedlings, shamblers, and integrators in contact with the main biomass well beyond its normal range of 30 miles.

If a node mother is killed, all thralls directly controlled by it (that is, any thralls that previously operated under its “umbrella”) become severed from the main biomass, and act accordingly.

Challenge Rating: Same as base character +3.

NEW WORLD ORDER CREATURES

In accordance with its mad vision for the future, the Last God’s New World Order is an amalgamation of men, mutants, and animals, collectively unified by the infection of the XBM macro-organism—an infection that effectively integrates all life forms into a single enormous “over-mind.” Following are statistics for the creatures (and infected humanoids) already united under the Last God’s insidious banner.

BEAR SEEDLING

These poor infected animals are no longer in pain; they are now just parts of the Last God. Each bear seedling looks like a lumbering mountain bear, but with a keen look of power in its all-black eyes.

☛ **Bear Seedling:** CR 5; Large Animal; HD 6d8+24; HP 65; Mas 19; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 15, touch 10, flatfooted 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); BAB +4; Grap +16; Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, 2 claws), +6 melee (2d8+4, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Contagion, Improved Grab, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

BEAR SEEDLING (TRANSFORMED)

These animals are *transformed* and bear very little resemblance to normal bears. In each case, the huge furred body has shrunk into a single shapeless mass, from which sprout numerous clawed appendages that support its weight like table legs. The animal’s fanged head rises up from this central mass on an elongated trunk that sways back and forth in the air as the beast scuttles along.

These creatures benefit from the *transformation* ability (*additional legs, extend head*).

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☛ **Bear Seedling (Transformed):** CR 5; Large Animal; HD 6d8+24; HP 65; Mas 19; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; Defense 15, touch 10, flatfooted 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); BAB +4; Grap +16; Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, 2 claws), +6 melee (2d8+4, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SQ Contagion, Improved Grab, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: Additional Legs, Extend Head.

BEAR SHAMBLER

These shamblers are infected mountain bears; they now resemble sickly versions of their former selves, shrunken from inner decay and rot. Entire handfuls of fur fall off whenever they walk, revealing pulsing, bluish flesh underneath.

☛ **Bear Shambler:** CR 3; Large Undead; HD 12d12 plus 3; HP 81; Mas -; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 14, touch 9, flatfooted 14 (-1 size, +5 natural); BAB +4; Grap +16; Atk +12 melee (1d8+9, claw); Full Atk +12 melee (1d8+9, 2 claws), +7 melee (2d8+5, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SQ Improved Grab, Low-Light Vision, Move or Attack Action Only, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort -, Ref +4, Will +8; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 29, Dex 11, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: None.

Feats: Toughness.

Transformation: None.

BISON SEEDLING

Rare during the twilight of the Ancients, and rarer still in the poisoned Twisted Earth, bison are a dwindling species. A few of these animals, surviving on the fringes of the deserts blanketing the San Luis Valley, have come into contact with the macro-organism and been “converted.”

☛ **Bison Seedling:** CR 3; Large Animal; HD 5d8+15; HP 49; Mas 16; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 13, touch 9, flatfooted 13 (-1 size, +4 natural); BAB +3; Grap +11; Atk +6 melee (1d8+6, butt); Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+6, butt); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Stampede (see “herd animal”, page 239 of *d20 Modern*), Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

CIVILIAN SEEDLING (TRANSFORMED)

These creatures still resemble the normal Wastelord men, women, and children that they were before being infected by the macro-organism. During the height of battle, they

transform into far more ghastly abominations: chests explode outward to reveal gaping, jagged-toothed mouths, while their arms soften and flail about like grasping tentacles.

These creatures benefit from the *transformation* ability (*extend arms, torso maw*).

☛ **Civilian Seedling (Transformed), Tough Hero 1/Strong Hero 3:** CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 1d10+3 plus 3d8+9 plus 4; HP 35; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +4 class); BAB +3; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d3+4 nonlethal, unarmed), or +5 melee (1d8+4, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d3+4 nonlethal, unarmed) and +0 melee (1d8+4, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Contagion, Improved Melee Smash, Melee Smash, Robust, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: None.

Transformation: Extend Arms, Torso Maw.

Possessions: None.

CIVILIAN SHAMBLER

These represent the unfortunate street people infected by *Node Mother A* during its infiltration of Hooper.

☛ **Civilian Shambler, Tough Hero 1:** CR ½; Medium-size Undead; HD 2d12 plus 1 plus 3; HP 17; Mas -; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+2 natural, +1 class); BAB +0; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+3, fire axe, two-handed); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+3, fire axe, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Move or Attack Action Only, Robust; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort -, Ref +0, Will +3; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: None.

Feats: Toughness.

Mutations and Defects: Regenerative Capability, Sickle Cells.

Possessions: Fire axe, sunglasses.

COYOTE SEEDLING

Coyote are quite common in the mountains and on the fringes of the San Luis Valley desert floor, and thus it was inevitable that the macro-organism would come into contact with them sooner or later. The Last God uses infected coyote as extra eyes and ears.

☛ **Coyote Seedling:** CR 2; Small Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 13; Mas 15; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 15, touch 14, flatfooted 12 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural); BAB +1; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP

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0; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

COYOTE SEEDLING (TRANSFORMED)

Because these animals are under normal circumstances quite small and insignificant, they typically undergo a hideous *transformation* into more formidable fighting machines to prepare to battle. In the course of transformation, the coyote's skull literally rips open like a grotesque budding flower, revealing an enormous fang-ringed mouth where the head should be. A ropy tongue lashes out from this gaping maw as if feeling around for prey to latch onto. Eyes protrude from their sockets on long antennae-like stalks, rotating to look in all directions.

These creatures benefit from the *transformation* ability (*eyestalks, enlarge maw*).

☠ **Coyote Seedling (Transformed):** CR 5; Medium-size Animal; HD 4d8+12; HP 30; Mas 17; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 16, touch 13, flatfooted 14 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +3 natural); BAB +3; Grap +6; Atk +8 melee (1d6+6, bite); Full Atk +8 melee (1d6+6, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: Eyestalks, Enlarge Maw.

DOG INTEGRATOR

These animals resemble normal dogs, but their eyes burn with an unnatural intelligence that is truly disturbing to behold. When the animal begins the process of *integration*, its back arches, it begins to quiver, and it latches onto any nearby target in an effort to hold it still while the integrator literally liquifies its prey.

☠ **Dog Integrator:** CR 3; Medium-size Animal; HD 4d8+8; HP 26; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 13, touch 12, flatfooted 11 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); BAB +3; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6+3, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+3, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Integration (2d6 per round), Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

DOG SEEDLING

Because of their small size and relative quickness, these small seedlings are employed by the Last God as agile eyes and ears, probing and scouting the desert for signs of other creatures to infect.

☠ **Dog Seedling:** CR 2; Medium-size Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 13; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 13, touch 12, flatfooted 11 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

HORSE SEEDLING (TRANSFORMED)

These animals no longer resemble natural horses. Each has *transformed* into something far more horrible, sprouting extra legs and scuttling along in the fashion of a scorpion or tarantula. Each horse's head now sits atop the creature's shapeless, fleshy mass, bobbing back and forth at random while emitting a cacophony of bloodcurdling bleats and chortles.

These creatures benefit from the *transformation* ability (*additional legs, rearranged vital organs*).

☠ **Horse Seedling (Transformed):** CR 2; Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; HP 19; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 70 ft.; Defense 13, touch 10, flatfooted 12 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +2; Grap +7; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, hoof); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, 2 hooves); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: Additional Legs, Rearranged Vital Organs.

HUMAN SEEDLING A

This seedling looks merely like a bony middle-aged man, the re-animated remains of a technician who "died" at the secret facility under Center more than 200 years ago. It is armed with a stun pistol scavenged from the wreckage of that long-forgotten laboratory complex.

☠ **Human Seedling A, Smart Hero 3:** CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d6; HP 11; Mas -; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 12, touch 12, flatfooted 11 (+1 Dex, +1 class); BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +2 ranged (1d6 plus paralysis, stun pistol), or +2 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed); Full Atk +2 ranged (1d6 plus paralysis, stun pistol), or +2 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ Damage Reduction 2/-; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Possessions: *Stun pistol, power clip.*

HUMAN SEEDLING B

There are only a few of these creatures, each a pureblood human infected by the Last God in the “accident” at Center more than 200 years ago. They maintain their human appearance and are clad in disintegrating technicians’ uniforms (all-white overalls) and work boots. They each carry a maser rifle and a power backpack.

♥ **Human Seedling, Smart Hero 3/Strong Hero 2:** CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d6+6 plus 2d8+4; HP 30; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 15, flatfooted 13 (+2 Dex, +3 class); BAB +3; Grap +3; Atk +4 melee (1d6, gun butt), or +6 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6, unarmed) or +6 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Damage Reduction 3/-, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Possessions: *Maser rifle, power backpack.*

MUTANT INTEGRATOR

These integrators still vaguely resemble the original inhabitants of Saguache; wrinkled albino humanoids boasting long, ape-like arms with multiple joints. These creatures wield spears if forced into battle, but the Last God does not intend them to fight; rather, they are to remain behind in the aftermath of conquests to *integrate* fallen enemies.

Mutant Integrator, Tough Hero 2/Strong Hero 3: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 3d8+6; HP 34; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 15, flatfooted 14 (+1 Dex, +4 class); BAB +4; Grap +7; Atk +7 melee (1d8+3, spear); Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+3, spear); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 3/-, Integration (2d6 per round), Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Spear.

MUTANT SEEDLING A

These seedlings are yet recognizable as the primitive Saguache tribesmen they were in life. Each looks like a wrinkled little man with unnaturally pale skin. They cradle *maser rifles* in their disturbingly mis-jointed arms; these weapons were created using the vast knowledge accumulated by the macro-organism since the Fall. Each of these seedlings has a single *power backpack* to power its weapon.

Mutant Seedling A, Tough Hero 2/Strong Hero 3: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 3d8+6; HP 34; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 16, flatfooted 14 (+2 Dex, +4 class); BAB +4; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +6 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +6 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Damage Reduction 3/-, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Maser rifle, power backpack.

MUTANT SEEDLING B

These former Saguache tribals now use *maser pistols* in combat with the Last God’s foes. Each has two *power clips*.

Mutant Seedling B, Tough Hero 2/Strong Hero 3: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 3d8+6; HP 34; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 16, flatfooted 14 (+2 Dex, +4 class); BAB +4; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d4+2, pistol butt), or +6 ranged (2d10, maser rifle); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+2, pistol butt), or +6 ranged (2d10, maser pistol); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Ancient Secret (ancient craft), Contagion, Scientific Improvisation, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Maser pistol, two power clips.

MUTANT SEEDLING C

These tribals are armed with *M16A2s* scavenged from the abandoned military camp in Saguache or taken from the bodies of fallen Wastelords. Each carries only a single clip of ammunition.

Mutant Seedling C, Tough Hero 2/Strong Hero 3: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4 plus 3d8+6; HP 34; Mas 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 16, flatfooted 14 (+2 Dex, +4 class); BAB +4; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +6 ranged (2d8, M16A2); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt), or +6 ranged (2d8, M16A2); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Damage Reduction 3/-, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

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Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: M16A2, one box of 5.56mm ammunition.

MUTANT SEEDLING D

These Saguache tribals are each armed with two *fragmentation grenades*. Because these are homemade explosives, there is a 1 in 10 chance that a given grenade is a dud (and does not explode when used).

Mutant Seedling D, Tough Hero 2: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4; HP 15; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 12 (+1 Dex, +2 class); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d3+2 nonlethal, unarmed), or +2 ranged (4d6, fragmentation grenade); Full Atk +3 melee (1d3+2 nonlethal, unarmed), or +2 ranged (4d6, fragmentation grenade); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Damage Reduction 1/-, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Two fragmentation grenades.

MUTANT SEEDLING E

These comprise the vast majority of the Saguache villagers who became seedlings. They are armed with spears and an assortment of primitive melee weapons.

Mutant Seedling E, Tough Hero 2: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+4; HP 15; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 12 (+1 Dex, +2 class); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, spear); Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, spear); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Damage Reduction 1/-, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Spear.

MUTANT SHAMBLER

The mutant shamblers of the Last God's army are undoubtedly the most numerous of its thralls. Made up primarily of mutant tribals infected at Saguache, they

provide the backbone of the New World Order forces. Due to the shortage of good weapons in the New World Order's arsenal, these former villagers are usually only armed with spears.

Mutant Shambler, Tough Hero 2: CR ½; Medium-size Undead; HD 2d12 plus 3; HP 16; Mas -; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 12 (+2 class); BAB +1; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, spear); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, spear); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 1/-, Move or Attack Action Only, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort -, Ref +0, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 17, Dex 11, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: None.

Feats: Toughness.

Mutations and Defects: Abnormal Joint Flexibility, Sensitive Sight. Bizarre Pigmentation (no skin pigmentation), Pituitary Deformation.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Spear.

NODE MOTHER A

This creature's harmless appearance belies its horrific nature. This node mother looks like a sickly old woman with wispy, thinning white hair caked with dirt from the desert. Almost comical are the sunglasses it wears (to cover its all-black eyes), which seem out of place given its "bag lady" wardrobe.

The node mother remains in human form and does not transform throughout this adventure, anticipating that it may need to disguise itself again in the future.

☛ **Node Mother A, Tough Hero 6/Dedicated Hero 3:** CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d10+6 plus 3d6+3; HP 76; Mas 13; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 16, flatfooted 15 (+1 Dex, +5 class); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d8+4, fire axe, two-handed); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d8+4, fire axe, two-handed); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 3/-, Melee Smash, Psi-Inhibition, Psi-Pulse, Psi-Relay, Tactical Aid, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; AP 8; Rep +3; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

Possessions: Fire axe, sunglasses.

NODE MOTHER B

In its former life, more than 200 years ago, this node mother was a researcher working at the top secret disease laboratory beneath the town of Center. During the "accident" there, this scientist was infected by the macro-organism and changed into a node mother. For hundreds of years it waited with its sister thralls, until recently they managed to escape to the surface during the power failure in the android quarantine.

The node mother superficially resembles a withered

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human male, but unlike the node mother in Hooper, this one has no need to maintain a disguise—and so it waits in its chamber fully transformed. The creature resembles a hunched-over man walking on all four limbs, with its entire back torn open to reveal a four-foot “mouth” with shattered vertebrae serving as “teeth” and “fangs.” A long mass of fused tendon and muscle emerging from this huge gaping hole serves as an enormous whip-like tongue, which it uses to lash onto prey until it can scuttle over and devour them.

This node mother is the effective New World Order field leader; kill it, and the shamblers will fall apart and the seedlings and integrators will lose many of their skills (as well as their telepathic connection to the main biomass beneath Center). As such, the node mother is generally surrounded by helpers, and remains out of the fighting whenever possible. If attacked, however, it is armed with a maser rifle and a power backpack.

This node mother benefits from the transformation ability (lashing tongue, torso maw).

☛ **Node Mother B, Tough Hero 3/Smart Hero 5/Strong Hero 3:** CR 14; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 3d10+6 plus 5d6+10 plus 3d8+6; HP 100; Mas 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 17, touch 17, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +6 class); BAB +7; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (1d3+5 nonlethal, unarmed), or +10 melee (1d8+5, bite), or +8 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d3+5 nonlethal, unarmed) and +5 melee (1d8+5, bite), or +8/+3 ranged (3d10, maser rifle); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Damage Reduction 3/-, Improved Melee Smash, Melee Smash, Plan, Psi-Inhibition, Psi-Pulse, Psi-Relay, Scientific Improvisation, Tactical Aid, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; AP 10; Rep +3; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: Lashing Tongue, Torso Maw.

Possessions: EMP rifle, minifusion cell.

WASTELORD SEEDLING

The seedling-in-human-form was sent to Shelter City to infiltrate the citadel and free its trapped comrade. The seedling looks and moves just like a Wastelord.

☛ **Wastelord Seedling, Tough Hero 4/Raider 2:** CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d10+12; HP 70; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +4 class, +2 leather armor, +1 chaps and chains); BAB +5; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d6+2, gun butt) or +8 ranged (2d8, Valtro PM-5-350); Full Atk +8 ranged (2d8, Valtro PM-5-350); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Bloodthirsty Cry, Chaps and Chains (+1), Contagion, Damage Reduction 2/-, Proximity Reliance (Immunities only), Shared Skills; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +0; AP 9; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: As *Skill Set D*.

Feats: As *Feat Set D*.

Mutations and Defects: Sensitive Sight, Cystic Fibrosis.

Possessions: Valtro PM-5-350, two boxes of 12 gauge ammunition, leather armor, combat knife.

WOLF SEEDLING

These creatures look like typical wolves—except for their all-black eyes and dry, sand-caked muzzles.

☛ **Wolf Seedling:** CR 2; Medium-size Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 16; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; Defense 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Contagion, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Thrall Traits, Trip; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: None.

WOLF SEEDLING (TRANSFORMED)

These creatures are *transformed* wolves. They now walk upright on powerful, deformed legs, their heads extended on long sinuous necks of pulsing, naked musculature. They snap their jaws repeatedly at the air around them, threatening to tear into anything that comes near. Their bodies are unnaturally lumpy and misshapen, as if their bones and internal organs have been re-arranged.

These creatures benefit from the *transformation* ability (*rearranged vital organs, extend head*).

☛ **Wolf Seedling (Transformed):** CR 5; Large Animal; HD 4d8+16; HP 30; Mas 15; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; Defense 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +4 natural); BAB +7; Grap +12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+7, bite); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+7, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Contagion, Low-Light Vision, Scent, Thrall Traits, Trip; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 21, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Varies.

Feats: Varies.

Transformation: Extend Head, Rearranged Vital Organs.

WOLF SHAMBLER

With their patched and matted fur covered with dirt and desert sand, and malnourished frames through which their bones can clearly be seen, these creatures only remotely resemble living wolves.

☛ **Wolf Shambler:** CR ½; Medium-size Undead; HD 4d12 plus 3; HP 29; Mas -; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; Defense 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); BAB +1; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Low-Light Vision, Move or Attack Action Only, Scent, Thrall Traits, Trip; AL N.W.O.;

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SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: None.

Feats: Toughness.

Transformation: None.

OTHER CREATURES

HEAP TURTLE

On the surface the “heap turtle” looks like any ubiquitous pile of scrap and garbage. When prey comes close enough for the creature to spot it, the heap turtle reveals itself for what it really is – a gigantic shelled beast covered in a layer of refuse that conceals its awful appearance.

♥ **Heap Turtle:** CR 9; Huge Animal; HD 16d8+112; HP 208; Mas 21; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; Defense 20, touch 8, flatfooted 20 (-2 size, +12 natural); BAB +12; Grap +28; Atk +18 melee (4d6+12/19-20, bite); Full Atk +18 melee (4d6+12/19-20, bite); FS 15 ft by 15 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ burst of speed, debris, sharp beak; AL none; SV Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +5; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 4.

Skills: Hide +0 (+8 when in water or junk), Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: None.

MONKEY

A standard monkey no bigger than a house cat.

♥ **Monkeys:** CR 1/6; Tiny Animal; HD 1d8; HP 4 each; Mas 10; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 size, +2 Dex); BAB +0; Grap -12; Atk +4 melee (1d3-4, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d3-4, bite); FS 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; AL none; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +13, Hide +13, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

SLIME MOLE

The slime mole gets its name from its mole-like head and the sheen of clear yolk-like ooze that coats its body. Two large white eyes (utterly blind to visual light) are set into the putrid flesh of the face, while two huge “arms” support its weight and drag it along wherever it goes. Behind it twitch and writhe two fat, useless tentacle

♥ **Slime Mole:** CR 7; Huge Mutant Beast; HD 12d10+60; HP 103; Mas 20; Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; Defense 15, touch 7, flatfooted 15 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +8 natural); BAB +12; Grap +28; Atk +18 melee (2d8+12, bite); Full Atk +18 melee (2d8+12, bite); FS 15 ft by 15 ft; Reach 10 ft; SQ fast healing, keen sight, stench, sensitivity; AL none; SV Fort

+13, Ref +7, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +4*, Listen +7, Move Silently +7*, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack, Stealthy*.

SNOFFLE HOG

The snuffle hog is a boar-like creature with porcupine quills, and quadruple upturned tusks.

♥ **Snuffle Hog:** CR 3; Medium-size Animal; HD 5d10+20; HP 62; Mas 18; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 20, touch 12, flatfooted 18 (+2 Dex, +8 natural); BAB +4; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d6+6, gore); Full Atk +8 melee (1d6+6, gore); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ Quills, Scent, Stubborn; AL none; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Improved Bull Rush.

WOLF

A common wolf with an average height 3 feet tall and weight of 200 to 250 pounds.

♥ **Wolves:** CR 1; Medium-size Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 13 each; Mas 15; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; Defense 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Scent, Trip, Low-Light Vision; AL none; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Survival +1 (+5 when tracking by scent).

Feats: None.

NEW CREATURES

FREE-FLOATING BIOMASS

When not hidden inside the physical body of a thrall, the XBM macro-organism looks like a pliant whitish “blob,” a collection of billions and billions of independent celled structures that come together to form an ooze-like mass. This mass is known as a *free-floating biomass*.

The Last God’s free-floating biomass can come together, split, or divide in any way the macro-organism wishes. Usually it only splits parts of itself to infect smaller creatures, creating new thralls. However, it can also split its main biomass (that is, whatever free-floating biomass holds the majority of its hit dice) to make additional free-floating biomasses. Each free-floating biomass is essentially a smaller version of the main biomass, and can operate independently (just like any thrall).

Once the Last God has split itself, it can join free-floating biomasses back up simply by bringing them back into physical contact. As soon as this happens the separate biomasses become one; add all remaining Hit Dice from the

biomasses together and alter the macro-organism's statistics accordingly.

Remember that hit dice (from the biomass pool) already invested in thralls (shamblers, seedlings, integrators, and node mothers) cannot be "re-absorbed." The only exception is in the case of a thrall that has been killed; the macro-organism can then use an integrator to collect more biomass (from other creatures) to add to its total. The integrator need only make physical contact with any free-floating biomass to transfer this HD.

The strength, abilities, size, statistics, and additional feats (added to *Feat Set A*) of separate free-floating masses depend on the hit dice the Last God chooses to give them. See below for statistics of the various sizes of free-floating biomasses:

HD	Size of Biomass
1	Fine
2-3	Diminutive
4-7	Tiny
8-15	Small
16-30	Medium-size
31-65	Large
66-125	Huge
126-250	Gargantuan
251-500	Colossal

SPECIES TRAITS

Contagion (Ex): A biomass can infect victims in a manner similar to that of a seedling. It will usually do this by first grappling and immobilizing its prey, then forcing itself into the target's throat on the following round. The type of action spent doing this dictates the Fortitude save DC to resist; the longer it takes to force one of its corrupted pseudopods into a victim, the better the chance the creature has of infecting him. If the biomass uses a move action the DC is 15, an attack action the DC is 18, and if it spends a full-round action the DC is 21.

A failed save means the victim succumbs and acquires one of the allowed New World Order templates—shambler, seedling, or integrator—within 1d4 rounds (only the largest existing biomass, the "main" biomass, can create new node mothers). Creating any new thrall in this way degrades the biomass' total strength (see The Biomass Pool).

Damage Reduction (Ex): A free-floating biomass has damage reduction against slashing, piercing, ballistic, and bludgeoning attacks, which stacks with damage reduction from other sources (e.g. damage reduction from chosen talents). The amount of damage reduction depends on the size of the biomass: Fine DR 1/-, Diminutive DR 1/-, Tiny DR 2/-, Small DR 2/-, Medium-size DR 4/-, Large DR 4/-, Huge DR 6/-, Gargantuan DR 6/-, Colossal DR 8/-.

Elasticity (Ex): A biomass has the ability to literally "build" new pseudopods and extensions by drawing mass from throughout its body. This allows it to increase its reach by 5 ft. as a move action.

Fluid Form (Ex): A biomass can re-shape itself to repair major damage to its physical form. This translates to an

BIOMASSES IN THIS ADVENTURE

In *The New World Order*, the PCs encounter only two free-floating biomasses—a small biomass in Hooper and a large biomass in the attack on Shelter City. Each of these is basically a miniature version of the primal form of the Last God, a smaller replica of the seething pool of protoplasmic bacteria beneath the forgotten town of Center. However, as the statistics blocks show, free-floating biomasses can get bigger—*much* bigger. Though even in part three of this series, *The Last God*, the biomasses encountered never reach the level of Colossal, if the Last God were able to grow that large (through integration) it might very well become the most powerful creature on the Twisted Earth.

ability to "heal" itself 1d8 points of damage as an attack action. It can heal no more than half its normal maximum number of hit points in damage per day.

Pseudopod Grasp (Ex): The protoplasmic properties of the biomass allow it to grasp with tremendous strength and flexibility. As a result a biomass receives a +8 racial bonus to Grapple checks.

☛ **Biomass, Fine:** CR 1/3; Fine Aberration; HD 1d8 plus 3; HP 8; Mas -; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 23, touch 22, flatfooted 19 (+8 size, +4 Dex, +1 natural); BAB +0; Grap -11; Atk -3 melee (1d6-3, slam); Full Atk -3 melee (1d6-3, slam); FS 1 ft. by 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +4; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 4, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Toughness.

☛ **Biomass, Diminutive:** CR 1/2; Diminutive Aberration; HD 2d8 plus 3; HP 12; Mas -; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flatfooted 16 (+4 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap -6; Atk -2 melee (1d6-3, slam); Full Atk -2 melee (1d6-3, slam); FS 2½ ft. by 2½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +5; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 4, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Toughness.

☛ **Biomass, Tiny:** CR 1; Tiny Aberration; HD 4d8 plus 3; HP 21; Mas -; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 17, touch 14, flatfooted 15 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +3; Grap +0; Atk +0 melee (1d6-3, slam); Full Atk +0 melee (1d6-3, slam); FS 2½ ft. by 2½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +6; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 5, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Toughness.

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♥ **Biomass, Small:** CR 4; Small Aberration; HD 8d8 plus 3; HP 39; Mas -; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 12, flatfooted 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +4 melee (1d6-2, slam); Full Atk +4/-1 melee (1d6-2, slam); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +8; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 7, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Toughness.

♥ **Biomass, Medium-size:** CR 8; Medium-size Aberration; HD 16d8 plus 3; HP 75; Mas -; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 11, flatfooted 15 (+1 Dex, +5 natural); BAB +12; Grap +20; Atk +12 melee (1d6, slam); Full Atk +12/+7/+2 melee (1d6, slam); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +12; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Toughness.

♥ **Biomass, Large:** CR 12; Large Aberration; HD 31d8 plus 3; HP 142; Mas -; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 17, touch 10, flatfooted 16 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural); BAB +23; Grap +38; Atk +26 melee (1d6+4, slam); Full Atk +26/+21/+16/+11 melee (1d6+4, slam); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +14; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder, Toughness.

♥ **Biomass, Huge:** CR 20; Huge Aberration; HD 66d8 plus 3; HP 300; Mas -; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19, touch 8, flatfooted 19 (-2 size, +11 natural); BAB +49; Grap +72; Atk +56 melee (1d6+8, slam); Full Atk +56/+51/+46/+41/+36 melee (1d6+8, slam); FS 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +24, Ref +22, Will +37; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 26, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder, Toughness.

♥ **Biomass, Gargantuan:** CR 36; Gargantuan Aberration; HD 126d8 plus 3; HP 570; Mas -; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 24, touch 5, flatfooted 24 (-1 Dex, -4 size, +19 natural); BAB +94; Grap +110; Atk +102 melee (1d6+12, slam); Full Atk +102/+97/+92/+87/+82 melee (1d6+12, slam); FS 20 ft. by 20 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL

N.W.O.; SV Fort +44, Ref +41, Will +67; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 34, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder, Toughness.

♥ **Biomass, Colossal:** CR 64; Colossal Aberration; HD 251d8 plus 3; HP 1,132; Mas -; Init -2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 35, touch 0, flatfooted 35 (-2 Dex, -8 size, +35 natural); BAB +188; Grap +221; Atk +197 melee (1d6+16, slam); Full Atk +197/+192/+187/+182/+177 melee (1d6+16, slam); FS 30 ft. by 30 ft.; Reach 15 ft.; SQ Blindsight, Contagion, DR 1/-, Elasticity, Fluid Form, Pseudopod Grasp, Thrall Traits; AL N.W.O.; SV Fort +85, Ref +81, Will +129; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 42, Dex 6, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: As *Skill Set A*.

Additional Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder, Toughness.

SPECIES TRAITS

Blindsight (Ex): A free-floating biomass, while usually lacking any sensory organs of its own, still has blindsight with a range of 60 feet.

NEW ANIMAL

The following is a new animal featured in this adventure, the *coyote*:

COYOTE

Coyote are extremely adaptable canines that are prevalent in desert areas. While mountain dwelling coyote are generally quite large (the size of a collie), the desert-dwelling coyote so common on the Twisted Earth are often only half that size. Coyote generally subsist by hunting small animals such as rabbits, lizards, and insects, but they also feed on fruit and carrion.

SPECIES TRAITS

Scent (Ex): This ability allows a coyote to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

♥ **Coyote:** CR 2; Small Animal; HD 2d8+4; HP 13; Mas 15; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 15, touch 14, flatfooted 12 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural); BAB +1; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+3, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Scent; AL None; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +5, Jump +3, Listen +4, Move Silent +5, Spot +4, Survival +1 (+5 when tracking by scent), Swim +3.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 3-4 HD (Medium-size).

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