

Palladium Books® Presents:

In the Face of Death™

A Dead Reign® Sourcebook



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By Kevin Siembieda

Warning!

Horror, Violence, Zombies & the Supernatural

The *fictional* world of **Dead Reign®** contains subject matter that deals with horror, the supernatural, death cults, zombies, conspiracy theories, the paranormal, magic, war, and extreme violence.

The setting is our modern world taken over by the walking dead – zombies. Hideous animated corpses that feed upon the living. The heroes are ordinary people who battle for their own survival and to reclaim the world from the dead. Human civilization has collapsed, our cities and towns are infested with zombies, madmen, and cultists.

Some parents may find the subject matter, violence, magic, and supernatural elements of the game inappropriate for young readers/players. Furthermore, the realistic manner in which the fictional horror material is presented *may* be disturbing for some young readers.

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In the Face of Death™ is a sourcebook for
the ***Dead Reign®*** zombie role-playing game.

Dedication from the Author

To the multitude of Palladium's fans who inspire me every day, and to everyone as we face the unique challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Be smart, stay safe, and hang tough. We humans are survivors powered and set free by our imaginations. Game on.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2020

The cover, by *E.M. Gist*, depicts a zombie in the city morgue.

Other Dead Reign® RPG Titles

- **Dead Reign® RPG** – Core rule book. Easy to learn. A lot of fun.
- **Civilization Gone™** – More zombies, madmen and danger.
- **Dark Places™** – More zombies, danger, and adventure ideas.
- **Endless Dead™** – 10 zombies, 5 O.C.C.s, military, random tables & more.
- **Fear the Reaper™** – Code and details about the iconic heroes.
- **Graveyard Earth™** – World overview, tables and more.
- **Hell Followed™** – 160 pages, 23 disasters, 11 zombies, 7 O.C.C.s, more.

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In the Face of Death™

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– *Kevin Siembieda, 2020*

Contents

Rethinking the Zombie Apocalypse	6	Doctor/Healer	60
Your Characters	7	Hustler/Procurer/Street Hustler	61
Like a Medieval Setting	8	Protectors	62
Want a dungeon crawl?	8	Trader/Trading Post	63
A World of Adventure	10	Urban Explorer Fortune Hunter	64
Even society is more like Medieval times	10	The City's Dark Underbelly	64
City Adventures and Encounters	12	City Survival Considerations	66
Elevator Shaft Zombies	14	The Zombie Population	66
Rescue Captives	17	Good Signs	68
Strangers in Trouble	21	Movement and Silence	68
Pattern Zombies	22	Silence is the Golden Rule	69
Impersonator Zombie	23	Silent Weapons	70
Zombies in Disguise	24	Cannibalize and save everything	70
Armored Brute	25	Security	70
Dead Mound Giant	26	Perimeters	70
A Family in Trouble	27	Surveillance	72
Reference Guide	28	Defenses	72
Zombies, Villains and O.C.C.s by Sourcebook	28	Barrier: Palisades	73
37 Zombies by Title	28	Escape Routes	74
21 Survivor & Hero O.C.C.s	29	Guard Animals	74
City Survival in the Zombie Apocalypse	31	Towers and Sniper's Nests	75
Life in the City	31	S.D.C. Values of Common Structures	76
A prerequisite for any city survivor	33	Heavy Vehicles in Urban Environments	76
When it's outsiders vs. city dwellers	34	Perimeter Breach Encounter Table	76
Rat Runs	34	Traps	78
Death Cults	34	Deadfall Trap	81
Zombies are Dangerous	34	Pendulum/Swinging Trap	82
The converging of the hungry dead	35	Pit Trap	83
Anatomy of a Post-Apocalypse City	35	Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse	85
Living in the Sky	36	Resource Acquisition	85
The zombie barrier defense	38	Drinking Water	85
The beauty of life on the upper floors	39	Finding Drinking Water in the City	87
On the rooftop	39	Food in the City	88
No place is completely safe	40	Wild Food, Nature's Bounty	89
Fire and military grade weapons	40	Growing Crops	89
Life Underground	42	Fishing in the City	91
Rat Runs	43	Hunting in the Zombie Apocalypse	92
Up, up and away	44	Small Game and City Survival	93
Rat Runs that go inside buildings	45	Rat Farms	94
Alternative Rat Run trails	46	Medicine and Medical Supplies	94
Rat Runs Inside Buildings	46	Power and Electricity	96
Road Signs if you know what to look for	47	Solar Cells	99
Brad Ashley, on Suburbia	49	Building and Finding Shelter	100
Survival in the flat, sprawling cities	49	Navigating the Cityscape	101
Urban Homesteaders	50	Silence is golden	101
Preppers/Survivalists	50	New Skills	102
Not every Homesteader is a Survivalist	51	Parkour	102
Hello Neighbor	52	Zombie Survival Training	103
Strangers from the outside world	53	Military Fortification, Defenses & Traps	107
Warnings and danger signals	53	Piloting: Bicycling Expanded	107
Bad Neighbors	55	Piloting: Skateboard Expanded	107
The dark underbelly of the city	55	Science: Civil Engineer	108
Retro-Savages	55	Technical: Lore: Zombies	108
Death Cults	56	Technical: Metalworking	109
Survivor Community People & Businesses	58	City O.C.C.s & The Apocalypse	109
Alignment Notes	58	Kids as Player Characters	110
Automotive Mechanic/Garage	58	Age of the Youngster and Modifiers	111
Junkyards	59	Notes for Gaming with Girls	112
		Alignments for Young Survivors	113
		Kid Personality Traits	114

Family Survivor Status (optional)	116
Kid O.C.C.s	117
Rat Runner O.C.C.	117
Urban Explorer O.C.C.	120
Zombie Nerd O.C.C.	123
Masked Lunatics as Player Characters	127
Classic comic book tropes to live by	128
Masked Lunatic Hero O.C.C.	129
Super Abilities (sort of)	131
Super Abilities Random Table	132
Signature Modern Weapon	138
Deadly Weakness	139
And Now for Something Completely Different	140
Cults and Bad Guys	142
One Example	144
Retro-Savages	144
Shaping the world and your game	146
Human Predators	146
Villain Survivors/Ordinary People. O.C.C.	146
Lone Hunter	148
Lions and Wolves	148
Jackals, Hyenas, and Coyotes	149
Rats and other human vermin	149
Vipers	150
Vultures	150
Weasels	150
Notable Bad Guys	151
Cannibals	151
Flesh Peddlers	152
Gutter Rat/Snitch	154
Skinners	156

Quick Find Index

Bad Guys	151
Brad Ashley on Life in the City	34
Brad Ashley on Suburbia	49
Community Businesses	58
Community People	58
Community Protectors	62
Community Trading Post	63
Death Cults	34, 56 & 144
Doctor/Healer	60
Encounter Table: City Adventures & Zombies	12
Encounter Table: Perimeter Breach	76
Experience Tables	141
Fortune Hunting Urban Explorer	64
Game Animals	93
Girls, Gaming with	112
Graffiti	47
Guard Animals	74
Homesteaders, Urban	50
How-to books	86
Human Predators	146
Hunting	92
Index by Title (see Reference Guide)	28
Junkyards	59
Kids as Player Characters	110
Life in the City	31
Masked Lunatics	127 & 129

Masked Lunatic Super Abilities	131
O.C.C.: Masked Lunatic Hero	127
O.C.C.: Rat Runner	117
O.C.C.: Urban Explorer	120
O.C.C.: Villain Survivors/Ordinary People	146
O.C.C.: Zombie Nerd O.C.C.	123
Parkour	33 & 44
Parkour Skill Description	102
Pit Trap	83
Predators, Human	146
Prepper/Survivalists	50
Rat Runs (full description)	43
Rat Runs Inside Buildings	46
Rat Runs, Life in the City	34
Rat Runners and messengers	53 & 63
Rat Runner O.C.C.	117
Resource Acquisition	85
Retro-Savages	55 & 144
Road Signs	47
Salvage Yard	59
Silence and Movement	68
Silence is the Golden Rule	69 & 101
Silent Weapons	70
Skills	102
Solar Cells	99
Super Abilities (see Masked Lunatic)	131
Survivor Business & People	58
Survivor Community	58
Survivor Homesteads	50
Trading Post	63
Traps	78
Urban Homesteaders	50
Water	85
Zombies are Dangerous	34
Zombie Encounters (see City Adventures)	12
Zombie, Lore Skill	108
Zombie Survival Training	103
Zombie, Villains & O.C.C.s by Sourcebook	28
Zombie, World of Super-Heroes	140



RETHINKING THE ZOMBIE



APOCALYPSE

You sometimes hear people say that zombie games are too limited and get boring quickly. Only if you let yourself get trapped in a tiny box where all you – the player characters – do is fight the same old basic zombies and scavenge for supplies. Yep, that sounds like it would get old fast.

It is easy to fall into those long established tropes, because they are featured in a zillion zombie movies, starting with the groundbreaking, genre creating, **Night of the Living Dead**. (Please don't get me wrong, I love the work of *George Romero* and Tom Savini and others. Thanks to the *Detroit Triple Fanfare* convention I was able to meet the man in 1972 when I was a teenager. It was only a few years after **Night of the Living Dead** became a cult hit, and his new movie to be released was **The Crazies** [March, 1973]. Alex and I got to see the director's cut of both films. **The Crazies** before its theatrical release. It was a thrill to see these two movies and to speak with George Romero afterward. That encounter would help inspire young, aspiring comic creator *Kevin Siembieda* to follow his dreams and to think outside the box the same as Mr. Romero. I also met Tom Savini some years later. But I digress.)

Almost all Zombie Apocalypse movies that have followed **Night of the Living Dead** tend to focus on survival and killing zombies. It's fun. It's visceral. It's heroic and relatable. It's what people expect for two hours of entertainment about the Zombie Apocalypse. These movies are all about fighting zombies and survival, usually immediately after the rise of the dead, and we love them. However, they have conditioned us to expect these stories and their tropes. There is nothing wrong with that, but a role-playing game and your imagination can explore so much more and go into so much more depth and weirdness.

More recent extrapolations of the zombie genre in comic books, novelizations, and cutting edge TV shows like *The Walking Dead* have, to some degree, begun to change our perspective of the zombie genre and the stories they can tell. But like a Pattern Zombie, the old tropes are so ingrained, we tend to be stuck in the classic ideas of them. The many sourcebooks in the **Dead Reign® RPG series** try to build and expand from the expected into the unexpected and into new areas of the genre. We try to challenge and change your expectations and perception of the genre with different types of zombies, their Supernatural Strength, the function of the Zombie Moan, that they feed upon life energy, etc., all the while expanding upon the setting and characters to create something much more expansive and fun.

I would like you try something. Please think of the world of **Dead Reign®** in the same way you would think about a **fantasy game** – something like **Game of Thrones** meets **Mad Max**. The setting of our modern world is the ruins of a recently lost civilization. It is a land of ruins and undead monsters. A landscape that may look familiar but which you no longer know and needs to be explored, in person, to know what treasures and dangers exist down the road. There are people to protect and plenty of monsters to slay. Thirty-seven different types of zombies, to be exact. Your characters are the boldest of survivors. Heroes and adventurers ready to go forth and conquer this new, strange, and horrifying world. Do it.

Your Characters

Now think of your player character group as you would a traditional fantasy group of adventurers. Each character has their own past, their own motivation, and demons that haunt and compel them to go into the transformed, post-apocalyptic landscape to carve out their destiny.

What are the characters in a classic fantasy player group?

One or a few **fighters/warriors/mercenaries** skilled in the art of combat.

A knight or a paladin who is an elite military specialist of sorts and trained to be more noble, heroic, and courageous than the average warrior.

A ranger/scout for tracking and knowing the lay of the land.

A thief or assassin, both of whom may be roguish antiheroes with a heart of gold or conniving scoundrels out for themselves. Despite their questionable motives and selfish or evil alignments, they consider the rest of the player group to be their teammates, if not friends, and work together certainly for as long as it serves their purpose.

A priest, druid, or prophet to bring hope and healing to the downtrodden and innocent.

A magic user. In **Dead Reign®** *magic* comes in the form of modern technology and firearms. Devices such as working radios, limited use of cell phones, GPS, cameras, electronics, generators, flashlights, guns, grenades, flamethrowers, modern medicine, and vehicles from motorcycles and cars to tanks and light aircraft all provide power and resources equal to magic in a fantasy game. Those who can own, operate, maintain, and build these modern marvels are like **wizards** and **alchemists**, and a boon to any team or survivor community who has them.

ALL of these character archetypes – or their modern equivalents – exist in **Dead Reign®**. Road Reapers, Shepherds of the Damned and people like them are knights and paladins, soldiers and protectors are fighters and mercenaries, Scroungers and Hound Masters are like rangers and scouts, thieves and assassins and “ordinary people” with the right skills and motivation can be almost any type of character, and so on.

What's that? You would like to play a character who is more (or less) than human? There are plenty to choose from: The *Half-Living* and *Zombie Prophet* who can walk among the hungry dead as if they were one of them, or the *One-Man-Army*, *Zombie-Killing Maniac*, *Naturalist*, or *Masked Lunatic Heroes* who fancy themselves to be super-hero vigilantes who guard over “their city,” or perhaps a *Mock Zombie* who looks human and believes it is still one of the living.

Or your character may be an Ordinary Person turned adventurer or hero: Your character is an ordinary Joe Survivor, only there is nothing ordinary about him for the very reason that he or she has the courage and desire to go out into the world to explore, scavenge, battle zombies and the forces of evil, stand up for what's good and right, and tries to help other survivors, and/or rebuild civilization.

Moreover, what was once ordinary may be rare and important and powerful now. The “ordinary” person may possess some unique skills and experience that make him extraordinary and

valuable in the Zombie Apocalypse – doctor, nurse, paramedic, electrical or mechanical engineer, scientist, pilot, builder, fixer, automotive repair, fighter, farmer, spelunker, veterinarian, soldier, priest, police, and many, many others.

Not to mention Apocalyptic O.C.C.s like *the Scourger, Hound Master, Wheelman, Thief, Thug, Zombie Researcher, Street Gang Protector, Free Spirit, Drone Pilot, and others*. Any of these characters may want to make a better life for themselves and their families, or the survivor community they have adopted, by going out into the unknown to find help, make allies, find and return with food and resources that may be the difference between life and death, or search for a better place to live. Many find themselves standing up for justice and people in trouble, because it is the right thing to do and there is no one else to do it. Others may seek work to support themselves or their families by using their fighting prowess, skills, and abilities as a means of survival, or because settling down in one place is not for them, or to make a small difference in some way to somebody.

On the other hand, as is common among many fantasy games, the player characters may be a mercenary outfit or start out as would-be heroes or opportunists who seek fame and fortune from their exploits. Helping people and hiring yourselves out as muscle, protectors, monster slayers, scouts, etc., in exchange for information, riches, and favors is just as valid a motivation as any other. Or perhaps your adventurers travel the land looking for new experiences, the remnants of the government, rumors of fortified government Safe Havens, or search for answers, or to find their place in this new, twisted reality.

Many of your characters may not think of themselves as *heroes* at all, and may range from good and Unprincipled to Anarchist and Aberrant alignments. Opportunists out for themselves, but who have moments of compassion and goodness that make a difference for other survivors, or who change and become heroes despite themselves, is the classic hero's journey of myth and legend. Such heroes and fighters are needed now more than ever, and will rise from the most unlikely of places. Heroes and adventurers who bring hope and make an indelible mark in the new, monstrous world.

Like a medieval fantasy setting, a lot of the combat is done with melee weapons: knives, swords, machetes, hatchets, axes, clubs, spears, staves, etc., as well as hand to hand and via simple long-range weapons like the bow and arrow, crossbow, and sling-shot.

Modern weapons are the equivalent of magic and magic weapons. Devices that can hurt and kill from long range (modern bow weapons, firearms, rifles, etc.) and inflict tremendous damage or have an area effect (hand grenades, rifle grenades, rocket launchers, mortars, flamethrower, etc.), or have special properties (smoke grenades, flash grenades, tear gas, flares, tasers to stun, chemical mace to blind, rubber bullets, etc.). Like magic in a fantasy game, modern weapons may not be available to just anyone, and whoever wields the most powerful of these weapons and has the most ammunition possesses the greatest power and leverage over others.

Vehicles and other forms of technology are also like magic. Rare and helpful. Some are fast and small, others large and capable of hauling great weights or many people, some can fly, some are armored, others are big and powerful or possess heavy weapons (machine-guns, mini-guns, cannons, etc.).

Like a fantasy setting, the player group travels from one place to another – farm, village, town, abandoned ruin, underground labyrinth, or wilderness region – looking for adventure and treasure. If heroes and knights (Shepards of the Damned, Hound Masters, Road Reapers, Soldiers or law enforcement or ordinary people still trying to help others), they are looking to right wrongs, destroy evil, help the downtrodden and people in need, and seek to make the world a safer and better place.

If mercenaries or thieves, they are looking for work and opportunities to find treasure and line their own pockets (as best you can in the Zombie Apocalypse) and/or to earn fame and glory. After all, a good reputation can increase your value and what you get paid as well as stroke your ego.

If the group members are monster slayers, they are probably well armed and specialize in killing zombies and clearing out buildings and areas for survivor groups. They may also take jobs involving guarding and protection, escorting Scroungers and merchants, and similar.

If motivated by revenge, the group may be hunting down a particular gang or band of raiders or bandits or Death Cultists, or someone who has hurt them personally or their family or survivor community. Such individuals find empathy with others suffering from gangs, raiders and other villains, and are likely to lend a hand or trade their services to other people suffering at the hands of such a group whether it is the specific one they hunt or not.

If healers or priests, the characters seek to cure the sick, tend to the injured, and help people in general.

Others may be wandering minstrels and entertainers bringing laughter and hope, or they may search for information, or regardless of their work, are really spies for another organization or community.

Like a fantasy setting, there is danger in the (now) uncharted wilderness and among the ruins of the old civilization. The wilderness and rural parts of the country have become an unknown quantity, broken up by the sprawling and intimidating ruins of a lost civilization. *Our civilization*. Cities of tall buildings and neighborhoods of houses now serve as jungles of steel and concrete. They are home to the good, the bad, and the monstrous. Some have tunnel systems, others secret rooms and underground complexes. Places that can only be quietly explored and looted on foot. The lost secrets, knowledge, and treasures they hold carried out on the backs of brave adventurers and heroes.

Among them are places of magic. In this case, places of technology, learning, science, medicine, military grade weapons, combat vehicles, and perhaps electrical energy and modern conveniences. Dangerous, monster-filled places that contain technology, weapons, and knowledge that is much needed by the downtrodden people besieged by the legions of the walking dead and survivors out for themselves. Technology and knowledge that may be a means to power and wealth for heroes and adventurers bold enough and strong enough and cunning enough to go into these dreaded ruins and claim the magic for themselves. Items that can empower the adventurers themselves or be sold to earn them money, creature comforts, and safety. Power and tales of daring that can make them rich or legends in this new world.

Want a dungeon crawl? There are underground military compounds (Area 51 and NORAD are just two examples), subway tunnel systems, steam tunnels, sewage tunnels, secret industrial complexes, mines, basements and sub-basements of certain

buildings, and so on, that may be home to monsters (various zombies), raiders, gangs, cults, villains, and great treasure.

Even more like a classic dungeon crawl is exploring and looting apartment high-rises and office buildings, or shopping malls and neighborhoods. What is a skyscraper if not a vertical dungeon that goes up instead of underground? Your adventurers kick in the first door, kill the monsters or villains inside (all manner of zombies, evildoers, and madmen), search the room for valuables, claim the treasure it may hold (jewelry, food, water, alcohol, tools, books, and magic items, or in this case, modern weapons, ammo, electronics, medicine, etc.), close the door, move to the next room and repeat. Never knowing what might await them from room to room and floor to floor: more Slouchers or any number of weird and monstrous zombies, dogs, wild animals, bandits, thieves, killers, frightened survivors, lunatics, Death Cultists, rival survivors, deranged survivors who love and keep zombies as pets or on chains, a trap, and on and on. The possibilities are endless.

Monsters & Enemies

The monsters are a variety of 37 different, weird and dangerous zombies: *Slouchers*, *Crawlers*, *Dead Mound Giants*, *Fast Attack Zombies*, *Fused Zombies*, *Juggernauts*, *Mock Zombies*, *Multi-Zombies*, *Screamers*, *Silent Slouchers*, *Spare-Parts Thinkers*, *Twin Speedster zombies*, *Walking Graves*, and *Worm Meat zombies* just to name a few. All of them twisted and dangerous abominations that hunt the living – all living things – and wait and lurk everywhere.

For the living, to prevent Earth from becoming a world of the dead, they must find a way to hold on and survive. And to do that they need heroes and champions of light to protect the innocent and strike down the monsters and forces of evil in all their forms. That includes an array of villains and madmen who either prey upon their fellow survivors or nurture the dead in a bid to become the new rulers over both the living and the dead.

The enemies and bad guys you find in fantasy games also exist in **Dead Reign®**: Thieves, raiders, pirates, would-be kings and tyrants, corrupt and self-serving sheriffs and soldiers, power-mongers, evil warlords, conquering armies, masters of monsters, slave traders, assassins, religious zealots and evil cultists, traitors, sleazeballs of every stripe, plenty of madmen, and – in this unique environment on the heels of civilization's collapse – lots and lots of gangs, soldiers, mercenaries, and groups trying to establish their own little kingdoms and towns. Some of these leaders and their troops are benevolent and caring, others cruel and brutal, still others are ruthless and wicked.

In this unique environment, explorers and adventurers and wandering heroes will encounter all kinds of people and communities. Each with their own belief systems, rules, laws, and strange ways. Some good. Some evil. Some twisted and insane. Some barely surviving, some low-tech, perhaps tribal or feudal in nature, some may be nomadic roving tribes of aboriginal people of the past. Others are high-tech or militarized in the extreme. Others roving gangs of bandits, raiders, or soldiers who wield modern weapons and travel in a cavalry of vehicles – motorcycles, cars, trucks, tanks and other military vehicles, bringing trouble wherever they go and plundering those less powerful than they. Still others may be brutal killers, insane maniacs, cannibals, people who love and nurture or worship the dead, and on and on.

All struggling to find reason and their place in a terrifying world that no longer makes any sense and is filled with the hungry dead.

The world we all once knew is gone. Changed overnight with the advent of the Wave and rise of the dead that hunt and devour those still living.

Everything is different. Every day is a struggle to stay alive. Nobody knows who or what awaits them in the next city, town, or neighborhood. There is only the unknown over the next hill, down the street, around the corner, and *behind every door*.

This is the unpredictable and savage world of adventure in which your characters find themselves. A world out of control, dominated by the hungry dead, brutalized by the living who believe might makes right and who see opportunity in the fear and suffering of other people. A world in desperate need of heroes. Your heroes. Adventure abounds, all you have to do is step into it.

Game Masters, when you create memorable villains and strange and menacing groups, communities, and places, you bring your campaign to riveting life. Seize upon the fact that this is our modern world transformed, and milk it for all it is worth. The familiar turned into constant menace. Also remember that lone villains and small groups can be just as effective and memorable as big, powerful bad guys and large evil groups and organizations.

Treasure and Reward

Being gunmen or muscle (or brains and skills) for hire means getting paid in goods valuable in a post-apocalyptic setting. That includes room and board – food, drinking water, and a place to stay/sleep while employed – at a Safe Haven or stronghold or hideout, as well as payment in melee weapons, firearms, ammunition, weapon accessories, maybe explosives or body armor, a vehicle, vehicle repair and maintenance, spare parts, fuel, electronics, optic systems, portable computers, cell phones, entertainment players, recording devices, timepieces, solar cells, medicine and medical care, footwear, clothing, alcohol, drinking water, fresh food, preserved food, candy and baked goods, books and training manuals, rope, wire, tools, sleeping bags, backpacks, and other survival/camping gear, helmets (military or riding), fishing and hunting gear, tents and camping gear, other gear, horses, livestock, dogs, and so on.

Like the days of old, **barter and trade** of goods and services is the currency of the day. That said, some people covet and collect (sometimes hoard) paper money, gold, silver, gems, jewelry, paintings, etc., for the day civilization returns. And many a survivor likes to have some jewelry, toys, works of art, books, and mementos of the past out of nostalgia and as a sense of hope for the future.

Treasure is all the valuables listed above that adventurers take from the villains they vanquish and the monsters they slay. Or they are the items they find in their lairs or from searches through the ruins of civilization.

As noted earlier, firearms, ammunition, explosives, smoke and tear gas grenades, military grade weapons, gear and vehicles, body armor, portable generators, solar panels, and similar equipment are the equivalent of magic items. Combat vehicles are the dragons, Golems and Elementals of this setting. Anything they can trade or use to make their job and survival easier or improve their lives or those of their loved ones, is treasure and valuable.

Such physical objects, devices, animals and livestock are big, bulky, and heavy. **Transportation** may be an issue. Vehicles can be a huge help but make noise and attract zombies and people. Vehicles may also have difficulty traversing certain terrain and dealing with obstacles. Horse or ox-drawn wagons and carts may be less noisy, but still make sound and attract zombies, who can see and sense the life energy of the animals and the people driving them. Both are targets for bandits and desperate survivors.

Carrying trade goods and valuables on your own back is limited and can impair movement, speed, and combat capabilities of the individual. Like pirates of old, many adventurers, Scavengers, and wandering heroes bury their treasure and hide caches of supplies and trade goods in out of the way places such as caves and ravines, basements, and inside buildings. Concealing the treasure/trade goods in dark corners and under rubbish and debris. Then they come back with a team of porters and defenders or vehicles to retrieve the goods.

Those who have a good relationship with homesteaders and survivor communities may also be able to leave piles of treasure/trade goods with them for safekeeping, or trade them the items and have their value put on their account. Such **credit** may buy the player character a home or a regular place to stay, or a storage facility to house extra gear and trade goods. Treasure not sold to the community might be used as trade or credit at a trading post for food, water, booze, weapons, ammo, and supplies, or medical treatment, and so on. However, there is always the risk that the community or trading post falls under attack and is robbed or wiped out and looted, or forced to abandon that location and move elsewhere. It is a risk many adventurers must take.

Heroes Needed

People are desperate for heroes and protectors, a role most gamers choose for their player characters to begin with. Well, in this world setting, heroes and protectors are in high demand. Like *Mad Max* and *Furiosa*, as well as *ex-police*, *Soldiers*, *Shepherds of the Damned*, *Hound Masters*, *Road Reapers*, *Sentinels*, *Zombie Hunters*, *Masked Lunatic Heroes*, and *anyone* willing to pick up a weapon and take a stand for what is right, or to defend the innocent, are the **paladins, knights, mercenary fighters and heroes** in the world of **Dead Reign®**. A world where noble heroes who wander the land helping those in need, slaying monsters, and fighting evil are a rare and precious commodity.

Groups like the *Road Reapers* are already becoming legends in the post-apocalyptic world. Their escapades are inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. Perhaps your characters among them.

A WORLD OF ADVENTURE

The world is dangerous.

People need saving and protection.

Ultimately, your player group is a band of heroes or mercenaries or adventurers righting wrongs and bringing hope whether they realize it or not.

Parts of world resembles the one the player characters grew up in, but this new world is very different and deadly. Nothing they knew is the same. Monsters – various types of zombies everywhere, especially in the abandoned cities and military

compounds – make life nearly impossible for the living, and there are so many zombies they are impossible to obliterate. The old governments and ways of life have vanished (or have they?) and there are no states or provinces. No official army or police.

Our modern civilization has vanished and we have been thrown back into the **Middle Ages**. There are no (or few) telecommunications. No Internet. Even vehicles have limited use and value depending on the environment and circumstances, and the fuel they need is finite and vanishing. Civilization ranges from wandering bands of nomads, tribal hunters and gatherers, farmers, medieval or American Old West-style forts, farms and homesteads, to strongholds and towns, or the rare Safe Haven or military base that may have power and modern amenities, even modern defenses and combat vehicles. However, for most survivors, walking on foot or riding by horses, the use of lamp oil and campfires and primitive weapons are all they can rely upon.

When your heroes encounter a place with power and lights, or a military encampment that may represent the US, Canadian, or Mexican government or local authorities, it is a surprise and a thrill, but may not be what it appears, or may be unsustainable. On the other hand, such a community (any community really) may be looking for *freelance* help, muscle, and intelligence the player group may be able to provide. This could be a way for them to win a valuable ally or make a new, dangerous enemy.

In the aftermath of the Wave, 3-24 months after the fall of human civilization, the player characters are likely to become members of an adventurer group or mercenaries, or a band of heroes. They come from all walks of life and from all over the country. Each has his or her own story of survival and heroism, regret, and desire for redemption.

It doesn't matter where the character heralds from. Every character probably has a different origin and could come from anywhere in North America or be a visitor from another country who got stuck here when the Wave hit and the dead rose.

One or more may be associated with a small survivor community or large Safe Haven, or the remnants of a military base. Such pockets of civilization are the equivalent of villages, towns, and kingdoms in a fantasy game. After all, fantasy settings are usually undeveloped and small medieval farms, villages, towns and the occasional established feudal kingdom surrounded by a vast, unknown wilderness.

Civilization is sparse and scattered across a diverse landscape filled with unknown dangers and monsters and the ruins of our modern world. Countless neighborhoods, farms and wilderness located in between every towering city. There are mostly small survivor communities, homesteads, strongholds, and Safe Havens, but they are few and far between. Some are ruled by noble and fair leaders/kings and the king's knights (military or militia compound), others by a council of leaders or elders. Others are ruled with an iron fist by wicked and cruel tyrants (Death Cults, ex-military, madmen, etc.), and some by warlords (gangs, ex-police and military, etc.), or priests (cultists) who may worship strange gods or have strange and terrible beliefs (Retro-Savages, Apocalyptic Messiahs, and Death Cults). Some people are enslaved or forced into indentured servitude by madmen and Death Cults and other villains. Some are ruled by, or the prisoners of, monsters (Thinkers, Mock Zombies, the Half-Living, or madmen or Death Cultists who command the dead).

Even society is more like medieval times. Each town, Safe Haven, and kingdom is separate and independent of the others,



with their own set of unique rules, laws, and system of doing things. There may be places where the old ideals are held dear and emulated, but most communities are run the way a powerful or charismatic leader, or group, or combat force dictates. Many are armed camps, though many may have little to no combat experience. Visitors, like your player characters, need to be cautious and careful to not fall on the wrong side of the law, challenge the authorities, or break a taboo that may get their entire group into hot water.

The bottom line is that almost ANY type of adventure you can play in a fantasy setting can be played in Dead Reign®. I hope you see your world is bigger and more unique than you may have first imagined. And the stakes may be higher, because your player characters are probably acting on behalf of their own families or those of a Safe Haven community, and may represent the fate of humanity. Your heroes and other survivors are the last of a dying species. Hunted with relentless vigor by the hungry dead and faced with many challenges.

There is a huge, unknown world for your survivor characters to explore with all sorts of people and strangeness waiting for them. Yet, even keeping the game close to home, in one particular city and the surrounding suburbs or countryside, there should be all sorts of little outposts, homesteads, rooftop communities, survivor Safe Havens, trading posts, rural towns, strongholds, cults, weirdos, madmen, and people in need to visit, fight for, work for, fight against, trade with and negotiate deals to help themselves or their family or their survivor community, and so on. There should always be a constant string of challenges and enemies to face: Warlords, gangs, thieves, cultists, Gutter Rats, Flesh Peddlers, Retro-Savages, slavers, lunatics, and military personnel, soldiers and police who have gone bad or crazy, and a variety of zombies to fight. Hermits, messiahs, Gutter Rats, madmen, farmers, hunters, preppers, and survivors to encounter. Build your **Dead Reign®** setting with people and places the same as you would a fantasy game blended with a post-apocalyptic sensibility and horror.

Unleash those imaginations and game on.

CITY ADVENTURES AND ENCOUNTERS

What follows are one hundred adventure hooks and ideas for you to run with, but there are plenty of others. Hopefully, some of them inspire many more. Be creative and have fun.

You can either select the encounter to expand upon as desired or roll percentile to make a random determination. And though written with cities in mind, most are easily adapted to rural settings and any Zombie Apocalypse environment. **Note:** Please adjust the number of adversaries and power level up or down to best suit the player group and the circumstances in your game.

01% A deal with a neighbor. A homesteader, rooftop community or other survivor or survivor group – maybe even a cult or Retro-Savage – has information, a location, or resource another survivor group needs, but the two sides are rivals or enemies. Can a group of outsiders like the player characters negotiate a deal or acquire what is needed on their behalf?

02% A quest to find one of the many military strongholds rumored to exist. Fortified locations said to welcome all people and whose inhabitants live much as they did before the Wave.

03% A quest to find a survivors' Safe Haven, town, city or military base that is rumored to be rebuilding civilization. A place that is able to accept every survivor who makes it to their gate. Does such an ideal place really exist? Is it truly the fair and safe refuge it is said to be, or is it plagued by corruption or other problems? Odds are the rumors are just that, baseless rumors. A myth created by desperate and hopeful survivors, or which did exist until it fell a few months ago. So when your adventurer group arrives, they may find zombie-filled ruins or a base camp in the hands of evildoers.

04% A quest to find one or more missing family members or close friends. You know they survived the Wave and the initial chaos of the dead rising, but you got separated along the way, or were supposed to meet at a specified location, but they never showed up. You know in your gut they survived and you are determined to find them. Perhaps this is why your character is part of an adventurer group or your group was hired to find someone else's missing family members or loved ones.

05% Beware the living hiding among the hungry dead. There are a handful of characters who can walk among zombies unharmed. This includes the Half-Living, Zombie Prophet, and the priests of Death Cults. Though Half-Living and Zombie Prophets are usually good guys, some are evil to begin with or become vengeful or evil as a result of trauma and join bandits and other dark forces. In other cases, the Half-Living or Zombie Prophet may be forced or blackmailed into doing the bidding of evil people who hold their loved ones prisoner and will harm or kill them if they do not do as they are told.

Those who can walk among the zombies are able to perform reconnaissance, surveillance, searches, and supply runs without fear of attack by zombies and are concealed inside a mob of them. When working against another group of survivors, those who can walk among the dead are able to do things to undermine the living under the cover of the zombie horde: open doors and gates to let the dead inside, lead zombies to them or to their hiding place, sabotage vehicles, loot their supply depots, do something to block their escape, and so on, or attack people without warning via any sort of melee weapon or firearm. The target is usually a key person within the enemy or rival group. Nobody expects a zombie to use a gun or throw a knife, steal or vandalize their car or their gear, lock them in or out, etc., so anyone who can walk among the dead has a distinct advantage and the element of surprise.

06% Bodyguard needed. One or all members of the player group are hired to guard and keep safe a very important person or someone in desperate need who touches their hearts. This could be a leader or group of leaders from a Safe Haven or other survivor community, a military leader or strategist, a doctor, a family, a Masked Lunatic Hero, a Shepherd of the Damned, a Zombie Prophet, a Zombie Researcher, a relative whose family is in dire need of protection (or rescue), and so on. The individual or group needs protection from a particular group or individual who wants them dead or wants revenge against the survivor community they serve. Perhaps he or she knows a secret or is a witness to an atrocity or crime, or was exiled by a disgruntled or criminal element at their community and they want revenge, or the leader(s) has taken a stand against a rival or evil group, or the two groups clashed and the hero who needs protection led the winning side



or played a key role in their success, or slew their leader or a beloved individual. There are countless reasons a person, especially a dynamic leader or selfless hero who stands against evil and selfishness, might need bodyguards in the Zombie Apocalypse.

07% Crime solvers needed. One or more crimes have been committed that have either hurt people or the community in some way. The community seeks justice or needs to stop a continuing crime spree that is undermining their community or hurting people. The player group takes on the role of police detectives/investigators. The culprit(s) may be an evildoer, thieves or other criminals, a traitor or spy within the community, or a desperate survivor, hermit, or madman who means no harm but doesn't know how to survive on his/her own, and is too afraid or mentally disturbed to approach the survivor community and ask to join them.

08% Community defenders and protectors needed. This Safe Haven or smaller survivor community has either been troubled by bandits and raiders or has earned an enemy or ruthless rival. To protect themselves they are hiring mercenaries, adventurers, and heroes to fight at their side or to provide protection for their people against acts of aggression. They might also be looking for hired fighters to escort and protect Scroungers, Hound Masters, and Shepherds of the Damned when they go out on supply runs or out looking for other survivors to rescue or help. This may include patrols that defend the perimeter and check in on outlying neighbors such as homesteaders and hermits. Or they may want hired muscle to escort a team of representatives who are supposed to meet with their enemy or rival to negotiate a peace treaty but fear skullduggery and violence.

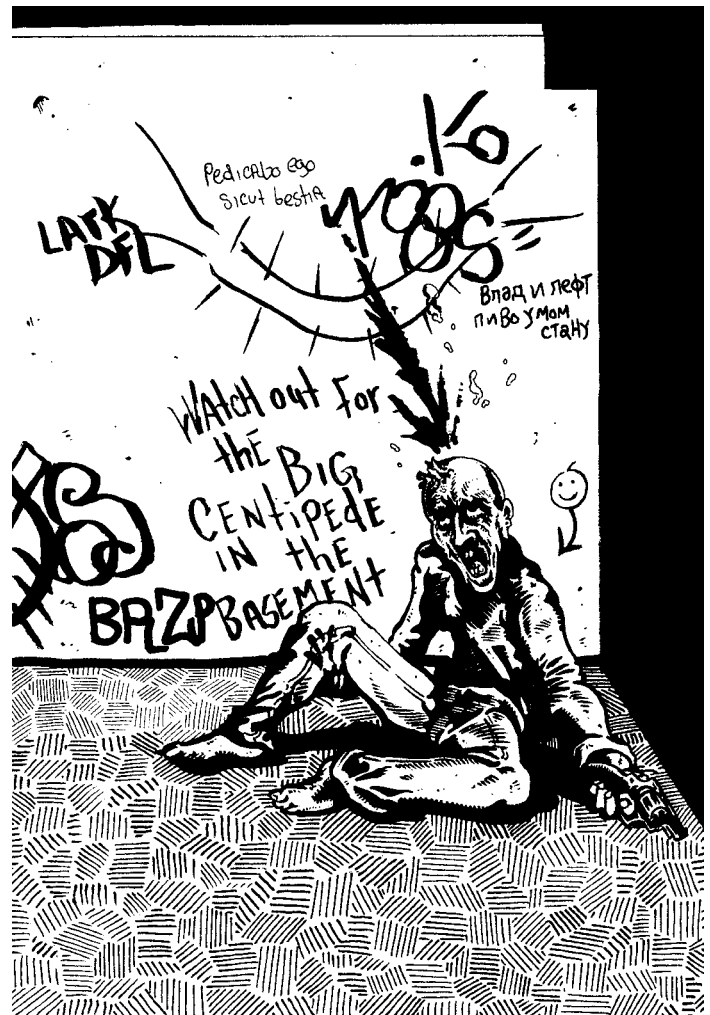
09% Clever deception. A *Mock Zombie* believes that he is a Half-Living or Zombie Prophet, not a zombie risen from the dead. This is a very real and sincere belief that the deluded monster clings to with such tenacity that he is often able to convince others that he is a fellow (living) survivor. This delusion is easily maintained when the Mock Zombie feeds often enough to remain fresh and alive-looking. When a Mock Zombie walks unharmed among the hungry dead, it is able to scout and spy for its human associates/community/cult, or is able to lure other survivors out with its living human appearance or lead them into a trap or into the clutches of the group it serves. This may be cultists, zombie lovers, lunatics, or a group of bandits, raiders, Retro-Savages, or anyone who has been duped by the Mock Zombie into believing it is a Half-Living or Zombie Prophet, or plays along to keep the Mock Zombie happy. Since this group of people have accepted the well-preserved Mock Zombie as a member of their community and do not challenge his claim to be a human, the deranged zombie serves them faithfully, killing the living it must feed upon to keep up appearances, in secret and away from prying eyes, or targeting only enemies or survivors outside the community that has accepted it. If careful, this clever deceit may last a long time, and depending on the group or community, they may not care that Mr. So and So is a Mock Zombie, provided the creature serves them with extreme loyalty.

A smart, wicked living person or group can easily use a Mock Zombie to their advantage against rivals and enemies by letting it hide among the dead, lead zombies to them or to destroy their enemies, and to capture and rob other survivors. Likewise, such individuals and Mock Zombies (and Thinkers) may use *Pretty Zombies* that look alive (or may look alive themselves) as bait to lure out heroes and protectors who reveal themselves in an at-

tempt to rescue "the people in danger." Too late do they discover the people they are trying to rescue are really *Pretty Zombies* that may be unleashed to join the attack against them. *Impersonator Zombies* may also be used by evildoers to lure the living into their clutches or to create a ruse to get them to trust them when their rescuer or helper is really a spy, madman, or a monster.

10% Elevator Shaft Zombies. The bottom of the elevator shaft is filled with 1D4x10 zombies who come shambling or piling out the moment the bottom elevator doors are opened. They pose a threat because they moan constantly inside the shaft, attracting other zombies to gather in the area outside the elevator doors and keep zombies on the bottom floor agitated and aggressive. They also pose a problem should someone release them. Moreover, every once in a while, a zombie or two, usually a Crawler, Fast Attack Zombie, or Flesh-Eater, is able to climb up to a higher level and manage to escape. Over time, those left in the shaft rot and fuse together, and form into a Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant.

11% Elevator Shaft Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant Zombie. This type of massive monstrosity is more common than you might imagine, especially over the passage of time. Some are formed by zombies that fall down elevator shafts and as the dozens and dozens of them rot, they fuse into one of the weird abominations known as a **Walking Grave** or **Dead Mound Giant**. Both are massive organisms that are an amalgam of dozens of zombies. Other times, these nightmares are inadvertently created by survivors who think they are eliminating zombies by pushing



or tricking them into falling down an elevator (or mine) shaft. Still others are created deliberately by Death Cults who send 2D6x10 zombies into the shaft from a higher floor, and sometimes use a controlled fire to fuse them together more quickly. Terror and Death Cultists then use these monstrosities to maintain obedience under the threat of being fed to the thing at the bottom of the elevator if they should disobey or try to escape.

Cultists and bad guys may also do this to create traps for enemies, rivals, and unallied survivors. And sometimes for **twisted games** in which one or more living people are dangled on ropes just above the reach of the Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant mass of zombies. Some games require those suspended by rope to fight each other, others have them bobbed up and down so that the many appendages, maws or giant limbs try to grab and snap at the suspended people. Or to see if the people dropped down on rope can manage to climb up the rope to freedom 2-4 stories above or fall to their doom.

As the Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant forms, some of the zombies climb atop each other or try to crawl up the sides of the elevator shaft. In many cases over time, this causes them to form a latticework of fused zombies inside the shaft up the wall, like vines crawling up the side of a brick wall. This effect can cover one to all sides of the elevator shaft's walls, upward for 1-4 stories, and any recent zombies, especially *Crawlers*, *Flesh-Eating* and *Fast Attack Zombies*, are able to scale the latticework of flesh, snapping mouths, and clawing hands to get at the living who may be suspended into the pit or who unwittingly open an elevator shaft's doors at a level the zombies can reach, or try to reach by leaping. These zombies and a few others, like *Thinkers*, may also try to climb the elevator cables to higher elevations and pounce the moment an elevator door is opened.

Given enough zombies and time, the horrors could fill several stories of the shaft, making it a solid tower of fused flesh and bone covered in mouths and limbs like a giant worm, but unlikely to be able to pull its mass out of the shaft.

Note: This phenomenon may also occur inside mine shafts, missile silos, cellars, deep ravines, pits, and sometimes in tunnels where many zombies get trapped and so tightly packed they do not have the space to move.

12% Find a valuable and rare resource. This is not the run of the mill resource like food or water, but rather a specific medicine, military weapon or vehicle, or aircraft, or boat, or missile, or a person with the necessary skills to save lives or restart/run an electrical plant, etc. Odds are this item or items, or person, is necessary to save lives or is vital to the survival of a group or a community. Without it/them, the community must move and rebuild or it will fall to the enemy.

In the alternative, the rare resource may be something an enemy wants in order to trade with them to get something or someone the community needs, or required to make a dangerous enemy force go away without further incident.

13% Free people trapped someplace. One to many innocent people are trapped someplace due to rising flood waters, fire, a collapsing building, tunnel cave-in, or are trapped at the bottom, middle or upper level when a stairwell collapses or is deliberately blown up. They must be rescued before zombies or bad guys can get to them. Or in the alternative, before the fire or water reaches them and their air runs out or the rest of the structure collapses.

14% Free people from slavers. This person or people have fallen into the hands of a Flesh Peddler, Gutter Rat, Death Cult,

or Retro-Savages looking for good breeding stock or carnal pleasure, or to perform manual labor. The latter could be working a farm, building, mining, cargo hauling, and so on, but probably under adverse and dangerous conditions.

15% The Labyrinth. A civilian, industrial, or secret military tunnel system of some kind, series of interconnected mines, subway system, steam tunnels, underground compound, etc., including a network of tunnels, sub-basement, or underground tunnels and rooms that are not on the "official" floor plans of the building, factory, military base, etc. Along borders this could be a tunnel or several tunnels and a facility for storing and smuggling drugs, weapons, or people. In a city or neighborhood, this could be a secret drug lab or similar operation. The labyrinth could be a secret way out, a potential site for a secret lair or Safe Haven, a secret military base or government refuge containing drinking water, weapons and supplies, perhaps even living government officials, etc., but first it must be explored and cleared of zombies, traps, and other dangers. Who knows what unexpected secrets or dangers may be unearthed? **Note:** On a smaller scale, this could be a secret basement, fallout shelter, supply cache, panic room, or prepper's underground bunker and escape tunnel(s).

16% Protect the village or kingdom, Safe Haven, or other survivor community, from warlords, gangs, bandits, raiders, cultists, Retro-Savages, maniacs, rivals, or monsters (any number or type of zombies). The enemy or rival engages in regular acts of sabotage, vandalism, theft, or raids, and the community/stronghold is looking for a group who can help protect them or put an end to the constant harassment.

17% Protect the castle from an enemy breach. An enemy or rival is working to breach the walls or gates of a tall building or skyscraper or stadium, or other survivor stronghold. Their plan, to create a few large breaches/openings via explosives, artillery, or by smashing vehicles through the walls and letting an army of the walking dead inside to do the rest for them. This is especially effective for enemies who want the "castle" themselves or want the resources and supplies inside, because the hungry dead only kill the living and leave most of the valuable supplies, gear and machinery undamaged. If the enemy can control the zombies, they can make them leave after everyone is dead. And if they can walk among the hungry dead unharmed, they can walk among them to lead the way, or to grab the most valuable goods before they are damaged or taken away by survivors as they attempt to flee.

In the alternative, a Terror or Death Cult may be looking to undermine or destroy the Safe Haven so that survivors must turn to them for protection and join the cult as reluctant followers in order to survive.

18% Protect the castle from an enemy siege! In this case, a rooftop community or Safe Haven is under siege by raiders, a bandit gang, a Death Cult, Terror Cult, or rival group who wants their building or the resources the community has accumulated. Or it may be under siege by Retro-Savages who want to destroy these fools who cling to technology and are the cause of the zombie infestation.

19% Protect the castle from zombies. Somehow, zombies are getting into what are supposed to be the cleared and sealed upper levels and people are dying because of it. Is there a traitor among them? A secret madman or Death Cultist? A Half-Zombie or Zombie Prophet who has turned against the living? A Mock Zombie kept fresh, attractive, and looking alive through care-

ful murder, perhaps away from the community when he makes scouting or supply runs? Or is there a Thinker or Mock Zombie, Death Cultist, Retro-Savage or other enemy that breached the defenses somewhere, or has figured out an unknown way in and is sending in small groups or waves of zombies to undermine them or kill them? Or is there something new and unknown at work?

Or perhaps there is some strange zombie or group of zombies that has eluded being found and destroyed that is hunting people within what is supposed to be a sanctuary for the living. It or they need to be found and destroyed or people will continue to die and rise as other types of zombies that kill more living, while the main cause of these problems remains loose and hidden.

20% Jail Break. Someone important or a group of innocent people (one to a handful of women, or children, a family, a doctor and his staff, a civil leader, etc.) have been taken captive and are held by a small or medium-sized group that has wicked intentions for their captives. Unless the person or people are rescued, they will suffer a terrible fate. The prisoners may be tied up and kept under guard, locked inside a van or truck, kept in a pit or inside a building, but probably not an actual jail cell. If they are locked in a jail cell inside a police precinct or sheriff's office, or perhaps an animal pen, the rescuers will have a more difficult time of it, and may need to get the keys or use explosives or an acetylene torch to liberate the captives.

A jail break versus a Prison Break or large scale Rescue Operation, below, usually involves stealth and/or a commando-style raid to *quietly free the prisoner(s)* before anyone notices, and get them out fast and safely with minimal to no combat and bloodshed.

21% Prison Break or Rescue Operation. This rescue is usually a much more active and larger scale combat mission to rescue a V.I.P. or small group, or even a large number of people, being held prisoner at a well armed camp or secure, physical location. The rescue team is likely to face a decent number of the enemies (the rescuers are probably outnumbered 2, 3, or 4 to one, maybe more) and may need to breach a secure and fortified position. This could be the camp of a well-equipped platoon of soldiers, bandits or raiders with a caravan of vehicles for cargo, transport and assault, or an actual prison or police precinct, sports stadium, or a well defended building or other fortified and defended position.

To effect a successful prison break, a diversion may be necessary while the rescue team (our player group?) engages in a fast, commando-style tactical assault on the location where the prisoners are being held in order to free and escort them to safety. After the prison break, the rescuers had better have a well-planned route of escape and/or backup, because the remainder of the group they just attacked is likely to come after them to recover their prisoners and to exact revenge! A variation of this scenario may have the player group be part of an all-out assault with the purpose of taking down as many of the enemy as possible, including the leaders, and chasing the rest off; heavy combat is to be expected.

In the alternative, the player characters could be the ones holding prisoners and are in the position of defending themselves and their captives from an assault team trying to break them out! Have fun.

22% Race with Death. A small pack of *Fast Attack Zombies* are encountered inside a building, a tunnel, a stadium, or on the streets. The monsters have decided that you and your teammates are prey and rush forward to attack. All the while shrieking



and shrieking, attracting other zombies (and people?) for blocks around until they are slain. If you flee, whether on foot, skateboard, bicycle, or in a vehicle, the zombies follow until they get close enough to pounce on top of you, or you kill them first. That is harder to do if there are several of them (half the number of the player group or one fast zombie for each member of the group).

In the alternative, your character(s) see 1D6 Fast Attack Zombies or Flesh-Eating Zombies running after 1D4 kids or teenagers. The youngsters are Rat Runners or Scroungers moving fast down a Rat Run, but the tireless monsters are hot on their tail and seem to be gaining on them. These kids need help before it is too late. If the player character(s) helps them escape or slays the zombies, it could lead to them making contact with the kids who will return the favor in kind with information, a few basic supplies, and/or a place for them all to hide and lay low for awhile to make sure other zombies or bad guys don't come to investigate the shrieking and sounds of battle. A good exchange (and role-playing) between characters may earn the Rat Runners' favor to introduce one or more members of the player group to the leaders of their Safe Haven community, probably located up in a skyscraper or on the rooftop of a tall building, but it could be in a suburban neighborhood or underground. This should lead to new opportunities for adventure.

23% Raid. A raid is a tactical assault with a specific goal. Raids often use the element of surprise and quickly turn into an all-out assault. The fighting lasts until the raiders are run off or they breach the skyscraper, town, or Safe Haven's defenses, get inside, and take what they want before they leave. That is usually valuables and resources such as vehicles, weapons, ammunition, drinking water, food, medicine, and other supplies. A raiding party may send in a small squad using stealth to scout a location and/or spy on the people before they launch their large-scale attack later. A typical group of raiders is the size of a platoon (30-60 raiders/fighters) or small army (80-120 raiders), though they may dispatch a smaller group to do the raiding.

Most raiders don't care about who they hurt or kill or the amount of damage they inflict upon a community. Their attack is simply to get what they want and leave, with a typical raid lasting under 10 minutes. Raiding parties that outnumber the defenders and inhabitants and clearly have the upper hand, may linger for 20-30 minutes to have some fun at their victims' expense. "Fun" may terrorizing the population with threats and beatings, rape, deliberate and unnecessary damage to property, killing pets and some livestock, and sometimes setting fire to property or engaging in torture or kidnapping a few people.

The setting of fire and severe damage is usually kept to a minimum because smart raiders want to be able to return in six months or a year to raid the community again. Raiders survive by preying upon other survivors. If you destroy too much and kill too many, the community fails, or it packs up and leaves, and there is nobody to rob over and over again. In fact, after the first raid or two, some raiders return without attacking but threaten violence unless the survivor community pays them tribute. "Gives us what we want," or "let us in to take what we want, and we will leave without anybody needing to get hurt." Most keep their word. Of course, refusal results in a brutal attack.

There are a number of adventure possibilities under this scenario. Here are just a few to consider.

1) The player group may be hired or recruited to recover something(s) stolen by a band of raiders: a kidnap victim, device, vehicle, fuel, livestock, medicine, or other resource.

2) A Jail Break or Rescue Operation of a V.I.P. (a leader, doctor, engineer, priest, wife, child, etc.) is another adventure possibility.

3) The player group may be hired or recruited to protect a survivor community from a band of raiders or any group of thieves or troublemakers.

4) The player group may be hired to target and assassinate the leader(s) of the raiders in the hope it will cause them to disband and move on.

5) Similar to #4, a survivor community may hire or recruit the heroes to find out what organization sponsors or trades with a particular group of raiders and to eliminate that organization or their leader. Or to negotiate a fair trade deal or peace treaty with them.

6) The heroes may be asked to do the raiding of a rival or enemy stronghold. Presumably a force of evil and destruction, but not necessarily. Also note in the case of Terror and Death Cults, many of the ordinary people in the community are not evil. They may be enslaved, indentured servants, or desperate people who had no other place to turn to survive. Like many street gangs and criminal organizations, once you get in with them you are a permanent member of that community/group, and they do not allow you to leave the gang or cult.

24% Rescue the captives/slaves from a Flesh Peddler. Innocent people or someone important to, or beloved by, a survivor community (or the player group) have been abducted by a Flesh Peddler, slaver, or other nefarious band of brigands and must be rescued before it is too late. Or the person/people may have been kidnaped for their skill sets.

25% Rescue one or more fair maidens in yon tower, or in this case, a skyscraper, tall building, warehouse, airport tower, or bridge. Her captor: A Thinker or Mock Zombie, or a madman, or bandits, or Retro-Savages, cultists, a sworn enemy or rival, or other bad guy(s).

26% Rescue a traveling merchant or trading post. All communities will have someone or a group of people who are excellent Scavengers or have a connection with Scavengers (or bandits and thieves), or who have lucked out in finding a vast quantity of one or several high-demand trade goods, and have opened a trading post. Trade of goods and service is vital for the survival of any community, and this trading post may be part of that community or an independent operation. In the alternative, it could be a traveling merchant trading goods and bringing news and stories from the back of a truck or wagon. Whatever the case may be, the trading post or traveling merchant is in trouble. It or he may have

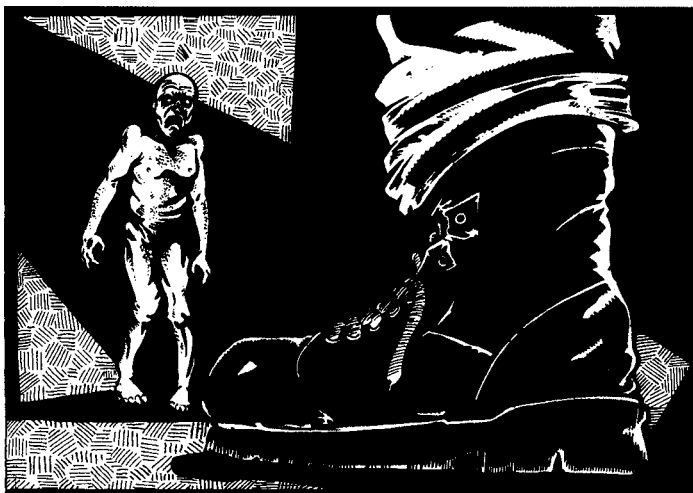
been raided and robbed, of the proprietor or his family members or friends have been abducted to be traded themselves or forced under torture to reveal the source of their supplies. The post and/or the people need to be rescued.



27% Rescue someone abducted for their skill set. In any post-apocalyptic setting there are skill sets we once took for granted that become invaluable. The people who possess those skills and knowledge, whether they are mechanical, electrical, medical, scientific, weapon and combat related, piloting, and so on, may be seen as a valuable commodity themselves and taken by unscrupulous fellow survivor groups. That is the case here. One or several skilled people have gone missing or are known to have been abducted. Not only are they in peril and taken from their loved ones, but their absence may also hurt their loved ones and/or community. If their captors are nomadic, they need to be rescued pronto before they vanish forever.

28% Rescue a lost child in the city before the monsters get him/her. In the alternative, the child (or anyone) could be lost in a suburban neighborhood or in a tunnel system, along the railroad tracks, a woodland, etc. This is not an abduction, or at least does not start out as one. This is one or a few children wandering off or running from danger only to get lost. Whether they later fall prey to nefarious people or zombies is what our heroes are trying to prevent. Encounters and danger along the way to finding the lost child(s) can be many or a few.

29% Rescue people from a burning building. A building, low or tall, has caught fire and the people inside need rescuing. To complicate an already deadly situation, the fire attracts an increasing number of zombies by the hundreds that fill the streets around it. Any survivors or rescuers running out into the open will be attacked. Fortunately, zombies instinctively fear fire so there is a bit of space on the streets and alleys around the burning structure, but not much. The thick black smoke that spirals into the sky can be seen for miles and may attract other survivors who may see the fire as a distraction and an opportunity to raid another part of the city or attack a Safe Haven, Death Cult, etc. **Note:** A burning house in a neighborhood has a 60% chance of spreading to 1D6 other nearby homes. All burning down to the ground and attracting zombies and maybe other people. The smoke from just one burning house can be seen up to 10 miles (16 km) away.



30% Rescue people trapped in a tunnel or mine. The tunnel may have collapsed or been deliberately sabotaged, trapping people inside who need to be rescued before they perish due to lack of air or drinking water, or the exit may have been cut off, leaving the only way out through a horde of zombies (or other villains or danger), or trouble may be heading in their direction. If an act of deliberate sabotage, the person/traitor or spy, group, rival, or enemy needs to be identified and prevented from doing this again. An act of sabotage might only be the beginning of bigger trouble coming in the future, such as a raid or assault.

31% Rescue people being experimented upon. Innocent people/friends/teammates may have been abducted or taken captive by a group experimenting upon survivors for any number of reasons. The recent captives will soon become part of that experiment unless they are rescued soon. The experiment may be rooted in science, involve the transition into the hungry dead, finding a cure or way to end the zombies, or it may be rooted in torture, sadistic pleasure, or madness. It may come from one or more Zombie Researchers, government scientists, Terror or Death Cultists, Restro-Savages, a madman, a Mock Zombie, a Pattern Zombie that thinks it is conducting some sort of medical procedure or research, etc.

In the alternative, our wandering adventurer group may have stumbled upon this medical or research facility or Masked Lunatic's lair by accident. They have not been seen or are not desirable subjects and are allowed to leave without incident. In the latter case, perhaps only people of a certain age or who possess certain traits, or seem to have influence over zombies, like the Half-Living, Zombie Prophet and Death Cultists, are the subject of the experiment. Do the player characters turn a blind eye and walk away, or do they intercede? Even scumbags like wicked cultists may not deserve the torture and treatment they will suffer at the hands of this "research."

32% Rescue the slaves of a Death Cult or Terror Cult. This organization is keeping people against their will or may have abducted one or more people for their skills. Can you rescue them? At what cost? Or the cult, gang, or criminal organization may really only want one person but have taken his or her family or loved one(s) to force the person to do their bidding. To complicate matters, this key person may be critical to a good survivor community, but the person will not abandon his/her loved one(s). If you want that person you need to rescue or negotiate the release of her/his family. Good luck.

33% Rescue the slaves of a Retro-Savage town. The captive people will suffer a long time before they meet their end as mistreated slave labor or worse. Their great sin, refusing to abandon technology and propagating its use, or trying to preserve and restart modern civilization. The prisoners need rescuing and will require being escorted back home through hostile zombie-filled streets or territory. In addition, their Retro-Savage captors are likely to give pursuit in an attempt to recapture them, and/or to punish or destroy them AND their rescuers – the player group!

34% Save and hold the bridge. Cities such as New York City, Chicago, Detroit/Windsor, Minneapolis and Saint Paul, San Francisco, and many others have one or more bridges that connect the city to other communities. Destroying those bridges will isolate the people living there and make travel and access to other communities and important resources difficult to nearly impossible. Thus, it is vital for a survivor group to get control of that bridge(s) and defend it against enemies and madmen who would rather see it (them) destroyed. The same applies to tunnels that connect communities. For example, Retro-Savages would love to destroy bridges connecting Manhattan to the other four boroughs, or the bridge and underwater tunnel connecting Detroit to the city of Windsor, or the Golden Gate Bridge connecting the city of San Francisco to Marin County, and so on.

Note: In the case of each *Save the X* adventure hook, the alternative to saving and holding it from others is the player group may be the ones trying to take control of, or destroy, the location to undermine an enemy, bad guys, or a rival. They may be trying



to do so by themselves for their own reasons, or because they have been hired to do so. They may be working on their own or as a team within a larger group of allies or employers. This is always a fun scenario in which you can turn the table on the heroes who

think they fight against the forces of evil only to find out that they have allied themselves with the real bad guys!

35% Save the city. Unless they are stopped, a group of Retro-Savages or other bad guys or madmen plan to burn down the city, be it a downtown area with skyscrapers or an entire suburban city and blocks and blocks of neighborhoods.

36% Save and hold the dam. Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy a dam and flood one or more outlying cities and towns in its path.

37% Save and hold the electrical plant. Unless they are stopped, a group of Restro-Savages, villains or madmen plan to destroy an electrical plant (or grid) to turn off the lights and power to the city and rival survivor groups.

38% Save and hold the factory. Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy a factory (large or small, and/or warehouse full of supplies or parts) that could be used to build a vital resource or a valuable trade good(s) like medicine, ammunition, guns, vehicles, etc.

39% Save the homestead(s). Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy or capture and enslave the homesteaders in this part of the city, one by one.

40% Save the hospital. Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy or capture a hospital (or research facility, private medical facility/laboratories, pharmaceutical or research building, etc.) and use its many resources, from the building itself to backup generators, medical devices, medicine, and perhaps helicopter port on the roof (and a helicopter?!) for their own diabolic purpose.

41% Save and hold the military base (or part of it). Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy or capture a military base (or part of one, or other government facility or factory or research compound, Air Force base and airfield, Naval base and port, armory, police precinct, a particular government or military resource, etc.) and all it has to offer, from military grade communications, weapons and vehicles, to other resources, and use them for their own diabolic purpose.

42% Save the power plant. Unless they are stopped, a group of villains or madmen plan to destroy a local power plant. They may want to control it themselves or want to make sure power can never be restored here again, or to undermine and weaken an enemy or rival survivor community (or cluster of communities), so they may raid or destroy it!

43% Save the Safe Haven or town. Unless they are stopped, a small army of bandits, raiders, cultists, or other villains plan to destroy or take over a rooftop Safe Haven, survivor town or other community for themselves. If they are not chased away, destroyed, or otherwise stopped (holding them at bay is likely to result in future assaults), they will attack, take the survivor community for themselves, and either enslave or cast out or slaughter the current inhabitants.

44% Search for a Cannibal Killer. The discovery of the remains of people who have been recently killed and partially eaten suggests that one, a few, or a pack of *Flesh Eating Zombies* have made the surrounding city blocks, neighborhood, tunnel or sewer system, a city park, abandoned industrial area, or a particular skyscraper, their hunting ground. Flesh-Eating Zombies are more cunning, stealthy, and predatory, like a tiger, than Slouchers and most other zombies, and they will continue to stalk and kill people until they are found and destroyed or they kill all the available prey and must move on.

In the alternative, the Cannibal Killer could be a Thinker or Mock Zombie that, for the purpose of creating terror or as the result of a mental aberration, eats part of its victim. Or the Cannibal Killer(s) could be a person or group (Terror Cult, Death Cult, serial killer, or other persons) that has turned to cannibalism. They eat parts or much of their human victim as food to survive, or because they have chosen to emulate the hungry dead all around them or as part of a Death Cult ritual. Or, perhaps, upon capturing their victim for whatever reason (revenge, sadistic pleasure, etc.), they feed their victim to Slouchers (while they are still alive) or Flesh Eating Zombies. Eating or removing body parts may be done to generate fear or out of madness, or to send a grotesque warning or message of revenge.

45% Search for a hero. A group of homesteaders or a Safe Haven community search for a local hero or adventurer group of renown to slay a monster or bad guy, or help in some other way, but nobody seems to know where he/they are. Can the player group take his or their place and save the day? And in so doing, perhaps establish a new client, ally, or trade partner? In the alternative, or perhaps as part two of this scenario, the player group is hired to find the missing hero, which could become an adventure or series of adventures. One part is the journey to find the hero and possibly many adventures along the way. When the hero is located, the player group learns he is in trouble – captured by evil forces and in need of rescuing, has amnesia, or is injured and needs to be given medical treatment and returned home to rest and recover, or perhaps he has his hands full helping other people in desperate need and cannot abandon them to return home until they are saved or helped. Will the player group help in regard to any of these situations? Presumably, they will, and that could send them on another adventure afterward.

46% Search for a Key Person. A vital person in a survivor community has gone missing or has been abducted by bandits or raiders for his skill abilities or is being held for ransom, or taken by a Flesh Peddler/slaver, or a cult, or Retro-Savages, or a Thinker Zombie, etc., and needs rescuing. As a key person, the individual is someone necessary to running a power plant or water treatment facility, or is the local doctor, a Zombie Researcher they believe is on the verge of finding a cure, or an important leader. Whichever is the case, he or she is vital to the community's survival or continued growth and prosperity.

In the alternative, the group may need to find a *local resident* who has vital knowledge or an important connection to someone or something the group or the community needs. The problem is he or she has either moved on to a new home or hiding place in parts unknown, or is out scavenging or exploring, or is missing and may be in trouble.

47% Search for a killer. Someone is killing people and needs to be found and brought to justice or put to an end. The killer may be an enemy agent who has infiltrated the community and is killing to exact revenge or to undermine the enemy, or because he or she likes killing. Or the murderer could be a serial killer, madman, or a ruthless criminal who kills rivals, witnesses, or anyone who gets in his way. Or perhaps the victims have been killed as human sacrifices as part of a twisted Death Cult ceremony or “magic” ritual that is supposed to protect them from the zombies or who knows what.

In the alternative, the killer could be a well preserved *Mock Zombie* that looks completely alive and human, living among them or nearby as a hermit or independent homesteader. Or a

Thinker Zombie, perhaps, that hides and waits and picks off people from one or more nearby survivor communities when they slip into the city streets to scout, scavenge, or to help others. The Thinker is smart enough to have watched and followed people coming and going along their Rat Runs and, like them, has figured out places to hide and attack, using the element of surprise, perhaps even waiting for them at one of their supply caches or hiding place where they feel safe. Either of these zombies may be smart enough to play dumb and behave like a slow moving Sloucher to avoid notice and to observe and follow from the shadows or from within the safety of a mob of zombies. However, it is a lone hunter because it has figured out that killing a person by itself enables it to feed upon ALL the life energy, not just a portion of it. This may also be the reason it uses a melee weapon to kill and goes for a quick kill to the head or throat, and the reason nobody suspects a zombie is the killer. Most people underestimate Thinkers.

48% Search for a secret. This may be the blueprints or security code to an underground military or industrial compound, or the way to a secret location, a map to a weapon depot or government Safe Haven, or the manual to operate a nuclear or electrical power plant, water treatment plant, factory, the manufacturing of ammunition or medicine, and so on.

Secret mission for a kingdom/Safe Haven or other survivor community. This could involve spying against a rival or enemy, or securing a vital resource like medicine or fuel, or finding a new route of travel, securing a nearby building or strategic position in the hands of zombies or a human group, clearing a neighborhood or tunnels of zombies, securing one or more weapons and ammo that might give them a superior advantage (machine-gun, rocket launcher, armored vehicle, tank, assault helicopter, military patrol boat, etc.), capturing or assassinating an enemy leader without a trail leading back to them, and so on. All of which requires going into hostile territory and finding or doing whatever is necessary to complete the mission.

49% Strangers causing trouble. One or a few strangers have arrived in town and are stirring up trouble or changing the status quo. This could be 1D6+1 Scroungers, Shepherds of the Damned, Soldiers, Road Reapers, Zombie Prophets, Zombie Researchers, Masked Lunatics, bandits, raiders, or nomadic survivors (ordinary people). They are either passing through or from another community and are aggressive and violent. They may be troublemakers or good guys unintentionally causing trouble with local bad guys or agitating the zombie population or inadvertently bringing trouble with them (a group of their enemies, rivals, raiders, bandits, Retro-Savages, a zombie horde, a group of different dangerous zombies, etc.). If good people, someone needs to make contact and settle them down, or help give them the lay of the land and a list of dos and don'ts. Of course, the strangers may be cooperative or disrespectful and uncooperative. If from another nearby community, they could be looking to negotiate terms to become an ally or trade partner, or may have left that community (or been exiled from it) and want to join the player group or a different survivor community.

In the alternative, they could be adventurers (the player group, itself, perhaps) looking to trade goods or services. They are able to help the community for fair trade of available supplies, or they are traveling merchants (or thieves) looking to establish a trade route with other survivors. If the strangers are a group of traveling merchants, they may offer goods they have scavenged on

their journey, or be looking to trade for additional goods, or may offer one or a few goods the group or community does not have and could use. Some merchants and communities will specialize in one or a few areas or have access to things other communities do not have, but want. This could be anything from food crops and preserved food, to drinking water, medicine, vehicle parts, tires, vehicle repair, guns, ammo, solar panels, electrical generators, some type of fuel (gasoline, propane, etc.), or just about anything. They only have so much carried with them and claim to have much more in one or several trucks, or at a trading post, not too far away (a half day's journey to 1-3 days). The question becomes, can they be trusted or is this a scam or trap? Are they traders or a scouting expedition for bandits or raiders, on another dangerous group that is trying to determine if our heroes and the survivor community they are associated with are worth targeting to rob.

Note: The questions when dealing with any stranger is: Can he or they be trusted? How much do you tell and show them? Are they spies or bad seeds or are they innocent survivors, like you, looking for a safe place to live? Will they be an asset or a problem? Making contact with outsiders is *always a risk*.

50% Strangers in trouble. 1D6 people – could be a family, women and children, a group of males or females who are dirty and desperate looking people, or well armed and equipped – have gotten themselves in trouble with (or may be heading toward) zombies, cultists, bandits, a street gang, or thieves are trapped under a collapsing building, or in other peril and need help. Without intervention, all or most of them will perish. Or the people are searching for heroes or mercenaries to help their cluster of homesteads or survivor community. What do *your heroes/adventurer group* do?

Note: Strangers can be a great source for adventure. They may represent a danger or need help. They may have information or heard rumors that lead to new opportunities or warn of danger. They are able to speak of things they have seen on their travels such as a looming danger, strange zombie or group of people, a great location for a survivor camp, the location of one or a few other survivor groups or a Safe Haven. Or they may know the whereabouts of a valuable resource they could not fully take advantage of themselves, but with the player group's help the two groups working together can. Maybe the strangers are looking to hire heroes or adventurers to do a job for them, or the strangers could be trouble themselves (con artists, thieves, spies, madmen, cultists, etc.). Game Masters, remember a stranger can crop up anywhere – on the road, in the woods, in an alley, inside a building, on the doorstep of your community, anywhere. Take advantage of this convenient avenue for adventure.

51% Take a resource. The player group is hired to take or help take over a place or capture a resource such as a hospital, power plant, municipal water plant/reservoir/clean water supply, armory, military base, fuel depot, airfield, or a building, ship, or location of strategic importance. This resource has either been taken from them by, or has fallen under the control of, an evil rival or a foul group of Terror Cultists, Death Cultists, Retro-Savages or other bad guys who use the resource and their superior position to unfairly exploit, control, enslave, or terrorize the good people in the area.

52% Crawlers. 1D6 Crawlers emerge between the walls, in the rafters, scurrying around and dropping down from the basement pipes, or in a tight space, under the stairs, or lurking under

vehicles. Crawlers like to lurk in small spaces and low places where other zombies cannot fit, such as under cars and dumpsters, in ditches and gutters, under porches, among debris and boxes, and all kinds of hidey-holes that abound in city environments, squeezing under fences, and through holes in walls, etc. (See page 40 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)



53% Zombie attack. A pack of 2D4 Fast Attack Zombies on the street or anywhere outdoors, or inside any building or house to which they can get easy access. They are especially dangerous in the halls and stairwells of tall buildings where they have the advantage of speed and do not tire when running or climbing stairs. Fast Attack Zombies chase and follow people and may get to a door before it can be opened or closed and secured. Inside an office building, these zombies roam up and down the halls looking inside rooms that have opened doors or windows. In a large room with cubicles, they are likely to split up and run around looking for prey. If the Fast Attack Zombies cannot find their way back outdoors, they continue to prowl other floors before going dormant under a desk or in a dark corner. Thankfully, because they like to run so much, people can often hear their footsteps as they dart to and fro on the floor overhead or in the room or aisle up ahead. Not so if the monsters have gone dormant or are engaged in a slow prowl. (See page 43 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

54% Flesh-Eating Zombies on the hunt. A pack of 2D4 Flesh-Eating Zombies are encountered on the street or anywhere outdoors. They probably have a lair inside a building, house, truck, van, or dumpster where they retreat to and go dormant after hunting and feeding. That said, they are out on the prowl most of the time.

Flesh-Eating Zombies behave more like a pack of lions, do not moan, and utilize stealth to prowl and hunt their living prey. This makes them more aware of their environment and much more sneaky and quiet than most other zombies. Flesh-Eating Zombies are known to watch and quietly follow people and animals from the shadows, picking them off one by one and waiting to pounce when they have the advantage or the element of surprise. When they find a way indoors thorough a smashed out or open window or door, they enter quietly, and prowl up and down the halls like a silent predator. Peeking inside rooms that have opened doors or windows, and listening for noise to investigate. Flesh Eaters are agile climbers and, like cats, climb up stairs, fire escapes, elevator

cables, rope, pipes, and lurk up in balconies, and on the rooftops of trailers, boxcars, low buildings and houses, as well as climb up into scaffolding, rafters, suspended ceilings, trees, and high places where they lurk and pounce down on unsuspecting human or animal prey. These zombies often hunt in pairs, trios, and small packs, and eat the flesh of their victims. (See page 45 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

55% A single Sloucher. This shambling zombie immediately unleashes the Zombie Moan the minute it sees or senses living prey. Silence it fast or risk other zombies in the area converging on the sound of the moan. (See page 38 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

In the alternative, they encounter a **Silent Sloucher** without the ability to moan or make any sort of vocalizations. It is a lone, silent hunter that attacks without warning. Though it is incapable of the Zombie Moan, the person attacked may scream from surprise or the sound of combat may attract 1D6 other Slouchers. (See page 13 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

56% 1D6+1 Slouchers. Or 1D4+1 Slouchers and a couple of Crawlers. They all start to moan and approach the minute they see or sense living prey, with the Crawlers scrambling ahead of the Slouchers. Silence them fast or risk other zombies in the area converging! (See pages 38 and 40, respectively, of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

57% One Mock Zombie. The example in the RPG is written with a touch of humor, but there is nothing funny about Mock Zombies, especially when they feed on a regular basis and look completely alive. The zombie sincerely believes it is alive. It may claim to be an ordinary person or a hermit, or it may profess to be Zombie Prophet or Half-Living, both of whom can walk among the hungry dead without being attacked. They may make such a claim if seen among zombies or when trying to get in close with a group of good people. A Mock Zombie always tries to fit in with the group it is trying to join. Weirdly enough, the monster is usually quite loyal to the people who accept it as one of them. This means the deluded creature is easily manipulated by selfish and evil people who play along with its claims even when they know the truth. A Mock Zombie that joins a Death or Terror Cult may be openly wicked or violent and may assume the persona of a Death Priest or someone able to control and lead small numbers of zombies.

Most Mock Zombies go through great lengths to live in denial and conceal their true nature as well as conceal and cover up the victims they kill. Most target strangers and people living outside of the community where they live among other living people. Caggy cultists and gangs give the Mock Zombie jobs that involve torture and killing of enemies or the butchering of animals to quietly and secretly keep the zombie fed without others catching on to its true, undead nature. It is ironic, but a Mock Zombie would rather think of itself as an unbalanced human or serial killer than a zombie. As a result, most like to do their hunting and killing away from prying eyes and the people who know them. Any witnesses to its killing of innocent people are chased off or hunted down and also slain.

Mock Zombies have limited emotions and only partial memories of being human, but they are enough to fake being alive in a convincing manner. No matter what, however, the creature still craves killing and needs life energy to survive and to prevent deterioration. (See page 50 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

58% Pattern Zombies. This may be one or two Pattern Zombies or dozens of them. They may be commuters that are locked in the pattern of going to work, punching the clock, and sitting at a desk or cubicle or standing at their position on the assembly line at a factory. This can be any frequent routine including being a guard who walks the halls of an office building at night and/or sits at a guard station looking at a bank of blank video camera screens, going and returning from a job, jogging, working equipment, running a machine, sitting at a desk, etc. Pattern Zombies are not a threat when the living steer clear of them and do nothing to break the routine of their pattern. However, if the zombies sees or senses the living, they momentarily break pattern to attack and feed, before returning to it. (See page 53 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

City dwellers learn quickly, but visitors may find out the hard way, to be wary of taxis, police cars, buses, and any vehicle that pulls up to you on the street, even if it seems like they are there to help you escape danger. The driver may be a Pattern Zombie just following its work pattern. A few moments after you enter the vehicle, it climbs over the seat to attack. In the case of a school bus, city bus, or other public transportation, any onboard commuters are also Pattern Zombies stuck in their pattern. This can be true of passenger train cars and subway cars where the Pattern Zombie boards and takes a seat or place on the public transportation even though it is not moving. After eight hours they either switch to a different transport or wander home to complete the routine of going to work and coming home that is locked into their dead brains in a continuous loop. Some cultists, Retro-Savages, pranksters, and lunatics refuel and maintain vehicles they know are used by Pattern Zombies to create a death trap for enemies, rivals, and outsiders, or to cause confusion, or because they find it amusing to watch.

59% 2D6+6 Slouchers. Though slow and dumb as a brick, Slouchers have Supernatural Strength and are the most common of all zombies, existing in the billions across the globe. The moment they see or sense the living, they all begin to moan loudly and pursue. A convergence is inevitable. Time to leave, unless you have the manpower or firepower to take them down fast. However, gunfire and the sound of any combat, coupled with the Zombie Moan, attracts 1D6x10 zombies every one minute for the next 1D6 minutes in the city, 4D6 zombies every minute in the suburbs. The commotion may also attract other people within earshot. The question is, are they good and helpful people or just as dangerous as the hungry dead? (See page 38 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for Sloucher stats.)

60% One Thinker Zombie with a weapon. Thinkers are alert and aware. This one may have been watching or following you, or already has another survivor (a child, teen, injured person, house pet, etc.) cornered or caught in a simple trap. That person needs help before the Thinker kills him. The monster has a melee weapon (baseball bat, crowbar, machete, knife, sword or spear) in its hand and the 1D4 Slouchers it leads like pet dogs are nearby and attack at the first sound of people or conflict. (See page 47 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for stats.)

In the alternative, this could be a Mock Zombie, an evil or insane Half-Living, Death Cult Priest, Zombie Lover, Masked Lunatic, or other maniac who keeps 1D6 Slouchers or Crawlers (or any of the zombies) as pets and attack animals, and is armed with a handgun and/or rifle of some sort.

61% A Pretty Zombie that is a Thinker sets an ambush. It may be male or female, a child, teenager, or adult. It has learned that because it looks completely alive and attractive, it can lure living people out of hiding (especially if it is an attractive female or child) to follow it or to trick them to come to its “rescue” when it pretends to be trapped, paralyzed with fear, injured, or about to be attacked by Slouchers. Using itself as bait in a trap has become one of a handful of clever, simple tricks this Pretty Thinker uses to lure human prey to their doom. Nearby are the zombies who follow and obey it, because they have learned such action gets them fed on a regular basis. These zombies may be a group of 1D6 or 2D6 Slouchers, Fast Attack or Flesh-Eating Zombies, or even a Dead Mound Giant or Walking Grave, or any type or combination of zombies waiting nearby behind a closed door or around the corner. When the Pretty Thinker moans or calls them or opens the door, they come charging out to attack and kill the prey. In a one on one situation, the Thinker may make the kill itself. This Thinker may also use a melee weapon or even a handgun for as long as it has bullets. (See page 47 of **Dead Reign® RPG** for Thinker stats and page 42 of **Civilization Gone™** for Pretty Zombies; basically a Sloucher that looks mostly undamaged and alive.)

62% Zombie Thinker leading a group of 1D6+2 other zombies, probably all or mostly Slouchers, but can be any combination of zombies. The Thinker and the zombies following it are just as surprised to stumble across you and your group as you are to stumble upon them. Run or fight? The zombies attack.

63% Zombie mixed horde! A mixed group of 1D6+4 different types of zombies that are part of a wandering mob of 1D4x10+40 zombies. At least 60% are Slouchers, probably more, but among the horde may be one Thinker or a Mock Zombie, a few Fused Zombies, a few Armored Brutes, Bug Boys, Crawlers, Fast Attack Zombies, Juggernauts, Worm Meat, and others, keeping our heroes on their toes. Probably too many to fight. Hide if not yet noticed. Get out fast if you are noticed.

64% Juggernaut Zombie. Big and muscular, think an extreme body builder or football player lumbering toward you. (See page 39 of **Civilization Gone™** for stats about these large, powerful zombies.)

65% Pretty Zombie. This may be a single attractive, alive-looking survivor or a group of 1D6 of them (could have been models, actors, a theater group, a church choir, or just nice looking people). Pretty Zombies are deceptive because they look completely alive and thereby catch other survivors off guard when they try to make contact with people they think are alive and may need help. As always, the zombies may be children, teenagers, adults or the elderly, but they are all dangerous. (See page 42 of **Civilization Gone™** for stats.)

66% Trash Crawlers. 1D6+1 Trash Crawlers may be encountered anywhere there is a pile of garbage and debris, especially loose trash the zombies can hide under and crawl through. This could be at a garbage dump, junkyard, inside or around or under a dumpster, inside a trashed building or house, a hoarder home, a garbage truck or truck filled with empty boxes or paper and trash, a back alley by the garbage cans, or any trash heap, debris mound, mass grave, or place where there are dead and decaying bodies of people or animals. Trash Crawlers hide at such locations waiting for prey to come scrounging for supplies and valuables. (See page 39 of **Civilization Gone™** for stats.)

67% Bug Boy Zombies. This zombie is a Sloucher covered in live bugs that live inside its body and eat at its flesh and the flesh of its victims. Bug Boys are bringers of pestilence including swarms of flies and gnats, fleas, lice, bedbugs, and other creepy crawlers that bite and infest the living. Moreover, because people are repulsed and disgusted by insects, the zombie has a Horror Factor of 16. The encounter may be with one or a dozen of them or one or a few may be found among a mob of Slouchers or a mixed group of zombies. (See page 14 of **Dark Places™** for stats.)

68% Worm Meat Zombie. This toxic zombie is a Sloucher covered in larvae and disease. They are usually found in damp, humid and warm environments where their festering and rotting flesh is inhabited by fly larvae and other worms and germs. The bite of a Worm Meat Zombie is poisonous and they are a harbinger of disease and rot. Any wound delivered by one is likely to become infected and even tussling with one can lead to illness. This makes Worm Meat Zombies much more dangerous than the typical Sloucher.

The encounter may be with one or a dozen of them, or one or a few may walk among a mob of Slouchers or a mixed group of zombies. Worm Meat are more common in the hot and humid south, but can be encountered anywhere, especially at hospitals, research facilities, underground facilities, tunnels, sewers, and anywhere there are rotting bodies or garbage that attracts flies and insects, including elevator shafts where dead bodies and/or zombies may have been deposited. Moreover, because people are repulsed and disgusted by larvae and worms, the zombie has a Horror Factor of 16. (See page 19 of **Dark Places™** for stats.)

69% Sewer Crawlers. 1D6+2 Crawlers missing the lower half of their bodies that have adapted to living in sewage, sewer tunnels, storm drains, steam tunnels, access tunnels under the streets, subway tunnels, basements filled with water or sewage, and other enclosed areas with standing water.

Sewer Crawlers are a double threat because they can climb up conduits, pipes, and debris to lurk in dark corners and along the walls or ceilings, as well as swim in the knee to waist high water! In the water you may not notice the horrid, little zombie until it attacks, pulling you under, or until it pops out of a crevice or drops down from the pipes or a pile of debris or sludge. (See page 23 of **Dark Places™** for stats.)

70% Impersonator Zombie. The so-called Impersonator Zombie or Mimic or Sounder represents a different kind of danger. This hungry dead is more aware and smarter than most zombies. In fact, it's intelligence is on par with a Thinker and this ambush zombie is more cunning and tricky. It likes to watch and follow the living and then set a trap for them. It hides, often in a bedroom or inside a bedroom or playroom closet or under the bed or behind the couch, or someplace a child might hide or get itself into trouble. There it impersonates a child or woman or young person whimpering and crying or calling out. Impersonator zombies are shockingly skilled at this pretense and at disguising their voices. They can also engage in a simple conversation and reply to simple questions, again, simulating a live person. Depending on the ruse, the monster can sound like a happy or frightened child or change its voice to sound like a weak or frail adult male or female. It may claim to be sick or injured or stuck to get worried survivors to come close so it can pounce or grab and attack them. When it doesn't know how to answer, it reverts back to crying or pleading for help, feigning shock, or panic, or delirium.



An Impersonator Zombie may hunt alone, luring one or two people away from a group and picking them off one by one, or the monster may lead a small group of quiet zombies. Worse, because it can make itself sound like a child, the creature often preys upon children, teenagers, and women. Youngsters share an immediate empathy with other children and are quick to respond to a fellow kid in trouble. They also tend to be more impulsive and less careful when rushing the aid of a fellow kid or woman. The maternal nature of many women also makes them easy marks for such a malevolent ploy, but most people, male and female, have a soft spot for children and mothers. (See page 25 of **Dark Places™** for details and stats about the Impersonator Zombie.)

When an Impersonator Zombie is the leader of a small group of 1D4+2 other zombies (sometimes twice that number), its cohorts are likely to be other quiet, stalking types of zombies, such as Flesh Eaters, Kidnapper Zombies, Silent Slouchers, and Thinkers, or a combination of them.

71% An Impersonator Zombie and Thinkers ambush. This is one of the most dangerous combinations of zombies around: One or two Impersonator Zombies working together with 1D4+1 Thinkers that command 1D4+1 Pretty Zombies. And yes, you read that right, they *work together* to stage ambushes and traps for the living.

The Pretty Zombies are almost always children or women, or a woman and a couple of children zombies. There are many variations of this trap, but they all go something like this: An attractive woman and children are cornered and paralyzed with fear, hurt, or otherwise unable to escape an approaching danger, probably Slouchers or raiders. The mother clings to the children sobbing and pleading for help. She might even be holding what seems to be a baby wrapped up in swaddling and a blanket. (She could be holding anything in that bundle, even a weapon.) The voices of the woman and the children or the crying baby are all provided by one or two Impersonator Zombies hidden nearby. The Impersonator could even be the woman or what appears to be her unconscious husband laying next to her or with his head in her lap, turned in such a way that his face and moving lips cannot be seen by those approaching. 1-4 Slouchers, probably pulled off the street just moments earlier, are approaching or barely held at bay by the walls of debris or a vehicle with smashed out windows.

Other times, 2-3 of the Thinkers in the group dress up and pretend to be raiders or other menacing “live” people brandishing guns (probably empty of ammo and nothing more than props). The Thinkers are bundled up under hoodies and coats and clothing and gloves to conceal their decaying bodies or the grievous wounds that killed them. They do this because they have learned that rescuers kill zombies without hesitation, but are often content to chase off other “living” people, even those who seem to be bad guys. So as the living rescuers approach and command the

“bad guys” to take off or surrender, the Thinkers do so, and either run off and quickly vanish (but really circle back or hide nearby), or they drop their weapons and raise their hands.

The trap is set. When the rescuers come close to comfort or tend to the children and woman, the Pretty Zombie, the zombie children, and the hidden Impersonator Zombie, nearby, all attack. As do the disguised Thinkers who have surrendered and/or those hiding nearby. One Thinker may also be holding back 2-8 Slouchers or other zombies nearby to release like attack dogs to engage the living.

To make sure the Pretty Zombies and children do not blow their cover and ruin the trap by growling or unleashing the Zombie Moan when the live rescuers approach, they usually sew their mouths shut, or tape and cover their mouths. A detail that cannot be seen from a distance or noticed when acting out of urgency to save the woman and/or children.

It is interesting to note that most Thinkers do not consider disguising themselves and pretending to be live humans. Only Thinkers who are led, or instructed to do so, by an Impersonator Zombie disguise themselves and engage in theatrics and pretense. Even then, they need the Impersonator to dress them, plan the ambush, and set the stage.

As for getting Slouchers to be part of the ruse and menace the pretend family, that’s easy. The dull-witted Slouchers are attracted by the human sounding voices and crying created by the one or two Impersonator Zombies, so they approach and moan even if they cannot find the living prey they hear. It all works to create a convincing death trap for the living. You can see how children, teenagers, and outsiders not familiar with such zombie traps easily fall victim to them. **Note:** Impersonator Zombies and their staged traps/ambushes, like the two above, occur most often in urban environments. Perhaps for the simple reason that there are so many zombies there is a greater chance to have more of the rarer types of zombies such as the Imposter and Thinker. Or it may be that the city environment, itself, has something to do with an increased number of zombie variants.

72% Zombies in disguise. One or two Impersonator Zombies accompanied by one or two Thinkers may disguise themselves to look like the living. These imposters lurk in a place they have figured out attracts the living, such as a store, mall, or warehouse that has packaged food, water, guns, ammo, clothing, electronics, and other resources people need and want. When someone shows up, the zombies pretend to be frightened survivors just like them; the Impersonator doing most of the talking. As typical for these monsters, they may pick off other survivors one by one, pretend to join them, or attack when the living comes within arm’s reach.

73% Blow Fish Zombies. The hungry dead that have been left in the water a long period. They are bloated, waterlogged Slouchers found in and around bodies of water, sewers, storm drains, aqueducts, and water treatment plants. They float and swim and are quick to attack the living in the water and climb onto boats and rafts. (See page 28 of **Dark Places™** for stats.)

74% Chained Zombies. This is a pair or small number of 2-6 zombies that have gotten themselves chained or wired together. They form a sort of wall or line of hungry dead stuck together. (See page 9 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

75% Fast-Slow Zombie. This a pair of zombies that are chained or fused together but are of two different minds, each tugging and pulling or pushing in a different direction. In some cases the Fast-Slow Zombie is fused back to back, one trying to

go forward, the other backward, or slowly spinning around as both dull-witted creatures try to walk and move. (See page 7 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

76% Fused Zombie. Most Fused Zombies are the result of fire or chemicals that have burned and melted the flesh of two or more zombies together, making them attached to each other. This can also happen when packed like sardines as their bodies deteriorate and rot, fusing them together.

The typical Fused Zombie is a pair of Slouchers physically fused together at the side, like conjoined twins. Or it may be a full bodied Sloucher or a Juggernaut with one or two Crawlers fused to its back facing the other way. (See page 8 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

77% Live Wire or Wailing Wall of Zombies. Sometimes a large number of zombies get tangled in barbed wire, razor wire, or fused to an electrified fence, or are deliberately chained to a length of chain link fencing. They are so tangled or connected that they cannot pull themselves free and become a sort of a wall of zombies that can range from a few dozen to several hundred. The zombies attached to this wall for yards/meters continually wail and moan and writhe along the wall, especially whenever living creatures come within range of their senses. It is always an eerie sight to come across a wall of zombies wailing and clawing at the air hoping to snare anyone who gets too close. Some crazy people, cultists, Retro-Savages, and survivor communities create such a Live Wire of zombies as part of their perimeter defense or as a mechanism of terror. A place where they can threaten punishment by feeding people to the zombies along the Live Wire or a place where enemies may be fed to the zombies and add to the wall. (See page 63 of **Endless Dead™** for description and stats.)

78% Multi-Zombies. This grotesque aberration is another type of Fused Zombie that has 2-4 zombies fused or wired together in such a way, that it has multiple limbs and 2-3 heads. They look like a monster or a giant from an alien world or something that crawled out of a nightmare. Multi-Zombies may have one zombie fused on top of another, giving it great height (7-10 feet/2.1 to 3 m), and may have yet another one or two fused to its back facing forward and/or backward. Other Multi-Zombies may be fused into a mound or pile that crawls along like a hideous insect or blob of fused bodies. They are gross and dangerous to engage in close combat and enclosed spaces as they always have multi-limbs and two or more heads and mouths, but are usually slow and easy to outrun when out in the open. Thankfully, a Multi-Zombie is usually encountered alone or among a group of Slouchers.

Multi-Zombies and other Fused Zombies are often found at locations that have experienced fire, chemical exposure, extreme heat and/or radiation, or being squished together in a confined space and melding together as their bodies rotted. They, Dead Mound Giants, and Walking Graves are all too common inside tall buildings at the bottom of elevator shafts and stairwells, garbage dumps, as well as boiler rooms, steel mills, plastic plants, pits inside factories and garages, nuclear power plants, and similar. (See page 9 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

79% Parasite Juggernaut. This massive and weird zombie is a hulking monstrosity that is a Juggernaut fused together with several Crawlers or other small zombies. This gives it several mismatched pairs of arms sticking out of its body and different heads, male, female, and children. Thankfully, a Parasite Zombie is usually encountered alone or among a group of small zombies

(possibly children) and Crawlers of various types. (See page 11 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

80% Spare-Parts Thinker. This is a twisted Thinker that augments its body with blades and sharp metal objects as weapons and jagged, deadly armor. Such a zombie may have blades for fingers or a sword for a hand, a body covered in sharp metal spikes and blades and glass, making it impossible to grapple with and offering plenty of items to pull the living into or slash and impale them with body blocks and wrestling moves. Other Spare-Parts Zombies add cleverly placed arms and hands from other zombies to its own body. And both types possess the, albeit limited, intelligence of a Thinker. Spare-Parts Thinkers may hunt the living as a solitary predator, or like other Thinkers, command other zombies to help corral and kill living prey. (See page 14 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

81% Twin Speedster Zombie. A pair of Fast Attack Zombies fused together and as fast as ever, and somehow more aggressive. May be encountered alone or with other Fast Attack Zombies or a mob of Slouchers. (See page 16 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

82% Walking Grave. Imagine a massive grave piled with bodies. Now imagine the grave can rise up and come after you like a mound of angry bodies fused together as a seemingly impossible crawling mound or a shambling giant. This is a dozen to several dozen zombies fused together into something that defies reason. It is most often encountered at military bases, hospitals, funeral homes, the sites of mass graves, and garbage dumps where bodies of the dead were piled or dumped into pits during the Wave and set on fire to burn the remains and prevent festering disease and infestation, only to have the fused mass rise up as a Walking Grave! Also at the bottom of elevator and mine shafts where bodies or zombies may have been dumped, stairwells, sewers and storm drains where bodies might wash up and pile up, pits, ravines, and similar. (See page 17 of **Endless Dead™** for stats.)

83% Terror Zombie/Fused Mock Zombie. This twisted nightmare is horrible on many levels and has four different manifestations. None of them good. Ultimately, this is a Mock Zombie that believes itself to be a living human being, except in this case, it is fused to one or more zombies, which drives the creature insane and to conduct acts of cruelty and murder. Usually encountered alone or among a pack of zombies, probably Slouchers. (See page 46 of **Fear the Reaper™** for stats.)

84% Armored Brute. In the broadest sense, this is any zombie wearing body armor, but many of the so-called Armored Brutes seem to seek out armor and deliberately wrap themselves in materials to protect their bodies. This can be anything from chains and chicken wire to leather clothing and military grade body armor. It is easy to presume these zombies retain some memory that compels them to find or make and wear body armor. That suggests many may have had police or military experience in life, but others may be compelled to do so via some other memory fragment from a video game, role-playing game, books, film, or television. The bottom line is that body armor and wearing helmets and head gear makes these armored zombies much more difficult to fight and destroy. And that makes them dangerous.

Armored Brutes may be encountered alone or among zombies in groups of any size. They can be found at any location from city streets and urban neighborhoods to rural and wilderness environments. That said, they are most likely to be encountered in urban environments, especially in and around police stations, armories

and National Guard reserves as well as military bases. (See page 86 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

85% Cannibal Muncher. This strange zombie hunts and kills the living, but also feeds upon other zombies, primarily the slow moving Slouchers, (See page 91 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

86% Dead Mound Giant. Of all the hungry dead, the Dead Mound Giant is one of the strangest and most inexplicable. A massive head and upper torso that seems to be made from dozens of other zombies. Only unlike the Fused Zombies and even the Walking Grave, this giant monstrosity seems to absorb the others into itself to form a new, massive body the size of a bus or several boxcars. The thing always has a giant, meaty head formed from dozens of other zombies that melt into it. The car- or van-sized head rests atop a mound of flesh also formed from dozens to a hundred zombies. Most of them disappearing, absorbed, into the giant's mass, only their heads and faces showing – spread across the abomination's body. The giant head rests on the trunk of a body, usually without a neck. One or two giant arms and hands also emerge from the undulating mound and sea of moaning heads and faces. Most Dead Mound Giants do not develop leg-like appendages and cannot stand erect or walk. Instead, they look and move more like a giant Crawler with entrail-like tendrils or streamers trailing behind at what might be considered its waist. Other giants have a serpentine or thick, worm-like lower half, especially those that form inside an elevator shaft or tunnel. Still others are fleshy mound-like creatures with a massive head, one or two giant limbs and a lumpy, mound or blob shaped body covered in faces. All Dead Mound Giants are of impossible size formed from the melted and merged remains of a hundred or more bodies. Its many human-sized heads and mouths snapping and tearing at anyone who comes too close or is snatched up in its Volkswagen Beetle-sized hand. Worse, the thing has dozens or a hundred-plus brains that can seize control of its body or take over when one is destroyed. To move, its body undulates or is pulled along by its one or two giant arms. A true horror. (See page 93 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)



87% Dead Weight Zombie. This is the nickname given to zombies that walk off bridges, scaffolding, and rooftops and topple out of windows. They are, of course, found in urban environments with tall buildings. When a zombie falls from a high location it hits the ground, or anyone unfortunate to be under it, with devastating force. Many of these zombies splattered around a tall building still function as best as their shattered remains allow, snapping and grasping and moaning at the living who walk by them. Their threat level is minimal but those who still possess the ability to moan can sound an alarm that attracts other hungry dead or dangerous humans, while those with motor function may grab and hold onto or pull animals and people toward its mouth. (See page 97 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

Some Death and Terror Cults and rooftop survivor communities deliberately push Slouchers out of windows high up to create a perimeter of Dead Weight Zombies around their building refuge so that they sound the alarm when intruders visit and attract zombies on the street to attack the intruders before they can find

a way inside. Some rooftop communities also toss zombies and dead bodies (among other objects) off the roof to bombard and kill attacking invaders on the ground below.

88% Kidnapper Zombie. Most zombies immediately attack and kill their victims, but not the Kidnapper Zombie. This fiend functions more like a Thinker or Impersonator Zombie with a malicious twist. It captures living prey, ideally people but also animals, cages them and tortures them for 1D6+1 days before making a kill. It is presumed these zombies were sadistic and abusive in life. Sadly, that part of their memory and pleasure center of the brain continues to work even in undeath, compelling them to stalk, capture, and torture before finally killing their victims. Kidnapper Zombies have intelligence equal to that of a Thinker or Impersonator, and are smart enough to observe and follow potential victims and wait to attack when they are alone and vulnerable. The initial attack is to subdue and carry the victim away to a secure location where it can keep them prisoner, sometimes caged, sometimes chained or tied up, and engage in torture. Likewise, the horrid zombie is smart enough to hurt and hobble its victims without killing them until it is ready, and often keeps 1D4 victims, locked up together, or close enough to hear the others' pleading and screams to ramp up the level of emotional terror and suffering.

Though a Kidnapper Zombie may hide among mobs of other zombies and may pretend to be a dumb, slow Sloucher, it hunts and kills alone, and never leads other zombies. (See page 100 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

89% Screamer Zombie. This strange creature shouts out words, screams, and shrieks, sometimes for no apparent reason, and when it hears, sees, or senses the living. Its shrieking, of course, attracts Slouchers and other hungry dead or instigates a convergence around its location, which can trap survivors in the area as the other zombies close in.

Some Death Cults and survivor communities, and even some homesteaders, use chained up Screamers like a watchdog to sound an alarm when dangerous animals and outsiders are lurking nearby. (See page 102 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

90% Seeker Zombie. Another dangerous zombie is one the Road Reapers have dubbed the Seeker, which may be thought of as part Fast Attack Zombie and part berserker. Seekers seem to be so ravenous that when they see or sense the living they fall into a sort of shark-like feeding frenzy, pushing through a throng of Slouchers and charging headfirst to make the kill. They are like berserkers in the sense that they are relentless pursuers that do not stop until they are destroyed or lose track of their prey. Even then, they will continue to search for hours after other zombies have dispersed and wandered away. When they know the living is hiding inside a building, the Seeker(s) searches and searches for a way in, climbing, smashing through windows, tearing at shingles and boarded up doors, ripping at chains and chainlink fencing, digging under fences like a dog, and will even dare running through fire, something few hungry dead ever consider. When you have one or more Seekers on your trail it is probably wise to make a stand and take them down rather than try to elude them. (See page 105 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

91% Shopper Zombie. This odd zombie is a type of Pattern Zombie that is locked into "shopping," or in this case, scavenging for food and retail items found in stores and malls. They are as dangerous as any Sloucher, but they can also be a boon to survivors as well as a pain in the neck. Shopper Zombies gather up

items such as food, bottled water, medicine, electronics, clothing, guns, and other retail items, new and used. That means grabbing and rummaging through a Shopper Zombie's bags, backpacks, suitcases, or shopping cart may reveal any number of items beneficial to the living, along with a certain amount of junk. For this reason, many survivors subdue or rob Shopper Zombies, rather than kill them outright, because the thing may have found helpful items they can use. However, since this zombie has an eye for valuables, it is also likely to pick up weapons, food, electronics, backpacks, and gear it finds laying in the street or tucked away inside a building where a living survivor dropped it or deliberately stashed someplace. (See page 108 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

92% Swimmer Zombie. That neighborhood swimming pool filled with rainwater, or pond, river, lake, or ocean beach may not be as safe and refreshing as it looks. Likewise, fishing from a boat dock, the shore, or from a raft or boat might be inviting an attack by a Swimmer Zombie. It's true, most zombies cannot swim, they sink like a rock. However, this hungry dead has adapted to life in the water and is a threat to swimmers, divers, boaters, and people along shorelines. One or several Swimmer Zombies may also be found in storm drains, flood waters, and aqueducts. (See page 114 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

93% Toxic Zombies are thankfully rare monsters that have been exposed to, and carry with them, dangerous levels of chemical toxins or radiation. They function like Slouchers but represent the additional threat of their bodies being harmful to the touch, and their bite being poisonous to the living. (See page 117 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

94% Vandal Zombie. Something leftover in this monster's brain compels it to punch, kick, hammer, and smash objects, vehicles and people. Many carry clubs, crowbars, or hammers, and go around smashing vehicles, kicking down doors, breaking windows, smashing items, and hammering on things. For reasons unknown, Vandal Zombies often gather in groups and go around vandalizing and killing. They are found most often in urban environments, particularly cities. (See page 121 of **Hell Followed™** for stats.)

95% Death's children. Zombies come in all shapes and sizes. Often the most disturbing are children who died and returned as the risen dead. Most survivors find it horrifying to have to fight and slay children that are zombies. They know in their heads that these "things" are no longer children. That they are just another one of the hungry dead, but it remains difficult and troubling to kill a monster that looks like a human child. Some people hesitate, which can be disastrous, and many have nightmares long after an encounter with zombies that were once children.

As with adults, a child who died may rise as any of the different types of zombies. Most are Slouchers, Crawlers, and Pretty Zombies, but they can also be Flesh-Eating Zombies, Fast Attack Zombies, Pattern Zombies, Thinkers, Sewer Crawlers, and Worm Meat, among others. The worst are Impersonator Zombies, because they pretend to be an ordinary, frightened child and climb into a person's arms before biting and tearing out their throat.

Zombies that are children are most likely to be encountered on school buses (probably Pattern Zombies that think they are going to school), in grade schools, playgrounds, amusement parks, churches, the mall, toy and video game stores, apartment buildings, and homes. They are dangerous in apartment building and houses because these zombies are small and can hide under beds or a pile

of clothes or stuffed animals, and inside cabinets, crawlspaces, and other small spaces where you may not be expecting a zombie.

96% Road of the dead. Flood water and silt or debris, a mudslide or rockslide, has washed over a mob of zombies and swept them away. When the mud or rocks settled and dried, it entombed the zombies in place, like flies caught in amber. Only the monsters still live and their flailing arms, and the occasional snapping jaws of a head and upper torso, stick out from the surface, hungry and ready to kill. Any living creature that walks along this 1D6x10 yards/meters length of road or terrain must be careful not to come too close or they risk getting grabbed or bitten. Even arms and hands that do not seem to have a head to see with grab at any passerby who brushes against them or whose footsteps and movement causes the limbs to blindly flail around.

In the alternative, this could be a horde of zombies in rushing water that are pushed against fallen trees or other debris to create a dam of hungry dead. The zombies fill a 1D6x10 yard/meter long length of a river, the strong rapids too strong for many of them to pull free and escape. They flail about and wail, sometimes climb over each other and reach for anyone who comes too close, is swept into their clutches by the rapids, or can be seen on shore. Once in a while a few manage to free themselves, get to shore, and shamle off into the surrounding environment to attack the living.

97% A family in trouble. An attractive woman and 1D4 children are cornered and paralyzed with fear, hurt, or otherwise unable to escape an approaching danger. This could be Slouchers, wild dogs, raiders, etc. The mother clings to her children, sobbing and crying out for help or pleading for mercy. She might even be holding what seems to be a baby wrapped up in swaddling under a blanket. Her husband may be injured and laying at her side or already taken by the enemy or monsters. This is NOT an Impersonator Zombie or bad guys' trap. She is alive and in genuine trouble. She needs help or the family will be taken or killed. In the alternative, this could be 1D4 youngsters, a Masked Lunatic Hero or other survivors who are in trouble and about to be overwhelmed unless someone intercedes. The player characters?

Anyone who helps rescue the family earns their immediate praise and gratitude. The family shares how they got into this predicament, what they are doing here, and any information and rumors they might know. They do not have a lot of supplies to give away as a reward, but may know of a place with valuables or resources for the taking, or a bit of information that could help the player group. If they are from a Safe Haven or escaped captivity from a cult or bad people, they will share the location. If the player characters are ever in trouble, the people they rescued will return the favor and try to help them in the future. A debt of favor can be worth its weight in gold in the Zombie Apocalypse.

98% A band of helpful strangers. The player group encounters a band of well-equipped and heavily armed, friendly and helpful travelers. The group may be the size of a squad or a platoon. They are willing to stop and help people who are in need as well as fight zombies and chase away bad guys, or lend a hand in other ways. They are happy to share information and rumors, and may have some very basic supplies like food and water they can spare. The strangers seem nice enough and at some point may invite the player group to visit or join their Safe Haven. However, it becomes quickly apparent that their survivor community is some sort of cult involving the use of zombies and perhaps the worship of a Zombie Prophet or a Death Cult deity or "energy" of some

kind. The friendly group accepts a polite no for an answer, and still indicates where they are located, and tells the heroes they have an open invitation. If they change their minds, they are told to tell the gatekeeper that Josh sent them.

99% A band of soldiers. This is a group of well-equipped and heavily armed, but tight-lipped, soldiers. The soldiers may be the size of a squad or a platoon and look fit, clean and well appointed. They may have light or heavy combat vehicles (probably light) and may have air support (probably 1D4 helicopters). They are willing to stop and help people in desperate need and battle zombies or bad guys, provided it does not take too long.

The soldiers claim to be part of an active military unit and imply by their appearance, words, and actions that they serve a surviving part of the government or some similar higher authority. Beyond that, they provide nothing more than their regiment identification number. With a stern face the soldiers decline to reveal where they came from, where they are going, whether they are part of the government, or any details about their mission. Nor will they reveal whether they are part of a larger force in the area, or the location of their base, and will not digress from their mission any more than they already have. Without fanfare, the soldiers pack up and leave. Likewise, they are unwilling to share casual information or even rumors or hearsay, and will not speculate upon anything. Nor will the soldiers share any of their weapons, ammo, gear, or supplies. They stopped to help and now they are moving on as if they are on a schedule. Anyone found trying to follow them will be dealt with harshly. And then they are gone.

00% Band of heroes. This may be a group of Road Reapers, Dead Rats Live gang members, Masked Lunatics, Shepherds of the Damned, members of a survivor community/Safe Haven, a band of nomads or mercenaries, etc., who are passing through. Or they may be heroes or adventurers like your player group.

They are happy to stop and lend a hand, help out, and fight zombies and bad guys. They have extra food, water, and basic supplies to share with those who may need it, maybe even a little extra ammo or medicine, as well as information and rumors the player group may find helpful. Depending on the situation (and the Game Masters), one or all of these NPCs (Non-Player Characters) may be willing to travel with the player group or join forces to take down a big baddie, or recover an important resource (weapons or other supplies, to clearing a power plant of zombies, etc.), before they move on. They have their own mission or agenda, so any help is temporary.

If necessary, these heroes may appear out of nowhere, like the proverbial cavalry, to save the day, at the Game Master's discretion. But this should not become a regular occurrence.



REFERENCE GUIDE

Zombies, Villains & O.C.C.s by Sourcebook

37 Zombies by Title

Note: The various names of zombies and terms like Masked Lunatics, Rat Runs, Rat Runners, etc., are often coined by the Road Reapers and spread across the country to survivors who encounter these zombie hunting motorcycle gangs and caravans – modern day knights-errant – by word of mouth and via the Road Reapers' manifesto of survival, printed up whenever and wherever they can, and by whatever means available, and given away to survivor groups and communities.

Dead Reign® RPG Zombies:

All about zombies, the Moan, etc. – page 22
 Zombie: Crawlers – page 40
 Zombie: Fast Attack Zombies – page 43
 Zombie: Flesh-Eating Zombie – page 45
 Zombie: Mock Zombies (thinks it's alive) – page 50
 Zombie: Pattern Zombies – page 53
 Zombie: Slouchers (most common) – page 38
 Zombie: Thinkers (alert & aware) – page 47

Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook:

Zombie: Juggernaut (big, muscular) – page 39
 Zombie: Pretty Zombie (looks alive) – page 42
 Zombie: Trash Crawler (hides among trash) – page 40

Dark Places™ Sourcebook:

Zombie: Bug Boy (covered in bugs) – page 14
 Zombie: Worm Meat (poisonous bite, disease, larvae) – page 19
 Zombie: Sewer Crawlers (climb and swim) – page 23
 Zombie: Impersonator Zombie (a human voice) – page 25
 Zombie: Blow Fish Zombie (swims) – page 28

Endless Dead™ Sourcebook:

Zombie: Chained Zombies (wired together) – page 9
 Zombie: Fast-Slow Zombie – page 7
 Zombie: Fused Zombie (physically fused together) – page 8
 Zombie: Live Wire/Wailing Wall Zombie – page 63
 Zombie: Multi-Zombies (multiple limbs) – page 9
 Zombie: Parasite Juggernaut (weird, massive) – page 11
 Zombie: Silent Sloucher (doesn't moan) – page 13
 Zombie: Spare-Parts Thinker (blades & metal parts) – page 14
 Zombie: Twin Speedster Zombies (Fused Fast Zombies) – page 16
 Zombie: Walking Grave (many zombies fused together) – page 17

Fear the Reaper™ Sourcebook:

Zombie: Terror Zombie – page 46

Graveyard Earth™ Sourcebook:

Random Encounters & World Overview (book)

Hell Followed™ Sourcebook:

Zombie: Armored Brute – page 86
Zombie: Cannibal Muncher – page 91
Zombie: Dead Mound Giant – page 93
Zombie: Dead Weight Zombie – page 97
Zombie: Kidnapper Zombie – page 100
Zombie: Screamer Zombie – page 102
Zombie: Seeker Zombie – page 105
Zombie: Shopper Zombie – page 108
Zombie: Swimmer Zombie – page 114
Zombie: Toxic Zombie – page 117
Zombie: Vandal Zombie – page 121

28 Dangerous People & Villains

Dead Reign® RPG:

Retro-Savages (NPC Villains) – page 60
Terror Cults (NPC Villains) – page 62
 Random Terror Cult Leader Table – page 63
Death Cults (NPC Villains) – page 64
Death Priest (NPC Villain) – page 68

Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook:

Backstabbing Cretin – page 10
Bandits – page 26
Bandit: Con Artist – page 27
Bandit: Thief – page 27
Bandit: Thug – page 27
Messianic Leaders – page 11
Messianic: Doomsayer – page 13
Messianic: God's Avenger – page 12
Messianic: God's Chosen People – page 13
Paranoid – page 22
Paranoid Survivalist – page 23
Psychopathic Killer – page 18
Raiders – page 28
Raider: Assassin – page 29
Raider: Driver – page 29
Raider: Thug/Gang Banger – page 29
Raider: Militia – page 30
Zombie Deathbringer – page 19
Zombie Lover – page 15
Zombie Lover, Deluded – page 16
Zombie Master – page 14

Hell Followed™ Sourcebook:

Mr. Bananas & Mr. Kong (NPC Villain) – page 72
Skull Rider (NPC Villain) – page 75
23 Disasters – page 30

11 Deranged Hero O.C.C.s

Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook:

Ghost Walker O.C.C. (Hermits) – page 8
Zombie Killing Maniac O.C.C. – page 20

Endless Dead™ Sourcebook:

Hermit Random Encounter Table – page 73

Hell Followed™ Sourcebook:

Masked Lunatics (NPCs) – page 55
Brimstone (NPC Hero) – page 55
Fire (NPC Hero) – page 59
Dead Rats Gang (NPC Heroes) – page 61
Dead Rats (Player Characters) – page 63
Mr. I Am No More – page 156
Snoose (NPC Hero) – page 66
Zombie Cop (NPC Hero) – page 70

21 Survivor & Hero O.C.C.s

Dead Reign® RPG:

Half-Living O.C.C. (part zombie) – page 70
Hound Master O.C.C. (protector) – page 72
Ordinary People/Survivor O.C.C. – page 85
Road Reaper O.C.C. (protector/zombie hunter) – page 75
Scrounger O.C.C. (scavenger/scout) – page 78
Shepherd of the Damned O.C.C. (rescuer) – page 80
Soldier O.C.C. (defender/protector) – page 82
Survivor O.C.C./Ordinary People – page 85

Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook:

Street Gang Protectors – page 30

Endless Dead™ Sourcebook:

Sentinel O.C.C. (heroic scout, lookout) – page 20
Survivalist O.C.C. (prepper) – page 22
Wheelman O.C.C. (driver/think Mad Max) – page 24
Zombie Hunter O.C.C. (hates zombies) – page 26
Zombie Researcher O.C.C. (scientist, seeks cure) – page 28

Fear the Reaper™ Sourcebook

Road Reapers, detailed throughout the book.
Their code, strategies, purpose, etc.

Hell Followed™ Sourcebook

Military Personnel Table – page 21
Drone Master O.C.C. (techie) – page 124
Federal Emergency Manager O.C.C. (govt.) – page 131
Free Spirit O.C.C. (survivor) – page 133
Naturalist O.C.C. (nature empath) – page 135
One-Man-Army O.C.C. (protector) – page 138
One-Percenter O.C.C. (rich & has resources) – page 141
Zombie Prophet O.C.C. (invisible to zombies) – page 145



CITY SURVIVAL IN THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Life in the City

People will tell you it is impossible to survive in the big city. The simple and obvious reason? Too many people have died there. Making downtown areas and big cities like New York, Boston, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, L.A., Montreal, Toronto, and Mexico City zombie central. Not only are they infested with zombies, but with all kinds of strange zombie aberrations you are not likely to see anywhere else. These cities are also the stomping grounds of Death Cults and weirdos, so it's probably best most folk steer clear of urban population centers.

In the early days of the Wave, when people were dropping like flies, cities became death factories. As more living people died and turned into the hungry dead, they immediately hunted those who were spared by the Wave. As the zombie population rose, the living population dwindled. Unless you got out of town during the first week, you were probably dead meat or trapped in the cities of the dead. It was sad, but by the time most people realized what was happening and decided they needed to flee, it was too damn late. I know. I was there in Chicago when things went south, and again when we tried to reclaim it from the dead and failed.

Hospitals, apartment houses, and office buildings became death traps. Slouchers and other types of zombies filled the streets around these locations like a stadium event. The minute any living people ran out the door, the zombies were on top of them. Most never made it to their car.

If those fleeing didn't close the building's entrance door behind them, the zombie horde flooded inside the building. Filling the hallways, hammering on doors, and systematically killing every living thing they encountered. Even if the door to your apartment held strong, the dead waited in the hall. Waited and waited. Shuffling and moaning and pounding on the walls and doors. Day after day they waited, like hungry jackals. When food and water ran out for the living, or when a body couldn't take no more, folks would take their own lives. Seen plenty of corpses of people who were trapped jump out of windows, hang themselves, or slice their own throat rather than die of starvation or at the jaws of one of the risen dead. They didn't experience the horror and agony of having their throats ripped out or being eaten alive, but they did no favors for the living. One less person to fight the good fight.

Those who didn't get sick from the Wave were killed by the risen dead or by some other means. I've heard estimates that fewer than 5-10% of the population in big cities managed to survive. And the bulk of those survivors only lived because they were able to get out of the city and away to rural areas where they had a fighting chance. So folks who tell you that the big cities are crawling with the walking dead, they aren't wrong.

These are the horror stories everyone tells, so cities have developed a reputation for swarming with the risen dead and being uninhabitable by the living. People like us *Road Reapers*,

Scroungers, *Shepherds of the Damned*, and other zombie fighters looking to reduce the monsters' population and help the people we find along the way. We make runs into urban areas, but it is never easy. We have seen things that you never want to experience. What makes it worthwhile is to scavenge and find rare stuff like ammo and meds, and to rescue people still there who got themselves trapped. Only the *Half-Living* and *Zombie Prophets* and *Death Cultists* can come and go as they please, but there are too few of them to make much of a difference, and even most of them prefer the company of the living rather than walk among the dead that won't die.

So the scenario I painted for you was completely true after the Wave when the dead began to rise to feed upon the living. Slouchers and Crawlers were everywhere. You could hardly avoid one. Holing up someplace locked up tight was a 50/50 crap shoot at best, and turned real ugly when water and supplies ran out. But if you could survive those first 2-3 months, or came back to the city afterward, you had a shot of surviving even in the biggest and most populated cities.

I know what you're thinking. There was a time not so long ago when I was one of those people who would have told you living in a city full of the risen dead is impossible, except maybe for a lucky few, Death Cultists, and small, fast, well organized bands of survivors. But that isn't true.

I'm man enough to admit when I'm wrong, and I was wrong in this regard. It isn't an easy life or one I would choose for myself, but it can be done. I've seen it.

Here's how. As living people became scarce for the zombies to hunt, the dead roaming the streets and hallways began to quiet down. Some dispersed out into the surrounding suburbs. Some just kept wandering into rural areas looking for the living and feeding upon livestock and the wild animals they could catch. The vast majority of zombies, however, didn't leave the cities. Half wander around aimlessly, the other half, maybe even two-thirds, found a dark corner and went dormant. These sleepers stagger into the streets only when they hear the wailing of other zombies or sense the presence of the living. The Zombie Moan is like a damn dinner bell that signals the presence of the living and draws nearby zombies out of the woodwork to respond like circling sharks. The presence of the living and sound of voices, vehicles, machines or gunfire rouses them from their sleep every time.

Yeah, that's all it takes. One or two moaning and wailing dead to awake the whole lot of them for a city block or three. The next thing you know, you're running and fighting for your life, with stinking zombies popping up from every nook and cranny. All of them converging on your location. Trust me, it's crazy and terrifying unless you have a team of brothers like us *Road Reapers* and guys like *Dead Rats Gang*. A band of brothers and sisters who have got each other's back. Even then, there have been plenty of times I have nearly died, and I've lost too many brothers to the hungry dead to want to think about it.



Us Road Reapers make supply runs into urban areas and launch organized assaults on zombies and Death Cults, but we pick our fights, especially after the battle for Chicago went so wrong. And we always have an exit strategy and backup plans. It doesn't matter what city it is, the urban sprawl all around Chicago; Aurora, Schaumburg, Evanston, Highland, Rockford, they are all bad news. No differences for Milwaukee, Madison, Windsor, and other cities big or small. We go in hot, using commando-style raids and hit and run guerilla tactics, but we don't hang around, and we sure as hell don't try to live there. If you ask me, clearing out small rural communities and turning them into Safe Havens is still your best bet for survival. It has worked for us and plenty of people we have met since the collapse of civilization.

Still, I have seen amazing city Safe Havens inside skyscrapers and on the rooftops of tall buildings. It's like that guy in the dinosaur movie who said, "life finds a way." People can be dumb as dirt at times, but resourceful as hell other times. And they have found a way to survive in the cities and suburbs. It makes my heart swell when I see these brave folks making a go at it where I thought life was impossible unless you were a Death Cultist. Downright inspiring. But that life isn't for me and I can't recommend it to nobody. Still, God bless them. I'm impressed and wish them well. — Brad Ashley, *Leader of the Road Reapers*

Brad Ashley is correct, despite the heavy concentration of zombies and the presence of Death Cults at population centers, people have found inventive ways to survive and live in cities in the aftermath of the Zombie Apocalypse.

During the outbreak of the Wave and the initial rise of the dead, those who did not flee the city needed to find a place to lay low and wait till things simmered down. When the moaning and wailing of the zombies and the gunfire and screaming of the living go quiet, the stark change is as terrifying as it is a relief. Around the same time, the lights go out and the new reality of the Zombie Apocalypse begins to settle in. Survivors begin to accept that the government is not coming to help (they probably already came and perished at the fists and jaws of the risen dead), and they are on their own. That leaves most people with one of two possibilities: One, try to find a way out of the city and flee to the subjective safety of the countryside. Which, at that stage, was likely impossible due to the zombies swarming the streets. Or two, figure out a way to survive in the city or die of thirst and starvation if not at the hands of the living dead.

Survivors who had lived in the city before the Zombie Apocalypse had the advantage of knowing it to varying degrees of detail. This insider's knowledge starts with a person's own neighborhood. First, they probably know which neighbors fled

the city or went somewhere like the hospital or a relief center and never returned. They also know things about them such as the Hanson family a few houses down the street had four kids, so there is probably plenty of food on their shelves. They also know the father was a policeman, so there may be guns and ammo in the home. Another man down the street (or in a different apartment) liked to hunt, which means there may be guns or bow weapons, and camping gear in his home. The next-door neighbor was an engineer at the Ford Motor Company. He and his wife headed for the countryside in their motorhome, but their car and pickup truck are in the garage. They would have also left behind cupboards of food, water, and a house full of other essentials (automechanic's tools and lots of them, clothing, blankets, pillows, how-to books, etc.). The same holds true of all the neighbors around you. These are the first locations that are explored and plumbed for essential supplies and weapons. At first, it seems strange, perhaps even wrong, to break into the homes, garages, and sheds of neighbors and take what you need. However, as survivors come to accept their situation and the fact that most of these people are probably dead, it becomes a matter of routine in their quest to survive.

Next to be plundered are the homes of people you don't know, as well as the corner market, liquor stores, retailers, and businesses.

Then comes the long-term thinking. For some, this may happen in a matter of days. For others, it may not happen until after weeks of denial or paralyzing fear, but sooner or later, people must ask themselves the hard questions and determine a long-term plan for continued survival. Is your present location a defensible and sustainable location? Probably not. Can you turn it into one or do you need to relocate? If the former, how do you do that without making a lot of noise and attracting every zombie within a mile? If the latter, where do you go? What do you take with you? How do you get there? Do you try to contact family and friends and take them with you? Of the strangers you meet along the way, who can you trust? Most people in the early weeks of the apocalypse are probably grateful to meet fellow survivors and team up to travel or to establish a secure location for them all. For some, a lasting bond of friendship is forged. Others quickly get on each other's nerves or find they are incompatible and need to separate or turn on each other.

In time, they either perish or find a way to survive and a place to live. For those living in the city, it starts by reclaiming a tiny corner of "their" city and building from there. When it comes to scavenging supplies, they already know many key locations throughout the city that could help them – various businesses and places of entertainment, factories, warehouses, retail stores, hospitals, police stations, schools and universities, airports and train stations, etc. – and what resources or dangers they may contain. City survivors learn where resources can be found and quickly determine the safest and fastest routes to and from them. They are also quick to determine the most dangerous locations in the city where mobs of zombies linger or roam, and where cultists and other bad guys or rivals have established their camps and Safe Havens. Next is learning about their neighbors and fellow survivors, which ones are good and trustworthy, which are not. It is surprising how quickly a sense of community forms among fellow survivors in the area. After all, living people, especially in the cities, are rare and precious. And the ones you can count on for help and support are rarer still.

A prerequisite for any city survivor is the ability to think quick on their feet and be ready to move at a moment's notice. Most post-apocalyptic city residents think and live like guerrilla fighters who use the familiar terrain of the city to their full advantage. That is more than knowing safe trails and places to hide. It is likely to include knowing the location of so-called Rat Runs, traps and damaged flooring that will collapse under the weight of pursuers, and locations to lead enemies to their doom. It also includes knowing which of your neighbors can be trusted and who cannot.

Survivors who make a city their home know the lay of the land because they must as a matter of life and death. This is their domain. The empty streets and buildings are just part of the concrete, metal, wood, and plaster jungle they have chosen to make their home. They know where the streets and alleys and the sewers and steam tunnels lead. They know what streets are blocked or compromised. Where the police precincts, fire stations, local clinics, and hospitals are located, and which businesses are likely to contain the goods and resources they need, as well as places to hide from, or lose, pursuers. Most will have also built traps and places they use to ambush and turn the tables on an enemy. They take note of where zombies are most numerous and where other danger lurks.

This includes knowledge of notorious people living in the city: Rosenthal the old hermit who wants to be left alone but who sometimes helps people in trouble, the madman in the sewers at 3rd and Main who keeps zombies on chains as pets, the McDaniels family who are into all the latest electronics, computers, and drones, or Old Man Sims the gun-toting prepper, and Mrs. Martini's hoarder house (or apartment). They also know about the Death Cult that has set up shop at the convention center and the band of raiders or thieves operating out of the brewery and another out of the armory. In the old neighborhood they know about the "drug house" that is sure to have guns, ammo, and cash (for those who think there is still value in paper money) stashed away along with illicit drugs and other chemicals. They know the local school has an old fallout shelter in the basement and that the community theater with the network of catwalks above the stage is an ideal place to hide or take up a sniper position, and so on.

Within a few months most teenagers, young adults, and even children if their parents allow it, have figured out they can outrun and outmaneuver most zombies, and enjoy the challenge. Children grow up fast in the Zombie Apocalypse, and many communities use the small, young, fleet-footed members of their survivor communities as lookouts, scouts and scroungers. The French obstacle running discipline of **Parkour** has become a skill being adopted and spread among many city inhabitants, particularly the young, adding to their ability to navigate the city and elude the living and the dead.

On a regular basis, city survivors carefully and quietly scout the streets and buildings of the neighborhoods where they live. Taking note of what remains untouched, what has been looted or damaged, and signs of recent visitation by outsiders. They are especially wary of strangers who enter the city and nose around on "their turf" – probably looting whatever resources they can lay their hands on and stirring up trouble with zombies and dangerous inhabitants in the city. Strangers visiting a city may cause deliberate or inadvertent damage to the city dwellers' hiding places, supply caches, Rat Runs, homesteads, and strongholds, or do things that change the landscape of the city as the result of their

activities, such as looting, fire, damage to one or more buildings or roads, destruction of a bridge or resource, etc.

Most people don't think about anyone inhabiting cities, so for them, a city represents a no-man's-land to scavenge for supplies or to destroy zombies, and where anything they do is without consequence. Others are under the mistaken belief that only evil cultists and dangerous people seek refuge inside cities, so they don't care about any damage or trouble they may cause them as a result of their incursions into any city.

Raiders, bandits, and cultists are the worst, as most are violent and brutal cutthroats who survive by preying upon other survivors. They come into the city to loot what they can, wherever they can. Hitting the most obvious targets like hospitals, police stations, armories, retail stores, and warehouses. Often leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. When they realize there is a Safe Haven or homesteads seeded throughout an area of a city, they are quick to target them or come back at a later date to attack and raid them. Raiders, thieves, and other brigands correctly assume that any survivor community will have resources they can take and use. And like barbarian hordes or roving bushwhackers, they use threats, kidnapping, thievery, and force to take what they want. This can lead to frequent raids or turn into all-out war if the city's survivor community have laid claim to a valuable or powerful resource like a military base, working power station and/or water purification plant, hospital, factory, warehouse or building with tons of supplies or a strategic advantage, and so on.

Small bands of strangers coming and going from cities is a fairly frequent occurrence. Most are just passing through. Seen once or twice for a few hours or a day before vanishing, never to be seen again. The majority are scavengers in search of one or several resources necessary for their own survival, or they look for missing loved ones. The most noble, like Shepherds of the Damned and Road Reapers, visit cities for the dual purpose of locating vital supplies and finding people in need to rescue from the city, taking them back to their survivor community away from the urban jungle. However, strangers who keep returning may have a different agenda or be people looking for a survivor community to join. People who could represent good people and assets worth recruiting to a survivor community. On the other hand, they may represent a new rival or danger.

Sizing up strangers to determine if they are dangerous or desperate, potentially helpful or destructive, is all part of survival everywhere, but it is amplified in the city where the environment is already deadly and the stakes are higher.

When it is outsiders vs city dwellers, the inhabitants of the city almost always have a stark advantage even when outnumbered twenty to one. City dwellers know the layout and terrain better than any outsiders could ever hope to know. As time passes, that knowledge becomes all the more detailed and comprehensive. This alone gives city dwellers a tremendous advantage when dealing with hostile outsiders and zombies alike. But they also mold and modify the city to their needs and advantage, setting traps of all sorts, using the zombies, and establishing several **Rat Runs** (described later) for the fastest and safest routes of travel in and out of specific city blocks, buildings and neighborhoods.

City inhabitants have the luxury of familiarity, knowledge, time, and personnel to make daily runs to extract provisions and bring them to their homesteads, hideouts, and Safe Haven communities hidden in the belly of the city, above or below ground.

They can even send out the equivalent of human caravans to gather and return with supplies carried on their backs and in bags. Like a platoon of well-trained guerilla soldiers, they know when and where to take cover from zombies and local enemies. They have predesignated locations to hide and rendezvous points to meet, regroup, rest, and make new plans. Places away from, and secured to keep out, the zombies that prowl the streets and alleys. They are also likely to have secret weapon and supply caches as well as ambush points and traps for invaders scattered across the city.

City Death Cults. Arguably, the only city dwelling survivors who might be more prepared and dangerous are Death Cult communities. Death Cults have the unique advantage of exercising some degree of control over zombies. They are able to direct and use the hungry dead as porters to carry boxes and bags of supplies, as well as machinery and fortifications, back to their sanctuaries in the city. This gives Death Priests and cultists greater freedom to move about urban environments without fear of having Slouchers and other dead attacking and devouring them. As a result, they may be able to secure a perimeter around a resource, and have the manpower to clear out an entire building or warehouse of its valuables where most survivors cannot.



Zombies are Dangerous

Gangs and groups like the **Road Reapers** and active **military units** can come in with blades swinging and guns blazing to clear a building or a neighborhood of zombies, and do so as often as they can; however, they can only do so much when deploying raiding tactics to get in and out before they are overwhelmed. Clearing an entire neighborhood or building and keeping it clear of the hungry dead is difficult in urban environments where the sounds of voices, vehicles, combat, and rebuilding draw hundreds or thousands of zombies out in a converging circle of doom. This is why many city dwellers have taken to living high up, where the sounds of such efforts cannot be heard at street level or cannot be pinpointed by the echoes bouncing through the concrete canyons of downtown skyscrapers.

Many a combat unit, whether a street gang, raiders, or professional soldiers, has perished because they did not know the lay of the city and underestimated how fast and how many zombies

would respond. In sprawling urban environments, let alone the streets and buildings of downtown, there are simply too many zombies (thousands, tens of thousands, or more!) that respond to the sounds of fighting and the presence of the living. Within 5-10 minutes, a platoon of 30-60 well-armed combatants can find themselves facing a thousand or more zombies converging upon them. The more noise or movement the living make, the larger the army of moaning dead becomes. Zombies crawling out of the woodwork to join in the assault every minute or two. It is a simple matter of math combined with the supernatural strength and difficulty of putting down the walking dead that makes these odds impossible to survive in a stand-up fight. Stealth, smarts, and speed are a survivor's greatest assets against getting caught in a wide scale convergence.

The converging of the hungry dead is what does in most survivors who enter an urban area. Zombies that notice the living immediately begin to moan and move in to attack. Their loud moans and movement alert and stir up other zombies that may have been dormant or wandering aimlessly. Compelling them to moan and follow the sound of combat or the moans of their ever hungry brethren. Their moaning awakening more dead, all of which converge in an ever tightening circle. Survivors who wait too long to flee, thinking they will be able slip away from the throng of zombies closing in on their position, are caught off-guard and overwhelmed when they realize the tightening net of zombies extends for several blocks in an outward spiral. In short, they face a gauntlet of zombies over many city blocks that is difficult to elude on the ground.

The group may slip by the initial attacking zombies, but it is the additional creatures moving in from the outer edge of the converging circle that are likely to cutoff escape routes and catch the fleeing humans flat-footed. Suddenly, the route the living took to get into the city is crawling with lumbering Slouchers. Their intended escape route gone, they are forced to improvise. Being flexible and able to improvise is always important and valuable, but may not be enough in an unfamiliar environment where the wrong move could be your last. An environment where one or many zombies may be encountered around every corner and behind every door. To make matters worse, the zombies inside buildings are also awakened and agitated by the clarion call of their fellow dead, so entering unknown buildings or houses is no better than being on the street. Maybe worse, because the living may find themselves besieged by zombies that were locked inside, or get themselves trapped inside with no clear way to freedom. Meanwhile, the zombie horde outside the building grows and surrounds it while the hungry dead inside the building also search for living prey.

As more zombies join the convergence, the moaning grows louder, attracting even more to join the hunt. The moan also has an unnerving effect upon the fleeing survivors. The louder it gets, the more frantic many people become, causing them to panic and make bad choices that lead to their death or hurt the people who may be trying to rescue them.

The sounds of fleeing footsteps, doors being kicked in or slammed shut and barricaded, gunfire, and combat all make the zombies more agitated and relentless, and draw out more of them from a widening radius, all converging on the survivors' location. In many ways, it is rather like disturbing a bees' nest. The first two, three, four bees are easy to contend with, but ten or twelve becomes difficult, and when 50 or 100 attack, things get desper-

ate and overwhelming. Blind panic to escape is likely to ensue and lead to missteps and disaster. This is where having reliable reconnaissance and a plan with two or more exit strategies becomes vital whenever entering any part of a city.

For survivors who have chosen to live in the city, familiarity with the streets, buildings, and neighborhoods, and especially having Rat Runs (described later) that have been (mostly) cleared and prepped for a quick retreat or getaway, becomes a literal life-saver. Plunging inside a dark building is suicide, because God only knows how many hungry dead may be waiting inside. However, a building – or at least a route through part of a building – that has been cleared and prepped as a Rat Run, is a different story entirely.

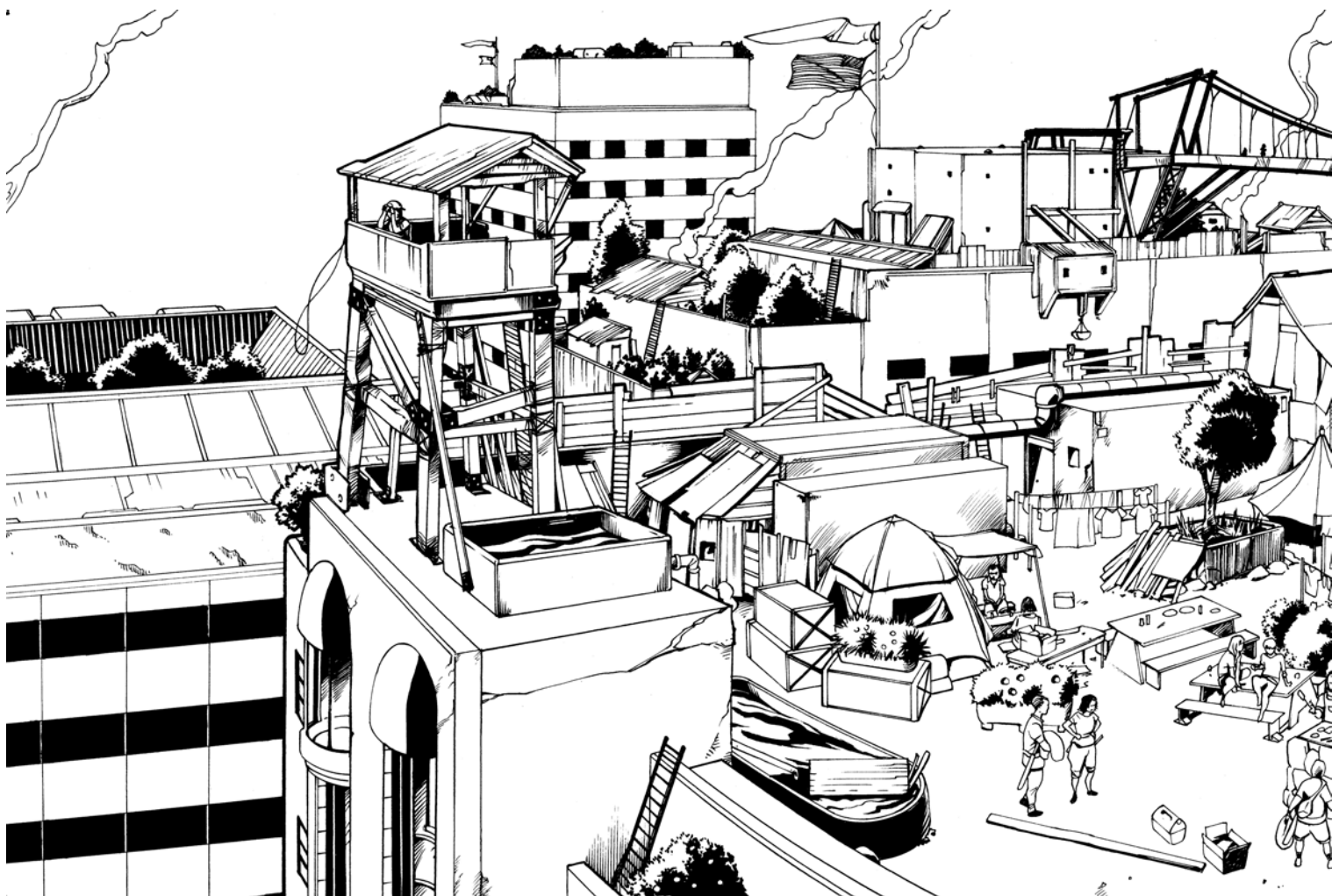
City survivors have learned one of the best ways to elude a gathering mob of zombies is to disappear inside a building and go up – provided there is a safe route in which to do so. Go up 2-8 stories and hole up where the hungry dead cannot see or sense you for 1-2 hours, and you should be as safe as can be, especially if there is a prearranged hiding place waiting for you. A dark corner that has already been prepared as a secret refuge even if it is only a closet or an access tunnel between the walls.

With their prey out of sight and beyond their sensing range, the zombie horde quickly disperses or goes off searching in the wrong direction because by going up and out of sensing range, their live prey has effectively “disappeared without a trace.” The dumb creatures have little understanding of spatial relationships or the notion to go up unless they are following the living. Once inside a building, the trick is to avoid contact with zombies that may be lurking inside. And when you do, to silence them fast, before their moaning alerts and attracts other zombies to your whereabouts.

As you can see, knowing the clearest, safest route and having established routes and hiding places along the way gives urban inhabitants a huge advantage over outsiders whose every step is into the unknown.

ANATOMY OF A POST-APOCALYPSE CITY

Cities and towns come in all types and sizes. Some have formed around industry and factories, others around mining or steel, or around a port and shipping, or medicine/pharmaceuticals, or technology, or a university, or a military base, etc. Many small cities and suburbs have a modest downtown area that may be only 3-12 blocks long. Others may be a sprawling metropolis the likes of Manhattan and Los Angeles or something more modest like Detroit, Cleveland, or Louisville, but still substantial. What the small cities and suburbs may lack in a large downtown area with tall buildings, they more than make up for with sprawling neighborhoods of homes, mall complexes, strip malls, a number of low profile industrial parks, warehouses, and at least a few factories. This describes most of suburban America. However, large cities filled with skyscrapers are also surrounded by a sea of houses. Urban sprawl means one city/suburb often seamlessly melds into another, distinguished only by a sign marking its border and a small, downtown shopping and business district, or perhaps a river, lake, factory or highway as a dividing line between one city and another.



Living in the Sky

This sourcebook is all about inner city survival and survivor colonies finding ways to live and prosper in the big city. The conventional wisdom is that living in the big population centers is impossible. These survivors prove otherwise. Some have built survivor camps and villages in basements and tunnels underground, others inside tall buildings, usually on the upper floors, and still others choose to live in the sky, on the rooftops of skyscrapers, office buildings, and apartment high-rises. Communities blessed with engineers and people with building skills have taken the concept of rooftop living to new heights. Establishing zip lines and rope bridges connecting to one or several other neighboring buildings and utilizing crank and pulley-style elevators and drawbridges lowered and raised via muscle power. Living like human spiders, weaving webs of lifelines from the roof of one building to another.

To some people this may sound like lunacy, but if done correctly, life on the rooftops and on the top floors of tall buildings can be extremely effective. Rooftop Safe Havens are not only the most ambitious and impressive Safe Havens, but have excellent odds for long-term survival. This is especially true of cities that are not in the path of extreme weather such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and heavy snow. Such ambitious survivor communities demand organization and cooperation among their members, creating powerful bonds and a sense of unity that helps

to carry them through all challenges and adversity that may come their way.

In a way, commandeering a tall building, whether 8-12 stories tall or 20+ stories, is rather like taking possession of a **castle** of old. Like a castle, its walls contain an entire village or town and protected by the defenses in elevated tower positions. In this case, the building is the castle. The lower floors contain the defensive barriers – moat, outer wall defenses, portcullis – and the warrior defenders are the people inside fighting for their families and their own skin. The difference being, the moat is replaced by various barriers and obstacles built outside and inside on the lower floors and into the stairwells, elevator shafts, and hallways. The outer wall defenses include live defenders manning the walls and zombie hordes defending the courtyard beyond the walls, i.e. an army of hungry dead wandering the insides of the ground floor and the first few lower floors and hallways, tearing to shreds any invaders who break through into the lower levels. The portcullis is any number of barriers, fencing and barricades built into the stairwells and hallways that prevent or slow the advance of invaders. Invaders who will be besieged by more guard zombies as well as live defenders picking off raiders at a distance, like archers, via long-range weapons from hidden and/or fortified positions. Should the invaders laying siege to a tall building stronghold make it high enough – an unlikely proposition – they then face a series of traps, barriers and ambush points, before they must engage the final line of well-armed, live defenders.



Any castle-like siege on an occupied tall building starts outside where the attackers must reveal themselves charging down the street to assail the “walls” and outer doors to the castle/building. This leaves them vulnerable to attack by defenders who have the advantage of superior elevated and probably fortified positions. There may also be walls and barriers on the street, probably made of large vehicles such as buses, trucks, semi-trucks and trailers, and even concrete barriers and construction vehicles, maybe a few national guard or army vehicles.

There may or may not be some “ground troops” – defenders with long-range weapons – but they retreat as soon as enemy forces break through the outer defensive barriers, leaving them to the defenders located along the wall and other elevated positions. These defenders attack with gunfire from above and from other elevated vantage points and sniper positions from above as well as secured locations in nearby buildings, catching attackers in a crossfire. Moreover, the advantage of height enables wall defenders inside, many stories above the ground, to strike at attackers along the wall with bricks, rocks, sections of pipe, and all sorts of heavy objects dropped out of windows. Objects that hit those on the ground with damaging and potentially deadly force. This means simple, heavy objects can help deter enemy attackers on the ground. Or course, guns and arrows and spears offer superior accuracy and guaranteed deadly force. A desk or shelving unit pushed out of a previously widened opening from 20 floors up hits the ground with the force of a grenade, sending a shower of shattered shrapnel flying in all directions to inflict additional

damage. A brick, cinder block, bowling ball, comparably sized rock or piece of debris, or equipment like a fire extinguisher or microwave oven, dropped from a great height hits the ground like a cannonball; gravity serving as the means of propulsion. A dead body or zombie pushed out a window will also hit with enough weight and force to injure or kill someone on the ground. However, while a shower of heavy debris raining down upon them may hurt attackers and even kill a few, or momentarily send them running for cover, these objects lack accuracy and may hit or miss. Of course, those below may not realize the debris shower is coming, making them more vulnerable to being struck, at random, and several rounds of such attacks may be enough to get them to give up. (**Myth Busting Note:** Coins, marbles, and other small objects dropped from a great height like the 30th floor or the rooftop of a skyscraper do NOT hit the ground with lethal force or the impact of a bullet. Air resistance increases the faster an object falls, cancelling out the acceleration from gravity and limiting the force of impact. In short, that coin hits with the same force as someone on the ground flicking it at your head, it may sting and annoy, but it does no damage. In fact, flat objects like coins are cushioned by the air and flutter to the ground similar to a leaf due to the drag force created by air resistance.)

Like castle defenders of old, boiling oil and hot tar could, in theory, be poured down upon attackers on the street below. However, the minimal results of such an attack compared to the considerable effort and logistics necessary to do so make it inefficient and even impossible for most survivor communities.

It should be noted that well-defended and fortified positions are always difficult to attack and vanquish. As a rule, the attacking force needs to outnumber defenders by at least 10 to one to have a decent shot at overcoming a dug-in or fortified position. More troops are better to improve the odds, but the outcome is still in question as opposing strategies and tactics, force of will, and sometimes, sheer luck may carry the day for one side or the other.

The zombie barrier defense. The use of zombies is not limited to only Death Cults and lunatics. Even the good guys, if they are smart, use the most ample resource at their disposal, especially in the urban environments. This is extremely effective in enclosed buildings.

What most city survivors laying claim to a tall building do is first clear the building. This can be a huge task in and of itself, but a necessity to create a safe, zombie free space anywhere in the building. Most rooftop communities completely clear the top 8-15 floors, turning the top 6-8 floors into living areas, hydroponic gardens, workshops, storage space, community gathering places, a generator room for electrical power, a chapel, a school, a trading post, etc. Making a tall building a suitable and maintainable habitat is usually done by getting to the top floors and clearing them out of zombies and securing them first. While this may require fighting their way to a stairwell or elevator shaft on the ground floor to get to the top, the floors highest up usually have the fewest zombies since most buildings and businesses were closed due to the pandemic known as the Wave.

Due to the pandemic of the Wave, most businesses were closed or manned by a skeleton crew of workers and perhaps a few guards and maintenance staff. When the power went out, most upper floors remained, in effect, sealed off. Consequently, the upper floors of office buildings have no or few zombies, except for the handful who died there, Pattern Zombies that continue to come to the job and go through the motions of work, assuming they can find their way all the way up to the higher floors, and the zombies off the street or lower levels that have either followed the Pattern Zombies or the living up into the top floors. (**Note:** Apartment buildings are usually filled with zombies on every floor and inside at least half of the apartments if not all of them.)

Clearing and sectioning off the stairwells and/or devising ways to use the elevator shafts (spelunking and rappelling climbing techniques work) can be the hardest initial work in securing a building. Next is clearing the upper floors and sealing them off from the dead. While this can be as easy as systematically going from room to room and slaying the monsters, many lead the zombies into a holding area, or to lower levels of the stairwell for use as zombie attack animals or an army of undead defenders. Or the living dead may be dropped down an elevator shaft to eventually form a Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant at the bottom. Remember, zombies are utilized as an aggressive, starving army of hungry dead to attack invaders coming into the building at street level and lower floors, as well as fill the stairwells of the lower floors.

The street level first floor is almost always swarming with zombies. The second and third floors too. Fourth through sixth floors are likely to have a fair number of zombies, as will the stairwells, but nothing like the first three floors. The reason is the doors and glass walls and picture windows of many tall buildings will be unlocked, kicked in, or smashed out, allowing throngs of

zombies to enter and wander about. This also lets in Pattern Zombies and those who chase the living into the building. There is usually a main lobby, shops, restaurants, lavatories, offices, and elevators on the first floor as well as escalators or public stairs that lead to the second and third floors. To get to the higher floors, one must use elevators or the stairs located behind closed doors. When the power goes out, elevators are no longer an option for zombies, though scaling the walls and cables is possible for some zombies as well as the living. Opening doors is not obvious nor easy for Slouchers and most zombies, requiring a Thinker or other semi-intelligent zombie to open it and lead them inside.

The other way for zombies to get inside buildings, hallways, rooms, and stairwells is following the living who flee inside them and keep running as the door slowly swings shut. The zombie that gets there before the door closes, pulls or pushes it open and follows the light or sounds of the living, as do the likely multitude shambling behind it. Malicious Retro-Savages, Death Cultists, and reckless survivors may leave doors open, damaged, or destroyed, allowing the hungry dead to come and go without difficulty, and sometimes the angry dead smash through doors and barriers or manage to tear them off by the hinges.

As a result, the first 1D6+4 floors usually contain mobs of zombies milling about looking for prey. Sometimes they get trapped inside rooms, hallways, stairwells, basements, and attached parking garages. Meanwhile, **Pattern Zombies** may come and go, attacking any living person they happen to encounter before returning to their repetition of work. Likewise, Impersonator Zombies, Mock Zombies, and Thinkers may more methodically and cleverly prowl the halls and find a way up to the higher floors in search of living prey, often with 2D6+6 zombies in tow. However, unless there are prey or sounds and scents to follow, most zombies stop after five or six floors. Those that cannot find their way out, go dormant. The rest mill about until food comes to them or someone leads them out.

Of course, openings in the walls of a building mean zombies come and go as the impulse strikes them. Moreover, businesses that were busy and attracted people to them in life, continue to attract the zombies in their unlife. Some faint hint of memory compel them to go in and linger around shopping districts, department stores, malls, busy office buildings, hospitals, train and bus stations, hotels, convention centers, concert halls, and other popular locations in the city which may include college campuses and schools. Sports stadiums, theaters, and parking structures tend to have more zombies milling around outside of them than inside. Largely because these are places where people came and went, once in a while, for a short time rather than a place of habitation, work, or long visits. A quick look inside a sports stadium, theater, or park, all of which are fairly open areas, reveals whether the living are present or not. Probably not, so the hungry dead lumber away to find a better hunting ground where whatever minuscule fragment of shattered memory tells them people are more likely to be found.

Rooftop Survivor Havens let the zombies wander in and out and hang around inside the first 6-10 floors of the building. Some even lure more zombies to the site and trap them inside rooms and halls and the stairwells of lower floors. Sometimes hundreds or thousands of them. There are a number of reasons for this. One, enemies and strangers are likely to avoid a building whose entrance levels are filled with the hungry dead, and look for much easier places to access. Two, those who dare to venture inside

usually give up and turn back after fighting their way through 2-3 floors of zombies. It is just not worth the risk and the herculean effort to go further. A smart move, because most survivors living in secured tall buildings keep stashes of zombies on some of the middle and upper floors as well, using them like attack dogs to sound the alarm (the Zombie Moan) and attack when intruders make it to that floor. Intruders who choose to press forward often perish for their attempt. Unfair? Cruel? Perhaps, but it is an effective barrier and defense that all rooftop survivor communities deploy. Furthermore, a barrier of zombies prevents new mobs of zombies from pressing forward and upward. When a mob of zombies encounters another mob of zombies, they instinctively realize there is no living prey in the vicinity and either join the shuffling mob for a while before wandering off into the street, or immediately turn around and shamle off in a different direction in the hope of finding live prey.

The beauty of life on the upper floors and rooftops of skyscrapers and tall buildings is the people are so high up that the monsters cannot sense or see their life essence, nor hear them 20, 30, 40 stories above the ground. Neither can dangerous people on the ground. There up on the top floors, people can live what passes as normal lives in the Zombie Apocalypse without fear of their work, playing, or luxuries like using solar panels, generators, and power tools, and the noise of construction, laughter, children playing, dancing, singing, playing recorded or live music, etc., because they are too high up for it to be heard. Meanwhile, the rooftop offers the ability to go outside without being seen or heard by the zombies and to feel the sun and wind and rain on their faces, to raise crops, collect rainwater, wash and hang clothes to dry outdoors, build and use solar panels (though the use of light remains a danger), and share a sense of freedom many other survivors living on the ground cannot. Life for survivors living in neighborhood houses and the lower floors and basements of buildings requires extreme caution, awareness, silence, and hiding as a constant and necessary part of their lives. Much like the *A Quiet Place* movies, people living in urban settings at ground level must exercise considerable amounts of self-control, intelligence, and stealth to remain out of harm's way. This is also true of homesteaders living inside buildings who use similar techniques and Rat Runs, as well as rural communities.

Securing a tall building is more than sealing off certain access points and areas of stairwells and floors. Inhabitants establish a vertical town or village inside the building, with trading posts, craftspeople, a system of trade for goods and services, and one or more other trading posts usually elsewhere on the street or in another building near street level. They also devise laws, rules and regulations for those living in the community, and establish escape routes in and out of the building, and Rat Runs on the ground level along with safe houses and supply caches at other locations. They may also establish Rat Runs and other rooftop farms, communities, lookout posts, and sniper positions on the top floors of other nearby skyscrapers. The largest and most ambitious rooftop communities may actually clear out and secure several buildings around the first, most central castle-building.

Zip lines and simple *rope and wood bridges* may go from the rooftop of one secured building to the neighboring one. In addition, there may be rope ladders, netting, bungee cords, and window cleaner-style scaffolding from the rooftop to the next 2-6 floors down, creating a sort of "Swiss Family Robinson" network of ropes and rope ladders, bungee cords, and bridges made from

extension ladders, wood, rope, etc., as well as dropping down from the roof to the windows of upper floors below. They all provide addition avenues of movement and escape from the roof to the next several floors and vice versa. Bridges and zip lines from one building to another also function as a means of escape and transportation from one rooftop colony or outpost to the next. The rope works may connect to one or several other buildings in a cluster to create a sort of giant spiderweb linking them.

On the rooftop are gardens for vegetables and herbs, and greenhouses for growing sprouts and delicate food plants. Solar panel arrays are located at various portions of the roof. They power the batteries and lights on a few of the floors below. There are water collection systems and a cavalcade of plastic barrels for water storage. There may be tents and huts that serve as homes for some of the families who live on the roof, but many more people live on the two or three floors below. Some people work the gardens, others hang laundry on clotheslines to be dried by the wind. A few of the men and women stand guard. They are armed with rifles in hand and other weapons hang from their belts. Other adults busy themselves with other responsibilities or watch over the children who have come up to the roof to play under the sun. A small group of youngsters run around one of the reinforced fire pits used for cooking and warmth at night. There are other fire pits and metal barrels as well as a number of propane powered grills for cooking. Another group of children chase one or two of the watchdogs and a little girl lovingly hugs her new kitten that her uncle rescued while on a supply run somewhere out in the city down below. Some of the older boys and girls attend to a school lesson and enjoy being out in the fresh air. One of the older men leans against a rooftop spotlight and begins to strum a tune on an acoustic guitar.

All of them and the dozens or hundreds of other people on floors below feel fortunate to have been able to establish this rooftop sanctuary and to have so much freedom. It took a tremendous amount of work and effort to haul all this up to the top floors, and it remains a work in progress. Good people died – too many good people – to make it a reality, but things are starting to really come together and it is already feeling like home. Their greatest concern now is continuing to improve and maintain this comparatively idyllic habitat in middle of the city. Even now, with the start of summer yet a few weeks away, they worry about growing and gathering enough to get them all through the winter.

The floors in the middle half of the buildings are filled with barriers and traps to prevent zombies or enemies from coming up. That said, there may be some middle floors that contain zombies to greet and attack unsuspecting invaders, or that can be let loose into the stairwell; blocked off in such a way to send the zombie horde downward to attack the intruders, and not let them into the safe zones of the upper floors. Even if by some miracle the invaders are able to survive the zombie onslaught and make it up to the higher floors, it buys the survivor community above time to prepare for combat or make good an escape to other neighboring rooftop havens and other ways out.

These spiderwebs of cables and bridges so high up mean nothing to the zombies on the street or inside neighboring buildings. At this height, people zipping across cables or walking over bridges go completely unnoticed by the monsters below. The hungry dead seldom look up except when there is a fire, large billows of smoke, explosions, persistent gunfire, or the sound of aircraft such as a helicopter landing on a roof (rare) or airplane

flying low overhead. For these simpleminded creatures, out of sight is out of mind.

Activities on the rooftops, upper floors and latticework of bridges and cables connecting buildings overhead mean nothing to the zombies on the street or in the lower levels of the buildings. They are ignored even by smart zombies. Even the zombies that may find a way up inside a neighboring building and are able to look out a window to see the ropes, bridges, and even lights and activity of people in the tall building across the street are oblivious to them. These constructs and activities are still too distant and quiet to register with them as a place to hunt prey. And even if they did, it is unlikely the monsters could figure out a way to get there.

Remember, though driven to hunt and feed upon the living, zombies, even most smart zombies, have a very limited capacity to think and reason. They are reactive, not proactive, attacking whatever comes their way. Yes, they wander in search of food, but do so without direction or a plan and chase only what they see.

First, looking out a window is seldom something any zombie, even Thinkers, ever do. Any zombie that looks out a window tends to look directly across or a little above or below their direct line of vision, not way up or all the way down. So they still do not notice what is happening a few flights higher across the way, let alone several stories higher or on the roof.

Second, unless a lot of people are seen being very active and loud, their ropes, netting, bridges, small clouds of smoke from cooking grills and campfires, and their rooftop activities do not register or have any meaning to the hungry dead. By the way, this suggests zombies rely more upon their ability to sense and see life energy than other visual cues. Thus, if people are too far away to sense or for the glow of their life essences to be prominent, the zombies are not likely to realize they are living prey. The creatures may see distant movement, but that alone does not trigger their hunt and attack instinct.

Third, that's if they see them at all. Zombies are largely oblivious to their environment. They are triggered to respond to the Zombie Moan, other sounds, human voices, and the life energy/aura of light that zombies can detect emanating from the living as if we were human fireflies. This is why most zombies wander aimlessly and sometimes travel in mobs, because they simply follow the zombies in front of them for a while, before wandering off on their own again. Part of the zombies' instinct is to be drawn to other zombies, at least for a little while, in case they are on the trail of living prey. Besides, the monsters have strength and greater success in numbers.

Fourth, odds are if the zombie(s) did recognize prey in a building across the street, it would have no idea how to get to there. Slouchers and most zombies would just stand there, clustered in the window, moaning and gazing upward. Their faces pressed up against the glass or their fists pounding and scratching at the glass until it fell out, and they with it, to the street below.

If a Thinker or other smart zombie should miraculously realize it had to go back down and over to the next building, the odds are it would have forgotten why it came down by the time it reached the street.

Fifth, zombies have a poor understanding of spatial relationships. If the monster hit street level and it still remembered the people on the rooftop, it is likely to have completely lost any sense of direction and where that rooftop of prey was located.

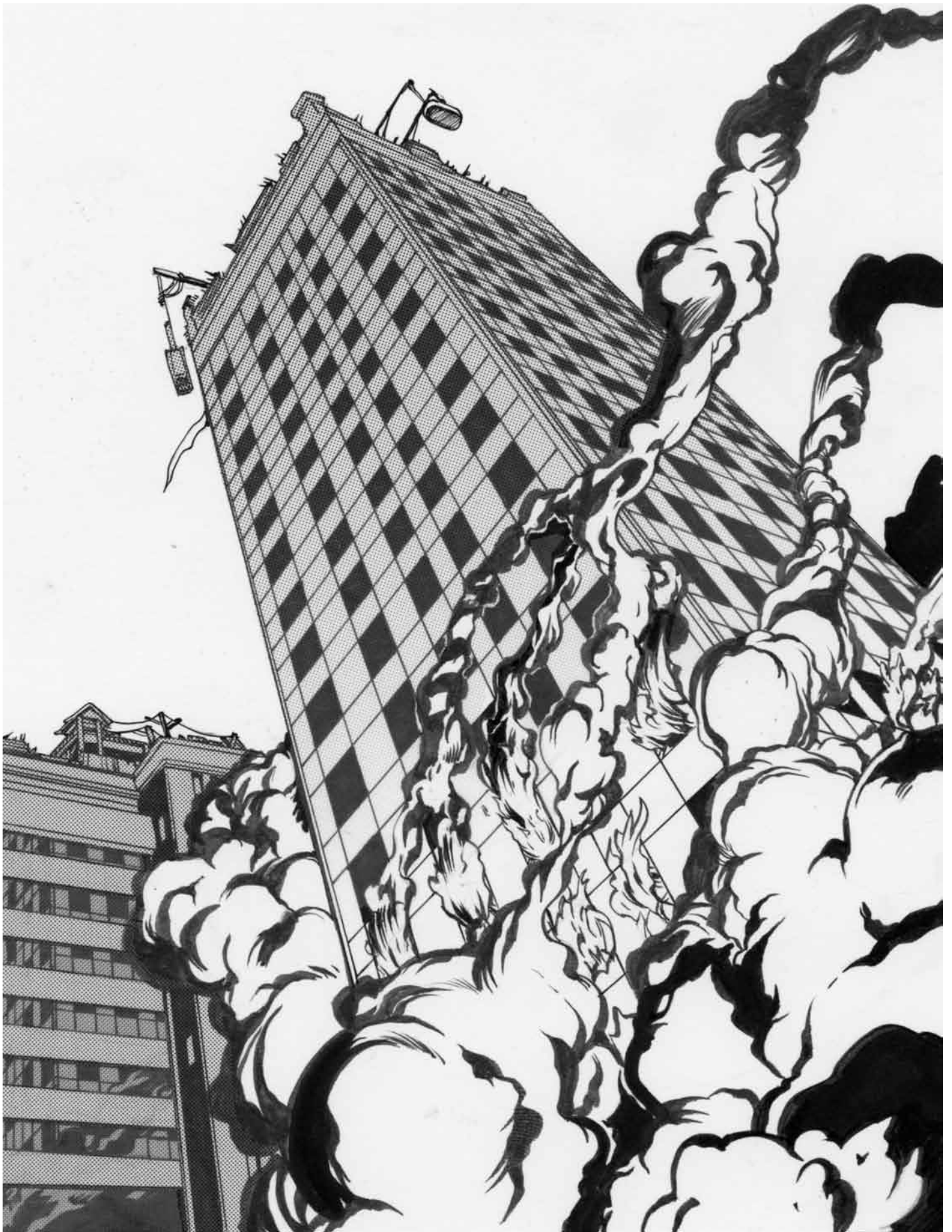
With nowhere to go, the zombie wanders off in a random direction growling and grumbling in frustration and bewilderment. Or it picks a random building and spends how many days trying to get up to the prey until, again, it forgets why it is there and either wanders off or goes dormant.

Of course, it is a different story for humans. People are much more likely to notice ropes and bridges running from one rooftop to another. However, as discussed earlier, bands of outsiders, raiders, and enemies should find it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to get past the zombies and other defenses and security measures to reach the upper floors of a rooftop survivor community. Most newcomers to such communities are encountered, vetted, and recruited on the ground over a period of time before they are invited to join a rooftop survivor encampment. Strangers are never brought up into the main refuge. NEVER. They are taken to a trading post, homestead, or small encampment away from the Safe Haven. Not far away, but not into the secured building atop which it is located. Most rooftop communities have safe houses, smaller satellite camps and outposts as well as alliances with homesteaders where unknown people in need and newcomers can be taken and observed for weeks or months with an eye for recruitment. All the while they are being studied and sized up by one or more trusted members of the larger community to determine whether they may be good candidates to join the larger community.

No place is completely safe. Even the most secure castle or tower-like skyscraper has its struggles and dangers. Crawlers may get into the service tunnels and areas between walls or suspended ceilings. The predatory Flesh-Eating Zombies, Fast Attack Zombies and Crawlers sometimes scale the cables of elevator shafts or find other ways up to the higher floors. Likewise, smart zombies, particularly Impersonator and Mock Zombies, are always a threat and may find ways in and up and bring other zombies or bad guys with them. Pattern Zombies who come to work or live in the building may have keys to unlock doors and know how to use them as part of their patterned routine. Not only may this give them access to otherwise secured areas of the building, but they may let in other zombies that follow them, or they may be watched and followed by smart zombies or the living.

As always, the most resourceful and dangerous threat comes from the living. People who may be able to figure out new ways to get inside, have access to tools and devices that may gain them entry, and other ways to scale a building's walls or to get from one rooftop to another. Perhaps even the use of aircraft, helicopters, gliders, and zip lines to get to a rooftop.

Fire and military grade weapons. Setting buildings on fire would seem like the obvious and easiest way to flush the living out of a building or to destroy the building. However, fire is too risky to be considered, even by the most vengeful and aggressive enemies. People learn fast that fire is a living, traveling monster of a different sorts. One that may indiscriminately devour city blocks and entire neighborhoods before burning itself out. This makes fire too unpredictable and dangerous to use. The exception being madmen and people with nothing to lose. It should also be noted that while zombies fear fire and keep their distance from it, they are attracted to it, encircling it. Somehow knowing that the living are likely to be responsible for fire and that the living must flee from it and into their waiting arms.



Explosives and other extreme measures to hurt or destroy rivals and enemies may also be deployed by people. Those with access to military grade weapons and combat vehicles may unleash rockets, mortars, mobile artillery, tanks, drones, and missile-carrying vehicles to destroy their enemies. Thankfully, few rogue military forces and survivors with access to such high-powered military weapons are known to exist, at least so far. Those in possession of such weapons also tend to be discriminating and careful with them. Though they may be able to level a tall building or neighborhood, what is the point of doing so? Such an action destroys precious resources and attracts zombies from miles around.

Though such destruction is desirable to Retro-Savages, military weapons and vehicles are themselves the product of forbidden technology, so they cannot bring themselves to use them. To do so is shameful and liable to bring down misfortune and the wrath of God upon their own village and noble cause. As a result, using technology to bring down the edifices of the old world is not their place.

Life Underground

Life underground is possible and does occur, especially at secret underground military compounds, industrial complexes, and sometimes in cities with subway systems like those of New York City, Washington D.C., and London, as well as cities that have mines like the salt mines under Detroit, or are built on top of the bones of an older, previous city, or cave system, but these are all rare. And though many cities have steam tunnels and sewer systems that could be inhabited, few city survivors choose to live underground.

Life underground is too claustrophobic and removed from the rest of the world for most people. At least living in tall buildings or on their rooftops you have a sense of freedom and connection to the world around you. It may be an illusion, but it is a welcomed and comforting one.

Remember, these tunnels have no working electric lights, so the inhabitants will need some method of illumination. That alone can be difficult, burning through batteries in flashlights and lamps at an alarming pace. Likewise, campfires for heat and cooking inside a tunnel require proper ventilation or the smoke and fumes may hurt or kill everyone in that part of the tunnel, or burn up all the life-giving oxygen if the inhabited area of a tunnel is too sealed off. Moreover, light in the eternal darkness underground also gives away a person's position to zombies and intruders. And there are likely to be very few exits/entrances – perhaps only one or two where the survivors inhabit the tunnel – limiting escape routes.

Generally speaking, people who live underground either feel too exposed topside or like the isolation of life inside a tunnel. Underground, you are isolated. You know only what you can see, hear, scout, and secure. Which is not much. The air is stale, and you feel alone even when you are a member of a group or a small, subterranean community.

When people do make a home or a life underground, they are usually one or a few homesteaders, or hermits, or people with mental or emotional difficulties. In short, people who want to get away and hide from the outside world. People who are loners and find comfort in the stifling isolation. That means most subterranean city dwellers are lone individuals or small family

clans. They are probably wary of strangers and even of other city dwellers they may see from a distance but with whom they avoid making contact. Some are timid and nomadic, ready to pick up and run at a moment's notice. Others are dug in like a badger or a bear, and ready to fight anyone who invades or threatens their lair, their possessions, or their loved ones. If you are traveling in an underground tunnel system and find what seems to be someone's camp, it is best to leave it alone. To do otherwise invites trouble or bloody revenge.

Underground travel is more common than living below. Using the sewers and steam tunnels or subway system as a secret means of travel or as a temporary hideout is quite common. In fact, portions may be used as part of a Rat Run or a sheltering hideout when invaders arrive. They can also serve as an invisible escape route from fire and other disasters to exit the city.

Steam tunnels and city access tunnels contain electrical conduit, water and steam pipes of various sizes located along the sides and ceiling of the tunnel. They are superior for travel and habitation because they are usually dry and warm compared to storm drains and sewer tunnels, both of which are designed to drain and carry water to a city reservoir, river, or lake. Melting winter snow and ice as well as rainwater fill storm drains and sewer tunnels with rushing water that can become quite deep and deadly, sweeping people and their belongings through the pipeline like violent rapids.

A prepped and secured area of steam or sewer tunnel under the streets can be an excellent method of travel or make for a nice place to hide yourself or a cache of weapons, ammo, water, and other supplies. "Secured" sections of tunnel have been cleared of zombies, debris and other obstacles or threats. Junctions where two or more tunnels connect are likely to see the other tunnels sealed off by chain link/cyclone fencing bolted into the wall. That seals the opening without compromising air (or water) flow and enables the tunnel users to see what is coming from the other tunnel (zombies, people, animals, floodwater, etc.). The same may be done at various points inside a solitary tunnel, especially if portions are known to contain a lot of zombies. Putting up fencing and barriers prevents or slows down hostile intruders and mobs of zombies from easy access into the secured area of the tunnel. Ambitious and skilled survivors may hinge this metal fence or gate in such a way that it can be opened and locked as desired. Less sophisticated people may simply block an area of tunnel with debris or zombies chained to the walls.

Zombies are not likely to go down into a sewer or steam tunnel unless they have a reason to do so, such as following human prey. In theory, clear out a tunnel network, fence or barricade sections, and you have a wonderful, underground tunnel network below the streets. However, Death Cultists and other bad guys may have the same idea regarding the use of underground tunnels, and may use the tunnels as a means of travel, unseen, under the streets and away from zombies and prying eyes, or may wait in ambush, or sabotage the areas used by rivals, or deliberately send hordes of zombies into the tunnels to take away this avenue of travel and escape, or to kill anyone living inside. Moreover, it is possible that rival groups may battle for control over an area of tunnel. Survivors who turn a tall building into their survivors' refuge need to take precautions to prevent enemies from entering their building via tunnels that may run under or very near their building.



RAT RUNS

Other than the brazen members of Death Cults and a few other select individuals who are able to walk among or control zombies to some degree, all city dwellers learn to travel their city as if it were a secret maze. They run through the streets and alleys, taking shortcuts under and over fences and through buildings, back onto the street or alley, and down into the sewers and steam tunnels, like rats in a maze.

A **Rat Run** is the nickname city survivors have given the secret routes they establish throughout the city, especially around their skyscraper habitats and urban homesteads. These are not simple paths and trails to here and there, but secret routes built and memorized.

Remember, there is no Internet, television, radio, or play time. Survivors in the first few years of the Zombie Apocalypse spend the majority of their time and effort on survival, establishing survivor colonies, and creating Safe Havens. Leisure time to read, sing, dance, or play is a luxury most survivors can ill afford. They spend their time finding and collecting resources, building and securing a base of operations, establishing defenses, and formulating the best routes in and out of the city. Whether they live among the tall buildings of a big city, downtown, or a sprawling neighborhood, they all have Rat Runs.

Imagine a young, healthy boy or girl, somewhere around 11 or 12 or 13 years old, but it could be anyone from child, teen, or adult age. The kid is wearing sneakers and a hoodie. A backpack is worn on the back or a duffel bag or satchel is slung over the

shoulder. The child runs down a cluttered city alley. As he races by, dormant and wandering zombies emerge from the shadows and doorways behind him and pursue. Following him with their empty eyes, taking a few shuffling steps and clawing at the air before the kid disappears from sight. He darts through holes in fences and walls and vaults over the wreckage of cars and other debris.

All the risen dead are too slow to catch the speedy kid as he or she clammers along a trail known to him and other members of his homestead or rooftop community. And because he darts around corners and dumpsters, and abandoned vehicles, and inside buildings and out the other side, the dull-witted monsters quickly lose sight of him and interest in the pursuit. Without a living target to follow, the zombies shamle away in a random direction or find a new dark place to go dormant.

Clutched in the running boy's arms is a bag – probably a pillowcase filled with scavenged supplies. This is in addition to the backpack strapped across his back or the satchel slung over his shoulder that has also been packed full of useful goods. The pillowcase contains packages of cereal, some cans of food and soda, a half dozen cigarette lighters, a jackknife, and a plush animal for his little sister. On other days it may be filled with batteries or medical supplies, or countless other things a family or community of survivors can use or trade with other survivors.

It has only been four or five months since the world as we knew it came to an abrupt end and the dead rose, but most kids have already learned they are fast enough and agile enough to avoid most of the risen dead, and can escape any that might give pursuit. Any, except maybe Flesh-Eating or Fast Attack Zombies.

This running game with the walking dead would be dangerous and foolhardy if the runner did not know where he was going, but this is a **Rat Run** designed with the very purpose of losing pursuing zombies and eluding dangerous living people. As long as the runner sticks to the Rat Run he should be safe and always several steps ahead of the monsters. It is when you have to improvise and plunge into the unknown that's always dangerous. You never know what you'll find when you enter the unknown. Not that it stops children and teenagers from taking ill-advised excursions off the Rat Run to look around and make their own little, unofficial runs and hiding places.

City dwellers are the first to figure out that zombies lose interest in what they cannot see or hear or sense, and so Rat Runs are designed to allow the people who know the trail to dodge around corners, under walls and fences, and to go high and low, turn many corners, and dart into and through and out of buildings. Most are entered through small openings low to the ground. Locations zombies may not notice and cannot fit through when they do.

Along all Rat Runs are holes cut low in the wooden or chain link mesh of cyclone fencing, or dug out under them, where the runner, whether a child or an adult, can squeeze through or slide under. Elsewhere are similar small openings sledge-hammered out at the base of the brick walls of buildings. These openings are usually concealed by garbage receptacles, boxes, crates, tires, furniture, the wreckage of a car, debris, and other objects. Sometimes the opening is out in the open, but because there is so much damage to many buildings and people know not to stick their head into dark openings, especially those level with the ground, most people don't notice, and the zombies, except for Crawlers or Thinkers, seldom notice them unless they see the living scurrying through one. Whether concealed or not, these openings are generally only large enough for a living person (or a zombie child or Crawler) to squeeze through on their belly or on hands and knees. It may lead to a hallway or a room on the ground floor, or drop into a basement, or a stairwell.

All of these openings lead to shortcuts and mostly secured routes so that, if you know the maze-like trail – and the people who created the Rat Runs do – you can run through it and the many openings at a good speed, losing zombies and human pursuers alike. As part of a Rat Run, all of these areas are inspected and cleared of the living dead on a regular basis, so they *should be safe*. However, things change all the time and the damn zombies are always wandering about, so Rat Runners need to exercise a degree of caution and always be ready for anything.

Up, up and away. People have a tendency to not look up and so do most zombies, so methods of escape and places to hide that **go up** can be very effective and reliable ways to lose pursuers, especially zombies. It is best, however, to use a way up when it is around a corner or otherwise obscured for a moment, so pursuers cannot see where their target went. Zombies are like hunting dogs, they follow wherever their prey goes. But if they lose sight of their prey and cannot sense his life energy, they lose the trail. As soon as the Rat Runner gets out of their sensing range he is safe. However, even when the zombies can sense a person nearby, when they cannot see him, they get frustrated. The monsters will linger for as long as they can sense life, and continue to moan, attracting more zombies to the location, but most just stand around. Too stupid to know how to open a door or a window or where to look next.

In the case of zombies, going high enough to escape their line of sight and sensing range, like scaling a pole, wall or rope ladder, or going through a window or opening and going upward, and even hiding behind a sign or billboard 4-5 stories above the ground makes the prey they are pursuing seem to have vanished. Confused, but in hot pursuit, the simple-minded monsters are likely to continue to lumber forward, down the most apparent path, or scatter in the hope of catching sight of their prey up ahead or around the next corner. However, if they can see or sense the person, they stand there, moaning and shuffling like hounds that have treed a lion or bear.

Many Rat Runs have a cleared and barricaded trail that goes up higher to get out of the zombies' sensing range, and may use an extension ladder, a few long planks or narrow sections of wood secured together that lead out one window, located several stories up, between two buildings set closely together. This enables the kid or adult using a Rat Run to exit one building that may be under siege by zombies and slip away inside another. If the Rat Runner is stealthy, the zombies are probably focused on the door, window, or opening the kid entered and too simpleminded to look up to realize their meal is still on the move and right above their heads. Should they notice their prey crawling across a ladder, rope bridge, or series of wooden planks, those on the ground stare upward, moan louder, and claw at the air, but are too dumb to try to find a way into the other building to pursue.

While human pursuers are able to follow their fleeing target, many will be unwilling to run headlong into a dark, unknown building. Nor are they likely to give chase over a narrow or rickety-looking makeshift bridge from one building to another, especially if they could fall a great height and die, or fall into the waiting arms of the hungry dead. Stupid zombies might try to follow across a ladder or bridge made of planks, but Slouchers and the vast majority of zombies lack the balance and agility to cross successfully, and fall to the street or alley below. Even those that might crawl over on hands and knees are likely to pitch and fall over. *Slouchers, Juggernauts, Bug Boys, and most zombies* – if they can even manage to climb out of the window and get a footing to stand or kneel on the narrow walkway – fall off after a few paces. Should they dare it, *Crawlers (any), Thinkers, and Mock Zombies* have a 55% chance to navigate the construct and make it across without falling. Only *Flesh-Eating, Fast Attack, Seekers and Kidnapper Zombies* have a 75% likelihood of successfully crossing such narrow bridges and pathways. As soon as the Rat Runner is able to escape the line of sight of the hungry dead or living pursuers, he/she/they have the chance to hide or make good their getaway by taking additional avenues of escape without being seen. Any attempt to follow any further is likely to be fruitless for both the dead and the living. Add to this the **Parkour** skill practiced by an ever increasing number of city dwellers, particularly the young, and most zombies, outsiders unfamiliar with the city, and even local cultists (most do not build or utilize Rat Runs themselves) will find it impossible to chase down anyone familiar with a Rat Run.

This is why most Rat Runs wind up and down, and around corners, and never in a straight line for very long. When they are on the ground at street level, the Rat Run weaves through walls and fences and buildings, and eventually goes up into a building, then down, because it confuses and loses zombies and dissuades human pursuers. The more challenging and difficult the pursuit path, the less likely a human pursuer is going to follow. Jumping fences or sliding under them is bad enough. Running into a dark

building the pursuers do not know is dangerous and foolhardy. Anything could be waiting inside and around the next corner.

Running up and down stairs, kicking in doors, crawling through small openings, or crossing a height on a rope bridge or wooden planks, makes the Rat Run so daunting and perilous that most human pursuers are not going to follow for very long. At some point, sooner rather than later, the living pursuer(s) should give up and turn back. If for no other reason than they quickly lose their sense of location and direction indoors following such a twisting and turning high-speed foot pursuit. This is not necessarily true if emotions are running hot and caution is thrown to the wind, or the person being chased is in possession of something so valuable or important it cannot be let go, but as a rule, people are not going to follow somebody running up and down through an unknown building or series of alleys, streets, or sewers. There are just too many unknown variables and ambush points, so they give up in short order and turn back. Survivors living in the big cities know this and use it to their full advantage. Of course, the same dangers apply to them whenever they veer off into uncharted territory and inside unfamiliar buildings.

Rat Runs that go inside buildings, which are most, are well conceived and laid out with concealed openings in many of the walls. Openings and secret panels are usually low to the floor and hidden behind furniture, boxes, or debris so that any intelligent pursuer has to stop and spend time looking around to figure out where the runner has gone and to find the concealed opening to the next room or hallway. By then, the Rat Runner is probably long gone. The dumb monsters are left completely baffled, as if the person they were chasing has disappeared into thin air. Live pursuers should realize they were outplayed and probably turn around and head back rather than follow deeper into the unknown.

Very much like mice and rat holes in the walls, the opening is small and out of the way. It leads to a sequence of several adjoining rooms or apartments, one after the other. Each with a similar, concealed opening or secret panel at the base of a wall, before exiting back into the hall or a staircase, or an opening in the floor leading down to the next level, or in the ceiling leading up to the next floor. City survivors get more inventive than this, however, and those with the skills to do so may create secret panels that are barely recognizable without close and time consuming scrutiny. These more carefully concealed hidden panels may open into an access tunnel or service area between the walls. Such tunnels and areas are common in many large buildings and skyscrapers.

In a basement or sub-basement, a hole in the floor covered by a rug, crates, or debris on top of a sheet of wood that can be slid aside and pulled back over the opening, may drop down into a steam tunnel or sewer, or leads to a smashed out window or exit hole in an exterior wall that lead into the alley or a side street.

On the second floor and higher, there are rooms with a window that opens easily or which is cleanly smashed out with no jagged glass pieces. Outside the window is a **knotted rope** or a **rope ladder** waiting, firmly attached to the wall right or left of the window. It may lead up or down – but almost always up, away from the ground level occupied by the hungry dead – to another smashed out window one or two flights above. Other times, there may be a narrow bridge made of wood or rope or a ladder that leads from the window of one building to the window of the building across the way. There is another secret Rat Run through the halls and rooms in that building (or on the floor above or below) that leads to safety or to a secure hiding place. City dwellers



establish hiding places and safe houses and hidden supply caches along and near Rat Runs to help and protect the Runners as they make their way through the bones of the city. “Their city.” The one they know like the back of their hand.

These safe houses and hiding places along the Rat Run can be almost anywhere. Some in the least likely of places, such as behind a cold, powerless furnace, or better yet, inside a gutted furnace or heating and cooling system with a concealed panel the kid can open and close. Or maybe there is a desk or furniture with boxes set on top of it. All stacked in such a way that they can be used as a staircase the Rat Runner can easily climb up to push open the ceiling tile or an access panel, and climb into the ceiling and close it tight behind him. There, concealed from the dead and the living, the Rat Runner can rest for a moment. Just enough to catch his breath before moving on. He knows it is too dangerous to linger for too long at any one location, especially if zombies or the living are in hot pursuit.

These winding, up and down Rat Runs are too confusing to be followed by most zombies and too tricky and troublesome for most live humans no matter how evil, angry or vengeful they may be. Moreover, nobody likes to enter an unknown building, because there are way too many unknown variables, especially inside large or tall buildings where anything can be lurking around every corner. City dwellers count on this, not only along their Rat Runs, but also inside their castle tower-like domains inside skyscrapers and other tall buildings. As a result, most pursuers give up the chase very early on.

This is why city dwellers who have chosen to make their home in the city select skyscrapers, office buildings, and apartment houses as the location for their Safe Havens or homesteads.

Inside, on almost every floor, even the ones where the zombies are deliberately left to wander, is a network of holes made in the walls, floors, and ceilings through which they can come and go, or lead invaders and bad guys to their doom.

Alternative Rat Run trails. During the Zombie Apocalypse, nothing is certain and no place is always safe. Survivors making their home in the big city and any urban environment know this, and must be prepared to make spur of the moment decisions, detours, and improvisation. Though Rat Runs are trails that have been cleared of danger, secured, and invisibly modified and built-up for use as a safe trail and shortcuts, with hiding places along the way, they cannot be constantly maintained. Life during the Zombie Apocalypse is chaotic. The environment frequently changing. That means the trail of shortcuts through and over fences, walls, ceilings and buildings that was safe yesterday, or just this morning, might be compromised at a later time. There could be one or more zombies present, a dog pack, a wild animal, bandits or cutthroats, members of a Death Cult, or a vehicle, or a portion of the building may have collapsed and now blocks the way. As a result, there are often alternate and emergency routes established. These secondary Rat Runs are much less well maintained and less known than the main Runs, and may be less obvious or more difficult to navigate, especially if the Runner is injured or carrying a lot of salvaged supplies.

When the location where the cyclone fencing is cut for easy passage, or where a hole in a wall is occupied by the enemy or otherwise compromised, farther down the wall in one direction or the other (or both), there may be a trash dumpster or pile of debris with wooden planks or bricks all stacked and positioned in such a way that a survivor in the know can run up and jump over the fence or wall. There might be a chain or rope hanging from a pole or street post, that, with a running start, can be grabbed and used to swing over a barrier or to a wall or window ledge or fire escape. There may be spikes – hand and footholds – hammered into a wall or pole that enables the survivor to climb up to a ledge on a building or to a balcony or to a window, and so on. Things that someone who doesn't know what to look for, does not see and is unlikely to notice.

Most Rat Runs extend 6-12 city blocks with just as many additional, less well traveled Runs that go deeper into the bowels of the city, usually to key locations (the docks, shipyard, truck depot, police station, hospital, shopping mall, train yard, power station, a safe house, weapon cache, etc.). There is also likely to be a secret escape route to another part of the city or into the suburbs in case of total disaster and an evacuation is required.

The largest as well as the most ambitious and resourceful city dwelling survivor communities will have lairs and hideouts tucked away along every route. Places they can squeeze into and close off to conceal the light of their life essence from zombies and hide from human pursuers. Some are little more than a closet, hole, or cave they can cover up with a board or sheet of metal, others are homey hideouts and safe houses with a mattress, a table and a few chairs, supplies for a week or two, and spare clothing.

Rat Runs Inside Buildings

As noted above, Rat Runs exist inside buildings, especially those whose upper levels have been cleared out and are being used for a Safe Haven, but also the middle and lower floors that serve as a deterrent to intruders. These indoor building Rat Runs

have the same purpose as those outdoors, to elude zombies and hostile human invaders, but also to lead invaders on wild goose chases and into traps.

A group of invaders may think they have the fleeing city survivor cornered because the fool has hidden inside a supply closet or broom closet or bathroom. Perhaps the door is locked, or not. When the door is opened, the living pursuers are surprised to find the small room is *empty*. Zombies are downright baffled. Confused zombies rarely linger, turning back the way they came to look around elsewhere in the adjoining room or hallway before wandering off. Living pursuers shake off their surprise quickly and begin to look around and open cabinet doors and move objects. Sure enough, behind the garbage can or a mop inside a rolling bucket, or the "Warning Wet Floor" sign, or a large box, is a barely man-sized hole in the wall. Probably with a dark towel or blanket pinned to it to make the opening less obvious (especially to zombies), but easy to push right through when on the run, like a human-sized dog door.

If the room was a bathroom, a quick look around may reveal no such opening in the wall. Open up the door of the vanity under the sink (most offices, apartments, hotel rooms, and homes have a vanity cabinet below the sink to cover the pipes), and at a quick glance it appears empty too. No one curled up hiding inside. Take a closer, more careful look, however, and there is a hole in the back leading to the next room or to an access tunnel between the walls. In the alternative, the bathroom exit may be up in the ceiling. Climb up onto the sink or toilet, push up the tile of the suspended ceiling, and pull yourself up to look inside, and there is an opening that is up in the wall to the next room or into the ceiling and the floor above.

Most people, including children and teens, are too heavy to be supported by an ordinary suspended ceiling or the ductwork for heating and cooling common in office buildings, skyscrapers, and some apartment buildings. So to make an effective maze trail in the ceiling, the survivors need to inconspicuously reinforce an escape route that functions as a crawl space or tunnel capable of supporting their weight. This reinforcement can be done with wood, thick sheets of paneling or flooring, wire, metal straps and struts, and similar material. Likewise, ambitious and skilled survivors don't cut or smash out an obvious hole at the base of walls and leave it open and exposed. If they have the time, tools, and skill, they carefully cut out a square in the wall that can be removed and put back into place with scarcely a trace. They may even paint or retile so that the lines of the secret panel cannot be seen at a glance or in dim light. Remember, there are no electric lights, so the only light source is coming in through the windows and whatever the person has brought with them. Such re-useable openings are especially hard to see when cut along bathroom tiles and lines in wall paneling. This fake facade can even be an entire wall or part of a wall that slides or swings open and shut, like a real secret door out of the movies.

Secret panels and concealed or covered openings always fool zombies, even if there are obvious cut lines, seams, or cracks in the facade. **Thinkers** and other smart zombies have a 10% chance to figure out what just happened, but only a 5% chance of finding where the secret panel is located and how to open it. Humans have a 50% chance of surmising there must be a secret door, and if they take their time to look around have a 60% chance of finding it. However, superior construction and concealment makes the search to find it take time and inflicts a -1D4x10% penalty to finding the



secret door and opening it. **Note:** Finding a secret panel or door requires careful examination and time: 1D6+10 melee rounds or 3-4 minutes. Time that most *human pursuers* are not going to take and a lot of time for the person(s) in pursuit to make good their escape. Most pursuers will assume there must be a secret panel, and they have lost their prey, and either move on or search the area where they have come to a dead end with their chase.

False Trails and Death Traps. Survivors with skill and cunning sometimes make deliberately crude and obvious holes or secret panels in a room to lead enemies *away* from the real Rat Run and the survivor community. **This false trail** may lead outside so that pursuers believe their prey really did “get away,” or it can lead to a hallway or stairs that go in the opposite direction or take them into a death trap.

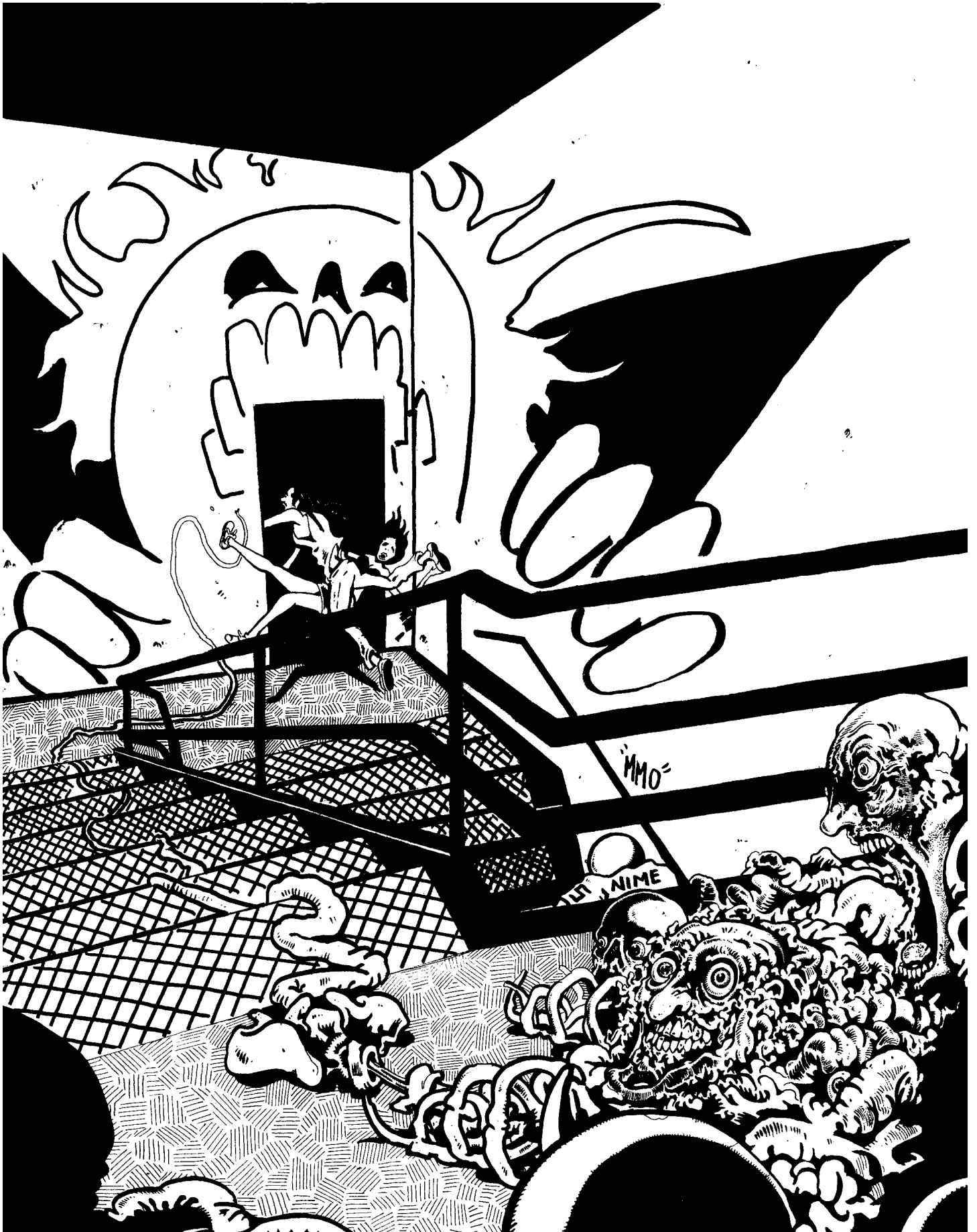
A death trap could be a room or section of flooring in a hallway or stairwell with loose or rotted flooring that collapses when weight is applied to it, or something as simple as a hole covered by a carpet that gives way under weight. Such a **deadman’s drop** could send one or more human pursuers (or several zombies) crashing down through the opening 2-6 stories below. Falling to the next floor only stuns, delays, and possibly hurts human pursuers, but they are likely to survive a one story fall and be very angry when they recover. As a result, most deadman’s drops are a lethal 2-6 story fall, often with zombies or a Walking Grave or Dead Mound Giant at the bottom. Or the false trail may lead into

a room with other traps or filled with 2D6+6 zombies; probably all *Slouchers*. Likewise, rather than lead living pursuers down a safe path, the false trail could lead to a hallway or room(s), or an exit where 1D4x10+20 zombies await. Or there may be a different danger waiting for them such as a hostile street gang, bandits, raiders, Death Cult, lunatic, or other types of death traps. (**Note:** There may be fewer or many more zombies/enemies, depending on the intention of the builder of the Rat Run death trap, its location, the current situation, the amount of noise being made by the involved parties, and the discretion of the Game Master.)

Road Signs, if you know what you are looking for

Those using a Rat Run escape route should know the way, having etched it in their memories and traveled it many times. However, even an experienced member of the survivor community who frequently travels the Rat Runs and city streets, such as a *Shepherd of the Damned*, *Scrounger*, *Hound Master*, or *Half-Living*, may forget their way and need **landmarks** to help guide them in the correct direction. Street signs, billboards and the buildings help in this regard, but **spray painted graffiti** and chalk markings are also used. Arrows are much too obvious, and while repeated symbols are used, one must be careful with them or a pattern may be recognized and followed.

To prevent signs from being recognized by enemies, the markings are mixed up. Some are small symbols – a “tag” on a stop

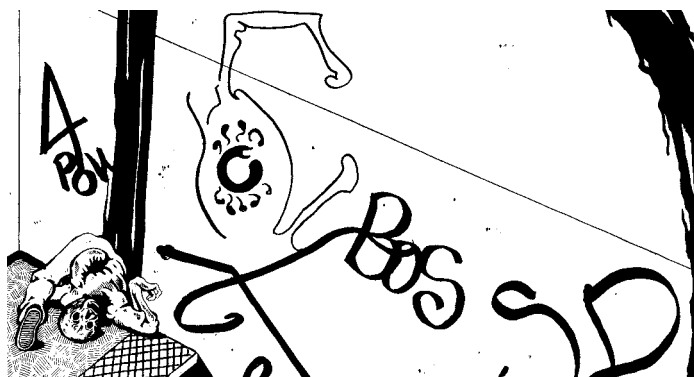


sign here, a street sign there, others medium to large on the side or lid of a garbage dumpster, a door, or the side of a vehicle, wall, sidewalk, or manhole cover. The stylization and color of the symbol may also be modified. Everyone who knows the symbol knows they are on the right path. Other times a word or phrase like “no one left” or “Turn back,” may have a double or secret meaning. Those in the know recognize it and understand they are to turn *left* or use the *left door* not the one on which the words are written. To other living people it is one of a million meaningless messages everywhere, but to members of the community such messages and signs have other meanings.

The color, size, or a finishing flourish such as a swish that ends in an arrow pointing a particular direction, or the top or bottom of an L or H pointing the way. A no sign (circle with a line through it) may actually mean yes, as in yes this is the proper door or way, and so on. The significance of the signs represents different things to different communities in different cities.

Other works of graffiti might be a barking or running dog on the sidewalk or the side of a building, fence, or vehicle. Barking means danger lies ahead in the direction the animal is pointed – same if it is a cat hissing – relative safety *should* lay the other way. The direction an animal – dog, cat, horse, lion, tiger, bear, etc. – is running toward usually means that it is the safe or correct way to travel. Or it may be a figure of a person dancing, jumping, spinning, falling, etc., and whatever direction an arm or leg is “sort of” pointing (without actually pointing) is the safe direction. Or at least it was safe when the graffiti was created. A dead body, skulls, or skull and crossbones, might indicate zombies or a Death Cult is nearby or up ahead, especially if the art depicts zombies eating or approaching a person or a body. A jumble of letters or words that end in an arrow design or a swish may also indicate a direction to head toward or to avoid. Again, these can be large designs covering a wall or the side of a truck, or a small design on a lamppost, street sign, fence, wall, car or sidewalk.

In some cases, the directions or warning is *written over* a sign or on top of, or part of, a meaningless graffiti graphic, but is identifiable to those looking for it. And sometimes the graffiti is a genuine warning, not just to those in the know, but to all survivors. “Stay out.” “Turn Back.” “Danger,” “Only dead here.” “Death Cult.” “Death Cult ahead.” “Flesh-Eaters.” “Bridge out.” “Don’t trust them.” “Safety west.” “Dead Rats Live.” And so on. Then again, common symbols like skulls, crossbones, the no symbol (circle with a line over a word or image), or “Beware of ... (dog, zombies, Retro-Savages, the name of a particular cult, gang, group, place, person, etc.),” may also be legitimate — or not. They may warn of real danger or promise genuine safety, *or not*. Caution is always necessary.



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BRAD ASHLEY ON SUBURBIA

Survival in the flat, sprawling cities

Life in the suburbs is pretty much the same as life downtown, but it is also different. If I had to pick one, I think I’d pick the suburbs, mainly because I can’t stand being cooped up in no high-rise all the time. I need to have my boots on the ground and my ass on the seat of my motorcycle. Give me a gun, a bike, and the road, and I’m a happy camper.

In some ways, you would think life in suburbia would be easier, at least for individuals and small, tight-knit groups, only it’s not. Like any place, it has its similarities and differences. For me, I would have to say survival in the suburbs is more dangerous than downtown.

Suburbs may mostly be sprawling neighborhoods, but they are still cities with plenty of risen dead, they are just made up of homes and strip malls and industrial parks rather than skyscrapers. The average home, warehouse, or office building is only one or two stories high, offices and warehouses in industrial parks and business districts 2-3 stories high, with only a few certain built-up places that might have buildings with 3-6 stories like an apartment house. Even some of the bigger cities like Detroit, Cleveland, Rockford, Milwaukee, Madison, Louisville, Phoenix and Las Vegas are mostly neighborhoods of homes built around a downtown or industrial or tourist area. Many suburban cities are built around one of those old, big industrial cities and their factories, or steel mills, or mining operations, or other industry. These cities and towns grew outward, not upward like New York or Mexico City, and they have plenty of the kind of sprawling neighborhoods I grew up with in Chicago all around them.

The problem, as I see it, is because the houses and buildings are low and you can see the sky overhead and down the street, it gives a person the sense they can see trouble coming and make a run for it, or that you can hide until it passes. Only I think that’s an illusion and a dangerous false sense of security. Everyplace *you* can find to hide is a place a zombie or dangerous person can be lurking. If you’re lucky and in good physical condition, maybe you can dodge and outrun trouble, but for most folks, it is an illusion that lures them to their death.

City neighborhoods like Detroit and Queens and Columbus, and all suburbs aren't really open at all. There are a million damn places a zombie can be laying dormant, awakened by sound or your life energy. The hungry dead can be dormant and just standing behind a dumpster, or tree, or shed, or inside or under a burned out car, or shrub, or bunch of weeds, or even crawling through the tall grass. Remember, there is nobody to mow those pretty lawns or tend to backyard gardens anymore. The manicured lawns are all overgrown, providing plenty of places for Crawlers and zombie children to lay low and wait. Tall grass and bushes also give cover to Flesh-Eating and Fast Attack Zombies that prowl through them and the streets like panthers. Fact is, I have seen more of those two types of zombies in the suburbs than in the big cities or downtown areas. But it doesn't much matter what type of zombie puts the bite on you, it's trouble. And it could be lurking anywhere, between the houses, around the next corner, inside abandoned houses and garages and sheds, under the stairs or under the porch, in the attic, up from the open sewer. I've seen them grab at you through open windows and holes in the floor boards and fences. I've seen Slouchers step right off a second or third floor balcony or upstairs porch, get up and come lumbering after you, while Flesh-Eaters and fast zombies will leap and pounce from that balcony or from a rooftop, or enter a house through an open second story window or a hole in the roof.

If you ask me, the neighborhoods are every bit as dangerous as downtown areas, only the terrain is different. It may seem like there are plenty of places to run and hide, but there aren't. And the damn Slouchers pop up everywhere like rats. And like rats, when you see one, there are 10 or 20 nearby, and I mean within the immediate area. Ready to crawl out of their hiding places and converge. Moaning and calling out more to join the attack. Creepy as hell.

Speaking of rats, I never thought I'd be happy to see rats. Growing up in the city, I used to hate rats. Disgusting, filthy animals. Nowadays, I could kiss them. If you are scavenging or walking through a neighborhood, building, or tunnel, and there are rats or mice, there are probably few zombies around, especially if there are a lot of the animals. No rats, squirrels, or pigeons, means plenty of zombies in the area, because when there aren't people and pets to eat, the zombies hunt rats and other varmints. Same thing goes for possums, raccoons, and house cats, all good signs when they're around. Dogs not so much because they are fast and can avoid Slouchers. A feral dog pack is just another danger, especially for individuals, pairs, and kids, that you're more likely to encounter in the suburbs than downtown. Those dogs are just as hungry and scared as you, and to them you are dog food, especially if you are sick or injured or small.

— Brad Ashley, *Leader of the Road Reapers*

URBAN HOMESTEADERS

Not everyone wants to live at a Safe Haven or in a larger survivor community with dozens or hundreds of other families. Some feel safer on their own or making a go of it with their small cadre of family or friends. Others may find it difficult to trust others or have their own ideas about survival. Whatever the reason, these folks create their own, small **homestead** and fend for themselves.

Homesteaders may be thought of in the same vein as the pioneers who settled the American frontier of the Old West. Rather than make their life at a frontier town or city, they chose to establish their own, independent homesteads and farms. Over time and as more land was claimed and cultivated by settlers, mostly families, they became part of a larger community. However, they began as self-reliant and independent homesteads who worked the land themselves, fought their own battles and made a stake in the new frontier. In the Zombie Apocalypse, that new frontier is the zombie-filled cityscape of the big cities and sprawling suburbia.

These intrepid bands of survivors are typically families and small groups of 3-18 people who function as an independent family clan or group that claims and carves out a particular location within the city as their own. A homestead can be established anywhere. Most are a house or a location inside a larger building – factory, warehouse, office building, garage, barn, retail store, etc., but may also be inside a steam tunnel, on a rooftop, in an apartment or office of larger structure, in a basement, bunker, bomb shelter, boxcar, sewer, cave, or anyplace that can be secured to keep zombies out and a family or group of people dry and safe, and function as a temporary or permanent living space.

Preppers/survivalists are among those most likely to go it alone and establish an independent homestead. This is someone who was prepared for the collapse of civilization, or at least a serious disaster, and may even have a panic room built into the house or basement, or a bunker or fallout shelter in his backyard or at the vacation cottage located in a nearby rural area. That said, unless a bunker or fallout shelter is in the home or backyard, even the urban prepper with a plan is likely to get trapped in the city and forced to make a stand for survival there.

It is cliché to think of survivalists as gun-toting extremists and loners, but this is seldom the case. Preppers are often intelligent, well educated, family oriented, social, and come from all walks of life. Prepared for disaster, they have provisions, basic if not advanced survival gear, a survival plan, and a pragmatic and practical outlook regarding people in a catastrophic situation. They are prepared for the chaos and understand that most other people are not. While the prepper has a plan, most people around him do not have a clue about how to survive, and that makes them panic stricken, desperate, and a danger to themselves and others. Just as a panicked, drowning swimmer is likely to pull his rescuer under the water with him, impair his rescuer's movement, and drown them both, preppers are cagey and wary about who they trust and try to help or befriend.

Most preppers prefer to go it alone with their family or select friends while watching and sizing up other people and survivor communities. As a result, this family or group of prepared survivors may help and rescue other people they think are worth helping, and befriend those who seem to have a good head on their shoulders, a plan, and good intentions, but let others swim or sink on their own. They probably don't have much compassion



or tolerance for fools and idiots, and are prepared to make hard choices for the benefit of their family's survival. Resources are limited and survival is difficult, so they do not waste their supplies or risk their lives on people who are a liability or foolhardy. At times, that requires turning your back on people who are likely to get you and themselves killed. To be safe, many prepper homesteaders lay low and keep their distance from people they don't know, or who they do not like or trust. These survivalist family clans, and small groups establish their own little, out of the way, homestead or stronghold. They may choose to help and interact with other homesteaders and larger communities, but prefer to remain fiercely independent and self-reliant.

Not every homesteader is a survivalist/prepper, far from it, but they all have their reasons for wanting to remain independent and self-reliant. They may find it difficult to trust others, or may not like the plans or rules imposed by would-be government rescuers or a survivor community. Or they may feel too vulnerable as part of a Safe Haven, or any number of other reasons. Instead, a homesteader group find and claim a corner of the city as their own, conceal and fortify it, establish defenses and their own strategies and tactics for survival, as well as establish their own Rat Runs, and do their best to keep themselves and their family and friends alive.

When located in a downtown area, the homestead may be inside an apartment high-rise and take up one or more apartments, or it may be in an office building, or store, or on the rooftop of a tall building. Though they may establish a homestead in tall buildings or on the rooftops, homesteaders are less likely to pick a skyscraper. Instead, they choose buildings that are 6-20 stories high as well as other locations off the beaten path such as steam tunnels, subway tunnels, basements, boiler rooms, warehouses, factories, industrial parks, train and bus yards, etc., even inside abandoned boxcars and semi-trailers. Police stations and hospitals, especially in the early years of the apocalypse, are avoided because survivors, good and bad, keep coming to them in search of supplies, weapons, and resources.

Homesteads living inside tall buildings tend to be located on the middle and upper floors, in the basement, or on the rooftop. The same as larger rooftop communities, these smaller yet still tall buildings offer the same sort of escape from the dread of living on street level, and enable people to get out into the sunlight of the rooftop and feel free and safe. It's not true, but it feels nice.

Many homesteads are located in what Brad Ashley would call "zombie central," where once you know how to avoid contact and manage them, the zombies function as roving packs of watchdogs and alarm systems in regard to the living. It's like living in the middle of a swamp swarming with alligators; few strangers or troublemakers are going to risk getting attacked and eaten. This dissuades strangers from lingering too long or from venturing too deep or high up inside buildings. Too many zombies and unknown dangers to contend with, so outsiders move on in search of easier targets.

In a neighborhood that is predominantly houses with lawns and backyards, the homesteader may select a particular home or portion of a home, duplex, or condominium for their homestead. Others may choose to live inside a church or a church rectory, or a school or gymnasium, or the corner store or inside a machine shop or warehouse or machine shop in a nearby industrial park or strip mall. The possibilities are limited by whatever the city has to offer. Though a homesteading family may claim an entire house

or building, their main refuge is likely to be a particular room or area inside (the basement, the attic, the bedrooms upstairs, the study off the patio, etc.). The homestead/house is likely to have windows boarded up, doors reinforced, and be surrounded by warning systems, defenses, and traps. A few or several Rat Runs through the neighborhood and into places where resources can be found are also established. The longer the family lives there, the more elaborate their defenses and Rat Runs.

As independent homesteaders, the people in the family or group expect to fend for themselves. Every member of the group, including children or elderly, has a job to do and rules to follow. Everyone needs to pull their weight and help to protect and provision their homestead if they expect to survive. While this may sound harsh, it is a necessity and the grim reality of the new, apocalyptic world.

Homesteaders who get to know other homesteaders and like-minded survivors are likely to come to regard them as friends and neighbors. However, like the days of old and rural regions, that neighbor may be "down the road a piece." Meaning, a few buildings, a city block to several blocks, to one or more miles away. In a downtown or more built up industrial city, 2D6 different homestead families might live in the same building but in different apartments on different floors, or they may live buildings and streets apart, with a great amount of emptiness and abandoned houses and buildings between them. Actually, "emptiness" is not quite the right word, because that space between homesteads and Safe Havens is filled with the hungry dead and other dangers, along with plenty of derelict vehicles, houses, buildings, and debris. All places for hidden danger to lurk.

Though there is no "town" nor a designated leader or ruling council among clusters of independent homesteaders, a loose sense of community develops as a result of their very presence. Over time, they learn of other individuals, families, and groups scattered across an area or throughout one or several buildings. Neighbors who help and watch out for each other if only in small ways, like alerting the "neighbors" to danger in whatever form it takes, whenever it enters their area. Homesteaders may also trade water, food, and other resources and services with one another as well as helpful suggestions and information. One or several families in the neighborhood may lend a hand to secure a building or clear a neighborhood of zombies, or help a neighbor to better secure their home or build traps. If a neighbor is a doctor or auto mechanic he or she may be willing to trade services for goods or services they need.

When there is a large Safe Haven community nearby the homesteaders are likely to be known to it and vice versa. Again, they may trade goods and services as needed or desired and, over time, are likely to develop lines of communication, friendships and a sense of camaraderie, but homesteaders continue to keep their distance. Some clusters of independent survivors may eventually form into an actual village or town, but right now it is too soon for that. They are simply separate and individual groups trying to stay alive and help each other out in the process.

The larger rooftop survivor communities and Safe Havens understand the desire to be autonomous and do not try to force these loners and independents to join their groups. That said, they are likely to welcome such individuals, families and groups anytime they change their minds, and they really do look upon them as *neighbors*. People who share a common outlook and who consider the city and their specific neighborhood to be home.



As noted earlier, homesteaders may take up residency in the suburbs or inside tall buildings anywhere, including downtown. That said, homesteaders who live on the rooftops or inside tall buildings tend to avoid towering skyscrapers in favor of buildings 6-20 stories tall. Zombies can sense life up to 25 feet (7.6 m) away, so it is best to inhabit buildings no shorter than three stories (30 feet/9.1 m) tall to insure being absolutely out of sensing range. However, on a building less than six stories (60 feet/18.3 m), people living on the roof, particularly when they come near the edge, are still easily visible to the walking dead and the living. People who can be heard and/or seen on the rooftop or the windows of the upper floors attract zombies that will surround the building, as well as attract trouble from the living. Not just the obvious trouble – bandits, raiders, Retro-Savages, Death Cultists, etc. – but possible trouble from desperate fellow survivors begging for help and sanctuary who may bring trouble with them or overload the survivor community's resources. The latter is especially true of homesteaders who probably have enough trouble supporting themselves let alone several new people.

Homesteaders are notoriously fierce about pushing strangers away. They are not heartless, and will share water and food and perhaps basic provisions if they can spare them, but not more than that. Nor do they take in strangers, not even overnight. Picture the classic scene of a parent standing on the porch armed with a shotgun and saying something like, "I don't mean you'll will, but I can't help you anymore than I have. You can't stay here. You need to go. Don't take another step closer. You are mistaken if you think I won't use this. Now go and God bless." If the homesteader gets a good vibe from the stranger or feels sorry for him, he may point him to a particular house or building to spend the night, or resource like a general store down the

way. He might also point out the fastest and safest route (though probably not one of his Rat Runs), and warn the stranger(s) of danger in the area, but most homesteaders will not do more than that. Large survivor communities are similarly wary of strangers, though they might have a holding area or safe house they may be willing to put the stranger(s) up at, but only if they get a good feeling about them. But they are not likely to let them into the main compound except under extraordinary circumstances.

Hello, Neighbor

One of the strengths of urban homesteaders and survivor communities is they know the lay of the land. They know the nooks and crannies of the building that serves as their living space, and they know the surrounding streets and neighborhoods like the back of their hands. That includes their fellow city inhabitants, from hermits and madmen and cultists to other homesteaders, survivor communities and Safe Havens. Neighbors they know well enough to determine whether or not they can be trusted, turned to and counted upon in times of trouble, are not a threat to them and their own homestead, or whether they are a threat, unstable, and potentially dangerous and should be avoided. This may include families and individuals who do not particularly trust others or prefer to fend for themselves, but who are good people and potential trade partners. Homesteaders quickly learn they improve their odds of survival when they can trade goods and services with fellow city dwellers who have put down stakes in the urban environment.

It is natural then for city inhabitants to build a sense of community through a network of fellow survivors – neighbors – who support each other, if only in small ways, and who work together

and watch each other's back. No homesteader is likely to join forces and go to war against another group or risk their own life, or their family, for someone who is looking for trouble or is repeatedly foolish or stupid, but they will lend a neighbor a helping hand, warn them of strangers and trouble, share resources, help build and maintain Rat Runs, traps, and barriers, take each other in for short periods, and simply be friendly and kind to one another. This might include a neighbor stepping up and out of hiding with a bow and arrow or gun in hand to rescue another local inhabitant from a stranger, cultist, or a few zombies. They also watch out for children and the neighbors they know and like.

This is likely to include any number of visual and audio signals to alert their fellow city dwelling survivors of danger and trouble. Like the animals that inhabit a coral reef, when the danger signal goes out, everyone in the "neighborhood" goes quiet and hides until the danger has passed. That danger may range from a mob of Slouchers, a pack of hunter zombies like Flesh Eaters and Fast Attack Zombies or other strange and dangerous walking dead, to a party of raiders or bandits, Retro-Savages or cultists, wild animal(s), or strangers.

Strangers from the outside world are always considered to be a danger until they can be observed and assessed. It is usually fairly easy to tell when a band of strangers are desperate and ill-prepared survivors searching for food or a place to camp for a night before moving on. But you never know, and extreme caution is advised. A group of well-armed men are likely to be raiders or thieves or members of a large group best to be avoided. A band of people with simple melee weapons devoid of technology may be Retro-Savages looking for tech-using survivors, like the homesteaders, to punish. Or they might be a rival group, aggressive cultists, lunatics, or innocent people, like them, come to the city to scrounge for supplies. It is too dangerous to make quick contact with any stranger without careful observation and sizing them up first. Even ordinary people can be aggressive and violent or thieving and murderous when they are desperate, ill, or traumatized.

Warnings and danger signals may take a vast variety of forms, from bird and animal calls, whistles, tapping on brick walls or pipes or vehicles, the opening of a window and hanging out a portion of drapes, a blanket, sheet, flag, or other signal made of fabric or clothing (to the strangers it is not unusual to see such things dangling from windowsills or ledges), to a flock of pigeons released from a rooftop pen that fly into the sky and circle a few blocks before seeming to disappear (they return to their coop). Nothing too out of the ordinary to the strangers intruding upon the homesteaders' turf, but these signals are like neon signs to those in the know.

Less subtle warning signals may include the release of a brightly colored child's balloon, the raising of a flag, a flare, a shout, a gunshot, honking horn from a vehicle or a blast from an air horn or musical instrument like a bugle or trumpet or drum, recorded music or a warning on a loop blaring for a few or several seconds, and so on. Even these loud or visual warning signals can go unnoticed or be untraceable when used from the open windows or rooftops of tall buildings because they cannot be seen from street level. Often a short burst of sound that echoes through the streets and the concrete canyons of the city cannot be pinpointed to its source of origin, but serves to let the neighborhood inhabitants know that danger/intruders are present, and to take cover, which all of them do.

Rat Runners and messengers – a job often given to children and teenagers but can be any member of the neighborhood or survivor community – may weave through their Rat Runs from homestead to homestead, softly tapping out, whistling or calling out the warning signal, or stopping to briefly and quietly report to a member of each homestead or a Safe Haven about approaching danger or a potential threat. This may be as simple as a predetermined sound, signal, code, or spoken words such as, "Raiders downriver," "Retro-Savages on 12th and Main," "Cultists coming this way," "Strangers approaching from the west," "Soldiers," "Gunshots on Maple Street," "Fire at the factory," and so on before the Runner scurries off to warn the next neighbor.

People living on rooftops and upper floors of tall buildings are likely to use flashing mirrors, flags, balloons, pigeons, lookouts waving flags or lights, signal lights at night, and similar signal mechanisms positioned so that they cannot be easily seen from below, but are clear as day to people on other rooftop communities and homesteaders in tall buildings. As noted earlier, they may also dispatch messengers to warn others and/or make limited use of sound if they are confident it cannot be used to pinpoint their location, or when the situation is so dire that it doesn't matter.

The one signal method that is seldom used is smoke. Smoke can be seen for great distances and is usually quite easy to follow to its source, especially when a fire and its column of smoke is allowed to burn for a long while.

When a confrontation with a stranger(s) seems imminent, most city dwellers are satisfied with eluding and hiding from anyone who seems like trouble or a nosy intruder passing through. Many homesteaders are happy to scare and chase away intruders rather than engage them in combat or kill them. Life is precious, and many survivors do not take a life without good cause. However, if a stranger is known to be a dangerous brigand, threatening and refuses to back off, or is an obvious cultist or Retro-Savage, and the homesteader has the jump on him/them, many take the opportunity to kill such enemies. This is a cutthroat, dog-eat-dog world, and many survivors of the Zombie Apocalypse have adopted a *kill or be killed* attitude. So if they can pick off one or a few known villains without raising an alarm, bringing attention to themselves, or inviting bloody retribution upon the neighborhood, they do it. In most cases, when a person goes missing, especially while making a run into urban areas, their party assumes they have fallen prey to zombies. Their disappearance does not, as a rule, elicit much of an investigation or search, especially from wandering brigands passing through an area. However, if a key man or a large number of people go missing, or if the victims are members of a large, local group, their disappearance may invite other members of their group or community to take a much harder look at determining their fate and who might have been responsible.





BAD NEIGHBORS

The dark underbelly of the city

Cities aren't just a haven for zombies and families trying to survive. Given the amount of potential resources available for the taking, scavengers, bandits, raiders, lunatics, and survivors of all stripes are drawn to the concrete jungle. In a world where might and brutality often makes right, it is not uncommon to run afoul of other human beings who have less than honorable intentions and lack empathy toward others. Not just strangers and outsiders coming to the city to loot places, but fellow city inhabitants. These **bad neighbors** may simply have a more ruthless, dog-eat-dog mentality or they may be rivals for the same resources and unwilling to share. Or they may be of evil alignment willing to kill and do harm to get what they want. Others see themselves as the new kings of the concrete jungle and like having power and lording over other survivors. Worse still are those who see the player characters (and other survivors) as resources to be exploited and plundered, or obstacles to be eliminated. Such brigands and self-serving gangs may be openly hostile and attack at first sight, or feign innocence and befriend the player group (and others) only to betray them when least expected.

Bad neighbors may also include homesteads and survivor communities who engage in morally bankrupt behavior and business enterprises. People who collect vital commodities and sell them for outrageous prices without regard to another person's desperate needs, or who traffic in drugs or sex, or buy and sell people, or snitch for Death Cults or raiders or whoever will pay them for their information. Whatever their business, goods or services, these morally bankrupt people and their enterprises hurt and take advantage of others so that they may profit. They are fellow survivors with established residences and places of business/trade just like any other survivor. This may include protection rackets, fight clubs, cock fights (or more likely people vs zombie spectator sports and gambling), drug dens, taverns, Flesh Peddlers, other sex trade operations, slave rings, fixers, and trading posts that are more like the neighborhood fence who doesn't ask questions about how or where a "customer" acquired the items he is looking to trade, even if he knows darn well the goods were stolen from a Safe Haven or the family down the street. Other bad neighbors may be gangs of punks and thugs and thieves who shake down and rob other city dwellers as well as any strangers they can get the drop on, rapists, murderers, and other cutthroats and lowlifes. The mechanics' shop or doctor, or trader who short-changes his customers or does a lousy job or sells inferior goods or services may only be a lazy scoundrel and a cheat, but in the Zombie Apocalypse such unscrupulous practices can be the cause of serious trouble and death. Bad neighbors, indeed.

Likewise, drunks, especially mean drunks, drug addled substance abusers, bullies, cowards, abusers of children or spouses, liars, and cheats are all bad news among homesteaders or any survivor community, large or small. Not only do such people prey upon their fellow survivors in the area, but their antics and crimes may bring down the wrath of strangers and outsiders they have cheated or harmed upon the entire community or neighborhood. Retribution and eye-for-an-eye vengeance are commonplace in this setting, and all too often the vengeful do not discriminate between the actual perpetrator and the community at large, causing innocent people to pay the price for the indiscretion of others.

Retro-Savages

Retro-Savages found in the city are looking for trouble. They are either trying to recruit and convert other survivors, or are out on a campaign to "tear down the edifices of technology" and "win salvation from the tyranny of the old ways." Translation: They hate modern civilization, and live like the Amish, but actively go out into the world to destroy surviving technology and the people who still cling to it. They see the trappings of civilization to be the sins of the past. This includes the icons and symbols of our fallen civilization and survivors who represent the government and modern society. Top on their hate list are soldiers, police, all government personnel, scientists, gangs like the Road Reapers who use motorcycles and guns, and anyone who refuses to give up technology and live like they do.

Though there are many varying and independent groups of Retro-Savages, all with their own specific beliefs, rituals, and varying levels of fanaticism, ALL believe technology and science are bad and must be forsaken, and that they and the old way of life (government included) are responsible for the Wave and the rise of the dead. They are convinced the illness, the deaths, the presence of the zombies, and the fall of modern civilization are punishment for losing our way and becoming corrupt, immoral, and driven by greed and ever advancing technology and dangerous science (robotics, genetic engineering, big pharmaceuticals, etc.). Retro-Savages see survivors and Safe Havens that utilize modern technology as perpetuating the very sins and evils that brought down human civilization and continue to punish people with the walking dead. Therefore, such foolish and wicked people holding on to technology must be converted and made to forsake their wicked ways or be destroyed!

Retro-Savages are the heroes of their story. They see themselves not as lunatics or extremists, but as the enlightened ones who are desperately trying to save people and preserve humanity. It is they who will bring humanity into a new, simpler and kinder age. But like any noble cause, they must face those who don't understand and resist what's right. People who clutch tightly to technology and hold onto their misguided and evil ways. People who must be surgically removed like a cancer, so that the rest of the body of humanity may heal.

As a result, Retro-Savages willfully go out into the cities and suburbs to vandalize and destroy vehicles, machinery, generators, power stations, water treatment plants, hospitals, factories, machine shops, modern weapons, electronics, communication devices, computers, cameras, objects made of plastic, processed canned foods, bottled water and beverages, and all things that represent or symbolize the modern world and its cursed technology. Since most survivors and Safe Havens use such evil machines and hold on to the dangerous old beliefs, they too must be undermined and brought around to the correct way of thinking, the Retro-Savages' way of thinking – or be destroyed for the sake of future generations.

Retro-Savages are well known for sabotaging homesteads and survivor communities by damaging and destroying their vehicles, machinery and defenses, and raiding and stealing medicine, supplies, and devices that they later destroy or use as bait to lure tech-using survivors to their doom at the jaws of zombies.

These fanatics also like to play one group against another, especially if both groups are "evil" because they both use technology. Thus, a Retro-Savage may tell bandits and raiders, Death

Cults and rivals about people who have what they want or need, as well as steal or destroy their property and then frame the other group for the crime. Retro-Savages may also infiltrate a group or community in order to identify leaders and prime targets to attack and destroy at a later date, as well as to determine a group's strengths and weaknesses. A favorite tactic is to sabotage defenses to leave a group or community vulnerable and then bring a zombie horde right to their doorstep. However, Retro-Savages engage in all sorts of actions that undermine survivor communities and travelers regardless of who may suffer or die: children, women, the sick and elderly, there is little compassion for anyone who clings to the old ways.

In the early days, Retro-Savages would set fire to laboratories, chemical plants, factories, power stations, car dealerships, hospitals, libraries, and institutions of learning, sometimes putting entire city blocks to the torch in their mad crusade. However, this practice is increasingly rare due to the fact that fire cannot be controlled and may spread to burn down hundreds to tens of thousands of acres, sometimes spreading and destroying their own rural farms and villages.

According to Retro-Savages, forsaking and destroying the old technology is the only way to restore balance to the world and put an eventual end to the zombies. They believe the risen dead will only find peace and vanish when that balance has been restored.

Death Cults

Death Cults are another bad neighbor. A type of survivor community with twisted beliefs and rituals, though they are less likely to be based on the salvation of humanity and more likely to be about power and dominion over others.

When the Wave struck down the human population and the hungry dead rose to feed upon the living, most people fled cities in droves and have never come back except to scavenge for supplies. Those who stayed and tried to wait out the mounting apocalypse or refused to leave their homes or loved ones unable to travel, soon found themselves lost among a sea of hungry dead. Terrified and overwhelmed, many would turn to whatever protector made itself available to them.

For many, that was the Death Cults. For that reason, many of the largest survivor communities in the big cities are Death Cults. The leaders and their most ardent henchmen and followers are fanatics and maniacs, but the majority of the cult's subjects are reluctant followers. People who joined them because they thought it was their only option for survival. Like most gangs, once they joined they could not leave without being targeted for retaliation as traitors. Worse, any friends and loved ones left behind, even if they remained loyal and obedient to the cult, would suffer for the traitors' disloyalty and treachery. Thus, with few exceptions, anyone who joins a Death or Terror Cult becomes a member of that new family for life. They swear allegiance and fealty to the cult leadership much as vassals and peasants did to feudal lords of the Middle Ages. In exchange for their loyalty and obedient service, the followers get a safe place to live, access to water, food, and basic amenities, and protection from the zombies and other hostile forces. Some cults are set up more like a street gang, but again, once you join, there is no easy way out.

Many terrified and desperate survivors join Death Cults because the cult's leaders and priests hold sway over the zombies and can offer people genuine protection from the living dead. It

also enables the inhabitants to remain in their home city where they are able to hold onto some semblance of the familiar and feel strangely safe, at least at first. Cults use many of the same tactics to destroy rival Safe Havens as the Retro-Savages, but in addition to commanding armies of zombies and manipulating Mock Zombies, Pattern Zombies and Thinkers, they are better with the use of subterfuge, infiltration, and treachery.

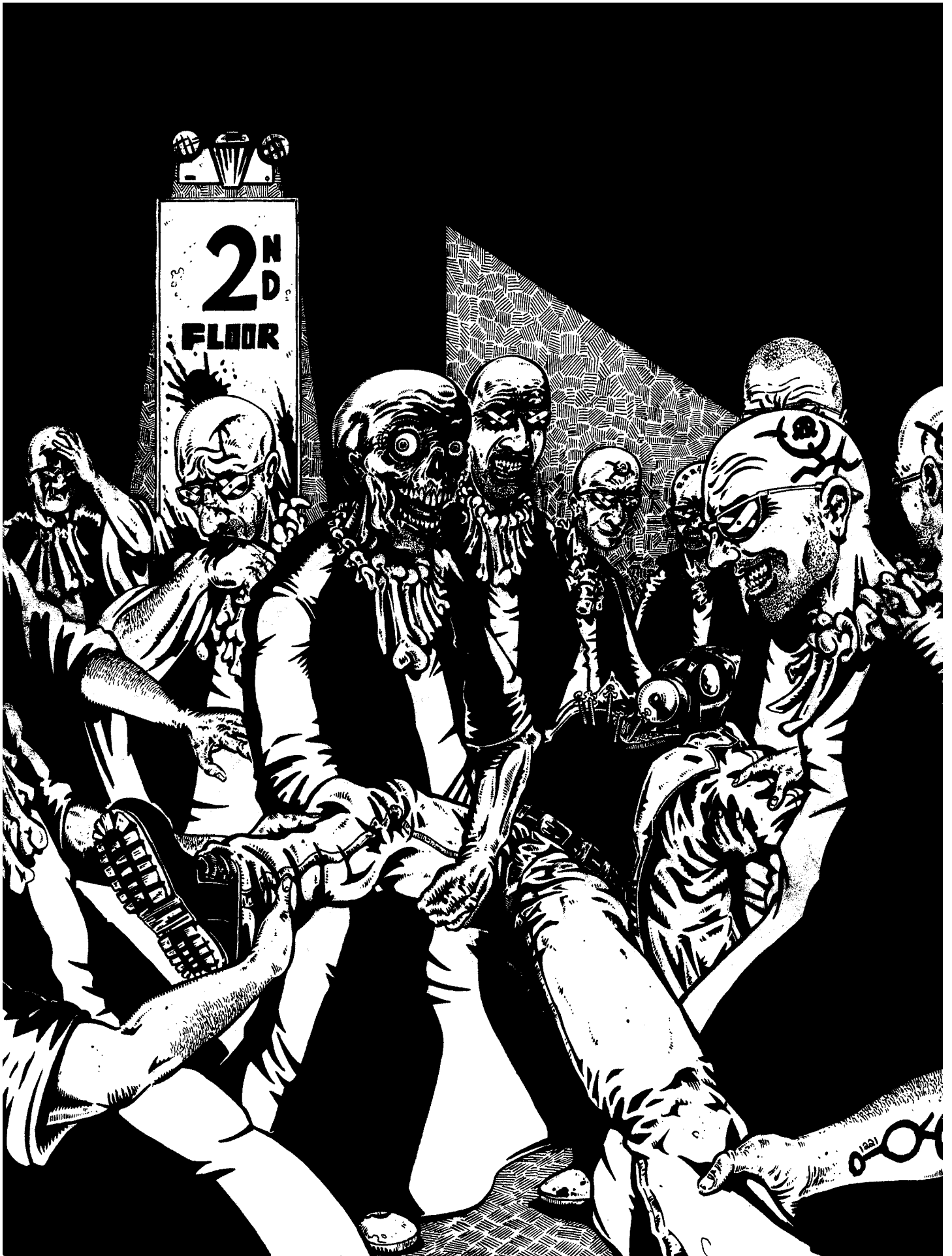
One common tactic is to try and infiltrate a Safe Haven community with one or more cultists to spy on the camp and perhaps sabotage it, or cause dissension and chaos from within. Such moles do what they can to locate and size up other Safe Havens and clusters of homesteaders. The cult may even openly communicate and trade with a community, feigning peaceful intentions and showing no signs of outward aggression until they have thoroughly infiltrated the group and are ready to move against it. Once a cult leader decides it is time to "harvest" an infiltrated community, the moles aid in the attack by sabotaging defenses and communications systems, capturing or assassinating key personnel, and otherwise weakening or dividing the community. Many infiltrators and cult leaders are skilled at recognizing people who are confused or disenchanted. These potential recruits for the cult are likely to be spared in an attack and taken away for indoctrination and conversion. Those who are too independent or resistant to the cult's influence are either driven away or fed to the cult's army of the undead and rise anew as zombies under their thrall.

Generally, Death Cults feel most threatened by large survivor communities, Safe Havens, and combat forces like the Road Reapers who they regard as rivals and enemies. They are wary of any heroes of renown and flamboyant adventurer groups working outside their purview, because they may cause the less loyal among the cult to question their leadership or way of life and inspire insurrection.

Homesteaders, on the other hand, are usually allowed to exist unmolested. Some cults even establish limited lines of communication and trade of goods and services with individuals, family clans, and small communities of homesteads. Of course, they may try to recruit impressionable youngsters and young adults to join the cult for any number of reasons. Cult recruiters are usually skilled salespeople, zealous followers, and con artists who know how to prey upon the strong, hot emotions of youth and stoke the fires of discontent, desire, and independence.

One or several cults may exist within the same city. A cult may range from a small, elite group of misfits to a large Safe Haven of a hundred or several hundred people, sometimes a thousand plus, but those are the exception, not the rule. The latter is more likely to be found in densely populated cities.

Some Death Cults and Terror Cults are led by a dynamic leader or messiah type who, like the Retro-Savages, see themselves as the noble heroes trying to save lives even when their cruel and murderous actions state otherwise. Most cult leaders are power-mongers who are the would-be kings of the empire they are building for the living among the hungry dead. Men and women who have found the Zombie Apocalypse and terrified people to be their means to power and respect. Other cults are led by ex-criminals, madmen, or depraved tyrants. All of them practice strange and often gruesome rituals and establish profane system of beliefs and agendas involving death, human sacrifice, zombies, spirits of the dead, and demons and/or dark gods. Some of the beliefs may be inspired or based on ancient myths and his-



tory, but most are spun out of whole cloth from the depraved minds of the cult's charismatic leader(s) and his or her elite circle of lieutenants and henchmen.

All beliefs and rituals involve some degree of inhumanity, torture, and the feeding of the living to the risen dead in order to tame and control zombies. In addition, most Death Cults engage in Aztec-style ceremonial rituals that involve the human sacrifice of vanquished enemies and non-believers to send their souls (and life essence) to the zombies and the blasphemous death gods said to have made the dead rise. Other Death and Terror Cult rituals engage in spectator sports and gambling in which the living are pitted against the hungry dead as well as one-on-one matches between the living. Some may also pit a group of the living against a larger group of zombies or against monstrous zombies like a Dead Mound Giant or Walking Grave in gladiatorial battles, death races between the living and Fast Attack Zombies, and all sorts of imaginative and horrifying competitions. Most which have the odds stacked against the living.

For people trying to make a life in urban centers, such cults are the epitome of a "bad neighbor" whose presence and behavior, directly and indirectly, jeopardizes the safety of everyone. However, unless the good guys have the power, resources, and numbers to challenge, destroy, or drive cultists away, they are a neighbor that must be tolerated and avoided. **Note:** See the **Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook** for a wide variety of bad guys, from bandits and raiders to madmen.

Survivor Community

People and Businesses of Note

Every community will have its own layout, orientation, chores, rules, protectors, and people of many different occupations. There will be Apocalyptic O.C.C.s like Hound Masters, Shepherds of the Damned, Scroungers, Soldiers, and Rat Runners along with the many occupations of the Ordinary People/Survivor O.C.C.

The following people, occupations, homesteaders, and businesses are just a few that a community or gathering of homesteads might have to offer. Individuals, families, and groups whose skills or entrepreneurial (and sometimes criminal) spirit brings specialized services and products for trade to the communities and towns of the **new apocalyptic frontier**, whether it is in the big city, city suburbs, or rural countryside. One to all of the following may exist in and around most Safe Havens, survivor communities of any size, and clusters of homesteads.

Alignment Notes: Non-Player Characters (NPCs) of **Principled** and **Scrupulous alignments** are good, honest, trustworthy individuals who never gouge their neighbors or strangers and always try to do their best work whether it is for a paying customer, a contribution to their community, or an act of charity for a friend or outsider. Good characters usually try to show compassion, understanding, and kindness to fellow survivors whenever they can, provided it does not jeopardize their family's or their own survival and welfare.

Unprincipled characters are individuals who tend to put themselves and their family and friends first. They sometimes cut corners, may exaggerate about their work/service or product, overcharge, and may lie to and cheat rivals, enemies, strangers, and especially people they don't like. However, while they can be rogues and a bit of a scoundrel, they know what's right and

wrong and never do anything that would seriously hurt or endanger a customer or a stranger or rival, and in the grand scheme of things usually do what is right and good for their community and others.

Anarchist (selfish) and **Aberrant** (evil with a code of honor) are NPCs who seldom overcharge or do inferior work for their neighbors and people they like, but regularly take advantage of and perform substandard work and overcharge for it when dealing with strangers, rivals, and certainly people to whom they take a disliking. When it comes to an enemy or someone they hate or envy, the Anarchist and Aberrant survivor may refuse to help or sell to him at all, or charge outrageous prices/goods in trade, and deliberately lie, cheat, or steal from him. Anarchist and Aberrant business people may also hoard goods, water down drinks, lie, cheat, steal, trade/fence goods they know are stolen, price gouge high-demand items, refuse to share with neighbors and people in need, and can be cold, cruel, and ruthless business people, especially when dealing with rivals, enemies, and people they don't know or dislike. An Anarchist character's word can never truly be trusted, but the word of honor from an Aberrant individual is always truthful and reliable.

Characters of **Miscreant** and **Diabolic** evil alignments can never be trusted and are disloyal. As a regular practice and point of pride, they gouge and cheat all customers – neighbor, friend, family, and enemy. Only a "true" friend or someone they fear is given a fair price and adequate workmanship or service. Evil individuals are also likely to associate with thieves, cutthroats, and other evildoers, and have no qualms about lying, cheating, robbing, or selling out a customer, stranger, rival, neighbor, or anyone if they think they can get away with it or suffering serious consequences for their actions if they are caught. They also hoard, steal, buy stolen goods, deal with enemies of the community, and resort to threats and violence when challenged or accused of wrongdoing.

Automotive Mechanic/Garage. This is one, two, or several people with mechanical skills who can repair, maintain, and probably soup-up vehicles with armor and weapons, and provide other automotive services. The garage or workshop is likely to be hidden and away from the mechanic's homestead, though a Safe Haven may have such a garage on location or nearby depending on the circumstances.

A garage may be located in an underground facility or parking structure, or inside a larger building, but is more likely an old auto repair shop/garage, automotive dealer, a bus station, police impound lot, truck yard, junkyard, small shop or factory in an industrial park or business district or strip mall. It might also be inside a warehouse or even the basement of a skyscraper. Most skyscrapers have a truck ramp and loading dock in the basement or sub-basement or a maintenance and storage/service area where two or several freight elevators are located in the back of the building. This is where deliveries and shipments are delivered and service/maintenance crews are located. Some buildings may also offer its tenants parking under the building.

Another possibility is inside one or more boxcars turned into a repair shop or series of repair shops at a train depot or truck or shipyard, or dock. The disguised and hidden "garage" is probably one of many boxcars or semi-trailers in a deserted and worthless looking part of the yard compound. Often just a massive, empty, pothole filled dirt lot where empty trailers are left. If the garage operation has the resources, it may set up inside a boxcar or the

trailer of a semi and turn it into a **mobile garage**. A few Road Reaper factions have mobile garages. The mechanics and crew can work on vehicles outdoors, or a bike, car, SUV, or pickup truck can drive up a ramp right inside the semi's trailer or boxcar to be worked on inside. Some even have lights and a heating system built into the mobile work area.

Some Notes about Junkyards and Salvage Yards: Most cities have at least one or a few junkyards, scrap/salvage yards, or recycling centers. Large cities and industrial cities will have many. Salvage yards can be ideal locations for any number of operations, but especially vehicle repair, maintenance, refurbishing, vehicle armor, and vehicle sales. An automotive or scrap **trading post** for fuel, tires, car parts, scrap metal, and the acquisition of vehicles. Working vehicles can be concealed among the wrecks. So can other supplies and resource such as fuel, weapon caches, spare parts, tools, and even fugitives on the run can be hidden all over the place in a junkyard or scrapyards: Inside and under vehicles and trucks, somewhere in a mound of scrapped vehicles, metal sheeting, junked appliances (stoves, refrigerators, etc.), and other junk, or inside a concealed pit in the ground, and so on. A junkyard also offers its inhabitants a great many places to hide and locations to keep concealed lookouts and snipers who watch for intruders and zombies without being seen themselves.

Defensive walls and mazes at a salvage yard can be made from wrecked cars, appliances, and scrap metal erected to keep out zombies and human intruders. If the yard is large, a series of walls or maze-like corridors can be made to confuse and slow down zombies and living invaders alike. All of it made from junked vehicles, broken refrigerators, old stoves and furnaces, metal sheets and fencing, and other scrap.

Many junkyards have walls and mounds of junk 10-30 feet (3 to 9.1 m) tall, and may have one or more working cranes or an industrial compactor as well as one or more gasoline powered generators and a number of working vehicles, even if the latter may look like junkers. Sometimes large vehicles on site, like semi-trucks and trailers or trucks and boxcars, or buses, are used as mobile barriers. Not only does this enable the survivor family, group, or Safe Haven occupants to quickly seal off or reinforce gates/openings or breaches, it also enables them to alter their maze defense inside the compound. Large vehicles can be used to extend a defensive wall or close off an opening to force invaders to travel farther, or to go around, or to give them one more obstacle to deal with, and so on.

Homesteads and Safe Havens that occupy all or most of a junk or scrapyards probably utilize sheet metal, barbed and razor wire, and all sorts of defensive barriers and traps. And the entire place could be a Rat Run with hiding places above and below ground, secret or barely noticeable tunnels under 5-25 foot (1.5 to 7.6 m) thick walls of vehicles or scrap piled on top of each other, as well as vehicles whose doors or trunks have been modified as crawl spaces for escape and concealment.

Working vehicles may include motorcycles, sedans, pickup trucks, Jeeps, SUVs, a few school or city buses, and, depending on the people in control of this facility, a semi-truck and trailer or two, and 2D6 empty boxcars. Some vehicles are for themselves, others are for sale/trade of goods and services. Additional services include car repair and maintenance, the selling/trading of spare parts, tires, fuel (perhaps more than one type), scrap metal, and vehicles. If they have one or more metalworkers/welders at

the junkyard, they are likely to offer welding services and putting armor on vehicles.

At least a few vehicles are their own, including 1D4 tow trucks, a few pickup trucks, a couple of all-terrain vehicles, and others kept for hauling and some kept fueled up and ready to go as escape vehicles. Each escape vehicle is loaded with "go bags" containing food and water for 1D4 weeks, two rolls of toilet paper, a survival knife, one or two blunt weapons, 1D4 guns with ammo for each, 1D4 road flares, a flashlight, and a first-aid kit. Other supplies on the escape vehicles include a blanket, a change of clothing, a jacket, a well equipped toolbox, and a 10 gallon container of gasoline.

Carpenter/Woodworker. A person skilled at building and working with wood. A carpenter or lumberyard is uncommon in downtown areas, but will be located in the neighborhoods and suburbs, including national chain "warehouse stores" like Home Depot, among others. Furthermore, many a suburban woodworker, craftsman, hobbyist, and handyman will have a wide range of saws, tools, and woodworking supplies and machinery in their garage, shed, or basement. Of course, large table saws and the like are big and heavy and require electricity to operate, but an ambitious survivor community with a power source may want to transport these heavy machines back to camp. The downside is such machinery as well as portable power tools all make noise that attracts the hungry dead and the living. However, when used in rural areas or inside a sealed building, especially if several stories high, the sound can be sufficiently muffled to be unheard on the street or by anyone passing by.

In addition to saws, woodworking tools, supplies, heavy machinery, and lumber being located at certain homes, such resources, particularly handheld tools, nails, screws, etc., some lumber and wood scraps may also be found at certain businesses in industrial parks, hardware stores, factories, and shops that build or refurbish furniture, as well as builders, construction sites and new home construction that was going on when the Wave struck and the dead rose. Such locations are also likely to have a variety of wood stains, varnish, paint and glue.

Ultimately, a survivor with woodworking and building know-how and the lumber, tools and equipment can help build defenses, traps, and barriers as well as build and repair furniture, floors, walls, stairs, etc., as a service in return for food, water, tools, and supplies for himself and his own family. This individual may be a homesteader or a member of a Safe Haven or other group.

Church/Place of Worship. Homesteaders may have a shrine or place of religious significance in their home. This may be a religious symbol above the bed or over the hearth. Survivors may also stop into an abandoned church, temple, or place of worship someplace in the neighborhood to pray or feel close to their god, but they seldom clear it out or secure it as a place of worship unless it is part of a larger survivor community. Safe Havens and other survivor communities may reclaim or establish a chapel or church at their stronghold, and some of those living on rooftops claim their place in the sky makes them feel distant from the dead and close to God.

Clothing Maker/Repair/Seamstress/Tailor. This is an individual skilled in working with fabric and making, sewing, altering, and mending articles of clothing, from gloves and caps to men's and women's wear of all kinds, skirts, blouses, pants, shirts, jackets, coats, cloaks, socks, etc. This may sound trivial until you run out of clothes your size and need someone to alter

the clothing you can scavenge or to turn blankets and fabric into clothing or patch existing clothing. As long as the person has a pattern or a sample to take apart and study, he or she can make just about any type of clothing.

With proper materials, this individual is capable of making padded leather goods as armor-like protection against the zombies' claws and bites – armbands, armlets, gauntlets, shoulder pads, jackets, hooded leather cloaks and coats, leggings, etc., a vital resource in the Zombie Apocalypse. This may include metal studs, buttons, strips, and other metal reinforcement.

Doctor/Healer. All communities seek to have one or several doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals of any skill level. Most do not have access to a clinic or hospital, however, and an expert staff of doctors, nurses, and healthcare professions is rare. However, some lucky communities do. Those that do are likely to be city inhabitants because most hospitals, clinics, and labs are located in cities and at universities in big cities.

Luck plays a big role in the availability of healthcare professionals. Many perished during the Wave or were the first to fall victim to the risen dead, but other survived. The larger and safer the survivor community, the more likely it is to have one or more doctors, several medical professionals, and a decent setup for surgery and the care of patients even if it is entirely makeshift. For a large community in tall buildings, there may be an entire floor or half a floor dedicated to medical care and treatment.

A doctor who has established a homestead in the city might be thought of as a country doctor who makes house calls or who has established a small clinic with a few other survivors, quite possibly people he or she worked with at the hospital or other medical facility. Such a clinic is likely to have been created by salvaging equipment, gear, and supplies from a hospital and/or another medical facility or medical warehouse. As noted elsewhere, hospitals and clinics are usually filled with and surrounded by zombies, and are also one of the most targeted locations for looting and scavenging by survivors, bandits, raiders, and criminals. All of them looking for medical equipment, drugs, and supplies either for themselves/community or to sell/trade at a high cost to desperate survivors. That said, city dwellers making a go of it in their city may be the first to scavenge supplies and medicine for their family homestead or survivor community and probably know of less obvious doctor offices, clinics, rehabilitation facilities, laboratories, and universities with medical teaching facilities. Any of which may have what they need.

In rural cities and towns where livestock can still be raised and kept without attracting too many zombies, **veterinarians** are crucial and likely to be part of a survivor community. In a pinch, veterinarians can also assume the role of a nurse, medical assistant, and even a doctor as they have the skill and training to perform basic medicine, suture cuts, set bones, etc., and can learn more if they have medical books available or someone to train them.

Gutter Rats. This is the derogatory nickname given to the weaselly lowlifes who live among the ruins of civilization. They are the jackals and vultures of humanity. Gutter Rats are snitches, cheats, and thieves who usually live and operate alone, in pairs, and in loose-knit packs and temporary affiliations with fellow Gutter Rats, criminals, cultists, and dangerous people. They are listed here because while not usually a member of survivor communities, they live nearby and prey upon homesteads and other survivor groups. Gutter Rats find shelter inside an abandoned vehicle, home, or a dry hole or hideaway to spend for a few nights,

before moving on to find a new, cozy, little dark corner to curl up in like a rat living between the walls. Most like to be on the move and don't have a permanent residence. Of course, when given the opportunity they are happy to spend a few nights with other survivors inside their home or community, but are likely to slip away when everyone is asleep, their arms loaded down with valuables. In the alternative, the cretin will be sizing-up the homestead or survivor community and sell that information to a band of thieves, raiders, or other criminal predators.

Opportunists and cutthroats who live by a dog-eat-dog philosophy of survival, Gutter Rats have no true or lasting alliance with any person or group, not even the bad guys they pander to, and often sell stolen wares and information. They lurk in the shadows, watching and waiting for an opportunity to cheat, trick, and rob strangers and locals alike, and are the kind of scum who loots the body of the fallen, sick, injured, and helpless, leaving them where they fell, even if they could help in the smallest of ways. Gutter Rats also trade information in return for food, alcohol, supplies, or favors. They sell out, lie, cheat, and steal whenever they can from whomever they can, regardless of how their actions or words might hurt others. Most would sell out their own mother if it is to their advantage, even if it is only in the short term. The majority of Gutter Rats are too craven and cowardly to personally kill someone with their own hands, though their deeds and words often lead to tragedy and death.

Gutter Rats are too lazy to build a homestead for themselves or to contribute to a larger community in such a meaningful way as to become a permanent part of it. In fact, most seem to be allergic to honest work and physical labor. Instead they prefer live off the scraps of civilization and the hard work of others. Stealing what they want or getting it through lies, deception, betrayal, and other nefarious means. They love to target and prey upon the young and innocent, often cheating and tricking children, teens, and trusting adults. **Note:** Typical alignments are Miscreants (55%), Diabolic (30%), and Anarchist (10%). See the Gutter Rat O.C.C. for more details, page 154.

Handyman/Repair Person. This individual is someone who is good with his hands and understands the basics of building, carpentry, electronics, mechanics, painting, patching, and maintenance and general repairs. The character may have worked in one of those areas or is a hobbyist in one or all of them, and can follow clear instructions in building cabinets or a patio deck to fixing a lawn mower or generator. Though skilled in a lot of areas involving simple, basic repairs, he is not an engineer or expert in any of them.

This person, male or female, can figure out and repair simple problems with a generator, clock, radio, and simple devices, fix and repair electrical wiring, make common home repairs, fix plumbing, perform basic carpentry, build defenses, make traps, and similar. When it comes to vehicles, he or she can change oil, spark plugs, and headlights, perform other basic maintenance and repairs, and can assist an auto mechanic with repairs, but cannot do more elaborate automotive or mechanical repairs such as rebuild a carburetor or engine, etc.

This Homesteader is likely to have a strong, well built, well defended stronghold for himself and his family, and probably a number of traps and crude alarm systems. A survivor community needs and wants as many handy people as they can get, and the character is likely willing to help any community in which he is a member and trade his services for food, water, and supplies.

This handy individual can help make and prepare weapons, traps, defenses, and other items.



Hunter/Outdoorsman. This individual, pair, or family are resourceful at hunting, trapping, fishing, and traveling and hunting in the wild. They know the basics of wilderness survival, dealing with weather and the environmental conditions, sunstroke, frostbite, etc., as well as camouflage, ambush, and land navigation. Those living in the city, however, probably seldom travel out into rural areas. The trek is too far and dangerous, and hauling back big game like deer and bear is too physically demanding. Instead, they hunt in the wilderness that is the quickly overgrown city neighborhood lawns and parks as well as nature sanctuaries and wetlands and along railroad tracks. These places are usually away enough from the hungry eyes, ears, and senses of the risen dead, and much closer than most people realize in the heart of the city, especially in the neighborhoods. Here a hunter can bag rabbit, squirrel, possum, raccoon, groundhog, muskrat, pheasant, wild turkey, geese, and ducks.

Within a single summer, the grassy sides of highways, neighborhood lawns and backyards, schoolyards, playgrounds, and city parks all become overgrown, attracting more animal wildlife to their doorsteps in the city. Even in the downtown areas of big cities, there are pigeons, doves, rats, cats, and dogs to hunt before more wildlife starts to filter back into it. Besides, with so many people dead and turned into zombies, the cityscape itself instantly becomes a new sort of wilderness of empty homes, buildings, concrete canyons, and mountainous skyscrapers.

The multitude of zombies hunt the hunters, which is a constant and pervasive danger. They are also competition that hunt the same animals, but most are too slow to snare small, quick game like birds, rabbits, squirrels, and rats, and do not have the advantage of long-range weapons like bow weapons, comparatively quiet pellet guns for small game, slings, and thrown weapons (javelins, spears, and knives). The use of bow weapons, slings, and thrown weapons is silent (or mostly silent), making them superior weapons in cities crawling with zombies you hope not to alert or attract to your location or your fresh kill.

Hunters and outdoorsmen can be a vital source of food for any homestead, Safe Haven, or other survivor community. Most also make good scouts, lookouts, and snipers against both villainous survivors and the living dead. Many have tracking skills that can be used to trail and jump kidnappers, thieves, and cretins who

have raided their home or community, or to aid in searching for children, friends, Rat Runners and Scroungers who go missing. Those skilled in hunting, stealth, and camouflage can put those skills to use protecting their loved ones, friends, and community from evildoers and fending off would-be attackers, and hunting down murderers, abductors, and thieves.

Hunters functioning as homesteaders or part of a larger survivor community usually have fresh kills, preserved meat, and properly cleaned and prepared animal pelts. Even small game can be stretched in soups and stews and casseroles to provide needed protein and flavor. Animal hides can be used to make blankets, rugs, and clothing.

Hustler/Procurer/Street Hustler. This is an individual, pair, group, or family who are resourceful at finding and procuring trade goods from food and booze, to medicine, spare parts, electronics, and all sorts of items that survivors in the Zombie Apocalypse may need or want. They are, in effect, aggressively enterprising Scroungers and dealmakers who specialize in “acquiring” goods and information that people regularly need and want. Most are so adept and well-connected to their environment – people in all walks of life within the area, good and bad – that a Hustler can almost always get whatever someone needs. Of course, there is always a cost, plus the Hustler’s cut. The more rare the item or the more difficult it is to acquire, the greater the cost (and likely the risk to the Hustler). Though a Hustler can acquire most items given enough time, the purchaser may not be able or willing to pay the price. And sometimes, even the best Hustler cannot always find and acquire what is asked of him.

Being connected means the Hustler knows the city and the many diverse survivor groups and individuals within its confines. This includes people of questionable and foul reputation, including fences, Gutter Rats, thieves, raiders, criminals, cultists, madmen, rivals, and enemies (or a member within a rival or enemy camp with whom the Hustler can communicate and do business). While this may sound shady and disreputable, and sometimes it is, most Hustlers in the Zombie Apocalypse are ambitious Scroungers who mean well, try to be reasonably fair, and are not exploitive of others unless the Hustler is an evil alignment. Most are Scrupulous (20%), Unprincipled (30%), or Anarchist (30%).

Hustlers of an evil alignment, however, are often ruthless and cold-hearted profiteers who care only about themselves and making a profit. They are likely to have a history of crime and violence. Such individuals or gangs function as a fence accepting goods from anyone, including known thieves, raiders, and murderers, no questions asked; and as smugglers or criminal brokers who have sources for “acquiring” goods and desired results by any means necessary. This means putting out the word to other Scroungers and adventurers, or to thieves, raiders, and cutthroats to get what has been requested regardless of the consequences and who might get hurt. These heartless and exploitive criminals always overcharge for their items and services in an attempt to get as much as possible. They also use goods and services to command outrageous prices and to extort favors they can use to their advantage later. This is often the case when the item or information needed is a matter of life and death. If the Hustler is the only person who can provide what you need to save a loved one or defend your community, what would you pay? Always be careful of the deals you make with this devil.

Metalworker/Blacksmith/Welder. An actual blacksmith is uncommon in a city environment, but it is possible, especially in

the suburbs. You might be surprised by what you can find inside a garage, shed, or backyard! Much more likely is someone who is a skilled welder or metalworker who used to work at a machine shop or welding shop or factory. Such an individual may still have access to the equipment at work (but will need help moving it to his new homestead, stronghold, or survivor community) and/or may have his own setup at home. This skilled individual can help make weapons, traps, and defenses, and armor-up vehicles.

Protector(s). This may be an individual or group of ex-law enforcement officers, National Guardsmen, ex-military or militia or hunters, preppers, martial artists, or anyone with a weapon and the courage and discretionary reasoning to wield it in the defense of a survivor community or Safe Haven. Homesteaders tend to arm and protect themselves, but even a cluster or neighborhood of homesteads may have a designated lawman or troubleshooter. This would be one or a group of fellow homesteaders who have volunteered to function as the neighborhood's representative sheriff/police force or detective(s) or other sort of protector. Someone they ask to represent and protect them as a whole, by standing up against and fighting or chasing away trouble when it comes. This is more than a tough guy or bruiser. This is one or a few people who can exercise calm and reason in the face of danger and potential conflict. Someone who seeks to uphold the peace, but is not afraid to use a weapon and fight when necessary.

Safe Havens and other survivor towns and communities are likely to have one or more lawmen or militia and defenders, along with an appointed or elected leader or council of leaders as part of their community. In most cases, every able-bodied man, woman, and child will take a stand to defend their community or home, but will (usually) defer to their leaders and protectors regarding combat and strategies and tactics.

In exchange for their protection, whether a formal Safe Haven or a loose-knit cluster of homesteads, the people show their appreciation and support by providing their protector(s) with weapons and ammunition, body armor (when available), law enforcement or military equipment, and other goods such as food, water, booze, medicine, etc., as payment and gratuities. Protectors are also likely to receive free or steeply discounted goods and services as well as favors. Good and caring protectors who are residents are motivated to protect their community and the people in it out of a sense of duty, responsibility, and camaraderie. For many ex-law enforcement and military personnel, this is what they know. It is the job they did before the Wave and have probably volunteered for it now in its aftermath. This is, after all, where they have decided to live and work to survive, especially if they are part of a town or Safe Haven. They are happy to protect it whether they get paid or are given favors in return, or not.

Protectors for Hire. Some adventurers and mercenaries may be available as hired guns, and many survivor communities hire them from time to time for special jobs or work that might take a family member away from their home for too long, or is too dangerous. Hired mercenaries, adventurers, and heroes may demand specific items and/or services as payment for each specific assignment. Part of that is likely to include getting first pick of treasure and resources they may take from bad guys or find on their mission. Sometimes they claim it all, but most good guys are happy to get the first pick and the best of the lot, and share the rest with the survivors who hired them.

Many mercs and adventurers are looking for a Safe Haven or community they can use as their base of operation (at least while



in the area), and to get a little rest and relaxation, resupply, and barter for goods and services with the spoils of their work. Some may even be looking for a place to make their home when they are ready to settle down. Most have good intentions, and even those who seek fame and fortune, genuinely care about the clients who hire them and may build lasting friendships. From a practical

point of view, you only get repeat customers when you do the job right and treat the client well.

Types of Work: Fighting, defending, and anything combat or peacekeeping related as well as fortune hunting are all at the top of the list for most hired guns. Many freelancers who trade on their muscles and fighting skills are willing to take all sorts of related work, such as guard and escort duty, search and rescue missions, S.W.A.T./commando raids, scouting, surveillance, acts of sabotage and theft against evildoers, threat assessment and management, crime solving and detective work, and scrounging for specific, often rare and hard to find goods and resources. However, when there is no such work, or when they feel like pitching in, they will do just about anything, from building to working the fields, slopping the hogs, and all sorts of manual labor that will get them fed, a safe place to sleep, or re-supplied.

Failure to pay hired guns never ends well for the people cheating them. This may result in the hirelings walking off the job, packing up and leaving, robbing or sabotaging their employer or community, and other acts of vengeance until they get paid or feel satisfied that they got their pound of flesh. In a worst case scenario, the cheated adventurers or mercenaries may turn against the people who cheated them by helping a rival or enemy to defeat or utterly destroy them.

The exact payment in trade, terms, and conditions for work provided by hired guns vary depending on the alignments of everyone involved, the empathy and kindness of the protectors involved, how fairly they were treated, and the level of danger they all face. Price may also be influenced by how much the hired guns may empathize with, and care about, their clients. Whether the protectors/hired guns are reliable, honest, fair, and incorruptible, or not, depends on the people involved on both sides of the deal.

Some mercs, adventurers, and self-proclaimed heroes are just as bad as the villains they may be hired to fight. Survivor communities need to be careful and exercise caution when hiring outsiders. The worst of the lot may be spies for raiders and bandits or cultists, or decide their employers have a good thing going and may cheat, rob, and take unjust advantage of them, or try to seize control and leadership of the community for themselves. When the latter happens, such brigands will leave them high and dry when things get rough or they get bored.

Rat Runner/Scout/Messenger. This is a job that goes to older children, teens, and young adults and gives youngsters a way to help their family and feel like they are a vital part of the homestead and community. Quick, nimble, clever, naturally curious, and small (or smaller than an adult), enabling them to squeeze through small openings, more easily hide and observe, and walk over narrow or fragile ledges, beams, and flooring that an adult might be too heavy to cross. Moreover, youngsters who take on this responsibility enjoy the challenge and risks, are fairly fearless, and very good at it. In addition, they run messages, information, and supplies to other homesteads and communities as needed, tail and spy on strangers and bad guys, help figure out the best routes for Rat Runs, scrounge for supplies (don't even try to stop them from doing this), and when not working for their family or survivor camp, they are happy to run errands for other people and communities involving the same sort of work in trade for things their family needs or for the kinds of things kids might want (candy and goodies, games, comic books, anime, electronics, batteries for their electronics, and more frivolous, practical, and dangerous things like weapons, ammo, booze, etc.). Kids

also make good assistants and porters. See the full **Rat Runner O.C.C.** description in the O.C.C. section of this book, page 117.

Sheriff/Lawman. See Protector.

Trader/Trading Post. A trading post is exactly what it sounds like, a sort of general store or pawn shop where adventurers, mercenaries, and primarily fellow survivors can go and trade goods and services for fresh and preserved meats, fish, food crops, potable water, and things they have scavenged (canned goods, candy, alcohol, clothing, blankets, medicine, electronics, tools, weapons, vehicles, toilet paper, etc.) for the supplies and resources they may need or want. Money no longer has value, though some people and trading posts *may* consider silver, gold, jewelry, works of art, and collectibles. However, most items not essential to survival often fetch nothing or little in trade unless it happens to strike the trading post's owner or a fellow customer's fancy.

A trading post may be started and run by an individual, family, homestead of enterprising Scroungers (or thieves and raiders), adventurers, or by a survivor community or Safe Haven. The latter are likely to be large and well-stocked posts with a wide variety of items for trade, but some may specialize (probably due to sheer luck) in one or several areas of speciality because the community (or person) has happened to come upon a large quantity of X (gasoline, guns and ammo, explosives, hardware, alcohol, canned goods, bottled water, toilet paper, etc.). A trading post is likely to trade for almost anything that has survival and quality of life value, unless it has a ton of it already.

Many a trading post, especially those associated with a Safe Haven or other large group or community, will put the word out to Scroungers, adventurers, and mercenaries when it is looking to acquire one or several particular resources or products (solar panels, a generator, specific medicine, etc.). Many also keep an eye out for the needs and requests of their neighbors (homesteads and other survivor communities). Like a neighborhood barbershop or bar, a trading post is also an excellent source for information, rumors, and gossip.

Like most survivor lairs in the city, a trading post may be located almost anywhere. In a small stand-alone building (rare), a mobile operation inside a van, truck, RV, boxcar, or semi (uncommon), or a secured location inside a neighborhood house (common), salvage yard (common), portion of a medium to large building such as a warehouse, factory, a building in an industrial park, etc. (very common), or inside a medium (5-15 stories) or tall building/skyscraper (very common; usually on one of the lower or middle floors, sometimes in a basement). Trading posts, even the ones sponsored or run by a Safe Haven, seldom bring strangers and outsiders into their secure stronghold, homestead, or living space, even if they are believed to be adventurers, mercenaries, or heroes of renown. Instead, a trading post that deals with unknown customers, adventurers, and strangers from the outside world is located *away* from the homestead(s) and survivor community where families live. Large Safe Havens and rural towns may have an additional trading post or general store for their inhabitants within the community, but they never allow strangers into the community if they can help it. It is much too dangerous.

The people running a Trading Post may be honest and fair, or ruthlessly exploitive with outrageous prices/terms of barter and unfair and selfish practices. On occasion, a trading post may be a corrupt and dangerous criminal enterprise that sells goods stolen from other survivors or acquired from thieves and raiders no

questions asked, and sometimes it may be a front for a cult. As a rule, the integrity and fairness of the trading post is a reflection of the people living in the community. If they are good, hardworking people, the trading post is likely to be fair and honest, but not always. Sometimes a criminal operation opens up in or around a community of good people. Other times the homestead or business enterprise is run by people who have been hardened by tragedy and trauma, making them cold-hearted, ruthless, and selfish (or evil). Others may have been that way from the beginning and continue to rob, cheat, and exploit the meek and innocent.

Barter of Goods and Services is the New Currency: As noted elsewhere, the trade of goods and services is the new currency. The price of goods and services depends on the available supply and demand, and the people offering them and those in need of them. Some people charge more than others for any number of reasons that have nothing to do with intentional exploitation (an exaggerated sense of worth or value, time away from the family, the amount of work, the difficulty of a job, the scarcity of a particular item or resource in that city, etc.). Fresh food crops, fruit, and vegetables will be seasonal, and home canned goods have a limited expiration date.

Paper money has no trade value to anyone in the Zombie Apocalypse. Silver, gold, and jewelry have no or little value for most people, a slightly better, limited value for speculators and those who are confident the world will someday return to the way it was.

The value of services also varies depending on the needs of the individual, homestead, or community, and the people able to provide them. The skills of doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals are always in high demand. So are fighters/protectors and, as a general rule, those who can build, fix, repair machinery and vehicles, fight, and do hard labor. Again, depending on the needs of the community, electrical and mechanical engineers and other skilled persons may also be in high demand. So much so that sometimes they are abducted and forced to work for cults, raiders, bandits, and other disreputable groups or survivor communities.

Urban Explorers who are Independent Adventurers, Fortune Hunters, and Local Guides. This individual is probably a teenager or young adult, male or female, who loves to explore and root through the bones of the city. As an independent operative, these Fortune Hunting Urban Explorers are likely to engage in the trade of exotic goods and items that are always in high demand like medicine, weapons and ammo, etc. This is how the Urban Explorer supports himself and his family or teammates. Being a “professional” explorer and scrounger supports this person’s way of life and his love of digging through city buildings, so he or she is always interested in learning about new locations rumored to hold vast treasures or rare commodities. For a price (trade goods or services), an independent Urban Explorer may be willing to serve as a local guide and lead an expedition of locals or adventurers to plumb the depths of a known location or new location rumored to contain something the group/community needs or desires. The fortune hunter’s fee is a percentage of whatever they discover. (No less than 10% and first choice, but more often 25-30%.) Or he may be willing to draw them a map to the general location and offer basic information for some item(s) or information he wants.

An independent Urban Explorer is a fortune hunter who always has his or her ear to the ground listening for stories about new places to explore and treasure to be had. When the individual

learns about a group planning to go to such a new place, he may volunteer to join and help them for a percentage of what he helps them uncover, or he may go off on his own to try to get there first and nab the best items or the lion’s share of the treasure/goods/resources before them.

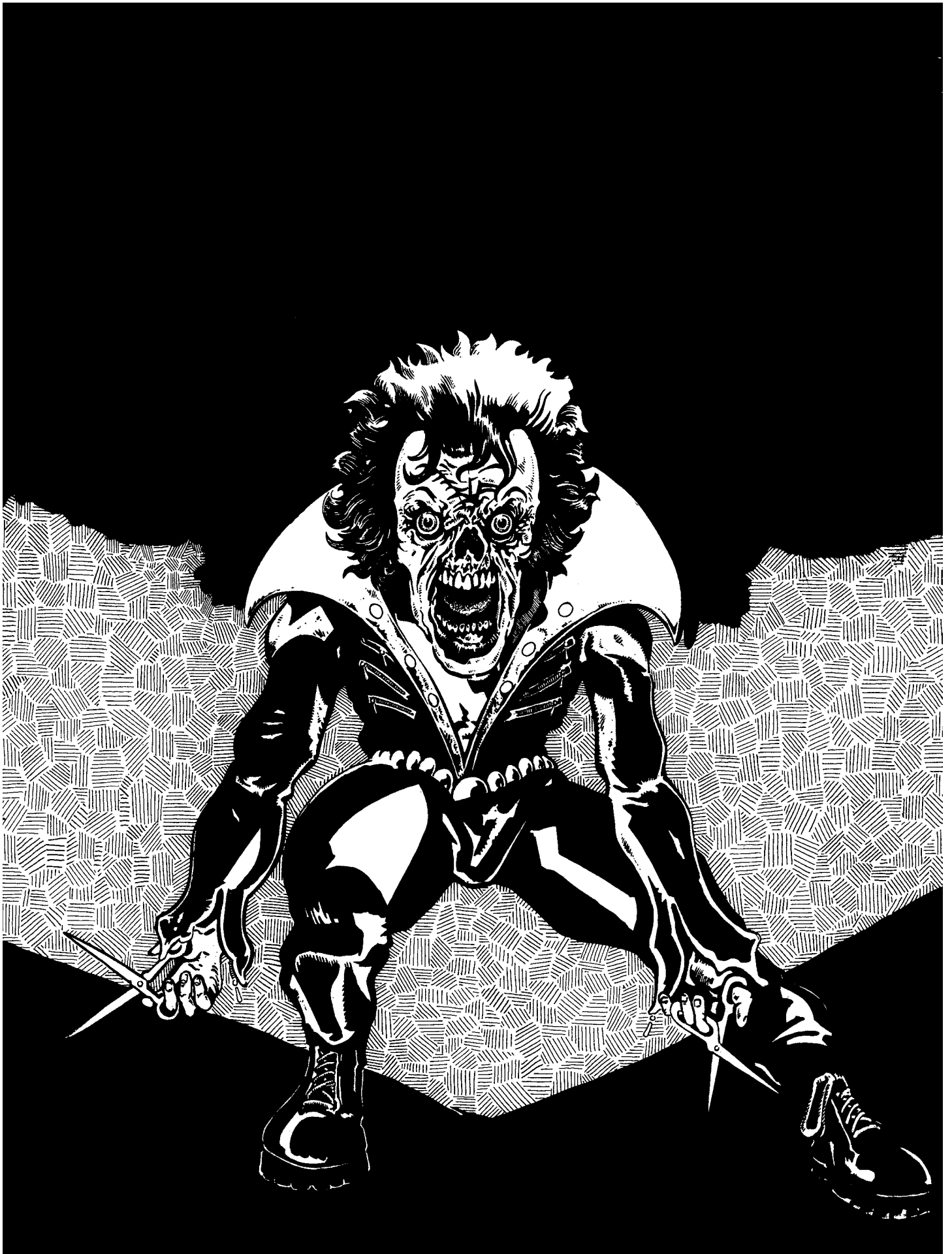
Watering Hole/Tavern. This may be someone – or more likely a family, adventurer group or other group of friends and associates – who are sitting on a warehouse of alcohol or who makes moonshine or beer or other type of hooch. They make a living by trading it with other survivors and travelers at the equivalent of a hole in the wall bar or tavern that only fellow city inhabitants and the people they vouch for know about and have access to. If located inside an office building, apartment house, or other tall building that is also home to a Safe Haven survivor community, this tavern or pub may be shockingly nice, large, and decked out with all the amenities you would expect from such an establishment prior to the Zombie Apocalypse! That may even include lights and music if the place has access to solar energy or another power supply. Remember, up high inside a tall building, music can be played rather loudly without fear of being heard on the street or lower levels below. However, if the tavern is located lower than 12 stories from the street and is not soundproofed, the owner and its patrons need to keep the music and merriment down to avoid attracting zombies and trouble from outsiders and bad people.

The City’s Dark Underbelly

We touched upon Gutter Rats, Hustlers, and bad neighbors, but there may be other dark and dangerous elements at play. How many and which ones depends on each city and the type of people who take up residency. Some of the darkness is a matter of chance or shaped by the emotional trauma and madness suffered by those living in the city. Tragedy and conflict may bring out the good or the bad in people.

A Game Design Observation: I think most people have a pessimistic view of people and assume most survivors become ruthless and selfish and quickly adopt a dog-eat-dog mentality. But it is not true. People are kinder and more caring than you might expect. I think I have mentioned this before, but I had the rare opportunity of play testing **Dead Reign®** at several conventions across the Midwest, where I gamed with dozens of people unknown to me and each other. In most cases, the players were complete strangers to each other, not a group that gamed together every weekend. To my pleasant surprise, most rallied around each other as well as innocent NPC survivors in need. Time and time again they would risk their game characters’ lives and fight tooth and nail to protect and save each other from zombies and bad guys alike. We see this in real life disasters too. Sure, there are looters and thugs, but the majority of people try to help each other and those in need. Please remember that.

The above notwithstanding, there are bad people and this is a role-playing game where we want villains to challenge our heroes. Drug dens, fences, Flesh Peddlers, thieves, gangs, thugs, raiders, madmen, cultists, prostitution, slavery, abuse, gambling, blood sports, and other illicit and criminal ventures may exist in and around a community of do-gooders. Most survivors are focused on day-to-day survival and helping other good people, but there are always those who are cruel, selfish, exploitive, and wicked. Predatory people who seek to gain from other people’s



desperation, fear, and needs. These dangerous and violent people and dark enterprises exist wherever people are found, be it in the city's downtown or neighborhoods or the rural countryside. Utilize them to bring adventure, conflict, and intrigue to your games. Recurring villains and sources of trouble for the player characters such as city inhabitants, good and bad, can be a lot of fun and add to your role-playing game experience.

CITY SURVIVAL CONSIDERATIONS

By Mark Oberle and Kevin Siembieda

In addition to resource scarcity, zombies, predatory people, and the fundamentals of survival (covered elsewhere in this sourcebook as well as the core rule book), survivors are faced with a variety of challenges. The following directly apply to making a life in the city whether you are trying to establish a homestead, a survivor community, or a rooftop Safe Haven in an urban environment.

The Zombie Population

Almost every survivor in the world eventually becomes aware that cities teem with the undead in greater numbers than anywhere else on the planet. Not only were there more people already living in cities who would die and become zombies, it is where people from surrounding communities often went to seek help from hospitals, the police, disaster relief centers, etc. The higher population density meant there were initially more survivors and pets, per capita, for the risen dead to hunt, keeping the hungry dead in urban areas in search of living prey. This applies not just to big cities and downtown areas but the outlying neighborhoods and suburbs. This concentration of living prey in cities made them the natural hunting grounds for the hungry dead in the early weeks and months of the apocalypse.

This massing of zombies in urban centers means more than just larger hordes of Slouchers. By sheer numbers and statistics, the prevalence of dangerous *aberrations* like Fast Attack and Flesh-Eating Zombies, Pattern and Fused Zombies, Impersonators and Thinkers, Juggernauts and Pretty Zombies, Dead Mound Giants and Walking Graves, and all the rest, is much higher in the cities. Moreover, zombies like Thinkers are able to coordinate and lead large groups of lesser zombies in pursuit of prey and to surround locations where groups of people have taken refuge, and even set simple traps and ambushes for the living and their pets. As homesteads and Safe Havens form, it is smart zombies like *Impersonators*, *Kidnappers*, *Mock Zombies* and *Thinkers* that are able to recognize locations where people travel, gather, and live, and who may bring mobs or hordes of the monsters to waylay travelers and besiege homesteads and Safe Havens.

The common estimate is that 85% of the urban population (60% in rural areas) had died and risen as zombies within 45 days after the start of the Wave pandemic. 50% died and turned into zombies as a result of the Wave, 35% were killed by zombies and would rise to join their ranks, 5% escaped into rural areas, and 5-10% were trapped or chose to live in the city. These numbers vary from place to place, especially in the suburbs, but seldom vary by more than 10%.



To get an idea of just how many undead exist in cities, consider the population density of the following USA and select global cities, circa 2016.

People per square mile/2.56 km (80-95% now zombies):

Albuquerque, NM – 3,000
Anaheim, CA – 7,100
Austin, TX – 3,180
Baltimore, MD – 7,600

Berkeley, CA – 11,580
 Billings, MT – 2,540
 Birmingham, AL – 1,450
 Boise City, ID – 2,800
 Boston, MA – 13,940
 Cambridge, MA – 17,320
 Charlotte, NC – 2,830
 Chesapeake, VA – 700
 Chicago, IL – 11,880
 Cincinnati, OH – 3,840
 Clifton, NJ – 7,630
 Dallas, TX – 3,870
 Dearborn, MI – 3,900
 Dearborn Heights, MI – 4,750
 Des Moines, IA – 2,670
 Detroit, MI – 4,850
 Denver, CO – 4,530
 East Orange, NJ – 16,530
 Fort Lauderdale, FL – 5,140
 Grand Forks, ND – 2,880
 Grand Rapids, MI – 4,430
 Green Bay, WI – 2,320
 Hampstead, NY – 15,100
 Hawthorne, CA – 14,500
 Hialeah, FL – 11,000
 Hoboken, NJ – 42,490
 Honolulu, HI – 5,800
 Houston, TX – 3,840
 Indianapolis, IN – 2,370
 Inglewood, CA – 12,200
 Jersey City, NJ – 17,860
 Kirkland, WA – 8,130
 Las Vegas, NV – 4,660
 Long Beach, CA – 7,520
 Los Angeles, CA – 8,480
 Louisville, KY – 1,900
 Mesa, AZ – 3,550
 Madison, WI – 3,300
 Miami, FL – 12,650
 Miami Beach, FL – 12,100
 Milwaukee, WI – 6,200
 Minneapolis, MN – 7,670
 New Orleans, LA – 2,310
 Newark, NJ – 11,650
 New York, NY – 28,220
 Oak Park, IL – 11,000
 Omaha, NE – 3,520
 Orlando, FL – 2,700
 Passaic, NJ – 24,200
 Philadelphia, PA – 11,700
 Phoenix, AZ – 31,130
 Pittsburgh, PA – 5,500
 Portland, OR – 4,800
 Providence, RI – 8,750
 Racine, WI – 5,000
 Richmond, VA – 3,730
 Rochester, NY – 5,840
 Rockford, IL – 2,330
 Saint Louis, MO – 5,000
 Saint Paul, MN – 5,820

San Diego, CA – 4,320
 San Francisco, CA – 18,580
 Seattle, WA – 8,400
 Spokane, WA – 3,650
 Sioux Falls, SD – 2,400
 Stamford, CT – 3,430
 Toledo, OH – 3,450
 Tulsa, OK – 2,050
 Union City, NJ – 54,140
 Washington, DC – 11,200
 Westland, MI – 4,000
 West New York, NJ – 52,820
 Worcester, MA – 4,940
 Yonkers, NY – 11,200

International Cities of Note

Athens, Greece – 14,000
 Baghdad, Iraq – 24,000
 Bangkok, Thailand – 16,700
 Barcelona, Italy – 41,400
 Beijing, China – 29,850
 Berlin, Germany – 11,000
 Brussels, Belgium – 18,870
 Bucharest, Romania – 21,880
 Buenos Aires, Argentina – 12,800
 Cairo, Egypt – 24,400
 Copenhagen, Denmark – 17,400
 Guadalajara, Mexico – 15,210
 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam – 24,500
 Hong Kong, China – 18,000
 Istanbul, Turkey – 20,000
 Jakarta, Indonesia – 27,140
 Kyoto/Kobe/Osaka, Japan – 16,600
 Lagos, Nigeria – 47,030
 Lima, Peru – 30,420
 London, England – 13,210
 Karachi, Pakistan – 49,000
 Paris, France – 54,415
 Manila, Philippines – 27,300
 Mexico City, Mexico – 21,750
 Madrid, Spain – 13,430
 Milan, Italy – 19,500
 Monterrey, Mexico – 17,300
 Montreal, Canada – 11,700
 Montreal Suburbs – 2,330
 Moscow, Russia – 12,700
 Mumbai, India – 76,800
 New Delhi, India – 28,600
 Recife, Brazil – 20,840
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – 17,700
 Sao Paulo, Brazil – 23,300
 Santiago, Chile – 21,690
 Shanghai, China – 34,720
 Singapore – 21,630
 Seoul/Incheon, S. Korea – 43,210
 Tehran, Iran – 27,370
 Tel Aviv, Israel – 13,150
 Toronto, Canada – 11,230
 Tokyo, Japan – 12,300
 Vancouver, Canada – 13,600

Good Signs

Spiders. Are you afraid of spiders? Get over it. In the aftermath of the Zombie Apocalypse, if you know what to look for, spiders and their webs can work for you as an early warning system. Wherever you find a stairwell, tunnel, doorway, or room laced in cobwebs and spiderwebs, you know it is not well traveled and has probably been abandoned and forgotten for some time. That's not to say there might not be one or a few dormant Slouchers curled up someplace, so caution should be taken, but it means people do not come here often and it may be a safe location to rest and hide. Moreover, it may not have been plundered and may contain valuable resources, salvageable supplies, or it might be worth adding to your Rat Run or turned into a secret safehouse or homestead.

The more cobwebs (old spiderwebs) and spiderwebs (new webs with the spider present), the longer it has been since this area has seen anybody. If a corridor or passageway is free of cobwebs and spiders, and dust for that matter, it means it is well traveled by somebody or may be someone's lair, or a trap waiting to be sprung. Spiders don't stay where their webs are broken or destroyed on a regular basis by people or zombies tearing them down as they pass through. Most people hate spiders and spiderwebs, so they wave their hands, weapons, or a stick to knock them down even when they don't pose a threat or danger. It is a knee-jerk, human response. City dwellers, especially Rat Runners, Scroungers, Shepherds of the Damned, Hound Masters, and anyone who scouts and explores the bowels of the city learn this pretty quick. Likewise, such individuals take care to do as little damage as they can to webs and cobwebs, ducking under and around them, rather than destroy them. This way a pursuer won't realize they passed through this cobwebbed area.

The same goes for rats and vermin. The presence of rats and mice means there are few zombies in the tunnel, house, or area. That's good news and suggests the place is not well traveled by zombies, or humans, and may be suitable as a homestead, hideout, weapon cache, or part of a Rat Run.

Movement and Silence

Navigating the urban landscape after the Wave is a challenge for a number of reasons. The landscape itself is filled with a variety of obstacles and vertical structures: walls, fences, houses, buildings, and other barriers to travel. In the neighborhoods and suburbia, this includes houses, abandoned vehicles, fences, walls, garages, sheds, animal enclosures, above ground and sunken swimming pools, shrubbery, trees, fallen branches, lawn ornaments, and discarded or abandoned objects like bicycles, toys, lawn and garden equipment, furniture, appliances, garbage, and debris. Some of this may sound funny, but it contributes to creating a treacherous terrain, especially as they become hidden in lawns and backyards overgrown with tall grass, weeds, and vines. Treacherous because tripping and falling over them may make noise that alerts the hungry dead or an enemy to your presence, or may cause an injury that can be ill-afforded.

The downtown areas of the city offer similar obstacles and hazards. In addition, each tall building is a mysterious, self-contained environment of its own. Each one different and potentially deadly. Each floor the equivalent of its own city block, one stacked on top of another. In some ways, tall buildings are rather

like a giant beehive or towering manmade castle. Inside, it is filled with a maze of hallways, staircases, elevators, hidden passageways (service tunnels and areas), and room after room containing ... almost anything. Every room represents the unknown. A potential treasure trove, zombies of unknown quantity and variety, dangerous people, or other danger. And like a beehive, you want to plumb its depths cautiously and quietly.

The loss of power in the cities means lights, escalators, elevators, electronic gates, security systems, locking mechanisms, and heating and cooling systems are inoperable, and the tap water unsuitable for consumption. That makes many parts of the building like traveling through a dark cave or cavern. The only light comes from available windows and whatever portable light source an adventurer or survivor has brought with them. In the summertime, being indoors in a sealed building is sweltering hot and musty. In some places the air may be stale or reek of decay and rotting flesh that may be overwhelming. In the winter, being inside the building provides respite from icy wind, but it is still freezing cold inside. Travel between the ground floor and the upper levels of tall buildings or through sprawling factories and large warehouses is a long, arduous trek filled with unknown danger around every corner, machine, or pallet, and behind every door. Even more difficult and exhausting is retrieving valuable resources and goods such as solar panels, generators, food, water, and supplies out of one skyscraper or high-rise and transporting it quietly and unseen across one or many blocks, and then hauling it up into another tall building that houses the homesteads or Safe Haven located on the upper floors or rooftop.

City streets are littered with abandoned vehicles, trash, and debris and stalked by mobs of wandering zombies. Any drawbridges no longer raise or lower, so if the bridge is raised, or if a vessel has smashed into it and knocked a section out of the bridge, it makes the bridge another obstacle to travel. The expanse of the bridge from one side of a lake, river, or canal becomes a gaping emptiness impossible to cross except by boat or raft. If an island location is only connected by bridges, taking down each bridge prevents people from entering or escaping certain cities unless they have access to water vessels or aircraft.

Public transportation systems such as subway trains, elevated tracks like those in Chicago, city buses and taxis are no longer in operation. Sections of thoroughfares, highways and city streets are very likely to be choked and clogged by cars and trucks. Each imposing a barrier to travel and making them impassable by a vehicle larger than a motorcycle or bicycle. Sometimes the vehicles are so tightly packed together that even foot traffic is difficult.

Some vehicles are burned out, others crashed into guard railings or another vehicle, lamppost or building. Other vehicles are left abandoned at the curb, up on lawns, or in the middle of the road. After the cities fell to the hungry dead there was no one to move the vehicles, so they remain where they stopped. This forces anyone trying to move around a city by vehicle, perhaps even on foot, to use secondary routes like side streets and alleys, but they too may be blocked by derelict vehicles, a crashed semi-truck and trailer, fallen trees or telephone poles, debris tossed into the street or fallen from vehicles as people fled, or even by the occasional tank or crashed aircraft.

Foot travel through these **vehicle graveyards** is ill-advised, as they offer innumerable places for Crawlers and other zombies, wild animals, and dangerous people to lurk. Each vehicle represents a mini-habitat containing potentially valuable treasure

dropped or left behind, such as food, bottled water, guns and ammo, flashlight, toolbox, flares, blankets, and countless other items a survivor can use to make it through another day. They may also contain the risen dead trapped inside or gone dormant until a treasure hunter or traveler wakes it. Animals like wild dogs, coyotes, wolves, and snakes may also make a lair or nest under or inside a vehicle with an open or smashed out window or sunroof, popped trunk, etc.

What was once a straightforward trip down the road may now require a winding, indirect route that drastically increases travel time and being seen by the walking dead or dangerous people. When the need to avoid threats such as groups of zombies, Death Cultists, gangs, bands of strangers, wild dogs, and dangerous animals is taken into consideration, traveling even ten blocks may take hours in some neighborhoods.

These difficulties are only magnified as time passes. Buildings begin to collapse, streets buckle and crater, storms drop tree branches into the streets, wind may uproot and topple entire trees and deposit portions of roofs and buildings and all sorts of rubbish and debris into the street and across sidewalks and lawns. Blocked and debris covered sewer drains and ruptured pipes and levees may cause entire portions of cities, highways, and lowlands to become flooded and remain flooded. Not only do these events and situations pose physical barriers, they also hamper navigation by obscuring and knocking down or destroying signs and other landmarks. Chunks of buildings, roofs, and signs weakened or damaged by storms or careless survivors may collapse to rain down upon anyone below with little warning. Zombies on the move as a mob or herd may be funneled into narrow corridors,

making that way in or out a death trap, or they may get corralled and trapped in great numbers at various locations on the street and inside buildings, parking structures, tunnels, and bridges.

Silence is the Golden Rule

Silence and stealth are essential to survive and navigate any urban setting, be it downtown or in the suburbs. All cityscapes are crawling with zombies. In this haunted world amid the ruins of civilization lost, loud talking, laughter, or a sneeze can bring death swarming upon you. Quiet is the new reality on the street and in the home. City dwellers, especially Rat Runners, Scroungers, messengers, and anyone who scouts and explores the city need to learn and practice self-discipline to tread softly, be quiet, and to not cry out when they are injured or surprised.

Homesteads and communities located inside buildings only 2-8 stories high need to always speak in hushed voices and move about softly or risk bringing doom to their doorstep. No singing, whistling, laughing, playing of electronic devices or musical instruments, no engine noise, gunfire, or romping around. Walking “at home” is done in socks or slippers, conversations are whispered, and all occupants, children included, learn to move about carefully and silently. Measures to maintain stealth, quietness, and concealment is a daily constant and a matter of life and death. Stealth and silence are critical. To do otherwise is to risk giving away the location of your safe space and being besieged by the walking dead or raided, robbed, and perhaps beaten and killed by evildoers. It is the freedom to live a comparatively loud and normal life up on the top floors and rooftops of tall buildings that



has prompted the creation of rooftop homesteads, communities, and Safe Havens despite the amount of work and cooperation necessary.

Signals and quiet or disguised communications. Talking in a whisper and the use of hand signals, tapping, whistles, finger snapping, flashing mirrors and lights, and even animal calls are common methods of communication and signaling in urban environments. Zombies seem to be attuned to listen for human voices and machine sounds, so whistles, animal calls, tapping, and visual signals attract much less attention than the human voice, making them effective ways for survivors to signal and communicate with each other.

Whistling, even when it is a lyrical tune, piques little to no interest from most zombies. The smart ones, however, after hearing a pattern often enough or for a long enough period, may be able to determine the sound is being made by a human and follow it to its source or become more watchful for human prey in certain areas.

Tapping may be done with a baseball bat, hammer, club, piece of pipe, or wood knocked against any hard surface. The tapping should be short taps and infrequent. Nothing too long or rhythmic, because that is recognized by the living and sometimes by smart zombies. Tapping sounds and light flashes, when kept short and infrequent, do not seem to register with the hungry dead. Persistent repetition over a period of two or more minutes, on the other hand, is likely to draw a number of zombies to investigate, but a couple of quick taps or flashes seldom do. Shouting, crying, banging, pounding, engine noise, gunfire, lights, and fire always attract both the living and the dead.

Of course, fellow humans are a different story, and are likely to recognize whistles, tapping, and lights as deliberate signals by fellow humans and investigate. Thieves and raiders are always on the lookout for travelers and homesteads to rob, and survivor communities to raid. Likewise, friendly and well-intentioned adventurers and travelers may bring trouble with them.

Silent weapons. The bow and arrow, crossbows, spears that can be used with a quick thrust or thrown, blunt weapons (hammers, clubs, baseball bats, crowbars, etc.), and blade weapons of all sorts (machetes, swords, knives, axes, hatchets, shovels, etc.) have become the preferred weapons of city dwellers. Homemade spears are among the most common and popular. For one, they are easy to make. For another, they enable the user to kill zombies from a safe distance (2-4 feet/0.6 to 1.2 m). Whether used against the living or the undead, the bow and arrow, spear and other melee weapons are silent. Other than a thump or a crack of the skull, their use makes little noise, so they do not attract nearby zombies or awaken dormant ones, nor do they alert hostile people who may be lurking in the area.

Do not misunderstand, city dwellers will use guns, especially when under siege by the living or the walking dead, and collect guns and ammo for when they are needed for defense or as trade goods, but the big cities, especially on the streets, alleys, and lower levels, are quiet zones. The less noise a weapon makes, the better. As a result, city dwellers quickly become skilled in the use of spears, javelins and other melee weapons, the bow and arrow, and the sling. Pellet guns and BB weapons also have their uses.

Flares and fire is restricted and deployed with caution, because they can cause devastating and uncontrolled fires that attract both the living and the dead.

Cannibalize and save everything. Survivors never know what they may need or when they may need it. Homesteaders

and survivors who are members of large communities or Safe Havens in an urban environment have the luxury of collecting and saving all kinds supplies and materials. This includes tools, machinery, electronics, weapons, ammo, empty weapon magazines, and many other supplies, as well as sheets and beams of wood and metal, barbed wire, netting, fencing, door and window bars, bricks, cinder blocks, cement mix, tar, wooden pallets, parking barriers, locks, nails, screws, spikes, rope, chain, and other items and materials that can be used to build homes, defensive walls, barriers, and traps. This mentality to salvage, collect, and store goes farther than this. When something breaks, survivors with the skill to do so take it apart and save the good working portions as spare parts. This includes pulling nails and removing screws from wood and metal and saving them, gathering and saving wire, string, rope, empty containers, nuts and bolts, eating utensils, blankets, gloves, clothes, boots, games, toys, and many other things.

Skills involving building, repairs, jury-rigging, and mechanical and electrical skills are invaluable in the advent of the Zombie Apocalypse.

SECURITY

The term security can mean a number of things to different people. In this instance it is used to describe the relative safety of an area against external attack. Establishment of a Safe Haven community, homestead, or even just a temporary shelter requires careful consideration and rigorous planning to minimize danger to the inhabitants. The process of deciding on a temporary shelter when out scavenging or otherwise traveling from place to place may have to be done at a moment's notice, though. Solid analytical and decision-making skills may be critical to survival. Establishing the best possible security requires examination of the following elements:

Perimeters

Establishing a security perimeter implies that being within the perimeter is relatively safer than being outside of it. Such perimeters are often marked by a physical barrier such as a fence or wall, but can also consist of natural barriers like a cliff face or river. Physical barriers may not be present if the perimeter has been established via surveillance alone (see below), or barriers may not be evident in the event that concealed traps or mines are used.

Perimeters are intended to keep out unwelcome interlopers, limit movement into an area in some way, or at least make those inhabiting the area inside aware that someone or something has entered. Multiple perimeters may be established in any given area, typically with increasing levels of security. For instance, a large private estate could have security cameras to monitor the property line, a tall fence with a gate or two to limit access to the property, locked doors and windows with burglar alarms to both keep others out and notify of breaches, and finally a "panic room" with solid steel walls and a heavy steel door to serve as a last line of defense. Each of these features functions as a perimeter.

The size of a perimeter must be considered when establishing one. There are limitations to how large an area can be effectively surveilled, such as the amount of manpower available. Leaving gaps or "blind spots" in a perimeter means threats may



intentionally or unintentionally exploit such a weakness to enter undetected. Of course, those experienced in security operations may leave false blind spots in overt surveillance to make intruders think they are exploiting a weakness only to walk into a trap, ambush, etc.

Once aware of a breach or potential breach of the perimeter, survivors with sufficient weapons and manpower should investigate and attempt to subdue, eliminate, or scare off intruders. In other situations, hunkering down behind defenses and/or hiding may be the appropriate response. Finally, evacuation may be necessary, especially in the face of overwhelming force or destruction of the shelter.

Surveillance

One of the most fundamental elements of establishing security is the use of surveillance. This can be done in a number of ways, including remote options such as drones and surveillance cameras and in-person options such as lookout points, guard towers, and foot patrols. The intent of surveillance is to identify potential threats and intruders so that city inhabitants can respond accordingly. This may include monitoring the integrity of defensive barriers and Rat Runs, and inspections for signs of a breach or weakening breach points. Zombies are relentless, and the sheer weight of numbers and endless testing of fences and other barriers can wear them down and create weak points that could give way and jeopardize the homestead or community.

Defenses

Cities, by nature of their population density at the time of the Wave, have an overall larger zombie population than any other environment on Earth. This alone makes establishing homesteads and survivor communities extremely risky. Hiding the homestead and community is one strategy, but sooner or later it is liable to be found and come under attack by zombies or antagonistic human survivors like Death Cultists. To stand a chance in such a scenario, defenses are necessary, even if only to delay enemies and allow the inhabitants to escape. What follows are some of the most common types of fortifications used to defend these enclaves of survivors.

Barriers. A wide variety of things, both natural and man-made, can serve as barriers. Natural barriers include cliffs, rivers, ravines, and thick vegetation like bamboo stands. Walls, fences, grating, and even immobilized vehicles are examples of man-made barriers. Defensive barriers are intended to keep threats out of the protected area, rendering it safe to inhabit.

Areas with natural defensive barriers have been used since prehistoric man inhabited caves and cliff dwellings. Not only did they provide shelter from the elements, they also limited access to predators and reduced the area that needed to be guarded to the entrance or entrances. Ancient cities and forts were often built on hilltops, peninsulas, or islands to take advantage of the natural terrain for defensive purposes.

Man-made barriers are more common in urban settings where fences and even walls delineate property lines. The majority of such barriers are not designed to withstand the rigors of combat, though, unless the surrounding area is particularly war-torn or at least has a history of conflict (like several cities that pre-date the American Civil War). Even in the case of historical conflict,

the city may quickly have grown beyond the original defenses and/or torn them down to make room for modern structures. Safe Havens and to a lesser degree, homesteads, established in cities are liable to take advantage of existing barriers, especially if they already appear sturdy or can easily be augmented to improve security.

Away from such permanent Safe Havens, temporary shelter is likely to be sought in hidden or defensible locations, especially if serviceable barriers exist. Another possibility is the quick creation of makeshift barriers like stacking pallets to block an entrance or circling a convoy of vehicles to create a perimeter similar to how pioneers circled their wagons to defend against attack. Places that have large openings (like store windows and bay doors), or only one way in or out, or too many potential hiding places for the undead, or that otherwise can't be secured are best avoided.

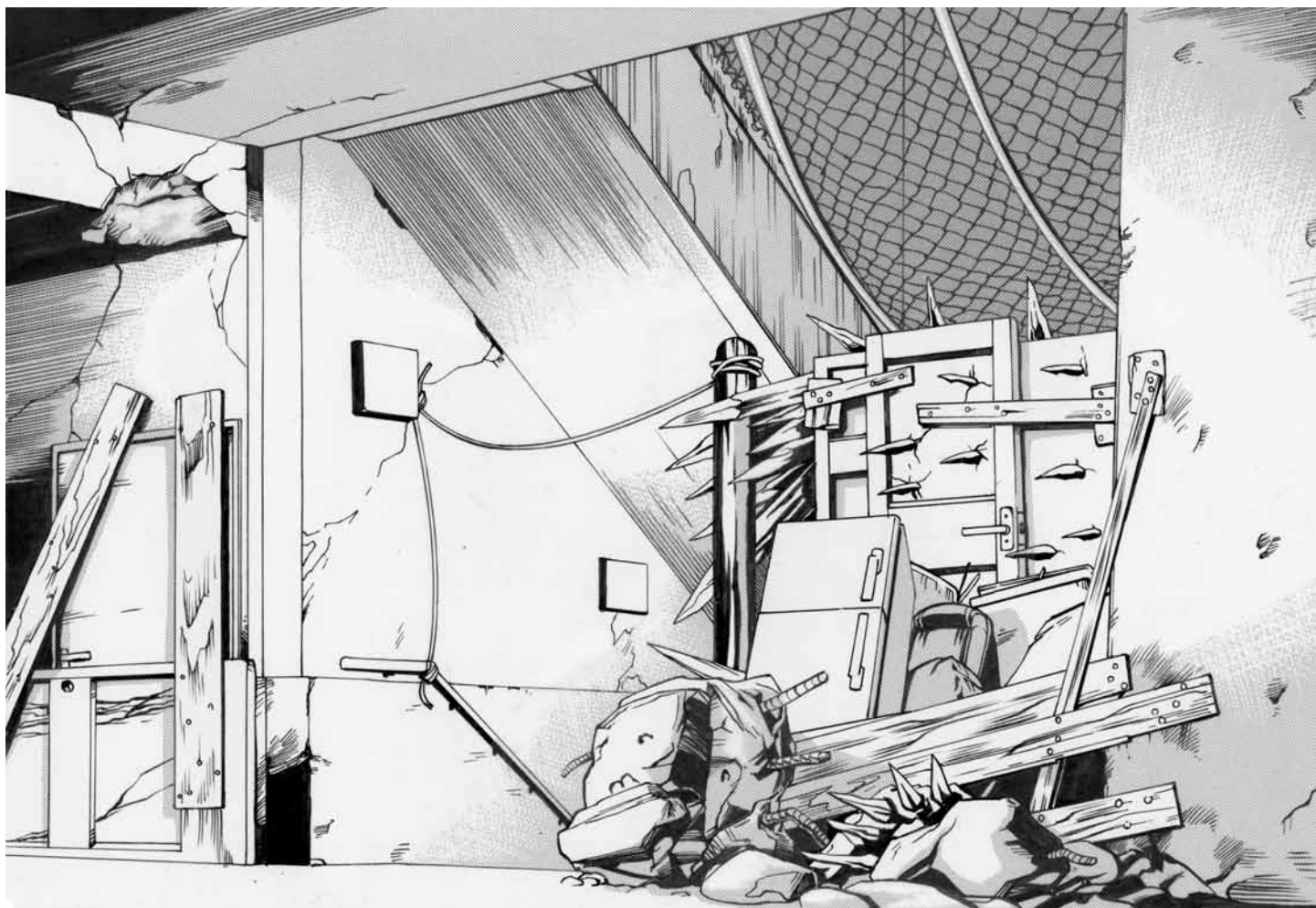
Barrier: Barbed or Razor Wire. Coils of this vicious wire are laid out to slow or even deter passage over patches of ground, pathways, or through entrances. Passing through either type of wire sees speed reduced by 90% for live people as the wire snags and tears fabric and flesh alike, and causes people to trip and fall, inflicting more damage and getting them more entangled (described under Damage, below). No Prowl is possible, as working through barbed or razor wire is a slow, noisy, and obvious affair. Reduce speed by 70% for zombies because they feel no pain as they press forward, tearing out pieces of clothing and chunks of rotting flesh. Zombies may get entangled and stuck in the barbed/razor wire, unable to move forward, creating a line of moaning, flailing bodies; at least until a mob or horde pushes down the ones in front onto the wire and climbs over them.

Damage: Unarmored individuals trying to move any faster than a Spd of 6 take 2D6 damage per 6 feet (1.8 m) traveled through barbed wire. Those going slower take 1D4 damage. 4D6 damage for razor wire, 1D6 when going slower. Leather clothes and body armor reduce damage by half, but speed of travel is unchanged and the clothing and armor are being slowly cut and shredded. This is also true for zombies (half damage) because they feel no pain and move slow to begin with.

Living people passing through such coils must also roll to maintain their balance (*Sense of Balance* skill or a 1D20 roll under the Physical Prowess attribute) for every 3 feet (0.9 m) traveled. A failed roll to maintain balance means they fall, take an additional 2D6 damage and are entangled, requiring 1D4+1 melee rounds (30-75 seconds) to get untangled and back on their feet. It takes 1D6 melee actions to get untangled when hooked on barbed/razor wire but still standing on your feet.

The additional danger for the living who get caught and snagged by barbed/razor wire is that the movement, noise, and smell of blood from nicks and cuts attract zombies who can see, hear, and smell them. **Note:** Barbed/razor wire can be cut and pulled away with the proper tools at a rate of one foot (0.3 m) per minute, or destroyed entirely with explosives and/or heavy equipment, but none of these processes are quiet or fast. In the city, the process to tear down coils of these deadly barriers will attract an army of 1D4x1,000 zombies within 1D6+4 minutes, with more coming every minute.

Barrier: Czech Hedgehogs/Dragon's Teeth. These are reinforced concrete or steel obstacles meant to stop vehicles from passing through an area. Their design is such that even tanks or armored personnel carriers are likely to become stuck on them



with one side or end tipped into the air if they try to force their way past/over them. While Dragon's Teeth were a common sight on the battlefields of World War II, they were abandoned as armored vehicles became larger and heavier. However, they could be made by ambitious survivors with building and welding skills, and the right materials, and are extremely effective against cars, trucks, and semis.

The average Czech Hedgehog (which resembled a jumping-jack made from steel beams) could withstand approximately 60 tons of force, meaning that newer and larger tanks could breach them the majority of the time with minimal damage (4D6 S.D.C. to treads). With tanks being relatively rare since the Wave, these and similar anti-vehicle obstacles have seen renewed use to deny passage to normal passenger vehicles and light armored vehicles.

Barrier: Palisades/Cheval-de-Frise. Most often used as temporary barriers, palisades are little more than sharpened branches or pointed metal poles arranged in a line, the sharp end sticking outward. Resembling a rack of crossed spears or row of large stakes rammed directly into the earth, the individual stakes are usually tightly packed enough to prevent people or zombies from squeezing through. If a victim falls on or is pushed into the pike-like barrier, the points (which may be intentionally fouled or poisoned) stab him for 2D6 damage each. Zombies easily become impaled on these poles, especially when a horde is trying to get to someone on the other side. This can allow them to then be dispatched at a safe distance using a projectile weapon or some kind of pole arm. Wooden versions may even be doused with an

accelerant and set ablaze, though the use of fire is always tricky and could backfire on the user.

Barrier: Doors/Windows/Gates. Doors, gates, and windows allow access through security barriers such as fences and walls. However, when closed they need to be able to keep threats out, especially since they are an obvious point of attack. This is one of the reasons why exterior doors on most homes and apartments tend to be sturdier than interior doors. Even then, most homes and businesses are not fortified to withstand serious assault, especially not windows, unless they are covered in bars.

It is fairly common in urban environments, however, to have solid-core security doors and metal mesh, grates, or bars installed over accessible windows to prevent break-ins; 90% of homes and businesses in high crime cities, 45% in medium crime cities, and 10% in low crime and affluent cities/suburbs.

Businesses may have retractable security gates or shutters to protect entryways, which are common in what were once "high crime" areas and even low crime areas. Window panes and glass doors may be made of plexiglass or other shatter-resistant material. Large buildings may utilize a dual entryway with two sets of doors that can be secured on either side of a small foyer, or sal-lyport, and are likely to have a no longer functioning alarm and surveillance system and a guard station.

More than the standard deadbolt or handle locks may be used to secure entryways, especially if modified by survivors. Door bars can be added that drop or slide into place, making it much harder to force entry. A wide variety of locks, including different

types of chain, latch, and bolt types can be installed to bolster security. Reinforced storm shutters may be manually or remotely closed to seal windows. One should be careful not to over-secure doors and windows in case the facility or shelter needs to be evacuated quickly.

Barrier: Clearings and Killing Fields. While the average person may not consider open ground a defensive feature or a barrier, there is a decided tactical advantage in being able to see any approaching threats. Woods, hills, tall grass, boulders, debris piles, mounds of earth, vehicle graveyards, and nearby buildings can shelter and conceal threats whether zombie or human. This potentially gives them the element of surprise and places to hide and shield themselves when attacking, and puts defenders on the back foot. **Open ground** prevents this and is desirable when defenders have long-range weaponry like firearms, mortars, bows, slings, thrown weapons, or even ancient-style catapults they can use to try and drive off or harm invaders. Clearings and open fields give defenders a clear shot at the approaching enemy, which is why they are also called killing fields. Of course, having an open clearing depends on the building, its location, and the terrain and structures around it. Many urban areas do not allow for such a clearing, while others may. For example, a parking lot, playing field, highway, or park may serve as such an open field. Such open spaces are something of a dual-edged sword, though, as the Safe Haven is more exposed and likely to be detected and attackers may also have long-range weaponry to strike from a distance. That said, most survivors do not have access to heavy weapons, explosives or artillery, and are open and vulnerable as they run or drive across the open field to retreat as well as to attack. And as discussed and described earlier, fighting from an elevated position like a tall building also has its advantages.

Barrier: Ditches and Moats. While the typical image of a moat is a large ditch or gully filled with water, it can also be mud, tar, or anything else that slows movement or provides a hazard to those attempting to cross. Oil or pitch can be used with the added bonus that it can be set on fire to destroy zombies and the living alike. The heat from such a barrier is enough to keep living beings from getting close, let alone trying to get across, and holds zombies at bay. When used in such a manner, the flammable material needs to be replenished every 1D4 hours to keep the fire burning or to be re-lit and reused at a later time.

Dry moats are referred to as ditches and still serve as a physical barrier, especially to most ground vehicles which may not be able to make the drop into the ditch and come back out. Attackers must climb or drop down into the ditch, and climb up the other side. While climbing and running across this wide, open space, they are susceptible to attack by gunfire, arrows, spears, slings, thrown or hurled objects, etc., or from zombies unleashed into the ditch.

Bunkers and Panic Rooms (rare). These structures are built to withstand a great deal of punishment, with the most advanced designed to defeat thermonuclear explosions. Many bunkers are located underground to enhance their defensive strength and hide them from enemies. A bunker built above ground – also called a blockhouse – can be used as a pillbox, or fortified weapon emplacement. Makeshift bunkers can be created by burying shipping containers, boxcars, buses, or camping trailers and leaving an access hatch or tunnel. Most cities in the U.S. and several other developed nations have **emergency**

shelters in the basements of large buildings like schools and hospitals which may function as a bunker, and may even be stocked with emergency supplies.

Panic rooms are similar to bunkers, but unlikely to be as large and are usually built inside a large home or building. They are typically concealed in wealthy residences and sometimes office buildings to provide shelter from storms and home invasions. Advanced versions of bunkers and panic rooms can actually be environmentally sealed to protect against things like chemical weapons or radioactive fallout.

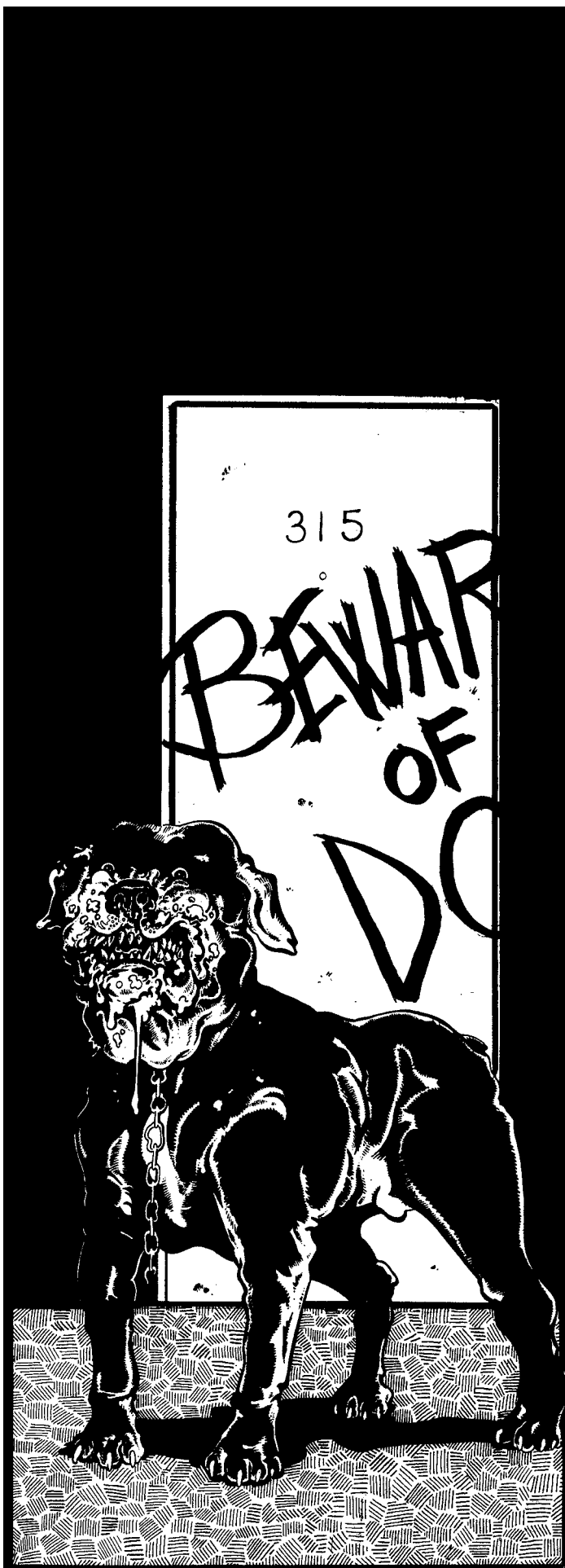
Escape Routes: Concealed exits from a city homestead or Safe Haven are typically a defense of last resort. However, it pays to know when discretion is the better part of valor as no home is worth dying over. Escape routes are ideally concealed to foil pursuit and prevent them from being used as a proverbial back door into the home or haven for enemies. To ensure this does not happen, the most cautious (paranoid?) survivors tend to set booby traps along their escape routes that only they know are there and how to avoid and disarm. Also see **Rat Runs**, earlier in this section.

Guard Animals: The first animal to be domesticated by prehistoric man is thought to be the wolf. Since those times, canines have served man in many roles, including as guard animals, hunting companions, and attack animals, in addition to many other roles. While Hound Masters are known for their training and use of dogs, they are not the only survivors to do so. Many homesteads and survivor communities employ dogs in a variety of roles (see **Dead Reign® RPG**, page 72 for trained dog stats).

Dogs are not the only animal that can be used for security purposes. Certain birds like geese and peacocks are territorial and honk and raise an alarm when a predator or intruder disturbs them. Larger predators such as alligators, bears, and jungle cats may be kept in enclosures and let loose on intruders or kept to discourage entry into certain areas. Even snakes may be utilized to frighten away or harm would-be burglars and intruders, though they have no use against the undead.

Guard Zombies: Keeping one or many guard zombies is a relatively common practice of some survivors, especially by Death and Terror cults, and certain raiders, thieves, and gangs. Other than the obvious danger zombies pose to humans, they also present a serious moral quandary for the majority of people. These were once people and may still be looked at as such by those with religious/spiritual leanings who believe human remains should be dealt with as respectfully as possible. The question of how to maintain such creatures is possibly the primary factor that discourages their use by many, though a hungry zombie is quick to attack intruders. Many wicked or deranged survivors, however, have no qualms feeding their zombie-pets living people (see the Zombie Lover on page 15 of **Dead Reign® Sourcebook One: Civilization Gone™**). Other folks just find it too unnerving to try and sleep with such bloodthirsty creatures in close proximity.

Interior Defense, an Atypical Layout: A defensive tactic is to arrange interior spaces in atypical ways. One good example of this is the underground tunnels built by North Vietnamese soldiers in the Vietnam War. They were often dug into maze-like complexes meant to confuse sappers and keep them off their guard. The interiors of large buildings and warehouses can be re-engineered in a similar way.



Even simple things like removing posted floor plans and/or room numbers can maximize the advantage of inhabitants who know how to navigate without them. By blocking certain entrances like stairwells and creating alternative access points (perhaps by cutting through a wall or floor as examined in the Rat Run section), it can stymie the movement of opponents who find themselves having to figure out how to get around inside the structure, while those familiar with the layout move around within it quickly. Since zombies are not the brightest adversaries as a whole, they may lose sight of pursued inhabitants, get lost inside the building, and either go dormant or eventually wander back outside in search of prey.

Inside warehouses and factories, pallets of parts and components and machinery can be moved to create makeshift aisles and mazes to confuse and slow down both living intruders and zombies. Moreover, defenders can hide, move along, and attack from atop tall pallets and pallet racks that are at a higher elevation than the walls of pallets on the floor. Pallets of books, bottled water, sand, and any heavy component makes excellent barriers and 4-5 foot (1.2 to 1.5 m) thick walls each weighing two or more tons per pallet.

Loopholes and Murder Holes: Holes or slits cut into walls and doors can allow defenders to use firearms, flamethrowers, bow weapons, or long melee weapons to attack encroaching targets. They are perhaps best exemplified by the gun slits often seen in the sides of pillboxes and arrow slits in medieval castles.

Murder holes are similar in concept, except that they are cut into a ceiling, allowing defenders on the floor above to shoot down from above or drop objects like stones, explosives, or hot liquid on top of living attackers.

Towers and Sniper's Nests: Since ancient times, towers have been used to not only provide a view of the surrounding area, but also to give defenders an elevated position from which to attack invaders. Such towers may be purposefully built to function as such, but any elevated position within or adjacent to a defended perimeter may serve the same purpose. Tall trees, billboards, electrical and cell towers, and smokestacks are all vantage points that can be used for what modern military terminology calls "overwatch."

The sentries and snipers posted at such positions are responsible for keeping an eye on the surroundings, looking for potential threats, and may coordinate the response of defenders and/or attack targets with whatever means are at their disposal. These tower positions are especially effective when manned by a sniper/marksman or soldier with a heavy weapon such as a machine-gun or rocket launcher. In downtown areas, similar positions can be set up on any floor or rooftop of a tall building.

On occasion, an independent homestead consists of little else than a tower. Survivors have been known to inhabit large tree-houses, water towers, and ranger towers in more rural areas, all of which make especially great outposts and places to hole up in because they are often well constructed, are easy to defend (doubly so if the ladder or stairs can be retracted), and are high enough that zombies on the ground cannot detect the presence of life above and typically wander away. The biggest downside to any open-air tower is that they are almost always easy to spot for miles around. Escaping from a tower haven can also be a tricky proposition, because they are easily surrounded.

Typical S.D.C. Values of Common Structures

The following is a list of common S.D.C. values for structural/security elements. Values given for fences and walls are for a 6 x 6 foot (1.83 m x 1.83 m) section.

Door, Interior Wood (hollow core) — 50 S.D.C.
Door, Interior Wood (solid core) — 100 S.D.C.
Door, Exterior Wood (hollow core) — 120 S.D.C.
Door, Exterior Wood (solid core) — 170 S.D.C.
Door, Exterior Metal (hollow core) — 200 S.D.C.
Door, Metal Grill — 350 S.D.C.
Door, Solid Metal — 600 S.D.C.
Door, Metal Safe — 800 S.D.C.
Door, Bank Vault — 5,000 S.D.C.
Fence, Wooden Picket — 60 S.D.C.
Fence, Wooden Privacy — 120 S.D.C.
Fence, Chain Link — 150 S.D.C.
Fence, Metal Bars for Security — 175 S.D.C.
Lock, Light Padlock — 25 S.D.C.
Lock, Common Latch — 40 S.D.C.
Lock, Medium Padlock — 50 S.D.C.
Lock, Heavy Padlock — 75 S.D.C.
Lock, Burglar Proof Padlock — 85 S.D.C.
Lock, Deadbolt — 100 S.D.C.
Support Beam, Small Wood — 100 S.D.C.
Support Beam, Large Wood — 400 S.D.C.
Support Beam, Small Metal — 250 S.D.C.
Support Beam, Large Metal — 1,000 S.D.C.
Wall, Interior Plaster — 120 S.D.C.
Wall, Exterior Wood — 150 S.D.C.
Wall, Exterior Brick/Stone — 200 S.D.C.
Wall, Cinder Block — 300 S.D.C.
Wall, Reinforced Concrete — 400 S.D.C.
Window, Ordinary Glass — 20 S.D.C.
Window, Plexiglass — 35 S.D.C.
Window, Bulletproof/Security — 75 S.D.C.

Heavy Vehicles in Urban Environs

Buses and semi-trucks and trailers can be used to transport large groups of survivors and/or supplies, as well as to create mobile walls and barriers, block streets and exits, etc. Though not as strong and durable as heavy construction vehicles, a semi-truck or truck and trailer has much greater speed when needed and can push through cars and smaller trucks, punch through fences and most walls, and be used as a heavy ramming vehicle (think the Mad Max movies). However, while big and powerful, putting it to such use will eventually, probably in fairly short order, damage the engine, gears, hoses, and cab and impair its driveability or destroy the truck.

Construction vehicles, also known as heavy equipment/vehicles, can be used to clear streets, build dirt mounds and other barriers to create defensive barriers or block streets, or be a mobile part of a defensive wall itself. They can also function in a limited capacity as armored combat vehicles. In the hands of an attacker, a bulldozer, excavator, or wheel loader can easily punch through and move walls of vehicles as well as smash through fences and crash through most walls. Likewise, a road-headers, boring machines, excavators/steam shovels, crane and

wrecking ball, and similar heavy vehicles can demolish walls, knock down towers, and so on. Any heavy construction vehicle from grader to dump truck, can do plenty of damage to structures they run over or into.

Even small construction vehicles such as a backhoes, forklifts, cherry pickers, and various trucks and earthmoving heavy equipment can be invaluable. Laying your hands on them is the tricky part.

Rooftop cranes can be a real boon to survivor communities on the roof and upper floors of tall buildings. Sadly, such a machine is found only on unfinished, new constructions and buildings under renovation.

Helicopters and rooftop landing pads. Availability of helicopters, and more to the point, skilled pilots (this is not a vehicle that can be flown by someone with no previous training), will be very limited. When they are available, helicopters can be a boon to any community, but especially in urban environments and for rooftop communities. That said, not every skyscraper or tall building can handle the weight of a helicopter, not even a small, two-seater, so care and caution must be exercised. Military combat helicopters are even more scarce than commercial and industrial work helicopters, and found only at select military bases, national guard, coast guard, and navy ships.

Another problem with the use of helicopters is they are loud and can be heard coming from a few miles away. Wherever they hover or land, people and zombies will notice, and the undead, brigands, and the curious will go to investigate.

The same goes for other aircraft. The main drawback to using even small aircraft is they need a fairly lengthy landing strip and they make a lot of noise that people and zombies both notice.

Perimeter Breach Encounter Table

The following table can be used to randomly determine encounters when a security perimeter has been breached somehow. G.M.s, feel free to adjust the level of threat up or down depending on your player group's level of ability or circumstances. Do not hesitate to embellish or create your own entries to the table.

01-02% Care package: The perimeter was intentionally breached, but only to leave a package for the survivors. Inside could be food, medicine, a radio, weapons, ammunition, or some other helpful resource. There may or may not be a note explaining who left it and/or why. Is this really a gift from a mysterious benefactor or grateful person someone in the community had helped? Or could it be sabotaged, poisoned, a surveillance device, a bomb, or other Trojan horse? The only way to find out is to examine what's inside.

03-10% False alarm: A barrier, alarm, camera, or trap was damaged by a fallen limb, weather, or other happenstance. Of course, this could be a trap/ambush, or a diversion while the real threat breaks through elsewhere.

11-15% A deer, dog, or other innocuous animal: False alarm. Depending on what it is, it might make a nice meal or two if the animal is still lingering nearby or has gotten itself trapped.

16-18% A domesticated farm animal such as a domesticated dog, pig, sheep, goat, cow, or horse! No owner in sight. It could be a useful asset, food, or pet and companion if it can be captured before a zombie or other survivor gets it. Of course, this could be a trap/ambush, or a diversion while the real threat breaks through elsewhere.

19-23% A hungry animal pack: 1D4 bold wild dogs, coyotes, or wolves per each player character. They can be scared off by a show of force or hunted for food. This should not be a trap, ambush, or a diversion, but you never know.

24-27% A lone Crawler or Trash Crawler: It may attempt to hide somewhere within the perimeter and take victims by surprise.

28-42% A lone Sloucher: While this single zombie may or may not be a threat by itself, if it starts to moan it can easily attract other zombies in the area. Alternatively, this could be a specialized zombie from one of the sourcebooks, like a Juggernaut or Toxic Zombie.

43-44% A zombie messenger: A single Sloucher wearing a sandwich board that says "LEAVE OR DIE!" Is it a bluff to scare the survivors away, or a credible threat? In the alternative the message could be some other threat or demand. "Return (or release) my goat." "You took my supplies from the office building, put them back or pay the price." "You killed my brother." "Send us so and so (or the men who killed X or took Y.)" "Leave food (or whatever) by the statue of X or we'll come and take it ourselves." And so on.

45-49% A fellow survivor(s) looking for help: 01-70% chance that they are one or a few innocent survivors just looking for assistance and will share what information they have, or 71-00% they are up to no good (thief, bandit scout, spy, Death Cultist, Retro-Savage, a pretty Mock Zombie, etc.). 33% chance that this person has some useful skill, information, or goods to offer in exchange for help.

50-51% A representative from a nearby survivor's enclave: They may have recently heard about this camp or just stumbled across it, and are looking to establish relations or trading. In the alternative, maybe they are looking for a doctor because several of their people are sick, need help securing supplies like food or water, or want to merge the groups to increase their odds of survival. Can they be trusted?

In the alternative, these people are associated with a neighboring or nearby Safe Haven which could have much more far-reaching and lasting impact, but how do you make sure they are good and trustworthy people? They could be bad guys or associate with a Death Cult, or by becoming associated with this Safe Haven, their enemies and rivals become your enemies and rivals.

52-54% A pair of Road Reapers or Street Sentinels: 01-33% they are just looking for a safe place to rest and would be grateful for some hospitality; 34-66% they are warning survivors in the area of a large group of undead, a Death Cult, or other danger nearby; or 67-00% they are desperate, in need of supplies, mechanical repairs, fuel, or a hand to help some fellow survivors in need.

55-57% A unit of Apocalypse Soldiers: 01-40% they are scouting the area for possible threats and will be grateful for any intelligence the survivors can provide; 41-80% they wish to use the camp or shelter as a temporary base of operations (for 1D4 weeks) and will share some excess supplies if allowed to do so, including ammunition or 1D4 types of supplies the homestead or community could desperately use; 81-90% they are looking for volunteers to help them help or rescue some fellow survivors in need or to fight some local bad guys; or 91-00% the battered and weary-looking soldiers attempt to use their military status to bully the community for supplies they need, or just try to take the



supplies by force, or try to conscript able-bodied individuals into fighting alongside them.

58-60% A quartet of Retro-Savages up to no good: They will attempt to steal or destroy crops, disable generators or solar panels, poison the water supply, or abduct one or two survivors.

In the alternative, this could be a family or a pregnant woman and her brother and two other children or her sisters. They have all forsaken the ways of the Retro-Savages and want nothing to do with the group they left behind. The problem is, their Retro-Savage community is looking for them and wants to bring them back into the fold. Take these people in and you may bring down the wrath of this Retro-Savage group or her husband and his friends or family members upon your homestead or community. What to do?

61-63% Vehicle crash: A passenger vehicle – could be a car or a city bus – has driven through the perimeter wall or defenses, the result of a zombie on board attacking the driver or a Mock Zombie or Pattern Zombie that lost control of the vehicle. Now there are 1D6 Slouchers and a Crawler trapped in and/or under the vehicle (triple the number for a bus) and 1D4 people inside the vehicle who may be injured and need rescuing. If the outer perimeter was a fence or other barrier it will likely need major repairs to continue serving its purpose. There's only a 25% chance the vehicle can be made operational again without extensive work. Note that if the perimeter is next to a body of water, like a river or lake, this may be a boat or barge wreck instead. The crash was not too loud, but 2D6 zombies in the area have come to investigate and are either trying to get at the live people inside the vehicle (if any) or trying to squeeze through the opening to get inside the community's perimeter.

64-75% A mixed group of zombies: Likely to include 2D6 Slouchers, 1D4 Crawlers, a pair of Fast Attack or Flesh-Eating Zombies, and possibly even a Thinker or one of the variants from Dead Reign Sourcebooks like a Kidnapper, Juggernaut, Screamer, or Fused Zombie.

76-78% A pack of 1D6+3 Fast Attack Zombies: These fast-movers have already made it past the first perimeter. Pray you have another line of defense or prepare for a nasty fight!

79-84% A Thinker probing the defenses: A Thinker, Imposter, Kidnapper, or other smart zombie is looking for a way inside. Take it out or hide well, because otherwise it will either get in by itself or come back with friends. In the alternative, this could be a Mock Zombie who is looking to join a group of "fellow humans." It looks human, alive, and healthy and is quite convincing. Welcome him or her, or chase him away? What if the Mock Zombie is a child, teenager, or woman?

85-88% Armored zombies on the attack: This may just be a stroke of bad luck, but it is more likely deliberate and they are led by: 01-25% Thinker Zombie. 26-50% Death Priest, 51-75% an evil Half-Living or crazy Zombie Prophet, or 76-100% Dressed in armor and turned loose by bandits, Retro-Savages, a rival group, or other bad guy using them like shock-troops. If so, there may be more, ordinary Slouchers behind them, or a gang of humans waiting to attack after the zombies breach the perimeter and cause damage and death. There are two armored zombies for every one defender (or as the G.M. believes appropriate).

89-93% A mixed mob of zombies: The same as 64-75% above, but triple the number of zombies. This horde may be the end result of a recent battle with Road Reapers, soldiers, or other group. Other than riling them up, the good news is they all (or most) show battle damage – missing limbs and large holes blown through them – so the S.D.C. values of (all?) the zombies are reduced by half or even 70%. Good luck.

94-96% Stranger things: This is a mixed group of 1D6+4 of the rarer, stranger zombies from other **Dead Reign®** sourcebooks. Zombies like the Bug Boys, Fused Zombies, Toxic Zombies, Vandal Zombies, etc. but one or two are either a Walking Grave or a Dead Mound Giant.

In the alternative, this could be a group of unusual human characters or a menacing NPC gang and might even be considered as recurring NPC villains or a source of concern and trouble. Or they could be a strange but good aligned group of fellow survivors from a distant Safe Haven looking to help out others, or seeking trade partners, or looking to make friends. They arrive

in some strange fashion or perhaps in helicopters or gliders, or tanks or other armored vehicle, or Road Warrior-like souped-up vehicles. Or whatever else the G.M. wishes in the moment.

97-00% Harbingers of doom: A mixed pack of 1D4x10 Slouchers approach the perimeter, but they aren't alone. For the next 20 minutes, in five minute intervals, another 1D4x10 zombies (mostly Slouchers) join them! This is the leading edge of a massive horde. When the main horde arrives in the next 1D6x10 minutes, it is a mixed group of zombies 1D4x100+100 strong (80% Slouchers). A careful scout can confirm this. (Or maybe an NPC arrives first to warn them of what is coming. This may be someone known to them or a stranger.)

Should you evacuate and take your chances on the road? Do you have time to evacuate everyone? If you stay quiet and hide, will they pass by without serious incident? Will your perimeter defenses hold? Even if they do, half are severely damaged, leaving the community vulnerable until repairs can be made. A vulnerability that rivals or thieves, and/or enemies may try to exploit.

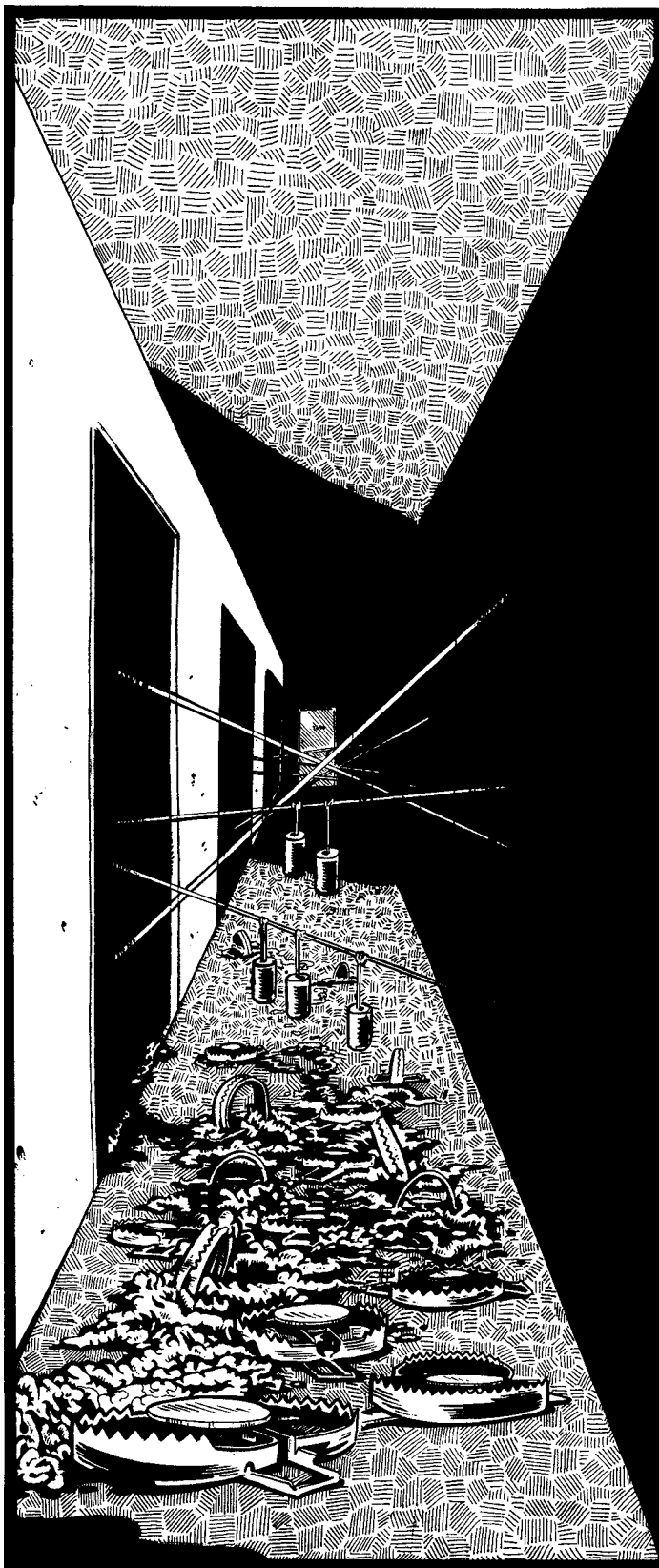
TRAPS

A common tactic deployed by humans and the occasional Mock Zombie, Thinker or other smart zombies is the use of traps. These can serve a variety of purposes including makeshift alarms as simple as strings of tin cans that clank and clatter when a zombie brushes against it, to pits and traps to capture intruders, and eliminate zombies. The use of traps is especially prevalent when manpower is low or even nonexistent. They can be used to secure locations in the place of barriers or guards, and factors like fatigue or physical needs are not a concern. Instead, many must be routinely checked and often reset or replaced to keep them in working order and free of remains and/or zombies.

Caltrops: A relatively simple trap, caltrops are sharp objects scattered across an area with the intention of injuring feet and/or damaging vehicle tires. This can be as simple as spilling out nails or screws across a road or path to puncture tires (25% chance) or shoes (20%) or unprotected feet (80%). Shattered glass laying flat on the surface is most effective against bare or stocking feet or when crawling on hands and knees (80%), not against heavy soled shoes or tires (10%; but increase to 50% when a line or field of glass is pointed up or at an upward angle).

For maximized effectiveness (90% chance), the nails or spikes of the caltrops should be facing up or at an upward angle or in several directions. This can be accomplished by hammering the sharp nails/spikes into rubber balls like toy jacks, or bits or strips of wood, rubber, plastic, or other material with metal nails/spikes driven through them. The size of the caltrops and the length and thickness of their metal nails/spikes vary depending on the target, i.e. humans and animals vs vehicles.

Two mechanisms that work on the same principle as the caltrop are the tire deflation device used by police known as "stingers," spike belts, traffic spikes, and stop sticks, laid across the road to stop a fleeing vehicle heading their way or to prevent vehicles from going in the wrong direction; and the retractable, heavy traffic spikes or tire shredders that are deployed at many high-security parking lots and vehicle checkpoints in which raised spikes shred the tires of vehicles trying to enter without security clearance, going the wrong way, or trying to escape. Military bases, many government buildings, and some factories,



office buildings and apartment parking lots have such “tire shredders” built into the road at their entrance/exit gates or checkpoints for security or to prevent unauthorized use of the lot.

In the world of **Dead Reign®** these same movable spike strips are often used by bandits and raiders to disable the vehicles of victims as the first step of an ambush. They are also particularly lethal to Road Reapers riding their motorcycles, which are -70% to pilot on blown tires and likely to lead to a nasty crash.

Damage (live): Each caltrop designed for use against humans inflicts 1D4 damage per caltrop, and a victim has a 66% chance of being impaled by 1D4 caltrops per six feet (1.8 m) traveled. Even one caltrop (1D4 damage) that becomes lodged in a foot is painful and impedes movement until it can be removed. The pain is one thing, but each step inflicts an additional *one point of damage* and until the nails or caltrops are removed. **Penalties:** Until then, reduce speed by 60% when only one foot has 1D4 caltrops/nails impaled in it, and reduce to a crawl, 90% when both feet are impaled. The wounded and hobbled victim (or animal) is engulfed in pain, with each step hurting and doing more damage. Suffers these additional penalties: -1 attack per melee round, -3 on Perception Rolls and initiative, -3 on all combat rolls (strike, parry, dodge, etc.), -10% on skill performance when off their feet, but -30% when standing or walking. **Note:** Even after the nail or caltrop is removed it hurts to put pressure on the foot; reduce speed by 20% until it heals over the next 1D6+1 days, and unless bandaged, the victim will continue to bleed. The loss of blood is slow and not life threatening in the least, but the individual may leave a blood trail, and zombies (and predatory animals) can smell the blood and follow its scent to the injured person.

The only way to escape caltrops on foot are to go around or over them (if possible), or clear a path with an object, broom, branch, stick, sword, etc. (nudging away with your foot is likely to cause it to stab into the softer material on the sides and top of footwear), or to gingerly move very carefully through the area at the rate of one foot (0.3 m) per melee round, tiptoeing around them. Protective footwear like thick-soled boots are likely to be insufficient to walk over a caltrop and still get impaled, though damage is half.

Damage (tires/vehicle): Caltrops, stinger strips and tire shredders designed to stop vehicles automatically penetrate any Armor Rating (A.R.) the rubber tire may have and inflict 3D6+6 damage to each tire affected, +30 damage when the vehicle is traveling at a speed greater than 30 mph (48 km), usually shredding two or more tires and inflicting a -40% penalty to the piloting/driving skill. Most victims crash or come to a screeching stop. **Note:** If the driver manages to keep control and not crash, he is driving on the rims, speed is reduced by 50%, and he continues to drive with a -35% skill penalty, -70% to perform stunts and evasive maneuvers.

Crossbow/Firearm Traps: Either a crossbow or some kind of firearm positioned so that it fires at a particular area when a triggering mechanism is pressed or broken. The weapon strikes the target on a 1D20 roll of 12 or higher (8 or higher if the firearm is loaded with scattering shot). Damage is as per the weapon used (2D6 for a typical crossbow, 5D6 for shotgun). This trap is relatively uncommon as it is widely seen as a waste of resources to use a weapon for a single shot only, and takes at least 4D6 minutes to properly align.

High-tech versions do exist that utilize motion or thermal detection equipment. The data is then fed through an advanced computer system to identify targets for automated weapons mounted on stands or in turrets. Such systems are highly advanced and typically only found in top-security government facilities. Damage is per the caliber of the weapon with the system having +2 to strike and three attacks per melee round.

Chemical Traps: Chemical traps use chemical agents, most often in gas or liquid form, to mark, incapacitate, or harm targets. The most common chemical traps take an aerosol/gas form and

is often comparable to a gas grenade. **Note:** If the gas is released inside an enclosed space without good ventilation such as a room or basement inside a home or building, or a small, deep cave or underground tunnel or sewer, the duration listed below or via a gas grenade (see page 112 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**) is likely to be double.

Examples of natural poisons include anthrax, cyanide, datura, oleander, ricin, and animal venoms. Man-made poisons include pesticides, industrial and cleaning chemicals, antifreeze, some prescription medicines, and radioactive materials. The focus of the chemical traps described below are mostly those delivered in the form of gas. **Note:** Most chemical traps are completely ineffective against zombies, meaning chemical gas traps are primarily used by bad guys and ill-intentioned survivors against living victims.

Exploding Dye Pack or Paint Grenade: If it explodes and sprays the face, the dye or paint may get into the eyes and blind its victim (60% chance) until the eyes are washed out with at least 16 ounces of water; requires at least one melee round (15 seconds), probably two. Standard penalty (-10) for being blind. In addition, the dye or paint marks everyone in the blast radius (4 feet/1.2 m for paint dye, 6 feet/1.8 m for a paint grenade). This may be vital to identify thieves and spies. Being “marked” lasts until the body, clothing, and gear is washed clean with soap and water. **Damage:** As per the damage and/or penalties noted below.

Knockout Gas (rare): An aerosol sedative/tranquilizer (or anesthetics may be used instead) is released to impair or completely incapacitate living beings. No effect on zombies or people in gas masks. **Penalties:** Drowsiness occurs within 1D4 melee rounds (15-60 seconds) of exposure, and sleep/unconsciousness occurs within 1D4 minutes. While drowsy and trying to resist sleep for those 1D4 minutes, reduce the number of attacks per melee, combat bonuses, speed and skill performance by half. When the victim falls unconscious, he sleeps for 1D6+6 minutes and cannot be awakened before then, and remains groggy/drowsy (with penalties) for an additional 1D6 minutes. This attack may prove life-threatening if the dosage isn’t correct (1% chance), especially to children (8% chance), the elderly (4%), and small animals (10%). **Note:** To save vs nonlethal poison, roll 16 or higher. Success means the character can fight off the gas and remains unimpaired (no penalties, no sleep) for ONE minute (4 melee rounds), but must roll to save again every minute of exposure to the knockout gas.

Smoke: Fills the room. Vision is obscured and breathing is hampered, causing victims to cough. **Damage/Penalties:** -8 to combat rolls (strike, parry, dodge, disarm, etc.) while inside the thick smoke cloud. The penalties apply while inside the cloud and for 1D4 melee rounds after exiting it.

Tear Gas: Fills the room. Vision is obscured, eyes, throat and lung burn, breathing is hampered, causing victims to gag and cough heavily, and possibly panic. **Damage/Penalties:** -1 attack per melee, -3 on initiative, and -10 to strike, parry, and dodge. The effects apply while inside the cloud and for 3D4 melee rounds after. A successful roll to save vs non-lethal poison (16 or higher) reduces penalties and duration by half.

Neurotoxin: This rare and deadly trap releases a harmful nerve agent such as mustard gas or chlorine gas. These substances have no effect on zombies, but are toxic and damaging to the living. Immediate removal from the toxic area and medical attention is necessary to prevent continued damage and possible death from

exposure to nerve agents and similar deadly toxins. **Damage:** 1D6 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round (15 seconds) of exposure. Get out fast! **Penalties:** Debilitating seizures (no attacks or actions possible for the victim(s) of the gas attack), or paralysis occurs. Either one lasts for 2D4 minutes, and if still within the gas cloud, the victim continues to take damage and is likely to die. Seizures or paralysis occurs within 1D4 melee rounds *after exposure* to the neurotoxic gas. Seizures or paralysis last for 2D4 minutes.

A successful roll to save vs lethal poison, 14 or higher, means damage is half and no paralysis or seizures, but suffers the following penalties: Reduce Spd, leaping distance, skill performance, and attacks per melee round by half, and reduce all combat bonuses to zero; unmodified dice rolls only for 2D4 minutes. **Note:** Even after recovery the victim feels weak for the next 2D6 hours and is -1 attack per melee round, all combat bonuses are reduced by half, P.E. and Spd are reduced by 20%, and skill performance is -10%. Luckily, such lethal chemical agents are exceedingly rare and available only to large militaries, clandestine weapons manufacturers, and perhaps a terrorist organization.

Suffocation/Asphyxiation: An asphyxiation trap deprives its victims of air and asphyxiates living beings to kill them, but has no effect on zombies, they simply go dormant.

Various gases like carbon monoxide/natural gas from a vehicle exhaust, natural gas line, or a sabotaged furnace, or the Halon used in some high-tech fire suppression systems can kill by asphyxiation. Many of these gases are tasteless and odorless and thus do not provide a chance to hold a breath. Asphyxiation from a gas starts to take hold within 1D4+1 melee rounds (30-75 seconds). **Penalties:** At that point victims see their Spd, number of attacks, all combat bonuses, and skill performance reduced by half as they become suddenly and unexpectedly fatigued, drowsy, and lightheaded. **Damage:** Unconsciousness follows 1D4 melee rounds later (15-60 seconds), and death by asphyxiation 2D4+4 melee rounds after that (90-180 seconds/2-4 minutes). **Survival Note:** Regardless of the type of asphyxiation, there is a chance that *immediate CPR* (or superior medical treatment and oxygen) may resuscitate the victim. Roll percentile under these odds of success: Dead from asphyxiation 15 seconds 90%. 30 seconds 80%. 60 seconds 50%. Up to 3 minutes 25%. Up to six minutes 10%. Up to nine minutes 1%.

Another type of asphyxiation trap that deprives its victims of air includes drowning in any type of liquid or solid that may engulf or submerge victims and leave them no air to breathe. Examples include drowning inside a locked chamber that fills with water, grain or sand, or dropping victims into an active grain silo without any handholds, or weighing down a victim and dropping him into a pool or body of water, as well as falling into quicksand or a bog, and similar. Victims may get a chance to hold their breath, which buys them about 5 seconds per point of their P.E. attribute number.

Toxic Gas: A noxious fume or gas that burns soft tissue like the eyes, throat, and lungs and causes damage and penalties. Affects only living beings who breathe it. No effect on zombies. **Damage:** 1D4 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round of exposure plus penalties, below, as the eyes water profusely, the throat and lungs burn and cause coughing, gagging and trouble breathing. If not treated by properly trained medical personnel, these injuries may lead to permanent blindness (1% chance) and

respiratory illnesses such as asthma and pneumonia (5% chance), and sometimes death, but it applies in a game context only if the character lapses into a coma and successfully rolls to survive coma and death. **Penalties:** Same as **Tear Gas** until the fumes inflict enough damage to kill its victim(s). Penalties occur for the entire time a person is exposed to the toxic gas and they linger for 3D4 melee rounds afterward, so getting clear of the gas cloud or gas-filled room fast is imperative. A successful roll to save vs nonlethal poison, 16 or higher, means damage and the duration of penalties are reduced by half.

Deadfall Trap: Rocks, logs, and other large debris, sometimes wrecked vehicles that are no longer drivable, are piled at the top of an incline and released or pushed to tumble into the target area. Also see Drop-Fall, below.

Damage: Everything in the area suffers 2D6x10 damage by from the falling debris. Unless victims make a successful dodge roll of 13 or higher and manage to make it to cover, they are struck and carried away by the falling debris. Some (25% chance) may be pinned in the debris pile and need to be rescued. Half damage for much smaller traps.

Even those who manage to successfully run or dive and dodge out of harm's way need 1D4 melee rounds for the dust to settle enough to see clearly again. Moreover, this trap is likely to seal off (70% chance) any entrances, exit, hallway, or tunnel, requiring the characters to find an alternative route to where they were going. Digging out enough of the debris to make an opening large enough to squeeze through will take 1D6+1 hours of work by at least six people. Longer if the debris pile is huge.

When designed to take down vehicles, they have no chance to dodge and there is a 90% chance they are pushed 1D6x10 feet (3D6 m) in the direction of the slide and may be overturned (50% chance) or partially buried or pinned by the debris (50% chance) and unable to move forward or make a retreat. Vehicles are a larger target than a person so they are struck by more of the debris and suffer 3D6x10+40 damage. 75% chance that a crane or tow vehicle will be necessary to pull them free. The people inside the vehicle suffer 2D6 damage, and need 1D4 melee rounds (15-60 seconds) to gather their wits and climb out through broken out windows. During this time, the trap builders typically swarm the vehicles to attack and take prisoners.

In the aftermath of this type of large scale deadfall, the debris pile may completely block travel through the target area or at least make travel over that patch of ground hazardous and very difficult. This type of trap takes a crew of people a considerable amount of time to build. The longest part being hauling and putting into place the logs, rocks or debris.

Drop-Fall and Swing Traps: These traps are usually triggered by a tripwire of some sort or a concealed individual cutting the trigger to set loose the trap. Both the drop-fall and swinging trap involve a heavy object like a log, punji stick embedded log, boulder, section of concrete wall, steel beam, car engine, large crate, heavy door, pallet, boxer's heavy-bag, or other heavy object of medium to large size suspended above an area that either drops down on top of the victims below it or swings down into them from above.

Damage: Small or lighter versions of this trap inflict 5D6 damage to 1D4 victims in its path. There is also a 50% chance those struck are knocked down off their feet. Victims of knockdown lose one melee attack and initiative. Roll to dodge to escape damage.

A large, heavy object used in such a trap inflicts 1D6x10 damage to anyone in its path. Adding spikes/punji stakes to the object adds an additional 3D6 damage. In the alternative, a cage or net may drop from above, trapping one or more targets in it when it drops down on them; no damage. Roll to dodge. **Dodging Note:** The only way to avoid damage is to dodge the incoming bludgeon dropping down from above or swinging in from the side and above. A roll of 14 or higher is needed with a penalty of -2 to dodge.

This is a simple trap to make that can be built and set into place in short order. The larger it is, the more time it will take.

Explosive Traps: The simplest version of this trap uses a tripwire to release a live grenade from a suspended can or other housing to explode near the intruder(s).

Damage: Varies depending on the type of grenade used. Typically 1D6x10 or 2D4x10 damage to everything in a 15-30 foot (4.6 to 9 m) diameter for typical explosive or fragmentation grenades. Variations include using smoke, flash-bang, or tear gas grenades as well as other types of explosives such as plastique or mines (though the former requires the *Demolitions* skill to use).

The complexity in explosive traps is primarily in the devices themselves, so setting them up usually only involves placing them and arming a trigger. This can be done in as little as 1D6 minutes by someone skilled in demolitions or 10-20 minutes for unskilled trap makers.

Fire Traps: These traps are similar to explosive traps, but trigger incendiary devices and set fire to the surroundings. They may use a small spark or flame to ignite flammable materials like dry wood, paper, or a pool of accelerant like oil. Other versions are more localized, but use a larger plume of flame to burn one or more targets. The former type is used mostly to burn down an entire structure with victims inside unless the surroundings are designed for it (e.g., bare concrete, steel catwalk, etc.). The latter type may be able to limit damage to surroundings, but any people or zombies set ablaze are liable to flail around and may spread the fire with them (30% chance for people in their death throes, 60% for zombies who feel no pain and keep moving while their clothes and flesh burn).

Fire traps require fuel and an ignition source, and are relatively complex and time-consuming if engineered from scratch (1D4 hours to build). Exploiting flammable materials in an area-wide trap is much simpler, requiring only 2D6 minutes to prep the fuel and arm the igniter. **Note:** As discussed elsewhere, survivors, even the crazy and wicked ones, quickly learn to avoid using fire as a weapon because it cannot be easily controlled. In a world with no or rare firefighting capabilities, the careless or improper use of fire can burn down forests, neighborhoods, and entire cities. Most people avoid fire-based weapons and attacks.

High-Voltage Traps: Electrified fencing is commonly used in maximum security prisons and other high-security facilities like military bases. However, this trap can be as simple as a charged battery for an electric car or gas-powered generator hooked to a metal door handle, ladder, or handrail. Damage and effects depend on the strength of the electrical current used. The effects of electricity on living beings relies on a sufficient voltage to overcome a person's skin resistance. That means it takes at least that amount of voltage, or charge, to cause the electricity to course through a human body and do damage (which is why a motorcycle or car battery alone does not normally electrocute someone). Once that threshold is met, it is actually the amper-

age that determines effects such as neuromuscular seizures and electrical burns. For simplicity's sake, however, voltage is what determines the damage of electrical exposure in Dead Reign.

Damage: 1D4 damage for every 50 volts of current (round down), is dealt per shock/5 seconds of exposure. For humans, this is dealt to both S.D.C. AND Hit Points, representing the internal damage to vital organs and the nervous system. Zombie physiology is such that only S.D.C. damage is done via involuntary muscle spasms and electrical burns. For example, the average portable generator delivers 120 or 240 volts, which would cause 2D4 or 4D4 damage accordingly. An electric car battery averages 350 volts, meaning a shock from one would deal 7D4 damage.

Lower voltage electricity (100-200 volts) is particularly deadly because if an energized object is grabbed the muscles in the hand can seize and prevent the victim from letting go (50% chance if AC power or 75% with DC). Higher voltages are likely to produce such strong spasms that a victim throws himself free (60% chance).

Net Trap/Large Snare: This trap uses either a lasso-style snare or a net concealed on the ground to snare its victim or victims (people or large game animal) and suspend them 5-10 feet (1.5-3 m) or more above the ground. The lasso can only capture one person per trap and hangs the person upside down by the foot caught in the lasso/snare. A net trap can catch 1-6 people if they are walking close together and if the net is large enough to hold them all; typically one, two or three people get caught in a large net. **Note:** However, such traps usually have ropes and pulleys that will be obvious (+3 to Perception Rolls) during the day and when moving slowly and examining the path ahead. Once spotted, this trap is easily avoided by going around it. However, when running or panicked, the victim may race headlong into the trap before noticing the trap mechanism. Such a trap may be a ruse to compel a person to go around and right into a tripwire, pit trap, dead fall, or other trap.

Damage: None, unless those caught inside fall from the trap and suffer 1D6 damage.

Penalties: 70% likelihood of dropping anything that was in the victim's hands when he was whipped off his feet and hung upside down. 50% chance that objects fall out of pockets and any backpack that was not snapped or zipped shut. A victim must be able to reach a knife and bend sufficiently enough to grab his ankle or the rope and pull himself up close enough to cut the rope or wire to free himself. This is more difficult than it may sound or look like in the movies. The average, out of shape individual will not be able to perform this stunt (2% chance), and will hang there suspended like a side of beef until someone else lets him down. Bad news if that someone is his captor and has foul intentions.

Characters in good physical condition (one or two Physical skills and Hand to Hand: Basic or Expert) have a 60% chance of success (can try once every melee round) and can usually cut themselves down within 1D6 melee rounds.

Characters in excellent physical condition (have Acrobatics or Gymnastics, or Boxing, or Parkour, or Wrestling AND any Hand to Hand skill, or three Physical skills plus any Hand to Hand skill) have a 90% chance of success to lift themselves up to grab and cut themselves free in 1D4 melee rounds, and are able to try twice per melee round.

Those trapped in a net must climb or cut their way loose, which takes time. Cutting your way out requires cutting several strands or a large section of the netting. This takes 1D4 minutes,

because the trapped person(s) must first orient himself, locate his knife, and work from an awkward angle, probably upside down. (Half that time if the victim has Supernatural Strength.) Climbing out takes 1D4+4 minutes.

Noisemaker/Flare Traps: These traps are makeshift alarms intended to reveal the presence of an intruder to elicit an ambush response. They may be as simple as a string of aluminum cans that rattle when disturbed, or as complex as a hidden motion detector or game camera used by hunters that transmits the image to a nearby monitor and guard or sniper. In the latter two instances, the trap may trigger a parachute flare to launch and illuminate the area or project a signal and an image on a monitor. Such traps are most often used as part of an outer perimeter, especially when protecting a campsite or the perimeter of a survivor community while the inhabitants sleep.

In the alternative, the trap unleashes a flare or fireworks, or turns on lights and an engine or other noisemaker (music, recording of voices, etc.) that serves as a decoy to lure zombies to its location and away from people or the entrance to a homestead or community while serving as an alarm at the same time. Since most zombies are attracted to loud noises, the sound of voices, and lights, they are easily drawn away to the source. While this "trap" does not actually capture or directly harm the zombies, it provides the people inside the homestead or community inside a building or enclosure time to respond. That response may be locking gates and doors, taking cover and hiding, rushing out to engage the zombies (or an attacker), or making a run for it.

Setting off flares or fireworks or triggering a car alarm or engine and/or lights or other sounds is always effective against zombies, but less so against human invaders/attackers. Even so, any intruder will be startled and confused for 1D4 melee rounds (15 to 60 seconds), giving the defenders inside time to react, same as above. Moreover, any intruders caught off guard by the lights and sounds off to the side a short distance away or behind them, are so startled that they may flee (75% likelihood), fearing they are about to be pinned down in an ambush and/or because they know the lights and alarm have alerted their intended victims to their presence. Most invaders, thieves, and raiders count on the element of surprise, which the warning system has just eliminated. Moreover, in an urban environment, 1D6x10+60 zombies in the immediate area come to investigate the noise and light show within 1D4 minutes, and attack the intruders outside the walls of the location they had intended to invade. Unless they move on quickly, 2D6x10+40 more zombies arrive in waves every 1D6 minutes. Trapping them between the defenders of the community and a converging horde of the dead.

This type of trap is a simplistic flare or fireworks combined with an alarm/noise-making mechanism and when the right components are available, it can be set up and reset in a matter of minutes.

Pendulum/Swinging Traps: This is a variation of the drop-fall or swing trap usually activated by a tripwire. The deadly or damaging portion of the trap is the heavy object that swings down to strike anyone in its path. A log, table, door, a gate from a chain-link fence, the fender from a car or truck, a girder or large piece of concrete or metal, or similar object makes a good battering ram to smash or slash unwanted intruders. Such an object serves as the heavy component that swings down on a pendulum, rope or chain to injure or kill enemies or to destroy or delay zombies.

Damage: 5D6 damage blunt, +2D6 if lined with punji stakes or blades. Depending on the size of this trap it may be able to simultaneously strike 1D4 enemies.

Pit Trap: A hole dug into the ground that is usually 7-14 feet (2.1-4.3 m) deep. Length and width varies as desired. Pit traps are especially effective at trapping small numbers of people and the less intelligent zombies for capture or extermination.

Outdoors the opening is concealed with branches, brush, a grass weave, or light netting, tarp, or cloth covered in leaves and some dirt.

Damage from Dirt Pit: 1D6 damage per 7 feet (2.1 m) of the fall.

Penalties from Dirt Pit: Simple pits can entrap or slow down enemy forces. Slouchers and most zombies are too stupid and clumsy to be able to climb out. Though if enough fall inside, some may be able to climb out over each other. Likewise, smart zombies, Crawlers, Fast Attack, and Flesh-Eating Zombies are likely to be able to climb out (60% chance, roll once per melee round). See *Getting Out of a Dirt Pit*, below, for people escaping such a trap.

Additional Damage from Dirt Pit Lined with Punji Stakes (optional): +1D6+1 damage per each punji stake a person falls upon, impaling him on the stake. Victims of the fall are impaled by 1D6 stakes. The *punji stake* pit is lined with wooden (most common) or metal stakes or rebar/reinforced steel bars, or jagged rocks, at the bottom. Punji stake damage is in addition to the damage from the fall. The scent of blood will attract zombies. See *Zombie Note*, below.

Additional Damage from Barbed or Razor Wire (optional): Tangles of barbed or razor wire staked or laid across the bottom of the pit add 2D4 damage and tangles the victim in the wire. Those who have fallen into a pit lined with barbed or razor wire must spend 1D4+2 melee rounds (45-90 seconds) to get untangled and back on their feet. Worse, they are probably nicked and bleeding, which may (66% chance) attract 1D6 zombies every 1D6 minutes.

Pit Trap Variations: Danger inside the pit: The pit maker may place things in the pit such as zombies that attack those who fall inside, explosive mines (rare), or dangerous animals (wild canines, bears, poisonous snakes, etc.) to attack those who fall in, though animals are vulnerable to any zombies that may have stumbled into the pit. Damage: Varies as per the zombie, mine, or animal in the pit.

Pits may be made large and long enough for vehicles to get stuck. These are uncommon even in the suburbs and rural areas, but can be made and are effective. In this case, the pit is probably more of a trench, designed to get the vehicle's front or back wheels caught to stop/crash or flip a vehicle, usually with just the front of the vehicle collapsing into a shallow pit 3-5 feet (0.9 to 1.5 m) deep. Punji stakes may be used to puncture tires and inflict additional damage to the engine, undercarriage, and gas tank. Larger and deeper pits are also possible, but are a lot of work and time, and have limited applications. Damage: 4D6 +10 for every 10 mph (16 km) of speed over 30 mph (48 km).

Getting Out of a Dirt Pit: Live people helping each other up and out should be able to exit a 7 foot (2.1 m) deep dirt pit at the rate of one person per melee round (15 seconds), with the last person requiring being pulled out by one or two others on the topside.

Getting out of a 7 foot (2.1 m) deep pit on your own is difficult: 25% chance each attempt to climb or pull yourself out and each attempt takes 1D4 melee rounds of time. +20% bonus if the character has the Climbing skill.

Getting out of a deeper pit, even with other people to help, is much more difficult. 20% chance of success for every attempt; +20% bonus if the character has the Climbing skill. Each attempt takes 1D4 melee rounds of time and effort per every 2 feet (0.6 m) of height/depth beyond 5 feet (1.5 m).

Trying to climb out of a dirt pit on your own, without any rock or strong foot or handholds can be tricky business. The dirt is soft so it crumbles and falls away as you try to pull your way up. If you have a machete and a few knives or several long stakes or climbing spikes to hammer into the dirt wall as you go up, you can make improvised foot and handholds. However, you probably need at least 4-6 of them, 8-12 are better, and depending on the soil and how long the stakes/weapons are, they may pull out as you put weight on them trying to climb out. Unless there is a root or rock to grab along the edge of the pit at the top, the dirt along the top may not support your weight, and may crumble, dropping you back down to the bottom (50% chance).

Pit Trap Zombie Note: In any urban environment, zombies are plentiful, and the sound of your falling and subsequent crying out in pain or surprise, cursing, hammering spikes into the dirt, grunting, huffing and puffing as you exert yourself, and other noises are likely to attract 1D6 zombies. There is a 50% chance some of these creatures (roll for each) are dumb enough to topple and fall right into the pit with you (cue zombie fight), and those that do not fall in, circle the pit moaning loudly and attracting 1D6+1 more zombies every 1D4 minutes you are trapped inside! Double that number if there is some blood spilled. Triple that number if there is a lot of blood from injuries.

Pit Trap Construction Note: Digging any sized pit trap requires at least basic tools and a lot of time and muscles unless the group has some sort of earthmoving equipment, such as a backhoe or steam shovel, but heavy machinery and power tools will attract unwanted attention from both the living and the undead, especially in any urban environment. The trap diggers also need to transport the large amount of dirt or clay away, so that it is not obvious the ground has been recently dug up. This takes hours or days depending on the depth and scale of the pit traps, plus time to make and put into place things like punji stakes. Rocky soil or clay makes the work much more backbreaking and time consuming.

Pit Trap, Indoors: Indoor pit traps are deliberately weakened areas of flooring or holes cut into the floor and covered with thin paneling or breakaway plywood that gives out under a weight of 55 pounds (25 kg) or greater, or the opening may be covered by a rug, tarp, cloth, plastic sheet, cardboard, etc. (which may, in turn, be covered in paper and light scrap to further conceal the hole), or the existing flooring may be sabotaged to give out under the weight of more than 55 or 60 pounds (25 to 27 kg). Whatever the covering, it is insufficient to hold a typical zombie or intruder's weight and drops them down a hole, one floor after another, 3-5 stories down.

Survivors living inside buildings have learned that dropping an enemy one floor (14 feet/4.3 m) is not likely to kill the person. It hurts and may cause injury that makes the victim angry and hungry for revenge. Consequently, most indoor pit traps are designed to drop the victim(s) through openings made in multiple

floors to fall several stories; typically 3-6 floors/stories (42-70 feet/13 to 21.3 m) before hitting bottom with bone breaking and deadly force.

Damage from Indoor Pit Trap: 1D6+2 damage direct to Hit Points and 2D6 to physical S.D.C. falling one story (14 feet/4.3 m), +2D6+5 damage direct to Hit Points and 2D6 to S.D.C. for each additional story. When Hit Points fall below zero (regardless of any remaining S.D.C.), the person is dead. Falling several stories through the floor of a tall building and hitting a hard bottom is usually severely damaging if not lethal. A typical indoor pit trap is a 3-6 story (42-70 feet/13 to 21.3 m) fall to the floor below, but can be farther. A plunge down an elevator shaft could be 20-50+ stories!

Damage to Zombies is the opposite and starts with the S.D.C. of their main body only. When that S.D.C. is gone, subtract damage from the creature's Hit Points. If any Hit Points remain, the zombie's body is mostly shattered and smashed, but still growling and biting. Turning what's left into a *Dead Weight Zombie*. Probably just a head and part of the upper torso, no arms or legs or spine (01-50%), or a head, part of the upper torso, and one arm (51-00%). Over time, many of these smashed up zombies may fuse together and become a Mass Grave Zombie or a Dead Mound Giant.

Additional Damage from Punji Stakes: 1D6+1 damage per each punji stake on the bottom of the pit/floor. Each victim of the fall is impaled by 1D6+1 stakes. If the pit is lined with wooden or metal stakes, it inflicts additional damage. Punji stake damage is in addition to the damage from the fall and the scent of blood will attract zombies. See *Zombie Note*, above.

Snare Traps: Whether intended for an animal or a human, the best snare traps are made of wire and designed to snare a leg and hold its victim.

Damage: 50% chance that humans caught in a snare fall down, suffer 1D4 damage, make a thud, lose initiative and one melee attack, and there is a 50% chance they drop anything they were holding (it falls 1D6 feet/0.3 to 1.8 m away). **Note:** See *Net Trap* for a large, lasso-style trap that suspends a human victim, upside down by his foot, above the ground.

Spring-Back Traps: Spring-back traps function in a number of different ways, but use mechanical force to propel sharpened objects with sufficient force to maim or kill an unsuspecting victim. They may achieve this velocity by using drivers such as counterweights, a flexible armature made of something like plastic or bamboo, steel springs, or even hydraulics. In the various designs, the driver is held under tension until the trap is triggered, usually by a tripwire, pressure plate, or similar trigger device. This releases the tension, causing the hazardous object or objects to fling toward the trigger and harm or kill whatever tripped it.

Damage: Depends on the size and type of the object intended to stab, cut, or crush, and how much tension it's held under. For weapons (arrows, knives, swords, spears, etc.) or tools (fire axe, hatchet, ice pick, screwdriver, spike, hammer, sledgehammer, etc.), use the object's normal damage as the base. **General Types of Damage:** Short/small blades, ice picks, spikes, rocks or ball bearings the size of a walnut to that of a baseball inflict 1D4 damage each. Arrows, crossbow bolts, and large knives inflict 1D6 damage each. Larger blades, swords, spears, and stones/cinder blocks inflict 2D6 damage each.

Low-tension drivers inflict the base damage only.

Medium-tension drivers add a +4 damage bonus.

High-tension drivers +6 damage.

Trapdoor/False Floor/Unstable Walkway: See *Pit Trap, Indoors*. In a nutshell, victims of this trap fall through a covered hole or weakened floorboards several stories down. The flooring or stairs are deliberately weakened when a trap or made into a trapdoor, but may also occur as damage from fire, water, rot, insect or animal damage, or an accident, so travelers inside tall buildings need to be aware of their surroundings and exercise caution.

Fire escapes, elevator cars, and even footbridges built between buildings may be likewise sabotaged so intruders plunge through them unexpectedly. Such falls may be several stories and end in a bed of steel rebar, a flooded basement, or worse.

Damage: See *Pit Trap, Indoors* for details.

Tripwire Traps: A wire (ideal), string, cord, rope, or vine strung between two points, usually at ankle height. There are two primary uses for a tripwire.

The first use, as the name suggests, is designed to trip intruders, causing them to fall down flat on their face. This simple trap requires strong wire so it doesn't break and can be used repeatedly. The wire is thin and a grey or neutral color, making it difficult to see unless you are looking for it. This is especially true outdoors in grass and weeds, but can be just as effective on a staircase, balcony, or in doorways and hallways as most people are not looking at the ground or floor. People who are running or too scared to be looking for traps never see a tripwire. **Note:** Apply Perception Roll bonuses when moving slow and looking for a tripwire or any type of trap. No Perception Roll applies when moving fast, running, not looking and when scared or panicked.

Damage: 1D6 damage from falling down onto the hard ground or floor, plus the victim loses initiative and one melee attack, and there is a 50% chance they drop anything they were holding in their hand. It falls 1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) away. The fall also makes a thud, especially on a floor, and typically alerts those nearby to their presence. Let's hope that's not a mob of zombies or a hostile enemy.

Additional Possible Damage: There may be additional damage if the tripwire is positioned to cause the victim to fall into a pit trap, down the stairs (same as a pit trap), or into punji stakes/rebar/jagged rocks/glass. Or the tripwire may also trigger a drop-fall trap or release zombies in a nearby room or pen.

The other use of a tripwire is as a mechanism to trip/launch/activate another trap such as an alarm, explosive device, or dead-fall, and many other traps as described previously in this section.

Wild Game Traps/Bear Traps: These traps work particularly well against animals and unarmored humans. They are pre-constructed traps consisting of spring-loaded metal jaws that clamp shut when the pressure plate in the middle is depressed. They are typically chained to a nearby tree or object, or staked into the ground and are simple to set, taking just 1D6 minutes to place and set. The large heavy types require a standard P.S. of at least 24 to be pried open without a lever like a large, heavy knife, sword, or large heavy screwdriver or crowbar (12 with a lever). A manual release switch also typically opens and resets the trap, if a human victim unfamiliar with such traps can locate it (10% chance).

Damage: 1D6 S.D.C. for small animal traps, 2D6 for medium traps, and 4D6 S.D.C. for large traps. Damage is typically done to the ankle or lower leg of a human victim, but it also holds animal and zombie prey in place unless they can tear themselves

free; animals have been known to chew through their leg to get free. Humans and intelligent zombies may be able to pry it open with a tool or great strength as noted above. Even then, animals and humans stand a high chance of bleeding to death unless the severe wound is properly bandaged or a tourniquet is applied. Boots are not likely to protect the leg from such a metal jaw trap (1% chance; 10% if a thick heavy work boot, 50% if the boot or leg is protected by reinforced metal strips, which is rare). **Note:** The blood and any howl of pain is likely to attract 1D6 nearby zombies and that number increases quickly over time.

Penalties: Damaged muscles in the leg and a likely fractured bone make walking on that leg painful and difficult. Reduce Speed by 90%. Reduce Spd by 70% if the victim has a staff or tree branch for support, and reduce by 50% on a pair of crutches. **Note:** Such a trap can be combined with an alarm, flare, electronic sensor (remotely notifying trappers of a sprung trap) or a hunter's trail camera (showing him exactly who or what is caught in the trap).

SURVIVING THE APOCALYPSE

RESOURCE ACQUISITION

By Mark Oberle and Kevin Siembieda

Authors' Disclaimer: While the following information was researched and MAY be reflective of reality, this material is for entertainment purposes only. Please consult subject-matter experts when trying to determine the safety of stored materials such as food and medicine. ~ *Mark and Kevin*

One of the first steps in survival is resource acquisition, starting with the basics: water and food. You cannot live without water, and a good daily amount of it. Next is finding food and at least temporary shelter. Everything else follows.

While food, water, and power are always the most common and pressing needs immediately after any disaster, within days after the Wave and the rising of the dead to prey upon the living, availability of basic resources becomes difficult. The hungry dead are a deadly impediment to gaining easy access to the streets, let alone the vital water, food, and supplies preserved in stores, warehouses and buildings. Society falls apart in a matter of days. The government and the order of law go silent and vanish. Mass-production grinds to a halt and utilities such as electricity and clean water stop working in most places, especially in cities and urban population centers.

Rural areas often have independent freshwater wells, arable land, and wild game, but urban environs typically lack easy access to the basic staples of survival, and with the hungry dead on the prowl, it is not like one can go fishing or leisurely scavenge for supplies even if the store shelves are full. The enterprising survivors who remain in the cities need to learn to adapt quickly and figure out how to meet basic needs or the zombie hordes will be the least of their problems.

DRINKING WATER

Potable water – water that is safe to drink and used for cooking and bathing – is the most vital and basic need human beings have next to breathable air. In the aftermath of an apocalyptic event like the Wave and the rise of the hungry dead, potable water

may not be easy to come by. The presence of zombies that are relentless in their hunting of the living complicates every aspect of survival.

The average adult needs approximately one gallon (3.8 liters) of drinking water per day to remain healthy. Closer to 5 gallons (19 liters) are needed to ensure hygiene and sanitation needs as well. In most modern urban environments, this is provided by public utilities that handle collection, filtration, sanitization, and distribution using a massive network of pipes and pumping stations.

Very shortly after the Wave, most municipal water systems begin breaking down all over the globe. As pressure is lost, the safety of the water coming out of the faucet becomes uncertain due to the possibility of negative pressure introducing contaminants into the water supply. The first places to lose access are *tall buildings*, due to the amount of pressure needed to get the water up multiple stories. That means that most survivors in an urban environment have to figure out alternative means to acquire clean water.

Finding water outdoors. City garden projects and neighborhood home gardens may not only have barrels and tubs that can collect rainwater or hold snow for melting, but ambitious gardeners may have actual rain collection systems and barrels already in place. This is especially true in the suburbs. These water collection resources can be used as is, if in a safe location, or taken apart and relocated to a survivor camp or Safe Haven community, and reinstalled there.

Sustainable methods of gaining access to water on a regular basis include rooftop rain and snow collection systems, and something as simple as rain gutters that spill into a clean barrel that captures the runoff from the slanted roofs of houses. Survivors can arrange this on numerous homes and appropriate buildings throughout the neighborhood. Assuming that sufficient storage capacity is available, i.e. suitable containers such as plastic and metal barrels free of contaminants. The best collection systems also have some sort of a mesh, screen, or strainer to catch and prevent grit, dirt, leaves, etc., from filling the water barrel. Of course, like anything else, this requires regular cleaning and maintenance to maximize water collection.

Gathering precipitation can work most of the time in most environments throughout the USA, Canada, and Mexico, as well as most countries of the world. Only the most arid climates with minimal or very seasonal rainfall are a problem, such as the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Dry spells are a

serious problem in any environment, making the storage of ample potable water an essential and valuable commodity. However, finding sufficient storage containers may be a problem.

Survivor havens located on the rooftops of tall buildings need such rain and snow collection systems where they live, but may have additional ones located on select rooftops of other buildings as well as neighborhood houses that are gathered up in smaller containers from time to time or used as a backup supply. As noted above, every community – whether a small survivor family homestead or larger Safe Haven with 30-100 people – will need to store as much water as possible, probably on one or more of the secured upper floors of the building they have turned into a survivors' community, but also on the rooftops and various locations on and inside nearby buildings, and at lookout points, hide-outs, and safe houses along Rat Runs and backup locations. Many smart city survivors stash caches of water, durable long-lasting food, and other basic supplies at numerous secret locations in case their Safe Haven becomes compromised.

Condensation collection systems are also reliable, but the output may be lower in volume and require special equipment and a certain level of know-how, or someone who can teach others about the process. The largest and best condensation collection systems also require power, and when the electrical grid goes down across most of the country within a few weeks, energy becomes an issue. Whatever methods are used, a means of rendering the water safe to drink is necessary to avoid poisoning or illness.

In rural environs, individual wells, creeks, ponds, and similar aquifers increase the chance that usable water is available to survivors – assuming such a source hasn't been contaminated somehow – but even their water should be boiled or purified to kill dangerous bacteria and parasites, and make it safe for consumption. Of course, boiling water does nothing to correct man-made contamination from deadly chemicals and poisons. For urban environments it is much rarer to have ready access to water resources like creeks and ponds, though swimming pools can serve the same purpose. In the early days there are ways to remove chlorine and chemicals to make the chemically treated pool water suitable for drinking. Over time, pools built into the ground can become man-made ponds that collect and hold rainwater. The amount of water can be increased if gutter downspouts are linked with additional piping that drains into the pool from one or more house rooftops.

It takes considerable effort to haul multiple gallons of water from a ground-level source up to a Safe Haven located dozens of stories up or on a rooftop of a tall building. A system of pulleys and platforms that can be lowered and raised can be a great help with this, but will still require a lot of work and muscle power. Likewise, trying to repair and maintain enough infrastructure to reliably deliver potable water to homes or tall buildings is a difficult, dangerous, and a resource-intensive undertaking that requires know-how and technical skills most survivors will not possess.

Water Purification

Boiling, chemical treatment, and filtration are all viable options for removing biological contaminants such as bacteria and viruses. Non-biological toxins such as heavy metals and other harmful chemicals can be separated out by membrane filtration,

distillation, or reverse-osmosis filtration. The latter methods do require specialized equipment, but can even be used to desalinate seawater and make it suitable for drinking or irrigation.

The use of chemicals and filtration and cleaning devices requires some level of knowledge or access to clear instructions. Those with such knowledge are wise to share it with as many others in any Safe Haven or survivor community that are willing to learn. Without the Internet, easy access to knowledge at our fingertips becomes old school methods requiring access to books, and how many people will know how to search and find what they need in a dark, dusty library or bookstore?

All sorts of **How-to books** can become a lifesaving guide to survival in the post-apocalyptic world. **Wilderness manuals** and **survival guides** with instructions on how to find and clean water, perform basic first aid, hunt, fish, build shelters, make basic weapons, survive different conditions, live in the wild, and so on, may be found not only in libraries and bookstores, but also in many school libraries *and homes*. There are a lot of hikers, woodsmen, fishermen, hunters, and preppers out there in the world. When out scrounging for food, water, guns and ammo, and you find yourself in the home of a hunter or woodsman or prepper/survivalist, there are certain to be a few books and magazines (more likely dozens of them) on the subjects of hunting, weapons, and survival. Find and keep a few basic instruction manuals and survival guides. Basic carpentry, building, electrical, and automotive manuals and similar guides may also be of great help as well as tools. Lugging around a giant stack of books and a 50 pound (22.5 kg) tool box is impractical when you are a nomad scrounging to survive, but a few key books and tools can make a huge difference, so build that basic tool kit. More instruction manuals and a good comprehensive set of tools are essential for any group trying to establish a permanent or semi-permanent Safe Haven community or refuge of any kind.

Distilling water by boiling it is one age old method, allowing the refined steam to condense and collect. There are distilling systems that could be purchased before the Zombie Apocalypse for a few to several hundred dollars, but after the dead rise, this becomes more problematic. Some micro-breweries and sportsmen stores that cater to campers and hunters may be a source for such equipment, as might some school and college science labs, and well-equipped hunters/woodsmen and survivalist/preppers who may have one or more distillers and/or a water filtration or purification system. The latter are prepared for end of the world crisis situations and know how to use them. However, if the prepper is not present and if there is no instruction manual, the survivors who find this lifesaving gear will need someone who can figure out how to use it (mechanic, mechanical engineer, scientist, hunter/prepper, etc.).

How long to boil water: Most people are under the misconception that water needs to be boiled for 10-15 minutes, but that has been proven unnecessary. Drinking water is scarce and too precious to waste. Experts agree that a rolling boil (about 190 degrees Fahrenheit) for 2-4 minutes kills parasites, bacteria, and microbes, rendering water safe to drink and cook with, but remember, it generally takes 5 minutes to bring water to a boil. To boil water longer has no additional benefit and causes more of this precious resource to evaporate for no reason as well as wasting more fuel (propane, gasoline, wood, etc.). Survivors should get into the habit of conserving all resources.

The negative aspects of boiling water to purify: First, boiling water sends water into the air as steam. Putting a lid over a boiling pot helps recapture some of the evaporating water, but measurable content is still lost.

Second, boiling requires a source of heat, whether it is burning wood or charcoal at a campfire or via portable camping stove. Portable single and dual burner propane or butane camping stoves are a great option, provided one can find a fuel source. Propane and butane will, of course, be more readily available during the early years after the collapse of civilization, but such fuel sources become scarcer to nonexistent within a few years. Burning wood is the cheap, obvious way to go, except it creates a distinctive column of smoke that rises up into the air, and may attract both zombies and human predators. Fire requires some sort of fuel even if it is firewood, but that fuel may be limited depending upon what it is, where you are, and the availability of the fuel material.

Third, as noted earlier, boiling kills pathogens but will not remove chemical contamination, fuel, or poison.

Water Filtration and Purification Systems. There are a large range of mechanical and portable filtration systems. The smallest and most portable are used by modern campers, hikers, fishermen, hunters, explorers, and other outdoorsmen. Most portable water filters need to be replaced after 100-120 gallons (378.5 to 454 liters). Using it beyond that point makes the filtration less and less reliable, and you must be able to locate the device and replacement filters in the first place.

The largest filter and purification systems are used by civilian and governmental crisis teams who respond to natural disasters such as hurricane and earthquake response. Finding access to disaster relief filtration systems, generators, and other supplies is likely to require blind luck or finding a Red Cross, National Guard, FEMA or military disaster relief facility/warehouse.

Water Storage. Storing large amounts of water is best done in sealed containers to prevent environmental contamination. Food-grade plastic is the preferred material for these containers since one of the primary water treatment chemicals, chlorine, is corrosive. There are sealable, 55 gallon plastic drums/barrels made specifically for drinking water which may be found at emergency shelters and military bases, but even plastic barrels, jugs, and bottles made for juice, milk and other drinks can be used if properly cleaned, sanitized and sealed. Of course, smaller containers are man-portable versus a 55 gallon (440 pounds/198 kg) barrel of water. **Note:** If the container cannot be reliably sealed it is a good idea to replace the water inside every 6-12 months. And it is best if plastic containers are kept in the shade or under cover and cool, otherwise chemicals in the plastic will leach into the water and contaminate it.

Manufacturing facilities/factories that make fruit juice, flavored water, other food products, or medicine may have a wide range of plastic (or metal) containers in different sizes. The most common sizes are 15 gallons (57 liters), 35 gallons (133 liters), and 55 gallons (208 liters). Metal drums may also be available but are heavier, rust over time, and are much less common than plastic containers in our modern era. Great care and caution is required when **salvaging barrels** for the use of storing water and food. Since fresh, clean water is scarce after the Zombie Apocalypse, being able to give a barrel a thorough rinsing is usually difficult if not impossible. Survivors should never use a container whose prior use is unknown or once held detergents, cleaning chemicals, and other toxic chemicals as they are poisonous and

their residue in the barrel is likely to contaminate the drinking water (or food), making them hazardous if not outright deadly. This also goes for plastic barrels that once contained dry medicine (pills, powders, etc.). Containers that once held toxic chemicals are nearly impossible to properly clean after the collapse of civilization, so do not use them.

How can you tell if a container has been used to contain hazardous materials? Trust your nose and other senses. If the container smells funky or has a chemical smell, or a greasy or oily texture to the touch, it is probably dangerous and should NOT be used. Running your finger along the bottom of a container, where its content is most likely to have collected and dried, is a bit dangerous to do, but is another way to test the residue in a previously used barrel. If your finger has an oily or gritty feel, and/or has an odd smell after you have run across the surface inside, do not use the container. If you lick your finger and it has a foul or chemical taste (risky and not advised, but effective), do not use the container. Ultimately, when in doubt, do not use the container.

Algae in water, mold, and bacteria in a poorly or improperly sealed and maintained container can also become health problems and result in poisoning, illness or death. Regular inspection and cleaning with soap and water, followed by a thorough rinsing, can eliminate those problems, provided the survivor has the resources to do so. If not, do not use the barrel.

Finding Drinking Water in the City

There are more sources of potable water in the city than you might realize, especially in the early days of the Zombie Apocalypse. For example, in the first few weeks, every bathroom has a **toilet tank**. The typical toilet tank holds 1-3 gallons (3.8 to 11.4 liters) of water. This is the same water that comes out of the faucet. If you are concerned about germs and bacteria, boil the water or use another form of filtration and purification prior to drinking.

Another water source most people do not consider, but which is found inside nearly *every* home, apartment, office, and warehouse, is the **water heater**. The typical heater contains 40-60 gallons (151 to 227 liters) of water waiting to be had. **HOWEVER**, be certain to shut off the water at the main before draining the potable water from the tank, or the heater automatically fills up with municipal water that is likely to be contaminated within a few days after the water treatment plant goes offline.

Likewise, old homes and some old business districts in the older cities may still use **steam heat and radiators**. For example, many of the office buildings, apartment houses, and businesses in downtown *Detroit* have steam heat and radiators (and there are steam tunnels under the downtown streets from the riverfront to the mid-town New Center area that may be used as a method of underground travel or a secret hiding place). Each radiator holds up to a gallon (3.8 liters) of water that can be tapped by survivors. Similarly, water can be drained from the pipes of apartment buildings and office buildings, but first turn the water off at the main and drain the pipes from ground or basement level to maximize the amount of water to be acquired. Shutting the water off at the main applies to all of the above situations. Otherwise, the pipes, toilets, and water heater tanks may refill with the contaminated water from the unmanned municipal water treatment plant, at least until it shuts down completely, probably in less than a week. Water from most treatment facilities becomes contaminated shortly after the collapse of civilization and most everything

we take for granted, clean water, electricity, cell phone signals, etc., shuts down in a matter of days.

The most obvious and safest source of water in urban environments, of course, is **bottled water** and **beverages** once sold retail for consumer use. Stores and retail outlets of all types and sizes, from gas stations, convenience stores, and pharmacies to supermarkets, shopping malls, and warehouse clubs (that sell food and beverages in bulk), are likely to contain many cases of bottled water, perhaps even many pallets of bottled water as well as juices, soda, food, and other commodities. HOWEVER, these locations along with hospitals, police stations, restaurants, and military bases, are the first places survivors – good and evil – flock to in the hope of finding water and provisions.

While people are fighting and killing each other over supplies at the local big box store or corner gas station, the canny survivor is breaking into the local cinema-plex, or an office building, factory, machine shop, or warehouse in a quiet industrial park. All probably off the beaten path with fewer zombies and other people to worry about, because these locations are often overlooked by most people.

Offices, office buildings, warehouses, machine shops, factories, printers, hospitals, clinics, schools, college campus buildings, movie theaters, and most businesses are all likely to have 1D4x10 cases of bottled water plus at least a few cases of additional, assorted beverages such as bottles and cans of soda-pop, juice, tea, lemonade, etc., all kept in a supply room or food locker. Some facilities such as factories and warehouses may have 1D6 *pallets* of water (56-72 cases of bottled water per pallet, 24-48 bottles per case depending on the size of the bottles) tucked away in a corner of the warehouse or in a storage area. Many factories, machine shops and warehouses purchase 1D6 pallets (or more) of bottled water because they get a good quantity discount and often stock up with enough for a 1-3 month supply for their workforce.

Most offices and warehouse facilities also have 1D4 **refrigerators**, and/or an additional 1D4 vending machines in the lunch room/kitchen or on the floor of the warehouse (double or triple that amount in a very large facility like a car or truck factory). Some large office buildings, warehouses, schools, colleges, and hospitals may have a full-service cafeteria or one or two restaurants inside the building, with a walk-in freezer and storage locker. But even beverages left in an ordinary refrigerator may offer 1D6x10 bottles/cans of water or soda and other soft drinks. While food in a refrigerator spoils in less than a week after losing power (depending on the food, environment, and outside temperature), bottled water, soft drinks, and canned goods keep for a long time, especially in an insulated refrigerator whether it has power or not. Most drinks and boxed and canned food items remain safe and edible for 10-24 months, sometimes 50% to 300% longer, depending on what it is and its immediate environment. Of course, bottled water and soda are also found in most every kitchen and pantry across North America.

Do not forget about **water coolers** and their oversized bottles of water. Many offices, businesses, and small shops have water coolers and 1D4+4 additional 4 gallon (15 liter) replacement bottles for each water cooler. These large replacement bottles are probably tucked away in a storage closet or kitchen area. Water cooler bottles are sealed and though heavy (8 pounds/3.6 kg per gallon of water), are easily transported and reusable!

Even a year or three after the collapse of civilization, such goods should still be available here and there. The reason is sim-

ple. The Zombie Apocalypse is such that 80-95% of the human population in most places is wiped out in a matter of a week or two after the Wave. People got sick, died, and turned so quickly, that resources were not used up. Store shelves and warehouse aisles and home kitchens are left fully stocked.

Since the zombies feed upon the living, they have no need for the water, food, and other resources of the living. The greater the population density of a region, the fewer survivors – making cities and suburban sprawl treasure troves for water, food, and supplies waiting to be taken.

If only it were that easy.

Such population centers have the greatest number of zombies. *The hungry dead*, as Brad Ashley has become fond of calling the zombies, are everywhere, and always looking for the living to feed upon. The modern, civilized world we once knew has been transformed into the land of the dead. Provisions on the shelves of stores, in homes and apartments and places of business, even if gathered up by frantic and fleeing survivors, may not have made it out of the city or even beyond the front door as people fell prey to the hungry dead. This has left ample amounts of water, food, and supplies everywhere. The challenge is finding and retrieving them in an actively hostile environment that is literally crawling with creatures that hunt and kill the living with alarming efficiency and overwhelming numbers.

As a result, while one or several survivors may find the same cache of water, food, and/or other vital and valuable resources, perhaps in abundance, they need to use small, squad-size groups deploying stealth and hit and run tactics to get in and out with small batches of goods each visit. This requires numerous trips and probably only whatever supplies they can carry or throw into the back of a vehicle before they have to flee. They are forced to leave water and supplies behind every trip, and may drop or stash items along the way as they hurry out or have to fight their way in and out of the locations.

Few survivor groups entering an urban neighborhood or city know the lay of the land, and seldom have the luxury of time to do a careful and meticulous excavation and collection of supplies. So even a place that may already have been broken into and scavenged multiple times, is likely to still contain a wealth of resources. If not water or food, other things from clothes and blankets to tools, fuel, medical supplies, camping gear, weapons, ammo, etc. And sometimes, even if there are only a few bottles of water or a few cans of food that fell and rolled under a desk or sofa, it can be a lifesaver for that person on that day.

FOOD IN THE CITY

Food has been discussed in the **Dead Reign® RPG**, but let's revisit some key points of consideration and some new aspects specific to city life, both big cities and suburban neighborhoods.

Within 3-5 years after the Wave, most preexisting, pre-apocalypse food supplies will either have been exhausted or spoiled. Meats and dairy products go bad within mere hours after refrigeration is lost. Dried, smoked, or salted meats last 4-12 months. Fresh produce that isn't preserved in some way (vacuum sealed, canned, bottled, dehydrated, etc.) spoils in a matter of days, with apples and citrus fruits keeping the longest (2-5 weeks), and root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and onions, when stored in a cool location, lasting 4-10 weeks, sometimes longer, sometimes

less depending on environmental conditions. Sealed cheese can keep for up to 6 months, but only 2-3 weeks after the package is opened.

Most dried goods such as grains, oats, rice, nuts, peas, and beans remain safe and edible for 1-3 years when kept in a cool, dry location, but are likely to become unpalatable 18 months beyond two years. Ramen noodles and dried fruit in sealed containers are only good for 6-12 months. Dried pasta and crackers last 1-2 years, possibly 3-5 years if stored in a dry, cool location.

Most commercially canned goods, generally, remain edible for 1-3 years. When stored in the right way, in a cool, dry, dark location, canned goods can remain safe to consume for 3-6 years. **Note:** A warning sign that canned food has gone bad is when a can has swollen at the top, bottom, or side, or the can is covered in rust. When in doubt, do not eat. Military MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) last for approximately 7 years from their production.

Frozen food and frozen canned goods can, theoretically, keep indefinitely as long as they remain sealed airtight and completely frozen the entire time. That said, they are probably subject to freezer burn and not suitable for consumption after 3-5 years, or may be edible but will have lost a significant degree of flavor and texture. Frozen food becomes ruined by exposure to moisture, heat, fluctuating temperatures, and being thawed out and refrozen. Again, trust your senses and when in doubt, do not eat the food. If the food smells odd or tastes bad, do not eat it!

Wild Food, Nature's Bounty

Our ancient ancestors were hunters and gatherers. This is the "gathering" portion of survival. Though seasonal, there are many edible wild plants and fruits found throughout the city, suburbs, and neighborhoods. We are talking about apple, pear, plum, cherry, and citrus trees, wild grapes and raspberries, elderberries, mulberry trees, nuts, and certain edible mushrooms. Moreover, many **weeds** are edible (usually the young leaves and stem, seldom the root or seeds, but sometimes the root or the flowers). Edible weeds include dandelions, alfalfa, amaranth, asparagus (yes, it's a weed), bee balm, bull thistle (root and young leaves), cat-tails, clover, chicory, chickweed, creeping Charlie, field pennycress, fireweed, garlic mustard, mallow, the leaves of the plantain weed, pineapple weed, prickly pear cactus, purslane, sunflower seeds, tea plant, white mustard, wild leek, wood sorrel, and others! There are easily 60 different edible weeds found in North America alone.

The secret is knowing what those plants are and being able to accurately identify them, because eating the wrong plant or berry, or the wrong part of an edible plant, can poison people, making them sick or killing them. With the Internet down, books with photographs, and people with firsthand knowledge and experience are necessary. You might be surprised by the level of knowledge a backyard gardener who is just an ordinary city boy or girl, hunter, nature lover, or hobbyist may know about plants and edible weeds. The same goes for survivalists, preppers, and students of botany.

Urban Gardens. Many cities, especially older cities like Detroit, Milwaukee, and others, have started programs to reduce ugly, urban blight by turning empty lots and fields into community gardens. Other cities, including New York City, have rooftop gardens and some people living in apartments may have window ledge or balcony gardens. Tomatoes, beans, cucumbers,

and herbs do well on a balcony. Likewise, many homes in urban settings have backyard gardens. Though it is illegal in most cities to have chickens and livestock, that doesn't always stop people from keeping a few chickens and a rooster, or ducks, and other small livestock that can be concealed in the garage or basement. Some suburban cities and towns where a homeowner may have a few to several acres of land allow their residents to do a little farming, have barns and chicken coops, dog breeding, and keep horses and basic livestock such as chickens, ducks, geese, goats, sheep, pigs, and dairy cows, provided the owner has proper space and facilities for them. Of course, as the communities become more rural, there is more farmland, orchards, farms and livestock (and fewer zombies), but you might be surprised how close some of these are to modern cities and their suburbs.

Since the Wave happens in the winter, gardens that require tilling and seeding every spring will remain mostly fallow, however, **perennial crops** will automatically regrow. Common perennial crops include rhubarb, asparagus, kale, garlic, globe artichokes, horseradish, leeks (a type of onion), malabar Spinach, miner's lettuce, potatoes, raspberries, black raspberries, sorrel, strawberries, scarlet runner beans, and sylvetta arugula, among others. (Also see weeds, above.) In addition, the storage shed, garage, or basement of homes and community urban gardens may contain *seeds* and bulbs, in anticipation of next spring's crops as well as gardening tools, one or more wheelbarrows, fertilizer, etc. Nurseries may also have greenhouses with young plants already being grown as well as seeds and supplies. Unfortunately, unless maintained, grass and weeds will crowd out many of these perennial crops within 3-6 years.

Growing Crops

Since the majority of existing food stores are gone or ruined within 2-3 years after society's collapse, local food production will need to be established to ensure long-term survival. Many Safe Havens start growing staple crops (potatoes, beans, tomatoes, carrots, etc.) to supplement their food reserve as soon as weather permits.

While outlying rural areas may provide ample tracts of arable land for farming, fishing, and/or hunting, urban spaces are much more limited. Though there may be plots of open land for community gardens and many backyards that can be turned into cropland and vegetable gardens, street-level farming is a tremendously dangerous proposition in the city post-Zombie Apocalypse.

The zombies aside, these plots are much more likely to be the target of raids by other survivors and bandits unless guarded or somehow camouflaged and concealed, and hordes of roving Slouchers can trample and destroy crops, not to mention natural pests such as rodents and insects. Death Cults and Retro-Savages may usurp such gardens and urban farms for themselves, or deliberately destroy them to undermine rivals and people they consider their enemies. Moreover, the presences of gardens and farm crops is a sure indication of a survivor community nearby. The more crops, the larger the survivor community. This is bad because there are plenty of self-serving and wicked people from rogues, bandits, and raiders to Retro-Savages and Death Cultists on the lookout for people to raid, rob, blackmail, enslave, and kill. Others who believe in the law of the jungle have no qualms about robbing and hurting others to survive, and some may be



looking for a Safe Haven to invade and take over, imposing themselves as the new, brutal leaders.

With traditional farming methods not being an option for most city-dwelling survivors, alternative means of farming and food production ultimately become a must for any residents who remain. As noted earlier, limited amounts of food may be grown indoors and on balconies and windowsills with little difficulty, assuming sunlight isn't too restricted, they are tended to, and a means of irrigation is worked out. **HOWEVER**, such visible gardens tell Thinker zombies, Death Cultists and other bad guys not only that survivors they can plunder are nearby, but where they live. Or at least, where they come every day or two to water their plants and vegetables.

Rooftop gardens are a much better option for city survivors. On any building higher than four stories, people on the ground will not be able to see crops/plants, even from a distance, and cannot see what exists on the top of skyscrapers and other tall buildings. Up on the flat rooftops of tall buildings, no one on the ground can see the rooftop garden or the survivor community living there, and the people are out of the sight and sensing range of the dull-witted zombies. Only from another equally tall or higher vantage point can anyone see the rooftop. Most survivors seldom risk going up more than six or seven stories unless they are being pursued or desperately searching for supplies, and even then, most scavengers do not go up to the top floor or the roof. While

tall buildings and skyscrapers can make unique living spaces, most outsiders and Gutter Rats find tall buildings, especially office buildings, apartment buildings, and department stores, too dangerous to explore and scavenge. Such large buildings are likely to contain dozens to hundreds of zombies on every floor and in every hallway, stairwell, apartment, office, and room, or may contain a deranged band of hostile city survivors living inside. Most survivors live outside the cities and neighborhoods in the rural outskirts, farmland, and wilderness, and consider anyone who dares to make a go at it in the city to be crazy and dangerous.

To grow a lot of food in the city, often the best option is an open-air rooftop garden and water collection and irrigation system. The crops get plenty of fresh air, sunlight and rain, and there is ample space for a large range of food crops. Still, there are challenges with rooftop farming, including logistics such as hauling soil to the rooftop, acquiring the seeds or live young plants to grow the necessary food plants, supplying regular watering/irrigation and fertilizer, etc. Making sure the roof has the structural integrity to support hundreds or thousands of pounds of soil and other equipment without collapsing is also important. The same goes for rooftop water collection and storage, and people who live under the stars on the rooftops themselves (and usually the 1-5 floors below). Shortly after the Wave and the rising of the dead, most buildings should be structurally sound and able to handle a farm or a survivor community that covers the entire roof.

However, over time, the structural integrity will weaken. Smart survivors should keep an eye out for holes, cracks and leaks in the roof and patch them to sustain their way of life. To do otherwise could compromise the roof within 1-6 years and could see portions begin to collapse. Such damage and cave-ins will result in the loss of precious food resources, the ability to grow more on that established roof farm, and could fall in on survivors living on the next one or two floors below. Severe damage like that could kill a number of people and require serious work to repair their living place or signal that it is time to move.

Most people, including city folk, are familiar with the basics of gardening and growing vegetables and herbs, but as noted earlier, the trick is finding the seeds or extracting living plant sprouts from elsewhere, and transporting them back to the rooftop garden. Cultivating seeds for next year's crops will be just as important as tending to the plants themselves. Growing food becomes increasingly important 18-24 months after the Zombie Apocalypse as preexisting packaged foods spoil and are no longer a viable resource even when they are found. It also provides a means of trade with other survivor communities and Safe Havens.

Hydroponic gardening is growing plants with liquid nutrient solutions instead of soil. While this presents another potential avenue for food production, hydroponics requires the knowhow or written instructions and specialized equipment, a reliable water supply, and a source of electricity for UV lighting for indoor farming, but it can be done.

Once crops are harvested, preservation methods are a means of prolonging their storage. Refrigeration is one of the most popular modern methods to preserve food, but requires either a climate with sustained sub-freezing temperatures, access to reliable electricity to run standard refrigeration units, or an absorption refrigerator that runs on a fuel like propane or solar energy. In some temperate climates like the midwestern United States or mountainous regions the world over, cold cellars packed with ice during winter months may be able to keep provisions cold well into the summer months.

Canning/vacuum sealing has been in use since the early 19th Century, and was later refined so that people could prepare and preserve foods in their own homes. Home canning was experiencing a resurgence in popularity just prior to the Wave, so supplies such as Mason jars, laminate vacuum pouches, and preservative additives are relatively commonplace in many homes and retail outlets that cater to the home. Food may be prepared in a number of ways for canning, including heat-treatment like boiling, brining (soaking in a salt solution), and acidic additives (pickling), all intended to limit the growth of microorganisms.

There are different types of canning, but the two most common are the *boiling water bath canning* method for high acidic foods including fruits and properly pickled tomatoes and vegetables; and *pressure canning* for low acidic foods such as the preserving of meat, poultry, seafood, and vegetables. Both require heat, with pressure canning requiring higher heat (240 Fahrenheit/116 C or higher) to destroy microorganisms that spoil food, but only pressure canning is capable of destroying the microorganism responsible for *botulism food poisoning* in meat and vegetables, which can be fatal. While cooler boiling kills the botulism bacteria, they can form spores that survive and grow, contaminating the food with deadly botulinum toxin. The only way to destroy the spores is to pressure cook the canned food at the higher temperature.

Canning is most often used to preserve fruit, vegetables, and meat. The making of fruit into jam and jelly, tomatoes and peppers into tomato and chili sauce, is also a way to preserve and can certain fruits and vegetables, rather than canning them whole.

Stored in the right way, home canned goods can remain safe to consume for up to 3-5 years when stored in a cool, dry, dark location. However, most canned pickles, vegetables, and fruits taste best when eaten within 6-18 months. After two years they may begin to go bad.

Dehydration is another technique that includes sun-drying, smoking, and freeze-drying. It works by removing moisture, which inhibits the growth of mold, bacteria, and other such contaminants. Dehydration can be used to preserve meats, fruits, vegetables, grains, and edible mushrooms. Stored properly, dehydrated meat will keep for up to two months, and fruit will store safely for up to 5 years, as will flour and other ground grains. Soft grains like barley and rolled oats will keep for 8 years, while dehydrated hard grains like corn and wheat will last for 10-12 years. Beans, vegetables, rice, and pasta store safely for 8-10 years and dehydrated dairy like powdered milk for up to 15 years.

Salt-curing and sugar-curing also work by absorbing moisture from the food to be stored, and are used primarily to preserve fruit (sugar-curing), meat, and vegetables. Like sun-drying, it is an ancient practice that can be accomplished with minimal equipment. In fact, it was the primary means of food preservation in colonial America. Access to the salt may serve as a limiting factor, though, with around 40 pounds (18 kg) needed per person yearly to preserve enough food to meet nutritional needs. Alcohol pulls water out of food as well, and is traditionally used for preserving fruit, while fermentation can be used to generate alcohols and acids directly from the food being preserved.

Proper storage of preserved foods is of paramount importance when ensuring a safe food supply. Sunlight, fluctuating temperatures, moisture, vermin, and outside contamination are all bad and the primary threats to provisions. Warm, damp environments encourage the growth of biological contaminants like bacteria and insect larvae. Cool, dry, dark storage is ideal for extending the life of all preserved foods. This is why in decades past people had a pantry in the basement or root cellar dug into the ground.

Vermin such as rats, mice, rabbits, possums, raccoons, and insects may destroy packaging to get at the food inside, leaving it tainted with feces, eggs, and bacterial contamination, and exposing it to air and additional environmental contamination. Chemicals and strong radiation may also penetrate storage containers and make supplies unsafe to consume.

One final consideration is the security of food stores, as raiders, thieves, Gutter Rats, and other low-lives as well as starving and desperate survivors will plunder any stored provisions they may find. Cultists, Retro-Savages, and Thinker Zombies may do the same, or outright destroy them to undermine rivals and enemies, or worse, they may poison/contaminate supplies in an attempt to destroy groups of survivors and rival Safe Havens.

Fishing in the City

Many cities and towns have been established along or near lakes and rivers, and have parks and nature preserves with streams, ponds, and wetlands within their confines. Some states like Kentucky, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and many oth-

ers in the Midwest and East and West Coasts, as well as much of southern and eastern Canada, and southern Mexico, have numerous ponds, streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands scattered throughout each State or Province with one or several bodies of water in or near almost every city and suburb. Likewise, most parks and campgrounds throughout the USA are built around bodies of water for fishing and boating, and fun at freshwater beaches. Many parks and campgrounds are very near (within 2-20 miles/3.2 to 32 km) cities, particularly smaller rural cities and towns.

Many of the cities have parks, nature trails, and small, natural rivers, lakes, and set-aside wetlands and nature preserves. All of which become overgrown after just one spring and summer. That is good, because fields of tall grass, wildflowers and weeds attract animals, particularly game animals like quail, pheasants, ducks, geese, rabbits, raccoons, possums, muskrats, etc., and provide cover for survivors.

It is also bad, because zombies are attracted by the wildlife, especially noisy geese, and the vegetation also provides them with cover, particularly for Crawlers and small zombies. Moreover, children who died and rose as zombies often retain a faint memory of going to play at the park and have a tendency to return and linger around playgrounds, schoolyards, parks, and beaches. One or several small zombies are easy to go unseen among the tall grass and brush until they lunge out to attack, growling and moaning.

Wetlands or marshlands, even if a small area or a man-made pond that has gone to seed, offer the same wide range of game fowl and animals noted in the paragraph above, as well as fish in their shallow waters, frogs (think frog legs), crayfish (not just edible but delicious), and in some parts of the country, alligators and snapping turtles, both good eating. Again, many industrial parks have small ponds or are located near a small wetland, often an undeveloped portion of land within or near the industrial park.

In theory, city survivors can go fishing with a line and pole, fly fishing, weir/cage fishing (viable in some streams), spear fishing, and even noodling (catching fish with their bare hands) in shallow ponds, streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. The problem, especially in the city and suburbs, but also in rural areas and wilderness regions, is with so many zombies on the prowl, it is difficult to fish out in the open or to stay at any one place – fishing by whatever means – for very long without attracting the attention of a few zombies. Bodies of water are by their nature an open area, so any living human being standing along the shore or in the shallows is quite visible. The zombies that notice the living start to moan as they approach and the next thing they know, the fishermen are trying to escape a convergence of the hungry dead. To avoid being noticed, some fishermen set their lines and retreat to a nearby hideout or a huntsman's blind, and go out to periodically check to see if they have caught something.

Going out on a boat may be an option for survivors living off a lake, river, or an ocean shore. However, the main problem is that they can be seen and tracked on the water for miles away and may lead bad people right to their doorstep, or find themselves cut off from shore by a group of wandering zombies. Fishing boats are also vulnerable to the weather, the waves, and other people.

Hunting in the Zombie Apocalypse

The presence of zombies creates an unusual and dangerous situation for the living. One, the dead hunt the living, so hunters of animals must be constantly vigilant for the risen dead stalking

them. Two, the smell of blood from a hunter's successful kill is likely to attract zombies, as will noise like gunfire or running through a field. Three, zombies prey on all life energy, so the hundreds of millions of them across North America are also hunting and killing the same animals people hunt for food and survival.

Large, slow animals, including domesticated cattle and livestock, are the most vulnerable to zombies. Many animals, particularly predators, instinctively display warning signs, snorting, growling, barking, stomping and scratching the dirt with their feet, etc., all of which are intended to scare and chase prey away. Animals, particularly livestock that has run free, are used to people backing off when they display these warnings and signs of aggression, but zombies don't, and most animals have not yet learned this. Sadly, many animals hold their ground. As the zombie comes steadily closer, an aggressive animal or one defending its mate, young or lair, will charge and attack the approaching "person" when he comes too close. Again, a living person is likely to slowly move away, or be so injured by the animal's attack as to be incapacitated or dying. Against a zombie, however, such an attack is almost certain death for the animal.

The fearless zombie does not turn or flee, nor dodge, as the beast pounces with slashing claws and vicious bites – or charges and rams – at what it thinks is a living person. The moaning zombie responds by grabbing at the animal and holding on to it with Supernatural Strength. Then rips at the beast's flesh with its own teeth and powerful fingers and hands. The zombie feels no pain or fear, and holds on tight, preventing the beast from escaping. Worse, it has been moaning since it first saw the living creature. The zombie doesn't have to make the kill itself via bites, pounding fists or strangulation, all it needs to do is hold on, moan, and wait. The monster's iron grip and dead weight becomes a trap and an anchor, preventing the beast from escaping. Its terrible moan and sounds of combat attracting other zombies within earshot or line of sight. While the one hungry dead holds on to the animal, the others converge. The confused animal does not understand why its claws and bites and kicks or goring attacks are not forcing this strange human to let go and run away or die.

Panicked, because it is held fast, the animal struggles to pull free rather than kill its attacker. Unless the animal is able to inflict sufficient damage to the zombie – ideally to the head and throat, or the limbs holding onto it – it cannot break free of the monster's grasp. Even if the animal is large and strong and finally does manage to break free, other zombies are likely to come upon it and attack. Or the circle of convergence is tight enough to prevent escape without capture. The large animal tries to run, but another zombie grabs hold of it, then another and another. Each attacking until the beast is dead and all the nearby hungry dead share in the P.P.E./life energy released at the moment of its death.

Predators and large animals no longer have the advantage of fear and brute strength. Large, agile animals such as horses, deer, moose and cattle may not run away soon enough before a zombie horde encircles and converges upon them. Though many animals have the advantage of speed, dodging, and leaping, it will not be enough against hundreds of encroaching zombies in a circle of doom. All it takes is for one to grab hold and weigh the animal down.

Animals whose natural response is to flee rather than fight have a better chance of escape. Roll to dodge as usual whenever zombies lunge or grab at them. The defender/dodging animal

must beat the strike roll of the zombie (or one or a few rolls for a group of zombies).

High roll wins. Defender (in this case the fleeing/dodging animal) wins ties. Breaking free from a Sloucher's or most any zombie's grasp is difficult, especially if the monster has grabbed the animal by its fur, the nape of its neck/throat, horn, antler, leg, wing, or tail.

Once a zombie grabs hold of an animal, caterwauling, flapping, kicking, claw strikes, bites, and butting attacks from the animal are NOT likely to cause the zombie to let go because it feels no pain nor fear. If the animal should inflict enough damage to reduce Hit Points below zero, the zombie simply lets go and falls to the ground.

To see if an animal manages to squeeze, pull, or buck itself free, roll 1D20; a roll of 15 or higher is a successful escape. Do not forget the zombie is likely to be holding on with one hand and striking the animal with the other, or biting at it, and may inflict damage to the poor creature before it can escape, leaving the animal lame, bleeding, or critically injured; G.M. discretion. **Reference Note:** See the **Monsters & Animals Fantasy RPG Sourcebook** for descriptions of 200+ real animals complete with their S.D.C., Hit Points, Spd, and the damage they inflict with their attacks. Otherwise, wing it.

This makes animals more wary of "people" in general and quick to flee when they are spotted. And the use of traps and pitfalls to catch animals is pointless unless they are checked on a frequent basis. Otherwise, the trapped animal falls prey to one or more zombies.

Small Game and City Survival

In rural areas, hunting large game such as deer and wild hogs and runaway livestock remains a viable option. In the cities of the dead, not so much. Without the sounds of vehicles and machines and people, animals return to cities, but are either run off by, or fall prey to, zombies as explained above. Still, there is large game to be had from time to time, and parks and places around drinking water will attract all manner of beasts (and people). And as noted earlier, there are likely to be many places where wildlife can be found in and around the cities and suburbs. Of course, too much hunting and killing in one area, especially a small area, will cause wildlife to find a new place to live, and certain animals migrate or hibernate with the changing seasons, making game animals unavailable during certain times of the year.

So, can a city dwelling survivor bag a deer or other large animal on occasion? Yes, but not often.

More likely a city survivor needs to rely upon **small game**. Before the fall of civilization and the rise of the dead, *ducks, geese, wild turkeys, squirrels, rabbits, possums, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, cougars, bears*, and all manner of wildlife were finding their way back into the cities and suburbs. Spotting a mother deer and one or two young, or a buck standing on the side of the highway, to a small herd of 4-12 crossing the street, was an increasingly common sight in the suburbs of big cities from Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Toronto, to Denver, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Seattle, and across the country. (**Note:** The Palladium Books offices in Westland, Michigan, are 25 miles [40 km] from *downtown Detroit*, and in one of many, continual suburban neighborhoods that melt seamlessly from one into the other without end or any sort of apparent *wilderness* separating them.

It is all a far-reaching urban sprawl of homes and small business districts. Yet, ducks and flocks of geese are a constant sight and nuisance in the industrial parks, playgrounds, strip malls, and apartment complexes in the area. Rabbits and deer are a regular sight and our animal neighbors include squirrels, possums, raccoons, skunks, and small rafters/flocks of 3-12 wild turkeys. At least we thought they were small rafters. Very recently, we were stunned to see 50 turkeys – our next-door neighbors counted them – parading down the street, single file like an army platoon. We never realized turkeys gathered in such large groups or that so many lived around us. It was a treat to see and the parade brought our business neighbors out of their offices and stopped traffic. To us city folk, this was a sight to behold. I digress to make the point that there is more wildlife in the suburbs and cities than most people realize. And in the *Zombie Apocalypse*, they are all a valuable source for food if you can catch them without becoming zombie meat yourself. As the suburbs become overgrown to look more like wilderness than city, more animals are drawn to the cities, including downtown areas.)

Added to the mix of potential game animals are cattle and livestock – chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, cows, steers, horses, etc. – that manage to escape into the wild and become feral. This takes place during modern times on a regular basis. For example, Australia has been overrun with rabbits for generations, brought to the land down under by European settlers; feral chickens run amok on the island of Kauai in Hawaii; monkeys and pythons proliferate in the Florida Everglades; and wild pigs (not wild boar) are found in the woodlands of various American States. Though the hungry dead prefer to feed upon humans, they hunt all living animals, and the large animals from cattle and sheep to dogs and cats are all on their menu. Likewise, big, slow, and gentle animals such as cattle and sheep are not likely to survive for long, falling victim to coyotes, wolves, dog packs, and other predators as well as zombies. Thankfully, animals slain by zombies do not rise from the dead. *Flesh-Eating Zombies* and *Fast-Attack Zombies* are among the greatest threats to animals, because they are fast and stealthy, and hunters by nature. They also prey on small game and people.

Small game animals are a city survivor's best option to hunt. There are the obvious animals like deer, squirrels, rabbits, possums, ducks, and geese, but there are a number of animals that may not immediately come to mind as viable game for survivors of the apocalypse. Among those animals are feral chickens, wild turkeys, muskrats, and as noted earlier, frogs (for their legs), crayfish/crawdads/freshwater lobsters, and certain types of snakes and game birds like quail and pheasants. All of which are likely to be found near water, wetlands, ponds, and overgrown fields found in and near many industrial parks, city parks, playgrounds, nature trails, and along railroad tracks, especially now since the trains have stopped running. Pheasants and depending on the part of the country, quail, foxes, wild pigs, wild boar, rattlesnakes (taste like chicken), young alligators, and coyotes may also be found in these places.

Not to upset animal lovers and pet owners, but when food is scarce, cats and dogs can also be eaten when necessary for survival. Other animals that civilized people no longer consider to be on the menu, but which abound in urban areas, are **doves** and **pigeons**. Pigeons used to be a food staple as recently as the turn of the Twentieth Century. (There is a reason the large, delicious passenger pigeon went extinct by 1920.)

Pigeons, many other birds, and small game animals can be hunted with *bow weapons, javelins, slings, slingshots*, and *pellet guns* which are quiet compared to more high-powered firearms. And for those with the knowledge or who learn from books or trial and error, they may be captured with snares, nets, and traps. Small animals such as rabbits, possums, raccoons, rodents, cats, and small dogs can also be caught using snares and traps. All of these methods and weapons may be preferable to firearms because they are quiet. Gunfire always attracts zombies and people in the area. Bait for traps will depend on the type of animal one is hunting. Cage traps are available at some rural hardware stores and may be found in some people's homes in the suburbs (those who have had problems with animals like feral cats and raccoons), but in the city are most likely to be found only at animal control shelters and Humane Society facilities.

Pigeon Farms. Rooftop survivor colonies can breed and raise pigeons in coops, though the smell of their waste and their constant cooing might be too much for some people. When that is the case, the easy solution is to raise them on a different one of the upper floors or on a neighboring rooftop connected by rope bridges and zip lines. Many rooftop communities have pigeon coops. The luckiest and most resourceful will have **chickens** and a rooster, and enjoy fresh chicken eggs and poultry on a regular basis. Chickens and their eggs have been a vital and basic food in the diet of humans for many millennia.

Pigeons in the city may attract rats which feed on their eggs, young, and the birds themselves. However, though disgusting by many people's modern standards, **rats** are also a viable *small game animal to hunt and trap* in the city. Not just to hunt for food, but to raise as livestock for human consumption.

Rat Farms are easy to establish and maintain. A female rat can mate and have a litter of 8-12 babies every 20-30 days. A rat reaches full size in 6-7 months, but females as young as six weeks old can become pregnant and bear young! And the rodents eat almost anything, so they are easy to feed with table scraps and spoiled produce (and even dead people). Their fast reproduction and short life cycle, and their ability to be raised indoors, mean rats can be raised as a source of food in large quantities, very quickly. During the long, cold winters of many cities, an indoor rat farm might become the only fresh food source available. For people who cannot stomach the idea, rat meat is easily disguised and can be shredded, diced, or chopped into small chunks for soups, stews, tacos, meat pies, or ground like hamburger or used in sausage. It can also be mixed with other meats. The trick with rats is keeping them contained. Though they can be allowed to run around one or more apartments or offices, they chew and gnaw on just about everything, including wood and plaster walls, and may chew their way to freedom even with regular care. Rats in the walls and on the loose can become a serious problem as they will chew on clothing, furniture, wood, cardboard, paper, electrical wires, get into food, and can carry disease and fleas that carry disease. This can be mitigated by breeding domesticated rats like the ones sold as pets and used for scientific research.

Guinea pigs can also be bred as food animals. Rabbits may also be an option but they are a more delicate animal and much more difficult to keep in captivity whether outdoors on a rooftop or indoors.

Bug Farms: And then there are insects. You never see this in the movies or books, but eating insects is a viable option. Fried insects are a staple in Thailand, Mexico, and many other countries.

Edible insects include crickets, grasshoppers, locusts, carpenter ants, termites, cockroaches, cicadas, dragonflies, June bugs (both as larva and the beetle), housefly pupae (cocoon phase), agave worms, earthworms, meal worms, wax worms, tomato and tobacco hornworm (a large moth caterpillar), pill bugs, and even wasps, tarantulas and scorpions, are edible and a high source of protein and fiber; more than 500 species in all.

When you are starving and food is scarce, these bugs may begin to look much more appetizing, and they are quiet compared to livestock and mammals when raised on a bug farm. It may surprise most people, but many insects actually have a nice flavor. Some taste like pine nuts or have an earthy flavor, and the tomato hornworm tastes rather like the tomato it feeds upon, while some other insects have a sweetish or fruity flavor, and a few taste like crab. For eating, there are ways to disguise the insect appearance such as chopping them up, coating them in something else, grinding them up and using it as a crumb coating on other foods, baking them into cakes and foods, and even ground into a sort of wheat-like powder for cooking and baking, or cooked and eaten like popcorn or a crunchy snack.

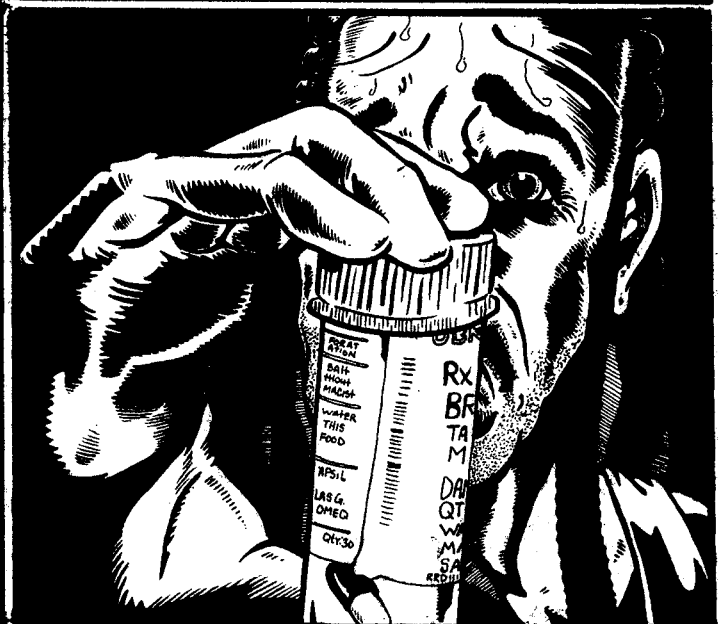
Again, you can grow most insects quickly, quietly, in large numbers, indoors and outdoors, often in a dark environment, and all year long in a suitably heated indoor facility. For some rooftop communities, this may be a great idea, with an entire floor of a building being the designated bug farm and food processing center.

MEDICINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES

While most medications have a shelf life, it is not the same as expiration dates for food. The date printed on most medications in the United States is the furthest date that the manufacturer guarantees the efficacy and safety of the product (typically between 1-5 years), but they can still be good for years after their expiration date. As with food, heat, moisture, and environmental contamination can all ruin medication very quickly. However, research has shown that approximately 90% of medications can be used for 10-15 years after the date of manufacture as long as they are stored properly in a cool, dry environment. Even when they have been unsealed, the drugs may remain viable for up to 2-4 years.

There are medications that do expire relatively quickly, such as antibiotics and insulin. The biggest concern with old antibiotics is *lost effectiveness* as the medication ages and degrades. This can lead to insufficient doses to kill off the bacterial infection, and risks rendering the bacteria resistant to a second course of that antibiotic. General consensus is that most powdered antibiotics such as those in tablets or capsules remain safe and effective for up to three years. For each year past three, there is a 1D6+4% loss in the effectiveness of antibiotics, and they will likely not serve their intended therapeutic purpose after the medication drops below 80%.

Tetracycline is one notable exception to this rule, in that when it breaks down the primary concern is actually liver toxicity. Toxic medication will inflict 1D6 Hit Point damage per dose administered and may have other detrimental side-effects depending on the medication. Note that other medications with



strict dosage requirements such as anti-epileptics and certain cardiac medications won't serve their purpose either when they begin to degrade.

In general, **liquid medication** of all kinds is less stable than powdered and tablet forms. Many liquid medications are preparations of powdered medication mixed with distilled water (like liquid antibiotics), which only last for 7-14 days. Insulin stays viable at room temperature for approximately a month, and 1-2 years if refrigerated. However, a tablet called **Metformin** used to treat Type II Diabetes has an estimated shelf life of at least 4-6 years. **Epinephrine**, used to counteract anaphylactic shock, is another liquid medication that can come contained in an auto-injection syringe. This medication remains effective for at least 4 years in spite of some loss of potency.

Topical medications also have a wide range of stability. Many non-prescription creams and ointments can be safely used for a matter of months after their expiration. However, creams, lotions, and ointments are more susceptible to breaking down in heat and over time. This causes the medication to be distributed unevenly, meaning more carefully blended prescriptions stop being viable right at or very near their expiration date. The implication is that many topical steroids and the like only remain useful for 6-12 months.

What this all means for the acquisition of medications after society's collapse is that those stored in pharmacies, dispensaries, hospitals, medical factories and warehouses, ambulances, and medical kits throughout cities, as well as those stored in emergency shelters, homes, and other places that are cool, dark and dry, may remain useful for years. However, certain medications will be in short supply much more quickly than others. Survivors with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, heart conditions, and transplant organs, face difficulty in acquiring the drugs they need to sustain their health and may suffer the dire consequences of unavailability or less potent medicine. Fights might start over caches of such life-prolonging medications, with each side trying to save someone they care about or perhaps just attempting to secure such a *valuable commodity* for trade.

One alternative source for commercial, mass produced medications may be local veterinary clinics. Caution is strongly advised when substituting animal medications for human medications, as dose and quality vary. The names of the medications for animals may be entirely different from the human version, causing confusion. Even in the case of drugs with the same active ingredient, many are formulated differently for different physiologies leading to different dosages, potentially harmful additives (at least to humans), and overall lower quality standards. Meds designed for small to medium-sized mammals with a single stomach, like dogs or cats, are the most likely to be compatible with human biology. Even then, only someone with the *Veterinary Science* or *Chemistry: Pharmaceutical* skill will be able to determine the exact safe dosage to use.

Producing new medication is only possible with advanced chemistry skills, and may require other knowledge such as *Botany* to grow and prepare herbal plants and minerals for medicinal purposes. Substances such as antivenom require venom to be extracted from the venomous animal, or a highly specialized process in order to be created. Even someone with the knowhow to produce medicines may not be able to recreate every medicine and may require access to rare compounds and chemicals.

Other medical supplies such as equipment, dressings/bandages, gauze, pads, tape, sutures, syringes, sterile gloves, and the like, may also have shelf lives. For instance, the adhesive on self-sticking bandages may dry up after several years and limit their utility. Nitrile or latex gloves can also dry out, losing their flexibility and becoming prone to tearing with minimal stress. Things like sterile gauze or steel surgical tools may fall victim to moisture.

Also remember that the single-use items that are used in a number of developed nations to reduce infection risk were never designed to be sterilized and re-used. Having to make do with resources limited in such a way causes most health care professionals to suffer a -10% skill penalty to *First Aid*, *Paramedic*, *Medical Doctor*, and related medical, pharmaceutical, and science skills. This penalty increases to -30% for major procedures conducted in a makeshift field hospital or surgical theater unless the professional is used to operating on scant resources and improvised conditions, such as a Military Field Medic. For this reason, military medical personnel and any medical personnel who have performed mission work in less developed nations have an edge after the Wave (*reduce the penalties mentioned by half*).

POWER AND ELECTRICITY

Unless they were environmentally conscious or lived in a disaster-prone area, the average city inhabitant does not give much thought to how the electricity they use is generated. They simply pay their monthly bill if they can and call a phone number to get power restored when it goes out. But after the Wave, the electrical and communications grids of most major cities go down and do not come back up, and most survivors are left in the dark without power and with few easy options for power. This forces survivors to get creative and find other means of producing power.

Power plant generators are the most common source of electricity production, especially for backup or emergency power. The vast majority of power plants work by turning large turbines which use this mechanical energy to produce electrical current. This can be done using combustion of fuel, nuclear fission, or even natural geothermal energy to heat water in a closed system, creating steam pressure to spin the turbines. However, it can also be accomplished more directly using already flowing water like a river (hydroelectricity) and windmills of all sizes.

Unless a Safe Haven community can secure and maintain the operation of a power plant – an ambitious undertaking by most anyone other than a military operation – the usual means of getting power must be replaced. The most readily available alternatives are smaller backup generators. Large generators are built into a number of buildings to ensure they can continue functioning during a normal power outage. Notably, hospitals, police stations, and even a number of high-rise buildings have their own generators to power critical systems (elevators, life-support, etc.) and emergency lighting. Almost all backup generators utilize diesel fuel, natural gas, or another type of combustible fuel to function. Smaller units designed for residential homes will often run on gasoline, kerosene, or even propane. However, this means that to keep the lights on, sources of this fuel have to be available,

which poses its own problems in the world of Dead Reign (see the section on fuel that follows).

The variability of these conditions from day to day means that some type of battery storage is necessary to provide sustained power in times of little or no production. These systems must be carefully managed and the batteries replaced from time to time (which is harder to do with each passing year after the Wave). Effecting major repairs requires the *Electricity Generation* skill. Building new generation systems is only possible with the *Electrical Engineer* skill or a set of detailed plans for a lesser-skilled individual to follow.

While rare, some facilities may have their own dedicated geothermal power source, solar plant, or small nuclear reactor. These are likely major production facilities, medical or university campuses, high-tech research labs, and/or critical government facilities. Even if survivors can gain access to such a rare place, one or more people with the technical knowhow to maintain and repair the power generation system are necessary to keep it running for more than 1D4 years at best. Usually such facilities that aren't destroyed in the chaos of the Wave will already be occupied by remnants of whatever organization originally occupied them and/or governmental personnel who identified them as a strategic resource to hold while trying to survive and rebuild society.

Wind turbines, solar cells, steam, and manual dynamos are all viable alternatives to combustion-driven generators. These sources of electricity face limitations of their own, though. Simply put, power is only generated with these systems if conditions are right. Without direct sunlight, solar cells don't produce any power. Wind turbines rely on some measure of air-flow to do the same, so no power is produced in still and calm atmospheric conditions. Manual dynamos require humans or other animals to expend effort to move a mechanical device like a crank, bicycle pedal, or turnstile to drive a dynamo.

Alternative Sources of Power

Generators may be a short-term alternative, but need fuel, so they are not a sustainable long-term option. Even if a survivor group should, by some miracle, have access to a lot of fuel/energy to power one or more generators, there are other concerns and dangers in the Zombie Apocalypse that may limit or negate the value of a generator.

1. Generators make noise. And noise attracts zombies, other survivors your group may not be able to help without exhausting your own limited resources and threatening your own survival, and it attracts bad guys looking to take what you have by force and bloodshed.

2. The lights provided by your generator also attract the hungry dead, survivors, and bad guys with the same negative results as #1, above. Boarding up, painting over, and completely covering windows may be a solution, provided other precautions are taken to avoid giving away the fact that you have power and presumably resources and shelter all coveted by good and bad survivors alike, and making you a target for smart zombies, Death Cults, and other enemies. Note that in a large building, like a hospital, with emergency generators, it is going to power and light up designated areas, including emergency exit lights, and key locations vital to its operation and people's safety prior to the Zombie Apocalypse. The point being, there may be too many windows, lights, and signs to block or cover without a major, time consum-

ing effort that may be noticed by people and smart zombies. It can be done, but it is not easy.

3. Sound is bad. Even if there was a way to muffle the sound of a generator – or in the case of large buildings with an emergency generator system located on a rooftop or indoors and sound-proofed so it cannot be heard outside – there may be other sounds and other signs that need be contained to prevent bringing trouble to your doorstep. This includes the sounds of your furnace and air-conditioning running and clunking and banging when it turns off, the sound of electric appliances and power tools, recorded entertainment playing a bit too loud, smoke coming from your chimney, the smell of fuel burning, the smell of food cooking on the electric stove, and so on. **Note:** In a dead city devoid of traffic, people and the ambient noise they make, sound carries far. This is why the infrequent cry of an animal, sounds from people, the Zombie Moan, a vehicle, or gunfire, rings far and wide and alerts and attracts zombies and people when that silence is broken. Survival in the big city is tricky business.

On the plus side, electricity via a generator or other means enables survivors to use helpful and expedient power tools, electric lighting, radios, electronic devices, medical devices, rechargeable batteries, remote-operated drones, electric vehicles, and so on. Not to mention, many of the creature comforts of modern-day living such as microwave ovens, electric stoves or hot plates, electric water heaters, furnaces and portable electric heaters, air-conditioning, refrigerators, and various entertainment devices requiring electricity to function. Thus, electricity provides benefits including saving time and effort for survivors performing tasks as mundane as washing clothes and dishes, improving sanitation, allowing for long-range communication, permitting extended food storage and easier cooking methods, and vastly improving morale by enjoying simple pleasures like a hot shower or a good movie to distract from the rigors of living through a Zombie Apocalypse.

Fuels

Butane is a pressurized gas fuel which doesn't liquefy at room temperature. This means that less fuel can be stored in a similar space when compared to propane, making it less attractive as a high-volume energy source. Due to this, butane is primarily used as fuel for small personal items such as lighters, lamps, and camping stoves. Other uses include chemical processing like the production of rubber and blending with other hydrocarbon fuel sources. Butane (and propane) has an indefinite shelflife and can last decades as long as its storage container maintains its integrity.

Charcoal is a slow burning carbon material made for cooking grills, picnics and camping. As long as it is kept dry, it is a combustible material that lasts for years. Bags of it were sold at most hardware and camping supply stores. 1D4 bags of charcoal and lighter fluid are likely to be tucked away in a shed, garage, or basement of most homes along with a patio/BBQ grill and one or two small, portable camping grills.

Coal is ancient plant matter compressed over millions of years into a combustible, sedimentary rock. It ranges from its precursor, known as peat, to anthracite which is the stereotypical black, glossy substance used primarily for space heating. Even peat can be harvested, primarily from bogs and other wetlands, and burnt for fuel. Peat has traditionally been used for home heating and cooking applications in places such as Ireland, Scotland, Russia,

and Germany, but is also burned in power stations to produce electricity.

In the past, coal burning stoves and furnaces existed in many homes, but by the 1960s, most homes and businesses in North America had converted to natural gas and forced air furnace systems from coal burning steam heat. Making coal burning devices virtually nonexistent across most of North America except for some industrial uses. Lignite and sub-bituminous coals are used almost exclusively in power generation and produce the most harmful byproducts when burned. Bituminous coal is the next highest grade, and is not only used for power generation but also for making steel. Anthracite is the highest grade of coal. This glossy, black mineral is primarily burnt as a heating source.

Coal burning fireplaces and sometimes coal stoves mean coal can be found in some hardware stores as well as from coal producing operations, but is not common in most urban environments. In the *Zombie Apocalypse*, coal is most likely to be found in rural areas and from mining operations and even mines that were closed years ago.

Fuel oil generally refers to heavier distillations of crude oil after more volatile fuels have been separated out, though in places like the United Kingdom, the classification also includes diesel fuel and kerosene. Heavier fuel oils are not widely used anymore outside of large oceangoing vessels, various industrial applications, and home heating in some older buildings (more prevalent in the northeastern regions of the U.S.). This is in no small way due to how viscous the oil is, requiring specialized heating equipment to warm it so it can be pumped into a boiler or furnace and burnt. Due to both practical and environmental concerns, this fuel source has been replaced in many instances by natural gas. (See page 34 of **Sourcebook 3: Endless Dead™** for more on vehicle fuels.)

Gasoline. Just like food and medicine, most liquid fuels have a shelflife. Gasoline is covered in the **Dead Reign® RPG**, page 125, and gas and alternative gas engines in **Sourcebook 3: Endless Dead™**, pages 33-34.

Gasoline remains useable for a long time only when properly stored and prepared, but gasoline sitting in the gas tank of an abandoned vehicle is likely to go bad in 2D6 months. Adding a *fuel stabilizer* helps prolong the life of properly stored gas. When gasoline in a sealed metal container is stored in a cool, dry location, it should keep for 2-3 years, possibly longer. When fuel stabilizers are used, it can extend the life for an extra 1D4 years.

The majority of the gasoline in the United States is blended with ethanol. The standard 10% ethanol gas only lasts for about 3-6 months, while pure gasoline is good for around 6-12 months. This is because ethanol not only oxidizes faster than gasoline, but also absorbs moisture that seeps into storage containers more readily than traditional gas. This moisture contamination and loss of combustible components of the fuel eventually mean a standard combustion engine won't ignite the fuel anymore, preventing it from operating. Fuel stabilizing additives can be mixed with fuel to enable it to be stored for 1-4 years at a time and remain viable, though they must be added prior to storing the fuel. Bad gas unsuitable for powering a vehicle still burns when ignited, so it can be used in other, basic ways.

Diesel Fuel: About the same as gasoline. Diesel fuel also has a limited operational life that can be degraded by exposure to air, moisture, heat, and light. While diesel in previous decades

could last for several years (possibly a decade or more), modern varieties have a lower sulfur content which allows microbes to inhabit and multiply in fuel stores. This can rapidly degrade the fuel and prevent it from combusting properly in diesel engines and generators.

When properly stored and treated, modern diesel fuel remains viable for one or two years. Keep your diesel fuel cool and dry and be sure to use diesel stabilizer every 6 months to keep it fresh. Stabilizers add 1D4 years to its life. If any is refined after society's collapse, it is unlikely to be a low-sulfur mixture because it is more complex to produce. Such "new" diesel fuel may last for 10-15 years if stored in an airtight container kept in a cool and dry environment.

Note: Ethanol and methanol are both varieties of alcohol that can be burned as fuel. In fact, gasoline in the U.S. is typically a 10-15% ethanol blend. Some modern engines are designed to run on E85 which is 85% ethanol, and cars running on pure ethanol are common in parts of South America. Methanol is blended with gasoline in Europe and China, with the latter utilizing some vehicles that run on pure methanol.

The most attractive aspect of using alcohol as a fuel is that it is relatively easy to make, with ethanol able to be produced in common stills and methanol by destructive distillation of wood. U.S. cars manufactured before the year 2000 may experience mechanical issues if run on alcohol long-term due to its corrosive nature, and in all cases the MPG is cut by about 30%. A minimum proof of 150 (or 75% alcohol content) is needed to be used as automotive fuel, with the best performance achieved around 190 proof (95% alcohol). Also note that an engine operating on even high-proof alcohol has difficulties starting in temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees C).

Kerosene/Lamp Oil. *Paraffin* or *lamp oil* is a purified liquid kerosene primarily used for heating, portable lamps, lanterns, Tiki Torches, and cooking stoves. Certain highly refined versions are even used as rocket fuel. Kerosene has the advantage of being a much more shelf-stable fuel than traditional gasoline and diesel fuel, with anecdotal evidence of remaining viable for decades when given proper storage and filtration prior to use. Internal combustion engines can be converted to run on kerosene, though the fuel must typically be warmed before passing into the combustion chamber to allow it to be ignited by a spark plug.

Natural gas is created by pockets of organic matter trapped deep within the earth, and is comprised primarily of methane. It is commonly located with other hydrocarbon deposits such as coal beds and oil reservoirs, but serves as a fuel source of its own. Natural gas is widely used in developed nations as a home heating fuel, for electrical generation, and even to power vehicles. Such vehicles run on either compressed natural gas (CNG) or liquefied natural gas (LNG), and are most common in countries throughout the Middle East and Asia. Natural gas pipelines are prevalent in Europe and North America, delivering the fuel which is used in cooking ranges, water heaters, clothes dryers, and central heating units. However, once production and pumping stations begin to fail, the pressurized lines will play out in most places, leaving homes and buildings without a direct supply of natural gas.

Propane is a fuel produced as a byproduct of natural gas and gasoline production and has been in use since around the

turn of the 20th Century. When pressurized at room temperature, the gas liquefies, which allows a relatively high volume of fuel to be stored in a relatively small space as compared to natural gas. Propane is widely used in the U.S. as a cooking fuel, in absorption refrigerators such as those found in campers and R.V.s, and even as an automotive fuel for forklifts and city buses.

One distinct advantage of propane in an apocalyptic setting is that unlike gasoline and diesel fuel, propane has an indefinite shelflife and can last decades, as long as its storage container maintains its integrity. Many cooking grills, portable to full-sized, free-standing barbecue grills, and cookers, as well as some hunting and industrial heaters and forklifts use propane gas.

However, long-term storage can pose certain risks. The metal container may rust if exposed to moisture, and leak. In enclosed spaces, propane gas sinks to the floor since it is heavier than air. This lingering gas can easily asphyxiate anyone sleeping close to the floor, and if accidentally ignited by a spark or open flame, the consequences can be explosive.

Propane is almost ubiquitous at convenience stores, hardware stores, and in households across the nation. Typically sold in 1-5 gallon canisters, larger quantities can be located at warehouses, city bus depots, and rural homes outfitted with large tanks for heating. Massive storage facilities which utilize salt caverns to store millions of barrels of fuel exist in Conway, Kansas and Mont Belvieu, Texas.

Solar cells and the power of the sun. If the Wave takes place in our modern, current calendar year, solar panels and solar powered portable devices are more common and accessible than ever. Still, they are not everywhere, and survivors looking to utilize solar panels may have to remove them from another building or one or more homes and transport them to their Safe Haven or to the rooftop of their skyscraper or tall building. This may be an arduous task, but well worth it.

Solar panels are very popular among *rooftop Safe Havens* across North America, especially as time passes. Though solar panels are ideal in regions where there are a lot of sunny days, they are still viable and valuable at least half of the time in the midwestern, eastern and northern parts of the United States and Canada that see a lot of cloudy days and snow. Even a small, portable solar array can provide enough energy to recharge the batteries of portable electronic devices such as power tools, laptop computers, cell phones, radios, entertainment devices, and rechargeable batteries. Large solar cell arrays can power or help power lights, large pieces of equipment, appliances, electrical generators, backup batteries, and possibly furnaces, heaters, and air-conditioning, any of which improves the quality of life and your odds for survival.

As with most technological devices, you need to have someone with the knowhow and skills to install and maintain a solar panel system and work generators, battery systems, and such, or find and follow the instructions. Survivor camps and Safe Havens with such people and/or knowledge are wise to train others so if the tech guy is lost, they have others to step in and carry on. Most engineers and individuals with mechanical and electronics skills should be able to figure out how to install/build and maintain a solar cell system. This is made easier when the survivors are relocating a working one to a new location, because it enables them to study it, make notes and drawings/

diagrams before or while taking it apart and use them for re-assembly. Likewise, a handy person with basic skills in these areas can also build a small, DIY (do it yourself) portable solar panel charger for small digital devices. Cell phones, laptops, and other modern digital devices contain a rechargeable battery. A typical USB power bank can be recharged in 90-100 minutes via such a small device, and half that time when plugged into a larger solar panel array. There are camping and survival guide books that contain instructions on how to make such a solar charger as well as how to make basic weapons, build shelters, the safe use of fire, and other survival tips. Such camping and survival manuals should be on every Scrounger's list (any survivor, really), and can be found in bookstores, schools, libraries, and many homes.

Wood has been used as fuel since the days of prehistoric man. Most useful as a source of heat and light, the primary advantages of wood as a fuel source are its ample availability and relative ease of use (even being available as compressed wood pellets). Unlike liquid or gas fuels, wood requires no special storage container other than a dry place to store it, and can be burnt in an open receptacle like a barrel or pit, or in an enclosed stove for heating and cooking purposes. Burning fire indoors does require proper ventilation through a flue, open windows or hole in the roof to prevent smoke from overwhelming occupants, and proper measures taken to prevent setting the building on fire.

While wood is widely available in many rural areas from natural sources, scavenging firewood in a city is more likely to require breaking down wooden structures, walls, and furniture. Care needs to be taken when burning processed and chemically treated, varnished, and painted wood. This includes most furniture, doors, floorboards, walls, and wood used in building construction, because they contain and release noxious fumes that can kill or make people sick, or contaminate any food being cooked. Painted and treated wood should never be used for cooking food or brewing. This is less of a problem outdoors, but can be very dangerous indoors. And as noted earlier, burning wood indoors requires a fireplace, wood burning stove, BBQ grill, or an improvised surface for cooking and heating, and satisfactory ventilation.

Wood is also bulkier than other fuels for the amount of energy received from burning it. Hauling a sufficient amount of wood for heating/cooking is a significant chore even when the final destination is at ground level. For survivors making their home either several stories above or underground, moving cords of wood from where it's gathered could be prohibitively labor intensive.

Game Note: Any non-renewable fuel will become increasingly scarce as time passes after the Wave. Some enterprising survivors are likely to attempt to reclaim the means of producing fuels such as gasoline. Facilities like oil wells, refineries, and natural gas pipelines and storage facilities are all strategic assets that may be the focus of a Safe Haven community (and game campaign). They can also be the focus of conflict between survivor groups which risks damaging the facilities. Maintaining and running them also tends to require a fair amount of skilled labor, which can be difficult to find in the world of Dead Reign. If survivors can restart such a facility and produce fresh fuel, it would represent a huge resource that could be traded for other valuable supplies.



BUILDINGS

Houses and buildings will stand for decades and longer. Yes, over time, natural disasters and weather such as floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, fire, and earthquakes will demolish part of some cities and entire towns and neighborhoods, but most will last. Weather – storms, wind, rain, heat, and cold – will all contribute to the deterioration of manmade structures. Wooden structures are most susceptible to water, storms, and fire damage, while brick, stone, and concrete buildings have a much longer life. With no relief agencies, government organizations, or private contractors to make repairs and maintain damaged and dilapidated buildings, over time, these unstable structures will collapse in on themselves and infrastructure will crumble. But survivors of the Wave have much more immediate and life threatening issues of survival to worry about.

The most destructive force that puts homes and businesses at risk are the living: people and wildlife. The massive zombie population contributes to the damage, wear and tear, but it is the living who do the most to undermine the survival of standing, manmade structures. The Wave is an unidentified pandemic that kills billions of people and causes the dead to rise and hunt the living. However, most of these, for lack of a better word, **zombies** are dull-witted, shambling creatures too simpleminded to even open the door to let themselves out of their homes, apartments, and workplaces. Instead they linger like ghosts or lay dormant waiting for the living to come to them. Zombies may knock down fences and doors and smash out windows, but only in pursuit of living prey. Otherwise, the hungry dead wander around aimlessly or fall dormant.

It is people and wildlife that break into houses, make holes in structures, and leave doors and windows open or broken, allowing vermin and weather inside to cause more damage and deterioration. If left sealed tight, most structures would last decades. It is the presence of moisture, rain, wind, insects, and animals' and people's biological waste, and the destruction they leave in their wake, that turns a solid, reliable building into a rotting derelict. Human and animal waste and careless destruction that adds disease and more vermin, bacteria, mold, and accelerated deterioration to the entropy of structures. The careless or foolish use

of fire can burn down not just a single house, but an entire neighborhood. Fighting – whether it is battling zombies or other survivors – inflicts all sorts of damage to standing structures: bullet holes, kicked in doors, smashed out windows, holes in walls and roofs, damage to foundations, vehicles that knock down fences and walls or smash into buildings, leaving massive openings. The list goes on, but it all equates to damage that makes buildings vulnerable to weather, vermin, and rapid deterioration.

There are survivors who cause such damage out of ignorance, carelessness, indifference, or desperation. Never thinking twice about the long-term damage and ramifications of their actions as they try to survive in the here and now for another day. Other survivors destroy buildings and resources out of spite or a deluded sense of purpose like the misguided *Retro-Savages*. Others do so to undermine rivals and enemies, or to build their own tin-plated kingdoms where they are king and those who do not bow down before them are harassed, beaten into submission, or destroyed. And of course, there are the bullies, bandits, raiders, and madmen who do as they please, take what they want, and hurt whoever stands in their way in their own bid for survival. For these rogues, fellow survivors are just another resource to plunder and use. Whatever damage they may inflict, or lives their actions may cost, is of no consequence to them.

FINDING SHELTER

Most cities and suburban communities are filled with homes and buildings, and structures that easily survive the Wave and the risen dead. Many of these structures will remain habitable for decades and if maintained, for centuries. However, a house or building is not necessarily shelter. Not in a world where the dead have risen to hunt the living and some people resort to a violent dog eat dog way of life, hurting and robbing other survivors. As a result, finding **shelter** – meaning a safe place to hide or live – has little to do with finding a house or building, and everything to do with finding a place to live like a human being and not a frightened rat in a hole.

In the simplest sense of the word, *shelter* is anyplace you can hole up for a night or a few days without falling victim to the dead or the living, and the elements. Like our cave-dwelling and nomadic tribal ancestors, this can be almost anyplace, large or small, in the open or down in a hole or crevice somewhere.

Temporary shelter is someplace safe, dry, and out of the elements for a night or two. In rural areas this can range from a cave or old mine, a dried up well, a corner in a barn, or inside a shed or a house, to a simple handmade lean-to, hut, or tent made from tree branches or packed mud or snow. As long as it is not near any known throng of zombies, dangerous wild animals, or hostile people, and it keeps you and your provisions dry and concealed, it serves its purpose as shelter before you move on.

The same holds true of finding **temporary shelter in the city**, whether it is the concrete jungle of downtown or the many street blocks of homes in the average city and suburban neighborhood. The two big differences of these two environments are the terrain and the number of hungry dead you need to contend with.

Instead of trees, boulders, caves, hills, mountains, barns and farmhouses making up the landscape, in the city you have homes, garages, sewer tunnels, tall buildings, metal dumpsters, and vehicles. After the Wave, everybody's world is transformed into a

new, nighmarish reality. And everyone must learn how to survive in it.

Permanent shelter is someplace you can live with some degree of safety and security. This can be an **independent homestead** that mostly avoids contact with the outside world and has its own Rat Runs, hideouts and hidden supply caches, but most are part of a community. This can be a series of independent homesteads, but a scattered, loose-knit community of them, much like the settlers of the American West, who function as neighbors who watch out for one another at least to some degree. They may also trade water, food, weapons, ammunition and other resources with one another.

Large permanent shelters usually involve a reasonably unified survivor community or Safe Havens whose inhabitants work together as a group with common goals and beliefs. Such a group may start with a few dozen to a hundred or more people who, working together, have claimed, cleared, fortified, and populated a specific location as their new home. In rural areas, that location could be a farm, ranch, factory, or even an entire, small town, or other defensible location.

In the city that location could be a church, school, gymnasium, warehouse, parking structure, train or bus station, museum, convention center, sports stadium, police precinct, National Guard armory, or in many cases, an office or apartment building, or a skyscraper. See *Life in the City*, page 31 and *Living in the Sky*, page 36.



Navigating the Cityscape

Navigating the cityscape in search of resources is a hostile and deadly challenge. Just as the wilderness is unfamiliar and frightening to many city people, the same holds true for people used to rural life and that of a small town or a quiet suburb. But for inhabitants of the city and specific urban neighbors, the terrain is familiar and they may feel safer there than anywhere else, regardless of the hordes of Slouchers wandering the streets and trapped inside hospitals, office buildings, apartments, and homes. Still, even for them life is difficult and survival uncertain.

Trying to scrounge food, water, and resources in the neighborhood may feel more like a house to house military search and clear campaign. Each home an unknown quantity. Each home containing an unknown danger that must be dispatched quickly and quietly lest the sound of battle brings more danger and zombies. There could be any number of zombies scattered throughout

the house inside the living room, behind the sofa, inside each bedroom, the bathroom, the basement, attic, anywhere.

Some common dangers include any number of zombies of any variety numbering only a few or dozens of them. Either of which may quickly become hundreds lured by the Zombie Moan. Or the house may harbor frightened survivors, probably a family, or family and friends or neighbors who attack anyone who seems like a threat (which is probably everyone) or who forces their way into their home. Or the house may contain 1D6 frightened and hungry dogs. Good watchdogs are likely to attack intruders. Or the house may harbor a band of bad guys happy to get the drop on other survivors and rob them blind, and maybe beat or kill them for good measure.

It is even worse in the once populated downtown areas and big cities like New York and Houston. More zombies. More places where they can be lurking, and a greater range of the different types of zombies. More and varied types of survivors and bad guys, too. Trying to scavenge or clear a building could bring half its zombie population down on the group's heads as well as attract Slouchers from the street. Or the group could get jumped by bandits, raiders, madmen, Death Cultists or Retro-Savages. Hospitals, schools, apartment and office buildings, shopping malls, and other places where sick people with the Wave came looking for help and where dead bodies were stored, or where people came while alive, are often swarming with zombies during the early weeks of the apocalypse and even months and years later.

Silence is golden. As mentioned often, silence is a requirement for survival during the Zombie Apocalypse, anywhere, but in the city more so than anywhere else. There are so many living dead in the city that you want to try to avoid triggering a convergence at all costs. When you do, flee.

First, you and your teammates want to be quiet and avoid loud footsteps, laughing, sneezing, and talking louder than a whisper. Hand signals, whistles, and finger snapping, and touching and pointing are common methods of getting someone's attention. Walking is done as softly as possible, which means moving slowly and carefully. That takes more time, but it saves lives.

Second, if a garbage can or piece of debris is knocked over or some other commotion is made, stop, take cover, and carefully watch for several minutes to see who or what may respond. If there is no response, great. If zombies or people appear, quietly move back to a secure, hidden position, and hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst. Always try to be alert and have one or more escape routes and combat strategies formulating in your head. In the Zombie Apocalypse, hiding and a strategic retreat are often the best options rather than a noisy fight attracting more zombies and trouble.

When zombies are encountered it is ideal if you can silence them before or a few seconds after the monster(s) begins to moan. It is vital that the taking down of the zombies is also done as quietly and quickly as possible. If the moaning can be silenced within seconds it should stop other zombies from moaning and investigating. Sometimes stopping the Zombie Moan after as long as a minute is also effective. The creatures responding to the dinner call may lose track of where the sound was coming from and wander right past your location or go off in a different direction. However, if many zombies are in close proximity and there are too many to silence quickly and quietly, it is time for a fast break and run for your life. At this point, being quiet may not make any sense and you can be as loud as necessary to

escape and put as much distance as possible between you and the hungry dead emerging out of the woodwork everywhere. See *City Combat, Strategies and Tactics* elsewhere for more details on this subject.

NEW SKILLS

Supplemental Survival Training

Outnumbered hundreds, often thousands to one, survivors living in urban environments have accepted they cannot possibly exterminate all of the risen dead. Instead, they have learned how to live with them by adopting methods and practices to avoid, elude, and escape the monsters rather than fight and destroy them. This practical principle is represented in both **Parkour** and **Zombie Survival Training**.

Each of these specialized Physical Skills can function as a *stand alone, non-combat martial skill* – or – as *supplemental martial training* used with each other or with a Hand to Hand Combat/fighting skill (Basic, Expert, Martial Arts, Assassin, or Commando). Selecting one or both of these skills adds a range of evasive maneuvers and defenses for avoiding and escaping zombies. **Note:** Many city children and teens have one or both of these skills and no Hand to Hand: Combat skill until they become older (16+ years old). Of the two, **Parkour** is best suited for use against both the living and the dead. As its name suggests, **Zombie Survival Training** is specific to moves and tactics for use against zombies, though some work on the living as well.

Parkour (special)

(Physical Skill) Parkour: This specialized training is a non-combat martial art that involves the art of evasion and pursuit. It incorporates running, leaping, vaulting, tumbling, and elements of martial arts, gymnastics, and acrobatics. It originates from French military obstacle course training for chases and fleeing in an urban environment. Masters of Parkour are able to navigate urban environments by quickly bounding over and on top of low walls and barricades, running along the top of brick walls and narrow ledges; running up the side of a wall or building to leap up to a higher wall, ledge, handhold, or over a wall or fence, or on top of another one; or to reach a higher staircase, fire escape, beam, branch, sign, pole, rope, handhold, etc. Parkour also involves leaping and bounding down to lower elevations. All of this without the use of equipment in order to elude, chase, follow, or capture an enemy. All maneuvers are performed with considerable speed and agility.

Parkour techniques include running, jumping, vaulting, tumbling, rolling, sliding, climbing, swinging, and moving on all fours with great speed and using the obstacles themselves (low walls, fences, bicycle racks, statues, boulders, parked cars, garbage dumpsters, railing, ledges, etc.) to help propel oneself, but which also serve as obstacles and barriers that slow down or stop pursuers in their tracks in order to elude capture or being followed. In the alternative, Parkour may be used to tail and give chase of an enemy on foot or in a vehicle moving at a moderate

speed without fear of being slowed down or lost due to obstacles in the way.

Game Note: Seriously, these guys move like Spider-Man or Batman (and exactly what I envisioned for *Rifts® Juicers* and *Crazies* back in 1990!), and are amazing to see. There are numerous videos online worth watching to understand Parkour. This is just one of them: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX7QNWEGcNI

Parkour Moves and Skill Abilities:

Parkour may be selected *in addition to a Hand to Hand Combat skill* and offers the following abilities and bonuses.

All of the moves below are available at level one. Some abilities may provide a bonus.

- **Balance:** Walk and run across a narrow beam, wall, or ledge (+10%).
- **Back Flip:** One or several flips backward in rapid succession to escape or go toward an opponent or structure. As many as one flip per each level of experience and counts as one melee action. (+1 to dodge when using this move.) (+1 to strike when the back flip is used as the means to rapidly approach an opponent and seamlessly launch into a body block attack; i.e. the back flip move is followed by an immediate body block attack. Counts as one melee action +1 attack, or 2 attacks. The intended victim may try to dodge this attack.)
- **Body Forward Flip:** One or several forward flips in rapid succession toward someone or a targeted structure. As many as one flip per level of experience. (+1 to dodge when using this move.) (+1 to strike when the forward flip is used as the means to rapidly approach an opponent and seamlessly launch into a body block attack; i.e. the forward flip move is followed by an immediate body block attack. Counts as one melee action +1 attack, or two attacks. The intended victim may try to dodge this attack.)
- **Handstand:** Stand on hands and the ability to walk on his hands. Can also stand on his head.
- **Horizontal Leap:** A leap 8 feet (2.4 m) across lengthwise horizontally with a running start and a rolling landing, +3 feet (0.9 m) leaping distance to grab the edge of a roof or wall with the hands to pull himself up onto the roof or over a wall. (+1 to dodge.)
- **Up to 15 feet (4.6 m) across** when leaping *down and across* to a lower elevation/wall/stairs/rooftop/landing platform or the ground. (+2 to dodge.)
- **Leap Down from a Height:** Down as far as 20 feet (6.1 m) and stick a rolling landing on the ground, get back on his feet, and resume running all in one melee action! (+1 to roll with impact.)

Note: Leaps down from 12 feet (3.7 m) or less are an automatic success without injury, but leaping from heights of 13-20 feet (4 to 6.1 m) has a 25% chance of the character landing hard and suffering 1D6 Hit Point damage and the effects of knockdown (loses initiative and one melee attack).

Leaping from a greater height up to two stories/28 feet (8.5 m) with a tumble and roll landing has a 50% chance of the character landing hard, suffering 2D6+2 damage direct to Hit Points and 1D6 to S.D.C., as well as suffering the effects of knockdown (loses initiative and one melee attack), AND has a 50% chance of spraining an ankle or pulling a muscle. When this happens, reduce speed and future leaping heights and landing distances *by half* until the character stays off his

feet and recuperates for 1D6+5 days! Requires the ankle being wrapped and the use of crutches to walk.

Damage from leaps or falls from a height greater than 28 feet (8.5 m) is 2D6+5 damage direct to Hit Points and 2D6 to S.D.C. for EACH additional story (14 feet/4.3 m). When Hit Points fall below zero (regardless of any remaining S.D.C.), the person is dead. Parkour does NOT turn you into Superman.

- **Leap Up Onto or Over Walls and Barriers:** A running high jump over or onto a 3 foot (0.9 m) wall/obstacle (+1 to dodge). Increase to 4 foot (1.2 m) tall wall, barrier, or obstacle at 4th level. Includes leaping up onto vehicles and sliding over or running across them.
- **Run Up the Side of a Wall:** The character can run 4 feet (1.2 m) up the side of a wall and leap to the top of a wall or fence or higher elevation up to 8 feet (2.4 m) tall. (+2 to dodge.) Increase to run 6 feet (1.8 m) up the side of a wall and leap to the top of a wall or higher platform/elevation up to 12 feet (3.7 m) high at fifth level.
- **Running Cartwheel:** The individual runs and launches into a cartwheel. Can do three cartwheels at level one and as many as +1 for every additional two levels of experience and uses up only one melee action or attack performing them in rapid succession. (+1 to dodge when using this move.)
- **Running Somersault:** One somersault at level one and as many as +1 for every additional two levels of experience, and uses up only one melee action or attack performing them in rapid succession. (+1 to dodge.)
- **Special Dodging Capability:** The Parkour skill makes it so ALL dodge rolls and evasive moves do NOT use up a melee attack. Normally, the act of dodging requires spending one melee attack, so it is a huge advantage to be able to dodge, leap, somersault, etc., without it using up a melee attack.
- **Tumble and Roll Landing:** A deliberate tumbling landing or roll without injury or knockdown penalties. A tumbling landing and roll may be performed in reaction to a body block/knockdown attack (success means no penalty, roll percentile under base skill), leaping down or falling from a height as great as 12 feet (3.7 m). (+2 to roll with impact when using this move.)
- **Vault:** Propel/vault over low walls, fences, barricades, vehicles, and obstacles up to 5 feet (1.5 m) tall (+2 to dodge). Increase to 6 feet (1.8 m) at fifth level.

Base Skill (all abilities): 50% +5% per level of experience. A failed roll means the character missed, fell short, or failed his maneuver, which may have consequences (stumble, fall, impact damage, etc.); try again if feasible.

Skill Bonuses:

+1D6 to S.D.C.

+1D6 to Spd attribute.

+2 on Perception Rolls to judge distances, heights, drops, and the momentum needed to make the jump, as well as to determine if structures such as narrow beams, ledges, tree branches, poles/posts, fences, flooring, platforms, and rope, can support the character's weight or the impact of vaults, leaps and landings.

Melee Attacks converted into Non-Combat Melee Actions (special): 1 melee attack = 2 non-combat melee actions whenever the Parkour skill is put into action for most of an entire melee round to chase/follow/pursue somebody or when the character is, himself, taking evasive action trying to escape or run away/flee.

ALL except 2 *melee attacks* that round must be turned into *non-combat melee actions*, like running, leaping, diving for cover, climbing, and the moves listed above, for the entire melee round (15 seconds). Only *TWO melee attacks* are available for fighting that melee round. The two attacks can be used at any point, together or separately, or not at all, but cannot be converted into non-combat melee actions or vice versa.

Note: Parkour can be combined with *Zombie Survival Training* and/or one Hand to Hand Combat skill with cumulative bonuses or used as a stand-alone skill.

Parkour and NO Hand to Hand Combat (special)

Many urban Survivors/Ordinary People O.C.C., especially youngsters, do not have a Hand to Hand Combat skill (Basic, Expert, etc.), especially in the early months of the apocalypse, but may learn Parkour, which gives them the bonuses and moves above, and the special bonuses below. **Note:** Do NOT combine with the **No Hand to Hand skill** on page 176 of the Dead Reign® RPG. Use only what is presented below, and above.

Level 1: One melee attack per round and 4 non-combat *melee actions* to perform any of the Parkour moves listed above, and +1 to roll with impact.

Body Block/Tackle Attack: This running attack inflicts 1D6 damage to its victims and has a 50% chance of knockdown, and counts as one attack. A victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack.

Level 3: +2 non-combat melee actions.

Leaping Body Block or Pounce from a Height: A successful leaping body block/tackle or pounce attack from above does 1D6+1 damage and has an 80% chance of knockdown (60% if the attacker is a child 15 years old or younger). A victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack.

Level 6: +2 non-combat melee actions, +5% bonus to Parkour and Climb/Rappeling skills, and +1 on Parkour Perception Rolls to judge distances, etc., as described under skill bonuses, above.

Level 8: +1 melee attack, +1 foot (0.3 m) to leaping distance and +2 to strike with a leaping body block/pounce from a height or vaulting action; same damage but has a 95% chance of knockdown (75% if a child 15 years old or younger). A victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack.

Level 10: +1 non-combat melee action, +1 to dodge, and +1 to entangle/pin an opponent.

Zombie Survival Training (special)

(Physical Skill) Zombie Survival Training: The difference between Parkour and Zombie Survival Training, is that Parkour is a fast moving, physically demanding martial art of evasion and pursuit suitable against the living and the hungry dead. **Zombie Survival Training** is a practical, down and dirty self-defense training specific to avoiding and escaping zombies rather than fighting them. It too can be used against the living, but is most effective against the walking dead.

Zombies possess Supernatural Strength, making just one of them a formidable adversary for one or more adults, let alone a child or teenager. City dwellers are quick to learn the difference, however, between fighting to kill a zombie and fighting to survive and escape one. To live another day in the big city, all people need to do is *avoid*, *elude*, and *escape* the living dead. A tactic



that makes survival in urban environments feasible for anyone, but is ideal for small, fast, nimble children and teens.

Rat Runners, Urban Explorers, and Zombie Nerds living in the city learn to survive faster and better than most. After all, they are likely to encounter and deal with zombies every time they leave the shelter of their hidden homestead or secluded survivor community.

The trick to urban survival is not to fight zombies and risk injury or death, but slipping past the monsters or moving faster when they become threatening or present a barrier to travel. In the city, there are often alternative ways to go around, over, or under the hungry dead, or to hide and wait them out. Urban survivors have learned that the moment you vanish from sight, the zombie is confused and is likely to wander in a different direction in search of the prey that has eluded it. This skill is built on the principle that there is no reason to stand and fight if you can elude or escape the creature.

The bottom line: Stand and fight, you die. Be smarter and faster than your monstrous opponent, and you can outmaneuver them all day long. That's how you survive in the city. Urban dwellers, particularly youngsters, figure this out fast.

Zombie Survival Moves and Abilities: Methods and tactics to avoid, elude, and escape zombies by slowing them down, out-

maneuvering them, and outdistancing them to vanish from their sight and sensing range, but in a less fast and acrobatic way than Parkour. All moves and tactics are known at level one. Some of these abilities may provide a bonus.

- **Body Block/Tackle Attack:** Inflicts 1D6 damage to its victims and has a 50% chance of knockdown. A victim of knockdown loses initiative and one melee attack. Also see *Sweep the Leg/Knock Them Down Attack*.

- **Block Bite and Put Whatever You Can Between You and the Monster:** Urban survivors quickly realize zombies fight rather like a pack of wolves or pit bulls: One latches onto prey with its hands and doesn't let go, moaning and snapping at its victim the whole time. The moan draws out more zombies to join the attack. When other members of the converging zombie pack join the attack, biting and tearing at the victim held fast by the first, that person is probably done for unless help arrives. However, using *anything* you have to block that grasping attack or biting jaws can be a lifesaving move.

Let the monster grab your backpack, satchel, sword sheath, or piece of debris you grabbed and shoved into its hands while you slip away and go low, or make a break for it. Or grab up a garbage can lid, box, pole, your bicycle or skateboard, or a piece of junk and use it to push the monster away or hold it at bay. When it leans in to bite or lunge forward to strike with a bite attack or with its fist or to grab hold, sidestep it or go low, and keep moving.

Another variation of this move is to shove something into its mouth. Your machete or any part of a gun, spear, baseball bat, broom, shovel, stick, brick, bottle, piece of lumber, a book, a rolled up magazine or ball of clothing, even your own arm *if* it has a protective vambrace or extra thick padding to block the zombie's bite. Not only does it prevent the creature from biting and inflicting damage, it makes it unable to moan.

A similar tactic is to jam an elbow or an object up into its throat and under the chin to jam its jaws shut and prevent it from biting and moaning.

When you have neutralized the bite attack by holding the monster at bay or jamming an object into its mouth or jamming its mouth shut, the trick is not to let it grab you with its powerful hands. That is the first thing zombies instinctively try to do. Zombies that have taken hold of their victim usually kill by leaning in to bite and rip out their prey's throat with their teeth, so keep those jaws at bay! Jamming the mouth shut or shoving an object into its mouth is a good, if temporary deterrent. If the creature latches onto the barrel or butt of your weapon with its hands or teeth and won't let go, leave it and dodge around it – go low, dance-around, or make a fast break to get clear and keep going until out of sight. The dumb monster is likely to spit the item out or drop it, and leave it where it falls, so you can come back for it later. Just block its attacks, dodge, get free, and get away while you can before others converge by the dozens or hundreds.

+1 to parry/block a zombie that is trying to grab or bite with a weapon or object.

- **Cut Loose:** There is no reason to stand and fight a zombie that has grabbed hold of you or a teammate when you can chop off its cold, dead hand at the wrist with one or a few quick well-placed blows from your machete, hand axe, heavy survival knife, or sword to escape. Hack off the hand that has grabbed you or your teammate and move before the creature can get a better grip with the other hand or lean in to bite. Blasting the wrist with a shotgun or high caliber weapon is another option, but the gunshot

will draw out many others and may deafen or harm the person in its clutches.

1D6+3 damage is required to cut off the hand at the wrist.

+1 to strike when targeting a zombie's wrist to chop off its hand.

● **Dance-Around Dodge:** Also known as the Ring Around The Rosie move. Similar to the Fake Out Dodge, below, only you dance around with the zombie in a circle or semicircle while facing each other, just out of the monster's reach. Moving in a circular motion causes the monster to mimic and follow your motion as if you were dance partners. It will be reaching and grasping at you the whole time, so stay sharp and keep your distance.

Then, as it follows you in one direction, you quickly dart the other way and around its other side to get past it. Slouchers and most zombies follow your movement, but cannot react fast enough to keep up, and you are able to dash past it while it is still trying to turn back the other direction and give chase. Similarly, if the zombie lunges while you are in motion, you are likely to be able to keep moving or change direction to sidestep its lunge and run past it. Most zombies cannot anticipate your next action and blindly follow your motion. When you make your move in a direction it did not see coming, it needs a moment (one or two melee attacks/5-10 seconds) to adjust and react/pursue. Burning up that number of the zombie's attacks is a lot of time for the living to make a break for it. Most kids are 50-100 yards (meters) away by the time the zombie has turned around and starts to follow.

+1 to dodge for adults and +2 to dodge for youngsters under 5 feet (1.5 m) tall.

● **Fake Out Dodge or Fast Break:** Most zombies are like a bear trap. When it gets a strong, solid hold of you, you're trapped. So don't get trapped.

When face to face with one or more zombies, move a bit to the left, then to the right, like a football player trying to throw-off and dodge a tackle, and then bolt back the other way (or go low) right past the monster. If facing a group of them, repeat. Dodging and weaving through any opening between them until you make a run for it.

Most zombies follow your movement, like a dog following your hand with a ball or a treat. Zombies turn their heads and entire bodies in your direction to reach and claw at you as they lumber forward. With a few exceptions, most cannot usually move fast enough to compensate when you suddenly turn the other way, enabling you to dodge and move around them. Depending on the circumstances, this may require moving into a *Dance-Around Dodge* (above) or *Go Low Dodge* (below) as your final move before making a fast break and running past them. And once you get past, keep going. Run until you are able to get out of their line of sight and elude them and others converging on your location.

+1 to dodge for adults and +2 to dodge for youngsters under 5 feet (1.5 m) tall, but only if the character keeps moving and does not stop to attack the zombie from the side or behind. **Note:** The dodge bonus for this maneuver does not apply when using this action to attack a zombie.

Basketball is a game most city survivors encourage kids to play in the Zombie Apocalypse. Playing basketball (ideally indoors or up on a rooftop where the sounds of the game cannot be heard by the hungry dead or strangers) not only relieves stress and provides a little fun, but helps teach the players moves they can use against zombies.

● **Go Low Dodge:** Super effective against Slouchers, Juggernauts, and most large zombies, this is a particularly good tactic for children and small, agile teenagers and spry, small adults.

First, make yourself a small moving target. Ducking below the monster's waist makes you more difficult to grab. Ducking low often makes the creature miss when it claws and reaches out to grab you, and if there is an opening to quickly scoot between the creature's legs – even if it means scurrying away on all fours – take it. Slouchers, Juggernauts, and the majority of zombies are not agile enough to react in time nor are they expecting an opponent to go low or dive through the space between their legs. An easy feat for children, not as easy for older teens and adults.

The Go Low Dodge is most successful when dealing with one or two zombies, or when several are lined up shoulder to shoulder like a wall. It is folly to dive into a mob of hungry dead because the monsters behind the first zombie can see and bend down or drop down to get the person crawling on hands and knees on the ground. Nor is it effective against Crawlers or children turned into zombies that are low to the ground and offer no place to dive under.

Note: It takes one or two melee attacks/actions for the typical slow-moving zombie to turn around and pursue. By then, a fast kid is already back on his feet running or dodging around a corner or behind debris. Not effective against fast zombies like Flesh-Eating and Fast Attack Zombies.

This evasive maneuver provides a bonus of +1 to dodge for adults and +2 to dodge for youngsters under 5 feet (1.5 m) tall, +3 to dodge when shorter than four feet (1.2 m) tall.

● **Go Up (and Over) to Elude:** Going up and over walls, fences, debris piles, and vehicles is a way to elude and slow down most dim-witted zombies. Remember, most zombies follow you as a hunting/chase instinct. They do so without anticipating your next move, intention, or destination. This means you can lead them down an alley or street or through a backyard that dead-ends into a barrier that you can climb or vault over. You should be going up and over to the other side while the monstrous pursuers are hitting the barrier and trying to push or smash through it, or until one of them figures out a way around it. Only Flesh-Eating Zombies, Fast Attack Zombies, smart zombies, and perhaps Crawlers and a few others are able to climb over or find a way around the barrier as quickly as most able-bodied people.

Likewise, if there is a way to go up and get out of sight, especially if it is on a rickety pile of crates, or wood, or fencing or debris that cannot support the weight of the zombie but takes you someplace secure, take it as an avenue of escape. This is where children and teenagers who weigh under a hundred pounds (45 kg) and are fast and agile have a tremendous advantage, able to climb up light structures, along narrow ledges, and squeeze through openings that an adult (and most zombies) cannot.

However, do not get "treed." Meaning, stuck someplace where you cannot continue to move away or get indoors or to a hiding place. Remember, the life energy of people glows like a neon sign for zombies to see, which means you are visible from a long distance, especially at night. If the creatures can see you, they will gather around below and wait you out. See *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, below, for a related tactic and more details.

● **Out of Sight, Out of Mind:** This tactic is the primary survival mechanism of urban dwellers. With some exceptions, such as Thinkers, Mock Zombies, Impersonators, Flesh-Eating Zombies, and Fast Attack Zombies, getting out of sight will win the day,

especially when the monster is confused about where you went to and can no longer see or sense your life energy. Getting out of sight and beyond the zombie's sensing range is critical. That's why going up can be so effective and is covered in detail earlier in this sourcebook about city life and Rat Runs.

Slouchers and most zombies are very linear thinkers and seldom look up or around unless a sound, light, or movement draws their attention. They shuffle forward looking straight ahead. They look around only when someone or something catches their attention. Noise, movement, light, and the sensing of life energy are all beacons for zombies. If you can get out of their line of sight long enough to climb up two stories, beyond the zombies' sensing range of 25 feet (7.6 m) and stay quiet and unmoving, odds are an entire herd of them can shuffle under you without ever noticing you up on that telephone pole or window ledge, or fire escape. At least, during daylight hours, because the living is seen by zombies as an aura of glowing light, making folks obvious at night. Thus, not remaining out in the open is the best approach to going up. Otherwise the odds are that a zombie in a mob of them or from a distance will see you, begin to approach and moan, redirecting the rest of the mob to your location up high, while others in the area emerge and converge on the sound of the loud moaning. Never get treed like a raccoon or bear cub being chased by a pack of bloodhounds.

Likewise, scurrying through an opening a zombie cannot fit through, and getting out of sight and sensing range, and laying low, quiet as a mouse, causes the zombies to quickly lose interest and wander away, or the mob keeps moving in the direction they last saw you heading. The faster you can get out of sight and beyond their life sensing range, the more likely you can elude one or a thousand zombies. It is what makes living on rooftops and inside tall buildings on the upper floors, off the ground and out of sight, comparatively safe.

However, if the zombie can see your radiant life energy, even if you are 1,000 or 5,000 feet (305 to 1,524 m) away, it/they stays, clawing at the sky or pounding on a door or fence or wall, moaning, and attracting more of its kind. The weight of numbers may eventually knock or tear down a fence or wall, or smash through a door or flimsy barrier and even flip over a car. Or there may be one among them able to figure out a way in, or how to climb up, or just wait you out. There is no allegiance among zombies. They are simple eating machines, so a moaning horde of Slouchers may attract nimble and cunning Flesh-Eating or Fast Attack or Thinker Zombies, etc., that may be able to leap and climb up to where you are, or figure out a way inside. Just as bad, the moans and pounding may attract Death Cultists, Retro-Savages, or evil-doers with human smarts and ranged weapons who may level an attack against you; so try not to get yourself "treed" with no way out.

● Slip Out Move: Urban survivors, including children and teens, learn to wear layers of loose clothing. One reason is extra layers of protection. Another is to have an outer skin you can afford to lose. When a zombie grabs hold of a loose outer garment – coat, jacket, hoodie, sweater, jersey, baggy shirt – you slip right out of it and keep on going. It is as simple as that. Yes the monster moans and pursues, but most are slow and as soon as you are able to turn a corner, go upward, or slip inside a building to become unseen and out of sensing range, the zombie lumbers right past your hiding place. In addition, it is likely to drop the article of clothing so you can come back to retrieve it at a later time.

This evasive maneuver provides a bonus of +1 to dodge for adults and +2 to dodge for youngsters under 5 feet (1.5 m) tall.

● Sweep the Leg/Knock Them Down Attack: Whenever possible, make zombies fall. This can be done by tripping the creature with a spear, staff, shovel handle, baseball bat, two-by-four, etc., tangling its feet and tripping it. Attacking the zombie's ankle, lower leg or knee by any means possible (kick, trip, tackle, breaking/damaging its ankle, knee or lower leg, a shotgun blast or high caliber round to the ankle, foot, or lower leg, and so on) is likely to knock it down and slow its pursuit (90% chance; 65% for kids 15 years old and younger).

This is another example of the common theme of Zombie Survival Training: Escape to live another day. How do you fight a roving army of zombies? The answer: You don't. You need to be smarter and faster to elude and avoid them. Take out an ankle and do anything to make it trip and fall.

If a Crawler is nipping at your heels, kick its teeth in. Seriously, break its jaw or knock its teeth out so its bite cannot break the skin. In the alternative, shove something into its mouth to block a biting attack, including the heel of a sturdy boot.

Characters with this Zombie Survival skill know a martial arts-style kick to sweep the leg and a tripping/leg hook to cause knockdown. **Knockdown** does no damage to zombies but causes the creature to fall flat, and lose initiative and one melee attack/action. When one, two, or a few at the front of a pack are knocked down, 1D4x10% of the others stumble and fall over it/them. Slowing down other members of the pack. If severe damage is done to the leg via a weapon – e.g. blows the foot, breaks an ankle or destroys the lower leg, reduce the creature's speed by half.

+1 to strike a zombie's ankle or lower leg in an attempt to knock it down/make it fall (50/50 chance of success; automatic knockdown if the foot, ankle, knee or leg is broken or destroyed). **Note**: Kick attacks and Kick Boxing can be handy for fighting zombies, provided the creature does not grab hold of the person's leg, which it will always try to do whenever you kick high or to the midsection of its body. Kicks low to the leg, knee, and ankle to knockdown and slow zombies is a much safer move. Fast zombies, smart zombies, and fellow survivors can try to grab the leg, parry, or dodge a kick attack or leg sweep.

● Use the Environment, Obstacles, and Barriers to Your Advantage: Any barrier or object that blocks or slows down pursuing zombies is a valuable tool. Make the Slouchers stumble over or go around a wall, parked vehicle, garbage can, crate, pile of debris, tripwire, a tangle of barbed wire, netting, fencing, a bicycle, etc. Sometimes this is something you can throw, push, pull, or knockdown down between you and the monster. Other times it is something you can slide under (like a vehicle or hole under a fence or wall), leap over, run around, or climb over like a monkey. Anything that buys you a little time and puts more distance between you and the zombie in pursuit. Likewise, leaping or swinging over an open manhole cover, pit trap, hole, ravine, trap, or collapsed area of flooring is another smart tactic. So is knocking zombies down into elevator shafts and stairwells, though that can have its own repercussions later.

Fast, agile kids and teenagers immediately pick up on this tactic. Kids are already used to taking advantage of a world built for larger scale adults. They squeeze through openings an adult or adult-sized zombie cannot fit through, and are able to hide in small spaces, and run along narrow beams, ledges, and structures that can easily support them, but not a larger, heavier pursuer.

+1 to dodge or to successfully dive/dodge through a small opening when trying to elude a zombie or other pursuer.

● **Wiggle and Squirm Free:** A frantic twisting, turning, wiggling, squirming, relaxing of muscles and going limp, so a) the attacker, whether zombie or human, cannot get a solid grip, and b) the survivor can slip the attacker's grasp and try to make a run for it. Must be performed immediately the moment a character is grabbed.

Chance of Success for Adults: 01-35% is successful, 36-00% failure to get free.

Chance of Success for Older Teens (16-20 years old): 01-50% is successful, 51-00% held tight in the grasp.

Chance of Success for Kids (15 years and younger): 01-65% is successful, 66-00% held tight in the grasp.

Base Skill for Zombie Survival Training (all abilities): *Not applicable.* Most are tactics or evasive and combat-style moves. For the latter two, roll 1D20 to strike, parry, dodge, etc., high roll wins, defender wins ties, as usual, unless stated otherwise. A failed roll means the character missed, fell short, or otherwise failed the maneuver, which may have consequences (stumble, fall, impact damage, getting grabbed by a zombie, etc.); try again if feasible.

Skill Bonuses:

+1D6 to S.D.C.

+2 non-combat melee actions used to evade and escape zombies, grab and pull someone out of harm's way, dive for cover, climb, etc.

+1 melee attack when fighting zombies only!

+3 on Perception Rolls to judge the spacing, width, and angle of openings between the character and his undead nemesis, as well as his own speed and trajectory and the size of openings in walls and structures, spacing between vehicles and under or inside structures, and similar, in order to evade or get past a zombie or enemy. **Note:** Zombie Survival Training can be taken in addition to a Hand to Hand Combat skill and/or Parkour.

Note: Zombie Survival Training is NOT intended to be a standalone Hand to Hand Combat skill, but rather a supplemental skill like Boxing. It can be combined with Parkour and/or one Hand to Hand Combat skill with cumulative bonuses.

OTHER NEW AND EXPANDED SKILLS

(Military Skill) Military Fortification, Defenses and Traps:

Knowledge in the design and building of basic defensive structures suitable for modern combat. If provided with the right materials, equipment, and time, the character can build defensive walls, bunkers, and all kinds of traps, as well as understand the value of natural terrain that includes obstacles to impede movement and protective structures to shield friendly forces from enemy fire. The character is trained to prepare barbed wire, tank obstacles, tanglefoot wire, trenches, tank ditches, foxholes/shell scrapes, reinforced concrete or earthworks, walls, pits, bunker complexes, machine-gun/mortar emplacements, tunnel systems and similar defensive constructions. Obstacles like ditches and minefields slow the advance of infantry and vehicles, exposing them for longer periods to defender firepower. Earthen walls and

foxholes afford soldiers some protection and can even disperse concussive force or deflect shrapnel from explosives.

This skill includes knowledge of the strategic placement of booby traps and mines, the telltale trademarks and indications of traps and mines, how to construct as well as avoid them, and the use of mine and explosive detection equipment. Even with simple materials and tools, the character can construct a wide array of traps to capture, injure, kill, delay, and demoralize enemies. Likewise, traps can be rigged to act as makeshift alarms (make noise, fire a flare, etc.) or even used to trap game animals.

Possibly the greatest drawback about using mines and traps is the time they take to prepare. It can take several man-hours of work to prepare rock slides, large pits, and similar traps. Luckily, this time can be shortened by help from others as it only takes one person with this skill to direct workers. See the preceding section on traps for examples of traps that can be constructed using this skill.

Since the character can make defenses and traps, he can also recognize and avoid them at the same base skill as making them. Including recognizing and noticing trip wires, electronic triggers, alarms, cameras, explosives, and mines. Disarming a trap without triggering it can be performed but takes time, at least 1D6+1 minutes, often twice as long, particularly if the trap is complex or involves explosives.

Base Skill: 30% +5% per level of experience.

(Piloting Skill) Bicycling Expanded: More than the basic skill of balancing and riding a bicycle, the character can ride over rough terrain and up and down stairs without losing control, and perform tricks, stunts, jumps and leaps. Roll under skill level to determine success. A failed roll means a crash. The rider and any passenger suffers 2D6 damage and there is a 5% chance of damaging the bike, making it unridable until simple repairs are made. Skill also includes basic maintenance and repairs.

Bicycle Speed: Varies as described below.

11 mph (18 km) on a hard, flat surface for characters with a P.E. (Physical Endurance) attribute of 15 or less.

15 mph (24 km) for characters with a P.E. up to 20 or a 3rd level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

20 mph (32 km) for characters with a P.E. up to 25 or a trained cyclist, or a 6th level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

24 mph (38.4 km) for characters with a P.E. up to 30 or a trained, professional cyclist or an 8th level Urban Explorer, or Rat Runner.

28 mph (45 km) for characters with a P.E. up to 40 or a trained, professional cyclist used to racing, or a 10th level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

Note: Reduce speed by 20% on dirt and 30% on gravel or grass, weaving through parked cars or a mob of zombies, and reduce by 40% on a steep incline. Maximum speed can be maintained for a time equal to the P.E.x5 in minutes; double for a trained, professional cyclist.

Base Skill: 50% +5% per level of experience. -10% to -25% to perform tricks, stunts and evasive maneuvers. The severity of the penalty varies with the difficulty and danger of the trick or stunt.

(Piloting Skill) Skateboard Expanded: The practiced skill and ability to ride a skateboard for fun, travel, and the performance of flips, hops, jumps, quick turnarounds and stunts at

speeds faster than running. The character can slide down and along railings, curbs, and low walls, hop gaps (1-4 feet/0.3-1.2 m), jump curbs and low obstacles (1-3 feet/0.3 to 0.9 m tall; including zombie Crawlers), and navigate streets, sidewalks, tunnels, and the hallways of empty buildings. Skateboards are most effective and fast on clean, smooth surfaces, making them very efficient during the first few months of the Zombie Apocalypse. Skateboarders have the advantage of being able to weave through narrow openings and paths, around vehicles and debris in the streets, and ride on sidewalks, through parking structures, down into built-in swimming pools, down stairs, up and along curbs, and outmaneuver most types of zombies and people on foot. However, over time, dirt, paper, leaves, debris, and vegetation growing in the cracks and holes in sidewalks and streets will make riding them slower and less effective without clearing a path first.

The place most people do not consider for skateboards because it was not allowed before the collapse of civilization is *navigating indoors*, down the hallways and stairwells inside office and apartment buildings. The hallways of most buildings are ideal for skateboards. Most are smooth linoleum, smooth tiles, hardwood flooring, or flat carpeting with little or no raised fibers/nap. This is also true of hotels, hospitals, schools, gymnasiums, convention centers, and the smooth, often polished, concrete floors of factories, warehouses, parking structures, train and bus stations, airports, hangars, subway tunnels, and military bases. Indoor locations are comparatively free of the dirt, debris, and vegetation found outdoors.

Whether in the hands of adults, teens, or kids, skateboards can be an excellent, simple, lightweight, man-portable means of travel, exploration, message and small package delivery, quick escapes, and general navigation of the streets and underbelly of urban environments, especially big cities and downtown areas, indoors and outdoors.

This skill makes the character a master of the skateboard and a wide range of maneuvers, tricks, and stunts such as manuals (riding on two wheels; front or back), ollies, nollies, pivots, pop maneuvers, firecracker maneuvers to ride down stairs, shove it maneuvers, stalls, stands, slides, power slides (for quick stops), flips, jumps, grinds, kick turns, bomb drops (dropping down from an elevated position onto your board), 180s, backside 180s, 360s, front and backside kick turns (for spins and quick turns), nose pickups, nose flip to stop on a dime and put the board right into your hand and keep walking in one fluid motion, to more elaborate tricks and fast movement.

Skateboard Speed (flat): Varies as described below.

6 mph (9.6 km) on a hard, flat surface for characters with a P.E. (Physical Endurance) attribute of 15 or less.

9 mph (14.4 km) on a hard, flat surface for characters with a P.E. up to 20 or a 4th level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

12 mph (19 km) on a hard, flat surface for characters with a P.E. up to 25 or a trained skateboarder or a 7th level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

15 mph (24 km) for characters with a P.E. greater than 26 and pushing hard, or a trained skater or a 9th level Urban Explorer or Rat Runner.

Note: Double the speed when going downhill/down an incline. Hitching a ride by holding onto the bumper or side of a vehicle can only be maintained for up to a speed of 40 mph (64 km) before the skateboarder is forced to let go or hits a crack or

object in the road and is knocked off his board (4D6 damage, lose initiative and 1D4 melee attacks/actions).

Reduce speed by 20% on an uneven or dirty, grimy surface, packed dirt road, or flat smooth carpet. Reduce speed by 50% on low carpeting or debris littered street. Cannot skateboard on grass, plush carpet, gravel or through mud.

Maximum speed can be maintained for a time equal to the P.E.x3 in minutes; double for trained, professional skaters and experienced Urban Explorers and Rat Runners with the skill who are 6th level or higher.

It is skateboard tradition for skaters to have nicknames and a tradition adopted by most Rat Runners and Urban Explorers.

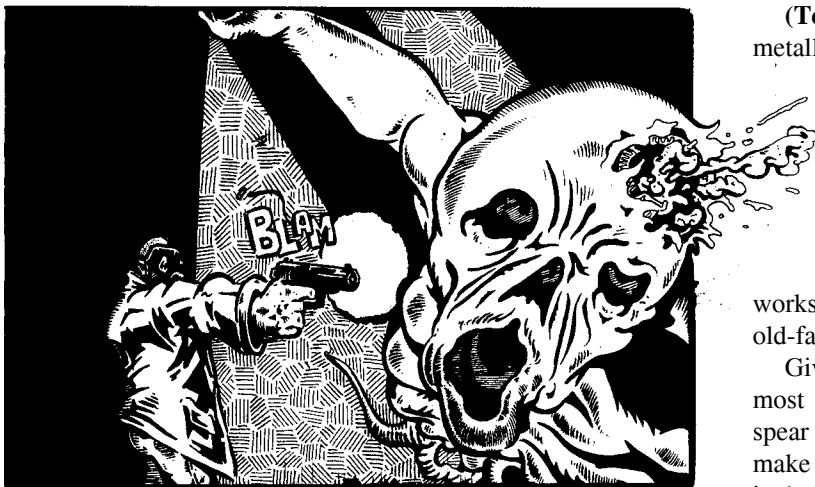
Base Skill: 40% +5% per level of experience. -10-25% to perform tricks, stunts and evasive maneuvers. The severity of the penalty varies with the difficulty and danger of the trick or stunt.

(Science Skill) Civil Engineer: The understanding of theories and practices of designing, building, and maintaining static structures such as buildings, bridges, water/sewage networks, dams, roads, railways, runways, and similar infrastructure. Included is the knowledge of surveying and cartography necessary for establishing construction sites. With the proper equipment, characters can attempt to design, modify, repair, construct, or sabotage any structure or element thereof.

The player must first roll to see if the character can properly analyze or design the structure. If successful, roll again to determine whether the character can fix/change/build the required structural component (G.M.'s discretion as to how complex the process is, for buildings it could be as simple as rolling once each for the foundation/flooring, walls, and ceiling/roof). If the second roll was successful, the repair, modification, or construction was properly done/made and the structure is sound. Obviously, the average building is more than one person can complete on their own, even if they have the proper equipment. Therefore, the character will probably need a team of able-bodied workers to complete all but the smallest projects. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. **Requires:** *Advanced Mathematics*, *Basic Electronics*, and *Literacy*. **Note:** The character also gets the *Masonry* skill at 40% +5% per level as part of this package. **Bonuses:** +5% to the *Carpentry* skill and *Military Fortification* and any *Demolitions* skills.

(Technical Skill) Lore: Zombies: A first-hand observational and anecdotal knowledge about the appearance, abilities, behavior, strengths, weaknesses, and dangers represented by the common zombies (namely those described in the **Dead Reign® RPG**), as well as the Fused Zombies (two melted or bound together), Juggernaut (big and fat or muscular), Pretty Zombie (looks alive), and Trash Crawlers (hides among trash and garbage dumps).

A character with Lore: Zombies also knows about a handful of additional types of zombies that are common to that character's specific geographic location and experience. For example, urban dwellers and rural survivors will know about different zombies that are more likely encountered in their respective environments, i.e. rural people have probably never seen or even heard about Dead Mound Giant, Impersonator, or Terror Zombies. Just as survivors living along the shore of oceans, rivers and lakes or swamps know about Bug Boy, Worm Meat, Blow Fish and Swimmer Zombies whereas landlocked survivors will not. **Base**



Skill: 30% +5% per level of experience for most people/O.C.C.s, or as listed for zombie specialists like the *Zombie Nerd*, *Zombie Researcher*, *Zombie Hunter*, and *Road Reapers*. Such individuals as well as adventurers, wandering heroes, and mercenaries learn about different types of zombies as they explore the world and many different environments.

(Technical Skill) Metalworking: An in-depth knowledge of metallurgy and the production of various alloys, as well as the techniques and equipment for working with metal to craft or repair metal items, create works of art, to build defenses, and so on. The character is familiar with multiple types of soldering, welding and cutting (including oxy-acetylene, MIG, TIG, and plasma), grinding, pressing and stamping, turning (using a metal cutting lathe), milling, bending and shaping, metal and iron-works, and the various methods of casting and forging, including old-fashioned hand-forging or blacksmith skills.

Given the proper time and equipment, the character can make most any metal item from scratch, including fashioning tools, spear and arrow heads, blades, and ancient melee weapons, and make professional quality repairs to damaged metal objects, including ancient and modern metal body armor, augmenting/armoring up vehicles, and so on. **Note:** *Mathematics: Basic* is required when making the measurements for precision parts such as those for machinery, and *Computer Operation* is needed to control many automated processes such as sophisticated casting and forging equipment as well as CNC mills. **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience.

CITY O.C.C.S AND THE APOCALYPSE

One of the most fun aspects of gaming in this post-apocalypse setting, is in addition to the fully detailed Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.s like the *Half-Living*, *Hound Master*, *Scroungers*, and others, you can play the *Survivor O.C.C.* – Ordinary People like us. I have had a blast with games featuring only Ordinary People as well as mixed groups of Ordinary People and specialized Apocalyptic O.C.C.s. Both work because in a shattered world where 80-95% of the population has become monsters, ordinary people with what were ordinary skills – skills we normally take for granted such as automotive mechanic, electrician, paramedic, nurse, driver, farmer, police officer, etc. – are suddenly rare and precious knowledge that make those who possess them extraordinary and invaluable. That expertise, ingenuity and lust for life is what keeps the human spirit alive and thriving against all odds.

Another thing unique to the **Dead Reign®** setting is the appropriateness of playing an often overlooked type of character that is both challenging and fun: **kids and teens, ages 10-19.**

In the Zombie Apocalypse, survivors need to grow up fast and pull their own weight. Everyone needs to contribute if the group is to survive. Kids and teenagers are eager to do both with commitment, derring-do, and style. They adapt quickly and step up to the challenge. The trick is for adults not to underestimate them and for the kids to not overestimate their own ability.

Masked Lunatics, presented in the **Hell Followed™ Sourcebook** as good and evil NPCs (Non-Player Characters), added a new dimension to the zombie genre that gamers loved. **In the Face of Death™** takes that concept two steps farther by making Masked Lunatics available as player characters. Mentally and emotionally traumatized survivors who are only able to pull themselves together and find purpose in helping others by re-imagining and reinventing themselves as comic book-style super-heroes. Complete with super abilities ... sort of. At least they believe they have super abilities and a destiny to be heroes.

The purpose of these “heroes”: To protect the innocent from monsters (the zombies) and villains (any bad guy, human predator, or dangerous lunatic). Most have a heart of gold and seek to help other survivors. They battle the forces of evil and try to free people enslaved by Flesh Peddlers, Retro-Savages, cultists, and survivor groups who try to rebuild their version of civilization on the backs of innocent people they threaten or enslave.

There are also some bad guy O.C.C.s and NPCs toward the end of this sourcebook. Everything in this sourcebook is intended to expand the horizons of the Zombie Apocalypse genre and your gaming experience.



KIDS AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. In this case, that hero is a child, teenager, or young adult. Whatever plans they may have had for the future – school, work, travel, entering the family business, etc. – it all changed with the pandemic of the Wave, the rise of the hungry dead, and the collapse of human civilization. In this world where the dead reign and right and wrong is left in the hands of each survivor group, everyone, regardless of age needs to find a way to survive and live among the fresh ruins of civilization, without falling prey to the omnipresent living dead.

Every member of a survivor group, including children and teenagers, has a job to do and rules to follow. They need to pull their weight and follow certain protocols designed as safeguards to help and protect and provide for them and their families. While it may sound harsh to put a 10 or 12 year old to work, or allow them to run loose in the zombie infested streets of the city, it is a necessity of survival. Kids can only be protected so much in the Zombie Apocalypse, and the younger they learn to live with, and survive in, the grim reality of that new world, the better.

Many adults have a tendency to coddle and underestimate children, but kids are much more resilient and capable than many give them credit for. So while some adults struggle with the idea of letting children out into the urban environment where the dead rule, the fact is, children and teenagers are the quickest to adapt.

Older kids (10+ years) are, generally, fast studies and quick to adjust to a world filled with, mostly, slow moving, dull-witted

monsters. They become very capable and daring members of their family homestead or band of survivors. They still find ways to play and make games of things, and there are countless places and buildings to climb and explore and hide in. Many of their “new games” now involve playing tag and chase with zombies. They learn to make a game of outsmarting, eluding, taunting, and tricking zombies. In the process testing and learning the limits of the creatures’ awareness and abilities.

Within a few months, most kids understand zombies better and fear them less than most adults. Kids, teens, and young adults are usually at the forefront of establishing Rat Runs and secret hiding places, scrounging for supplies, and finding vital resources. Most enjoy weaving through the zombie-filled streets, dodging monsters and madmen to scout and explore, or to run messages and packages to fellow survivors, or engage in tailing and spying upon strangers and people of questionable character and unknown intentions from a distance. The youngsters who accept these jobs tend to have a natural aptitude for them.

Best of all, these life and death responsibilities make the youngsters feel proactive and important. That they have a place at the table and make a difference and contribute to their survivor group, be it a family homestead or something much larger. They learn to be cautious and resourceful, but not afraid. That they are in control of their destiny and live with courage and commitment to others. They are the new heroes in the ruins of the old world.

Drawbacks for kids

Role-playing opportunities for adult players

In the Zombie Apocalypse, everyone, young and old, is on a fairly level playing field when it comes to figuring out what to make of their new reality and how best to adapt to it. However, there are some practical and inescapable disadvantages to being a child or teenager. They are young and still growing, so they are not as physically strong or confident as an adult. They are exuberant and full of energy, so they are always ready for action and a new challenge, but lack experience and training. This means they are not always good at making the best choices or react under the heat of emotion. Most do not fear death and are quick to take risks. Sometimes foolish and dangerous risks. Kids and young adults under the age of 22 (sometime much older) tend to become distracted and careless when bored or stuck with tedious tasks. They may daydream or wander off the job in search of something more interesting and challenging or fun. Many tend to be reactive and respond with emotion in the heat of the moment rather than pausing for a moment to consider and thinking out all of their options. This often leads to ill-conceived quick action, attacks, acts of vengeance, or risky and reckless behavior. Other youngsters take foolish action or dangerous risks to earn the approval and respect of their peers, parents, or an authority figure. Youngsters may also be lured away by something new or mysterious or an exciting opportunity or challenge. And some like to tease, taunt, and “have fun” with the zombies which may lead to trouble.

For the most part, the young are bold and courageous, anxious to prove themselves and find their place in the world. Sentiments that work both for and against them. Of course, the level of responsibility a young character can handle will vary with each individual (or a young player) and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The vast majority of young, ages 10-21, however, rise to the challenge when given the chance and proper guidance. This is especially true when assigned to work with a slightly older young leader who has proven him or herself, or a tolerant older mentor who is good with kids. **Note:** Youngsters and most people, regardless of age, do not respond well to bullies and bossy individuals and unfair treatment. They like to be treated with respect and honesty and appreciation, but also need rules and guidance.

While younger children require adult guidance and supervision, most young, ages 10-21, function well in pairs and small bands of 3-6 members. When given the chance, most young can be every bit as brave and resourceful as any adult in their community. This is why we include the rules and O.C.C.s for young survivors in **Dead Reign®**, ages 10-21. Enjoy.

AGE OF THE YOUNGSTER AND MODIFIERS

Roll percentile dice or pick one.

01-20% 10-12 years old.

21-50% 13-15 years old.

51-80% 16-18 years old.

81-00% 19-21 years old.

Stats and Modifier Details by Age

Physical Attributes are the basic stats before possible skill bonuses. The height of females is typically 10% less and weight 20% less. As always, these tables are just a guideline. Some characters may be larger or smaller, heavier or lighter as may be deemed appropriate. **Note:** Characters 18 years old and younger require 30% more experience points to reach the next level of experience due to lack of self-discipline, focus, and lower levels of comprehension and emotional maturity.

01-20% 10-12 years old: Height: 1D6+50 inches tall (130 to 142 cm). Weight: 60-80 pounds (27 to 36 kg).

Roll 1D6+1 for each Mental Attribute.

Roll 1D6+2 for each Physical Attribute.

Gets all O.C.C. Skills as listed under the O.C.C., but suffers a -20% penalty to each skill, except *one* which gets the full bonus and is the kid's primary area of interest or talent. No Elective Skills or Secondary Skills.

Base Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6.

Base S.D.C.: 1D6

Base P.P.E.: 4D6

21-50% 13-15 years old: Height: 1D6+56 inches (145 to 157 cm). Weight: 90-125 pounds (40.5 to 56 kg).

Roll 2D6 for each Mental Attribute and an additional +1 bonus to ONE of choice.

Roll 1D6+3 for each Physical Attribute and an additional +1D4 for ONE Physical Attribute of choice.

Gets all O.C.C. Skills as listed under the O.C.C., but suffers a -15% penalty to each skill, except *two* which get the full bonus and are the kid's primary areas of interest or talent. No Elective Skills or Secondary Skills.

Base Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6+1.

Base S.D.C.: 1D6+2

Base P.P.E.: 3D6

51-80% 16-18 years old: Height: 3D6+60 inches (160 to 198 cm). Weight: 130-150 pounds (58.5 to 68 kg).

Roll 2D6+2 for each Mental Attribute and an additional +1D4 for ONE of choice.

Roll 1D6+6 for each Physical Attribute and an additional +1D6 for TWO Physical Attributes of choice. Whenever the result adds up to 16 or higher, roll an additional 1D6 and add it to that one attribute.

Gets all O.C.C. Skills as listed under the O.C.C., but suffers a -10% penalty to each skill, except *three* which get the full bonus and are the teen's primary areas of interest or talent. The character also gets half the Elective Skills and one Secondary Skill.

Base Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6+1.

Base S.D.C.: 2D6

Base P.P.E.: 2D6

81-00% 19-21 years old (young adult): Height: 3D6+62 inches (165 to 203 cm). Weight: 140-180 pounds (63 to 81 kg).

Roll 2D6+3 for each Mental Attribute, +1D4 for TWO of choice.

Roll 2D6+3 for each Physical Attribute and an additional +1D6 for TWO Physical Attributes of choice. Whenever the result is 16 or higher, roll an additional 1D6 and add it to that attribute.

Gets all skills, O.C.C., Elective, and Secondary Skills, as listed under their O.C.C., but each O.C.C. Skill suffers a penalty of -5%, except *six* which get their full bonuses and are the young person's primary areas of interest or talent.

Base Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6.

Base S.D.C.: 2D6+4

Base P.P.E.: 1D6

For Your Reference, 22-30 years old (young adult): 3D6+62 inches (165 to 203 cm). Weight: 140-200 pounds (63 to 90 kg).

Roll 3D6 for each Mental Attribute, +1D4 for ONE of choice. Roll 3D6 for each Physical Attribute and apply a bonus of +1D4 to TWO of choice. Whenever the result is 16 or greater, roll an additional 1D6 and add it to that attribute.

Gets all skills as listed under their O.C.C. with full bonuses.

Base Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6.

Base S.D.C.: 2D6+6

Base P.P.E.: 1D6



Notes for Gaming with Girls

Girls and boys approach role-playing games differently. I put this together after reading a fascinating article some years ago about how the Lego Company spent something like 3 billion dollars studying the psychology of girls to figure out why boys go all-in on Legos often well into their teens and even adulthood, while girls tended to stop playing with Legos around age 7 or 8. Long story short, boys like toys/gear and building of things. Girls like stories and settings (ideal for role-playing, right!?). **Most importantly**, girls strongly identify and imagine themselves as their character, or in the case of Legos, the figures and settings, much more than boys. Like I said, fascinating. And there was a lot more to it than just that, but I want to keep this short.

Once I was aware of this dynamic, I paid a lot more attention to how kids and teenagers who identify with the feminine role-played. This was especially obvious when selecting and creating their character. When I was running games at the Westland library for youngsters who had never role-played before, I gleaned a lot.

I offered pre-rolled character sheets, and while the boys would grab and play almost anything, sometimes barely reading their character sheet before selecting it, the girls were much more discriminating. Nine out of ten times they wanted characters (male or female) who were attractive (this was of huge importance) and either smart, sophisticated or wealthy, or at least dashing and stylish. And the girls seldom wanted to play anything that was ugly or inhuman, unless it was an attractive Elf or sometimes a Wolfen. Being a tall, attractive canine character was acceptable to half the girls while others refused to play a “dog.”

I was running Palladium Fantasy, so there were monstrous characters like Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, and Wolfen, but girls showed no interest. Some would rather not play at all than have to pick one of them. Seriously.

I know a lot of you would like to get your daughters involved in role-playing games. Well, making attractive, well-appointed characters with style and flair – not wimpy or girly, by the way – just bold, attractive, and fashionable, even glamorous characters, will go a long way. Why, because they identify with their imaginary character more closely than boys. It's just the way girls and

boys are wired. **With that in mind, I suggest you let players who identify with the feminine roll an extra 1D6 P.B. (Physical Beauty)** for their character (optional). Also let them take their time picking their O.C.C. and gear. Girls like to create fleshed out, detailed characters whose appearance and abilities matter to them.

FYI: The stupid stereotype that girls are timid sissies or scaredy-cats is completely wrong. These girls – ages 11-17 – were bloodthirsty bad asses. They just wanted to go adventuring and fight in style! And all the kids, regardless of age or gender identification, took to role-playing like a duck to water. Have fun.

ALIGNMENTS FOR YOUNG SURVIVORS

Children, teenagers, and many young adults tend to have very strong convictions and see the world in terms of black and white. This means they fiercely hold onto the beliefs and values of their parents, family, closest friends, and community. They also tend to have visceral and extreme reactions, and find solutions based in emotion and action or violence in the heat of the moment. (“You scum bags almost killed my Mom! Now you pay!” Or, “You stole important supplies we needed, so now we’re taking all of yours. Be happy we aren’t killing you!”)

Even youngsters, teens, and many young adults of **good alignment** often have a black and white, eye-for-an-eye sense of justice and morality. Which can make them take action in the heat of the moment they may later regret, and which may have dire *consequences* they do not recognize nor anticipate in that moment. Their response may be honest, but it may also create trouble and problems for them and/or their loved ones or community.

Roll percentile dice or pick one of the following for a youngster’s Alignment.

01-40% Principled (good).

41-70% Scrupulous (good).

71-88% Unprincipled (selfish, but usually does the right thing).

89-97% Anarchist (selfish, possibly thieving).

98-99% Aberrant (evil with a code of honor, but young enough to change).

00% Miscreant (self-serving evil, but young enough to change).

Alignment Notes: If the young character is a **good alignment**, he or she is likely to be fiercely good and loyal to those ideals. That means the good alignment for most youngsters is Principled or Scrupulous.

Principled makes the kid the proverbial “boy scout” or “girl scout” who has a strong sense of right and wrong, and strives to be virtuous, good, sincere, honest, loyal, and brave. They are trustworthy to a fault, and super-loyal and true-blue to friends, family, and the survivor community to whom their word is likely to be their bond. They respect authority and follow the rules. However, the kid with a Principled alignment may trick, cheat, and lie to those they regard to be an enemy or evil people. Their worldview is full of high ideals, goodness, and black and white, this or that, reasoning.

Scrupulous good is the next most popular alignment among kids and teenagers. It is similar to Principled but provides a bit more moral flexibility while still being good and noble. While this youngster strives to be good, honest, and loyal, he is much less a letter of the law type of person. These individuals are about truth and justice and fair play, and may question authority and rules that seem unjust or wrong minded. They may also bend the rules and look for loopholes, and tell white lies when they think it is okay or they can get away with something that really doesn’t hurt anything. However, when it comes to big, important matters, the Scrupulous kid is as good, honest, trustworthy, loyal and brave as they come. All of which becomes malleable as circumstance dictates when dealing with the enemy or wicked people. That said, this kid’s word of honor is true and usually unbreakable.

Unprincipled offers a level of freedom and self-serving opportunity with a side of devil-may-care and impishness attractive to kids with a mischievous or carefree and reckless attitude. However, most Unprincipled kids still have a strong sense of right and wrong, and are loyal to friends and family. It is everyone else who needs to watch out. So while the youngster might want to be selfish or do something wrong (lie, cheat, steal, etc.), and from time to time may do so, especially to strangers and bad guys, ultimately they lean toward doing what is morally right, and will admit to wrongdoing, apologize, and try to make amends. This is why they are Unprincipled rather than Anarchist.

Anarchist. Truly selfish and wild youngsters are much less common than you would think, and do not survive long in the Zombie Apocalypse. Yes, we all start out life as selfish and self-serving creatures who must learn empathy and to share and be considerate of others. However, the children, teens, and young adults in the first years of the Zombie Apocalypse are the product of civilization. They do not fall into barbarism or wanton anarchy or thievery. Quite the contrary, most young survivors seek purpose and structure.

Youngsters of an Anarchist alignment tend to be freewheeling and self-serving because they feel they have already lost too much and the world owes them something. They don’t do well in large groups and tend to be lone wolves. They don’t like rules and do not trust adults or authority figures. As a result, Anarchist characters regularly bend and break the rules, may defy orders, lie, cheat, engage in petty theft, and run off on their own to do as they please, as well as encourage others to do likewise. However, they still recognize the value of life, try to find empathy with fellow survivors, especially fellow kids and parents, and try to help them.

Evil alignments among children and teens are rare. Unrepentant evil is rarer still, and should NOT be attributed to any characters under the age of 18. Misguided, lying, thieving, aggressive, bullying, and violent youth, perhaps, but evil, possible but not likely. Not yet. People of evil alignment are the survivors who quickly succumb to brutality and predatory behavior, but not the majority, and not most idealistic children and teenagers.

When emotions run hot and idealism clashes with grim reality

Seeing the big picture and learning self-restraint, self-discipline, compassion, and diplomacy usually comes with age and experience. As a result, such traits are not a fully formed part of a youngster’s skill set or thought process. Moreover, the young



are dealing with their changing, growing bodies, awash with hormones, and waves of powerful emotions they have not yet learned to deal with. Even children and young adults of good alignment with big hearts and the best of intentions can be brash, brazen, outspoken, disrespectful, hot tempered, seditious, too quick to action, and downright ruthless.

Acts of rebellion and disobedience are likely spawned by the feeling they know better, or because they are not being taken seriously or listened to by adults, or because they feel very strongly about the subject and believe they must follow their heart. Youngsters are prone to act and react upon their gut feelings and emotions, as well as their powerful sense of loyalty, justice, or high ideals. And most hate to compromise.

All of which can be good sometimes and disastrous other times. That black and white outlook and those hot emotions of youth that boil to the surface so quickly make them bold and quick to action without thinking things entirely through. All too often resulting in unexpected consequences and trouble. Even children and teenagers who are mature and wise beyond their years and show a strong sense of responsibility, empathy, and reliability are ruled by emotion and idealism. Worse, their goodness and lack of experience means they can be more easily deceived and taken advantage of by people with malicious intentions.

Player Game Tips: If you are an adult playing a character who is a youngster, try to keep these and all elements of being a young hero in mind as you are playing. Enjoy the challenge of playing in character as a youngster. Which can be a blast, by the way, so go for it. Just realize there will be consequences to your character's inexperience, words, and deeds.

If you are an adult gaming **with** children, try to be tolerant and nurture their gaming experience. Try to nudge young players along without outright controlling them or leading them by the hand. This is especially important for the Game Master and parents.

There may be some wild moments, but I guarantee you most will surprise you. When I was running games as part of the Westland Library's youth outreach program, I gamed with a new group of youngsters every month; ages 11-17 with the occasional young adult tossed into the mix. I was endlessly amazed by how quickly they grasped game mechanics and role-playing concepts (almost instantly) and how well they stayed in character. Sure there were moments of silliness, outrageous violence, and times where I, as Game Master, had to step in as a referee to point out when someone was not playing by the rules or in character, but for the most part, they played great. I enjoyed those "youth" game sessions as much as any game event with adults.

And most important of all, everyone had fun.

KID PERSONALITY TRAITS

Bonuses and Penalties (optional)

Roll percentile dice or pick one of the following for a youngster's personality traits. Though optional, we highly recommend rolling or picking one.

Having a character with a specific perspective or personality trait can instantly breathe life and extra nuance into a player character. So either roll dice to make a random determination or pick one that you think you would enjoy playing. Or not, it is up to you.

Bonus Skill Note: If the character should be an O.C.C. that also has any of the bonus skills some Personality Traits provide, take the skill bonus provided by the Trait, divide it in half, and add it to the character's O.C.C. skill. Round up.

01-09% Bookworm/Nerd: This kid is smart and clever. He or she has a lot of book knowledge and knows a little bit about a lot of things. The child's sharp, analytical mind enables the character to notice things other people miss. While this youngster may have a good head on his or her shoulders and may have the makings of a good strategist and tactician, the character lacks physical development and does poorly at tasks that require physical strength, endurance, or athletics. This may make the character a bit of a liability in combat situations.

Bonuses: +2 to I.Q. and M.E. attributes, +1 on all Perception Rolls, and +5% on all Communications, Electrical, Science, and Technical skills. **Penalties:** -2 to P.S. and -1 to P.P. attributes, and -5% penalty to all Physical and Wilderness skills.

10-18% Brave and Quick to Action: Too brave sometimes. This youngster is positive, bold, and brave, always tries to do the right thing and is protective of other kids, especially those who are younger. However, the character may not think before he or she acts, takes foolish and dangerous risks, and may not know when to stand down.

Bonuses: +1 to M.E. and P.P. attributes, +2 to P.S., +1 to strike and parry, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, and the bonus skill of Athletics (general) or Kick Boxing (pick one). **Penalties:** -1 on Perception Rolls.

19-27% Gentle and Kind: This compassionate and sensitive youngster would not hurt a fly and is always a good alignment. Though loyal, honest, and empathetic toward others, the kid is not necessarily gullible or an easy mark. The character may tend to be meek and quiet, but speaks up and even puts his foot down

when it is something important or he feels strongly about. Tries to avoid zombies rather than fight them, but will fight and take them down when necessary.

Bonuses: +1 to I.Q. and M.E. attributes, +2 to M.A., +2 on Perception Rolls to notice when someone is in distress (sad, scared, worried, hungry, sick, injured), +1 on all other Perception Rolls. **Penalties:** -1 to P.S. and -1 to save vs Horror Factor.

28-36% Hothead: This character has a short fuse and a hot temper, or a chip on his shoulder. The kid is prone to angry outbursts, fighting, and brooding. Too often the character takes matters into his or her own hands, going off to do what he thinks is right or best without thinking through all the possible consequences of his actions. This may also mean being defiant, especially to authority figures and bad guys, shooting off his mouth, and making threats to the wrong person at the wrong time or refusing to cooperate or surrender. This kid has not learned when discretion is the better part of valor, nor diplomacy, and does not know when to hold his tongue or his fists. All of which can cause hard consequences and trouble for himself AND the people associated with the kid.

Bonuses: +1 to P.S. and +2 to Spd attribute, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, and one of the following combat skills: Kick Boxing or Wrestling (pick one). **Penalties:** -1 on M.E. and M.A. attributes, as well as -1 on Perception Rolls.

37-45% Impatient and Distracted: Tends to get bored and wander off, does not listen carefully and forgets important details – or doesn't hear them in the first place. Impetuous and always interested in what is happening elsewhere or in things that sound like fun and offer adventure. This youngster is always interested in stories, rumors and gossip involving heroic adventure, combat, treasure, and glory. And manages to remember all the details of those stories and rumors. This makes the kid prone to be a gossip especially when it involves something dangerous, heroic, scary, or something a kid should not know about. The kid daydreams about becoming a great leader, warrior, hero, or adventurer.

Bonuses: +1 to P.S. attribute, +1 on Perception Rolls to notice strangers, clues, secrets, scary or suspicious people and behavior, and details concerning these things; +5% to any Wilderness skills, and gets the bonus skill of Tailing (+10%). **Penalties:** -5% on all skills other than Physical and Wilderness skills (wants to get most lessons and chores done quickly so he or she can run off to do something more interesting, important, or fun).

46-54% Show Off: The kid seeks respect and approval from others, so he or she often runs off to do something important or daring, even when told not to. Quick to accept most challenges, perform dangerous stunts, and to engage in risky, even death defying feats to prove how bold, brave, or capable he or she is. This kid has more guts than brains and may like to tease and toy with zombies, luring them to chase or attack bad guys, troublemakers, and strangers while he slips away to watch safely from the sidelines. The kid may also approach strangers or associate with dangerous people.

Bonuses: +1 to M.A. and P.P. attributes, +2 to Spd, +1 on initiative, +1 to dodge, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and has the bonus skills of Climb (+10%) and Escape Artist (+10%). **Penalties:** -1 on M.E. attribute, -2 on Perception Rolls, and the character's recklessness and daring can get him or her hurt, captured, trapped, and into all kinds of trouble. Trouble that may jeopardize friends and anyone who comes to the rescue. Worse, every suc-

cessful stunt or feat of daring-do only inspires the kid to take more risks and press his luck.

55-63% Shy and Slow to Action: This kid may be a diamond in the rough with a good head on his or her shoulders and a good heart. Unlike others the same age and older, the kid tries to see the big picture and imagine the many possible outcomes and consequences of his and the group's actions. This makes the character responsible and he or she may even possess potential leadership qualities. As a general rule, this character has a strong sense of right and wrong and is lawful and loyal, as well as cautious, and usually thinks things through. However, the youngster lacks confidence at this age. As a result, the kid has difficulty making decisions, especially quickly, and tends to be slow to react and take action. Tries to avoid trouble as well as clashes with zombies rather than fight them, or anyone, but will fight and take a stand when necessary or to defend or protect a friend or loved one.

Bonuses: +1 to I.Q., M.E., and P.E. attributes, +1 on all Perception Rolls but may not act on what he notices or speak up about them, plus gets the bonus skills of Detect Concealment (+10%) and Intelligence (+10%). **Penalties:** -1 on initiative, -1 to dodge, -1 to save vs Horror Factor, and has trouble trusting others, especially strangers.

64-72% Street Urchin: This youngster has no fear making his or her way through city streets and alleys or exploring houses, buildings, and tunnel systems. The city is "his" (or her) domain. He or she may have always been resilient, tough, and self-reliant, perhaps growing up in a rough part of the city or with absent parents, and learned to fend for him or herself. In the alternative, the kid may have adapted quickly to life in the Zombie Apocalypse. Whatever the case, this self-sufficient individual is likely to be an



independent and resourceful thinker who is not easily swayed or tricked by others. Likely to be an Urban Explorer, Rat Runner, Scrounger, or Shepherd of the Damned O.C.C.

Bonuses: +1 to I.Q., M.A., and +1D4 to Spd, and gets the bonus skills of Find Contraband (+10%), Roadwise (+20%) and Streetwise (+20%). **Penalties:** -5% to book learning skills like Electrical, Medical, Science and Technical skills, and likes to be on the move outside and doing something, not cooped up indoors or waiting around doing nothing. Has trouble trusting others, especially strangers, and also has trouble following orders, sometimes bending the rules and the law and defying authority when the kid thinks they are wrong.

73-81% Tall and Lanky: The kid is tall and thin, 2D4+4 inches taller than most youngsters that age, but the same weight. Nickname may include Bean Pole, Stilts, Stretch, High-Pockets, Giraffe, Goliath, etc.

Bonuses: +1 to P.P. and +1D6 to Spd attribute, +1 to strike, one Ancient W.P. of choice (W.P. Blunt, Knife, Sword, or Spear typical), and being tall makes the character appear to be 1D4 years older than he/she really is, which can be helpful sometimes and a problem other times. **Penalties:** -1 to dodge and -5% to Prowl/hide.

82-90% Tiny but Wiry: The kid is small, 33% smaller and lighter for a youngster that age, but is agile and wiry. Nicknames may include Rabbit, Rat, Mouse, Chipmunk (or Chip for short), Sparrow, Spider, Flea, Hobbit, Runt, Half-Pint, Pee Wee, Pika-chu, and similar. The kid's small size and light weight make him or her able to walk over rickety structures that cannot hold the weight of anyone larger or heavier, and to squeeze through small openings, giving this character an advantage as a spy, scout, Rat Runner, and Scrounger. The kid is likely to avoid zombies rather than fight them, but will fight and take them down when necessary. In fact, the Tiny but Wiry character may toy with zombies and lure them to chase away or attack bad guys and strangers whenever the kid believes he can slip away through a small opening or get across a plank or flooring that cannot support the weight of an adult or the zombie.

Bonuses: +2 to P.P. attribute, +1 to dodge, and has the bonus skills Acrobatics (+5%) and Prowl (+10%). **Penalties:** -2 to P.S. and Spd attributes, and is not physically intimidating (-10%). At some point in the character's future (which may be years depending on the kid's age), the small youngster is likely to "sprout" up to normal size and weight; a so-called late bloomer.

91-00% Tough Bruiser: This youngster is 1D4+2 inches taller and 40% heavier than others that age. Nicknames include Tiny (in the ironic sense), Big Guy, Moose, Bull, Brick, Tank, Bruiser, Hulk, Mountain, and similar.

Not only is the youngster larger than most, he or she is strong, tough, and knows how to fight. The individual will have either grown up in a rough part of town or was involved in athletics before the Zombie Apocalypse, or has toughened up fast since. This character is likely to be one of those young toughs who thinks he is invincible and is quick to use his size and strength to his advantage, including intimidation to avoid trouble and fights, or to get what he wants. If a good or Unprincipled alignment, the Bruiser is likely to be quick to step in to protect younger and smaller children.

Bonuses: +1D6 to P.S. and +1 to P.E. attribute, +1 to strike and disarm, and two bonus skills: Body Building & Weightlifting

and Hand to Hand: Expert or Martial Arts (pick one). **Penalties:** -1 on M.E., M.A., and Spd attributes, and -1 on Perception Rolls.

Family, Survivor Status (Optional)

The Wave and the subsequent rising of the dead has devastated families and the global population in general. Everyone has lost people they love. In the case of children and teens, most have lost grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and one or both parents. Communications went down worldwide very quickly, so the fate of family and friends in other states, provinces, or countries is unknown but presumed to be grim, leaving many young survivors on their own to fend for themselves. **Note:** Other players might consider playing other family members (just an idea).

01-10% Lucked out! The entire immediate family survived (mom, dad, siblings, and in this case, maybe even one grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin). All live in the city, probably together in a homestead or as part of a survivor community.

11-20% Lost father, but the rest of the immediate family survived and is living in the city.

21-30% Lost mother, but the rest of the immediate family survived and is living in the city.

31-40% Lost both parents. The character is the oldest and is responsible for 1D4 younger siblings. They all live together in the city.

41-50% Lost both parents. The character is the youngest of 1D4 siblings and feels like he or she is never given the credit they deserve and is treated like a "child." The kid enjoys prowling and exploring the city and dreams of becoming important and respected someday. 1D4 adult relatives, grandparents, aunt or uncle may have survived but their whereabouts are unknown, so for now the kids are on their own.

51-60% Lost everyone except 1D4 siblings or cousins. They are close and rely upon each other as they find a way to survive in the urban jungle as members of a homestead that has taken them in or a survivor community, or live on their own. Other players might consider playing one or more members of the family unit.

61-70% Alone. Separated from the family, their fate and whereabouts unknown. Though people tell the kid his family could never have survived, he continues to look for them, believing at least some of them, perhaps all of them, have survived just as he or she has.

71-80% The two of us. The character and a brother or sister are all that has survived. Parents, grandparents and other relatives have all perished. In the alternative, the brother or sister could be a cousin. Another player might consider playing the family member.

81-90% Me and my best friend. Both friends have lost their entire families. They have no one but each other (and any new friends they may make in the future). The bond between these two is stronger than blood. Another player might consider playing the friend. In the alternative, this could be a romantic couple.

91-00% Completely alone. The youngster has lost his whole family, friends, everyone he or she has ever known. Strong and independent, this brave youngster finds camaraderie in new friends to whom he or she is fiercely loyal. Untrusting of strangers.

NO O.C.C.S

In all cases, the young character starts at first level experience, unless the G.M. dictates otherwise. For most youngsters, this is the O.C.C. they stick with for the rest of their lives, whether they stay in the city or become a wandering adventurer, mercenary, or hero.

Young need more Experience Points: Youngsters 18 years and younger require *30% more experience points to reach each next level of experience!* This is due to the exuberance of youth, being less focused and disciplined, and a general lack of maturity.

Modifiers: Remember to include the skill modifiers and penalties imposed by the **Age** and **Personality Trait** of the young character.

Young adults, 19 and older, may select any O.C.C. from the **Dead Reign® RPG** or any sourcebook. This may be Ordinary People or one of the Post-Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.s, though the ones listed below tend to be the most common for people in urban settings whether it is the big city or the suburbs.

* **Asterisk Denotation:** The O.C.C.s marked by an *asterisk* are most common for kids under the age of 19.

Alphabetical List of O.C.C.s for Youngsters

Half-Living: Many a child and teenager caught the Wave and almost died, but survived. That means some are the Half-Living; an existence between human and zombie. Probably feared and mistreated by some, especially adults, but accepted by most other youngsters.

Hound Master: What kid doesn't like dogs? However, to be a Hound Master, the youngster needs patience and understanding regarding how to handle and train dogs.

* **Scrounger:** Kids love to explore and search for treasure.

* **Sentinel:** Like Shepherds of the Damned, Sentinels are scouts, first responders, and protectors who wander the city streets helping those in need. Many are associated with a cluster of homesteads or a Safe Haven community. (See page 20 of the **Endless Dead™ Sourcebook**.)

* **Shepherd of the Damned:** Everyone likes to feel important, and this youngster has found his or her calling helping people: finding and leading people out of the city to a safe place, rescuing those in need, bringing food and supplies to people who are trapped, and reuniting families as a Shepherd of the Damned. In this world, these kids know the pain of losing people they love.

Street Gang Protector: Basically Ordinary People/Survivor O.C.C.s who have formed a street gang to defend the streets and homesteaders of their neighborhood. HOWEVER, in this case, the character may be one member of a band of like-minded or diverse youngsters (any of the other O.C.C.s) who are looking to form their own gang of young protectors or adventurers (i.e. the rest of the player group). In the alternative, the kid could be a young member of a predominantly adult Street Gang Protector group. (See **Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook** for details on this O.C.C. and additional Ordinary People options and expanded skills under this O.C.C.)

* **Survivor/Ordinary Person:** This kid has at least some education and skills from before the collapse of civilization. Select any one of the 42 occupations and their respective skill packages listed for the *Survivor O.C.C.* in the **Dead Reign® RPG**. An old-

er kid or young adult might have been in high school, pre-college prep, college, trade school, the family business, or the ROTC, maybe even in the military.

* **(New) Rat Runner/Scout/Spy/Messenger:** For youngsters living in an urban environment only, described elsewhere in this section. The daring lookout, spy, messenger and scout, able to squeeze in and out of tight places and tight situations, and who ain't afraid of no zombie.

* **(New) Urban Explorer:** For youngsters living in an urban environment only, described elsewhere in this section. City exploration taken to a new level.

Wheelman (See **Endless Dead™ Sourcebook**; for older teens 16+ years.)

Zombie Hunter (See **Endless Dead™ Sourcebook**; for older teens 16+ years.)

* **(New) Zombie Nerd:** Ideal for youngsters living in an urban environment or wherever there are large quantities of diverse zombies, but especially cities. The O.C.C. is described elsewhere in this section. The observational study of zombies from the point of view of a youngster.

Note: Any of the other O.C.C.s may be *possible* for kids (G.M. discretion), but are much less likely. This is because the O.C.C. is not common to begin with or it requires a mentor who is of that O.C.C. to train the kid in a specialized area of expertise.

Being an Urban Explorer, Rat Runner, Zombie Nerd, or any Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C. is risky business. Under different circumstances it would be ill-advised and irresponsible to give a youngster such a dangerous responsibility, but in the Zombie Apocalypse, the youngsters' fearlessness, size, weight, and agility make them ideal candidates for this type of work, and most excel at it.

RAT RUNNER

A post-Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.

Human beings are incredibly resilient and adaptive, especially when it is a matter of life and death. That includes children. Kids are smarter and more aware than most adults give them credit for. During the Zombie Apocalypse, children are quick to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of zombies and take full advantage of them to avoid, elude, trick, and manipulate the hungry dead; even the fast and smart zombies. Few are better at this than Rat Runners, fleet-footed children, teens, and young adults who are adept at negotiating city streets and weaving their way through alleys and abandoned buildings, tunnel systems, and Rat Runs.

A **Rat Run** is the nickname city survivors have given the secret routes they establish throughout the city, especially around their skyscraper habitats and clusters of urban homesteads. These are not simple paths and trails to here and there, but secret routes built with slits in fences, unobvious ways over walls, secret doors and openings, hiding places, and caches of supplies and gear along the way. Rat Runs are designed for use by every member of the survivor community that develops them, but nobody knows them better than the Rat Runners.

Rat Runners are often children and teenagers who are as quick thinking as they are fast on their feet. Most know *Parkour* and *Zombie Survival Training* and take great delight in outsmarting and outmaneuvering zombies and the living. A Rat Runner is part



track and field runner, part messenger and delivery service, and part lookout. They roam up and down the streets with one eye out for zombies, the other for danger, and a nose for treasure and opportunity.

While Rat Runners know their established Rat Runs inside and out, they also know the streets, alleys and the insides of many of the buildings within a 12-24 block radius (that's 1-2 miles/1.6 to 3.2 km). In addition to the maze-like trail of the Rat Run, they know just about every shortcut and other routes within that zone as well as the graffiti codes that indicate direction and danger. They also venture out farther from time to time, and farther than their parents or community leaders know about or would approve.

The Rat Runner's knowledge of the city doesn't end there. These eager and adventuresome kids look for maps and information about places they want to investigate or share with their Urban Explorer and Zombie Nerd buddies. They also keep their ear to the ground regarding rumors and gossip about other city inhabitants, visitors from the outside, strange creatures, goings-on outside their own group, and rumors of treasure; i.e. supplies and resources, and in their case, that may include games, toys, books, candy, soda, and perhaps booze.

To know what is going on in "their city," Rat Runners know almost everyone in and around their main zone of activity, not just their specific community, as well as people of note, groups, cults, and zombie hot spots outside their primary turf. This means

knowing who is crazy but harmless, crazy and dangerous, and just plain trouble. That includes Gutter Rats, Flesh Peddlers, gang members, thieves, fences, and other shady characters a kid best not be hanging around with. And most do not "hang" with these unsavory individuals, but Rat Runners know about them and who to go to in order to get information, help, or contraband (i.e., hard to find stuff in the hands of crooked dealers/traders, thieves, raiders, cultists, lunatics, etc.), even if that info or help comes at a price. Bad people always have a price, even when it doesn't seem like it or it's not too nasty (i.e., "Let's just say you owe me a favor." Or, "All you need to do is deliver this package to Aten at the church. And no peeking, this is only for him.")

Though discouraged by responsible adults – most of whom have given up trying to get Rat Runners to comply – Rat Runners like to tail and spy on others, especially outsiders, Gutter Rats, cultists and other dangerous people. They love the intrigue and adventure and insist it is their job to keep an eye out for danger and potential trouble from strangers and shady locals. And they do a good job of it.

Most of them keep their distance from strangers and do not make contact with them, but they cheerfully follow and observe. Taking notes, sometimes photos and video with smartphones, they follow and watch strangers and people of questionable character to see where they go, if they are part of a larger group, the number of members in the group, what they are doing, what they may want (good or bad), if they are just passing through (but may be a temporary danger to be avoided or waited out), their intentions (scavenging, looking for someone, wanting to settle in the city, killing zombies, trading with cultists, etc.) and, if possible, assess their threat level. Adventurous Rat Runners may try to follow them back to where the strangers came from, though they seldom travel beyond city limits. The most daring may sneak in close enough to hear what strangers or enemies are saying, or to rifle through a backpack or vehicle when nobody is looking. And though they are not supposed to do so, some may decide it is safe to make contact and engage with them.

Though wary of strangers, most Rat Runners are empathetic to the plight of fellow survivors, especially children and families, and may try to help them if they think they are harmless or well intentioned. Help usually comes in the form of leading the outsider(s) to safety (but not to a safe house or the homestead or community), to water, and away from danger, help them escape the clutches of zombies or bad guys, and they may share a few basic supplies like a couple bottles of water or cans of plentiful food. Rat Runners may also exchange general information, but nothing that compromises their own people or valuable resources. No matter how young the kid may be, Rat Runners are cagey and know to never reveal where their own survivor camp, community, or homestead is located, their numbers, or the location of resources.

Rat Runner O.C.C. Special Abilities:

1. Rat Run Bonuses for Rat Runners: Increase speed by 20% whenever using a Rat Run, because the Runner knows every shortcut, nook and cranny along the way. This speed bonus applies to foot travel and when using a bicycle or skateboard.

+1 non-combat melee action per round.

+2 on Perception Rolls to recognize signs of potential trouble and when something is amiss on the city streets and back alleys, and when something is out of place along a Rat Run.

+10% to the following skills when on a Rat Run or part of the city the individual knows well: Camouflage, Climb, Detect Ambush, and Prowl.

2. Parkour: To help them navigate the concrete jungle, Rat Runners learn the martial art known as Parkour. A skill that has swept across the apocalyptic landscape like wildfire among the young living in cities. It is perfect for those who exhibit physical gifts of athleticism, running, and climbing. For Rat Runners it all comes with the job, and it feels like a game as well as an ability that makes them special. Each Rat Runner challenging the others and trying to outdo each other.

3. Find Contraband Skill Note: This is the basic skill as usual. However, in the Zombie Apocalypse it means tracking down hard to find goods, medicine, medical equipment, weapons, ammunition, information or services from underhanded and dangerous people. This includes outsiders, Gutter Rats, Flesh Peddlers, Raiders, Bandits, cultists, and other predatory and unsavory low-lives.

Rat Runner O.C.C.

Also Known As Runner, Roadrunner, Alley Cat, Lookout, Spy, and Messenger.

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (40%), Scrupulous (35%) or Unprincipled (18%).

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high Spd is ideal.

Occupation: None per se. This O.C.C. is usually that of a youngster who has studied and learned about city survival and zombies via first-hand experience.

O.C.C. Bonuses: None per se. See *Stats and Modifiers by Age*, above.

Common Skills: All except Drive Automobile unless the kid is 16 or older.

O.C.C. Skills of the Rat Runner (Kid):

Bicycling or Skateboard (+15%; pick one).

Camouflage (+10%)

Climb (+10%)

Detect Ambush (+5%)

Find Contraband (+20%)

Land Navigation (+14%)

Parkour (as noted above)

Prowl (+10%)

Roadwise (+24%)

Streetwise (+10%)

Tailing (+20%)

W.P. Ancient: One of choice.

Hand to Hand Combat: See Combat Notes under Elective Skills.

Elective Skills: Select three from the standard available categories. These skills *may* reflect the character's current interests or life before the Zombie Apocalypse.

Hand to Hand Combat Note: A Rat Runner of any age can select Zombie Survival Training (Special Combat Supplement) or Hand to Hand: Basic for the cost of one Elective Skill, or Martial Arts for the cost of three.

Secondary Skills: Select one Secondary Skill from the Secondary Skill List in the **Dead Reign® RPG** at levels 2, 5, 8, 11 and 14. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: A pair of blue jeans or cargo pants, a jacket (leather or lambskin are ideal) or a heavy sweater, a hoodie, a loose button-down shirt and/or T-shirt, scarf or handkerchief, sunglasses or pair of protective goggles, baseball cap or knit hat or could even be a ski mask, sneakers or combat/hiking boots (or one of each), leather gloves (may be driving gloves), belt, canteen or 4 bottles of water, food for the day (sandwich or a couple cans/packages of food), disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; does 1D4 damage), backpack, duffle bag or courier bag or purse, 1D4 pillowcases used as sacks to carry stuff, a comb or brush and some personal items such as: a pocket mirror, makeup, a few pieces of candy or pack of gum, a can of soda pop, a small ball, wallet, coin purse, a half dozen rubber bands, a few coins (for playing with and dropping down holes to determine depth), etc. **Notes About Gear:** The belt may be an army web belt with loops for survival knife, canteen, flashlight, portable radio, a few pouches for holding stuff, etc. Though the Rat Runner may have both a duffle bag and backpack, he or she probably only carries one or the other with him. Blunt weapons are likely to be common items such as a baseball bat, hockey stick, wrench, hammer, length of pipe, shovel or shovel/rake/axe handle, a crowbar, and similar.

Tools of the Trade: A bicycle or skateboard depending on what the Rat Runner prefers, 1D4+2 signal flares, 1D4 chemical lights (12 hour duration) or road flares (burn for 3D6+30 minutes), 1D4 pieces of chalk, one can of spray paint (any color), smartphone (with working camera/video capabilities), wrist-watch, flashlight, six foot (1.8 m) length of cord strong enough to hold the kid's weight, two pens or markers or mechanical pencils, notepad or sketchbook for taking notes and drawing.

Weapons: One weapon for each W.P. (Weapon Proficiency), plus the Rat Runner could have a staff, baseball bat, tree branch, tool, or other common item he or she can use for protection, climbing, or fun.

Special Additional Equipment: Rat Runners roam the streets and alleyways and venture inside buildings on a daily basis. While not Scroungers, they are likely to find food, water and equipment inside buildings or dropped by scavenging outsiders. Items may range from bottle openers and toys to guns, clothes and everything in between. The youngster might keep such items to play with or as spare items, as well as unsanctioned backup weapons, personal trade goods, a keepsake, a good luck charm, etc.

These items are often unsanctioned and "off the books," meaning they can be almost anything that makes sense provided the Game Master deems it to be available in the specific environment or due to special circumstances. The latter may include a rare or unique item, weapons, food, or gear stolen from an outsider, taken from a zombie, found on the corpse of a soldier or police officer, or inside a car or building, and so on. This can include melee weapons, guns and ammo, bow and arrows, road flares, pepper spray, a dirt bike or other vehicle, sporting goods, grappling hook, gasoline, and other gear or trade goods. The kid should report or turn such items over to a parent, community leader, or authority figure, but may stash such "treasures" away for himself, friends, or family, in a secret hiding place along with other goodies, contraband (this could range from candy and food to booze and adult magazines), and other odds and ends.

Additional equipment handed out upon assignment or special missions will depend on what the homestead or community has available to it, or what the Rat Runner may have scavenged or found during his or her excursions on the street and inside buildings. This may include any of the items above to things like nightvision goggles, gun sights and other optic systems, walkie-talkies, tools, sporting gear such as protective head gear, helmet, arm pads, elbow and knee protectors, light custom-built armor (nothing heavier than Leather Studded and Padded Armor; see page 117 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**), and so on at the Game Master's discretion.

Vehicle: Bicycle or skateboard; see Tools of the Trade, above.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade. The Rat Runner is usually part of a family homestead or larger survivor community that provides room and board and camaraderie, gear as needed, and allows him or her to keep some of the stuff the individual finds out on runs.

Trade Goods: Kids have \$1D6x100 worth of trade goods. Adults, \$4D4x100 in trade goods.

URBAN EXPLORER

A post-Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.

Youngsters are by nature curious and like to explore. In the aftermath of the Wave, amidst the ruins of civilization, there are millions of homes and buildings to climb and explore. For most Urban Explorers, curiosity and climbing seem to be part of their DNA. They love the drama and intrigue of being out on their own or working as a part of something bigger. Silently snaking through buildings and venturing into places where only the risen dead roam. These youngsters excel at exploration and intelligence gathering, in part, because they feed on the underlying excitement of danger and intrigue.

Many see their job as a dangerous game that makes them invaluable to their family and community. Responsibilities like being an Urban Explorer, Rat Runner, Zombie Nerd, Sentinel, and Shepherd of the Damned, among others, provide that sense of purpose and importance. And they are important. The efforts of the Urban Explorers to locate life-sustaining resources and hiding places, chart potential Rat Runs, and identify danger help people on a daily basis. And because they are doing something so valuable, it gives them focus and purpose to help them cope with their own loss and the lasting horrors of the new dead world.

Urban Explorers must be smart, resourceful and have good memories. They must also exhibit responsibility, and steadiness, and be physically nimble. These intrepid explorers cannot be afraid of the dark, heights, narrow spaces, zombies, or strangers. Most of these unique youngsters are fiercely loyal and dedicated to their families and friends, and by extension, their community.

Being small and lightweight has its advantages, because the youngsters can hide in small spaces likely to be overlooked by most people, and can worm their way through spaces that adults cannot fit through. Being small and lightweight also means the Urban Explorer (and Rat Runners and Scroungers) can run across rickety planks and ladders, beams, scaffolding, and unstable flooring and rooftops that adults are too heavy to walk upon without causing the structure to collapse. However, their passionate gung-ho, can-do attitude is a double-edged sword that can be an



asset or a liability. Like most kids and young adults, they tend to think of themselves as indestructible and endlessly clever, like Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. Only this is no storybook tale, and taking unnecessary chances can get someone killed. There are times when the exuberant youths do not stop to consider how their brash or reckless, daredevil behavior might hurt their team

or community. Still, when given proper guidance and supervision, these young hotshots can be a huge asset and play important roles within any family or survivor community.

Urban Explorers differ from Rat Runners and Scroungers in that their mission is very much focused on the exploration of their surroundings to gather intelligence, and bringing that data back to their leader or community. Not tailing or spying on people per se, nor physically gathering supplies and bringing them back, though they may assist on both fronts. Instead, they explore the guts of the city all around them. Urban Explorers climb up and down every corner, nook and cranny of streets and buildings. Crawling up into ceilings and attics and rafters, between the walls and service areas, down into basements and access tunnels, steam tunnels, and sewers. All the while trying to remember where they have been, how they got there, what they found there, and going back to draw maps and take photographs with smartphones. Cell phones may no longer function as communication devices, but they make great, pocket-size cameras capable of snapshots, video, and sound recordings, and may still have GPS capabilities.

While Urban Explorers may pick up weapons, gear, and supplies for themselves or the community on their explorations, their job is to map and gather detailed intelligence about their city and the structures in it. They search for all the city's secrets and map and diagram specific buildings and locations they believe to contain vital resources or have strategic value, as well as those that represent a potential threat. Danger has a wide range of categories. Structural damage from storms and weather, fire or water, people and combat could mean unless the valuables are excavated soon, they will be lost, or the entire building, tunnel, or bridge could represent a hazard (or a trap for enemies) that may fall in on itself or into the street. Of course, danger frequently comes in the form of zombies and all types of people. You can never tell for certain what a person is thinking or whether they are telling the truth or have their own dangerous agenda. This is why strangers are always viewed with uncertainty and concern. Buildings and locations with strategic value for whoever controls them, could become a source of continual conflict and sieges. As odd as it may sound, such a location/resource might be better off destroyed than letting it fall into the wrong hands or become a target of frequent sieges. Of course, there are other obstacles and dangers, and it is the Urban Explorer's job to identify them as well as secret routes to safety, Rat Runs, potential strongholds, hideouts, and valuable goods and resources.

The Urban Explorer's maps and intel are likely to provide the estimated amount of time it should take to get from point A (the community) to point B (the resource) unencumbered, and back when loaded down with supplies. The Urban Explorer makes maps, notes landmarks, and takes photos regarding the location of the goods and resources it contains, as well as the presence of homesteaders, lunatics, cults, bandits, gangs, Retro-Savages, Gutter Rats, and other people along the way who may represent a potential ally or an obstacle.

The data collected is all turned over to the head of the family or survivor group for the leaders to assess and evaluate. Then Scroungers, Soldiers, Shepherds of the Damned, and others are sent out on missions to gather resources and supplies, clear areas of zombies, rescue people who may be trapped or in danger, establish Rat Runs and supply caches, and go on similar missions to supply and protect their homes, neighborhood, or survivor community. Urban Explorers may accompany such groups to show

them the way and/or to point out specific dangers, strategic locations, and resources, or they may be sent out to explore a new location, building or neighborhood. It should be noted that doing a thorough floor by floor, room by room search and exploration can take weeks when the location is a tall building, factory, or supply yard.

The favorite targets of Urban Explorers are skyscrapers, other tall buildings, and industrial compounds such as factories, warehouses, industrial parks, shipyards, truckyards, mining and drilling operations, gas and oil refineries, and similar. Urban Explorers are just as adept exploring houses and small businesses in neighborhoods as well as underground tunnel networks. They often team up with fellow Urban Explorers, Rat Runners, and Scroungers, but can be members of any team or adventurer group.

Urban Explorers without any affiliation with a family or survivor group may become **fortune hunters**. Such individuals may be a member of an adventurer group or function as a lone wolf independent contractor. The latter either goes exploring to gather the best goods for trade, or sells his services and expertise to other groups, especially outsiders unfamiliar with the cityscape, for a percentage of whatever they uncover or first pick. This guy is the eavesdropper at a watering hole who steps forward with a grin and says, "I know exactly where to find what you need, and I'm happy to take you there — for the right price." If a potential client questions why they need him, the fortune hunting Urban Explorer will present a litany of dangers, pitfalls, and other reasons why they need him. ("I'm the only one who can get you in and out of there alive with the goods you're looking for. Of course, if you prefer, you can spend a month fighting the living dead and trying to find it on your own. Good luck with that.") In the alternative, this bold and daring explorer (think Indiana Jones and Han Solo combined) may have his own crew or associates (the player characters, perhaps) who can get the job done without the client ever dirtying their hands or risking their own lives. Often a fortune hunter or independent Urban Explorer takes on a client for the resources or extra manpower they can provide, which should help him score a bigger payday for himself, or remove an obstacle he cannot handle on his own. And sometimes, the rascal just needs a reason to follow a lead or rumor, or to go back into a dangerous location that is more than he can handle on his own.

While you might assume such a treasure hunter would be an adult, in the Zombie Apocalypse, it is just as likely to be a kid, teenager, or young adult. It is the knowhow and courage of the explorer, not his or her age, that matters most.-

Urban Explorer O.C.C. Special Abilities:

1. No fear of heights or falling: Urban Explorers love to climb and go where others fear to tread. They are calm and steady regardless of height or depth of the unknown, and are experts at going up and climbing around like monkeys to avoid zombies, gain access to structures, observe, and gather intelligence. Every new discovery and find is a thrill for these individuals. **Bonus:** Impervious to insanities/phobias involving heights and falling.

2. No fear of narrow spaces or the dark: Having an inquisitive and curious mind seems to be part of this character's genetic makeup. They enjoy exploring the dark recesses of the old world to help their family, friends, and community, and do so with little hesitation. The Urban Explorer is used to scrambling through narrow spaces and squeezing into small compartments, crawl spaces, tunnels, and dark places. They are not bothered or

freaked out by them, not even when they may seem to be momentarily trapped or stuck. This character thinks nothing of squeezing through a small opening or squirming through a narrow service tunnel. **Bonus:** Impervious to claustrophobia and other phobias and insanities involving small spaces and darkness.

3. 1D6+2 secret hiding places, +1 per each level of experience: Urban Explorers like to establish their own secret hiding places known only to them. This is in addition to community hideouts, safe houses, and Rat Runs the Urban Explorer may have helped to establish.

4. 1D4+1 secret supply caches, +1 per each level of experience: These are small hidden supply caches that are the Urban Explorer's personal stash. It may be hidden under a floorboard, between the walls, up in the rafters, concealed inside a pipe or furnace, or inside a steam tunnel or anyplace that is dry, secure, and difficult to find. This may be a "go bag" of basic supplies or a cache of weapons and ammo or special gear, or trade items.

An Urban Survivor's typical **go bag** has a week's worth of food, two weeks' worth of water, a first aid kit, a change of clothes, an extra pair of shoes, gloves, a blanket, a bar of soap, a hand towel, disposable cigarette lighter, book or box of matches, notepad, 1D4 ink pens, a smartphone with a working camera, two road flares, 1D4 extra melee weapons and/or a gun and 1D4 extra ammo clips. Other common items may include a tool kit, a length of rope, a map or two, a pair of walkie-talkies, lamp or flashlight, a bedroll or sleeping bag, additional food and water, cigarettes (if lucky, a laser distancer), and other odds and ends. They are all packed into a backpack or satchel bag that is ready to grab at a moment's notice.

Other caches may be entirely or mostly a number of specific items such as rifles or shotguns or pistols, or a combination of them all and plenty of ammunition for each, or melee weapons, fuel, medical gear, or medicine (antibiotics, painkillers, etc.), tools, electronics, or other supplies or trade goods.

Urban Explorer O.C.C.

Also Known As: City Mole, Seeker and Scout.

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (50%), Scrupulous (30%) or Unprincipled (18%).

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high P.P. is ideal.

Occupation: None per se. This O.C.C. is usually that of a youngster who has studied and learned about zombies and city survival via firsthand experience.

O.C.C. Bonuses: None per se. See *Stats and Modifiers by Age*, above.

Common Skills: All except Drive Automobile unless the kid is 16 or older.

O.C.C. Skills of the Urban Explorer:

Appraise Goods (+10%)

Barter (+5%)

Bicycling or Skateboard (+5%, pick one).

Climb (+20%)

Excavation (+20%)

Intelligence (+20%)

Land Navigation (+20%)

Prowl (+10%)

Roadwise (+14%)

Rope Works (+10%)

Spelunking (+15)

W.P. Ancient: One of choice.

W.P. Modern: One of choice.

Hand to Hand Combat: See Combat Notes under Elective Skills.

Elective Skills: Select three additional from the standard available categories. These skills *may* reflect the character's current interests or life before the Zombie Apocalypse.

Hand to Hand Combat Note: An Urban Explorer of any age can select Parkour and/or Zombie Survival Training (Special Combat Supplements) at a cost of *one Elective Skill* each; Hand to Hand: Basic for the cost of two, or Martial Arts for the cost of three.

Secondary Skills: Select one Secondary Skill from the Secondary Skill List in the **Dead Reign® RPG** at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Dark clothing, cargo pants or army fatigues are preferred, a jacket (leather or lambskin are ideal), a hoodie, a loose button-down shirt and/or T-shirt, scarf or handkerchief, a pair of protective goggles, a baseball cap or knit hat or could even be a ski mask, sneakers or combat/climbing boots (or one of each), leather gloves (may be driving gloves), belt, canteen or 5 bottles of water, food for two days (sandwiches or a couple cans/packages of food), disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; does 1D4 damage), backpack, duffle bag or satchel (the latter is a large bag with handles), a comb or brush and some personal items such as: a pocket mirror, makeup, a few pieces of candy or pack of gum, a can of soda pop, a small ball, deck of poker cards, wallet, coin purse, a half dozen rubber bands, several coins (for playing with and dropping down holes to determine depth), etc. **Note About Gear:** The belt may be an army web belt with loops for survival knife, canteen and equipment, or a mountain climbing/spelunking harness, belts, rope and gear. No armor because it is too bulky, gets in the way, and hooks and snags on things.

Tools of the Trade: Mountain climbing/spelunking tools/gear, 50 feet (15.2 m) of climbing cord, perhaps a grappling hook, crowbar, small hammer, 1D6+4 pitons for climbing, 1D4+2 pieces of chalk, one can of spray paint (a bright color), one laser pointer, smartphone with working camera/video capabilities, compass, wristwatch, flashlight, ball of string, 1D4+2 pens or markers or mechanical pencils, notepad or sketchbook for taking notes and drawing, a bar of soap, a hand towel, disposable cigarette lighter, book or box of matches, a map of the city, 1D4 maps of the neighboring cities, a pair of walkie-talkie radios, pocket tape measure, laser distancer, a pair of nightvision goggles, a lamp or flashlight, and 1D6+4 chemical lightsticks (12 hours duration and can be seen up to a mile/1.6 km away).

Weapons: One weapon for each W.P. (Weapon Proficiency), plus the Urban Explorer may have a small pickaxe or hatchet, other tools, or common items used for climbing and/or forcing their way inside buildings and rooms.

Special Additional Equipment: While not Scroungers, Urban Explorers are likely to be the first to find food, water, equipment, and resources. Some of which they may keep for themselves without ever mentioning it to their community leader or a client. Certain items a youngster might keep for himself may in-

clude backup weapons or tools, extra ammunition, electronics, climbing gear, optic systems, surveillance equipment, sweets, toys, a keepsake, a good luck charm, and so on. Personal trade goods and additional equipment can be almost anything provided the Game Master deems it to be available in the specific environment or due to special circumstances. Same as the Rat Runner.

Additional equipment handed out upon assignment or special missions depends on what the homestead or community (or client) has to offer, or what the Urban Explorer has acquired for himself during his/her many expeditions into the bowels of the city. This can include any of the items above, nightvision goggles, gun sights and other optic systems, walkie-talkies, and sporting gear such as protective head gear, helmet, arm pad, elbow and knee protectors, armor, etc.

Vehicle: Many Urban Explorers prefer to travel on foot, but are also likely to have a bike or skateboard. An adult may also have a motorcycle, jeep, or truck.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade. Most Urban Explorers are a member of a family homestead or larger survivor community, so he or she gets room and board, camaraderie, and gear as needed, and is allowed to keep some of the stuff the individual finds on expeditions.

Trade Goods: Kids will have \$2D4x100 worth of trade goods, \$4D4x1,000 for adults, \$4D6x1,000 for an independent fortune hunting Urban Explorer as well as knowing locations that are likely to have goods whenever he or she is ready to go and gather them.

ZOMBIE NERD

A post-Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.

Children's games now involve playing tag and chase with zombies, among other games involving eluding and toying with the walking dead. In the process, these youngsters test the limits of the creatures' awareness and abilities. But there is one type of precocious youth who takes these games and tests to a whole other level: the Zombie Nerd. While a tiny percentage of Zombie Nerds may approach the subject from a scientific perspective, the vast majority are simply smart children and teens who are fascinated with zombies. Some near the point of obsession. They watch and observe and test zombies all the time and know everything there is about the living dead on par with the Road Reapers (probably better) and actual Zombie Researchers.

Do not misunderstand, this not scientific research like the Zombie Researcher O.C.C. (see the **Endless Dead™ Sourcebook**). Rather the Nerd's interest is a practical, strategic, and tactical approach to better understanding and dealing with the creatures in everyday life. The reality for people living in urban environments is that the hungry dead are a dangerous part of life. You must learn to deal with them or die. It is as simple as that. So the Zombie Nerd's study of the living dead comes from the practical place of learning how to understand and coexist with the creatures without becoming a meal for a mob of them. The kid's motivation may be born from pure curiosity, hatred (zombies took away everyone and everything he or she loved), or the need to survive.



If you think about it, it makes sense. Zombies are everywhere. Their presence is inescapable, particularly in the city, so it is good to know your enemy well. And the Zombie Nerd knows most types of zombies with a startling level of detail and accuracy. Often, in much more detail than most parents and other adults. In fact, when parents or authority figures try to discourage this dangerous interest, it usually only serves to fuel the Zombie Nerd's commitment and studies.

The typical Zombie Nerd has read everything *Brad Ashley* of the Road Reapers has ever written and would love to meet him! They listen to every report, story, rumor, bit of gossip, and theory about zombies that comes their way, and most have their own theories as well as notebooks filled with their own observations and drawings. This zombieophile knows about most of the different types of zombies because the greatest number of zombies are found in urban settings and that's where many of the strangest zombies come to life. However, the Zombie Nerd does not know about all zombies, just the ones common to city environments, including Imposter Zombies, Dead Mound Giants and Walking Graves, and most of those presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG**. The Zombie Nerd continues to observe and study the monsters both from afar and up close. Just as people who are raised to work with and handle wild animals (alligators, lions, tigers, bears, etc.), the Zombie Nerd has a healthy respect for, and a deep understanding of, the deadly power of zombies – better than most people – but does not fear them. In fact, some Zombie Nerds become so complacent around the hungry dead that they may get dangerously close and too comfortable and blasé – indifferent and unimpressed by the most common zombies such as Slouchers, Crawlers, Pattern Zombies, Flesh Eaters, etc. And perhaps too curious about the unique and rare ones like Thinkers, Mock Zombies, Imposter Zombies, and Dead Mound Giants. If a new or rare type is spotted, the Zombie Nerd will be tempted to chase after it as if it were a rare butterfly or exotic animal. The kid will want to observe and study the new zombie's behavior, abilities, quirks, and motivation, how it reacts to people and situations, and everything else he can glean about the monster.

Zombie Nerds use their practical understanding of zombies and firsthand experience to avoid, elude, and escape the hungry dead, as well as to lure, trick, lead, corral them and use them like guard animals and as features in defenses used against living enemies. And of course, the Zombie Nerd experiments in the most effective ways to incapacitate and destroy the living dead.

Their extensive knowledge and understanding of the creatures means the Zombie Nerd also has at least a passing knowledge of Death Cults, the Half-Living (they find these people endlessly fascinating), Zombie Prophets, and Road Reapers. Some Nerds idealize those road warriors to such a degree they may imagine they'll grow up to become a Road Reaper or other zombie fighter. The nerd is smart enough to recognize that Death Cultists and their devout followers, as well as Zombie Lovers and other madmen who worship, command, and protect the hungry dead, are wicked or deranged and dangerous people. However, their fascination about these people's influence over the living dead may get them in trouble with such groups and individuals.

Zombie Nerd O.C.C. Special Abilities:

In addition to the observational study and firsthand experience described above, the Zombie Nerd has the following special O.C.C. skills and abilities.

1. Lore: Zombies (Special): As a layperson zombie specialist, the individual knows and understands the habits, quirks, behavior, abilities, and motivation of zombies. Knowledge the individual uses to avoid, elude, trick, and manipulate zombies (the latter to a limited degree). It also includes knowledge about local and notorious Death Cults, and the history, theories, and rumors surrounding *the Wave* and what caused the dead to rise. **Base Skill:** 50% for Zombie Nerds +5% per each additional level of experience (30% for the average Survivor).

2. Recording Equipment: The Zombie Nerd will have at least 1D4 smartphones with cameras and at least one handheld video camera and a Go Pro type of camera that can be worn on a helmet or headband for the purpose of filming and studying zombies. The means to display and watch and ideally edit the video as well. This individual is likely to have hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of video and snapshots of zombies. Stacks of drawings, sketchbooks, and notebooks too.

3. O.C.C. Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls involving Zombies: This includes anticipating their attacks, which way a zombie is going to move or lunge, how likely they are to react and what that reaction is likely to be, assessing the threat level the creature(s) represents, knowing where to look for dormant zombies and noticing them there, recognizing smart and fast zombies, and noticing most things about zombies.

+1 additional non-combat melee action (not an attack) per round.

4. Unafraid of Zombies: This is not an overall Horror Factor bonus, but rather a lack of fear of zombies specifically due to familiarity and a deep understanding of the creatures. That said, the Zombie Nerd has a healthy respect for zombies and while he or she may take calculated risks, does not, generally, engage in reckless or foolish behavior with these monsters.

Zombie Nerd O.C.C.

Also Known As Zombie Hotdogger, Zombie Wrangler, Zombie Boy or Zombie Girl.

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (30%), Scrupulous (50%), or Unprincipled (18%).

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high I.Q. and P.P. are helpful.

Occupation: None. This O.C.C. is usually that of a youngster who has studied and learned about zombies via firsthand observation and experience.

O.C.C. Bonuses: None per se. See *Stats and Modifiers by Age*, above.

Common Skills: All except Drive Automobile unless the kid is 16 or older.

O.C.C. Skills of the Zombie Nerd (Kid):

Bicycling or Skateboard (+5%; pick one).

Climb (+5%)

First Aid (+5%)

Intelligence (+10% only when specific to zombies).

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Zombies (see O.C.C. Special Abilities, above).

Prowl (+5%)

Swim (+10%)

Tailing (+10% only when it pertains to tailing zombies).

Tracking (people, +10% only when it pertains to tracking zombies).

Zombie Survival Training (Special Combat Supplement).

TV/Video (+10%)

W.P. Ancient: One of choice, but most likely W.P. Spear or Staff.

W.P. Modern: One of choice.

Hand to Hand Combat: See Combat Notes under Elective Skills.

Elective Skills: Select four from the standard available categories. These skills *may* reflect the character's current interests or life before the Zombie Apocalypse.

Hand to Hand Combat Note: A Zombie Nerd of any age may select any of the following: Parkour (Special Combat Supplement) for the cost of one Elective Skill, Hand to Hand: Basic for the cost of one Elective Skill, or Martial Arts for the cost of three. Martial Arts is only available to those older than 15 years of age.

Secondary Skills: Select one Secondary Skill from the Secondary Skill List in the **Dead Reign® RPG** at levels 2, 4, 7, 10, and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: Any kind of clothing, a jacket (leather or lambskin are ideal) or a heavy sweater, a hoodie, a loose button-down shirt and/or T-shirt, scarf or handkerchief, sunglasses or pair of protective goggles, baseball cap or knit hat or ski mask, sneakers or hiking boots, a pair of light leather gloves, a pair of heavy or padded gloves for dealing with zombies, rain poncho, survival knife (2D4 S.D.C.), medic's bag, first aid kit, 1D6 chemical lightsticks (12 hours duration), small or medium-size flashlight, disposable cigarette lighter, a book of matches, belt, canteen or 4 bottles of water, food for the day (sandwich or a couple cans/packages of food), disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; do 1D4 damage), backpack, duffle bag, and personal items.

Tools of the Trade: 1D6 signal flares, magnifying glass, binoculars, laser pointer, first aid kit, 1D6x10 latex gloves, 2D4 surgical masks, a face shield or motorcycle helmet with a face shield, a bicycle or skateboard depending on what the Zombie Nerd prefers, 1D4 pieces of chalk, 1D6 smartphones with working camera/video capabilities, wristwatch, flashlight, six foot (1.8 m) length of cord strong enough to hold the kid's weight, 1D6 pens and markers, two mechanical pencils, a notepad or diary and a sketchbook for taking notes and drawing, and if available, an audio recorder for more note taking and recording observations.

Homemade light body armor (special): This armor is probably made by the Zombie Nerd him/herself: A.R. 1D4+9, 2D6+36 S.D.C., -5% Prowl/movement penalty. It includes elbow and knee guards, forearm coverings/vambraces and upper and lower leg guards made of hard plastic or rubber from tires, a neck guard, helmet (probably bike or skateboard helmet or a welder's mask, but may be a football, motorcycle or other type of helmet, or no helmet but reduce A.R. by one point), and probably shoulder pads and chest protector. May incorporate protective sporting gear (football, hockey, etc.).

Weapons: One weapon for each W.P. (Weapon Proficiency) and 2D6x10 bullets for any modern weapon. One of those weapons or an additional weapon will be a staff or spear or length of thick PVC pipe for tripping and knocking down zombies.

Special Additional Equipment: If the Zombie Nerd has an interest in science, the individual may have a microscope and medical gear for studying zombies, and may even have a sort of secret clubhouse laboratory with zombie specimens, notebooks, and recording and playing equipment (probably battery or solar powered). The Zombie Nerd is likely to collect hours of snapshots and video of zombies, so other equipment includes more smartphones, cameras and video recording equipment and monitoring equipment, one or more hunters' trail cameras, other optic and audio systems, and similar equipment scavenged from city ruins or acquired in trade of goods or services. Surveillance equipment is much desired but probably not available. Writing and art supplies (note and sketchpads, paper, pens, paints, inks, markers, pastels, etc.) may also be on the nerd's list of desired items. This is in addition to items a youngster (or anybody) might want to keep for fun and games, a keepsake, a good luck charm, personal trade goods, etc.; can be almost anything provided the Game Master deems it to be available in the specific environment. See Rat Runner for more details.

Additional equipment handed out upon assignment or special missions will depend on what the homestead or community has to offer, or what the Zombie Nerd may be able to scavenge/find on the street and inside buildings

Vehicle: Many Zombie Nerds prefer to travel on foot, but are also likely to have a bike or skateboard, whichever the character prefers.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade. The Zombie Nerd is usually a member of a family homestead or larger survivor community that provides room and board, camaraderie, and gear as needed, and allows him or her to keep some of the stuff the individual finds out on excursions.

Trade Goods: Kids will have \$2D4x100 worth of trade goods. Adults, \$3D6x1,000.





MASKED LUNATICS™ AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

MASKED LUNATIC HERO

A post-Zombie Apocalypse O.C.C.

Advice for you heroes out there. I never thought of myself as a one, but here I am trying to save lives and destroy monsters. That seems to make me and the other Road Reapers, making us heroes in the eyes of most people. To us, it's just a matter of doing what's right.

If you have a shred of decency in your bones and want to see humanity survive, then you do what you have to do. In our book, that's helping other survivors and fighting the damn things out to destroy us all. If that's what makes us heroes, then I can tell you there are a lot of heroes walking around out there. You're probably one yourself, you just don't know it yet.

— Brad Ashley, *Leader of the Road Reapers*

The concept of the Masked Lunatic was first introduced in the **Hell Followed™ Sourcebook**, but while a number of Masked Lunatics were presented, complete with stats, including the gang calling itself the **Dead Rats**, we did not present an O.C.C. for use as player characters. Well, that changes right now. As much fun as Masked Lunatics are as wacked out NPCs (Non-Player Characters), they can be a blast as player characters. Be warned, allowing Masked Lunatics as heroes in your **Dead Reign®** campaign might change the dynamics of the classic apocalyptic setting, especially if many of the player characters or the entire group are all Masked Lunatic Heroes. Yet even the heroes are mostly tragic figures whose only way of coping with the loss and horror of the Zombie Apocalypse is to disappear into a heroic alter ego and their own twisted reality. A reality in which they can only function as comic book-style heroes with super abilities and/or resources they use to protect the innocent from villains and monsters.

Most Masked Lunatic Heroes are not a gang of a hundred people or even a dozen. Nor do they seek the reins of power or leadership (unless a villain, perhaps), and few inspire copycats or start a movement, because what these Masked Heroes do is, well, crazy. They may be well intentioned, but crazy nonetheless. Instead, the typical Masked Lunatic, whether a hero or a villain, is a lone individual, a dynamic duo, or a small band of 3-8 psychologically damaged people.

Most seem to crop up in urban environments and large cities that have been subjected to the greatest amount of horror, death, and zombies. All kinds of zombies. The *Masked Lunatic psychological syndrom* arises from severe emotional and mental trauma. As a coping mechanism, the individual is inspired by the heroic vigilantes and superhumans popularized in comic books, movies, and television. Each different and unique, based on the lunatic's current distorted view of reality, his or her knowledge of the genre, sense of morality, and mind shattering experiences.

What all Masked Lunatic Heroes do have in common is a powerful sense of right and wrong and a driving purpose to help people, save lives, and battle evil in every guise, be it the living or the dead.

Masked Lunatics do not, of course, possess super abilities in the true sense of the word. None are Superman, Wonder Woman, Iron Man or Thor. However, here's the thing, Masked Lunatics do possess a handful of special abilities (described below) that are the result of their peculiar mental state, delusion, psychosis, driving obsession, and adrenaline surges. They draw upon, and live by, classic comic book tropes and a distilled code of heroes. This includes using your powers for good, being a protector of the innocent, seeking justice not revenge, believing all life has value, heroes should strive to be noble and good, and "with great power comes great responsibility." It doesn't matter that the hero's "great power" is only in the lunatic's own mind. He or she has power and must live by the Hero's Code (below).

Though Masked Lunatics do not have true super abilities or psychic powers, they still see themselves cast in the role of the super-hero or masked vigilante, protector of the innocent, and defender of the city and the (living) people in it. Whether this notion is drawn from modern super-hero comic books, film, novels, or more classic literature such as *Robin Hood*, *Zorro*, *the Scarlet Pimpernel*, or *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, most Masked Lunatics battle evil, try to save and protect the innocent, patrol the city, have one or more hideouts or secret base of operation, may have "agents" (snitches, friends and helpers), and/or "sidekicks" (gravitate toward children and teen Rat Runners, Urban Explorers, Zombie Nerds, and Shepherds of the Damned as well as other protector and rescuer type people). They also wear a mask and costume (or "uniform" as some insist) of some sort, and keep their true identity a carefully guarded secret.

The term *lunatic* may sound a bit glib and sometimes overstated, but is not off the mark. Most of these self-styled vigilante heroes have suffered a psychotic break or other form of mental and emotional trauma resulting in *mental illness* and an *altered state of mind*. For many, their role as a **masked hero** is the only way they are able to cope with the loss and trauma they have suffered. Starting with the death caused by the pandemic known as the Wave, the loss of numerous loved ones, and the subsequent Zombie Apocalypse and collapse of civilization. With nothing but death and carnage and zombies all around them in a nightmare world that is a constant reminder of what they have lost, these would-be heroes are only able to deal with it all by becoming *someone else ... something else*. A masked hero who is strong and brave and, more often than not, noble and upstanding, and perhaps a little bit more than human. The latter is especially true of Half-Zombies, Zombie Prophets, and lunatics whose madness gives them superhuman strength, awareness, resistance to pain and other "powers."

Despite their noble intentions and identification with heroes, many of these Masked Lunatic Heroes are extremely violent, ruthless, and brutal against those they regard as their enemies or monsters, and are relentless in their crusade, whatever it may be. Enemies and monsters almost certainly include the legion of zombies, Terror Cults, Death Cults, Raiders, Bandits, Flesh Peddlers, and other evildoers. However, depending on the severity of the Masked Lunatic's psychosis, delusions, and break from reality, that enemy list may include Retro-Savages (who are usually fanatics and madmen themselves), Gutter Rats (who are shaken down for information via threats and force), other criminals and tyrants, but may also include bullies, vandals, spouse and child abusers, people who are cruel to animals, other Masked Lunatics and madmen, and sometimes anyone the hero *believes* is cruel, unfair, selfish, or bad. And because in the comic books super-heroes often operate outside the boundary of the law and are hunted by the authorities, soldiers, and government agents, the police and other authority figures may be considered enemies or at least people who do not understand the hero and want to lock them up. Thus, they are avoided, seldom trusted or embraced as an ally, and considered to be enemies or at least a dangerous obstacle.

Many Masked Lunatics suffer from various mental conditions including living in their own reality with delusional points of view, phobias, and obsessions. Starting with the obvious, that they see themselves as costumed heroes obsessed with protecting the innocent and fighting evil like a comic book character come to life. Such Masked Lunatics try to live by some kind of a hero's code of honor and justice. However, while well-intentioned and kind to those they believe deserve it, the Masked Lunatic is likely to live a hard, unrepentant lifestyle of ruthless violence. Killing enemies without hesitation or remorse, and engaging in acts of violence and vengeance on the behalf of others. That said, most have a soft spot and exhibit impressive tenderness and kindness toward children, women, elderly grandparent types, infants, and baby animals.

Classic comic book hero tropes the Masked Lunatic Heroes live by

Here are the most common ones. Whenever a Masked Lunatic Hero or Villain player character or Non-Player Character (NPC) is created, take most of these into consideration. Be flexible and inventive, and have fun with it. In most cases, let the player figure out what these tropes and characteristics are if the lunatic is their character, with final approval or rejection and modification by the Game Master as he or she may deem appropriate. Players, accept the G.M.'s final decision and changes.

An arch-enemy. This may be one or more specific persons or zombies, or a type of zombie or bad guy such as a particular cult, group, or organization, whether real or imagined, and may include Retro-Savages, cultists, drug dealers, gangbangers, bikers, criminals, police, soldiers, the FBI or other government agents, kids, O.C.C., etc.

A deadly weakness, probably one of his phobias or the source of trauma like darkness (because something terrible happened at night or in a dark place), fire, smoke, cold, fear of drowning, falling to his doom, being eaten alive, and countless other things. That weakness may manifest itself as bad luck (reduce all combat bonuses by half), actual weakness of some sort (reduce speed or P.S. by half when exposed to the weakness, and so on). If the

deadly weakness is a particular type of person or zombie, perhaps reduce combat bonuses and the number of attacks and/or non-combat melee actions by one third or even half when forced to face that foe.

In other situations, the Masked Lunatic might suffer different psychosomatic reactions like having difficulty breathing or hearing or seeing, or might lose the use of a hand or arm or leg, or suddenly cannot use one or more of his "super" abilities or skills until the deadly weakness is removed from his presence or he from it. Be creative and have fun.

A routine of patrolling the city. This is usually a specific neighborhood or area of the city the Masked Lunatic considers to be under "his" protection.

An origin story. This tale may be real or imagined and one the Masked Lunatic may or may not be willing to share. It is likely to have something to do with a severe trauma or deep personal loss, or terrifying event, or it may be something completely made up to mask the real trauma.

A secret civilian identity. This is the character's "ordinary person" identity when not a costumed hero. This is probably a good idea, even in the Zombie Apocalypse, because there are plenty of bad guys who will come to resent, hate, and seek revenge against anyone who thwarts their efforts or stands in their way, especially on a reoccurring basis from a Masked Lunatic Hero. It is cliché but true, such villains and criminals may try to use and hurt the people or survivor community the hero cares about to get at or leverage the hero, so a secret identity is as important as the mask and costume worn as a hero. It should be noted that a Masked Lunatic Hero may spend most of his time in his heroic identity and is likely to keep a low profile and live alone in his civilian identity.

A superhero name/identity and persona. Something dramatic like *Road Reapers*, or a comic book hero cliché such as Super This, Captain That, The Incredible or Amazing Whoever, etc. Or the name may be intended to evoke fear like *Zombie Cop* and *Skull Rider*, or it may be something that makes no sense or has meaning only to the madman like the *Dead Rats* or *Snoose*.

A signature costume and mask. Yes, the costume may be colorful spandex tights and a cape from a Halloween costume shop or theater company, sporting gear, homemade, or ordinary clothing and a simple sack with eye holes cut out, or a hood, ski mask, or some other sort of mask, bandana or scarf to conceal the face. The costume may have a particular color scheme and style of clothing, but is usually something fairly practical and often dark in color. Many include body armor of some kind that may be inspired by ancient Greek, Roman, Medieval warriors, etc., or modern day police and military armor, homemade armor, or just about anything that seems appropriate to the Masked Lunatic.

A signature weapon or gimmick. This could be almost anything from a Katana or other sword to a baseball bat, crowbar, or any melee weapon, or bow and arrow to a specific type of favored firearm, explosives, drones, etc.

A secret base of operations. Every super-hero needs his bat cave or secret lair loaded with weapons and supplies for crime fighting and zombie slaying, rescue missions, surveillance, and survival, along with a safe place the hero can rest, sleep, and recuperate when things get too hot or he needs to recover from an injury. A special super-vehicle may or may not be a practical part of his secret operation. When it is, the vehicle may be a souped-up commercial car or truck, military grade vehicle, or a completely

ordinary motorcycle, car or truck the Masked Lunatic believes to be special. And in some instances, a vehicle may serve as one of his signature weapons (i.e., one of his special powers/skills may be to hot wire a car or truck or semi, and drive it into mobs of zombies or cultists, or into buildings or other vehicles used by the bad guys, etc.).

Live by the Hero's Code, or something very similar. Every hero needs a code. Below are the classics.

Fight evil.
Battle injustice.
Protect the innocent.
Defend the weak and helpless.
Seek justice and fair play for all.
Seek truth and be honest and trustworthy.
Champion life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
With great power comes great responsibility to others.
Show compassion and mercy to those who deserve it.
Your word is your bond to those who deserve it.
Use your "gifts" to make a better, safer world.
Be good for goodness sake and inspire others.
Keep your city safe for the innocent.
Never take a life lightly.
Buy Girl Scout Cookies.
Fight well, die hard.
Freedom!

It should be noted that for many Masked Lunatic Heroes, this code only applies to people who deserve it, not criminals and cut-throats or smart zombies.

A Network of Agents (optional). Some comic book and pulp heroes like the Batman, the Punisher, Daredevil, Moon-Knight, the Avengers, the Shadow, Doc Savage, and others have a network of snitches and friends who are ordinary people with special skills and function as a support crew. These individuals may know of each other or not, but are people the Masked Lunatic Hero can turn to for help and a variety of needs: medical treatment, repairs, information, weapons or ammo, gadgets, supplies, a place to hole up and lay low for a while, and similar assistance.

Super-Team of Heroes. Most Masked Lunatics are lone wolves, though they may have a network of helpers and friends they can rely upon in a pinch (see *A Network of Agents*, above). It is rare, however, for more than two or three Masked Heroes to work as a team. One reason is that all members of a group need to be able to share the same goals and delusion(s) in order to work well together. That is difficult for mentally damaged and emotionally unstable people, especially if each is living in their own version of reality. There has to be some commonality to bind them together for longer than one mission. Finding one other lunatic to share the same delusion is fairly easy, though one is probably the dominant lead hero and the other the submissive "sidekick" in this team. More than two or three Masked Lunatics sharing in the same fantasy and establishing a sustainable pecking order in the group begins to get difficult. However, a charismatic leader might be able to put together and manage team of 3-8 Masked Lunatic Heroes.

The above notwithstanding, lone wolf heroes, pairs or a small group of Masked Lunatic Heroes are often able and willing to "team up" with other noble heroes and courageous survivors, i.e. the player group. **Team-ups** for special missions or to battle a common enemy happen in comic books all the time, so Masked Lunatics are open to this trope.

Similarly, one or two members of the player group could be a Masked Lunatic Hero. This has its pros and cons. Among the pros, the hero is likely to be courageous and loyal to a fault; among the cons, the Masked Lunatic may have moments that get the whole group into trouble, or the hero may suffer a psychotic break from reality and launch into a berserker rage, suffer from a paralyzing phobia at the least opportune moment, follow an obsession, run off on his own, take matters into his own hands, experience PTSD, and may have other quirks that can be an asset or a liability. If played well and on a level that is not a frequent source of annoyance or trouble, this can be fun.

Super-Friends. A Masked Lunatic Hero is likely to have super-*friends* – meaning one or more other Masked Lunatics he or she respects and thinks of as fellow heroes he can turn to in a crisis, and perhaps team-up with to battle a common enemy or to get information or gear. Likewise, most Masked Lunatic Heroes will come to the aid of a "fellow hero" as well as adventurer groups and survivors in need of help or who are trying to save lives or face a common enemy, including zombies and evildoers in general. Masked Lunatic Heroes can get along and help each other out as long as each respects the other's boundaries and stays out of each other's way and does not become a rival. This includes staying out of each other's "territory" unless invited, not engaging another's "arch enemy" unless that bad guy initiates an action or attack against him first, not threatening or attacking the people or community(s) under the hero's protection, and so on.

Why do Masked Lunatics, heroes and villains, seem to appear most often in urban environments? There are two likely reasons. One, city dwellers have often witnessed and experienced more horrifying things and suffered greater trauma than people in rural environments, and two, most comic book heroes are based in cities. As a result, the fantasy of becoming a super-hero feels more appropriate in a city environment where people live in the greatest numbers, lives are in the greatest peril, and super-heroes are most needed. In short, urban environments fit and support the Masked Lunatic's irrational fantasy.

Game Note: Players, be creative with all of these tropes and your character's delusion of being a masked hero. Game Masters, be reasonable without going overboard.

MASKED LUNATIC HERO

A post-Zombie Apocalyptic O.C.C.

Start by creating a Survivor – Ordinary Person O.C.C., page 85 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**.

Attributes: Roll as normal.

Alignment: Since this is a "hero," most should be of a good alignment: Principled (30%) or Scrupulous (53%). Some may be Unprincipled (10%) (selfish but does the right thing in the end). Not many will be a selfish Anarchist (5%; self-serving) or Aberrant evil (2%; has his own twisted code of morality and justice, like the Punisher).

O.C.C. Bonus: +1D6 to Hit Points, +2D6 S.D.C., and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

P.P.E. Base: Roll as normal.

I.S.P.: Not applicable.

Level of Experience: Same as described under the O.C.C.

Common Skills: All.



Other Skills: As per Occupation.

Occupation & Skills of the Survivor: Same as described under the O.C.C. The character's occupation and skills may help define the Masked Lunatic's origin story, purpose, motivation, and goals.

Hand to Hand Combat: Roll percentile dice for a random determination: **01-25%** Basic. **26-50%** Expert. **51-75%** Martial Arts. **76-00%** Commando.

Super Abilities (of sorts): See the instructions and descriptions below.

Survivor Standard Equipment: This could be a good start for basic gear.

Survivor Professional Equipment/"Tools of the Trade": Same as described under the Survivor O.C.C. However, depending on the circumstance, the lunatic's Masked Hero alter ego, pure luck, and whatever the Game Master is willing to agree to, "Tools of the Trade" may include items that fit with the individual's *pre-apocalypse occupation*, but also the equipment, weapons, and gear that go with the Masked Lunatic Hero's *super-hero secret identity*. This includes the signature costume, weapons, vehicle, equipment, his secret lair, and supplies suitable for a hero and protector. This can be almost anything, but both player and Game Master should exercise a degree of reasonable restraint and some measure of plausibility within the realm of the setting. I also recommend that some equipment, especially if a player character, is acquired via adventuring and role-playing during the campaign. And all or most should require G.M. approval.

Survivor Weapons: Same as Tools of the Trade, above.

Vehicle: Same as Tools of the Trade, above, and may range from none at all or a bicycle to something unusual and dangerous, to a souped-up motorcycle, ATV, truck, or military combat vehicle depending on the environment, circumstance, and the Game Master.

Pay: None, everything the Masked Lunatic Hero has probably comes from trade and barter in his civilian identity or whatever he scrounges on his own as a lone wolf. AND whatever the masked hero can "acquire" during his or her excursions into the ruins of the city or receives as rewards for heroic service. Acquisition of goods and crime-fighting gear include whatever can be stolen or forcibly taken from vanquished bad guys, dangerous and reckless people, and monsters. This may include stealing vehicles, weapons, and gear from the government, the military, police, wrong-minded survivor communities, etc., to be put to better use by the Masked Lunatic. This is where that Robin Hood and vigilante mentality might come into play.

SUPER ABILITIES (OF SORTS)

Masked Lunatics really do possess special abilities. Sadly, those abilities are born in madness and trauma producing real psychological and/or physiological responses that seem to simulate – especially to the lunatic – super abilities. "Powers" that only fuel their delusion of being destined to be a super-hero in these terrible times.

Masked Lunatic Heroes think of themselves as "gifted" heroes destined for a special purpose, because it is the only way their shattered minds are able to accept their place in the Zombie Apocalypse and go on living in that nightmare reality. For those who see themselves as some sort of "comic book hero," their "super-powers" are proof of their purpose and destiny. It is why they lived when millions of people died, including many (all?) of their loved ones (survivor's guilt). And as everyone knows, with special powers comes the responsibility to protect and help the innocent and battle the forces of evil.

It is only from this mindset and sense of greater purpose to do good and save lives that these tragic heroes can function at all. Without their hero persona they would be paralyzed with fear, suicidal, catatonic, or suffer from myriad other insanities that would get them and those around them killed. But as a *super-hero* whose destiny is to fight evil and save lives against impossible odds, they have a reason to live. A greater purpose, and are driven to do good. Being a super-hero or vigilante is a "job" they accept with insane courage and fierce dedication. Adopting the many tropes of the comic book hero makes their delusion feel all the more real and purposeful.

It is not surprising then, that many Masked Lunatics believe their *special (super) abilities* are a gift from God or given to them by the Wave. ("I didn't get sick and die. Instead I became super-human.") Or received their powers from aliens, or a magical artifact (it may be something very old from a museum, a gemstone, or something very ordinary), or from a science experiment, or from the same government conspiracy that unleashed the Wave, or from mysterious light or radiation, or an insect bite, or genetic mutation triggered by the Wave, or big pharma chemicals in our food, or the meds given to the individual when he got sick, or any number of weird explanations that make sense to their twisted logic and broken minds.

In reality, it is denial and delusion, insanity and powerful emotions, that have produced the equivalent of *special abilities* in these Masked Lunatics that give them a real – albeit crazy and irrational – psychological and physiological edge to go out and battle zombies, fight evildoers, rescue people, and help other survivors.

And from an esoteric and philosophical perspective, if they believe they are super-heroes with all their heart, and behave like super-heroes, are they not heroes?

Special O.C.C. "Super" Abilities of the Masked Lunatic:

Masked Lunatics possess a handful of abilities that stem from their psychosis and other underlying psychological and emotional conditions and responses. If the individual's delusion of being a super-hero is shattered, their "super abilities" vanish and the individual immediately descends into a despondent and dysfunctional state that is likely to rapidly become suicidal or catatonic. Being superhuman and helping people is all that holds these individuals' fragile psyches together.

Note: Though our focus here is on the *heroes*, the same conditions and abilities may be applied to any Masked Lunatic whether good, evil, or selfish. Masked Lunatics may be heroes or villains.

1. Super Abilities (sort of). Roll percentile dice for random determination of *three special abilities* or select a total of *three*

from the following list. These are what the Masked Lunatic considers to be “super abilities.”

With the exception of a *Signature Weapon*, if the same ability is randomly rolled, ignore that roll and roll again or select an appropriate or desired “power.” I am a big fan of random determination for player characters. After all, these powers are actually the result of mental and emotional trauma. However, role-playing is all about building a character you will have fun with, so selecting abilities that fit an idea you may have for a character can be just as fun and satisfying.

Note: In the case of duplicate bonuses, do NOT combine them. Rather uses the highest of them. The only exceptions are S.D.C., attribute bonuses and attacks per melee, they are cumulative. So are penalties and insanities.

- 01-05% Berserker Rage
- 06-10% Climbing (includes Parkour skill)
- 11-15% Crazy Look/Wild Eyes
- 16-20% Danger Sense
- 21-25% Fearless
- 26-30% Fighting
- 31-35% Human Insect
- 36-40% Lightning Reflexes
- 41-45% Lunatic Yell
- 46-50% Mind Reading
- 51-55% Mind Over Matter Resistance to Pain
- 56-60% Resistant to Mind Control & Drugs
- 61-65% Reversible Amnesia
- 66-70% Run Fast
- 71-78% Signature Melee Weapon
- 79-85% Signature Modern Weapon (Gun)
- 86-90% Stealth
- 91-95% Superhuman Strength
- 96-00% Zombie Imposter

01-05% Berserker Rage

The individual suffers from Blind Rage Syndrome: A violent overreaction to a verbal, physical, and visible insult, threats, and abusive behavior directed at the Masked Lunatic. An impulse control disorder of unwarranted rage and aggressive outbursts.

Duration: 1D6+1 melee rounds or for as long as the Masked Hero is being insulted, bullied, abused, attacked or feels under attack. While in a Berserker Rage, the individual is lost to aggression and combat, and does not snap out of it until the fight is over or he/she is rendered unconscious or subdued for at least 1D4+2 melee rounds.

Bonuses ONLY During Berserker Rage: +10 to P.S. and +2 to Spd attributes and add any P.S. damage bonus to the damage inflicted in combat from punches, kicks, and melee weapons; +1 attack per melee round, +32 to S.D.C., no fatigue, and Impervious to Horror Factor due to adrenaline fueled endurance and resistance to pain during the Berserker Rage, and +20% to save vs coma and death.

Penalties: The Masked Lunatic cannot control his Berserker Rage and cannot make it happen, and once it begins he cannot stop it at will. He becomes a victim of his own fury.

Loses self-control, awareness and reason while in a Berserker Rage. The Masked Lunatic is consumed by violence and is -4 on Perception Rolls, -2 to dodge, never pulls a punch, and is -40% on the performance of any skill that does not involve fighting.

Worse, the individual is so blinded by rage that he or she is turned into a savage fighting whirlwind that has little idea of what else is happening around him or the damage he is doing, or the people he is hurting. In the heat of the Berserker Rage, the lunatic does not recognize faces and may attack friends and allies with full force if they try to intervene and stop the fight, and may hurt or kill any innocent person who accidentally gets in the way.

The fighting usually does not stop until the Berserker's opponents are all defeated, run away, or drop their weapons and surrender, or until he, himself, is rendered unconscious or overpowered and subdued in some manner.

When the fight is over, the Berserker barely remembers who he may have fought, hurt, or killed, and stomps off triumphant and proud of having vanquished his enemies or taunters. The only clear memory is the person and the initial insult or attack that triggered the fight. Everything else is a blur and most Berserkers do not linger to survey the damage or to take note of the identities of the people who have fallen to his violent outburst. It should be noted that the Berserker is usually satisfied with victory by defeating or chasing off his opponents and does not require killing them. However, in the heat of combat, the Berserker may not realize how much damage he is inflicting and may kill people whether that is his intention or not. This individual always fights to win.



06-10% Climbing

The Masked Lunatic may have been a professional climber, a climbing enthusiast, had special training (military, SWAT, competitive, etc.), and/or very athletic before the Wave. Not only is he or she skilled at climbing and rappelling, but also knows the skills Acrobatics (+20% bonus), Parkour (+10%), and Climb/Rappel (+20%).

Other Bonuses: +10 S.D.C., +1 to strike with leaps, pounces, diving tackles, drops from above, and swinging from a rope, +2 to strike when diving to push, pull, or catch another person (or important item) to get them out of harm's way, +2 to roll with impact.

+3 on Perception Rolls to gauge distances and the soundness of rock, concrete, flooring, and structures.

11-15% Crazy Look/Wild Eyes

It may sound silly but being confronted by a crazy person or a masked assailant with a wild, dangerous look in his eyes and etched across the face, possibly even frothing at the mouth or spitting when he speaks, gives most people a visceral fear response when he threatens them or attacks. It's not just the Crazy Look, it is the Masked Lunatic's entire aggressive and dangerous body language.

All survivors know crazy people are unpredictable and dangerous. And they are right to be afraid of this Masked Lunatic. That Crazy Look is a flexion of the aggression, rage, and intense focus the Masked Lunatic keeps bottled up inside and ready to erupt. He taps into those repressed emotions to chase away, battle, and destroy evil as well as fuel to rescue and protect the innocent, particularly children, families, the elderly, and those who are mentally and emotionally damaged.

Since this hero looks like he is out of his mind and ready to erupt into brutal violence, opponents are frightened and put off balance.

Bonuses: +12 to S.D.C., +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to damage, +10% to save vs coma/death, and +1 to ALL saving throws including Horror Factor, but the Wild Eyed Masked Lunatic's "super ability" is a **Horror Factor of 15** and an **88% chance to intimidate and scare others** via his Crazy Look and aggressive, threatening body language. People who are threatened or attacked by this lunatic must roll higher than the Horror Factor 15 to save. **Note:** If the Wild Eyed Masked Lunatic also has the *Lunatic Yell*, double the penalties listed below, and increase Horror Factor to 16.

For NPCs (Non-Player Characters), the Game Master may choose one of the following reactions that seems most likely – or – Roll percentile dice to determine a random fear reaction of those NPCs facing the wild man. If it is a player character who fails his Horror Factor roll against a Masked Lunatic with a Crazy Look, that player can roll on the following table or pick the reaction that seems most appropriate for his or her character. Of course, the addition of role-play through such a frightful encounter is encouraged.

01-20% Startled. Startled and unsure how to react, the person just stammers and hesitates, losing initiative and one melee attack, but can otherwise respond to the Wild Eyed Masked Lunatic as the player deems appropriate for his character.

21-40% Scared and momentarily panicked. If it avoids a confrontation with this lunatic, the person being confronted either blurts out whatever information the Masked Lunatic Hero has requested or does whatever the madman has demanded, within reason. ("Where is X?" "What's the safest way out of here?" "Unlock that door and get on your knees and pray I don't kill you." "Get out of here, now!" "Holster your weapon and stand aside. Don't make me hurt you." "Drop the bag and run! Run for your life and don't look back!!" "Tell your boss I'm coming for him." And similar.) **Note:** This is one or two immediate responses to the lunatic's demands, and not likely to be a series of answers to questions or a prolonged interaction. The longer the interaction between characters, the more likely those facing the Masked Lunatic can adapt and steel themselves to the fear and intimidation and keep their mouths shut or fight back.

This is not mind control or hypnosis, so the Mask Lunatic's victims are NOT forced to do anything against their will. The threatening lunatic is simply so intense, scary, and intimidating that most survivors, particularly ordinary people, children, and cowards like Gutter Rats and thieves, do as commanded in the face of imminent danger from the crazed individual, especially if they are given the chance to flee or avoid harm. If the person does not comply, the Wild Eyed hero snarls and threatens, "Alright, you had your chance. Now we do this the hard way;" or "Okay, now you die;" or some similar threat. This gives the potential victim another chance to comply. If the person being threatened does as asked, the Masked Lunatic does not hurt him and the threats and demands are likely to end there. If the person *does not comply* or makes a move to attack, the crazed Masked Lunatic attacks with punishing force.

41-60% Freezes for a few seconds as per the standard Horror Factor reaction. Loses initiative (don't even roll for it), loses one melee attack or two non-combat actions, and cannot defend himself (no parry or dodge) against the first attack leveled at him! Snaps out of it after that first attack, and can engage in battle as normal.

61-80% Runs away! The opponent(s) who fail to save vs Horror Factor 15 flee from the crazed Masked Lunatic, which is usually an acceptable outcome for the maniac. However, the flight response is momentary and the person(s) stops running and regains composure after 1D4 melee rounds (15-60 seconds). At this point, the opponent may continue to move away in a less panicked manner, go to get help or report the encounter, or turn back and return to face the Masked Lunatic with no further combat penalties and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

81-90% On edge. The character facing the Masked Lunatic is neither frozen in fear nor intimidated to the point of capitulating to his demands, but is nervous and off his game. Suffers the following penalties when fighting or facing the masked assailant: -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 on all combat maneuvers (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, etc.), and -5% on the performance of skills.

Penalties for characters with Crazy Look: -2 on Perception Rolls and -10% to the performance of skills whenever the Masked Lunatic is in an aggressive, violent state of mind. Anger, combat, frustration, and feeling helpless triggers the Crazy Look and aggressive, intimidating behavior.

16-20% Danger Sense

This Masked Lunatic believes he has psychic or super abilities to anticipate the future and sense danger. In reality, this individual is hyper-aware of the environment around him and the people in it. He notices the slightest air movement or temperature change due to the opening of a door or window, someone moving behind him, and so on. In addition, a character with Danger Sense is keenly aware of people's *microexpressions* – noticing the smallest voluntary and involuntary emotional responses such as a change in the dilation of the pupils, the contraction of an eyelid, the flare of a nostril, a barely perceptible twitch of the brow, cheek, mouth, etc., a change in the pitch of a voice, and other indicators that provide clues to what a person is really feeling, thinking, or preparing to do.

Microexpressions cannot be controlled and most last for a fraction of a second, but this Masked Lunatic notices them and responds accordingly, even if he or she is not conscious of doing so.

Most people cannot see microexpressions even when looking for them, but the Masked Lunatic can, though he may not be aware of it. Which is why he thinks it is a super ability to see or predict events about to happen a few moments in the future. This Danger Sense ability is a symptom of extreme trauma and anxiety that has made the individual hyper-alert and aware of his surroundings, people, and danger, and ready to react to it in a heartbeat.

Danger Sense enables the Masked Lunatic to gauge people's likely response to outside stimuli (questions, stress, fear, challenges, etc.), and he reacts to those responses in a split second, or knows when to keep an eye on someone in emotional distress, ill, injured, or not to be entirely trusted. **A Masked Lunatic Hero** uses this ability to help and protect people, avoid danger, and stop attacks. **A Masked Lunatic Villain** uses them to his advantage to provoke a reaction, and time an attack or escape, as well as to trick, cheat, undermine, betray, and hurt people.

Danger Sense provides the character the following skill to recognize people's true feelings and intentions even when they try to conceal them.

Angry, Hateful, Ready to Explode: 70% +2% per level of experience of being able to recognize when a person is filled with anger and likely to be a loose cannon or a ticking time bomb ready to go off and attack or explode in rage at an inopportune moment or at someone in the group. The Masked Lunatic knows to keep a sharp eye on this person to avoid or counter an attack by this individual, or to contain (or talk down) an eruption of anger that could endanger those around him.

Anxiety, Agitation, Desperation, Fear: 70% +2% per level of experience to recognize when a person is filled with anxiety and fear and likely to freeze or flee under stress or combat, or engage in irrational and risky behavior as a result of their emotions. Knows to keep a sharp eye on this individual to intercept and prevent the person from doing something that could endanger or hurt himself or those around him, or needs protection from his own actions.

Attack: 70% +2% per level of experience of recognizing when a person is tensing and gearing up to launch an attack or try to make a break for it and flee.

Deception: 60% +2% per level of experience of recognizing if a person is lying or holding back details, which may be a reason

for concern. The Masked Lunatic detecting this knows to keep an eye on this person and/or to speak to him in private to try to discern what he is holding back, and whether it is a secret that could endanger that individual or the group, or jeopardize their mission. Most people living through the Zombie Apocalypse have trust issues and one or more traumatic experiences or deeds they don't want to share, so holding something back is not necessarily a sign of treachery or evil intentions.

Disgust and Contempt: 60% +2% per level of experience of being able to tell when a person is feeling disgust or contempt suggesting he dislikes or hates an idea, person, creature, object, etc., and likely wants nothing to do with it or has hostile feelings about it. Someone exhibiting contempt for the Masked Lunatic, or the group or Safe Haven or a plan, is capable of betrayal and sabotage.

Guilt: 60% +2% per level of experience to tell when a person is behaving in a guilty or embarrassed/shameful manner.

Sincerity: 60% +2% per level of experience of being able to gauge if a person is being sincere and probably truthful.

Danger Sense Bonuses: +2 on all Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm and entangle, and +2 to pull punch. In addition, people who are trying to intimidate, interrogate, or seduce a Masked Lunatic who possesses Danger Sense suffer a -30% penalty to their skill roll and he can usually tell when they are bluffing, making an empty threat, or are deadly serious.

Penalties: -30% to read and anticipate intelligent zombies like Mock Zombies and Thinkers, and -40% to read people whose faces are partially or completely covered/masked. Still reads body language, but the signals are not as clear. Tends to be mildly paranoid, doesn't trust strangers or cultists.



21-25% Fearless

The Masked Lunatic is fearless, unafraid of danger, zombies, and the most wicked people, EXCEPT for whatever **phobias** (1D4 of them) plague this individual. The phobias are probably considered to be the super being's *Deadly Weaknesses* and may have had something to do with how his loved one(s) died or the obstacle that prevented him from saving them. The only way he can live with the guilt of this tragic failure and deep loss is to become a hero and rescue and protect other people.

Bonuses: +1 to all Perception Rolls, impervious to fear/Horror Factor and remains calm, clearheaded, and suffers no penalties in scary, even terrifying situations, when under stress, under fire, in

combat, or when facing death and impossible odds. In fact, +5% bonus to any and all skills whenever in a crisis situation.

Penalty: Though this individual may appear cool, calm, collected, and courageous under fire, he or she is likely to be harboring a secret death wish, and wants to go out in a blaze of glory. The only thing that is likely to keep this “hero” from not taking the final step that causes his demise is that other people need him. This means the Masked Lunatic is probably in constant emotional pain over something he or she did or did not do. Thus, the individual’s life as a masked super-hero is a reaction to PTSD in an attempt to make amends for the tragic deed that haunts the Masked Lunatic day and night. Has nightmares and is unafraid to take crazy chances.

26-30% Fighting

This Masked Lunatic loves the thrill of martial combat and competition. He may have been an amateur or professional fighter, mixed martial artist, or wrestler before the Wave. He is not a bully and is seldom arrogant or demeaning, but does tend to be cocky and overconfident. In fact, this individual hates bullies, tyrants, and slavers, and is obsessed with fair play, helping the underdog, and protecting the weak, meek, and those who need someone to stand up for them. (“Hey! Leave the boy alone. Why don’t you pick on someone who can defend himself, like me? Assuming you don’t mind an ass kicking.”)

Bonuses: +2 to P.S. and P.E. attributes, +12 to S.D.C., +1 attack per melee round, +2 to damage, +1 to pull punch, and automatically gets the skills Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (this replaces any lesser hand to hand skill), Kick Boxing, and Wrestling.

Penalty: Tends to get in over his head. Quick to fight and accept challenges involving fighting or tests of combat skills, but often overestimates his own abilities or takes on more than he can handle (i.e. fights when outnumbered or outmatched), but is a good sport if he loses in a fair fight. This Masked Lunatic has difficulty walking away from injustice and incidents of bullying or physical or emotional abuse without saying something or intervening on the behalf of the victim, even when the situation calls for tolerance, discretion, and walking away. If this hero does walk away, he will be looking forward to the opportunity to give the bully or abuser his comeuppance and loves to beat and humiliate such people. The problem with that is such arrogant, selfish, or wicked individuals are likely to seek vengeance upon the fighter in a rematch that is anything but a fair fight.

31-35% Human Insect

The Masked Lunatic believes he has the powers of a spider or insect because he has no fear of heights and is able to climb and walk along ledges at full speed, and likes to prowl, lurk, and hide up high and in dark places. This includes rooftops, window ledges, scaffolding, rafters, trees, telephone poles, lampposts, up on billboards, cell towers, electrical towers, girders, and runs along the tops of walls, fences, bridges, and other high places. From his vantage point up high like Batman or Spider-Man, he watches his city and attacks, pouncing or swinging down on a line to drop upon unsuspecting bad guys. This Masked Lunatic Hero likes to use the element of surprise, darkness, and elevated positions to observe, attack, and make his dramatic appearance.

Bonuses: Automatically gets the skills Hand to Hand: Expert, Acrobatics (+20%), Climb (+40%), Parkour, Prowl (+10%), and Rope Works (+15%), and is unafraid of heights and can run across a ledge, narrow beam, or the top of a wall at full speed without slipping and falling off.

Penalties: Has trouble relating to other people, especially children and families, and is uncomfortable with signs of affection. Tends not to trust most people, but likes bugs, and may eat insects as food (that last part is optional).

36-40% Lightning Reflexes

The Masked Lunatic has lightning reflexes and fast hands. Many like to use thrown weapons.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), and gets the skills W.P. Targeting and Parkour or Zombie Survival Training (pick one). Also gets a +5% bonus to action oriented skills requiring a delicate touch, fast reactions, or manual dexterity, including Bicycle, Climb, Cook, Demolitions (all), Escape Artist, Firefighting, Juggling, Palming, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, Basic Mechanics, Rope Works, Safe-cracking, Sign Language, and Skateboard.

Lightning Quick Redo (special): Once per melee round, the gamer playing a Masked Lunatic with Lightning Reflexes can call for a Redo and can reroll one failed strike, parry, or dodge, immediately after the failed roll. The best result stands. The Lightning Quick Redo uses up one melee attack for that round. If no attacks remain, the Redo is not possible.

Penalties: This Masked Lunatic Hero tends to be an adrenaline junkie who craves action and adventure. This often compels the character to wander off on his own, explore/investigate, and take chances and risks. He or she is fidgety with his hands, especially when bored, and is -2 on Perception Rolls and -10% on skill performance when bored or forced to do something the individual does not want to do.

41-45% Lunatic Yell

The Masked Lunatic has a wild, maniacal yell. This is not a normal shout but a loud bellow of a word or phrase or sound, or an animalistic shriek, howl, bark, growl, or a menacing, even demonic, laugh, or all of them. Think Tarzan’s trademark yodel or the Shadow’s laugh. Whatever it is, it seems to come out of nowhere or from the shadows or rafters, and catches people off guard, startling, frightening, and/or unnerving them. In addition, if the evildoers cannot pinpoint the location of the sounds and put a quick stop to them, the sounds attract zombies. This is a reason to be concerned, afraid, and make a hasty retreat all by itself. Of course, in the lunatic’s mind it is “he” who scared away the villains, not their fear of an impending zombie convergence. Of course, the noise-making lunatic hero is safe up high or in a hiding place when the zombies come, and is probably used to doing things to draw zombies out to attack bad guys as one of his favorite tactics.

Bonuses: The Masked Lunatic is +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Penalties Imposed Upon Opponents (special): Moreover, people facing the yelling or maniacally laughing Masked Lunatic suffer the following penalties: -2 on Perception Rolls and -1 on all combat maneuvers (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, etc.), and

-10% to perform skills due to being distracted and on edge. People trying to intimidate, interrogate, or seduce the yelling, laughing, howling Masked Lunatic do so with a -20% skill penalty.

Penalties: Masked Lunatics who use their weaponized Lunatic Yell as they attack or as an intimidation technique are usually aggressive, violent, and bold risk takers who are likely to take dangerous chances, fight against overwhelming odds, and risk their own life to save or protect friends, allies, children, and puppies.

46-50% Mind Reading (not really)

Psychological Warfare

The Lunatic insists that he is psychic and can read minds and/or auras. The claim sounds sincere and in a moment, he or she will seem to prove it by revealing things about a person or people he should not know. Like psychics who do “readings,” the Masked Lunatic is able to glean information about his subject via astute observation and reactions to his questions and comments and extrapolating upon them.

The Mind Reading “psychic” then rattles off questions and observations and educated guesses about the person that are true or touch too close to the truth for comfort. The Mind Reading Masked Lunatic also engages in word play that is a type of *psychological warfare* used by police interrogators, hostage negotiators, and CIA type operatives that are intended to sow the seeds of dissension and divide the enemy from within.

A big part of this Mind Reading “power” is the same skill at reading people exhibited by con artists, carnival acts, and fake psychics. Which means the Masked Lunatic may ask questions or make statements from the shadows while he or she gauges the reactions of his opponents. From this, the lunatic makes statements or asks more questions that irritate, intimidate and confound most people. Things designed to strike a nerve, and when the “Mind Reader” recognizes he has struck a nerve, he keeps poking at it to intensify the distrustfulness, fear, hostility, and division within the enemy’s ranks. Statements such as: “I know you have this or that weakness.” “Is revenge really worth jeopardizing your team? Oh, that’s right, you don’t really care about them. They’re just a means to an end.” “Do your teammates know you pocketed X (valuable, weapon, ammo, secret, etc.)? Why don’t you show them what’s in your pocket?” This Masked Lunatic is intuitively skillful at pressing buttons and creating doubt and anxiety in both individuals and groups of people. This includes saying and suggesting things that are not true. The bad guy he just accused of pocketing something may have done no such thing, but the cunning madman knows the accusation will create derision and distrust, which in turn leads to distraction, delays, confusion, and infighting which may all work to the advantage of the Masked Lunatic and/or his own teammates or allies (the player group).

This style of psychological warfare can be very effective up close within or among the people being targeted, or from the shadows in the distance, calling out to the people the Masked Lunatic is trying to unnerve, scare, confuse, or in whom he is trying to create discord. Part of that tactic is to seem unafraid, condescending, and knowledgeable of them. This includes using their names or nicknames. “What’s the matter, Billy-Boy? You don’t want your buddies to know you’re scared (or whatever, a thief, rapist, killer?)” And when something strikes a nerve, the Mask Lunatic doubles-down on it and keeps poking at it. In the example above, where he accuses one of them of pocketing

something they all want, the accusation might be true, but is more likely to be a flat out lie. When the others question their teammate and he shows them his empty pockets, the self-proclaimed mind reader chuckles and says something like, “Oh, that’s right, you stuffed it under the seat of that blue Chevy (or wherever) when they weren’t looking.” When the Masked Lunatic is accused of trying to cause trouble, he’ll have a glib comeback or push another button like, “What’s the matter, Billy-Boy, you afraid the Big Moron might lose his temper? Wait, what was it you say about him, Dewan? Oh, he’s too stupid to find his nose on his own face.” Another lie that causes more squabbling and dissension pulled out of thin air via hearing the man’s name and observing the dynamic of the group and/or the insecurity or weaknesses in the guy who is a big, dumb lug.

There is no real mind reading going on. The Masked Lunatic is using careful observation, speculation, and psychology to undermine his opponents so he and his allies may be able to get the drop on them, or distract them long enough for people to sneak past them, or steal from them, or sabotage them, etc. For the Masked Lunatic it is all a fun game and mental exercise. This type of con game and psychological warfare is what this individual excels at, and loves to pull off against bad guys who deserve to be messed with or to give them their comeuppance.

Bonuses: +8 to S.D.C., +2 to I.Q. and M.E. attributes, +8 to M.A. attribute, and tends to be convincing and sincere. Also has a great memory for names, faces, and details about people and their personality quirks. Thinks fast on his feet and doesn’t show it when he himself is nervous, scared, or very angry. Calm under pressure (reduce skill penalties by half).

+2 on all Perception Rolls, but +4 to recognize things that upset, frighten, anger, and bother people.

Penalties: Does not always know when to shut up or when to stop poking the bear. This individual tends to be arrogant and condescending and too often pushes his luck and gets himself into hot water or the stuffing beaten out of him. He or she despises bullies, tyrants, slavers, and thugs, and likes to mess with them and tear them down, again, sometimes to his own detriment. Such antics may also get his teammates into trouble along with himself. Though he is loath to admit it, this individual is likely to have a soft spot for heroes, idealists, underdogs, and children.

51-55% Mind Over Matter

Resistance to Pain

This is a mind over matter ability in which the Masked Lunatic is able to detach himself from physical and emotional sensation and slip into a calm, zen-like trance state. This trance state usually occurs whenever the Masked Lunatic is bound or otherwise helpless and under attack without any other means to defend himself. Anyone interrogating the individual using threats, seduction, noise, heat, cold, or physical pain/beatings/torture, suffers a penalty of -40% on their skill roll as their lunatic victim is able to resist and deaden the effects of their physical and emotional intimidation.

Bonuses: Moreover, the individual can use mind over matter to slow his metabolism to provide himself with 1D4+1 extra minutes of air, +1 to save vs poison and disease, +15% to save vs coma and death, and heals an extra 1D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. per 24 hours in which at least six hours is spent in a trance.

Pushed Beyond the Limit (special): The Masked Lunatic is able to continue to fight as normal, without penalty, until Hit Points are reduced to 12 below zero. However, to keep fighting after Hit Points are reduced to zero or less takes a profound toll. Even if the madman suffers no additional damage in combat, each melee round below zero counts as one more Hit Point of damage from blood loss and compounded preexisting injuries. When the individual reaches -12 Hit Points, he or she finally collapses and falls into a coma. This also occurs when the character suffers more damage from an attacker.

At this point the character requires immediate medical attention or will die. If the wounds and injuries are properly treated and tended to within 12 minutes, the lunatic is momentarily stabilized and the player must roll to save vs coma and death! Failure to save means the hero dies. A successful save means the maniac is as weak as a newborn kitten and cannot even stand for 1D6 days, and requires bed rest for that period. After that, the Masked Lunatic is at half strength (half all physical attributes, bonuses, skill performance) and should remain in bed and rest for another 1D6+2 days before being back on his feet. **Note:** The Masked Lunatic knows when he is about to push himself beyond the limit and does so knowingly.

Penalties: While in a mind over matter trance, the individual goes to a “safe place” and is only vaguely aware of what is happening to him or what is going on around him. While in this dissociative state, the Masked Lunatic Hero cannot speak, fight, perform skills, or take any action. The trance can be ended at will by the individual. Also see coma and death.

56-60% Resistant to Mind Control & Drugs

The Masked Lunatic’s state of mind is such that it is difficult to intimidate, trick, seduce, sedate, or brainwash the individual even with the use of torture, threats, drugs, and deprivation techniques.

Bonuses: Attempts to intimidate, Interrogation, and Seduction are -40%, +5% to save vs coma and death, and the character is +3 to save vs poison and drugs. Even when the character falls victim to poison or drugs, their damage, effects, penalties, and duration are half! (In other game settings, this character would be +3 to save vs psionics and mind control, and even when he succumbs their effect is half.)

Penalties: Resistance to drugs means the effects, restorative properties, bonuses, and duration of good and helpful drugs are also half; does not like or trust doctors and healthcare professionals.

61-65% Reversible Amnesia

The Masked Lunatic slips into a dissociative fugue state whenever placed under interrogation while in captivity, imprisonment, beatings, and torture or when placed under extreme, life and death stress. This is the way the individual’s mind protects itself from more trauma. While in this state of disconnection with himself, the individual suffers amnesia and cannot remember his or her identity, purpose/mission, place of origin, home, friends, any memories whatsoever, name or anything about himself. The character is a blank slate. While the amnesia is in place, the Masked Lunatic cannot be tricked, seduced, or forced to reveal

any sort of information about himself or those he associates with because he really does not remember any of it. Skills, however, may come to him out of the blue as a sort of reflex response, but at a penalty of -20%, and -1 melee attack or two non-combat actions per melee round.

Bonuses: Impervious to Interrogation, Seduction and torture.

Penalties: Amnesia is both a bonus and a curse as it may lead to torture, beatings, imprisonment, and even death at the hands of an angry enemy who may not believe the individual has amnesia and continues pressure to punish and make him talk. In addition, the amnesia victim is frightened and confused for the duration of the amnesia. **Note:** In this case, the Masked Lunatic’s identity and memories return when he is among people he knows or a safe place like his home, hideout, or the survivor community where he is a member, or among other kind and friendly people who may remind him of his friends and safe place. Amnesia may also pass when the clear and present danger is gone and the individual feels safe for at least 3D6 hours. 01-60% likelihood the character does not remember exactly where he was or who had held him captive or tortured him until confronted by that person(s) again.

66-70% Run Fast

This Masked Lunatic likes to run and is very fast. Running and jogging help clear his mind and make him feel good, positive, and strong.

Bonuses: +10 to S.D.C., +2 to P.E. and +1D6+5 to Spd attribute. The individual can run at half speed for one hour per every 4 P.E. attribute points, and at full speed for one minute per every 2 P.E. attribute points. Also gets three of the following skills: Parkour or Escape Artist (+20%, pick one), Physical Labor or Swim (+10%, pick one), and Skateboard or Land Navigation (+20%, pick one).

Penalties: Feels antsy, irritable, and ill at ease, like a caged animal, when bored or cooped up and unable to run. -2 on Perception Rolls and initiative, and -5% on skill performance.

This individual falls into a deep depression and may become despondent if imprisoned or trapped in a confined space for more than 1D4+3 days. When that happens reduce skill performance, attacks per melee round, and all bonuses by half. Craves freedom and completely returns to his old self within 1D6+2 hours of being released and allowed to run free (no penalties).

71-78% Signature Melee Weapon

The Masked Lunatic has a special relationship with one or two particular types of melee weapons that make the character feel confident and more powerful. Whenever he or she uses that type of weapon, the character receives bonuses regardless of past training or lack of it, in addition to any possible W.P. skills. Most important, the weapon feels like an extension of the character, instilling him or her with a sense of confidence and purpose.

Select no more than a total of 2 Signature Melee Weapon categories. Each selection counts as one of the Masked Lunatic’s “super abilities.” Characters who select one or two Signature Melee Weapons do NOT usually select a signature Modern Weapon, but they may, and vice versa.

Bonuses for Signature Melee Weapon: +2 to damage, +1 to strike, parry, and disarm, W.P. Paired Weapons, and is an expert in cleaning, maintaining, and repairing this type of weapon.

The Signature Melee Weapon ability may be selected as many as two times for two different types of signature melee weapons, such as Blunt (all types of clubbing weapons) and Sword (all types, short swords and long), etc. If the Signature Weapon is Blunt or Swords, for example, it means all types of blunt weapons (mace, hammer, crowbar, baseball bat, etc.) or all types of swords (machete, saber, cutlass, rapier, bastard sword, broadsword, Claymore, etc.).

In some cases, the player or G.M. may prefer to limit the Signature Weapon to a very specific type, e.g. Katana or all Japanese swords only, or broadswords, or rapier/fencing-style swords only, and so on, however, this may be too limiting, especially in the Zombie Apocalypse where weapons and supplies are scarce.

Penalties (applicable to all Signature Weapons): Because the Signature Weapon is an important part the character's *super-hero* identity and sense of self and power, he or she is diminished without that weapon: -1 melee attack, -2 on all combat maneuvers/bonuses (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, disarm, etc.), reduce Spd by 10%, and -20% on all skill rolls.

79-85% Signature Modern Weapon

The Masked Lunatic has a special relationship with one or two particular types of modern firearms/guns that makes the character feel confident and more powerful. Whenever he or she uses that type of weapon, the character receives bonuses regardless of past training or lack of it, in addition to any possible W.P. Modern Weapon skills. Most important, the weapon feels like an extension of the character, instilling him or her with a sense of confidence and purpose.

Select no more than a total of 2 Signature Modern Weapon categories, and each selection counts as one of the Masked Lunatic's "super abilities." Characters who select one or two Signature Modern Weapons do NOT usually select a signature Melee Weapon, but they may, and vice versa.

Bonuses for Signature Bow or Modern Firearm Weapon (Guns): +1 melee attack, +1 to strike, and W.P. Trick Shooting, and is an expert in cleaning, maintaining, and repairing this type of weapon. In the case of bow weapons, repairing and making arrows and crossbow bolts.

This Signature Weapon is a specific type/category of modern firearms – be it bow weapons (all types of bow and arrows and crossbows), handguns, rifles, shotguns, submachine-guns, or heavy military weapons.

If the signature weapon is a bow and arrow it means all types including crossbows; if **handguns**, the character can use all types and models of revolvers and pistols; if **rifles**, it means all types of commercial hunting rifles and commercial scopes and attachments; if **shotguns**, it means all types of hunting and commercial shotguns, if **heavy military weapons**, it means all types of assault rifles, assault shotguns, submachine-guns, machine-guns, rifle grenade launchers, rocket launchers, portable mortars, and military grade attachments and accessories such as laser targeting, optical scopes, silencers, flash suppressors, etc.

In some cases, the player or G.M. may prefer to limit the weapon to a specific type of gun like a .357 Magnum or .45 automatic pistol, or a specific manufacturer (Smith and Wesson, Heckler and Koch, etc.), but this may be too limiting, especially in the Zombie Apocalypse.



Penalties (applicable to all signature weapons): Because the Signature Weapon is an important part the character's *super-hero* identity and sense of self and power, he or she is diminished without that weapon: -1 melee attack, -2 on all combat maneuvers/bonuses (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, disarm, etc.), reduce Spd by 10%, and -20% on all skill rolls.

86-90% Stealth

The Masked Lunatic has developed the skill to move silently even in a crowd.

Bonuses: Gets the skills Escape Artist (+20%), Prowl (+30%), and Tailing (+30%).

Penalties: Has a tendency to quietly slip away without anyone noticing, and silently appear seemingly out of nowhere. Both are off-putting and annoying for most people, and can be startling at times and provoke a harsh reaction. Also tends to be secretive, slow to trust people, and believes in one or many conspiracy theories.

91-95% Superhuman Strength

Adrenaline, other physiological reactions, and powerful emotions momentarily give this Masked Hero a boost in Physical Strength (P.S.) whenever the individual becomes truly enraged, scared for himself or for others, or finds himself in a high stress situation like trying to escape or rescue someone, being cornered by a dangerous enemy, or a life and death situation.

Duration: The Superhuman Strength only lasts for 1D6+3 melee rounds (a minute or two) per occurrence.

Bonus: +10 to S.D.C., +12 to P.S. attribute and add any P.S. damage bonus to the damage inflicted by punches, kicks, and melee weapons, as well as any weightlifting/carrying bonuses, when applicable, for the duration.

Penalties: Cannot summon this strength whenever it is desired, only when enraged, scared, etc., which has its disadvantages.

96-00% Zombie Imposter

The Masked Lunatic is a Half-Living or some similar variation of one, and is able to walk among the dead without being recognized as one of the living, but cannot command or control the monsters. Still a valuable ability in the Zombie Apocalypse. However, the living may consider him or her to be less than human and undesirable or dangerous. **Note:** See page 70 of the **Dead Reign® RPG** for complete details, abilities, and the usual bonuses of the Half-Living.

Bonuses: In this case, the Zombie Imposter can move among zombies freely and at full speed without fear of aggression or attack. With the exception of Mock Zombies, the others don't seem to notice him or care about what he is doing, never follow him, or attack. Furthermore, the Zombie Imposter can usually walk up to a zombie and take an item off its person or remove it from the monster's pocket, and even take a weapon or item from its hand (75% chance) without resistance or trouble. Zombies only attack the Zombie Imposter if a Death Priest commands them to or if the Masked Lunatic attacks first. However, in the latter case, the zombie(s) fights only enough to make the Zombie Imposter stop attacking it. So if the hero is knocked down or pushed aside, the zombie forgets about him and keeps moving. The only exception is when a Death Priest or someone/thing with influence over the zombie commands it to keep fighting.

The Zombie Imposter also gets the skills Impersonation (zombies only! +25%), Undercover Ops (among mobs of zombies only, +20%), and Zombie Lore (+10%).

Penalties: Tends to look pale and more dead than even most Half-Living (-2 to M.A. attribute and reduce P.B. by half), is feared and shunned by most people, and may be accidentally mistaken for a real zombie and attacked by the living. People are slow to trust this character and many Imposter Zombies tend to avoid large gatherings or interaction with people, keeping to themselves.

DEADLY WEAKNESS

All Masked Lunatics have 1D4 Deadly Weaknesses/Achilles Heels. A vulnerability that may be real, like an allergy or medical condition, or an inability to do something such as swim. For example, because he does not have the Swimming skill, the lunatic fears bodies of water (not rain, but a swimming pool, maybe even a full bathtub) as his Deadly Weakness. Other times the Deadly Weakness is the object, condition, or location of a terrible trauma, or a delusion that is completely imagined due to other mental conditions. Whatever it is, whenever the Masked Lunatic must face his weakness – his Kryptonite – the person functions at a diminished capacity.

Penalties from the Weakness: The Masked Lunatic loses his heroic confidence and is -2 attacks per melee round, reduce all bonuses (Perception Rolls, initiative, strike, parry, dodge, etc.) and skill performance *by half* for as long as the Masked Lunatic is subjected to that person, object, place, or condition that is a Deadly Weakness.

The Deadly Weakness may be a zombie or person, a condition or time of day, a location or type of vehicle, weapon, or object, etc., but whatever it is it fills him with a sense of fear, trepidation, and vulnerability that manifests as the penalties noted above.

Conditions may include being without his lucky weapon or good luck charm, the time of day, a particular location or environment, etc. In the case of an object such as a perceived weakness to a particular melee weapon or gun, the penalties apply whenever the Masked Lunatic must directly fight/engage the person who wields that weapon or is that occupation. If a location, the Masked Lunatic suffers penalties while trapped or forced to stay in that location (church, graveyard, tunnel, etc.).

Authority Figure (pick one): Crime bosses, doctors, firemen, nurses, parents(or parent figures, police (includes security guards, FBI, etc.), politicians, priests, scientists (any, and anyone wearing a lab coat), soldiers/any branch of the military and national guard, school principal/dean, or possibly some other professions.

Charm/Fetish Object/Magic Talisman: The Masked Lunatic believes a particular object is his lucky charm or source of his superness. Without it, the person suffers the penalties above. If the weapon, lucky charm or magical fetish or talisman is lost or taken away, the Masked Lunatic will consider doing almost anything to get it back, but until then the individual suffers the penalties.

If he believes the object is the source of his “powers” the Masked Lunatic functions at half power or, perhaps, without any of his special “super abilities” until it can be recovered. It is all psychosomatic, but very real to the individual.

Chronic Health Condition: When the effects and symptoms (shortness of breath, momentary coughing, sneezing, weakness, dizziness, watering eyes and blurred vision, fever, etc.) caused by a real malady like an allergy, asthma, other lung/respiratory illness, heart condition, cancer, etc., flare up, the Masked Lunatic considers it his curse and weakness.

Remember, some allergic reactions such as certain chemical and food allergies can be so severe as to cause not just the usual penalties noted, but also convulsions/seizures, swollen body parts, rashes and sores, difficulty breathing, partial paralysis, and even coma and death! However, allergies to dust, mold, pollen, cats, dogs, etc., that cause coughing or sneezing may be just as

dangerous in the hostile environment of the Zombie Apocalypse. A sudden or persistent sneeze or coughing may alert and attract one or dozens or hundreds of zombies or bad guys to that individual's location. This can be very serious sometimes or played for laughs other times.

Day or Night (pick one): The Masked Lunatic believes he derives his power from the sun or moon/stars, so the individual is at full power (has all abilities and bonuses) during that period of the day, but is at half power (and suffers the penalties) during the other. In the alternative, the Masked Lunatic may believe his or her abilities are only available in light, even if dim, or darkness and deep shadows regardless of the actual time of day.

Elemental Conditions (pick one): Being buried alive (includes avalanches and landslides), blizzard conditions, caves, claustrophobia/tight spaces, earthquakes, fire, flying, fog, heights, ice, lightning, mountains/cliffs, thunderstorms (thunder and lightning), tunnels/being underground, water/drowning, or similar.

Germ (all): The Masked Lunatic is terrified of germs and that may be the reason the individual wears a mask of some kind in the first place, especially if the mask is a bonafide gas mask or respirator, but any mask may fit the bill. This individual may also wear gloves, goggles, a visor/face shield, and protective clothing (coverall, environmental suit, radiation suit, etc.). Without his gas mask or protective gear he suffers the penalties noted above.

Likewise, he suffers these penalties whenever forced to fight an enemy like a Bug Boy or Worm Meat Zombie, or a contaminated person, and when exposed to an environment where germs or bio-weapons are rumored or believed to be present. The latter may include the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and prevention), quarantined areas, isolation area at a hospital or laboratory, research facilities known to deal with germs and microscopic organisms, as well as unsanitary environments like sewers and garbage dumps. In addition to the usual penalties, this individual may also be a hypochondriac and imagine being sick with other symptoms after being exposed to that particular disease.

Location (pick one): It may be the place the hero lost one or more loved ones, nearly died himself, or experienced some other horrible traumatic event. This will be a specific type of building or location. Attic, basement, bridge, cave, church/temple, city hall, graveyard, gymnasium, hospital, jail/prison, military base, morgue, playground, police station, school, sewer, sports stadium/arena, tunnel, etc.

Loved one being endangered: This is more than an acquaintance or teammate, but people truly and deeply beloved such as a spouse, lover, parents, beloved sibling or other close family members, or a true best friend. In this case, the penalties are imposed when the Masked Lunatic must fight to protect or rescue them from a villain and that loved one is in immediate and real danger.

Vehicle (pick one): May have lost someone/everyone in a vehicle or was involved in a crash or other traumatic incident in a specific type of vehicle. Depending on the individual, this could be a very specific vehicle (e.g., all Ford Mustangs) or a general type (all mini-vans, or buses, or ambulances, or fire trucks, etc.), or a very broad type of vehicle such as all cars, construction vehicles/earthmovers, trains, trucks, helicopters, jet aircraft, propeller aircraft, boats, ships, etc.

Weapon (any, ancient or modern; pick one): A particular type of weapon. Perhaps such a weapon took the life of a loved one or failed to protect/save a loved one, or was used to torture or

in an attempt to kill the Masked Lunatic. Any opponent or enemy wielding that weapon has the advantage (impose penalties noted above).

Zombie (pick one): This is almost certain to be a specific type of zombie, and probably one of the more exotic and rare ones like an Armored Brute, Bug Boy, Cannibal Muncher, Dead Mound Giant, Juggernaut, Thinker or other smart zombie, Mock Zombie (the Masked Lunatic believes its stories and that is it is a live person or Half-Living), and so on.

Zombie Bite: A zombie's bite does not infect its victim with the Wave nor turn him into a zombie. However, the Masked Lunatic is not so sure about that and, in the vein of a hypochondriac, believes he can feel the horrid creature's infection coursing through his veins and making him sick as his body struggles to fight off some kind of terrible (imaginary) plague or the effects of being turned into one of the hungry dead! He's not, but try convincing him of that. In this case, the psychosomatic penalties from being bitten last for 2D6+12 hours or until the Masked Lunatic can get the bite tended to by a "real" doctor or medical professional, or a Zombie Researcher who can convince the nutcase that the wound has been properly cleaned, treated, and there is no longer any risk of infection. Additional, meaningless tests and a shot of antibiotics (or a placebo chemical like sugar water), might help to convince the Masked Lunatic that he is fine. As soon as he believes this the penalties come to an early end.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

A game changing consideration: I offer this only as food for thought, because it can be fun, especially if you want to take your zombie game into a wild and different direction, or want to start a second, souped-up campaign. Consider combining **Dead Reign®** with **Heroes Unlimited™** or elements from the **Rifts® Dimension Book: Heroes of the Megaverse®**.

Keep the same modern Earth setting and the zombies and survivors, but make this a world with superhumans (good and bad) possessing full-blown super abilities a la **Heroes Unlimited™** or **Heroes of the Megaverse®**. This allows you to create a comic book-style modern setting with a universe of super beings like Marvel or DC comics. The difference is that this world has become *infected* with something that is turning people into zombies. Whatever it is, even many of the super beings are vulnerable to it and becoming zombies via a zombie's bite or death at the hands of a zombie or some horrible super abilities at the hands of a villain. Heroes, even supermen, slain by the living dead turn into super-powered slobbering zombies – or Thinkers, or Mock Zombies, or Pattern Zombies, and so on! I think you can see the kinds of fun you can have with this by making super-heroes into many of the **Dead Reign®** zombies. Having super beings turned into zombies escalates the danger because these superhumans are still able to use (all or some of) their super abilities, though probably on an instinctual and destructive level. Worse, super-hero zombies are likely to battle fellow superhumans and turn more of the heroes into dangerous super-monsters! Is there a cure? Can the zombification be reversed? Are these heroes condemned to be the living dead? Must beloved heroes be destroyed?

As I recall, Marvel Comics actually did a couple of comic book series in which beloved heroes and villains were being turned into zombies and causing havoc as only zombies with super abilities can. I never read those comic books, but they might be another source of inspiration for this type of RPG campaign or one-shot adventure. I think super beings having to battle zombies, including fellow super-heroes and super-villains turned into zombies, can be very interesting, very fun, and very different. I mean, just imagine if your favorite comic hero or group of heroes got turned into a zombie(s) and went on a rampage. The destruction, danger, and adventures are many.

One of my gaming pals, *Ryan McDaniels*, has done exactly this. He and his players are having a terrific time playing the Zombie Apocalypse in a world of superhumans. In his game, the cause of the zombie plague is a super-villain seeking world domination. This baddie's super ability is the control over the dead/living dead, so he is turning half of the population into zombies

with the intention of global conquest and world domination over both the living and undead.

In the alternative, perhaps the force that is responsible for turning people into zombies (virus, aliens, dimensional energy, space radiation, government experiment gone wrong, nanobots, magic, whatever it is) has also turned some people into superhumans! But some of those zombies are also "super." What about giving the Half-Living one or more super abilities, or Death Cultists, or a Death Cult leader who has super-powers *and* commands zombies, some of them with super abilities? Sound pretty epic to me.

Of course, going this route is a very different type of zombie game than a tried and true **Dead Reign®** campaign, but it is a fun idea you might find worth exploring as a separate campaign, mini-campaign, or one-shot night of super-hero horror (or zani-ness). Play it straight and serious, even terrifying, or with humor (think super-hero Zombieland).

Endless possibilities limited only by your imagination.

EXPERIENCE TABLES

Experience Tables for *Endless Dead O.C.C.s* are also included below. They got accidentally left out and I meant to in-

clude them in a later sourcebook, but kept forgetting. Most of you have been using the *Survivor/Ordinary People* experience table, which is perfectly fine, but here are the official Experience Tables. Thank you for your understanding and resourcefulness.

Bandit/Thief, Flesh Peddler, Gutter Rat, Cannibal (all villains)

Level 1: 0,000 - 1,930
Level 2: 1,931 - 3,860
Level 3: 3,861 - 7,470
Level 4: 7,471 - 15,150
Level 5: 15,151 - 21,600
Level 6: 21,601 - 31,700
Level 7: 31,701 - 41,900
Level 8: 41,901 - 55,000
Level 9: 55,001 - 77,000
Level 10: 77,001 - 110,000
Level 11: 110,001 - 150,000
Level 12: 150,001 - 200,000
Level 13: 200,001 - 270,000
Level 14: 270,001 - 350,000
Level 15: 350,001 - 410,000

Masked Lunatic (Hero or Villain)

Level 1: 0,000 - 2,120
Level 2: 2,121 - 4,240
Level 3: 4,241 - 8,480
Level 4: 8,481 - 17,200
Level 5: 17,201 - 25,400
Level 6: 25,401 - 35,800
Level 7: 35,801 - 51,000
Level 8: 51,001 - 71,200
Level 9: 71,201 - 96,400
Level 10: 96,401 - 131,600
Level 11: 131,601 - 181,800
Level 12: 181,801 - 232,000
Level 13: 232,001 - 282,200
Level 14: 282,201 - 342,400
Level 15: 342,401 - 402,600

Survivalist, Wheelman, Skinner (villain) & Zombie Nerd

Level 1: 0,000 - 2,000
Level 2: 2,001 - 4,000
Level 3: 4,001 - 8,200
Level 4: 8,201 - 16,400
Level 5: 16,401 - 24,500
Level 6: 24,501 - 34,600
Level 7: 34,601 - 49,700
Level 8: 49,701 - 69,800
Level 9: 69,801 - 94,900
Level 10: 94,901 - 129,000
Level 11: 129,001 - 179,100
Level 12: 179,101 - 229,200
Level 13: 229,201 - 279,300
Level 14: 279,301 - 329,400
Level 15: 329,401 - 389,500

Rat Runner

Level 1: 0,000 - 1,875
Level 2: 1,876 - 3,750
Level 3: 3,751 - 7,250
Level 4: 7,251 - 14,100
Level 5: 14,101 - 21,200
Level 6: 21,201 - 31,200
Level 7: 31,201 - 41,200
Level 8: 41,201 - 51,200
Level 9: 51,201 - 71,200
Level 10: 71,201 - 101,500
Level 11: 101,501 - 136,500
Level 12: 136,501 - 186,500
Level 13: 186,501 - 236,500
Level 14: 236,501 - 286,500
Level 15: 286,501 - 326,500

Urban Explorer & Sentinel

Level 1: 0,000 - 1,925
Level 2: 1,926 - 3,850
Level 3: 3,851 - 7,450
Level 4: 7,451 - 15,000
Level 5: 15,001 - 21,500
Level 6: 21,501 - 31,500
Level 7: 31,501 - 41,500
Level 8: 41,501 - 54,000
Level 9: 54,001 - 75,000
Level 10: 75,001 - 105,000
Level 11: 105,001 - 140,000
Level 12: 140,001 - 190,000
Level 13: 190,001 - 240,000
Level 14: 240,001 - 300,000
Level 15: 300,001 - 350,000

Zombie Hunter & Raider (villain)

Level 1: 0,000 - 2,050
Level 2: 2,051 - 4,100
Level 3: 4,101 - 8,200
Level 4: 8,201 - 16,400
Level 5: 16,401 - 25,600
Level 6: 25,601 - 35,700
Level 7: 35,701 - 50,800
Level 8: 50,801 - 69,900
Level 9: 69,901 - 95,000
Level 10: 95,001 - 130,100
Level 11: 130,101 - 180,200
Level 12: 180,201 - 230,300
Level 13: 230,301 - 282,400
Level 14: 282,401 - 354,500
Level 15: 354,501 - 426,600

Zombie Researcher Scientist

Level 1: 0,000 - 2,120
Level 2: 2,121 - 4,240
Level 3: 4,241 - 8,480
Level 4: 8,481 - 17,200
Level 5: 17,201 - 25,400
Level 6: 25,401 - 35,800
Level 7: 35,801 - 51,000
Level 8: 51,001 - 71,200
Level 9: 71,201 - 96,400
Level 10: 96,401 - 131,600
Level 11: 131,601 - 181,800
Level 12: 181,801 - 232,000
Level 13: 232,001 - 282,200
Level 14: 282,201 - 342,400
Level 15: 342,401 - 402,600

CULTS AND BAD GUYS

Cultists and other villains come into play as the wolves and vermin that haunt the ruins of human civilization.

Think about it. Depending on the time-line of your game, the world as we knew it existed only one month ago, or maybe six months or a year ago. The ruins of our world, our civilization, are fresh. In some rural locations, the people and society we knew only a few short months ago, before the Zombie Apocalypse, may still exist. A little pocket of what was, spared by the Wave and not yet inundated by the walking dead. A living time capsule that does not yet know it is an obsolete anachronism of the past.

Among the ruins of civilization are its skyscrapers, homes, and highways. The bones of our recent past still standing tall as silent monuments of what once was. The thumbprints and building blocks of a vibrant, boisterous people that now cling to life against impossible odds. Inside these edifices are food, machines, and objects that survivors need and cherish.

These fresh ruins of civilization are everywhere in great abundance like the trees of a forest. Only this forest, these ruins, have grown cold and dangerous. Haunted not just by zombies (another sort of monstrous shadows of the past), but by the people who have forsaken civilization and morality in favor of wickedness and savage depravity. People who have chosen to become predators that live like vultures and ravenous wolves, feeding not just on the carcass of the past, but also preying upon their fellow survivors.

Broad stroke villains are sprinkled throughout the **Dead Reign® RPG** and **sourcebooks**. They are the bands of thieves, raiders, criminals, cutthroats, lowlifes, madmen, and survivors who have forsaken law and order, decency and morality – some of them overnight – in favor of the ugly new reality where might makes right and the new dominant species preys upon the living.

It is hard to say who among these villains are the worst. Is it the small bands and isolated homesteads inhabited by cannibals who have taken their cue from the hungry dead to hunt and trap and feed upon their own kind?

Is it the gangs of thieves, thugs, and raiders who roam the streets and countryside looking to rob and take whatever they want from their fellow survivors?

Or is it the bushwhackers who hide in the shadows waiting to ambush the unsuspecting?

Then there are the deceivers and tricksters. Fellow survivors who seem friendly and nice. They offer shelter or food and water or kind words of advice, but they are really setting a trap for those who dare to trust them. Human wolves who wear a smile before they spring their trap and take everything you own, or chuckle as they slit your throat.

Madness abounds and takes many forms among the ruins of civilization. There are the false prophets and would-be saviors and redeemers, the paranoid and the delusional. Some are recluses who hide from prying eyes. Other madmen worship the zombies and keep the hungry dead as pets and playthings or guard animals, or as avatars of some imaginary death god. For other lunatics, a fallen spouse, child, or friend they cannot bear to give



up is kept and cared for as a zombie loved one, and fed the living to keep it fresh and pretty (or not), but still with them in physical form if not in any other way.



Cults

Some of the scariest villains are **Death Cultists** and **Terror Cultists**. Dangerous villains and vermin found among the endless ruins of civilization. Each group looking to establish a new way to survive and exist and flourish in a world where the dead reign. The beliefs of many cults bordering on the religious (and the depraved) with rites and rituals, and new rules for living and worship of the dead. These groups are usually dominated by a single, messianic leader or prophet, or a band of “enlightened” elite, or Death Priests.

Cults, like Safe Havens and other survivor communities, offer some semblance of safety and normalcy, which helps when they actively recruit new members. In the cities where survival is the most tenuous and the hungry dead are most numerous, a cult may seem to be the only (or the easiest) road to survival, especially for frightened and desperate families. It matters little in that moment of overwhelming terror, that the cost of survival and safety within a cult may be losing your morality and humanity. Or the true price of membership may not be revealed until after the family joins the cult and finds that leaving the group is no easy task.

Since Death Cult leaders or priests have learned to gain some degree of control and power over the risen dead, cults can grow to be of considerable size. Cults are most numerous in urban environments, from big cities and downtown areas to neighborhoods and sheltered suburbia. It should be noted that though many people assume Death and Terror Cults are large organizations with people clad in robes and bones engaging in human sacrifice, the vast majority are small and shockingly ordinary in appearance. Many outwardly seem like a typical family homestead or cluster of homesteads, or an ordinary survivor community. At least until their beliefs and practices regarding the dead and outsiders begin to surface.

A short visit or friendly trade of goods or services with such a group may be innocent and uneventful, even helpful and worthwhile, especially at first. After all, members of a Death Cult are, in many ways, just like you and everyone else. They feel love,

fear, and hate, they have families, children, and friends, hopes and dreams, and work together to survive in an uncertain and changing world filled with monsters. They, too, may be victimized by the human wolves and vultures of the post-apocalyptic world, and bleed and love, live and die, like anyone else. What sets them apart is their distorted and all too often sinister belief system and predatory practices toward other survivors. Practices that make outsiders potential victims, but which may be quietly disguised, as to not raise an alarm or to lure victims into their clutches.

One example

Let’s look at the **Retro-Savages** as an example. You might not consider them a cult, but in many ways they are very cult-like. As you might expect, they do not see themselves as wicked, cruel, or insane. Quite the contrary, they believe they are enlightened people who have forsaken technology and the old ways, and punish those who do not, for good reason. They are an example of a common post-Zombie Apocalypse movement or social manifestation that has swept across the globe, especially in the most developed countries of the world. However, even they do not represent any one organization, government, cult, or religion. None have hundreds, let alone thousands, of satellite groups. Most bands of Retro-Savages are unrelated groups of survivors who did not know each other before they found they share a common belief that technology is the root of all evil.

Some Retro-Savage groups are quite small, others large. They may appear to be a rural farm community or cluster of scavenging homesteads, or an entire, sweeping survivor community, but most are small and medium-sized independent gatherings of like-minded people with common shared beliefs. They are often galvanized by one charismatic leader or a council of leaders who use fear and desperation to unite and motivate their flock. Over time, their beliefs turn into formalized practices, rituals, and a way of life and survival.

What all Retro-Savages scattered across the globe have in common is the belief that technology and the old government and big corporations are bad, and to be chastised and condemned. These paranoid fanatics become a militant terror group when they actively sabotage and destroy remaining technology, vehicles, factories, and everyone who refuses to forsake technology and accept the ways of the Retro-Savage. To protect, preserve, and promote their way of thinking (the better way, the right way), they believe it is their responsibility to destroy the old technology and the foolish people who embrace it still. To do otherwise is to continue to bring down the wrath of God (or Fate) and keep the zombies among them. Most Retro-Savages believe that when all people have forsaken technology and the remnants of the old civilization crumbles to nothingness, that the living dead shall perish, so that humanity may start anew and flourish in a simple world free of industry, pollution, greed and wickedness.

It is ridiculous, of course, but to varying degrees and practices, this is what all Retro-Savages believe. Thus, many Retro-Savages go out into the ruins of civilization to sabotage power plants, factories, machine shops, auto garages, and icons of technology and government, as well as actively destroy any electronics, computers, cellular phones, guns, cars, most books, and other forms of technology whenever they come across them.

Likewise, many willfully sabotage and kill people who do not share their worldview and beliefs. Often feeding them or sacrificing them to the zombies. For many Retro-Savage towns, tribes, clans and groups, the act of feeding their rivals and enemies (anyone who does not share in their beliefs and clings to technology) to zombies is not wicked or cruel, it helps move the new natural order forward and somehow keeps their hands clean of murder. In short, live simple and pure as farmers, hunters, fishermen, and gatherers free of technology, corporations, and government, or be punished by becoming one of the hungry dead. Non-believers unwilling to forsake the old ways – ways that brought about divine retribution in the form of the Wave and the risen dead (the punished people) – are fed to the dead, or stripped of their foul technology and let loose back into the world where they will either find their way to the truth and come into the fold or be punished by becoming one of the living dead. In so doing, Retro-Savages believe they are doing God's will and helping to further the new, better and noble reality.

Many cults function in a similar manner as Retro-Savages, but are much more diverse and twisted. Each is a unique entity. Each can be a few people, a single homestead, a cluster of homesteads, a medium or large survivor colony, or a sprawling, well established Safe Haven. The cult may be built upon a conspiracy theory or paranoia, rebellion against the old civilization or government, quasi-religious beliefs, the reverence or worship of the zombies or a death god or an ancient religion or deity, or built on the insane vision, dreams, or prophesies of one charismatic lunatic. A maniac who may seem completely rational, or wise, or prophetic. A man or woman with a plan for bringing enlightenment and a safer, superior way of life. People who seem to offer answers, safety, and purpose, and leaders and organizations that give people hope, someplace to belong, and a plan for survival, can be the catalyst to form successful and large cults with devoted followers.

Again, like communities of Retro-Savages, many cults do not think of themselves as villains or wicked. However, the nature of



a cult – i.e. a philosophy that is based on extreme and unorthodox views or the whims an influential leader or cabal of leaders – makes most “cults” aggressive and militant, and therefore dangerous to others. They seek obedient and subservient members and converts, and regard people who oppose, speak out, or act against the cult to be enemies who must be silenced or destroyed. Moreover, like a street gang, once you join a cult it is difficult to leave it. Most cults are ruled with an iron fist by their leader(s), and those who do not capitulate to that leader's rules and edicts usually pay for it with their lives.

Many cult leaders are in it for the power, glory, and relative wealth/prosperity they gain – a despot king or queen of their own little kingdom. Many are power-mongers, narcissists, and control freaks who seek domination over others while they have the freedom to take numerous spouses, do as they please, enjoy liberties and rewards denied to their flock, and engage in heinous acts of abuse, bullying, and cruelty. As with most societies, whether a small social group or society at large, while the cult members may be misguided and foolishly complacent zealots who serve their leader, they may not be evil themselves. It is more likely that the power base of the organization is comprised of the wicked and savage ones who make the rules and call the shots, while their followers compliantly or fearfully go along with them and keep these malevolent, cruel, and self-serving or deranged leaders in power. As a result, take down the cult's leader(s) and top lieutenants and enforcers, and the cult is likely to crumble and disperse.

Sadly, many Death Cults, and especially Terror Cults, are nihilistic. They have lost faith in humanity, reject moral and religious principles, and believe in anarchy and that life has no meaning. They profess that governments and morality are an illusion that can never be maintained or an obstacle to true freedom and enlightenment. The Zombie Apocalypse would seem to support nihilistic delusions and psychotic views of all kinds. After all, the dead walk and hunt the living, so it is reasonable that leaders of the Terror Cults and some Death Cults may believe that life is fleeting and that the strong-willed and physically powerful should do whatever they want to whomever they desire before their futile and meaningless existence comes to an end. Some may think of themselves as already one of the walking dead, and that they will find true peace only when they are killed by a zombie and become one of them. However, until then, chaos rules and they intend to live life to the fullest at the expense of other survivors. To the nihilists' deluded way of thinking, all those who believe in a higher power, religion, law and order, or the goodness of people are the true fools and lunatics, not them.

The most pragmatic nihilistic psychopaths may even believe it is their duty or destiny to bring death to the living. Sending (or leading) hordes of zombies against survivor communities and raiding homesteads and capturing adventurers, scroungers, and survivors and feeding them to zombies or slaying them in death rituals so they may ultimately achieve nirvana.

The most sadistic and demented nihilist Terror and Death Cult leaders will have their way with the living first. Enslaving people and engaging in rape, torture, physical and mental abuse, and all manner of depravity before letting them die at the jaws of the hungry dead. Like all cults, such nihilistic Terror Cults and Death Cults may be small, medium, or large, but they all start out small and grow by one means or another.

It should be noted that the most delusional and evil cultists, especially the members of Terror Cults, associate and work with

other evil people and lowlifes such as Gutter Rats, Flesh Peddlers, thieves, raiders, cutthroats, and madmen. Particularly if the individual or group can get them what they want, help them achieve their goals, or exact revenge.

Other cults, including Death Cults, may be fairly benign, reasonable, and orderly. A cult of druids or wiccans, for example, may be peaceful, kind, and good. Even a Death Cult that worships an ancient mythological god or spirit of death may simply have a weird, pragmatic acceptance of death and zombies, and not be overtly evil, or cannibals, nor engage in human sacrifices or feed people to zombies. But others might, so Game Masters, have fun when deciding what a Death Cult may be like, the secrets and strangeness they harbor, their practices (good or evil), and how their presence and beliefs can spice up your game. Such villains should not simply be raging lunatics and attackers (e.g. the evil gangs in the Mad Max movies), but a source of sabotage and trouble, betrayal and secrets, suspense and horror.

Shaping the world and your game

All these different people and possibilities should be considered when Game Masters are fleshing out the world in **Dead Reign®**. Remember, every cult, group, survivor community, and person encountered should be different and interesting. Each person, group and community should be unique and different with their own laws, rules, morality and strange quirks. As player characters wander the shattered landscape of human civilization, they will encounter people. All sorts of people, good, evil, indifferent, or crazy. They'll meet lost children, families, homeless people, folks in need of medical attention or other help, strangers, heroes, adventurers, cultists, crooks, con artists and thieves. Some will be lone individuals or pairs, others small to medium groups and gangs and cults – as well as thugs, street gangs, explorers, traders, scavengers, people in trouble, people who can help, people with resources for a price, small cults and large (good and bad), groups of madmen, soldiers, researchers, Zombie Prophets, and Half-Living.

Game Masters, mix it up and keep your players guessing. There can be all kinds of survivors and cultists, heroes and villains. Be inventive. There will be Shepherds of the Damned saving lives, Scroungers who serve a community or themselves, Hound Masters and Road Reapers looking to save lives, Rat Runners on guard, Zombie Nerds seeking knowledge, and countless others. The player characters can encounter bands of police or military personnel perhaps looking to start a survivor haven or wanting to join one, or adventurers and fortune hunters, or heroes and Masked Lunatics who may mean well but only cause more trouble and grief. The world is filled with heroes and villains, farmers and warriors, and people of every stripe. Some good, some bad, some kind, some selfish. Others are desperate or being manipulated, some are strange or crazy and harmless, others crazy and dangerous, and a whole lot more.

Some people may live on rooftops, others underground in steam tunnels or subway systems or in a secret underground complex beneath part of a city, or factory, or military base. It could have been for police, military, or industrial use or a criminal or smuggling operation. There may be fallen heroes who have succumbed to wickedness or madness and villains who seek redemption. Stop and think about the possibilities and have a blast.

Oh, and let us not forget about the omnipresent danger of the **zombies**. As I said in the beginning of this sourcebook, think beyond the obvious zombie tropes. Build yourself a unique world in which every city, suburb, rural town, farm, building, and woodland has its own hallmarks. The character of each location will be based, in part, on its inhabitants, both living and dead, as well as the people of the past and the specifics of that city or town (industrial, automotive, pharmaceutical, medical, military, educational, agricultural, etc.), and the people who live there now (families, cultists, etc.). How have they adapted? What they are becoming? Which ideals have they chosen to preserve and which ones have they forsaken?

The level of goodness or evil and the leaders who strive for greatness, or power, or control, will all have an impact on the character of each location and its varied inhabitants. Each city, neighborhood, and town should have its own personality and identity, and only you and your players determine what waits around the corner or behind the next door. Game Masters (and players), try to be flexible and improvise as events and circumstances dictate. Retool your plans and encounters based on the actions and goals of the players and their characters. This is a role-playing game. The G.M. may be the chief architect of the city and its adventures and occupants, but the players and the words and actions of their characters help to build and define that location and the story that is unfolding.

The beauty of RPGs is that it is a team effort, sometimes even when you don't realize it. Embrace that and love every moment.

Here are some villains, cults, and ideas to use and to inspire you. Keep those imaginations burning bright and game on.

– Kevin Siembieda, *Game Designer and Game Master*

HUMAN PREDATORS

Villain Survivors/Ordinary People O.C.C.

Human Predators are usually Survivors/Ordinary People O.C.C. of any profession or occupation in the past – thug or criminal to trucker, teacher, or public accountant. Create these predators – these villains – just as you would any Survivor O.C.C. The thing that sets the villain apart is not just his or her Anarchist or evil alignment, but the predatory practices he or she has adopted since the collapse of human civilization. Practices that have reshaped such individuals, turning them into villainous predators living in the concrete jungle of fallen human civilization.

Many of these brutal or craven individuals have embraced lawlessness and chaos, preferring its freedom over the rules and laws and limitations society imposes upon the individual. They like doing whatever they want to whomever they want. It makes them feel powerful or feared and respected, or just plain free. They like the rule of the jungle and the idea that only the strong and the cunning (and the treacherous) survive. Without laws and restrictions to hold them down, their brawn and/or ruthlessness puts them at the top of the food chain, and they intend to stay there.

Still others are simply so traumatized they will never be the same. Some are obviously deranged and evil, others are so emotionally and/or mentally damaged that they embrace strange and dangerous beliefs to function in the world. Still others kowtow to, and accept and serve, thugs, tyrants, Death Cultists, and evil men



and women because they offer them protection and survival under their cruel dominion. Like most people, these reluctant henchmen and followers are doing whatever is necessary for them and their families to survive. If that means bending to the will of a madman or an evil leader of a Death Cult or Retro-Savage community that requires them to fight, rob, and kill people, so be it.

Individuals who go down this dark path quickly become hardened to the suffering of others, and continue to do whatever it takes for them and their crew to survive. In their own way, these Human Predators are worse than the zombies, because they have a choice and have *chosen* to victimize and hurt fellow survivors. They live like a pack of wolves or jackals preying upon other people who cannot oppose them. It does not matter how you might categorize them – bandit, raider, pirate, killer, rapist, madman, Gutter Rat, Retro-Savage, Death Cultist – they are all cold-hearted predators who only see people as potential victims or resources to be used and thrown away.

Since they are predators, I present their archetypes as the *animals* whose behavior they most resemble. This should give Game Masters and players a pretty clear idea of each villain's worldview, goals, and personality.

What all predatory people have in common is that they prey upon their fellow survivors without feelings of empathy, guilt, or regret. To them, other people, even children and heroes, are nothing more than prey. Lambs or sheep to be fleeced or led to slaughter and devoured. Such is the way of the post-apocalyptic jungle, especially among cults and violent city dwellers where the mightiest, most cunning, and ruthless people lord over the weak. To these predators, there are no longer any laws or rules to dictate how they should behave, other than the ones they choose to make for themselves and impose upon others. Such ruthless jungle animals take what they want by force and intimidation, and anyone who stands in their way is an enemy to be destroyed.

Human Predators:

The Lone Hunter. Some Human Predators are lone hunters who pick off other survivors in one-on-one conflict like a **mountain lion**, **jaguar**, or **tiger**. This may be a direct, face to face confrontation and a reasonably fair fight, or the beast may use the elements of stealth and surprise, striking from above or below, or from the shadows, or from a distance with a long-range weapon. These villains pride themselves on their strength, fighting prowess, courage, and skill. They may support a family or a pack (homestead, cluster of homesteads, cult, or survivor community), or just themselves. Whatever the case, they generally hunt and kill alone or in pairs.

Alignment: Anarchist (20%), Aberrant (20%), Miscreant (50%), or Diabolic (10%).

Attribute Bonus: +2 to M.E., +1D4+4 to P.S., +2 to P.P. and P.E., and also +20 to S.D.C.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Select any from the Occupational Skill packages as presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the **Survivor O.C.C.**, but not the Elective and Secondary Skills.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Lone Hunter has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Boxing or Kick Boxing (pick one), Climb (+20%), Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Commando (pick one), Land Navigation (+20%), Prowl (+20%), Streetwise (+20%), Tailing (+30%), two Transportation Skills of choice, Wilderness Survival (+20%), one Ancient W.P. of choice, and two Modern W.P.s of choice.

Lions and Wolves. The most aggressive and dangerous predatory people use strength of numbers and hunt others in a pack, like wolves or a pride of lions. These **lions** and **wolves** are fierce, aggressive, and smart. Some of these predatory gangs rely upon brute strength and tag team fighting tactics as well as all manner of strong-arm tactics and threats to get what they want. Lions and wolves are the most likely to unleash violent beatings and engage in rape, murder, terrorism and tyranny. And like a cat, may toy and play with their victims before taking whatever it is they want from them.

These brutes enjoy being the feared lords of the jungle and doing as they please to whomever they want. While they may allow most of their victims to live, they make sure they know who holds the reins of power and that it is only by the grace of their mercy that victims are allowed to live. These powerful and ruthless packs of Human Predators are smart and look for rich targets, not vagabonds, children, or people who are barely surviving. Instead they target heroes, adventurers, soldiers, Road Reapers (a rival pride or wolf pack), and anyone who seems to be well equipped or possesses vehicles and an apparent abundance of riches and resources. That means they may raid or threaten and blackmail clusters of homesteads, towns, farms, fortified positions, and Safe Havens, small and large. Such gangs are often tyrannical, cruel, and ruthless, and likely to be led by a tyrant warlord or be a hunting party for Raiders, a Terror Cult or Death Cult.

Most bands of human predatory lion prides and wolf packs use strategies and tactics that involve guerilla attacks, the element of surprise, ambushes, crossfires, feints, flanking, and surrounding an opponent or victim. And as you would expect from a pack of wolves, many like to chase down their prey and find hot pursuits to be fun. These more strategic, tactical, and resourceful Human Predators are more likely to let their superior numbers, strategic position, and the threat of death and destruction work for them. When their victims surrender, the lions and wolves take what they want. They are not afraid to use violence and kill anyone who dares to oppose or attack them, but murder tends to be a last resort. These pack hunters see value in letting their victims live so these sheep can be fleeced again and again.

It should be noted that lions and wolves, especially the alpha and beta of the pack, but any of them really, are just as dangerous alone or in pairs as they are in a group. Double dangerous when protecting their family and homestead/lair or when backed into a corner. The reason we are comparing *people* to animals is to provide you with a clear picture of the sort of person this breed of villain is and how they will behave. Lions and wolves are, by nature, large, strong, and at the top of the food chain. That makes them aggressive, ferocious, bold, and unafraid to challenge and fight anyone who may have what they want, or to protect themselves and their own. The latter includes not just the lion or wolf's mate and family, but the beast's fellow pack mates/gang members, possessions and turf.

Alignment: Anarchist (20%), Aberrant (25%), Miscreant (45%), or Diabolic (10%).

Attribute Bonus: +2 to M.E., +1D6+1 to P.S., +2 to P.P. and P.E., also +20 to S.D.C. (30 S.D.C. if the Alpha leader, 25 if the Beta).

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any, select from Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Lion or Wolf has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Boxing or Athletics (General; pick one), Hand to Hand: Expert or Martial Arts (pick one), Intelligence (+30%), Interrogation (+15%), Land Navigation (+20%), Streetwise (+30%), Tailing (+20%), two Transportation Skills of choice (+20%), one Ancient W.P. of choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice.

Jackals, Hyenas and Coyotes. Compared to the lions and wolves above, these villainous human pack hunters function more like cowardly jackals, hyenas, and coyotes. These predators also use strength of numbers, and are seldom encountered in a group of less than ten. They lurk in the shadows and come out at night when they have the advantage over sleeping prey, and always attack as a *group*. Their targets are only the weak and vulnerable and those they outnumber by at least two to one. They strike only when they outnumber their intended prey and believe they have the upper hand. Fair play is a dirty word to these bushwackers, and they use every dirty trick in the book to get the advantage over their victims and when they fight. Like hyenas and jackals that follow the African lion to feast upon the scraps left behind or to steal what they can as opportunity and treachery presents itself, these human jackals/hyenas/coyotes may be craven and cowardly, but they are also dangerous, especially when they have superior numbers or the position of strength. They are the kind of animals who engage in bullying, beating others, torture, rape, and other acts of cruelty for the pleasure of it or to show off to their equally deplorable buddies. While they are usually smart enough to leave most of their victims alive so they can be blackmailed and victimized repeatedly, many are quick to murder anyone who looks at them the wrong way.

Unlike the strong and bold lions and wolf packs, these wicked and shameless villains attack anyone, rich or poor, and are happy to kill a person for what little they may have in their pocket, or sometimes just for the fun of it. However, while bold and cocky in numbers and when holding the upper hand, these predatory bullies lack true courage and back down to, or flee from, a superior opponent. Moreover, they will not threaten or attack unless they are reasonably certain they can win the battle, and again, are likely to give up and retreat when things begin to go against them. For this reason they may serve as the henchmen and underlings of stronger and smarter predators and dominating cult leaders.

Alignment: Anarchist (10%), Miscreant (50%), or Diabolic (40%).

Attribute Bonus: +1D4 to P.S., +1 to P.P., +2 to Spd, and also +10 to S.D.C.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any, select from the Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Jackal, Hyena, or Coyote has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator, and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Aerobic Athletics or Forced March (pick one), Climb (+10%), Detect Ambush (+10%), Detect Concealment (+10%), Hand to Hand: Expert, Prowl (+10%), Land Navigation (+20%), Streetwise (+20%), Tailing (+20%), one Transportation Skill of choice, one Ancient W.P. of choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice.

Rats and other human vermin are self-serving cretins out for themselves. Though rats swarm to locations where resources can be stolen and underhanded opportunities are ample, they seldom team up with other rats and know better than to ever trust their own kind. Rats are conniving and aggressive in their own way. Not like a Jackal or even a Weasel, but in treacherous and underhanded ways. This includes backstabbing rivals, enemies, and people who get in their way. This may be a literal knife in the back, but is more often sneakier and indirect. Rather than face a person in a fair fight, the rat tries to undermine or ruin his enemies by planting evidence and framing him, or by pulling strings and manipulating a more powerful person to do his dirty work for him. Thus, rats take pride and glee in getting other people in trouble, demoted, beaten, bullied, and killed while they watch their handiwork from a safe distance in the shadows and without getting their claws dirty.

Rats are always out for themselves and can never be trusted. When one seems to be working for another person's benefit or trying to help the team, odds are there is something in it for the rat, or he has his own agenda and is playing them for fools. Rats are back stabbers, blackmailers, kidnappers, and thieves. They also usually know when it is time to find greener pastures and new opportunities. Usually, right after a betrayal or other act of treachery that will get them killed if anyone finds out, so they go on the lam.

Human rats often try to associate with a group of lions or wolves, even jackals or weasels, as well as innocent people who haven't noticed their nefarious activities or whom they have fooled into trusting them. Rats almost always hold the lowliest subordinate positions within any group, where they are barely noticed or thought of as non-threatening. There, they do little to contribute to the group or community, and feed upon whatever juicy scraps they can get their paws on. All the while the rat quietly lurks, watches, and waits for an opportunity to run off with a "lion's share," or to exact revenge upon a hated rival or enemy. Ultimately, rats are only out for themselves (and sometimes their family or best friend), and happily wheel and deal, cheat, trick, and betray anyone they can in order to get what they want or to save their own hide. When cornered, they fight, but only enough to escape and flee. Their loyalty is mercurial, usually bought by whomever gives them the best deal. But even then, the rat's loyalty can be compromised and purchased again and again by the highest bidders. Most of these vermin will betray their own mother, spouse, or best friend if there is a big enough payday in it for them, or if it saves their own hide.

Alignment: Anarchist (10%), Miscreant (70%), or Diabolic (20%).

Attribute Bonus: +2 to I.Q., +2 to P.E., and +1D6 to Spd.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any. Select from the Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C., though this character is likely to have a criminal past such as a thief or thug.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, Rats and other vermin have learned a different skill set since becoming a predator, and get the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the time line of your apocalyptic setting.

Appraise Goods (+20%), Climb (+10%), Find Contraband (+20%), Hand to Hand: Basic, Parkour or Escape Artist (+30%; pick one), Prowl (+14%), Tailing (+10%), Radio: Basic (+10%), Streetwise (+20%), one Ancient W.P. of choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice (usually something easy to conceal).

Vipers are the proverbial snake in the grass. The individual who may seem ordinary, friendly, and harmless, but who is secretly only out for himself and will crush anyone who gets in his way. When push comes to shove, this ruthless and murderous predator strikes with deadly force to take down anyone who is threatening or an obstacle to whatever he wants. This cutthroat generally lacks empathy for other people and does not hesitate to kill or do whatever is necessary to achieve his goals or those of the master he or she serves. Vipers may be a member of a larger group, homestead, gang, cult, or Safe Haven community, or slither among lions, wolves, jackals, and weasels, but seldom vultures or rats.

In most cases, the viper is devoid of compassion or mercy. This individual's sole concern is for his or her own survival and well-being, often at the expense and misery of others. Vipers may be cutthroat thieves, assassins, saboteurs, slavers/Flesh Peddlers, and dealers in drugs and other vice and contraband. If one of the latter, the viper has no concern about how his "product" may harm others or the morality of his business practices.

Alignment: Miscreant (40%), Diabolic (40%), or Aberrant (20%).

Attribute Bonus: +2 to I.Q., +2 to M.A., and +2 to P.P.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any, select from the Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Viper has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator, and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Escape Artist (+10%), Hand to Hand: Assassin or Martial Arts (pick one), Impersonation (+12%), Performance (+20%), Recognize Weapon Quality (+20%), Seduction (+30%), Streetwise (+20%), Surveillance or Disguise (+10%; pick one), one Ancient W.P. of choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice.

Vultures are craven carrion feeders who prey upon the dying world and all the sick, weak, innocent, and helpless people in it. Vultures may gather in massive flocks, tolerating the presence of other vultures and vermin, but each one is out to grab whatever they can for themselves. They do not work as a team or group, and the few times that a group of human vultures may team-up to work together, they often end up fighting over the spoils or even the potential spoils, with one or more robbing, cheating, or

betraying the others. When vultures join a group of stronger personalities like lions and wolves, they stay in the shadows or at a distance, and function in subservient roles as henchmen and lackeys. When they join heroes and survivors of good alignment, vultures again are aloof and keep their distance, biding their time for an opportunity.

Unlike jackals and hyenas, who long to hold power or get the better of their betters, vultures (and rats) are too spineless to make a move against them. They know their place in the pecking order and accept their fate as underlings to feast on whatever scraps their more powerful and ruthless masters allow them to have. Human vultures and vermin seldom consider rising above their lowly station. However, when they get a chance to lord over or take advantage of those weaker than they or too helpless to fight back, they are often cruel and malicious bullies. Should their victim(s) rise up to stand against them or find someone stronger to champion and protect them, vultures take flight (and rats scurry away), to hide until the danger passes or they go in search of new opportunities.

Vultures are the lowlives who sponge off a group or survivor community. They try to avoid work and responsibility, and contribute as little as possible to the group, but are happy to take as much as they can get from those too kind to throw them out. Sadly, vultures (and rats) are the first to abandon ship and disappear when danger looms or things are looking sour. Returning only when the danger or trouble is over. They are also likely to betray the group or community if there is something in it for them.

Alignment: Anarchist (20%), Miscreant (60%), or Diabolic (20%).

Attribute Bonus: +2 to I.Q., +2 to P.E., and +1D6 to Spd.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any, select from Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C., though this brigand is likely to have a criminal past like thief or thug.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Vulture has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator, and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Appraise Goods (+20%), Barter (+20%), Escape Artist (+20%), Find Contraband (+10%), Hand to Hand: Basic, Prowl (+10%), Salvage (+10%), Tailing (+10%), Radio: Basic (+10%), Streetwise (+10%), and one Ancient or Modern W.P. of choice (pick one).

Weasels are vastly underestimated animals, and so are their human counterparts. The animal is small and attractive, even cute, so people do not realize they are smart, fast, and when necessary, deadly fighters. Human weasels tend to be con artists, thieves, infiltrators, and saboteurs who know how to insert themselves among the people they plan to target. The weasel has the smooth charm and confidence to put them at ease before robbing them blind or sneaking off with whatever it is the cunning beast wanted, and is often long gone before anyone is the wiser. This is the new friend or helpful stranger who is likely to trick and betray the individual, family, group, or community, but only if the act of betrayal improves his own lot. This also means the self-serving weasel can be "bought," trading his loyalty and services to the highest bidder. That said, weasels sometimes have their own code

of ethics and can be surprisingly loyal to people they care about, and even those they take a liking to or grudgingly admire.

Unlike human vipers, vultures, and rats, weasels are bold and confident and hold themselves in high esteem, so they do not betray, sabotage, or work for table scraps; it must be worth their while. In fact, most are looking for their big kill or lion's share of the spoils, and can often get it. The muscles they use most with dangerous skill and precision are their *intelligence* and *charm*. Most weasels like a challenge and sometimes work hard to test their abilities or to prove they are the best. Few weasels resort to brutality, unnecessary violence, or murder unless they are cornered, but they do tend to be vengeful. When cornered or facing death or imprisonment, or seeking revenge, watch out, because a human weasel will rip your throat out and do almost anything to escape, survive, or succeed.

Alignment: Anarchist (30%), Aberrant (25%), Miscreant (35%) or Diabolic (10%).

Attribute Bonus: +3 to I.Q., +2 to M.E., +1D4+3 to M.A., and +2 to Spd.

Common Skills: Standard, all.

Occupational Skills: Any, select from the Occupational Skill packages presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual Elective and Secondary Skills, the Weasel has learned a different skill set since becoming a predator, and gets the following. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting.

Concealment (+20%), Find Contraband (+20%), Hand to Hand: Expert, Impersonation (+30%), Intelligence (+10%), Palming (+10%), Parkour or Escape Artist (+10%; pick one), Performance (+20%), Pick Pockets or Pick Locks (+10%; pick one), Streetwise (+10%), Undercover Ops (+20%), and one W.P. of choice (any; Ancient or Modern). **Note:** Weasels are more aggressive, ruthless, and dangerous than the common *Con Artist/Huckster* or Professional Thief presented in the **Dead Reign® RPG** under the Survivor O.C.C.

NOTABLE BAD GUYS

The following are types of people that often form dangerous clans, gangs, cults and communities. Some are nomadic wanderers, others set up shop in urban environments, from big cities and downtown areas, to neighborhoods and suburbs.

WARNING: The villains and material that follows may be too graphic, violent, and unsuitable for young readers. Parental discretion is advised.

CANNIBALS

A post-apocalyptic villain

Any person of any O.C.C. may be a cannibal. This also means the cannibal(s) can be any of the predatory people from lions and wolves to jackals and vultures. That said, most cults and groups of people who resort to eating fellow human beings usually fall into the predatory category of jackals, vultures, rats/vermin, and the insane, or a mixed group of predators and O.C.C.s.

It may come as a surprise, but most Death and Terror Cults do not eat other people, though many do feed them to zombies. Such zombie feedings are often part of a ritual that involves maintaining control over the hungry dead, and are used as a method of punishment and means of intimidation. ("Do as you are told or you'll be fed to the zombies.") Some Death Cults who use cannibalism in rituals may do this as a means to honor the fallen or brave opponents/enemies, or as an homage to the risen dead. Others engage in ritual sacrifice and sometimes cannibalism (eating the heart or brains, or innards) as a form of worship to a real god of the past (Mayan, Aztec, etc.) or to a newly imagined death god or god of a distorted myth or legend.

Cannibals tend to be individuals, pairs, a family homestead or farm, small groups, and gangs, not large communities. They may be led by a deranged head of the family or group leader, prophet, or madman, or may have been traumatized to emulate the hungry

dead by eating the living. Some are strangely practical, eating enemies and outsiders or "bad people" who threaten or attack them first, while others have decided it is easier to hunt living humans rather than animals. Some hunt people the same as they would a deer, some are bushwhackers, and others set traps. Their victims may be killed and butchered on the spot, or they may be taken captive, kept in chains or in a cave, and even bred like livestock. Others purchase their victims like livestock from Flesh Peddlers.

The vast majority of Cannibals are very discreet and secretive. They keep to themselves even when part of a larger cluster of homesteads or members of a survivor community. Their practice of eating people is a well kept secret, unknown to their neighbors and friends. Cannibals distrust outsiders, and fear and avoid self-proclaimed heroes and adventurers. Secrecy is wise, because most people even in the Zombie Apocalypse are horrified by the idea of killing and eating fellow human beings, and usually kill people who are cannibals. Only Terror Cults and sometimes a Death Cult that engages in cannibalism are likely to be open and flamboyant about their despicable culinary choice.

Cannibal NPC Villain

Start by creating a Survivor/Ordinary Person O.C.C., page 85 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**, but with the following modifiers and additions.

Also Known As Man-Eaters.

Alignment: Anarchist (10%), Aberrant (10%), Miscreant (50%), or Diabolic (30%).

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high P.S. and P.P. are helpful in hunting and butchering their victims.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1D4 to one Physical attribute of choice and +2D6+6 to S.D.C.

Common Skills: All.

Occupation & Skills of the Survivor: Select a Survivor O.C.C. occupation prior to the Zombie Apocalypse. Those skills are

equal to 1D6+1 levels of experience. The character's occupation and skills may help define the character's origin story, purpose, motivation, and goals, or not. Do NOT select Elective and Secondary Skills. Instead, see Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements, below. These are the skills of the post-apocalypse Cannibal.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual selection of Elective and Secondary Skills, this jackal or vulture has learned the following skills since becoming a predator who traps, hunts and feeds upon fellow human beings. All should start at first, second, or third level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting, or as desired by the Game Master.

Animal Husbandry or Breed Dogs (+10%), Biology (human only; +10%), Brewing, Concealment, Cook (+20%), Hunting (people!), Prowl (+10%), Radio: Basic (+10%), Tailing (+10%), Tracking (people; +20%), one Transportation Skill of choice, one Ancient W.P. of choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice.

Standard Equipment: Basic, sturdy clothing, work boots or sneakers, blue jeans, apron, leather gloves, box of 100 latex surgical gloves, 1D4x10 surgical masks, a large survival knife (1D6+1 S.D.C.), machete (1D6 S.D.C.), a favorite melee weapon, one weapon for each W.P., belt, canteen or 4 bottles of water, disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, a package of one hundred 12 inch (30.5 cm) cable ties, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; each does 1D4 damage), a walkie-talkie, cell phone (for photos and video), a duffle bag or messenger bag, 1D4 sacks/pillowcases, and some personal items such as a pocket mirror, makeup, wallet, etc. on their person.

Tools of the Trade: A set of scalpels and/or hunting knives, meat cleavers, cutlery, and tools used for skinning and butchering animal carcasses, plus various types of saws, hatchets, hooks, salt and materials for making dried, salted, and jerked meats, maybe a grinder, numerous large pots, pans, roasters, casserole dishes, food containers, one or more outdoor cooking grills, a butcher's and kitchen facility.

Lair (special): This is the Cannibal's food pen where human captives are kept until ready for butchering, and butcher's facility (good lighting, table with straps or chains, buckets, tools, plastic containers for the meat, cookware, canning supplies, etc.). The Cannibal's actual living place will be someplace else, but likely to be nearby, i.e. elsewhere in the building, a secret lair/hideout down the street a block or two, etc. Would love to have access to electricity and a refrigeration unit, freezer, working stove and oven, and power tools.

Vehicle: Varies. A Cannibal is likely to do most of his traveling, hunting and stalking of prey on foot, but may have a jeep, pickup truck, or other sturdy vehicle capable of transporting captives and the carcasses of their victims.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade. This villain may sell and trade human livestock to Flesh Peddlers and Death Cults, but many keep to themselves and hide the fact that they are cannibals. Most operations are modest and secretive.

Trade Goods: \$2D6x100 worth of trade goods, which may include fresh meat as well as scavenged items, crops, and other food or trade goods.

FLESH PEDDLER

A post-apocalyptic villain

Flesh Peddlers capture, buy, and sell people. No questions asked. Prostitution and slaves are this scumbag's main stock in trade, but this vile monster doesn't care what the buyer's intentions are for the people sold. These heartless and often sadistic villains only see people as marks and commodities and have little, if any, concern about their fate. The purchaser may be looking for slave labor, a human punching bag, human bait, a plaything, a victim for torture or experimentation, gladiatorial games, food for zombies or cannibals, and other depraved and cruel purposes, but that is of no concern for the Flesh Peddler.

These vipers are also likely to traffic in drugs and other contraband, as well as illicit services, the drug trade, protecting and hiding villains and fugitives on the run, covert medical care for fugitives, the smuggling of people, kidnaping and blackmail, fencing stolen goods (and people), and gambling.

Many Flesh Peddlers host blood sports and gladiatorial-style games for the purpose of gambling and entertainment. They charge an admissions fee, sell drinks, drugs, and sex to the spectators, and take bets on fights. Blood sports include cockfights, dogfights, boxing and wrestling matches, and battles between people against animals, people against people, and people against zombies. Many, though not all, fights are to the death. To keep the games fresh and constant, Flesh Peddlers often have their own champion (a slave or a willing participant), or they sponsor local champions for these brutal matches. Many offer an impressive purse such as a souped-up vehicle, gallons of fuel, solar panels, a working generator, a cache of rare or high-powered weapons and ammo, body armor, medicine and medical supplies or equipment, gallons of drinking water, a lot of food or livestock, alcohol or drugs, and other coveted commodities. And in special cases, commodities may include special favors (safe passage out of town, medical treatment, free room and board for a week at a safe and secure location, information, etc.), and of course, a person (captured man, woman, or child) or small group of people (captives or slaves) as *the prize* that goes to the winner.

Some Flesh Peddlers may try to control the food market, overcharging for drinking water, food and livestock, and cornering the market on *mystery meat*. Fresh ground meat, sausages, stew meat, and meat pies being their specialty without identifying its content. Or the despicable villain may claim the meat to be one thing, when it is really something else. Probably a mixed product that could contain a combination of beef, pork, venison, horse, rat, or other animals you probably don't want to think about, and yes, perhaps people.

Perhaps needless to say, Flesh Peddlers associate with other savage predators and cutthroats, including thieves, raiders, Gutter Rats, Death and Terror Cultists, Retro-Savages, and all manner of foul people. The typical Flesh Peddler is a viper who has hired muscle and thugs functioning as his private henchmen, protectors, and enforcers. They usually get room and board, a slave or plaything, respect (such as it may be), and access to the boss's wares and often opulent living quarters.

Flesh Peddler NPC Villain

Start by creating a Survivor/Ordinary Person O.C.C., page 85 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**, but with the following modifiers and additions.

Also Known As a Slaver and Meat Seller.

Alignment: Anarchist (5%), Aberrant (10%), Miscreant (50%), or Diabolic (35%).

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high I.Q. and M.A. are helpful.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to I.Q. and M.E., +1D4 to M.A., and +2D6 to S.D.C.

Common Skills: All.

Occupation & Skills of the Survivor: Select a Survivor O.C.C. occupation prior to the Zombie Apocalypse. Those skills are equal to 1D6+1 levels of experience. The character's occupation and skills may help define the character's origin story, purpose, motivation, and goals, or not. Do NOT select Elective and Secondary Skills. Instead, see Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements, below. These are the skills of the post-apocalypse Flesh Peddler.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual selection of Elective and Secondary Skills, this viper has learned the following skills since becoming a predator who trades in people. All should start at first, second, third, or fourth level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting or as desired by the Game Master.

Brewing or Public Speaking (+10%; pick one), First Aid or Barter (+20%; pick one), Gambling (+30%), Gambling: Dirty Tricks (+25%), Find Contraband (+30%), Hand to Hand: Ba-

sic, I.D. Undercover Agents or Palming (10%; pick one), Radio: Basic (+10%), Streetwise (+20%), Surveillance or T.V./Video (+20%; pick one), one Transportation Skill of choice, one Ancient W.P. choice, and one Modern W.P. of choice.

Standard Equipment: Clothing can be almost anything from a casual pair of blue jeans and sweatshirts or T-shirts, to military fatigues, to business attire or circus performer and weird (cap, cloaks, wild hats and clothing, etc.). That said, most Flesh Peddlers seem to be showy and go for the "gangsta" look with expensive jewelry and gold chains, but that may range from "street chic" to high-class business chic, or sleek, expensive, leather clothing, pants, vest, jackets, and long coats. (Not a bad fashion choice as it helps protect against zombie attacks.) Surprisingly few wear S&M leather fetish gear or dog collars. Dog collars, studded leather, and chains are usually reserved for their living "merchandise" and ladies of the night, though some Flesh Peddlers do use a whip or cane.

Most will have a knife or favorite melee weapon, a gun, leather gloves, belt, canteen or 4 bottles of water, disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, a package of one hundred 12 inch (30.5 cm) cable ties, a pair of handcuffs, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; each does 1D4 damage), a walkie-talkie, cell phone (for photos and video), a duffle bag or messenger bag or purse, and some personal items such as a pocket mirror, makeup, comb, brush, jewelry, etc. on their person.

Tools of the Trade: Since Flesh Peddlers have a lucrative if dirty business (even if it is a start-up business), they often have a comparatively comfy life with a range of food, alcohol, cloth-



ing, weapons, ammo, 1D4 vehicles, and most gear and supplies common among well supplied survivor communities. And since they deal with raiders, bandits, thieves, smugglers, gamblers, cultists, Gutter Rats, and a wide range of criminals and unsavory people, they can get most of whatever they may want. **Note:** That includes information, safe passage through gang or cult controlled parts of town, getting a sit down with a leader of a gang, cult, etc., and so on. Flesh Peddlers rub shoulders with all kinds of wicked, criminal types and know many people operating in the shadows and the dark underbelly of the city via gambling, the sex trade, slavery, and related “business.” The Flesh Peddler also acquires and trades in *debts and favors*, much like pre-apocalypse crime bosses, and he or she can vouch for people, help parties put together deals, find a fence or smuggler, acquire contraband, and introduce people to figures in that shadowy underworld.

Henchmen (special): Henchmen/underlings are a special part of the Flesh Peddler’s Tools of the Trade. The Peddler is the head honcho, the boss of his disgusting business. He doesn’t need to carry a lot of gear or money/trade goods/slaves, because he has “people” for that.

● **1D6+4 Gutter Rats/Snitches on the street.** Vermin who trade information and sell out innocent people to curry favor, or to get gambling credit or a bit of merchandise from Flesh Peddlers. They may also direct potential clients (and victims) to the Flesh Peddler or his henchmen.

● **1D4+3 Musclebound Thugs/Gang Bangers and Leg Breakers.** This is the boss’ “soldiers” to guard and protect him, his girls, and the merchandise (including people!) that he sells. Experience Level: 2-4th level goons/bodyguards or as set by the Game Master. **Note:** Always has one or two at his side for protection.

● **1D4+1 Enforcers.** These lions and wolves are skilled gunmen who may have been criminals before the collapse of civilization, or hunters, thugs, soldiers or police, but not special forces or S.W.A.T. Most enforcers like to fight and hurt people. Experience Level: May be 1-6th level for each or as set by the Game Master. **Note:** Always has one at his side for protection. More if entering into a potentially dangerous situation.

● **One captain, right-hand man (or woman).** This is a smart, skilled, dangerous henchman who is a Hit Man/Assassin or ex-military or ex-police (probably special forces/S.W.A.T.). Experience Level: 4-8th level or as set by the Game Master. **Note:** This hand to the viper is usually off “handling business” like securing new slaves and contraband or solving problems. Only with the boss when something important is going down or the captain’s presence is needed. This is the guy who handles a lot of negotiations and deal making, and leads a rescue or jail break if the Flesh Peddler is taken prisoner or hostage.

Note: Bigger operations will see 2-4 times as many of these henchmen.

Lair (special): This is the Flesh Peddler’s domicile and guarded hideout. Not a place where clients or customers are ever brought.

● **Lair: Slaves to Serve:** 1D6 slaves functioning as servants. Can be any Survivor Occupation, but probably mostly domestic (cooking, cleaning, etc.), any level of experience. All are likely to be forced to serve under the threat of death or

worse (may have threatened family, death, torture, etc.). Loyalty is rewarded. Disobedience, resistance, escape attempts, sabotage, and sedition are severely punished.

● **Lair: Plaything Slaves:** 1D4 slaves functioning as playthings to be used and abused before being tossed aside and sold off or killed. Can be any Survivor Occupation, but probably mostly domestic, any level of experience, but probably low. Likely to be in chains or kept caged. Flesh Peddlers are cruel and evil.

Note: Bigger operations *may* see more servant slaves and playthings.

Place of Business (special): This can be anyplace and anything from the back of a cargo truck or boxcar, to a home or warehouse, to a pre-apocalypse sleazy bar or nightclub, or just about anything else (rooftop or basement of a tall building, corner of a factory, shipyard, tunnel, etc.). This is where the Flesh Peddler meets with clients and displays his merchandise. This is also where he is likely to keep slaves and people for sale, though some have a second location separate from the “showroom” or bar, nightclub or casino/gambling hall.

Those who offer blood sports will have a separate “arena” for animal and gladiatorial-style fights and gambling. Though an “arena” is likely to be nothing more than a secured basement or rooftop or upper floor of a building, corner of a warehouse or factory, or even just a dug out pit someplace secluded and protected from zombies. Since drunkenness, cheering, and shouting are an important part of the spectacle (and you want drunk gamblers), the place will be away from zombies or soundproofed and secluded to avoid an attack by mobs of the hungry dead.

Vehicle: Whatever serves this villain’s purpose as a private vehicle, but also 1D4 trucks for transporting people and other wares, as well as a number of vehicles for his henchmen.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade, and this foul villain’s primary stock in trade is slaves and sex. See Tools of the Trade for additional info. Use your imagination for the rest. Most operations are modest in size.

Trade Goods: \$1D6x10,000 worth of trade goods, from people/slaves for trade, to booze, drugs and other goods and contraband. Flesh Peddlers are the worst of the worst.

GUTTER RAT/SNITCH

A post-apocalyptic villain

“Gutter Rat” is the derogatory nickname given to the lowlifes who live among the ruins of civilization. They are the vermin of humanity picking through its remains and found mostly in urban environments, especially large cities, including neighborhoods and suburbia, but sometimes rural towns and large Safe Havens. These evil and self-serving vermin only care about their own survival, and sometimes the welfare of a mate, a loved one, or fellow Gutter Rat. However, when push comes to shove, Gutter Rats are only out for themselves and look out for their own survival above all others.

Opportunists, thieves, and snitches, they live by a dog-eat-dog philosophy of survival and have no true or lasting alliance with any person or group. They lurk in the shadows, watching and waiting for an opening to loot the body of the fallen, sick,



injured, and helpless, leaving them where they lay, or to steal from someone when they aren't looking. Even if they could help in the smallest of ways, they do not, unless they think there is something in it for them. This is the guy who leaves an injured or trapped survivor behind after stealing his backpack and ransacking his pockets. Gutter Rats lie, cheat, and steal whenever they can from whomever they can, regardless of how their actions or words might hurt others. Many will sell out their own mother if it is to their advantage, even if that advantage is short term and fleeting. Most are too cowardly to personally kill someone with their own hands, though their nefarious deeds often lead to tragedy and death.

Gutter Rats are snitches, cheats, and thieves who usually live and operate alone, in pairs, and in loose-knit swarms of fellow human vermin. They make temporary affiliations with fellow Gutter Rats, Flesh Peddlers, Death Cultists, thieves, raiders, and other dangerous, predatory people, as they are willing to deal with anyone who can give them what they need or want. It doesn't matter if that trade partner is an honest and good person, or a thief, raider, Retro-Savage, or Death Cultist, as long they get their payment. That pay comes as trade goods such as food, supplies, weapons, ammunition, a place to stay, protection, booze, drugs, information, a favor, and so on. Their chief stock in trade is information, as Gutter Rats always have their ears to the ground and eyes open for any gossip, rumors, news, and information they can trade to somebody. This is one reason they are always on the move, wandering through the streets and lurking in the shadows – watching, listening, and remembering.

Some Gutter Rats are in the flesh trade, though they are not slavers or pimps – that's more the purview of the Flesh Peddler and some raiders and Terror and Death Cults – but they may lure trusting outsiders into the clutches of such villains or take a child, teen, or sick or injured person to such villains to sell. If the opportunity presents itself, these dregs may also try to extort a payment or "reward" from a family, hero, or a community for the return of a missing person secretly in their clutches or trapped at a location only they know about. Such craven behavior, however, means the very villains they trade and associate with have no respect for them and treat them like the untrustworthy snitches they are.

Most Gutter Rats seem to be allergic to honest work and physical labor. Instead they prefer to live off the scraps and hard work of others, stealing what they want or getting it through lies, tricks, betrayal, and other nefarious means. They love to prey upon the young and innocent, often cheating and tricking children, teens, and trusting adults. They are too lazy to build a homestead for themselves or to contribute to a larger community. At least not in a meaningful way to earn themselves a place within it. Thus, few ever find or make a permanent home anywhere. Instead, Gutter Rats live in the streets and alleys, and curl up in the dark holes of the city. Finding temporary shelters and hideouts at parking structures, warehouses, factories, junkyards, inside tall buildings, houses and vehicles as well as the lower levels of buildings, basements, sewers, and tunnel systems.

People learn fast to never trust a Gutter Rat under any circumstance whatsoever. Just because one has been truthful or friendly in the past doesn't mean he or she won't sell you out for a can of beans tomorrow. Gutter Rats switch sides as often as most people change their clothes, and without regret or guilt. These vermin work with anyone who offers them the greatest reward or pay, or when it serves their own purpose, or someone offers them a better

deal. Any display of loyalty is either out of convenience or is a sham. It takes a lot for a Gutter Rat to show real empathy, loyalty, and friendship, as most will turn on you in a heartbeat and sell out their own mother if it benefits them.

Gutter Rat NPC Villain

Start by creating a Survivor/Ordinary Person O.C.C., page 85 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**.

Also Known As Snitch, Stoolie, Informer, Backstabber, and Rat.

Alignment: Anarchist (10%), Miscreant (60%), or Diabolic (30%). Always devious, sneaky, crooked, and treacherous. Self-serving scum without honor or morals.

Attribute Requirements: Not applicable, though a high I.Q. and P.P. are helpful.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to P.P. and +1D6 to Spd attributes, +10 to S.D.C., and +3 on Perception Rolls to recognize an easy opportunity or an easy mark/victim to cheat or rob, as well as to notice valuable information and items of value, and who has them and where they put them.

Common Skills: All.

Occupation & Skills of the Survivor: Select a Survivor O.C.C. occupation prior to the Zombie Apocalypse. Those skills are equal to 1D6+1 levels of experience. The character's occupation and skills may help define the character's origin story, purpose, motivation, and goals, or not. In this case, the character may have been a snitch or low-level criminal to begin with. Do NOT select Elective and Secondary Skills. Instead, see Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements, below. These are the skills of the post-apocalypse Gutter Rat.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual selection of Elective and Secondary Skills, this vermin has learned the following skills since becoming a low-level predator who trades in information and stealing. All should start at first, second, third, or fourth level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting or as desired by the Game Master.

Appraise Goods (+30%), Barter (+20%), Basic Mechanics, Find Contraband (+20%), Gambling (+10%), Hand to Hand: Basic, Intelligence (+10%), Palming (+20%), Pick Locks (+10%), Prowl (+10%), Streetwise (+30%), Tailing (+15%), and one W.P. (any, Ancient or Modern) of choice.

Standard Equipment: Clothing can be almost anything suitable for life on the streets, and usually dresses in layers and has a warm, long coat with lots of pockets for the winter, a trench coat or jacket with pockets for warmer months. Likes boots and loves leather jackets and coats even if they are very worn and soiled, wears pullover knit caps and/or other types of hats and caps ideal for operating outdoors and inside drafty buildings. Most will have a knife or favorite melee weapon, a gun, and one weapon for every W.P., flashlight, penlight, wristwatch, screwdriver, lock picking tools and/or a small or medium-sized crowbar, a belt, one or two canteens (or 1D6+2 bottles of water), a bottle or flask of booze, a pack of cigarettes or vaping device, disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; each does 1D4 damage), cell phone (for photos and video), a notepad or two, 1D6 pencils, 1D6 pens or markers, a can of spray paint, a piece of sidewalk chalk, a backpack, a duffle bag or 1D6+1 pillowcases for hauling loot and salvage, and some personal items such as a pocket mirror, comb, brush, wallet, pack of gum, chewing tobacco, etc., on their person.

Notes About Gear: Gutter Rats tend to travel light, though they may have 1D4+1 hidden supply caches with things like more water, booze, ammo, a first aid kit, knife, machete, spare canteen, flashlight, blankets, 1D6 extra pillowcases, knapsack or bedroll, another backpack or satchel, 1D6 notepads, 1D4x10 pencils, 1D4x10 pens or markers, a can of spray paint, a crowbar, basic tools, and similar.

Tools of the Trade: Bags and sacks for carrying loot, crowbars, lock picks and basic tool kit for breaking and entry, prying open crates and doors, popping the trunks of vehicles, or hot-wiring a car, some alcohol, a pair of good, comfortable boots or shoes for lots of walking, a rain poncho, and basic clothes and gear for life on the street as a snitch and a thief.

Vehicle: Probably none, does a lot of walking. To be a good snitch, you need to lurk in the shadows, prowl the streets, and pound the pavement with eyes peeled and ears open for opportunities, rumors, and info. Might have a bicycle or a motor scooter tucked away someplace for getting out of town.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade, and this foul villain's primary stock in trade is information, stolen goods, and scavenged salvage. Most operations are modest.

Trade Goods: Typically, no more than \$1D6x100 worth of trade goods. Gutter Rats tend to spend their money/trade goods freely and quickly, living high on the hog whenever they can and then back on the street.

SKINNERS

A post-apocalyptic villain

Any person of any O.C.C. may be a Skinner, but most have the predatory nature of lions, wolves, and jackals, which is to say they are aggressive, violent, and gather in gangs and cults. In fact, most Skinners are nomadic raiders, highwaymen, and hunters, but a number of cults are also comprised of Skinners. What sets Skinners apart from other groups is the practice of killing and skinning their enemies, including traitors among their own people, and turning their hides and bones into clothing or ornamentation. As repulsive as the practice of wearing human or zombie skins like animal hides to make capes, cloaks, ponchos, body armor, gloves, boots, moccasins, face masks, and other "leather" products from humans and/or zombies is, it has been adopted by many diverse groups, small, medium, and large, around the globe.

Skinners wear the skin and bones, or body parts (teeth, fingers, hands, ears, etc.) of their victims. Many, like the DOA cult (see the **Hell Followed™ Sourcebook**), do so to evoke fear and submission in others. Other Skinners use them to make macabre jewelry and clothing. Still others wear the skins of people and zombies as a sign of strength and power over for their enemies, or as part of a warrior ritual to a dark deity or death god. Some wear flesh masks made from slain people or zombies over their faces to evoke fear and disguise their identities, or as war masks. And if they can control or walk among the hungry dead, they use them to hide among the zombies, or in reverence of the monsters.

Some Skinner gangs and cults wear the still moving body parts of zombies. Wearing the hide of a zombie like a second skin or suit of zombie skin clothing, and moving zombie body parts as ornamentation, is as gross and disturbing as it sounds. The heads of zombies, their jaws removed to prevent them from biting

their wearer, may hang from belts around the waist or across the chest, or as cowls around the neck. Skinners also like to mount the heads of their victims and vanquished zombies on pikes, poles, and fence posts. They may also adorn their vehicles with the severed limbs and heads of zombies as a warning to others or to create an atmosphere of terror. Or they may lash clawing zombies, whole or halves (Crawlers), to the front, back, and/or roof of their vehicles as a twisted defense system. The loud moaning (or shrieking in the case of Screamer Zombies) serving as an alarm.



The clawing and biting zombies, always trying to grab and pull intruders into their biting jaws, make a deadly defense system. All of it is freaky and weird and an effective way to spread terror and get people to surrender and give up their possessions without much resistance.

The reputation of Skinners is that they are savage and brutal warriors who take what they desire from whomever they want. So when a band of these skin-wearing cutthroats give a person or community the opportunity to give them tribute (food, water, fuel, guns, ammo, or whatever they request) to go away without bloodshed, many count their blessings and do so. Which is exactly what these ruthless wild men want, hence their intimidation tactics via the wearing and display of human and zombie skin, body parts, bones, and zombie hood ornaments.

All Skinners are said to be savage, warlike barbarians and mad dog killers – many of whom are more than a little crazy. However, when it comes to combat and raids, most exhibit considerable combat skill and a wide range of military strategies and tactics, including subterfuge, infiltration, sabotage, and guerilla methods. Skinners function like a wolf pack with a pecking order and have a powerful and/or charismatic alpha wolf leader and beta second in command. As a rule, they favor knives, machetes, axes, and swords, but also use an array of modern firearms and military weapons and vehicles when they can lay their hands on them. Inevitably, some of the Skinners will have police or military training and combat experience.

Though Skinners wear clothing made of human and zombie hides, bones and body parts, few are ever cannibals. It is ironic, but most Skinners find cannibalism to be repugnant and depraved, and are likely to kill any cannibals they encounter. These are warriors who take what they want by force, like a pack of wolves. The remains of the living and the walking dead are their vanquished adversaries slain in combat or a duel, and worn with honor. Their victims skinned after they were slain, not while still alive. The reputation of Skinners is so terrifying that many raiders, bandits, Flesh Peddlers, and Terror Cults recruit one or a few to join their elite members or enforcers.

Skinner NPC Villain

Start by creating a Survivor/Ordinary Person O.C.C., page 85 of the **Dead Reign® RPG**, but with the following modifiers and additions.

Also Known As Skinwearers, Skin Warriors, and Skin Raiders.

Alignment: Typically evil; Aberrant (10%), Miscreant (50%), Diabolic (30%), or Anarchist (10%). All Skinners pride themselves as bold, deadly warriors who are ruthless and often merciless in combat.

Attribute Requirements: P.S. of 14 or greater; a high P.P. and P.E. are helpful, but not necessary.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +4 to P.S. and Spd attributes, +2 to one attribute of choice (any), +20 to S.D.C., and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Common Skills: All.

Occupation & Skills of the Survivor: Select a Survivor O.C.C. occupation prior to the Zombie Apocalypse. Those skills are equal to 1D6+1 levels of experience. The character's occupation and skills may help define the character's origin story, purpose, motivation, and goals, or not. In this case, the individual may have had a police, military, or criminal background. Do NOT select Elective and Secondary Skills. Instead, see Elec-

tive & Secondary Skill Replacements, below. These are the skills of the post-apocalypse Skinner.

Elective & Secondary Skill Replacements: Rather than the usual selection of Elective and Secondary Skills, this lion or wolf has learned the following skills since becoming a predator who raids, traps, and hunts fellow human beings and zombies. All should start at first, second, third, or fourth level depending on the timeline of your apocalyptic setting or as desired by the Game Master.

Hunting, Land Navigation (+10%), Leather Working (+15%), Rope Works (+10%), Sewing (+20%), Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+20%; including human hides), Tracking (people and zombies; +15%), Motorcycles & Snowmobiles (+10%), one Transportation Skill of choice, W.P. Knife, one Ancient W.P. of choice, one Modern W.P. of choice, and Wilderness Survival (+10%).

Standard Equipment: Basic, sturdy clothing, work or combat boots, may wear any type of practical clothing for combat: military fatigues, hunting clothes and gear, etc. Also has leather gloves, 2D4 latex surgical gloves, a large survival knife (1D6+1 S.D.C.), machete (1D6 S.D.C.), a favorite weapon (melee or modern), one weapon for each W.P. and plenty of ammo (at least 1D4x1,000 rounds for each), a belt (probably a web belt with holsters and pouches), a canteen or 6 bottles of water, 1D4 days worth of food rations, a disposable (or refillable) cigarette lighter, one roll of duct tape, a package of one hundred 12 inch (30.5 cm) cable ties, pocket knife or box cutter (or both; each does 1D4 damage), a walkie-talkie, cell phone (for photos and video), a backpack and large duffel or rifle carrier/bag, 1D4 sacks, and some personal items such as a pocket mirror, gum, chewing tobacco, comb, notebook, marker, skulls, bones, etc. on their person.

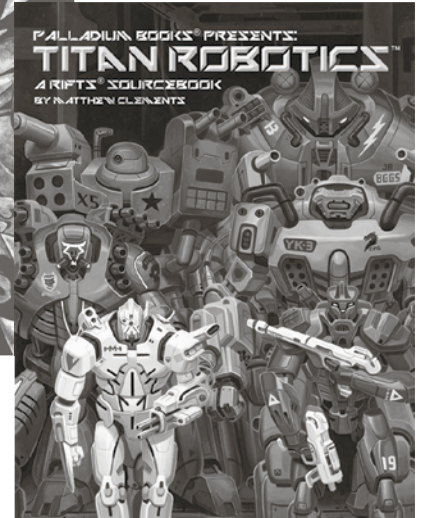
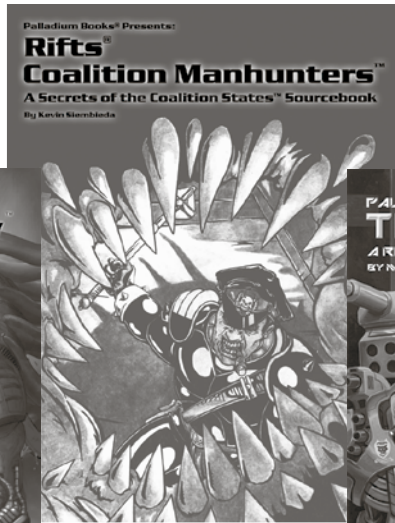
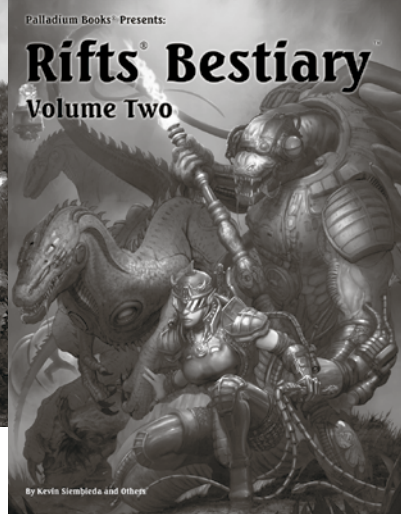
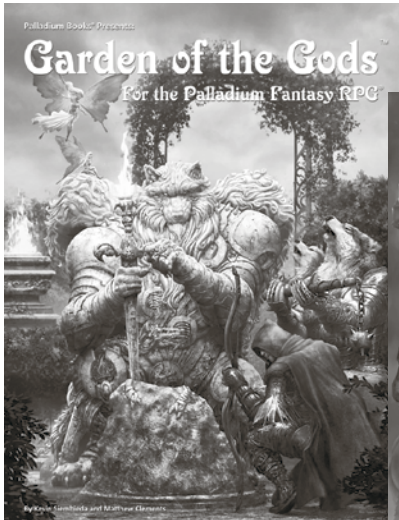
Tools of the Trade: Guns and ammo, several extra gallons of gasoline, a set of scalpels and/or hunting knives and other tools used for skinning and butchering animal carcasses, various types of saws, hatchets, hooks, gas powered chainsaw, two 20 foot (6.1 m) lengths of cord, one 6 foot (1.8 m) length of chain, materials for tanning hides and leather, a box of 100 latex surgical gloves, 1D4x10 surgical masks, an extra backpack, a knapsack, a bedroll or sleeping bag, compass, binoculars, nightvision goggles or gun scopes, and likely other gun scopes. May hunt with a bow and arrow or include a bow among his range of weapons or W.P.s.

Vehicle: Varies. The Skinner is likely to have a motorcycle, ATV, or dirt bike in the back of his jeep, pickup truck, or similar sturdy vehicle with off-road capabilities for transporting people, supplies, gear, and loot. Most Skinner gangs prefer a combination of light, fast vehicles like motorcycles and fast cars along with rugged all-terrain vehicles such as jeeps, pickup trucks, and humvees. Military grade vehicles, body armor, and ordnance whenever they can get them.

Pay: None, everything is barter and trade, and this aggressive villain takes what he wants and trades or fences stolen goods to fellow predators, raiders, and cultists, as well as to unsuspecting homesteads and survivor communities. Most Skinner gangs are modest in size.

Trade Goods: \$2D6x1,000 worth of trade goods, which is mostly stolen goods acquired via raids, hijackings, ambushes, and robbery.

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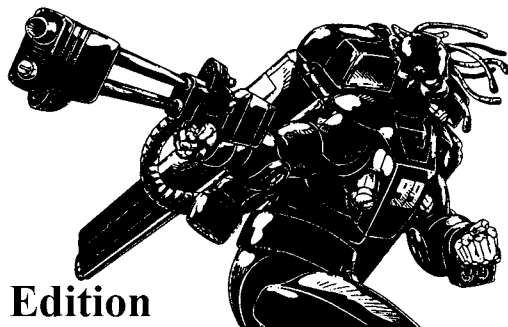
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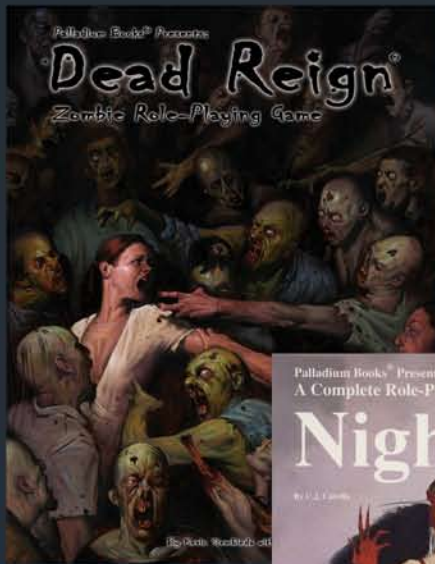
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