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SLEEPERS

BY BILL OGDEN

Using cryogenics to sleep past the fall of civilization or nuclear winter is a common theme in the Post Apocalyptic genre. Such characters could have vast knowledge of ancient ways, technology, and locations of ruins to loot. They may also offer scholars a rare first person glimpse into the culture of the Ancients.

They may be worshipped by survivors, or killed for the "crime" of ruining the world, or killed for simply not being strong enough to survive the Post Apocalyptic world. In the game, they could be used as a plot device, someone for the players to try and find, revive, protect, and/or deliver to their home base. They might be fearsome foes, armed with a vast array of high-tech gear. One or more of the players might even be Sleepers. An alternate campaign start might have all players play characters in a Modern setting into which the Fall comes.

SLEEPERS AS FOES

(See The Last Soldier, below)

This is the simplest method of using sleepers. A hidden base might have scientists, doctors, a variety of non-combatants, and some soldiers to protect them. For example, when the computer that runs a base detects the characters entering, first robots and automated defenses would be activated, and eventually the first set of frozen soldiers. Obviously, it should take some time to thaw 200lbs of fighting man or woman, but hopefully for the computer (and the plot), the initial defenses will slow down the intruders long enough for one or more sleepers to

Slowly, carefully, the group moved forward. They had gotten past ancient automated defenses, mutant cockroaches, and a narrow escape from a collapsing ceiling to get to the heart of this ruined Vault. Tchon the Scav was in front, his mutant senses alert to possible dangers. Next was Visa, whose mental prowess and knowledge of the ancients was second to none. In the rear, keeping watch for more dangers was Ranger, battered assault rifle ready. Ahead, lights glowed dimly beneath a thick layer of dust, and strange shapes, each meters off the floor, and two and a half meters long, were lined up along the walls. Tchon carefully brushed back the dust, and said with disappointment, "It's a body, a dead person preserved inside." Visa moved up and examined the Ancient script on the control panel. "No, not a dead body. A Sleeper!!"

be awakened. Such opponents can be built with the Sleeper Background below, and whatever equipment the GM feels is appropriate.

SLEEPERS AS PLOT DEVICE

(See Protect the Brain, below.) The characters might discover a sleeper and be ordered to or decide or otherwise end up escorting the Sleeper somewhere; to their base, to an ancient site to where the sleeper can use her technical expertise, or simply to a safer place. The sleeper may already be thawed out, or the characters might be the ones who awaken her. In this case it is probably better for the sleeper to be a scientist or other non-combatant, someone helpless to survive the Post Apocalyptic nightmare that the Earth has become, but someone in possession of vast amounts or a key piece of Pre Apocalyptic knowledge. Such a sleeper could be built with the Sleeper Background, but should have relatively low physical statistics and minimal combat ability. Another possibility is that the sleeper was frozen with a terminal illness, an illness incurable before the Fall. Could Mutant powers or Post Apocalyptic advancements save her now? Will she live long enough to help the party with their mission?

SLEEPER AS PLAYERS

If a player wants to play a sleeper, one big question is how long ago did he wake up? The campaign might start with the Sleeper(s) just hatched out, facing a motley crew of Post Apocalyptic survivors. If the GM wants to, he can even run the adventure of the Survivors finding the Sleeper complex and reviving them. Or, just as the Tribal character doesn't start with his tribe, the sleeper might have woken up some time ago and learned something of the world away from the Vault in which he slept; basically treat it as just another background

The "Sleeper campaign" (see below) could start with the characters deep in a vault, with no idea how long they've slept, what woke them, and what dangers exist. The initial scenario will almost be a reverse adventure, instead of trekking through the wilderness to the ruin, then working their way inside, the PCs will start deep within the ruin trying to get out.

SLEEPER BACKGROUNDS

There are two sleeper backgrounds. The first is appropriate for a "near future" fall, before the invention of Lasers, Powered armor, and all the other Sci-Fi items in the Twisted Earth. This could represent either a sleeper frozen before such things were invented or a setting where such items were developed after the Fall, in high tech enclaves or elsewhere. The second is the Advanced Sleeper, appropriate for the default Twisted Earth setting and other settings where Man's civilization rose to great heights before it fell. (See Chapter 4: Gamemastering, Near Future vs. Present in the Darwin's World 2nd Edition rules for some comparisons on the consequences of when the Fall takes place.)

SLEEPERS

This background is for a character frozen in the near future, when the Ancients never (or hadn't yet)

developed Advanced Technology. He might have had himself frozen to save himself from the Fall, or perhaps some time before the Fall, expecting to be revived in a safe, technological society.

An example of a character with this background is someone either useful enough for the government to save, or with enough influence or personal wealth to have it done. Scientists, Doctors, and Soldiers would be saved because of their skills, their value after the Fall. Politicians and the very rich will use their influence to save themselves, their families, and maybe their close friends. Less common will be ordinary citizens, frozen for experimental purposes, to wait for a cure for a disease, or simply to "time-travel" to the future. Now the character has awoken in a devastated world, with no tribe or settlement to call home. Will he seek his own descendants to see how they fared? Will he try to find some vestigial government to which he can transfer his loyalty? Or will he use his pre-Fall knowledge to build his own powerbase?

Skills: Choose two of the following skills as a permanent class skill: Computer Use, Craft (any), Diplomacy, Disable Device, Drive, Knowledge (any but see below), Navigate, Pilot, Repair, Research

Bonus Feats: Sleeper characters start with the Post Apocalyptic Technology Feat.

Languages: Ancient

Special: Sleepers cannot be Mutants. They are limited to the following Occupations: Academic, Craftsman, Demagogue, Healer, Merchant, Military, and Repairman. Sleepers cannot start with the Post Apocalyptic Hero class, and Sleepers starting at higher levels should seek the GMs approval for any of the Advanced or Epic Classes in the Darwin's World rulebook. Sleepers cannot start with ranks in the following skills: Speak Language or Knowledge: (Business, Current Events, Mutant Lore, Popular Culture, Streetwise, and Twisted Earth), for sleepers, this sort of knowledge would fall under Knowledge (Ancients).

ADVANCED SLEEPERS

This background is for a character frozen at the peak of mankind's technological advancement. Robots, energy weapons, artificial intelligences, anti-gravity, space flight, all the wonders of science fiction are her reality. She might have had herself frozen to save herself from the Fall, or perhaps some time before the Fall, expecting to be revived in a safe, technological society.

As with Sleepers, examples of characters with this background is someone either useful enough for the government to save, or with enough influence or personal wealth to have it done. Scientists, Doctors, and Soldiers would be saved because of their skills, their value after the Fall. Politicians and the very rich will use their influence to save themselves, their families, and maybe their close friends. Less common will be ordinary citizens, frozen for experimental purposes, to wait for a cure for a disease, or simply to "time-travel" to the future. But now the character is lost in a wasteland, with no tribe or settlement to call home. Will she seek her own descendants to see how they fared? Will she try to find some vestigial government to which she can transfer her loyalty? Or will she use her pre-Fall knowledge to build her own powerbase?

Skills: Choose two of the following skills as a permanent class skill: Computer Use, Craft (any), Diplomacy, Disable Device, Knowledge (any but see below), Navigate, Repair, Research

Bonus Feats: Advanced Sleepers characters get no bonus feats and must spend one of their feats to gain the Advanced Technology feat at 1st level.

Languages: Ancient

Special: Sleepers cannot be Mutants. They are limited to the following Occupations: Academic, Craftsman, Demagogue, Healer, Merchant, Military, and Repairman. Sleepers cannot start with the Post Apocalyptic Hero class, and Advanced Sleepers starting at higher levels should seek the GMs

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THE SLEEPER CAMPAIGN

A Sleeper campaign, with all players initially playing characters who start with one of the sleeper backgrounds, will be different from most Darwin's World games. The PCs will be ignorant of many aspects of the Twisted Earth, it's society, geography, languages. This can be an excellent way to start a group Playing Darwin's world, it's actually better if they aren't familiar with the Twisted Earth setting, it's geography, politics, and customs.

There are at three general ways to start the Sleeper campaign, and many variations.

THE WAKE UP

The first is start with the PCs waking from their long sleep. They might have been frozen knowing the Fall was coming or in complete ignorance. Either way, they will soon discover that all is not right with the world, error messages on computer screens, dust, damage to the Vault, skeletons, diaries etc. will be clues to what happened. They will eventually explore the Vault in which they awoke, and either base themselves in the facility, or go exploring.

CONVERTING AN EXISTING CAMPAIGN

Another method would be to convert an existing d20 Modern campaign to a sleeper campaign. This can be an excellent way of starting a new campaign without having to create new characters. It could also increase the sense of loss, for both players and characters, only a short while ago there was fast

food, crowds of people, television, cell phones, now there is a wasteland. Obviously this works best with a non-magic campaign, a special operations or spy/mercenary type game for example. You can even built up the coming Fall, with political tension, or terrorist attacks, discovery of a new comet; whatever is appropriate for how the GM wishes Fall to happen. Eventually, the Fall will start, and the PCs will have to make their way to the Vault to be frozen (see Adventures, below).

In this case characters will probably not have the Sleeper background, but conversion should be simple. Ranks in Knowledge skills such as Business, Current Events, Popular Culture, and Streetwise can be converted to Knowledge: Ancients. (The Post Apocalyptic version of those skills will be very different than the Pre Apocalyptic versions.) If the player has too many ranks in those 4 skills, the PC could have Knowledge: Ancients at max, and lower the other skills appropriately. (Example, Sam the soldier has 1 rank in each of those skills; he ends up with 4 ranks of Knowledge: Ancients. His fellow Sleeper Pete the psychologist is 1st level, and has 4 ranks of Business and 2 ranks in each of the other 3 skills. A total of 10 skills ranks. He ends up with 4 ranks of Knowledge Ancients, 4 ranks of Knowledge: Business, and 1 rank in the other 3 skills, still a total of 10 skill ranks.)

START BEFORE THE FALL

The final method is to create characters with one of the Sleeper backgrounds, but start playing them before the Fall. Depending on the characters, there could be mundane Modern adventures, possibly foreshadowing things to come as described above. Eventually the Fall comes, and the characters must make their way to the Vault to be frozen.

The simplest way is to use a "Near Future" fall, and the Sleeper background, not the Advanced Sleeper Background. If you allow the Advanced Sleeper

background, you may be forced to come up with a lot of details about a future society which will soon cease to exist. Alternately, you can use a "Near Future" setting, but allow the characters access to advanced training.

OTHER BACKGROUNDS

Other backgrounds might be allowed. If society is crumbling before the actual fall, there might well be Ritual Preservationist groups, like the Cargo Cults, or even Feral types in the depths of futuristic cities. The big question is, why would such characters be frozen? Obviously, the GMs word is final for such cases.

MUTANTS

Unless your Prefall setting has a lot of background radiation, no Sleeper would be a mutant, which could make a Sleeper campaign somewhat bland. However, if you rename Mutant to Genetically Engineered, it could work. Perhaps the engineering program was a failure, for each improvement (Mutation) there was a downside (Defect) except in very rare cases (for example if the PC took the Remove Defects feat at 1st level). It is suggested that Genengineered PCs fit a theme, such as a "super soldier", a Psi, or a engineered Spy. Some mutations would also be rare in genengineered PCs. Of course, they might be present as an unintended side effect of the genetic manipulation. They might simply be not available, or might cost 2 mutations to have them. As always, the GMs word is final.

"MUTATIONS" BY THEME

Super Soldier: Aberrant Endoskeletal Encasing, Accelerated White Blood Cell Activity, Blindsight, Energy Immunity (energy weapons), Extreme Resilience, Increased Body Density, Increased Movement, Independent Cerebral Control, or Sensitive Sight

Psi: Adrenaline Control, Autism, Dual Cerebellum,

Independent Cerebral Control, Pyrokinetic Pulse Generation, and at least one Neural Mutation

Spy: Chameleon Epidermis, Fragrance Development, Hyper Olfactory, Increased Movement, or Sensitive Sight

Rare “mutations” for Genengineered: Aberrant Horn Development, Acid Excretion Glands, Additional Limb Development, Claws, Complete Wing Development, Dermal Suction, Dermal Poison Sap, Dual Headed, Elongation, Epidermal Acid Enzymes, Light Distortion Field, Multiple Stomachs, Serrated Dental Development, Simian Deformity, Spontaneous Electric Change Generation or Stench

WEALTH/POSSESSIONS

It’s simpler to use the Darwin’s world money and prices, a modern character will also own a vast array of clothing, furniture, DVDs, etc., but most of that would have little effect on Post Apocalyptic survival. What the characters “buy” with their starting money would represent either items bought specifically for survival, or items the character can scrounge up around their home. Some items could be allowed for free, such as a cell phone or vehicle. Alternately, you could use standard d20 Modern Wealth rules, but some players might use the system to buy or start with large amounts of gear, which might require GM supervision. Depending on how quickly the crisis builds up to the fall and therefore how much warning the characters have, the characters might have weeks to stock up on supplies or only a few hours. Naturally, what they have before the Fall and what is still available when they are finally thawed is up to the GM.

ADVENTURES

For the Start Before the Fall and the Convert an Existing Campaign, the first few sessions could be normal d20 Modern adventures. This can give the

PCs some experience, and establish the characters as friends, and be used to foreshadow the coming Fall with rumors and news reports of political unrest, an approaching comet, mysterious flu, etc depending on what causes the Fall. Once it finally happens, the PCs will presumably head for the Vault to be frozen. Initially, they might not even be aware of the Sleeper program. Or it’s possible that they are on a list, and are contacted and told they need to get to a particular place by a certain time. Swarms of refugees, looting, martial law, and hedonistic behavior by those who feel they won’t survive, power outages and other crisis will be the obstacles faced by the characters. There should also be examples of heroism, stubborn police or military trying to do their jobs, doctors working frantically to save as many of their patients as they can, etc. The characters may also witness events that later impact the Post Apocalyptic world. For example, Dr. Gunderson at the emergency room tries to help as many people as possible. In the Post Apocalyptic setting, a local Ritual Preservationist society worships the god of healing Gundson. A National Guard convoy takes many refugees out of the city to the safety of hills. In the Post Apocalyptic setting, the Natgar tribe still roams those hills. The sleepers themselves might be subject of legend; a tribe or society, possibly descended from technicians or guards, might have legends of the Sleepers, even preserved photographs and official documentation from the Sleeper program.

CAMPAIGN FOCUS: REBUILDING THE PAST

A campaign could take the Sleeper focus to the extreme, and concentrate on Sleepers and their impact on the Post Apocalyptic world. Obviously they can wake up to a “typical” Post Apocalyptic world, with some high tech societies, some low tech, mutants, madmen, etc. At first the characters explore and learn about the society, but after a while they may simple become another band of survivors, with little to

differentiate them from others.

But another possibility is that the Fall was so long ago and so devastating that no high tech society survived, all non-sleepers are Feral, Tribal, or Resentful. (Modified forms of the other Backgrounds such as Ritualistic Preservers would work, but societies with Technology higher than Primitive Technology should be extremely rare or preferably non-existent.) The sleepers would be the only ones with knowledge of the lost technology and science. A campaign in this setting could be more about rebuilding society and less about fighting Raiders and looting high-tech artifacts. Knowledge of gunpowder, the printing press, even the spinning wheel could be more valuable than an Assault Rifle.

ADVENTURE OUTLINE:

THE LAST SOLDIER

This can be added to any existing adventure, to add a simple nighttime encounter, or a longer-term scenario with the characters being hunted by the Soldier.

The characters make camp near an ancient outpost or building. After searching and looting it, they settle down for the night. But while they sleep, ancient computers follow their instructions, and wake the Last Soldier (he was frozen in an area the PCs couldn’t get to, if they even find the underground portion of the ruin.) He will observe the party, possibly following them for some time, and eventually try to capture one for interrogation. He will be a dangerous foe, or a useful ally.

IN THE NIGHT

Depending on how the Soldier gets out of the Vault, a successful Listen check might hear the ancient hatch opening, pushing aside dirt and other debris. It is recommended that if the PCs investigate, the hatch will be closed and secured; while the characters investigate the hatch, the Soldier backtracks them to

their camp and investigates, when the PCs return, a Spot check DC 15 will tell them that someone has been there. Efforts to follow the Soldier's tracks should be difficult, both from the darkness and because he will hide his trail, raising the DC by +5 (see Track feat in d20 Modern) and he will likely ambush them.

SUBSEQUENT ATTACKS

He may ambush the PCs, or track and observe them, trying to figure out if they are friend or foe.

The Last Soldier (Fast Hero 2/Strong Hero 2/Soldier 2): CR 6; Medium Size Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 2d8+4 plus 2d10+4; HP 41; Mas 14; Init +3; Spd 35 ft (30 ft wearing vest); Defense 25, touch 19, flatfooted 23 (+2 Dex, +7 class, +6 equipment); BAB +4; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d4+2, fists), or +5 melee (d6+2, rifle butt) or +8 ranged (3d12+2, Laser Rifle); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ see below; AL USA; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +1; AP 3; Rep +0; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Occupation: Military (Survival)

Background: Advanced Sleeper (Knowledge [Tactics], Repair)

Skills: Balance +0, Climb -2, Drive +7, Hide +2, Knowledge (Ancients) +2, Knowledge (Tactics) +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +2, Profession (career military) +7, Repair +7, Spot +7, Survival +7, Tumble +0

Feats: Advanced Technology, Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Combat Martial Arts, Educated, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency

Talents: Increased Speed, Melee Smash

Class Features: Weapon Focus (Laser Rifle), Weapon Specialization (Laser Rifle)

Possessions: Tactical Vest, Laser rifle, spare Power Beltpack, Copper Identity Card (military), full survival kit

Notes: As a foe, the Last Solider will use hit-and-run tactics to try to wear down his opposition. As a potential ally, he will likely try to seek some organization both worthy of his loyalty and which needs his skills and training. He is likely to have many archaic beliefs, such as the idea of equality for women. He also likely (at least, by the standards of other denizens of the Twisted Earth) to be wasteful of high tech items such as ammunition; old habits are hard to break

If you wish to use a Sleeper instead of an Advanced Sleeper, make the following changes:

Background: Sleeper

Feats: remove Advanced Technology and Futuristic Firearms Proficiency, Add Personal Firearms Proficiency, Quick Reload

Possessions: change weapons to: M-16 with 3 spare full clips, Beretta 92F with 2 spare full clips

FOLLOW UP ADVENTURE

If the soldier and the PCs become allies, he might lead them into the Vault where he was frozen, or to other Vaults.

ADVENTURE OUTLINE:

PROTECT THE BRAIN

The characters are hired or ordered to escort a recently awakened sleeper to safety. Alternately, they may find and revive the sleeper, and decide to take him to a settlement, either to sell to the highest bidder or for more altruistic reasons. The sleeper has no survival or weapon skills, but possesses skills and abilities that could be quite valuable.

Doc Brown (Smart Hero 5/Scholar 1): CR 6; Medium Size Humanoid; HD 5d6 - 5 plus 1d6 - 1; HP 17; Mas 8; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; Defense 15, touch 12, flatfooted 13 (+2 Dex, +3 class); BAB +2; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3+0, fists), or +4 ranged (by weapon); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ none ; AL none; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +5; AP 3; Rep +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Occupation: Academic (Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology], Research)

Background: Advanced Sleeper (Craft [mechanical], Repair)

Skills: Computer Use +13, Craft (chemical) +8, Craft (electronic) +18, Craft (mechanical) +18, Craft (Structural) +8, Knowledge (Ancients) +13, Knowledge (Earth and Life Sciences) +13, Knowledge (Physical Sciences) +14, Knowledge (Technology) +14, Knowledge (Tactics) +6, Profession (military R&D) +6, Repair +18, Research +12, Search, +8, Spot +6

Feats: Advanced Technology, Builder (Electronic, Mechanical), Educated (Earth and Life Sciences, Technology), Educated (Technology, Ancient Lore), Gearhead, Modern Firearms Discipline, Modern Vehicles Discipline, Simple Weapon Proficiency

Talents: Savant (Craft (electronic), Craft (mechanical), Repair)

Class Features: Ancient Secret (Modern Vehicles Discipline, listed above)

Notes: Doc Brown was a researcher working on the next generation of improved combat vehicles. He was frozen, perhaps the base he was in was hit and buried, or perhaps he has a disease or illness which needs curing. In combat he is likely to freeze, or run in panic.

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