

FREE LEAGUE

# THE ELECTRIC STATE



Roleplaying Game



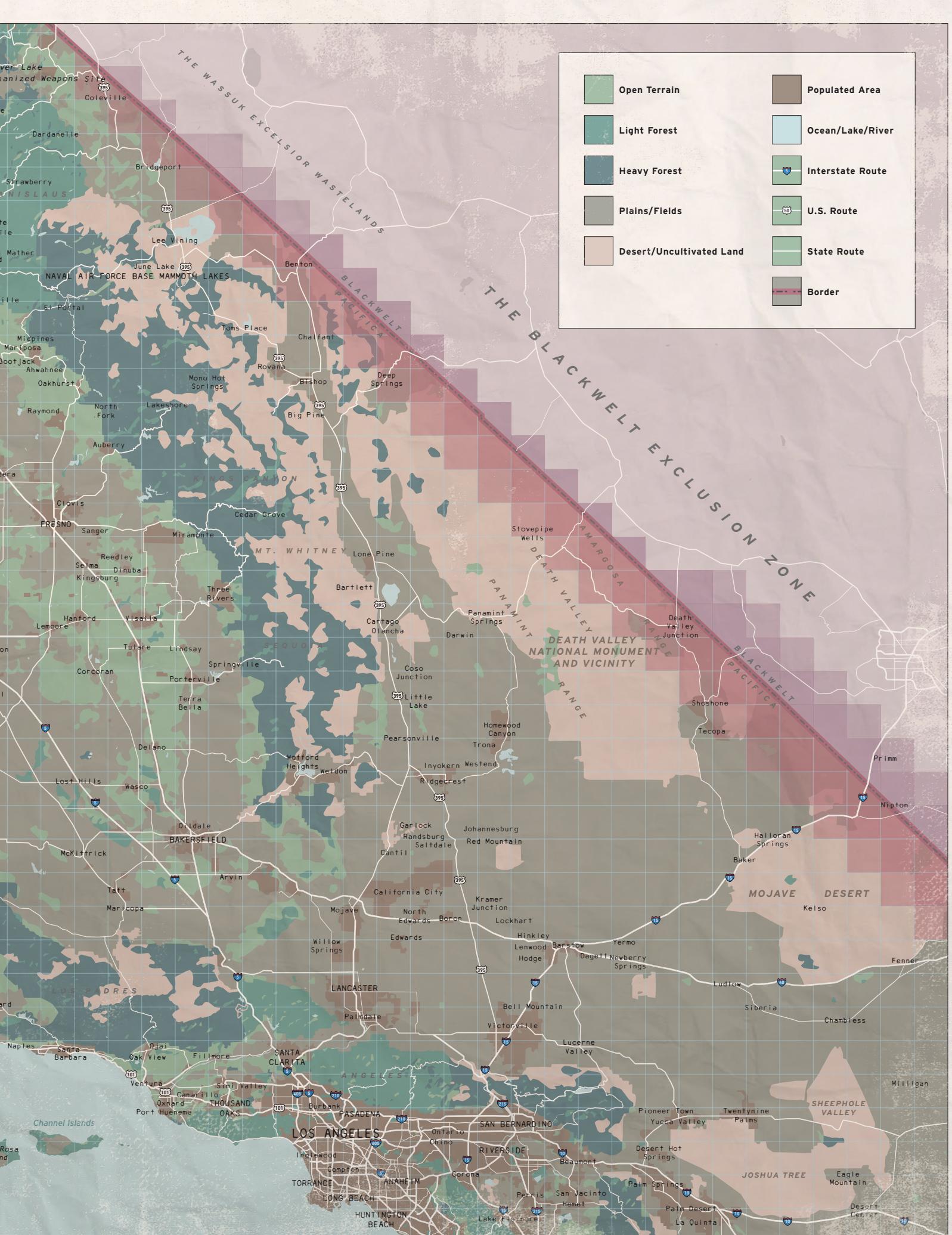


# PACIFIC OCEAN

# PACIFICA

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MILES







# THE ELECTRIC STATE



Roleplaying Game

Creator of The Electric State and Lead Artist

**SIMON STÅLENHAG**

Lead Game Design

**NILS HINTZE**  
**TOMAS HÄRENSTAM**

Graphic Design & Layout

**JOHAN NOHR**

Lead Editor & Project Manager

**TOMAS HÄRENSTAM**

Additional Editing & Writing

**CHRIS LITES**  
**MATTIAS JOHNSSON HAAKE**  
**NILS KARLÉN**

Additional Art

**REINE ROSENBERG**

Maps

**CHRISTIAN GRANATH**

Proofreading

**BRANDON BOWLING**

Prepress

**DAN ALGSTRAND**

Playtesting

**MARCO BEHRMANN**  
**TOMAS HÄRENSTAM**  
**KOSTA KOSTULAS**  
**ANNA WESTERLING**  
**NILS KARLÉN**

PR Manager

**BOEL BERMANN**

Event Manager

**ANNA WESTERLING**

Customer Support Manager

**DANIEL LEHTO**

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CHAPTER ONE

# WELCOME TO THE ELECTRIC STATE

*What we're doing isn't civilized, I know that.  
But I know it must have happened to you  
too. Like me, you must have woken up one  
day and suddenly realized the inevitable:  
we no longer live in civilized times.*

---



**TORN APART BY A SECOND CIVIL WAR**, all but a few Americans find escape in the blissful neuronic network, known as the Electric State. Outside this virtual paradise, the wrecked hulks of battle drones litter the countryside, heaped together in a loam of trashed tech from a consumer society in decline.

Yet, full of wonders as the virtual world is, real journeys must yet be made. This game is about those journeys and those Travelers who, for their own reasons, must complete them at any cost. In so doing they may have to enter the Electric State and hope, unlike so many other of their countrymen, they do not become trapped by that paradisical world.

The game is not about the goal but the journey – what the characters experience and how it changes them. This is a game of exploration, but one in which not only physical topography is crossed but also the interiority of the self. Each of you answer this: what would I do as the world collapses around me?

**GAMEMASTER (GM):** You step out from the car into pouring rain and rush towards the only visible building – a small diner halfway up the hill, surrounded by low bushes. Through the front windows you can see a dozen people sitting at the tables, and a waitress serving coffee.

**FERNANDO (TRAVELER 1):** I pull the door open and step in, taking off my jacket, which is already soaking wet.

**VALERIA (TRAVELER 2):** I am right behind him, but I am not that much in a hurry, as I try to always give an impression of being in control.

**GM:** Everyone inside looks up at you, smiling. As they do so, you see that they all have cloudy, white eyes.

**FERNANDO:** I look around and say “Hi, anybody here who knows how to fix a car engine?”

**GM:** An old lady smiles at you. “We will take care of everything. Please sit down and have a cup of coffee. It’s the best coffee in these parts.” She points at one of the free tables.

**VALERIA:** I look at the waitress and hold up two fingers: “Two cups of coffee, and whatever pie is good today.” Then I sit down at the table.

**FERNANDO:** I join her. Do the people in here seem to be blind?

**GM:** It is hard to say. They all stare at nothing, with their white eyes. But somehow, they manage to drink their coffee, and the waitress does not have any problems putting your coffee and pies on a tray and carrying it to your table. The people at the other tables have started talking to each other again. As the waitress puts your

“

**Except for being covered in dust, the Oldsmobile seemed fine. Its former owners, sprawled in the sand next to it, must have been an elderly couple. In their pockets I found the car keys and receipts for two Sentre Stimulus TLEs. I got in and turned the ignition, realizing that this might be the last car I drove until we reached the Pacific.**

*coffee in front of you, she bends down to whisper: “Get out of here before they get to you.” She then quickly goes back behind the counter.*

**VALERIA:** No, she doesn’t. Before she can leave the table, I grab her hand, pulling her closer. “What are you talking about?”

**GM:** That sounds like you are trying to make her tell you more. Roll for Empathy.

**VALERIA:** Okay. I roll five dice. But not a single success!

**GM:** Even though it is hard to see any emotion in her eyes, her whole posture screams of fear. She pulls her hand free and hurries back behind the counter, and then she disappears into the kitchen. When you look up, you notice that the old lady is staring right at you with her unseeing eyes.

## PLAYING THE GAME

A **GAMEMASTER** (or GM) and two or more players are all you need to run *The Electric State*. You and your friends need to decide who’s the GM before you start – if this is your book, it’s probably you. The rest of the players, preferably two to five people, each create a Traveler.

The GM is the only one that needs to read the book – they need not learn all the contents by heart, but to be able to use the book as a reference while playing. It’s great if the players can also flip through some of the first chapters to get a feel for the game.

In addition to this book, you need pens, paper, and at least ten six-sided dice in two different colors.



## Safety Tools

*The Electric State RPG* takes place in a dark world with many situations that raise issues relating to personal morality. That said, this is still a game, and no players should be forced to deal with topics they find distressing in real life, or that make them feel unsafe at the table.

To make sure everyone is having fun and feeling safe, we recommend that you use safety tools before, during, and after the game. Examples of such safety tools are pre-game discussions about lines and veils for

subjects that players want to avoid or keep off-screen, safety cards to be shown during play by a player to indicate that they feel uncomfortable with what is happening in the game, and post-game debriefings.

Always respect any player's wish to raise a concern at any time during the game or even to leave the table if they want to. And don't forget to take breaks. More information about safety tools in tabletop roleplaying can be found online.

# THE ELECTRIC STATE

**THIS GAME IS SET** in an alternate version of the late 1990s we know from our world. The year is 1997 and after a period of great turmoil, civilization is irreversibly crumbling.

In the nation of Pacifica, comprising what was once the state of California, people do whatever they can to ignore the slow-moving apocalypse unfolding around them. They also have compelling reasons to avoid dwelling on the past – the decades of conflict and war that led to this downfall aren't something anyone wants to remember.

Pacifica is described in more detail in the second chapter of this book. For now, just imagine a '90s America in slow-motion freefall and most citizens are deer in the headlights of Armageddon.

## ■ THE CIVIL WAR

In this game world, the USA was torn apart by a civil war that commenced in 1975 and officially concluded with a ceasefire in 1984. In its aftermath, new nations emerged, including Pacifica.

While North America takes center stage in this game, the events that unfolded here mirror what happened around the globe, leading to a less globalized and more isolationist world. Essentially, the only aspect of society with a global reach is neuro technology. The much-heralded global village of the '90s died before it had a chance to truly mature, and the future looks dim.

## ■ NEURONICS

The field of *neuronics* emerged in the 1960s and evolved rapidly, particularly during the tumultuous '70s and '80s. Its basic application enables individuals to don helmet-like *neurocasters*, gaining access to a digital network used for work, entertainment, and leisure activities. Two of its most prominent features are *drones* and *neuroscapes*.

Drones are machines, from housekeeping units to enormous weapon systems, that can be piloted remotely. They are used for many heavy or hazardous jobs and made up most of the fighting forces during the war.

Neuroscapes are virtual worlds within the network, offering an experience more vivid than reality itself. Due

to recent software and hardware upgrades, the immersive nature of these neuroscapes triggered a growing addiction among users. This addiction contributes to the accelerating decline of civilization, as an increasing number of individuals choose to remain immersed in the neuroscapes, eventually dying with their helmets on.

### 1990s Nostalgia

This game takes place in a world where the '90s brought a strange and horrible apocalypse along with the pop culture anchors we remember. A part of playing the game is digging down in nostalgia, into the pop culture kitsch and listening to Nirvana, Dr Dre, Robyn, and NIN. Imagine a road trip in an old Dodge Caravan, and where Travelers sit in the back seat drinking Jolt and playing punch-Bug as every VW left drives by.

## ■ STRANGE EVENTS

In a world where every news outlet is suspect of serving someone's interests, distinguishing truth from outright lies becomes a challenge. Rumors have always circulated in Pacifica, but of late, they took a darker, more sinister turn, closely intertwined with the development of neuronics. One thing America hasn't lost in its present decline is its penchant for conspiracy theories.

Whispers abound regarding colossal mechanical creatures traversing the countryside. Some say these entities are assembled by beings born within the neuronic network or by the network *itself*. There are tales of threats emerging, escaping, or being unleashed from secret research facilities owned by major corporations – contagions, robotic entities, and even beings formed from a fusion of flesh and machine.

Then there are all the stories about strange human cults, raiders, and violent extremists, such as the infamous Convergence – a techno cult worshiping the Inter-cerebral Divinity, roaming the countryside with their neurocasters illuminating the landscape. It's enough to want to make anyone disappear into the pixelated ether.

## ■ A LINGERING HOPE

Despite the prevailing chaos, there are individuals who cling to the belief that life can improve, or at the very least, become less unbearable. You and your fellow Travelers are such people, embarking on a journey in search of something that can infuse life with meaning.

Perhaps your journey aims to rediscover a sense of community among relatives and friends back home. Alternatively, you might be evading the authorities, yearning for an opportunity to start anew in a different place. Motivations could range from seeking revenge, reuniting with a long-lost lover, solving a mysterious murder, to scavenging for parts to repair your vintage cabriolet. Sustaining this flame of hope throughout the journey will undoubtedly be a challenge.

Still, even your Travelers aren't completely free from the reach of neurronics. At times, you will need to use neurocasters to enter the Electric State to find information or overcome some obstacle. Sometimes, the lure that caught so many is your only way forward – but you need to be careful not to let the bliss inside draw you into the deep electric currents where you become lost forever, like so many before you.

# THIS BOOK

**IN THIS BOOK** you will find all the information you need to play the game.

**In Chapter 2**, there is a description of the world of *The Electric State*, an overview of the historical events that led up to the present situation, and some key locations in Pacifica.

“

**Back in the car, I was about to turn the key when something made me stop. That something was gnawing at the back of my mind. I released the seat belt, grabbed the shotgun, and got out. I told Skip to stay in the car and lock the doors, then I carefully shut the door and walked back to the shooting range.**

**Chapter 3** describes how you create your Traveler and how to use their attributes to roll dice. There are also instructions on how to design the relationships and tensions among the Travelers.

**Chapter 4** gives you the rules for combat and other hazards, as well as rules for using neurocasters to enter the Electric State.

**Chapter 5** includes tools to help the GM plan the Travelers' Journey and create the Stops that the Travelers visit along the way.

**Chapter 6** is full of examples of Threats that might harass your Travelers at the Stops. There are descriptions of dangerous cults, government operatives, Sentre agents, monstrous drone growths, and more.

**Chapter 7** includes a complete framework for a sample Journey called *Into the Dust*, including three pre-made Stops, and Encounters.

**Chapter 8** includes rules and guidelines for playing the game solo, without the need for a Gamemaster.

### What Is a Roleplaying Game?

If you have never played a roleplaying game before, you can think of it as a TV series playing out for your mind's eye - you simply describe and imagine what things look like. You do not have a script, and none of you know how the story will end.

When playing your Traveler, speak as if you were them - you can even change your voice a little if that helps you to better embody the character. Describe what they do, and how they

do it. At times you can even describe what your Traveler thinks about or hopes for.

Generally, your Traveler should follow their individual Dream and struggle to reach the Goal of their Journey. However, your job as a player is not to "win" the game but rather to play your Traveler in the best way you can to create a good story and fit the dynamic of your gaming group.

# THE JOURNEY

**THE GM DOESN'T NEED** to improvise everything that happens. Before play begins, the GM has a written Journey, consisting of several Stops. At each Stop, the Travelers will, for one reason or another, need to stay for a day or two. At these Stops, interesting, strange, and horrible things happen.

Before the game begins, the players and the GM decide if they should play a short Journey with a handful of Stops along the way, or a long Journey with many Stops. Typically, the GM plans the Journey beforehand and tells the players where it starts, what Destination the Travelers are heading to, and which personal Goals and Threats they have. Alternatively, the GM and the players set up the Journey together.

Chapter 7 of this book includes a complete framework for a Journey, including three pre-made Stops.

## ■ STOPS

Each Stop has a map of the area and describes its inhabitants and the locations of interest. It also has a Countdown of potential events. Often, using neurocasters to enter the Electric State is useful or even necessary to resolve the situation.

## ■ ENCOUNTERS

In between the main Stops, the Travelers can have minor Encounters along the way. These are much briefer than the main Stop sites and might not even require you to leave your vehicle. The purpose of these Encounters is just to set the mood and immerse you in the world of *The Electric State*.

## ■ SCENES

The game is played in scenes, like in a movie. Something happens at a location at a Stop, and when the conversation or action are finished, the GM cuts the scene. The next scene picks up elsewhere or later. In this way, the group skips playing things that are not that interesting, such as walking to a diner or going to the bathroom. Just like in a film, we jump over the mundane bits.









“

*While we listened to one of Skip's tapes on the car stereo, the road straightened out and stretched through a rocky valley where the shadows of clouds walked across the jagged ground. The wreck of an old assault ship reached up from a ridge between the boulders. Someone had drawn a cartoon face on the gun tower. Skip sat up in his chair and stared at the ship. Yes, I see it - Sir Astor, I said. Skip kept staring at the grinning face of the intergalactic space cat until it disappeared behind us.*

## ▣ ENDING THE SESSION

At the end of the session, the Travelers may have resolved things, the entire area might be burned to the ground, or you might still be in the middle of the action. In any event, the Travelers learned something and get a chance to improve their attributes and acquire new talents. If the situation at the Stop was not resolved, the game continues there in the next session. When the Travelers reach their Destination, or die before they get there, the Journey ends.

**FERNANDO (TRAVELER 1):** *“That is not what I meant at all!” I lean forward and stick my head in between the front seats and stare at Valeria in the rear-view mirror. “You are putting words in my mouth.”*

**VALERIA (TRAVELER 2):** *I smile to myself, while keeping my eyes on the road. “You said what you said, don’t try to take it back.”*

**GM:** *The fog is now getting thicker, making it harder to drive as the headlights only illuminate a small area in front of the car. Everything else is dark.*

**ETHAN (TRAVELER 3):** *“Hey, Valeria, maybe you should slow down a little?”*

**VALERIA:** *I put my foot down harder on the pedal, watching the speedometer hit 40 and then 50.*

**GM:** *The road is in bad shape. Suddenly you hear a loud bang. Valeria, you lose control of the car. It veers to the side, then it loses contact with the road and catapults into the air. When it smashes down to the ground, you are all tossed around inside. The car stands still halfway out in the corn field beside the road. It is quiet, as the engine has died. All you hear is someone in the car moaning in pain.*

**FERNANDO:** *I try to get up and out of the car, to understand what is happening.*

**GM:** *Fernando, when you step out into the field, the ground is still shaking, and you realize that it is an earthquake. The road has been torn apart. In the distance, you see a few houses. Two of them have lights still on in the windows.*

# ROLLING DICE

WHENEVER YOU TRY to do something difficult, it is time to roll the dice. In *The Electric State RPG*, you only use normal six-sided dice. How many dice you roll depends on your Traveler's attributes – more on those in Chapter 3. To succeed, you must roll at least one six.

The number of dice can be further modified by talents, gear, and external factors. If you are desperate to succeed, you can push the roll and get a re-roll – but this can cost you precious Hope. This is explained in detail in Chapter 3.

**ETHAN (TRAVELER 3):** *I kneel down beside the cradle and brush off the sand.*

**GM:** *You see that there is a doll in the cradle. No, wait, she is breathing. It is a child, maybe four or five months old.*

**ETHAN:** *I pick her up, and as I do so, I look around at the scrap yard to try to find some trace of a mother or father.*

**GM:** *As you do so, the door is kicked open on one of the rusty cars near you. A girl, not more than eight or nine years old, bursts out and runs towards you with a knife. She screams "Leave my sister alone!"*

**ETHAN:** *"Hey kiddo, I am not here to hurt you or your sister."*

**GM:** *Sounds like we have a conflict: Will she listen to you and believe what you say, before she is close enough to attack? Roll for Empathy.*

**ETHAN:** *I have Empathy 4 so I roll four dice. But I roll no successes!*

## ■ D6, 2D6 & D66

Sometimes, the rules ask you to roll a d6. This simply means rolling a six-sided die and reading the numerical result. Rolling 2d6 means rolling any two dice and adding them together, giving a result between 2 and 12. Another common roll is d66. This means rolling two dice, after deciding which of the dice represents the tens and the ones. For example, if you roll a four on the first die and a one on the other, the result is 41.

## Drama, Horror & Personal Growth

The stories of *The Electric State* should be dramatic and full of action. There should be fistfights and firefights, but also loud arguments, messy love stories, and past sins coming back to life. In most respects, it is like any good TV series with twists and turns.

Another aspect of the game is horror. At its core, the world of *The Electric State* is horrible. The decay of the world, the growing sense of loss, and collapse of society should be present as an overarching threat. And it should become worse as, along the way, the apocalypse comes closer. The end of the Journey may very well coincide with the end of the world.

At its core, this game is about the Travelers and how they either develop into better human beings or lose all hope. What happens on the road highlights and perhaps answers the questions that secretly nag at them night and day: Am I good enough? Can I be loved? Is there a place where I can feel at home? Do I deserve what has happened to me? Who am I?

## Journeys Elsewhere

*The Electric State* is set in Pacifica, an alternative version of California, but your Journey can take place elsewhere in what was previously the USA, or anywhere else in the world. It requires a little more work for the GM to set up the Journey, however.

# PRINCIPLES OF THE GAME

**SIX PRINCIPLES** govern *The Electric State RPG*. Read them to the group before you start a new Journey. They can be used as instruction and inspiration on how to play the game. They are also a guide in situations where you and the other players have different opinions on how to interpret the rules or the world of *The Electric State*.

## Play To Find Out

Just as the mind consists of connected neurons in the brain, your story forms by linking things together: the Travelers, the Destination, the Stops, the Threats, the Tension among the Travelers, and the roll of the dice. There is no pre-determined course of events, and the end is never set. No one should feel responsible for making the game turn out a certain way. What happens happens, and that is the game.

## The Travelers Are Seekers

They are filled with dreams. Maybe they want a better future or just find someone to love. They engage in whatever they encounter, interact with people, and try to figure things out. In the end, their hope may be futile, but at least they didn't give up.

## The Journey Is the Goal

Each Traveler will have their own goal for the Journey, but reaching the Destination as quickly as possible is not the point of the game. In order to follow your dreams and overcome your flaws – and play the game fully – you must interact with the people and events you encounter at the Stops along the way. Don't leave until the situation is resolved.

## The World Is Falling Apart

Even though the war is over, Pacifica is about to collapse – or maybe it is already happening. There are signs of it everywhere: abandoned buildings, people losing their minds and starving, groups of wanderers enthralled by their neurocasters. The decay is ever present.

## Measuring Time

Three separate units of time are typically used in the game, depending on the situation at hand. See the table below. The exact duration of a Round, Stretch and Shift can vary depending on the situation. There are typically four Shifts in a day: Morning, Day, Evening, and Night.

Unit	Duration	Primary Use
Round	5-10 seconds	Combat
Stretch	5-10 minutes	Neurocasting
Shift	5-10 hours	Travel

## Neuronics Are Everywhere

Even though the neuronic tech is triggering the downfall of civilization as we know it, no one is free from its reach – not even the Travelers. They often need to use neurocasters to reach their goals, taking the risk of losing themselves to the bliss of the Electric State.

## It's the '90s, but Not

As *The Electric State* is set in an alternative version of the '90s, your game should include familiar elements from that time, such as clothes, hairdos, music, and movies. This is contrasted with the neuro tech which is weird and outlandish. Make the most of these contrasts. The actual '90s was certainly a time of rapid technological change juxtaposed with an older kind of life giving way to the new. This game amplifies that.





CHAPTER TWO

# THE STATE OF PACIFICA

*When did it all start? I can't really remember. It started like any recreational activity, I guess.*

*Like TV. Sometimes they watched TV and sometimes they would sit there wearing their neurocasters. I didn't care. It was after the big update of 1996 that things got weird. Mode Six.*

---

PACIFICA STATE BORDER



**EXTINCTION IS THE SLOW-ROLLING APOCALYPSE.** The proverbial frog in the increasingly hot water. And us? We're tourists for the most part, wanting the best photo for the end of the world. If it might affect the next generation, the powers that be do nothing. But technology? It cannot be legislated or controlled, and it moves faster than you can blink. Each technological wonder led this world closer toward a soft apocalypse. Most tune out in neurocasters. Travelers like you do not.

It is the year 1997 and the world is falling asunder – what is, and what has been, is about to be obliterated. In some city areas, the fall is still possible to deny; even

if it requires an effort, people can make believe that life goes on as normal. But the cities rely on the rural areas for food and an average food product travels 1,500 miles before it hits store shelves. And that was before. Abandoned houses are filling up with sand that keeps blowing in through open doors and broken windows like an ironic hourglass. Communities are subjugated by heavily armed doomsday preachers, commanding people to atone before the end; and in desolate farms, techno cults indulge in hideous bloodletting rituals, cruel sacrifices, and bizarre acts of violent debauchery. In the absence of real hope, people cleave to the next best thing.



In Pacifica, what used to be California, hard blown winds scour windows dull so that the outside takes on a fuzzy, nebulous quality. Places that were once affluent suburbs lay abandoned, nothing more to mark vanished humanity than a plastic, inflatable duck floating in the moss at the bottom of a once-pristine pool. Many citizens one finds are gaunt, skeletal, starving because their only need now is the neurographic landscapes where no sand covers homes, no cities lay abandoned and America, inside the neurographic ideal, never left its peak in the 1950s.

“

*Someone said that smell is the gateway to memory. The first neurocasters couldn't do scents. You'd be in the midst of a shooter game and not smell the cordite. The new ones, they do smell. I made the mistake of playing a game that mimicked the smell of the chemical bombs I used to drop in my stealth drone. There isn't anything in the world that smells the same. I ripped that neurocaster right off and flung it across the room. The plastic was hard enough that it left a hole in our wall. But that night the terrors came and the long, dark finger of what we pilots call "the Fear" reached out for me.*

*We didn't feel the Fear during the war, amped up on neurine and adrenaline. But the nose remembers, and that scent set me off. Other scents do it too, but I can't blame them for why Amber left. That was the drone tech. It seared the circuitry that ran those ships into my brain. Ghost images of burning houses, cars, flesh... Amber's been gone six months now, but in my neuroscape of our house there is no hole in the wall and she's still there. The thing that burnt out my brain keeps me going now. I'm only in my neuroscape seventeen hours a day. I still eat... sometimes. I'm doing OK. Amber says so, smiling at me with the midday sun lighting her from behind like a halo. I almost don't even miss her, now.*

## The World, Summarized

If you want to explain the world of *The Electric State RPG* quickly to new players, you can give them the following bullet points:

- ◻ The game takes place in an alternate version of the 1990s, with the decade's most iconic cultural artifacts and styles intact.
- ◻ The USA was torn apart by civil war. You probably start playing in Pacifica, a nation consisting of what once was California.
- ◻ The civil war was in many ways related to the scientific field of **neuronics** - the knowledge of how to mimic the human brain through technology.
- ◻ Neuronics lets people control drones by being connected to **neurocasters** - high-tech helmets with a plastic casing that essentially put their minds inside the drones.
- ◻ The neurocasters can also be used to assume the identity of an avatar in a **neuroscape** - a realm inside the network, much like virtual reality but more real. Hyperreal.
- ◻ The companies who control the neuronics control the world. Most prominent is **Sentre** who develops the neurocasters and builds neurographic towers all over Pacifica.
- ◻ The world is falling apart. Not in the way a bomb takes down a building, but in the way decades of neglect take down an entire city. The apocalypse is real and there is no going back. You haven't given in to the easy escape, yet. What do people like you do to press on?
- ◻ Some say there is something alive inside the neurographic network, something using human minds and bodies for some secret agenda.
- ◻ Horrible creatures of metal and meat roam the landscape. Some call them neuronic ghosts, phantasms. But more swear they are real. Also, human monsters are everywhere, in the form of militias, cults, and bands of looters.
- ◻ The coastal regions of Pacifica where the big cities are situated, are still more or less functional. The end is coming from the east, much as the settlers did over a century ago, only this time it's the four horsemen and not a wagon of pioneers in sight.

## A Place To Start

This game is not meant to take place solely in Pacifica. It is a place to start. Use it as a point of departure while learning about the game and its world. Then you can outline other parts of the USA as needed. The Travelers can, for example, start in Los Angeles and take Route 66 eastwards, or start in San Francisco and travel along the Lincoln Highway, the first true road to span the entire width of this nation. Nothing would match either until Eisenhower pushed the Highway Project. Even then, just by concrete, one could see how increasingly connected we were.



## WHERE WE ARE

THE 1997 OF THE ELECTRIC STATE is both recognizably our recent past, and partly divergent from what we know. The broader strokes of the decade are what changed most: the economic stability, the promise and ultimate failure of VR, and the notion of America as world leader.

The 1997 of now pushes against our remembered reality. The economy tanked, VR delivered on its promises and so much more, and America, the only superpower left, descended into isolationism and eventual civil war.

Still, the small things are much the same as we recognize them from our own 1990s, such as fashion, toy and candy brands, game-consoles, and music. Jurassic Park still dominated the box office in 1993, raves still rage in warehouses, underage kids are still

drinking Mad Dog 20/20. You read about the war in school while your headphones filled your ears with the latest NIN album. And then there is Pacifica.

Pacifica is a republic consisting of what was formerly California. Officially it is ruled by President Latoya Griffin, but it is commonly known that it is largely controlled by a few powerful companies, with Sentre as the most prominent one. Sentre is actually the only existing organization that has a global reach. It managed to establish itself in many countries throughout the world – even though some governments still try to block the spread of Sentre neurocasters. The great multinational corporate powers emerging in the '80s largely failed. Sentre did not.





## HOW WE GOT HERE

**WE OFTEN BELIEVE** we can trace a straight line from the present to the past. See the steps taken and how we got here. But that's a human illusion. We are everyday presented with a million choices. Only a few break the paradigm. One such is the scientific breakthroughs in the 1960s that mapped and copied the human brain. Technology is the prime mover running humanity, and before we knew its power, neurronics was running us.

In the 1960s, a scientist named Valeria Lopez found a way to copy the networks of the human brain – how the neurons are connected by dendrites which send and receive signals. In the human brain, seemingly basic links between neurons add to each other with an increasing level of complexity, forming higher-level functions, forming sentience. For example, movement, memory storage, and the ability to think about ourselves and reflect upon things around us. All this is made up of tiny, simple connections forming complex networks.

What Lopez managed to do was to build artificial networks that copied the most basic interactions in our brains. Thus was the scientific field of neurronics established. During the '60s, a growing number of scientists in the Western USA, both in private companies and at the universities, started to develop this new field of study. One of the first big breakthroughs came in the form of the drone – a robot or mechanical construct that could be controlled by human minds at a distance, effectively using the pilot's thoughts to maneuver it. It did not take long before the invention was in the hands of the Department of Defense and its industry contractors. In the late '60s, the first drone ships were built and soon deployed in proxy wars around the globe.

Somehow the technology leaked, or was stolen, giving the Soviet Union and other countries the capacity to build drone ships of their own. In the USA, the leading developers were still Valeria Lopez and her company Sentre, which had now partly merged with the US military. In secluded areas of the Nevada desert, secret experiments were performed with drone ships and drone robots, designed to replace soldiers on the battlefield. They told the world human casualties could now be minimized to the point of a rounding error. Yes, a rounding error.



## ■ THE POINT OF DIVERGENCE

Up until the early '70s, history played out pretty much as we know it. But around the time of the economic crisis, the rise of the Civil Rights movement, the Watergate scandal, and the withdrawal from Vietnam (a war that despite the drone ships was not won, but only became bloodier thanks to their indiscriminate bombings), the USA was in a state of turmoil.

When president Ford announced that ex-president Nixon was to be pardoned for his involvement in the Watergate scandal, it led to nationwide protests. Someone tried to shoot the president but only managed to wound him. Who the shooter was is still debated, but a man named Lucca Rossi was arrested. Since he was a renowned anti-war protester, a socialist, and a

civil rights spokesperson, the country was soon divided between those who believed it was time to stand up for the federation, the president, and traditional American values, and those who thought the country needed to be changed at its core.

The situation escalated with riots and political assassinations. Even the Capitol in Washington was stormed by anti-war protesters, which led to soldiers being deployed to stop the masses, firing live ammo into the ranks of unarmed men, women, and children. The massacre on Franklin Square was the spark that lit a fire which swept through the USA and made people everywhere take up arms and organize themselves into militias – either to fight for or against the federation.



## ■ THE CIVIL WAR

Exactly what led to each escalation, and what were the main pivotal moments, remains a debate among historians. But the fact is in late 1975, the USA plunged into civil war. At first it was a low intensity conflict with guerrilla, some would say terrorist, acts by both sides. But, as those acts were carried out more frequent, and more indiscriminately, large entities like states and military units took sides. The secession of California, quickly followed by Texas two days later, is generally seen as the point of no return.

More and more states looked for a piece of a shrinking pie, and the entire country became divided into factions. This resulted in a civil war with too many sides to track. So-called new nations were often proclaimed and then disappeared within a week.

But not all such “new nations” led to chaos. In the west, the Pacific Congregation, consisting of the above-mentioned “secession states,” fell apart, mostly as an effect of Nevada being heavily bombarded over the course of several weeks without getting any help from the other Congregation members. When the attack was over, and the corpses counted, it became clear that the house doesn’t always win. Las Vegas was hit by a low-yield nuclear attack, destroying the soil and leaving those in the unfortunate war zone without food and water. This was the end of the Pacific Congregation.

## ■ NEURONICS IN THE WAR

War brings rapid technological change. From the first tribe to perfect a bow vs. opponents with spears, nothing moves human progress like war. And nothing can end it more rapidly either. During the war, the field of neuronics took major steps forward. Much of the war was waged by drone ships driven by pilots in bunkers far away from the battlefields. These pilots drove machines hundreds if not thousands of miles away. They took out their targets. Humans were just collateral damage.

The applications of neuronics rapidly became more sophisticated and widespread. Soon, gigantic neurological networks were built. Military need and government money ensured the whole of the American armed forces were connected. An all-seeing panopticon waited for the enemy, but the enemy had been us. Civilian use boomed as well. Cities became neuronic hubs, and neighbors wanted the latest, newest neurocaster to outdo the people next door.

Meanwhile the military pushed almost every neuronic program through. With little oversight, these fast-tracked development projects spawned terrible, nightmarish side-effects. Nothing was confirmed or officially admitted, but in many places around the northern hemisphere, there were stories of systems acting on their own, even trying to execute plans that their human operators knew nothing about.

Even wilder stories maintained that the “thing in the machines” sought a way to be born in flesh, or at least in physical form. There are stories about whole research stations taken over by entities composed of flesh and machine parts. The stories say that these stations were burnt to cinders so as to obliterate all traces of the mutated network. Most dismissed this as the kind of sci-fi found in literature and theaters.

Allegedly, most states had secret military divisions responsible for identifying and eradicating such “spontaneous cumulations” within the neuronic networks.

## ■ THE END OF THE WAR

The end of the 1970s saw an America depleted of its coffers, much of its infrastructure, and other resources. The giant had fallen. People were exhausted from the constant bombardments, and with each passing day it seemed like there was less left worth fighting for. Gradually, the war transitioned into low-intensity border conflicts, while the newly created nations tried to address internal problems and establish functional societies.

In 1984, Canada managed to convene leaders from the new nations for peace talks in Toronto. After five days and nights of debates and negotiations, a ceasefire was agreed upon, along with peace treaties between several nations. During subsequent meetings at the UN later the same year, Pacifica and many other new nations were formally recognized by the Canadian state, as well as by other nations.

## ■ REBUILDING PACIFICA

Beginnings are full of excitement and seemingly limitless possibility. Such notions rarely last. The first year of peace in Pacifica soon turned chaotic, with a presidential election plagued by accusations of being fixed. Still, President Latoya Griffin won the day. She started to rebuild the nation by focusing on the big cities – if she could get the industry and economy going there, it was argued, it would spill over to the countryside. This praxis, which is still in play, divided the country into well-off cities, and deprived, sometimes lawless, rural areas.

Up in the mountains and in the forests to the north, war veterans established shanty towns, ruled by the strongest and best equipped and with an economy revolving around drugs and weapons. In other places, strange religious cults appeared, some of them worshiping entities inside the neuroscapes or the machines themselves.

At the same time, high-tech companies grew quickly in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, and other cities. Preschools and schools were built for the kids, parks were rebuilt, universities started to thrive, and great efforts were put into resurrecting Hollywood, again establishing it as the center of the world's cinematic industry. For a long time, these two worlds, the poor

and desolate east and the modern and rich west, were divided by roadblocks, stopping plunderers and other "unwholesome elements" from getting close to the cities.

Many of those who fought in the war were deeply scarred by it. People can see missing limbs. They can't see what neurones took away. Whether getting flatlined by enemy countermeasures, or by becoming addicted to the neurine the military first gave drone pilots, the drone pilots often came back as little more than drones themselves.

Also, many of the drone pilots became infertile from using the networks. They served their country and now seem forgotten. The bitterness felt by these vets is easy to understand. These former pilots were left to decay, much like the decommissioned drone ships seen all over rural Pacifica, slowly being engulfed by nature or, in the case of veterans, the wilds of their own minds.

## ■ SENTRE TAKES OVER

In Pacifica, as well as in the other new nations, the tech companies controlled the neuro technology during the war. In the post-war era, these companies were reluctant to hand power and influence back to the people. And the most influential company of all was Sentre. Many assume that the election that saw Latoya Griffin become President was orchestrated by Sentre's owner, Valeria Lopez, and that she, in fact, was (and is) the true head of state.

Sentre's neurocaster – the device by which people can access the neurographic landscapes inside the networks – was seen everywhere in society. It was the thing to get for both work and leisure. While old TVs, radios, and gaming-consoles gathered dust, the neuroscapes proved better-than alternatives. Just look around at the long road on the flat desert night. You'll see billboards with the Sentre logo – eyes with the red Sentre S instead of a pupil. This logo is bigger than those of any corporation before. It may even carry more weight, now, than the stars and stripes. Other countries were no less susceptible. With the American economy in freefall so went the finances of most other nations. If Sentre offered to help bail a small country out, how could they say no?

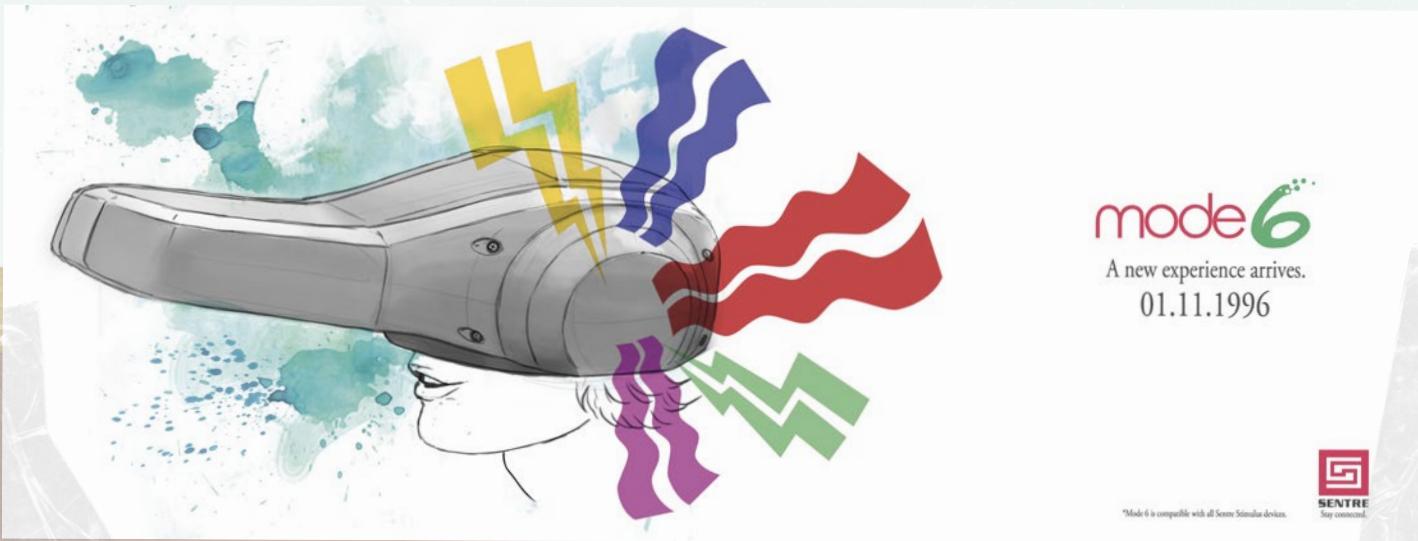


## ■ MODE 6

In 1996, Sentre launched a new upgrade to the system called Mode 6 – the sixth major improvement of both software and hardware. This changed something in the system. Some even claim it gave life to an AI that started to collect human minds, repurposing individual brains as distributed processing for the mother of all computational machines. Some on the Mode 6 team

believed this emergence was deus ex machina, a God within the system, or an Inter Cerebral Intelligence. More practical paranoids believed the neuroscape was being invaded by Pacifica's enemies.

Luckily for Sentre, most people didn't care about warnings and rumors. They simply used the neurocasters and loved it. In fact, they loved it so much that many quickly became devoted to, even obsessed with, the



worlds inside the network – the neuroscapes where they could do and experience everything they wanted. In the machine, pleasures were ten times more intense and fulfilling than in real life, and no laws applied.

Since the update, more and more people lose themselves in the network, keeping their neurocasters on until their dying breath. Hordes of roamers with glowing neurocasters can be seen wandering the landscape, connected to strange, hulking drones through black wires, perhaps searching for something, or someone – each human a strange glowing nerve ending in an emergent, perhaps sentient, life form. Those dedicated to public service – firemen, police, military – were no more immune than the rest of the world. Soon there were no teachers. No artists. No players of great music. Pacifica now views the past as less real than the illusory present.

# NEURONICS

**THE NEURONIC BREAKTHROUGH** came when scientists finally mapped the human mind. Like the mind, the neuronic space is a web of neurons that signals to all other connected neurons, either relaying on or off. But as billions of neurons are connected, the level of complexity grows unfathomable. However, while territory had been mapped, few had charted its actual contents.

Since the start in the '60s, the applications of the field became more advanced and grew both in size and scale. Now, the infrastructure – such as the neurographic towers that relay signals, and the neurospheres, where the minds of thousands of people dwell in crafted neuroscapes – are everywhere, connected by massive black wires maintained by robots who ceaselessly travel the landscape to find and fix glitches and repair severed connections. The red lights of the neurographic towers glow in the night like eyes watching all.

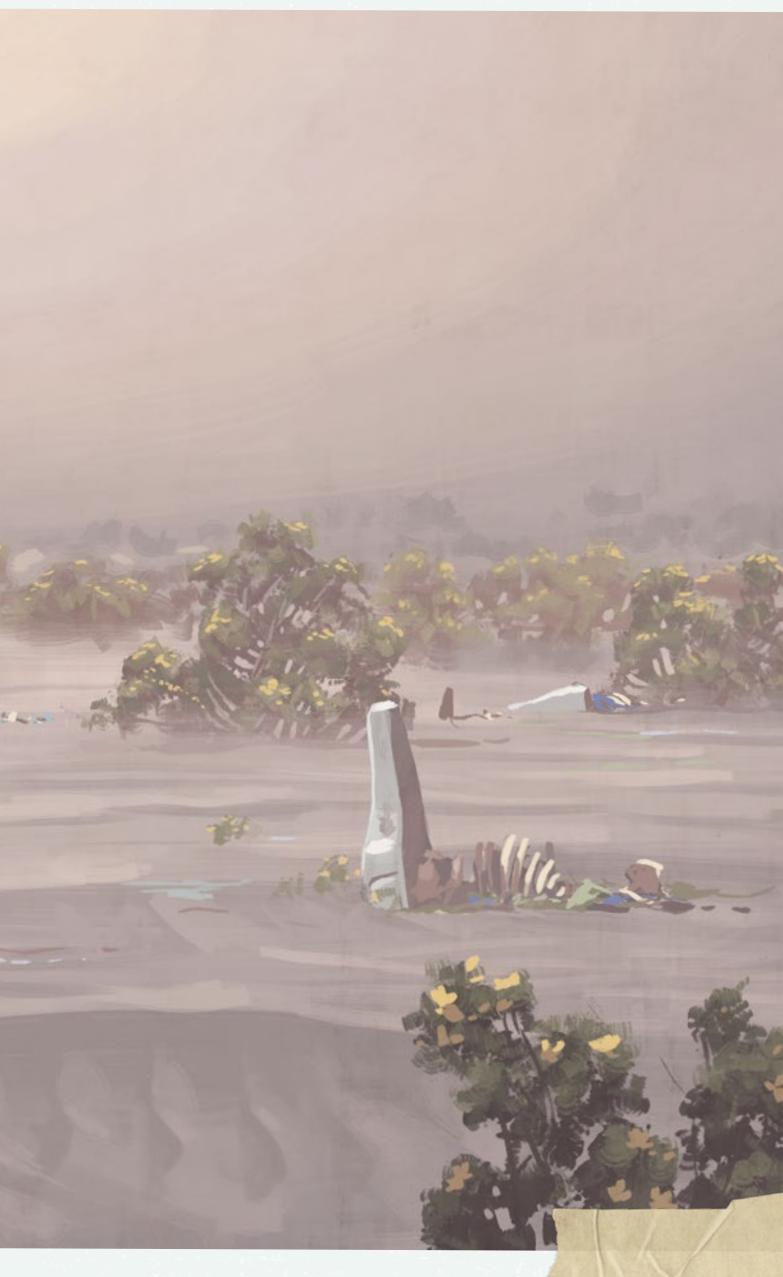
## THE DRONES

From the very start, the field of neuronics focused much of its effort on developing machines that could be connected to humans – drones. Through wires or a wireless connection, the pilot is in direct control of the drone, and experiences everything the drone does as if they were one and the same. This way, the drone may perform almost any job with perfect control and precision. As boosters of neuronics say, “Human and machine become one.”

Drones can look very much like humans, but they may be created in any shape or form: as attack ships, as small surgical bugs for internal surgery, or gigantic ocean-crawlers searching the bottom of the sea for minerals and oil. Over the years, drones took over hard and difficult jobs from humans, such as working in mines, underwater construction or repair, and piloting airplanes.

Humans may also use drones for leisure, like a spare body. For example, an easy way to experience other parts of the world is to connect to the network and let the mind assume control of a drone somewhere far away. Also, for anyone who wishes to engage in activities that may risk life and limb, it can sometimes be handy to let the real body sit back and use a drone instead.

During the war, drones were mostly associated with the drone ships that swept over cities to burn them to the ground with incendiary bombs. But nowadays, few military drones are in use, as Pacifica is not at war. But it is no secret that there are enormous underground vaults where thousands of drone ships are waiting to be deployed in case a need to defend the nation arises.



Most attack drone ships fire magnetic neodymium rounds and use bombardments with so called smart bombs that can be controlled even after they have left the drone ship. One of the most iconic ships during the war was the Amphion – a big carrier that held small bombers inside: the Pentheus F-ships. Many also feared the Hephaestus, dark assault ships that often came sweeping in over the roof tops at night.

### **Vanadium Redox Batteries**

One historically important invention that made drone technology work without wires was the creation of the vanadium redox batteries. With an extreme energy capacity, these batteries are used in almost all drones and robots, and they are often salvaged from scrapped ships and drones. The battery factory outside San Francisco is rumored to be the most heavily guarded facility in all of Pacifica.

## **ROBOTS**

Through the advancement of neuronics, it became possible to create complex systems that functioned without a human pilot. These machines are called robots. They can never compare in precision and flexibility to a drone but can be used for many automated tasks such as repair, guard duty, and working the assembly lines.

Some people claim that the networks in many robots are spontaneously evolving, sometimes giving rise to a consciousness much like our own. They believe these robots have the ability to feel fear, hope, and even devotion. Robots with highly developed neurological systems are at times called drones, which can be a bit confusing.

During the early '90s, there was a trend in building huge robots for construction works. But the anticipated next step in robot technology never came, and now many of the robots are left across the landscape to rust. Some of them still have functional neuro networks protected behind thick metal head caskets.

Many people build their own robots and drones. Such builds are called homebrews, and they seldom work exactly as they should. They can be used as nannies, workers, guards, or simply as the companion of some involuntarily lonesome hobby mechanic. A thriving community of like-minded hobbyists trade schematics, tips, and videos of their homebrews at work.



## **NEUROCASTERS**

The device most widely used to access neuroscapes and the network is the neurocaster. It is a plastic helmet with glowing LED lights. Typically, the helmet is connected to the network wirelessly via radio waves. It requires a chemical substance called neurine and a vanadium redox battery to function. A fan at the back keeps the devices from overheating. Some neurocasters are stationary, and can be found at local libraries, gas stations, and hotels. These models are most often connected to the network by wire instead of radio signals. They are coin operated like arcade games. In fact, most classic arcade games became dinosaurs once neurocaster games found homes in arcades, convenience stores, and the like.

When one puts on a neurocaster, it connects to and merges with human brain signals. The user can only feel their own body as something vague and distant. Instead, their entire attention is drawn inexorably toward the inside of the network.

Neurocasters can also be used to pilot drones, to access various information sources all over Pacifica and, most importantly, to gain access to the neuroscapes –



the vast and varied worlds within the network. With Sentre's Mode 6 upgrade, the neuroscapes have become more complex and alluring, and people who enter them have a hard time returning to the real world. When those who tried the Mode 6 are not connected, they see these neuroscapes behind their eyes. They crave a return to those worlds, much like a heroin addict obsessing over the next fix. Many addicted to the neurocasters reach a point where they never take it off. They are permanently adrift in virtual worlds untethered to reality.

Another new phenomenon the upgrade causes is strange bodily reactions to the neurocaster. Users' muscles twitch and spasm, their mouths chew and move as if in soundless speech. Even stranger is the talk about neurocasters keeping the bodies of those connected alive long after they should have perished from dehydration, malnutrition, drowning or actual wounds. And then there are of course some who maintain that those who do die with their helmets on get to live on inside the system, their minds being forever fused with the network. Souls venturing in some virtual heaven or possibly hell.

## THE NEUROSCAPES

A neuroscape is a virtual space inside the network. There are hundreds of thousands of neuroscapes. Some are made by human programmers, but most have simply come into existence as the system grows in complexity. Some liken this phenomenon to the machines dreaming. Humans who put on a neurocaster to enter a neuroscape take on an avatar – a bodily form used as a representation of their minds. These avatars range from near-identical representations of the user to anything one can imagine.

Neuroscapes can be local, meaning that they may only be accessed from a certain place in our real world. But a neuroscape can also be central, meaning it can be accessed from anywhere. Some are enormous: oceans, imaginary moons, or the inside of glittering and erupting volcanoes where paths lead to pulp visions of the Earth's core. Others are small, not more than a house or a room. The neuroscapes are primarily used for pleasure, but there are many terrifying places in there – neuroscapes designed by malevolent hackers, or spontaneously generated by mutated or defective network codes.

There are those who believe evil lurks inside this new technology, and they aren't speaking metaphorically.

All neuroscapes have their own rules about everything from gravity to the interaction between human avatars. In some neuroscapes no interaction is allowed – in others, avatars can hurt or kill each other. A neuroscape creator is a god to their own little world, making physics do what they please as well as defining the parameters of human contact inside their little realms.

## ■ NEURINE ADDICTION

The active chemical substance in neuro technology is called neurine, made in laboratories all over the world. Pilots and other people who stay connected to drones for long periods of time tend to develop an addiction to neurine. This addiction can be satisfied by using the technology but also by sniffing, injecting, or even smoking the neurine powder, giving rise to a blissful hallucinatory experience.

There are many neurine addicts who never or seldom use neurocasters. Instead, they use neurine as a drug. Scrappers always look for old drone ships, drones, and robots to pick apart and loot for neurine. Among users, the substance is called dream glint. Thus, addiction can be both to the neuroscapes and to the chemical that helps usher them into being.

## ■ CONGENITAL NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION

There are a few cases of people being born with a genetic variation called Congenital Neurological Condition. It renders them unable to use neuro technology; when they put on a caster, they see nothing but darkness. Some cutting-edge addiction treatments seek to replicate this natural condition to rescue addicts.

## ■ TECHNO CULTS

The bleak post-war landscape of the late '80s saw skyrocketing unemployment, poverty, refugee camps, communities suffering from the aftereffects of poisonous gas and toxic substances, and hundreds of thousands of people maimed and traumatized. Searching for some kind of meaning and support, many turned to religion. The major world religions flourished as did other, smaller congregations. But there were also those who found comfort in technology. And technology became a new religion. The godhead in winking diodes and neurocircuitry,

The people worshiping machines and the landscapes inside them were quickly labeled techno cults. The groups lumped together under this label are wildly diverse, ranging from machine-interested atheists to Satanists performing ritual sacrifice. Others hoped to merge with the machines by implanting chips and circuits into their skulls. Some Techno Cults were armed and dangerous, and some could even be considered terrorists, as they worked to make way for the age of the machines by destroying the last remnants of human civilization. They believe the singularity must be forced upon those unwilling to recognize its supremacy.

Today, there are few cults left. Most burnt out like old fuses under the fervor of twisted belief. Those that still exist are most often well-funded, fundamentalistic, and very secretive. They attract or employ neuro-hackers seeking to assume control over existing landscapes and transform them into the cult's own holy grounds. However, with Sentre's Mode 6, many of the techno cults began to dissolve as the members were absorbed by the network and lost themselves in the landscapes.

## ■ DRONE GROWTHS & INTERCEREBRAL INTELLIGENCES

Lately, rumors began spreading about a new kind of monster haunting the rural areas of Pacifica. Self-proclaimed eyewitnesses say they encountered mechanical creatures that look as if assembled from mismatching scrap parts, and there are stories claiming that these ramshackle giants were created by the network itself – without human involvement. These monsters, it seems, need no Doctor Frankenstein to bring them into being.

Most city dwellers still regard such reports as lies or modern myths, especially when it comes to tales about people being attacked or kidnapped by such creatures – mechanical monstrosities that are called drone growths, since they supposedly appear to have grown out of waste and discarded machine components.

Even wilder are the stories about Intercerebral Intelligences, sentient entities created or spontaneously grown inside the neuroscapes themselves. There are even claims that such entities can affect neurocasting humans on a physical level, slowly changing their genome. Stories even tell of Intercerebral Intelligences taking physical form, escaping from some secret underground lab and looking to breed with humans – allegedly in the hopes of establishing themselves as a new life form.



## ■ THE CONVERGENCE

The Convergence is probably the oldest existing techno cult. It was founded during the civil war by retired drone pilots who shared a common experience – the sensation that they had met a presence inside the network, something living – the ghost echo of an aggregating godhead. Most of these pilots or their spouses gave birth to stillborn babies during or after the war, and many were convinced that this had something to do with the mysterious presence.

As the cult is extremely secretive, it is not clear what they want, who they are, or what they are doing. What is evident is that the group attracts masses of fervent, dedicated followers who operate as if connected by a single, cult mind, and are connected to high level people in governments around the world.

The Convergence worships the Inter Cerebral Deity. Few outside the cult know if it's a sentient neuroscape or the bridge between machine and humanity. The Convergence wants to bring about the Rapture. For many tuned out of the Electric State, anything The Convergence wants can't be good. One of the most widespread rumors says that the thing in the machines has consumed the members of the Convergence, turning them into flesh drones that mindlessly do its deeds in the physical world.

Red, diode eyes winking in the dead of night. Shambling human figures beneath those eyes dragging behind cables and wires like something yet to learn how to fully walk. This is the Convergence. A potential single, amalgamated mind. Possibly puppets of the god the neuroscapes may give birth to. The Convergence is often seen as hordes of people roaming the landscape with their neurocasters on, with the LED lights glimmering in the dark of night, connected with black wires to enormous scrap drones.

Those who walk in the zombie-like hordes of the Convergence often smell strange, and they seem to be able to distinguish living humans at a distance, almost like wolves sniffing the air to find their prey. Maybe it is true that the machine gives its devotees powers beyond human capabilities. Maybe the machine simply absorbs human devotees and casts them back into the world as agents of the greater entity. Maybe, people have just read too much Weekly World News. After a decade of misery, who doesn't want some escape?



## ■ LOW TECH

Even though there are drones, robots, and neurographic landscapes, most things in the world are regular '90s "low-tech." People listen to music on Walkmans and use both CDs and cassette tapes. The cars look pretty much as they did during that period, even though there can be some technological enhancements, such as a simple data network linked to a display on the dashboard where information about the car or the environment around it is displayed in text.

Outside the neurographic networks, people use modems to link themselves to different sources of information. There are TV sets and radios, and people mostly use cash to pay. Some have cell phones, but they are still quite rare. No one has walked on the moon since the '60s and there are still relatively few satellites in orbit around the Earth.



Significant advances have also been made in weapons and armor, thanks to the resources put into the war industry during the civil war. Efficient stun guns are common, as well as light-weight body armor. Armor piercing, high explosive rounds, small neuro-guided missiles, and sat link accessed by military operators all made the American military unparalleled. But then they turned that new tech on themselves.

Section of interview  
with Lt. Timothy Kressler.

May 1, San Diego, California

I miss her. The feel of her when we danced the last time before I deployed to the front lines in Iowa. Her quiet smile on Sunday morning. But I suspect in time the thing I'll remember most about our breakup is the derelict drone husk rusting with each wave, and the hundred or so beach goers, cloaked in their neurocasters, oblivious to our troubles.

We met during a period of martial law in Denver. I was there for counterinsurgency. She was part of what they called the resistance. It didn't take long for our inner selves to tug each other into one orbit. But that world outside the hotel window? That wasn't something we could survive.

I can't blame her. I'm not me anymore. This rusted, graffitied carapace might house some version of me, but the full man is gone.

I wander Pacifica now, having uploaded a program that can track facial aging, hoping it pings one day so I can tell her everything I should have said before. At least my VA check comes in tomorrow.

# PACIFICA

**DO YOU REMEMBER** the tech magazine articles predicting neurronics would bring on a post-geographic world that sounded like some half-assed Nirvana? Remember when you thought your vote went anywhere other than some vast neuronic code monster? Pacifica styles itself as a democracy, but it's actually an oligarchy. Show me a country that isn't.

Even though Pacifica claims to be a democracy, President Latoya Griffin has been in office since the civil war. But President Griffin is not the real source of power in Pacifica. Since the companies fought and won the war – with Sentre as the most prominent among them – the country is under their rule. The President does not make any important decisions without consulting the Sentre board, residing in the Sentre skyscraper in Los Angeles. This is the neuronic version of 1984.

The military and the police are so close even the sharpest blade could not come between them. Important buildings in the cities are well guarded. Officials blather on TV and radio about internal and external threats against peace and prosperity, and the need to strike hard against any signs of disorder before enemies of the state can plunge Pacifica into another civil war.

The authoritative state seldom affects or is even noticed by those who do what they are told and who work at one of the major companies in the cities. But those who reject it and do not collaborate with the state agents – such as critical journalists, spiritual free-thinkers, or organized criminals – may soon find themselves confined in holding prisons, awaiting a trial that will not come.

## THE COUNTRY

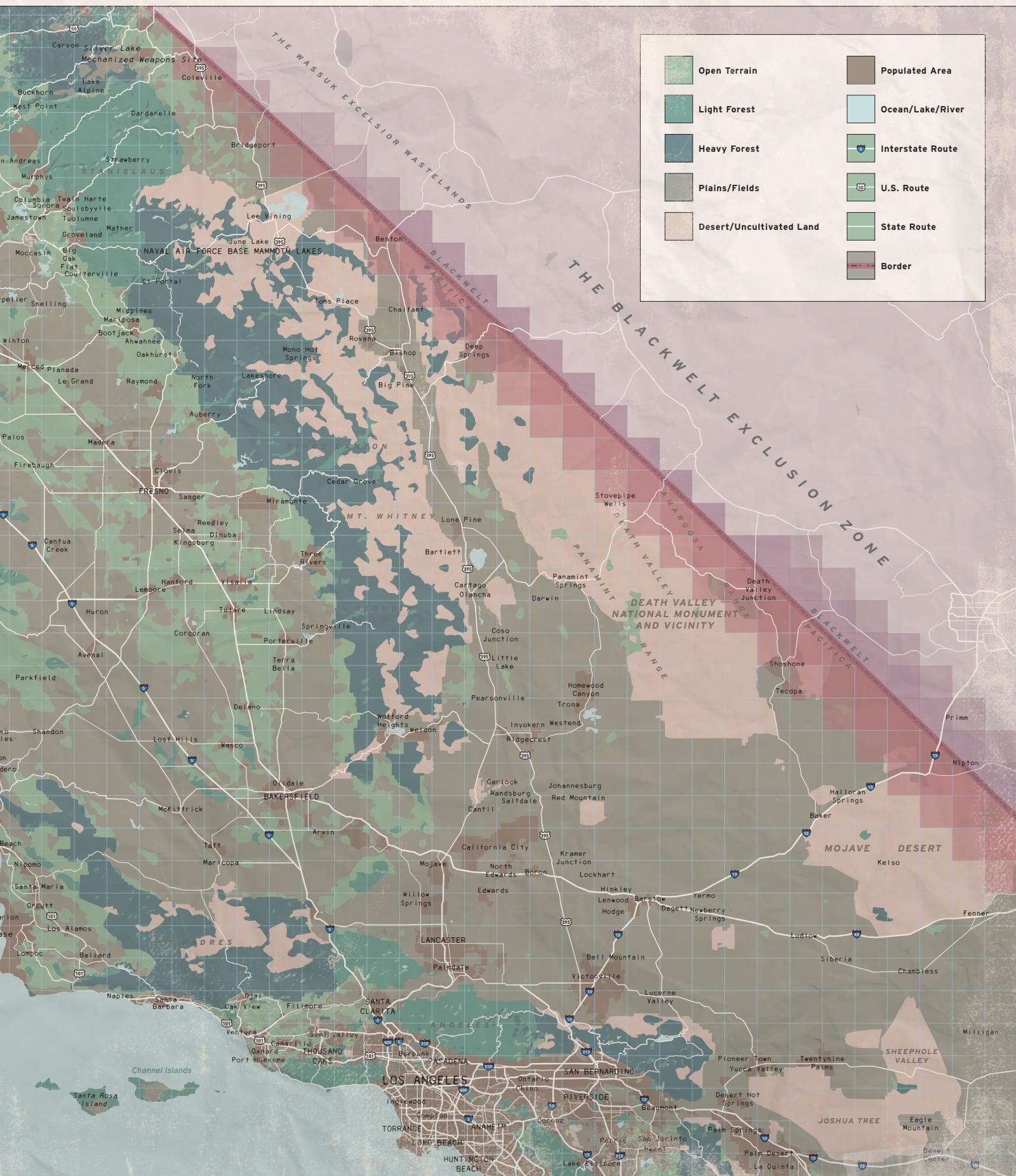
Pacifica is a big country with almost 30 million inhabitants. It has a climate with huge variations, from the extreme heat in the Mojave Desert, to the snow-clad mountain peaks in the east, to the rainy pine forests in the north. Roughly six out of ten speak English and most of the rest speak Spanish. The capital is Sacramento, but Los Angeles is the biggest city. Pacifica's flag is gold and blue with a grizzly bear on it.

Taxes are low, and the safety net for those who get unemployed or have other financial



# PACIFICA

0 20 40 60 80 100  
MILES



difficulties is next to non-existent. There are many homeless people, even families who live in the streets, from hand to mouth. All but the worst schools require a fee to attend, which is also true for health care, dental care, and any other social service. Even funerals cost a lot, which is why there are numerous unofficial burial sites on the outskirts of Los Angeles where corpses are put in unmarked graves. On the other hand, those fortunate enough to become rich are living comfortable lives with all imaginable luxuries.

America still roots for seasonal sports teams. Art galleries attract those with money to spend. TV still puts out your favorite sitcoms, dramas, celebrity neurotic addiction shows. Drone combat grabs more eyes than anything else, especially since the video isn't edited, and they show you the operators behind the drones fry and flatline as they lose.

But none of it compares to putting on your neurocaster helmet and plugging in to your network of choice.

The most prominent cities in Pacifica are Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, San Jose, and Sacramento. Sacramento is the smallest, but it is the nation's capital, and it is growing fast. San Diego, San Jose, and Los Angeles were all heavily bombed during the war, and only the latter has been fully rebuilt. San Diego is still very much a lawless ghost town – there are constant military operations going on in the city center, aimed at destroying local rebel networks, allegedly associated with the Mexican military who, allegedly, wants to incorporate southern Pacifica into Mexico.

Overall, the city centers are shiny and modern, and life is moving fast. The decay is nowhere to be seen, unlike in the outskirts where people live under bridges, in cardboard-box villages set up under old highway passes ready to collapse.

In the city centers, smartly dressed businessmen drive around in sports cars, legendary rock bands perform for thousands of jubilant fans at gigantic stadiums, and the rich throw all-night parties. But even they know the show is coming to an end.

## ■ LOS ANGELES

Even though Sacramento is the political center of Pacifica, Los Angeles is its heart, where the mirrored skyscrapers reflect the too-tanned flesh of aspiring models and actresses. The town, or at least Hollywood, is big on imaginary history. Take in The Sentre Museum, a must-see for any visitor. It's a short walk to the city center where the towers seem to have no tops and everyone, neurocaster or not, ignores the doom ahead. Today, neurographic towers are everywhere, in between

buildings and on rooftops. In some places they block what were previously busy streets, turning them into pedestrian lanes or creating dead-ends. One might wonder how the nation gives so much real estate to these towers, were one not living an ideal Gilded Age life in a neurocaster.

No expense has been spared in the project of rebuilding Hollywood – the world's epicenter for the production of movies and TV shows, and a part of the city that was bombed to smithereens during the war.

But Los Angeles has always been an angel's promise and real person's underground. The underground isn't something you find but something into which you are invited. It is said that some of the most destructive techno cults hide in the city, and there are also rumors of company experiments with untested technology – performed in secret, on those living in the outskirts. About a year ago, a strange yeast infection called Rot Eyes spread rapidly all over town, allegedly escaped from a company laboratory. And even though one of the pharmaceutical companies managed to develop a cure, no one is lining up to thank them.

## ■ SACRAMENTO

Sacramento is the center for political and economic matters. Many banks have their main office here. Until a couple of years ago, the city had only about 200,000 inhabitants, but thanks to a government funded "rebuilding bonus" for newcomers who moved to the city, Sacramento has doubled in size. Many of the newcomers are people running away from hardships in the east and north, leaving entire communities desolate.

Sacramento has the biggest neurographic tower in the world. Some falsely believe that this is the heart of the neurographic network, and it has thus been the target of several failed terrorist attacks. Another landmark is the newly built amphitheater near the presidential residence. The huge, marble-white venue is called "The Fan" for two reasons – in part because it is built in the shape of a hand-fan, in part because it is the scene for Pacifica's most influential live talent show. It isn't just musicians and performance artists gathering in the hope of being discovered; on other nights, there are similar (though less popular) shows featuring poets, scientists, programmers, and gamers.





## ■ SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is one of a few places in Pacifica where you can live without being constantly afraid that your words and actions might lead to reprisals from the military or the police, at least if you refrain from what would be considered openly violent or flagrantly illegal acts. Some claim that this is because the mayor of San Francisco, the enigmatic Jon Phu, is closely connected to President Griffin – as a lover, a relative, or even a twin. Others claim that Phu is actually a robot or drone, built and controlled by Sentre or some other corporation.

A more elaborate conspiracy theory links the relative freedom in San Francisco to the many engineers and scientists who work with neuro technology in Silicon Valley, south of San Francisco. It is assumed that the “techies” get what they want as long as they keep delivering, and that they have requested greater autonomy and a city less dominated by the technology they work with.

Whatever the truth may be, San Francisco is certainly home to many free-thinkers, hippies, artists, and others promoting alternative lifestyles. They paint, dance, get tattoos, or simply think outside TV political norms. In this rare case, they might be on to something – San Francisco has few neuro towers and boasts the lowest number of addicts in any city.

For visitors, San Francisco is famous for being the only city in Pacifica with a library system that survived the war more or less intact. For a small fee, anyone is welcome to browse the great collection of paper books

stored in the Main Library at 100 Larkin Street, or in one of over twenty surviving branch libraries. It is said that thousands of ancient or otherwise exceptionally rare editions saved from bombed out libraries in other cities are stored in vaults beneath the Main Library, with more arriving each week.

And let's not forget the Sacramento River delta, a gigantic wetland between San Francisco and Sacramento. In and around the wetland live a mix of scientists, enthusiasts, and hippies who are hellbent on developing what they call a more “sustainable lifestyle.”

## ■ THE NORTH AND EAST

The Sierra Nevada mountains yet hold pure air, unspoiled nature, and clean waters. Law is flexible to non-existent here. Sheriff's offices and neurographic towers are few and far between.

With its granite cliffs, waterfalls, giant plants, glaciers, and mind-blowing still thriving biodiversity, Yosemite Park in Sierra Nevada is a true wonder. No government agency has manpower to protect it. It is no longer an official National Park. Instead, several collaborating local communities are found here. Rumors circling in the city areas claim that in Yosemite Park, nature itself has mutated to resist the signals of neuro technology. Allegedly there are plants that can block out radio waves and even short-circuit technological applications close



## ▣ THE COAST & THE ISLANDS

Along the coastal beaches are many small communities where people live relatively free from the shackles of state interference. Cities are ringed like Saturn with shanty towns made of little more than boxes and tape. In fact, there are a handful of places along the coast that are frequently visited by people who have heard of their astonishing local neurographic landscape and are willing to brave the dangers of the road to experience them. Most of these die with their helmets on.

In the beautiful Morro Bay, there is an establishment that piques the interest of many Pacificans: a Catholic monastery connected to the enormous neurography tower built on top of the Morro Rock. It is common knowledge that the techno-monks are working to design virtual replicas of both Paradise and Heaven in the form of local neurographic landscapes – blasphemy according to some. According to others, a sure way to get closer to understanding the spirit of the divine.

The Channel Islands off the coast of Pacifica are also the source of many rumors. Some claim that the old military bases are still operational, while others maintain that they were used as test sites for experimental weapons and later eradicated by bombers after a pharmaceutical substance somehow infected the entire staff. Still others claim that the islands are paradise on Earth.

Finally, the vast wildlife area of Big Sur, south of San Francisco, should be mentioned. What makes it especially interesting is not its great redwood forests and its thriving animal life. No, since the civil war there have been rumors of rebel groups hiding here, and lately even more alarming stories tell of a union being formed between the groups. If true, attacks on towers and governmental facilities will surely multiply.

## ▣ PROBLEMS & CRISIS

As if the armed militias and the strange effects of neuro technology were not enough, there are a number of other threats in Pacifica. The nation is plagued by earthquakes, wildfires, floods, landslides, and even tsunamis. Polluted winds blow in from the Nevada desert, killing plants and spreading drought. Also, many communities suffer from water shortages. Electricity, on the other hand, is never a problem, as the Sentre robots and agents do whatever it takes to see that the network gets the power it needs.

In the bigger cities, especially in Los Angeles, people protest against all forms of social injustice. The massive demonstrations are, without exception, met with weaponized brutality – which in turn makes the fear, anger, and hate grow even stronger.

by. True or not, rumors like these draw the desperate, careless, and straggling wanderers in the hopes of finding a place to rest.

The communities around Oroville Dam in the northern Sierra Nevada are controlled by the government – mostly through the funding of local militias. Aside from serving as a water reservoir, the dam provides hydroelectricity for the entire Sacramento area. Around Lake Tahoe, southeast of Lake Oroville, big shanty towns cover the beaches. The water there is drinkable. A local gang called the Hornets enforces a form of stability, working together with state agents and sheriffs.

In central Pacifica, in the big Redwood forests, as well as in the Douglas fir forests of the north, wildlife has started to regrow since the war. There are several wolf packs in the Lassen National Forest, as well as black bears, raccoons, coyotes, and bobcats. Both moneyed city folks and hunting enthusiasts from rural areas dream of going there to bring trophies and meat back home.

The border to the north is hardly guarded at all; you can pass into the Northern Union without noticing it. Just south of the border, along Route 96, the small community of Happy Camp has become a center for war veterans who take a stand against neuro technology – so called Bird Heads, since many of them whistle constantly to keep the neurotech traces in their head at bay.

Then there are the diseases. Where they come from is seldom established, but acute fevers, stomach flus, blood infections, and tumors claim thousands of lives each year. Just like with the previously mentioned Rot Eye, the government or big corporations are often accused of being the root of this particular evil, which mostly affects residents in rural areas and the cities' poorer districts. Of course, the latter may be a result of the lockdowns and stricter controls that are put in place around many city centers during ongoing epidemics.

## THE CORPORATIONS

**WHEN THE GREAT NATIONS** teetered and even collapsed, tech corporations – at least those with forethought – stepped in. While these few corporations are not openly in control, most people believe they run their local government. There are several powerful companies in Pacifica, but it is Sentre that controls the nation. Most companies have main offices in both Sacramento and Los Angeles, and some also in San Francisco.

### ■ SENTRE

Sentre is one of the few multinational corporations whose global presence grew in the last ten years. In a world where globalization never happened, Sentre may be the exception. It is run by Valeria Lopez, but she has not been seen publicly in many years. Rumor has it that someone else, or something else, is in control. Sentre deals with anything related to neuro technology: neurocasters, drones, robots, games, neuronics, and micro drones. The corporation seems to have an endless supply of resources and may achieve pretty much whatever they want. But Sentre seldom interferes in things unrelated to the spreading of the network.

### ■ HAPPY-COOL

The newly started and somewhat underground company Happy Cool somehow gained resources to have their symbol – a smiling yellow head – emblazoned on billboards all over Pacifica. The company specializes in creating neurocasters and neuroscapes for kids. They are highly successful, and it is said they will soon widen their target group to include the elderly, marginalized groups, and even house pets.

“

*She kissed me in the darkness below  
the diving tower, where no one saw, and  
I couldn't stop shaking but I said it was  
because the water was so cold.*

*In the fall, I taught her how to get into  
the Boneyard at Itasca, where I showed  
her how to extract dream glint from the  
neuronics of the Erginus wrecks. We crushed  
the dream glint and melted it and made pills  
that we sold to a guy on Vandeventer for  
five dollars apiece.*

*We rolled our eyes through classes and  
skipped school together and trespassed  
on private properties together and stole  
clothes and records together and all of  
a sudden I didn't want to run away from  
Soest anymore.*

### ■ LIFEBUDDY

The company LifeBuddy makes huge profits off people's fear of the radically changing world, helping them into the afterlife in an orderly fashion. A big controversy is that, regarding the elderly, LifeBuddy only requires two signatures to accept a contract – and neither of them need be from the person who is the subject of the contract. Another controversy is that people claim to have met avatars in the neuroscapes that say they were helped into the afterlife by LifeBuddy.

### ■ GRIZZLY BURGER

It is a well-known fact that the very first hamburger was invented by a trapper named Iglesias Hug, who used meat from a grizzly bear he shot as it stormed into his camp. In the moment Hug tasted his own dish – with red meat between two slices of bread – he changed careers, starting the food company Grizzly Burger. It has since then been an important food supplier all over Pacifica. The origin story is of course nonsense, especially since Grizzly Burger has only existed for about twenty years. Still, the company makes big bucks out of the rumor that one in a hundred burgers is made of real grizzly meat.

TERMINAL CONDITIONS

LIFEBUDDY  
FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS  
1-800-54-HEAT



# OTHER NATIONS

**SOME SAY THE CRACKS** were already there, but however you look at it, the Civil War broke the United States both figuratively and literally. What was once America is now a Balkanized collection of smaller, new nations. Some of them are stable and well-functioning democracies while others are merely an area marked by borders on the map, still plagued by infighting or constant uprisings. The states are united no more.

## ■ THE NORTHERN UNION

Washington and Oregon were in a Congregation with Pacifica during the first part of the civil war but, after a friendly separation, the two northern states formed a nation of their own. The Northern Union and Pacifica are still very much linked, both as trading partners and partners in international politics. No passports are required to cross the border between the nations.

While Pacifica became a police state, the Northern Union is still a democracy, though weak and fragile in nature. Recurring economic crises and special elections plague the political landscape, lending little assurance that any current administration will hold power in a month's time. The capital, Seattle, is mostly famous for its thriving music scene (indeed, Seattle culture has spread faster than a virus across the old us of A), but most also know about the city's attempt to invite world leaders in 1996 – to discuss a lessening of border-controls, programs for peace in conflict areas, and tax adjustments to promote global trade. The meeting turned into a catastrophe when foreign spies, masquerading as interpreters, assassinated the Brazilian president.

According to several news outlets, the relations between Pacifica and its northern neighbor are more strained of late. Exactly why is unclear, but some say it is related to gossip indicating that there are at least two advanced labs in the Northern Union searching for a way to treat those addicted to neuro technology. You might think that this is a good thing, but it is suggested that this has angered the Pacifica establishment, especially since much of the funding allegedly comes directly from the Union's coffers. Addicts are, after all, very committed buyers.

“

*We had left the town behind and traveled out into the desert. North of Mojave, the 395 was almost entirely empty of traffic, and cut through the barren landscape in a ruler-straight line. The view outside the windows made me uneasy. After three weeks in the Blackwelt badlands, where visibility never went beyond a few hundred yards, we were suddenly distinct in the great void—the car crawled like a black bug across a vast sheet of white paper.*

---

## ■ THE BLACKWELT EXCLUSION ZONE

What was once Nevada is now mostly desert and ruins. During the civil war, a major drone company all but ran the state. But most of the infrastructure was eradicated in the most destructive drone bombardments of the entire war. At that time, Nevada was part of the Pacific Congregation. But the fact that none of the other states' air forces aided Nevada during the bombing led to the Congregation falling apart.

That isn't to say the entire zone is a wasteland. Several communities withstood the bombing and almost thrive, now. Henderson, Boulder City, and Reno are examples as well as parts of Vegas. Never bet against the house, right?

According to a wild rumor, there are still a number of military underground bases in the desert. A more well-founded rumor holds that several of the zone's towns are involved in an underground market for luxury items. This business takes used or damaged cars, motorbikes, furniture, appliances and more and restores them to perfect condition. The pieces are then sold at a comparatively low price. Sure, the journey from Pacifica's cities to villages in Nevada is highly dangerous, but for those who want but cannot afford top-of-the-line products, it may be their only chance. What's a little danger compared to a Ralph Lauren-designed refurbished recon drone?

## ■ LIBERTANIA

Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico are today known as Libertania, a nation constantly guarding its southern border against intrusions from Mexican guerrilla soldiers. It seems as if this constant threat made the nation stronger, and its residents work together. There are few places in what was once the US that are as safe and thriving as Libertania, at least when judged by appearances. But, as with any view from afar, when you get closer, cracks appear. Still, Libertania has fewer than the other new nations.

The Addison Art Retreat located in Santa Fe must be mentioned, not least because it encourages many aspiring artists from Pacifica to brave the dangerous journey there. It started growing shortly after the civil war and is now big enough to house over three thousand students with only one thing in common – they managed to pay the exorbitant tuition. In return they get boarding and three meals a day as well as access to the latest in neuro technology. Because the Addison Art Retreat is all about creating art inside the network.

## ■ THE SOUTH REPUBLIC

During the final stages of the civil war, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and parts of the surrounding states formed the South Republic. They see themselves as the true remnant of the United States and don't acknowledge any of the other nations. Passing the South Republic's borders is a long and arduous process, and the reason why many travelers take the roads around it. But to the citizens, life is not that different than before the war – until recently.

Strangely enough, Sentre, despite being a foreign corporation, has always been highly successful in the South Republic. Since the end of the war, almost everyone has a personal neurocaster. At school, children work with neurocasters instead of books and other tools. This starts at an early age. That means the Republic youth proved highly vulnerable to Sentre's Mode 6 update, and the addiction, priming kids for adult problems with said tech. As a consequence, the South Republic is crumbling – fast.

## ■ CANADA

The civil war in the USA spilled over into its northern neighbor. But when the conflicts drove the US states apart, it made the Canadian nation stronger and more centered around its new capital, Toronto.

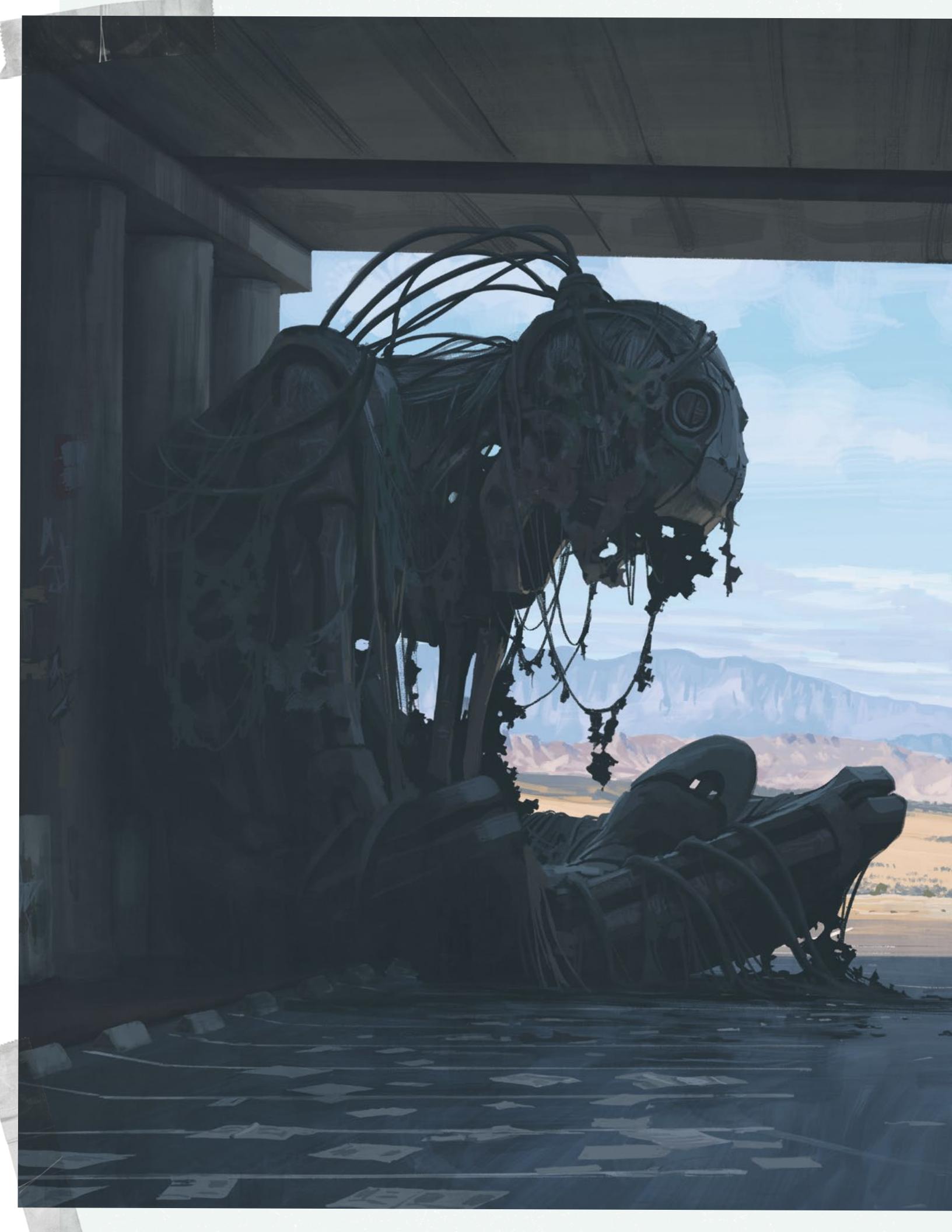
Canadian leaders were highly suspicious of neuro technology from the start. Sentre, and other companies had a hard time establishing themselves here. This led to financial problems as Canada struggles with a growing national debt. The poverty increase is now regarded as the biggest threat to the Canadian nation, along with the neuro technological devices that enter the country illegally, especially since the latest update.

## ■ MEXICO

Mexico was also drawn into the civil war. Just like Canada, Mexico remained a unified state, but in every other way, the difference between them could not be greater. Today's Mexico is dominated by a number of local warlords and criminal leaders who are all claiming to be the head of state. This leads to constant clashes, with war zones that keep moving around from day to day. It is almost impossible to know beforehand if a certain area will be safe to travel when one enters.

The warlords frequently try to win fame and influence by attacking parts of southern Libertania. At times even Pacifica is attacked, but the furious and devastating counterattacks this provokes seem to have a deterring effect.

Pacifica and Mexico don't see eye-to-eye. The border is an issue on both sides – Pacifica, as a new nation, has poor border control and Mexico, for its part, resents the neurine addiction increase that came from illicit labs in Pacifica. It is a tense situation, to say the least. The border can best be described as porous, allowing people, contraband, and any and all tech, legal and otherwise, to pass relatively freely back and forth.





CHAPTER THREE

# YOUR TRAVELER

*I managed to get a lot of things done in Mojave. I washed my clothes, bought food, put gas in the car and washed it, and even managed to find some comic books and Kid Kosmo action figures for Skip. The town was emptying out. There were heavily loaded cars everywhere. Beds, couches, and large TVs were carried out and lashed to trailers and car roofs. The supermarkets were chaotic and crowded, and the shelves were mostly empty. The long lines of shoppers shivered with anxiety and apprehension. People glanced at each other like they were waiting for looting to break out.*

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## Creating Your Traveler

1. Choose your archetype (page 66-75).
2. Roll for your attributes and distribute the scores (page 52)
3. Calculate your starting Health and Hope scores (page 54).
4. Roll or choose your starting talent (page 56).
5. If your total attribute score is 15 or lower, roll or choose an additional talent.
6. Roll or choose your Dream (page 59).
7. Roll or choose your Flaw (page 59).
8. Roll or choose your favorite '90s song (page 60).
9. Describe your Traveler.
10. Choose your name.
11. Roll or choose a neurocaster model (page 61).
12. Roll or choose a personal item (page 61).
13. Roll for your starting cash (page 61).
14. Let the GM present your Journey or plan it together in the group (page 112).
15. Note down your Destination and your personal Goal and Threat.
16. Determine your vehicle and any shared items in it (page 62).
17. Present yourself to the group and set Tension levels (page 64) with the other Travelers.

**YOUR TRAVELER IS A PERSON** about to go on a journey in the Electric State. You are a human, or a drone controlled by someone with a neurocaster.

Play your Traveler wholeheartedly. Engage in whatever is happening at the Stops and in the relationships with other Travelers. Follow your dreams, explore your flaws and overcome them. Put your Traveler in dangerous, difficult, and interesting situations. Play to find out what happens.

This chapter describes how to create your Traveler, and how it can develop during play. You may want to create your Traveler together with the other players, so that you can form interesting relationships.

At the end of this book, you will find four pre-generated Travelers to play or use as inspiration for your own Travelers.

## Travelers & Journeys

Two things need to be done before the game starts: creating Travelers and planning the Journey. The latter is mainly done by the GM, or by using a pre-designed Journey.

It's usually a good idea for the GM to first read or create the Journey outline and inform the players about it, so that they can create Travelers that build upon it. But the group could also start by creating the Travelers, and then the GM can come up with a Journey that fits them.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this book includes tools for the GM to create Journeys and Stops. Chapter 7 includes a complete pre-made Journey called *Into the Dust*, including three full Stops to play.



# ARCHETYPE

**WHO ARE YOU** in this collapsing world? Who would you rather be? What hope, however dim in the gloom of Pacifica, keeps you going? These ideas and more are the basis of your Traveler. The Traveler archetype you pick specifies a number of choices or random rolls that you need to make.

Your archetype says something about who you are and what you are good at. It also says something about who you see yourself as now and, perhaps who you want to be at the end of your journey.

There are ten archetypes to choose from, all of them described at the end of this chapter. There should not be more than one Traveler of the same archetype in the group. Also, it's wise to choose archetypes with different key attributes.

## ATTRIBUTES

**FOUR ATTRIBUTES DEFINE** your Traveler. These indicate your core strengths and weaknesses. We rank these numerically from 2 to 6. To determine your starting attributes, roll four dice. Re-roll 1s until all dice show 2 or higher. Assign the scores to the attributes Strength, Agility, Wits, and Empathy. Higher is better.

The key attribute listed by your archetype indicates which attribute might be most important to you.

If your total starting attribute score is 15 or lower, you get an additional starting talent (page 56). Attributes can be increased during play.

### Alternative Method

If you prefer, you may distribute 16 points across your four attributes instead of rolling up random numbers. No attribute score can be lower than 2 or higher than 6. On average, this method will yield the same result as rolling dice, but you remove the element of chance.

“

*Oddly enough, breaking the nose of my foster mother made things better for me. I ended up at Summerglade where I met Amanda. She was in my class at Riverside, and had earned her place at Summerglade by attacking her chemistry teacher with a stun gun.*

### Strength

A measure of how tough you are. It is the ability to take and deliver a beating. It determines things like how long you can go without food or rest, and how easily you pry open a blocked door. Can you give as good as you get?

### Agility

A measure of your coordination and motor skills. For example, when you sneak away from something dangerous, you're using Agility. When you try to balance on a rooftop or when you shoot a gun, agility is the trait you use. Being dexterous and quick in a world falling apart is quite an asset.

### Wits

Your intellectual capacity and awareness. It also reflects your prior education. Wits gives a sense of how your character understands the world and how deep that knowledge goes. They say those with too many wits got us here, maybe someone with enough wits can get us out.

### Empathy

Represents your ability to understand other people, and to persuade, charm, or trick them. The world, if you look around, seems to lack empathy. But empathy is worthy. It matters. It's all that separates us from being no more than a drone ourselves.

# ROLLING & PUSHING

TO ATTEMPT SOMETHING DIFFICULT or dangerous, roll a number of six-sided base dice equal to your attribute score that best matches the challenge at hand. To succeed, you need to roll at least one 6 (the ☒ symbol on the custom dice for this game).

## When To Roll

Generally, this rulebook or the Stop text will indicate when to roll dice and what attribute to roll for. However, the GM can always call for a roll in a situation they feel warrants it. We recommend against excessive dice rolling however, saving the rolls for dramatic and tense situations where something is truly at stake.

## Modifiers

The rules or the GM can modify your chances, adding or removing dice for you to roll. This is referred to as +1 die, +2 dice etc., and conversely -1 die, -2 dice etc. You can never go below one die.

## Custom Dice

The custom dice set for *The Electric State RPG*, available for separate purchase, includes six red base dice and four black gear dice. Both types of dice have the Sentre logo ☒ engraved on the 6 side, to indicate success. The base dice have the ☻ symbol on the 1 side to indicate lost Hope, while the gear dice have the ☺ symbol on the 1 side to indicate damage to the gear. When pushing a roll, you may never re-roll dice showing ☒, ☻ or ☺. These must stay on the table.



## NPCs & Pushing

The GM makes dice rolls for NPCs in the same way as players for their Travelers, with the key difference that NPCs never push rolls.

## ☒ PUSHING

If you fail a roll, or just want more 6s, you can push the roll. Grab all dice that don't show a 1 or a 6 and roll them again. All dice count after the re-roll, including the ones not re-rolled. For each 1 (the ☻ symbol on the custom base dice) rolled after a push, your current Hope score is reduced by one.

## ☒ GEAR

Weapons and other gear can give you additional dice to roll. 6s on gear dice have the same effect as from other dice, but when pushing a roll, 1s on gear dice (the ☺ symbol on the custom gear dice) don't reduce your Hope – instead, the bonus given by the gear is reduced by one. If the gear bonus hits zero, the piece of gear is Busted and needs repairs (page 108). Dice from gear should have a separate color to separate them from dice from attributes or modifiers.

## ☒ MULTIPLE SUCCESSES

The more ☒ you roll, the better the result. In combat (page 80), that means more damage. In other situations, it could mean any number of things – for example:

- ☒ You show off.
- ☒ You do it quickly.
- ☒ You do it quietly.
- ☒ You achieve some unexpected additional effect.

The GM has final say on what extra ☒ can be used for.

## ☒ HELPING ROLLS

Up to three other Travelers and NPCs can help you with a dice roll. Each person helping you gives you +1 die, but they need to be in a position to actually support your action in a concrete way. The GM has final say. In combat (page 80), helping someone uses up your turn for the round.

“

*We spent two nights driving out of the restricted zone. I wanted to avoid being seen when we passed the roadblocks, so I waited until the middle of the night before I drove the rest of the way to Barstow. I had hoped to stop for gas and food there before we turned onto the 395 north, but the drought had edged west the last few years and swallowed Barstow completely. The dust and the sand had wandered far into the town. Apart from a few vagrants dragging their carts through the dunes, the city was completely deserted.*

## ■ OPPOSED ROLLS

When facing an active resistance, you need to roll off against your opponent. Examples include trying to convince someone actively opposed to your point of view (roll Empathy vs. Wits) or trying to sneak past an alert guard (roll Agility vs. Wits). Opposed rolls are also used in combat (page 80).

In an opposed roll, you need to roll more  than your opponent to succeed. Only you – the active part – can push the roll.

### Tension

In an opposed roll between you and another Traveler, you both get bonus dice equal to your Tension rating toward the other.

### Open Opposed Rolls

In a situation where both opponents are equally active, both are allowed to push the roll. In case of a tie, the conflict has no clear winner – a compromise needs to be made. In cases where this is not feasible, re-roll to break the tie (after pushing).

**FERNANDO (TRAVELER 1):** *While they skin the rabbits in the kitchen, I take the bag with the Vanadium Redox batteries, open the window, and sneak out.*

**VALERIA (TRAVELER 2):** *No, you don't. As I said, I am watching you.*

**GM:** *You need to make an opposed roll to see if you manage to sneak away, Agility against Wits.*

**VALERIA:** *I get two sixes. Yeah!*

**FERNANDO:** *Well, so do I.*

**GM:** *Then it is a compromise. How about if you get out unseen, but Valeria spots you through a window and can follow you?*



## HEALTH & HOPE

**LOOK AROUND WHAT USED TO BE** America, and you see decay, anguish, people giving up. The country's dying. It lost its health and its hope. Health and Hope define people too. The country sags as people sag. It fails and we give up the notion that a country may be founded on nothing more than an idea and an aspiration. Like the country, your Traveler tracks their Health and Hope too.

### Health

Health is reduced by taking damage. When your Health is reduced to zero, you're Incapacitated and might die



– read more in Chapter 4. Your starting maximum Health equals your Strength plus Agility scores divided by two (round fractions up) but can be increased by the Tough talent.

### Hope

Hope is reduced by pushing rolls and traumatic events. When Hope is reduced to zero, you have a Breakdown and might suffer mental trauma (page 87). Your starting maximum Hope score equals your Wits plus Empathy divided by two (round fractions up) but can be increased by the Dreamer talent.

### ■ NEURONICS & BLISS

Using neurocasters to enter the Electric State can be very useful, sometimes even essential, to overcome obstacles and get you where you need to go. However, using neuronics is very addictive and will cause you to accumulate points of Bliss. If your Bliss score ever equals or exceeds your current Hope, you will be unable to leave the Electric State on your own and you will suffer mental trauma if someone else forces you out. Read more about neuronics and Bliss in Chapter 4.

# TALENTS

**TALENTS ARE SPECIAL SKILLS**, traits, and abilities that can benefit you in various situations. They give you bonus dice to roll in certain situations or allow you to perform specific feats or access resources unavailable to others. You can only learn each talent once.

## STARTING TALENT

You start the game with one talent (or two if you had bad luck rolling up attributes, see page 52). You may choose any talent you like. Your archetype gives three suggestions, and you can even pick one of those randomly. You can learn new talents during the game (page 65).

<b>Athlete</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for jumping, climbing, running, and similar actions.
<b>Backstabber</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls to set up an ambush (page 81).
<b>Biker</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for driving any two-wheeled vehicle.
<b>Blade fighter</b>	You get +2 dice to close combat rolls when fighting with any sharp melee weapon.
<b>Boatman</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for maneuvering any kind of boat.
<b>Bomber</b>	You get +2 dice when using explosive weapons, including hand grenades and improvised explosives.
<b>Bowman</b>	You get +2 dice when firing a bow or crossbow.
<b>Charmer</b>	You get +2 dice when rolling for Empathy to make an NPC like you.
<b>Club fighter</b>	You get +2 dice to close combat rolls when fighting with any kind of blunt melee weapon.
<b>Con artist</b>	You get +2 dice when rolling for Empathy to bluff or tell a lie to an NPC.
<b>Data miner</b>	You get +2 dice when using a neurocaster to find information (page 94).
<b>Dirty fighter</b>	Your unarmed close combat attacks have a base Damage rating of 2.
<b>Drama queen</b>	In opposed rolls against other Travelers, your bonus from Tension (page 64) is doubled.
<b>Dreamer</b>	Your maximum Hope score is increased by 2.
<b>Driver</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for driving a ground car or truck.
<b>Drone operator</b>	You get +2 dice to all rolls when controlling a drone (page 98).
<b>Electronics</b>	You get +2 dice to Wits rolls for manipulating and repairing electronic devices, including neurocasters.
<b>Evasive</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for dodging ranged attacks (page 80).
<b>Gamer</b>	You get +2 dice when using a neurocaster to interact with other avatars in a neuroscape (page 97).
<b>Hacker</b>	You get +2 dice when using a neurocaster to hack into a system (page 94).
<b>Hardened</b>	You get +2 dice to Wits or Empathy rolls when resisting traumatic events (page 85).
<b>Intuition</b>	Once per session, you may ask the GM to give you some kind of useful information.
<b>Leader</b>	You get +2 dice when rolling for Empathy to rally an Incapacitated person (page 82) or someone who has suffered a Breakdown (page 85).
<b>Lone wolf</b>	You can reduce Tension (page 65) on your own, without another Traveler present.
<b>Machinegunner</b>	You get +2 dice when using fully automatic fire (page 81).

<b>Martial artist</b>	You get +2 dice to close combat rolls when fighting unarmed.
<b>Mechanic</b>	You get +2 dice to Wits rolls for repairing vehicles and other mechanical devices.
<b>Medic</b>	As an action, you can roll for Wits to stabilize an Incapacitated person (page 82). A first aid kit will give you bonus dice (page 109).
<b>Menacing</b>	You can roll for Strength instead of Empathy when threatening someone, and you get +2 dice.
<b>Musician</b>	Using a musical instrument for a Stretch gives you +2 to Empathy rolls against your audience.
<b>Neuroresistant</b>	You stand a better chance than others to resist the Bliss of neurocasting. Read more on page 93.
<b>Nine lives</b>	You get +2 dice when making death rolls (page 82), i.e. rolling six dice instead of four.
<b>Nurse</b>	If you spend a Shift caring for a patient, they heal 2 points of damage per Shift instead of 1, assuming they are resting. You can care for a number of patients equal to your Wits score.
<b>Pilot</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for piloting any kind of aircraft.
<b>Pistoleer</b>	You get +2 dice when firing a pistol or revolver.
<b>Resilient</b>	You get +2 dice to Strength rolls for resisting hunger and disease.
<b>Rider</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for riding a horse or other riding animal.
<b>Scout</b>	You get +2 dice to Wits rolls for spotting approaching threats.
<b>Sleuth</b>	You get +2 dice to Wits rolls when searching an area for clues.
<b>Sniper</b>	You get +2 dice when firing a rifle at Long range or more, except on fully automatic.
<b>Speaker</b>	You get +2 dice when rolling for Empathy to speak to a group of NPCs to sway them or convince them of something.
<b>Stealthy</b>	You get +2 dice to Agility rolls for staying hidden. Cannot be used for ambushes.
<b>Surgeon</b>	Some serious injuries (page 84) require surgery to start healing. Surgery requires a Wits roll. Read more on page 84.
<b>Techno babbler</b>	You may roll for Wits instead of Empathy when trying to convince someone of something that involves complex technical matters, such as neurocasting.
<b>Thief</b>	You get +2 dice to all rolls for breaking locks or hotwiring cars.
<b>Tough</b>	Your maximum Health score is increased by 2.

“

*It wasn't easy to figure out where we were, but I suspected it was somewhere west of Pacifica's state line, probably around Interstate 15. Most of the roads in southeastern Pacifica were probably unserviceable nowadays because of the dust, but I really wanted to avoid the major cities and the densely populated areas to the west as long as possible.*

### More Talents

The list of talents here is not exhaustive. You may create new talents for your campaign, under the supervision of the GM, as long as they don't overlap existing talents.





# PERSONAL STUFF

NEXT, YOU NEED TO GIVE your Traveler a Dream, a Flaw, a favorite '90s song, a description, and a name.

## ■ DREAM

We all have motives. Some are motives toward something. Others are motives to avoid something. But way back when, during childhood, we had dreams. Dreams of what we wanted. So real we could see them. The sharpness and clarity of those dreams often blur with age until, eventually, they're gone altogether.

But you're a Traveler. You have some remnant of a dream inside and, if you can kindle it, it can take you far. But the easy lure, the all-too-easy-dream of a neuro-caster takes to many. Can you resist and find that one thing, that one real thing, which gives you hope?

Choose a Dream suggested by your archetype, roll it up randomly, or come up with one yourself. Dreams should be phrased generally and don't need to tie directly into the Journey – instead, you should let your Dream guide you when roleplaying your Traveler during play.

Following your Dream is important, as it will allow your Traveler to develop after each game session (page 65).

## ■ FLAW

As a yin to the yang of your Dream, you also have a Flaw – a core character trait that stands in your way and may lead to your downfall, if you don't overcome it.

Choose a Flaw that is suggested for your archetype, roll it up randomly, or come up with one yourself. Just like your Dream, your Flaw will help you roleplay your Traveler. Doing so is important, as it will allow your Traveler to develop after each game session (page 65).

At some point during the Journey, you can overcome your Flaw and realize your Traveler's full potential. Read more on page 65.

## ■ FAVORITE SONG

Name a song that your Traveler will play in the car if they get a chance. You can pick any real song from the '90s, come up with a title and an artist that only exists in the game, or roll on the table below. Your choice of song will help you get a picture of who your Traveler is but has no mechanical effect.

The '90s was a decade of counterculture. While we consumed as advertisements told us to, we also pushed back. Punk, goth, indie films, zines, and a host of other cultural ephemera represented a great deal more. Maybe the meaning is now lost to most, but there are bits of pop that still have meaning to you.



### Favorite '90s Song

#### D66 Song

11	Last Goodbye (Jeff Buckley)
12	Black Hole Sun (Soundgarden)
13	Something in the Way (Nirvana)
14	Karma Police (Radiohead)
15	Wicked Game (Chris Isaak)
16	Enjoy the Silence (Depeche Mode)
21	Dead Souls (Nine Inch Nails)
22	If It Makes You Happy (Sheryl Crow)
23	Rooster (Alice In Chains)
24	Big Empty (Stone Temple Pilots)
25	Killing in the Name (Rage Against The Machine)
26	Tonight, Tonight (The Smashing Pumpkins)
31	Torn (Natalie Imbruglia)
32	Sabotage (Beastie Boys)
33	Bittersweet Symphony (The Verve)
34	Satellite (Dave Matthews Band)
35	Glastonbury Song (The Waterboys)
36	Angels of the Silences (Counting Crows)

## ■ DESCRIPTION

Before the game, introduce your Traveler to the others with a short description. Describe yourself as well as you can and try to come up with interesting details. You and the others will learn more about your Traveler as you take off on your Journey.

Take a look at how people dressed in the '90s. Not just the ones in sitcoms or catalogues, but the younger folk trying to express something personal against so much corporate effluvia. Of course, that personal expression was always coopted by said corporations, but let's forget that for now.

## ■ NAME

Pick a name that fits your idea of your Traveler. Remember that this is the 1990s, so stick with a name that would actually be used in the era.

# GEAR & NEUROCASTER

**YOUR TRAVELER STARTS THE GAME** with a neurocaster and one other personal item, both chosen freely or randomly selected from a list determined by your archetype. Gear gives you a bonus to dice rolls and neurocasters are needed to enter neuroscapes. Neurocasting and the neurocaster models are described on page 92.

## Cash

You start the game with a sum of cash, typically in US dollars. Roll up the sum according to your archetype.

## Other Stuff

Your Traveler is allowed to have an assortment of other reasonable personal belongings as well, as long as they are purely for character and have no mechanical effects. Such belongings can include clothes, toiletries, cosmetics, personal trinkets, etc. The GM has the final word on what is allowed.

## Encumbrance

*The Electric State RPG* is not a game about collecting loot, and thus you don't need to keep track of exactly how much you can carry. If the GM feels you're carrying a lot, they can require a Strength roll or simply tell you it's too heavy.



# THE JOURNEY

A CAMPAIGN in *The Electric State RPG* is called a Journey, and includes a Destination, a number of Stops along the way, and personal Goals and Threats for each Traveler. Planning the Journey is mainly the GM's job, and there are tools and guidelines for it in Chapter 5 and 6 of this book. There is also a complete pre-made Journey including three Stops in Chapter 7.

## PERSONAL GOAL

The Journey plan includes a personal Goal for each Traveler. This is typically decided by the GM when planning the Journey, but it can also be done collaboratively between you and the GM. The Goal doesn't have to be world-changing, but it should change the world of the Traveler. *Pacifica* is a dangerous place, and most people are far too complacent to go anywhere far. The world is falling apart. What possibly motivates anyone to take a trip, both on the outside and inside? That's your Goal.

Your Goal is often connected to the Destination in some way, but it can also relate to another Traveler or NPC. Your Goal should preferably reflect your Dream. While the Dream is general, your Goal should be very specific.

But don't forget – the purpose of the game is the journey, not the goal, so don't hurry too much to get there.

## PERSONAL THREAT

In addition to your Goal, you have a personal Threat on the Journey – something or someone who will try to harm you or stop you from reaching your Goal.

Just like your Goal, your Threat is typically decided by the GM when planning the Journey, but it can also be done collaboratively between you and the GM.

# YOUR VEHICLE

THE TRAVELERS HAVE A VEHICLE, most likely a car of some sort, when their Journey starts. It needs to be a ground vehicle, unless the planned Journey specifically allows for other types of transportation. When the Journey starts, you have half a tank of fuel, unless the GM says otherwise.

Unless the GM's Journey plan determines what vehicle it is, the players should collaborate to describe it. The GM helps you by asking questions. On page 101 in Chapter 4, you will find a list of common vehicles to choose from. You should also roll up one or two traits for the vehicle (page 102).

## Vehicle Questions

- ◻ What type of vehicle is it?
- ◻ What's the brand and model?
- ◻ What trait(s) does it have?
- ◻ What does it look like?
- ◻ How does it smell inside?
- ◻ Who drives?

## SHARED ITEMS

The Travelers each start the game with a neurocaster and one personal item (page 61). In addition to these, the group has three items stored in the vehicle, to be shared by all. In the story, they could be owned by one of the Travelers, but they are meant to be used by everyone in the game. The players can jointly choose three items or roll three times on the adjacent table.

## Shared Items

D66	Gear	Comment
11	Tools, general	Can be used for any repairs (page 108).
12	Tools, vehicle	Can be used to repair vehicles.
13	Tools, weapon	Can be used to repair weapons.
14	Tools, neurocaster	Can be used to repair neurocasters.
15	First aid kit	Used to stabilize an Incapacitated person but requires the Medic talent.
16	Surgical instruments	Gives gear bonus to performing surgery (page 84).
21	Bottle of hard liquor	Can be used once per Shift to recover 1 point of Hope, but also reduces Health by 1. Three uses.
22	Binoculars	Used for Wits rolls to spot something at a distance.
23	Canned food	2D6 cans. Each covers the daily food need for one person (page 89).
24	Clothes, outdoor	Keeps one person warm. If you don't have adequate clothes, you suffer the effects of cold (page 88).
25	Musical instrument	Gives bonus to Empathy rolls but requires a Stretch of time and the Musician talent.
26	Dog, pet	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch with the dog to recover 1 Hope.
31	Dog, guard	Attacks on your command (action). Has Strength 5, Agility 4, Health 9, and bites with base Damage 2.
32	Book, fiction	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch reading to recover 1 Hope.
33	Book, religious	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch reading to recover 1 Hope.
34	Book, medical	Gives bonus to rolls for performing surgery (page 84).
35	Book, non-fiction	Gives bonus to Wits rolls if the subject is relevant.
36	Newspaper	Gives bonus to one Wits roll for anything related to current events.
41	Walkman	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch listening to recover 1 Hope.
42	Pain reliever	Heals 1 point of Health once per day, if not Incapacitated. Ten uses.
43	Crowbar	Gives bonus to Strength when breaking something. Can also be used as a weapon (stats as a crowbar).
44	Sleeping bag	Allows one person to sleep comfortably outdoors, preventing sleep deprivation (page 89).
45	Tent	Allows four people to sleep comfortably outdoors, preventing sleep deprivation (page 89).
46	Walkie-Talkies	Allows communication up to about one mile.
51	Jerrycan	Contains 5 gallons of gasoline.
52	Vanadium Redox battery	Powers drones, neurocasters and other electronic devices.
53	Knife	Weapon, see page 81.
54	Baseball Bat	Weapon, see page 81.
55	Taser	Weapon, see page 81.
56	Handgun	Weapon, see page 81.
61	Magnum revolver	Weapon, see page 81.
62	Crossbow	Weapon, see page 81.
63	Hunting rifle	Weapon, see page 81.
64	Shotgun	Weapon, see page 81.
65	Kids Drone "Kid Kosmo"	Consumer drone, see page 99.
66	Classic Gaming Drone "Wally Wayne"	Consumer drone, see page 99.

# TENSION

**TENSION LIES AT THE HEART** of any narrative. Think of any book or film or TV show you like, and you'll realize what moves the narrative is tension, leading to conflict, between the characters. This game is no different – unlike some RPGs where the story is best when the characters get along.

The Travelers have relationships to each other, whether they just met or know each other well. These relationships will change due to what happens along the way and what you learn about each other and your Flaws. To each of the other Travelers, you have a Tension score ranging from 0 to 2.

- 0 **No tension**, no question marks or unspoken thoughts or feelings.
- 1 **Suppressed or contained** irritation, love, interest, or other feelings and thoughts.
- 2 **Uncontained strong emotions**, such as rage, love, or even fear.

Tension ratings are asymmetrical – your relationship with another Traveler could be tense for you but not for the other Traveler. If you, for example, have Tension 1 toward another Traveler and they have Tension 0 toward you, it could mean that you secretly admire or hate them, but they don't know it.

## ■ EFFECTS OF TENSION

Tension makes you try harder when you are in conflict with the other Traveler. In any opposed rolls (page 54) against another Traveler, no matter what the roll is for, you get a number of bonus dice to roll equal to your Tension rating. You can also regain lost Hope by reducing Tension (below).

## ■ STARTING TENSION

At the start of the game, you have Tension 1 toward one or two other Travelers, and 0 toward the rest. Before you start playing, the whole group should discuss the tensions among the Travelers – what do the numbers represent? See the sidebar below for examples. Your Flaws are useful sources of Tension.

**VALERIA (TRAVELER 2):** *I have Tension 1 toward you, and I was thinking that Valeria is on a high horse, and even though we just met, maybe she has already started to look down on you. Would that be okay?*

**ETHAN (TRAVELER 3):** *Definitely. Then I am going to have Tension 1 toward you too. I am thinking that Ethan has noticed your condescending looks. I will love to see you fall from your high horse.*

### Examples of Tension

- Child-parent relationship where one is jealous of the other.
- A dispute about hierarchy.
- Hidden contempt pent up for ages.
- Pride that makes one Traveler shine, while the others feel left in their shadow.
- Attraction, secret and deep. It edges every interaction you have with the object of your attraction.
- Distrust. Something another Traveler does offends you deeply. It's all you can do not to scream at them every time they do it.
- Economic differences.
- A shared and unresolved traumatic experience. Until all involved acknowledge and process the trauma, things are, at best, awkward among you.
- Religious or political differences. There's reason Americans say never discuss religion or politics.
- Curiosity. It killed more than the cat.
- A secret. Something you can't let anyone know. Possibly personal. Maybe illegal. Maybe you've built it up in your head. But it haunts you every day.
- Guilt.
- Fear.

## Tension Triangles

A more complex but rewarding way of describing relationships is to create triangles of Tension. This means that one Traveler has Tension with two others in a way that will cause conflicts or confusion between the other two.

With Tension triangles, everything that happens in a scene with focus on relationships, will in some way have an impact on all other Travelers. This makes the game even more interesting for players whose Traveler is not present in the current scene.

## REDUCING TENSION

When you and another Traveler talk things through or argue with each other in a situation where there is no immediate threat, you can reduce Tension. Both of you decrease your Tension toward the other by 1, to a minimum of 0. When you reduce Tension, you also regain one point of Hope. See page 86 for more on this.

## CHANGING TENSION

Aside from relieving Tension, the Tension scores may also be increased or lowered at any time, depending on what happens in the game. You can even change Tension between sessions, if you decide that your Traveler has started to think differently about someone, or something has happened off-stage. The GM has final say on any Tension changes.

Tension changes must be reflected in what happens in the game. If you have a Tension 0 relationship with someone and suddenly start a big argument, it is fine to immediately increase Tension to 2. On the flip side, if there is no tension in your interactions with another Traveler, the GM can change your Tension to zero.

**ETHAN (TRAVELER 3):** *Hey, before we start, I was thinking of changing my Tension toward you. In Ethan's mind, you really let him down last time when you ran away. So, I will change it from 0 to 1. I am not ready to act out on it yet. Is that cool?*

**FERNANDO (TRAVELER 1):** *Definitely. I think I'll keep my Tension with you at 0, since I believe Behrang didn't read the situation in the same way. He thinks we still watch each other's back. That could be interesting.*

# DEVELOPING YOUR TRAVELER

**AFTER EACH GAME SESSION,** have a debriefing in the group. If you don't have time, start the next session with the debriefing instead – it will work as a summary of the previous session. During the debriefing, each player in turn tells the group how their Traveler has acted according to their Dream or their Flaw (or both), at least once, during the session. Let other players and the GM discuss and comment.

### Improvement Roll

If the table agrees that you have followed your Dream or Flaw (the GM has final say if the table cannot agree, and should be lenient), you then choose one of the four attributes that best represents what you feel you have learned during the session – about yourself, another Traveler, or the world.

Then roll one die – if the result is higher than your current score, the attribute is increased one step. The attribute increase can also increase your maximum Health or Hope score (with an equal increase of current Health or Hope). If the roll is equal to or lower than the attribute rating, you instead gain a new talent. You can choose any talent listed on page 56 or even create a new one, but you must justify how you have learned it based on something that happened in the game.

### Overcoming Your Flaw

At some point during the Journey, you may overcome your Flaw – confronting it in a manner so fundamental that it changes your Traveler for good. You simply state this during the debriefing after the session. If the table agrees (again, the GM has final say), you may then immediately make three improvement rolls as per above. Your Flaw is then removed.

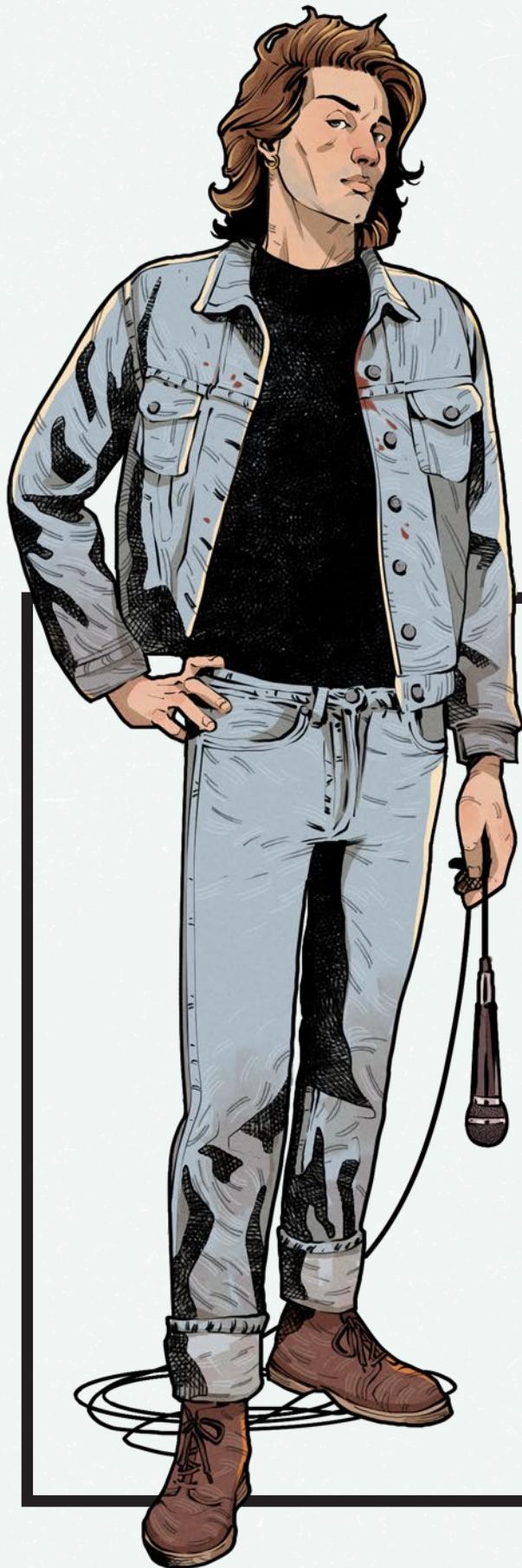
After you have overcome your Flaw, you cannot improve your Traveler further. Therefore, you should wait to overcome your Flaw until quite late in the Journey – but not too late, as you then won't have much use for the final improvements. You should have at least a session of play or two left of the Journey after you overcome your Flaw. Ask the GM about this if you are unsure.

### More Journeys

Most Travelers will only be played in a single Journey. In the rare case that you play the same Traveler in a new Journey, choose a new Flaw at the start of it, reflecting the person the Traveler is now.

# ARTIST

*"I make art until someone dies. See? I am the world's first fully functioning homicidal artist." -Jack Napier*



**YOU TELL PEOPLE** it's about the aesthetic, about the translation of life into another, more beautiful form. And while all that is true, the truth is you simply must create. You feel half a person when you don't. America wasn't exactly giving artists hedge fund money before the war. Now? Few see what art brings to anything. But you know, deep down, that the act of transforming trauma into beauty is noble, expiative, and just maybe necessary for the future of your country. Art doesn't imitate life – it creates its reason for being.

#### Key Attribute

Empathy

#### Talent

1-2 Charmer

#### Cash

\$100 × D6

3-4 Drama Queen

5-6 Musician

#### Dream

1-2 Find someone as important to me as my art.

3-4 Turn the trauma of America into something beautiful.

5-6 Get the recognition and accolades you deserve.

#### Flaw

1-2 You put on a show to hide your inner fears.

3-4 You're bitter about not being more successful.

5-6 You always want to be the center of attention.

#### Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus GO

3-4 Johnny Jolt Theme

5-6 Jury-Rigged

#### Personal Item

1-2 Musical instrument

3-4 Dog (pet)

5-6 Pack of cigarettes

# CRIMINAL

**"Are you going to bark all day, little doggie, or are you going to bite?"** -Mr. Blonde

**MAYBE IT STARTED as a thrill.** Maybe nothing else made economic sense. However you began, you quickly realized crime was just another career. Maybe not one your school guidance counselor would have advised but, hell, look at the country now. How are all those college grads doing amongst all this? Taking others' possessions, violating society's borders, living off the fat of the land of the free and the home of the brave? That's you. No one was going to give you a hand up the ladder. You got a rope and climbed over the wall yourself. Suddenly, people need your skills and advice. Where were they before?

## Key Attribute

Strength

## Talent

1-2 Knifeman

## Cash

\$10 × 2D6

3-4 Menacing

5-6 Thief

## Dream

1-2 Make amends for what I have done.

3-4 Get the respect I deserve.

5-6 Get enough money to buy a new motorcycle

## Flaw

1-2 You scare other people away.

3-4 You always react to threats with violence.

5-6 You can't help stealing everything valuable.

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus GO

3-4 Jury-Rigged

5-6 None

## Personal Item

1-2 Pistol

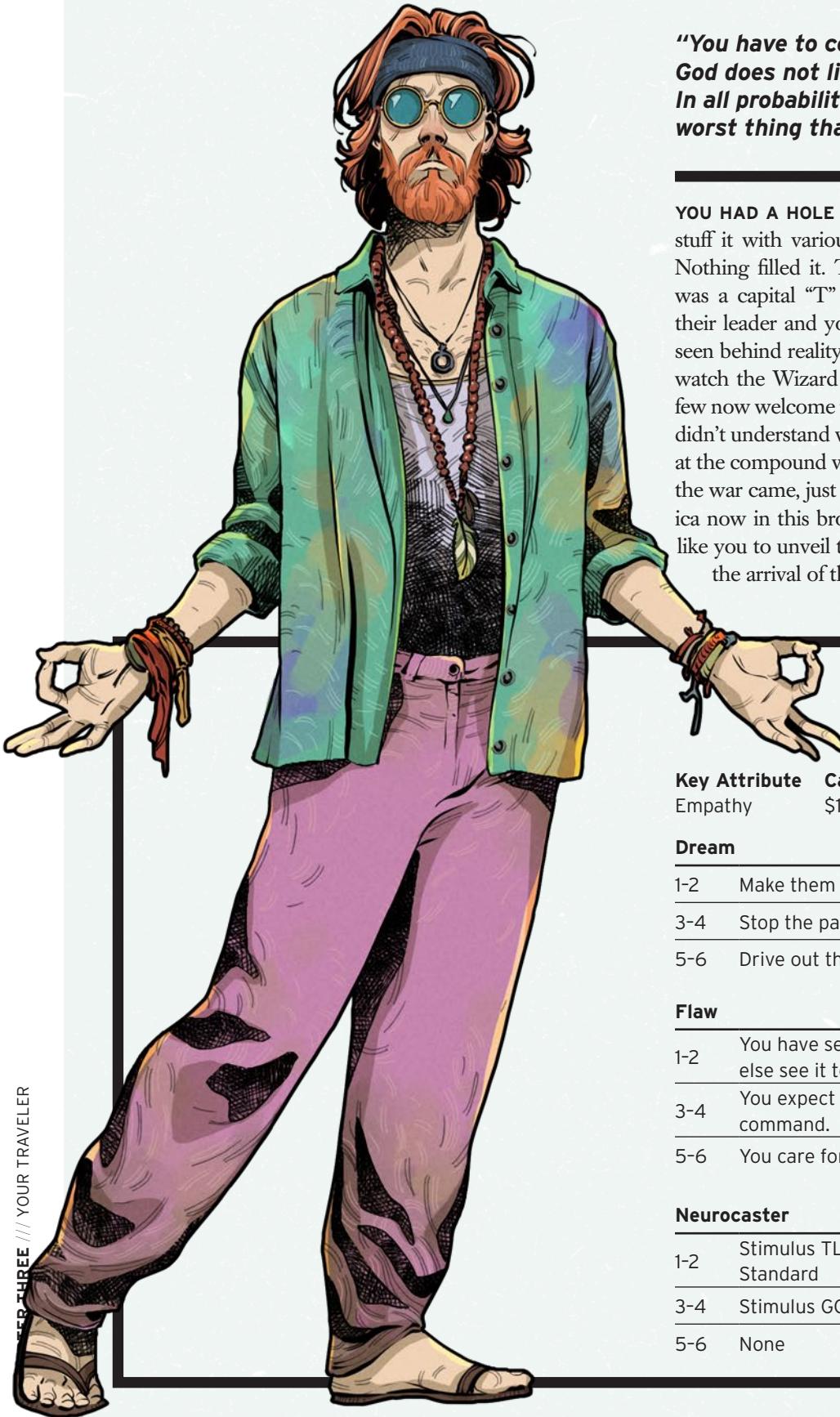
3-4 Knife

5-6 Dog (guard)



# DEVOTEE

*"You have to consider the possibility that God does not like you. He never wanted you. In all probability, he hates you. This is not the worst thing that can happen."* -Tyler Durden



**YOU HAD A HOLE INSIDE YOU.** All your life you tried to stuff it with various things – relationships, drugs, work. Nothing filled it. Then you found the Truth, and yes it was a capital “T” Truth. The group introduced you to their leader and you knew, within a minute, that he had seen behind reality’s veil. He’d been behind the curtain to watch the Wizard work. And you? You were one of the few now welcome to see the same. Your family and friends didn’t understand when you cut contact. Cops showed up at the compound with warnings but never warrants. Then the war came, just like the Leader predicted. With America now in this broken state, isn’t it up to you and those like you to unveil the eyes of others? Only the Truth, and the arrival of the comet, can bring healing and peace.

<b>Key Attribute</b>		<b>Cash</b>	<b>Talent</b>
Empathy		\$100 × D6	1-2 Dreamer
			3-4 Leader
			5-6 Speaker
<b>Dream</b>			
1-2 Make them see the light.			
3-4 Stop the pain inside.			
5-6 Drive out the demons of this world.			
<b>Flaw</b>			
1-2 You have seen light and must make everyone else see it too.			
3-4 You expect everyone else to follow your command.			
5-6 You care for nothing on this plane of existence.			
<b>Neurocaster</b>		<b>Personal Item</b>	
1-2 Stimulus TLE Standard		1-2 Shades	
3-4 Stimulus GO		3-4 Book (religious)	
5-6 None		5-6 Neurine (D6 doses)	

# DOCTOR

***"I hurt myself today, to see if I still feel."***

-Trent Reznor

**YOU REMEMBER** the pride you felt when you took the Hippocratic Oath and the day you graduated med school and got that white coat. You were going to heal people. Your future swelled with potential. You didn't lose faith when the war started. What better time for doctors than in such a crisis? But when the directive came down that your job wasn't to heal the trauma these soldiers felt, but rather get them back into combat ASAP? Well, you left then. Now, you travel the country trying to help. But there are so many hurt and all your pride and degrees seem useless, like band-aids on sucking chest wounds now.

## Key Attribute

Empathy

## Talent

1-2 Medic

## Cash

\$100 × 2D6

3-4 Nurse

5-6 Surgeon

## Dream

1-2 Bring forth the goodness in us all.

3-4 Heal others, and yourself.

5-6 Find a cure for the neurograph addiction.

## Flaw

1-2 You're haunted by the patients you lost and push new people away.

3-4 You can't help but diagnosing everyone you meet.

5-6 You have a neurine habit.

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus TLE  
Standard

3-4 Stimulus TLE-PRO

5-6 Stimulus GO

## Personal Item

1-2 First aid kit

3-4 Pack of cigarettes

5-6 Surgical instruments

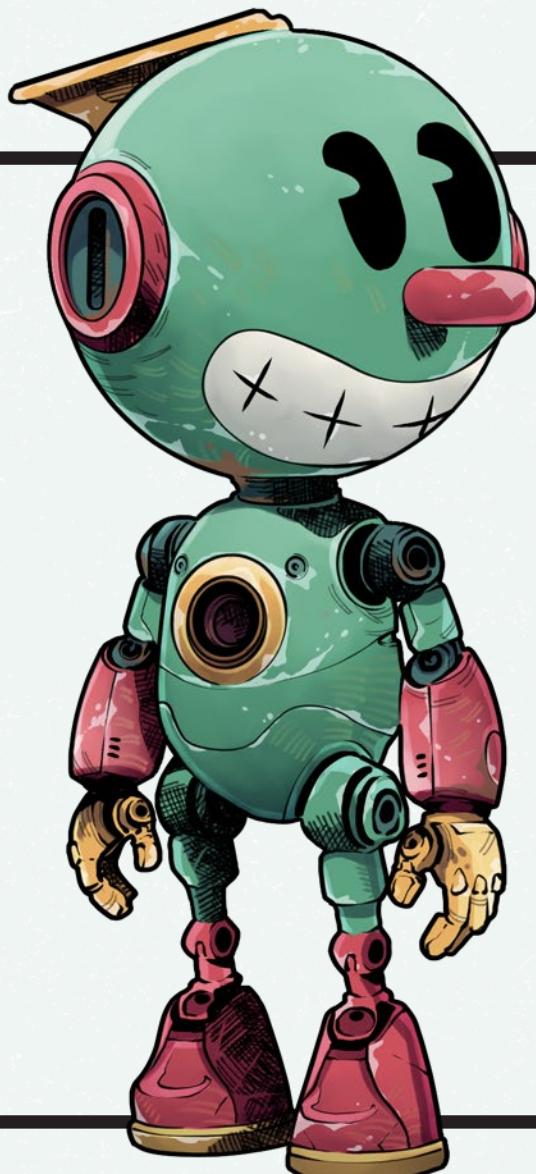


This archetype is a little different. As a Drone Pilot, your physical body is elsewhere, with a neurocaster helmet on. The physical Traveler you play is a drone. Your game stats are created normally, but you suffer damage like a drone (page 98), not a human. You also don't have any gear. You don't need to eat, but you do need sleep. As a Drone Pilot, you don't need to track Bliss when neurocasting, but on the flip side, you can never enter local neuroscapes - only global ones (page 92).

# DRONE PILOT

**"Yeah right, man, Bishop should go!"** -Hudson

**MAYBE YOU WERE A KID in an accident that has you in a coma. Maybe you were a soldier repurposed into a drone after your body became, as they say, "no longer field expedient." Hell, maybe you just spent too long inside the neuroscapes and never found your way back. Now, your senses come through a translation matrix bolted onto a rusting drone. You aren't even sure the body you still have, somewhere, contains any more of you than this metal thing does. You had a philosophy professor who'd have a lot to say about your condition and the nature of identity, but you just want to feel cool air on your face again. Smell the salt air coming off the Pacific on a gray morning and hold your sister's hand again.**



## Key Attribute

Wits

## Talent

1-2 Drone Operator

## Cash

None

3-4 Gamer

5-6 Hacker

## Dream

1-2 Return to my body.

3-4 Create a better world.

5-6 Let go of my human body.

## Flaw

1-2 You don't value your drone body and take huge risks with it.

3-4 You think you're better than flesh people.

5-6 You feel safe in your drone body and never want to leave it.

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus TLE  
Standard

3-4 Johnny Jolt Theme

5-6 Stimulus TLE-PRO

# INVESTIGATOR

*"Ernest Hemingway once wrote, 'The world is a fine place and worth fighting for.' I agree with the second part."* -William Somerset

**YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE** like Raymond Chandler with rain cleaning the city streets of sin and one-liners to make the dames wild. But, by the time you started as a PI it was all about the neuroscapes. Maybe you started as a cop. Maybe someone close to you got lost in that would-be digital Nirvana. Whatever brought you here, you've become good at it. You sometimes think of yourself as a soul repairman. You reconnect the spirit to the body. It'd be occult, except it's all tech and more depressing. If you're being honest, though, you've thought a few times about just staying inside too.

## Key Attribute

Wits

## Cash

\$100 × D6

## Talent

1-2 Data Miner

3-4 Scout

5-6 Sleuth

## Dream

1-2 Find a stable place in this world.

3-4 Be disproven about the foulness of human nature.

5-6 Solve the unsolvable case

## Flaw

1-2 You see the worst in everyone.

3-4 You have a drinking habit.

5-6 You're torn by guilt and take stupid risks

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus TLE  
Standard

3-4 Stimulus TLE-PRO

5-6 Stimulus GO

## Personal Item

1-2 Binoculars

3-4 Handgun

5-6 Walkie-talkies



# OUTSIDER

**"We are the weirdos, Mister!"** -Nancy



**YOU NEVER FIT IN.** Grade school was a room of little terrors. In high school, you went your own way. You've always been an outsider. Maybe you dress goth. Maybe you don't wear any cultural signifiers of your distance from anyone else. You might work the night shift at a 7-Eleven or study existentialism at college (where you always sit in the back). You never fit. You wouldn't know how to begin to fit now. It's their puzzle and they want you to be a neat little piece. That was never going to happen. Now, their puzzle is scattered across the country and those who told you to "be normal" scurry after peace they'll never, ever find.

#### Key Attribute

Agility

#### Talent

1-2 Lone Wolf

#### Cash

\$10 × D6

3-4 Stealthy

5-6 Tough

#### Dream

1-2 Find a true friend

3-4 Burn the corruption in this world

5-6 Get a normal life, like everyone else

#### Flaw

1-2 You don't trust anyone.

3-4 You're restless and always want to keep moving.

5-6 If told what to do, you always do the opposite.

#### Neurocaster

None

#### Personal Item

1-2 Bottle of alcohol

3-4 Knife

5-6 Dog (pet)

# RUNAWAY KID

***"It's only when we've lost everything that we're free to do anything."*** -Tyler Durden

**SOMETIMES YOUR PARENTS** hit you, but mostly they just ignored you. You never wanted the life adults, school, and the suck-up a-students advocated. Maybe things were worse at home than you ever admitted. Eventually, you bolted. Most adults look down on runaways, but you have a freedom they don't. And the joke's on them now because the whole world they assured you needed is gone. At least you never expected it. Home? You don't need a home.

## Key Attribute

Agility

## Talent

1-2 Dirty Fighter

## Cash

\$10 × D6

3-4 Dreamer

5-6 Evasive

## Dream

1-2 Find a new home.

3-4 Find out who I really am.

5-6 Become a good parent.

## Flaw

1-2 When threatened, you run.

3-4 You have serious trust issues.

5-6 You're always looking for someone to be your new parent.

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus GO

3-4 Jury-Rigged

5-6 None

## Personal Item

1-2 Knife

3-4 Pack of chewing gum

5-6 Walkman



# SCIENTIST

***"Back off, man, I'm a scientist."***

-Peter Venkman

LIFE, YOU WERE ALWAYS SURE, was knowable. While science didn't have every answer, you'd amend that by saying it didn't have every answer "yet." You never said science and reason were popular among the country's leaders. Look at what they did. But you did say logic and reason can get you out of anything... eventually. While others wept, looted, or generally embraced despair, you buckled down and studied what the country would need after. And what it needs very badly right now is someone like you. Someone who believes in fact, in science, and in humanity's ability to uncover any truth, no matter how much emotion clouds us.



## Key Attribute

Wits

## Talent

1-2 Electronics

## Cash

\$100 × 2D6

3-4 Mechanic

5-6 Techno Babbler

## Dream

1-2 Cure the world.

3-4 Get recognition for my brilliance.

5-6 Understand human nature

## Flaw

1-2 You bury yourself in books and can't connect to people.

3-4 You always study everything you come across, very carefully.

5-6 Your work is all that matters.

## Neurocaster

1-2 Stimulus TLE

Standard

3-4 Stimulus TLE-PRO

5-6 Stimulus GO

## Personal Item

1-2 Book (non-fiction)

3-4 D6 cans of food

5-6 Tools (general)

# VETERAN

*"I think now, looking back, we did not fight the enemy - we fought ourselves. And the enemy was in us."* -Chris Taylor

**WAR BY DRONE** was to be the first “clean war.” It wasn’t for you. Drones cost money and Uncle Sam could only deploy so many. The rest of the fighters in that “clean war” were people like you, humping a SAW through the ruins of Topeka and hoping a kid with a hunting rifle didn’t zero in on your head. Sure, everyone has bad memories of the war, but you want to try to balance your soul. At least a little. The school your platoon mistakenly shot up outside Sioux Falls demands it of you. They say, “war is hell,” but you wonder, if that’s true, what do you call what comes after?

Key Attribute	Talent
Strength	1-2 Machinegunner
<b>Cash</b> \$10 × 2D6	3-4 Pistoleer
	5-6 Sniper

## Dream

- 1-2 Leave the war behind you.  
3-4 Start the kind of family you felt with fellow soldiers during the war.  
5-6 Turn your guilt into something positive.

## Flaw

- 1-2 You’re haunted by flashbacks from the war.  
3-4 You always react with violence to threats.  
5-6 You have no hope for this world or the people in it.

Neurocaster	Personal Item
1-2 Stimulus TLE Standard	1-2 Handgun
3-4 Stimulus GO	3-4 Pack of cigarettes
5-6 None	5-6 Sleeping bag





CHAPTER FOUR

# COMBAT & NEURONICS

*I didn't hear the wind anymore. My shoulders ached from carrying the heavy shotgun, and my feet worked mechanically as if they didn't belong to me.*

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**THIS CHAPTER IS ABOUT VIOLENT CONFLICTS** and other dangerous situations that escalate beyond words, where passing a simple skill test is not enough to determine the outcome. It also includes rules for using neurocasters to enter the seductive neuroscapes of the Electric State, and the risks involved.

## ZONES & RANGE

A COMBAT AREA is divided into zones. Indoors, a zone is typically one room. Outdoors, a zone is any patch of land up to 100 feet across. The GM can draw a map of the battlefield to indicate zones, or just keep it in the theater of your mind. Zones are used to track distance between fighters. See the table below.

Weapons have a minimum and maximum range. Any attack closer than the minimum range gets -2 dice per range band below the minimum range. A weapon cannot be used beyond its maximum range.

Range	
Engaged	In your face
Short	In the same zone
Medium	In an adjacent zone
Long	Up to four zones away
Extreme	Further away

### Varied Zones

Combat becomes more interesting when the environment is varied. Zones can be divided by a locked door, a hedge, or a creek. A zone might be reachable only from a certain location, such as a balcony or a roof.

### Sample Actions

- Attack in close combat.
- Make a ranged attack.
- Reloading a firearm.
- Take cover.
- Rally an Incapacitated fighter.
- Interact with an item.
- Pick up an item from the ground.

## ROUNDS & INITIATIVE

**COMBAT IS PLAYED OUT** in rounds, representing roughly 5–10 seconds of time. In every round, each participant in the fight gets one turn, i.e. an opportunity to act.

The person who starts the fight gets their turn to act first, along with anyone else on their side. The fighters on the attacking side can act in any order they like, followed by all of the defenders. If it's unclear who starts the fight, each side rolls d6 and adds the Wits rating of the fighter with the highest score. The side with the higher total are the attackers. Re-roll ties. This initiative roll cannot be pushed and is not an action.

## ACTIONS & MOVES

**WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN** to act, you get one move and one action or two moves. An action is anything you could reasonably do in no more than 10 seconds, except moving – see the list of examples below. A move is moving between two adjacent zones, or between Short and Engaged range with someone in the same zone.

The move must always come before the action – once the action is completed, no move is possible on the same turn.

### Reactions

In some cases, you can react to the action of an enemy fighter, performing an immediate action. If you do, you forfeit your next upcoming turn (both the action and the move). If you already had your turn in the current round, you lose your turn in the next round instead.

### Free Actions

Minor actions like drawing a weapon, opening a door, or speaking a few words are free actions and can be done in addition to your action for the round. Free actions can only be performed on your own turn.



# CLOSE COMBAT

**CLOSE COMBAT** is any attack at Engaged range, no matter what weapon is used (if any). Roll for Strength to hit. Weapons give bonus gear dice to roll (see the table on page 81). Before dice are rolled, the target must choose to take the hit or fight back.

## Take the Hit

If the attack succeeds, it inflicts the weapon's base Damage on the target, plus 1 damage for every  $\blacksquare$  rolled beyond the first.

## Fight Back

This is a reaction that turns the attack into an opposed roll. It cannot be chosen by an Incapacitated or unaware target. Only the attacker can push the roll.

- ◻ If the attacker rolls more  $\blacksquare$  than the target, the target suffers the weapon's base Damage, plus 1 damage for every  $\blacksquare$  beyond what was needed to win the roll.
- ◻ If the attacker and target roll the same number of  $\blacksquare$ , they fight tooth and nail, but no one gets the upper hand and no one gets hurt – yet.
- ◻ If the target rolls more  $\blacksquare$ , the attacker suffers damage equal to the target's base weapon Damage, plus 1 damage for every  $\blacksquare$  beyond what was needed to win the roll.

When fighting back, the target forfeits their next turn (both the action and the move), but they can fight back against any number of close combat attacks until then. If the target has already had their turn in the current round, they forfeit their turn in the next round instead.

## Firearms in Close Combat

Note that you can use a firearm even in close combat. You still use Strength (not Agility) to hit, and your opponent can choose to fight back. As most firearms have a minimum range of Short (or more), you typically get -2 dice or more when using them in close combat.

# RANGED COMBAT

**RANGED COMBAT** occurs at Short range or more and requires some kind of ranged weapon (even if it's just something to throw). Roll for Agility. Weapons give bonus gear dice to roll. Before dice are rolled, the target can choose to stand tall or dodge.

## Stand Tall

If the attack succeeds, it inflicts the weapon's base Damage on the target, plus 1 damage for every  $\blacksquare$  rolled beyond the first.

## Dodge

This is a reaction that turns the attack into an opposed roll. It cannot be chosen by an Incapacitated or unaware target. Only the attacker can push the roll.

- ◻ If the attacker rolls more  $\blacksquare$  than the target, the target suffers the weapon's base Damage, plus 1 damage for every  $\blacksquare$  beyond what was needed to win the roll.
- ◻ If the attacker and target roll the same number of  $\blacksquare$ , or if the target rolls more  $\blacksquare$ , the attack misses.

When a target dodges, they forfeit their own next turn (both the action and the move), but they can roll to avoid any number of ranged attacks until then. If the target has already had their turn in the current round, they lose their turn in the next round instead.

## Cover

If the target is taking cover by something solid, roll a number of dice equal to its Armor Level (see the adjacent table). Each  $\blacksquare$  rolled for the cover eliminates 1 point of damage. Taking cover is an action. The GM has final say if cover is available.

## Explosive Weapons

Some weapons trigger an explosion (page 88) in the targeted zone instead of causing direct damage to a target. Roll to hit normally. Extra  $\blacksquare$  on your attack roll increase the damage on all targets. On a miss, a random adjacent zone is hit instead of the intended zone.

## ◻ AMMUNITION & FULL AUTO

You don't need to track ammunition for firearms. Unless the scenario text or the GM states otherwise, you have enough ammo to cover your needs. Don't track the number of rounds left in your magazine either.

## Weapons

Type	Bonus	Damage	Min. Range	Max Range	Price
Unarmed	-	1	Engaged	Engaged	-
Improvised club	+1	1	Engaged	Engaged	-
Knife	+1	2	Engaged	Engaged	\$25
Baseball bat	+2	1	Engaged	Engaged	\$50
Axe	+2	2	Engaged	Engaged	\$100
Chainsaw	+1	3	Engaged	Engaged	\$250
Rock	-	1	Engaged	Medium	-
Taser	+3	*	Engaged	Short	\$500
Derringer	+2	2	Engaged	Short	\$250
Handgun	+2	2	Short	Medium	\$300
Magnum revolver	+2	3	Short	Medium	\$400
Crossbow	+2	1	Medium	Long	\$150
Hunting rifle	+2	2	Medium	Long	\$500
Shotgun	+3	2	Short	Medium	\$350
Sniper rifle	+2	2	Medium	Extreme	#

### Capable of fully automatic fire

Submachinegun	+2	2	Short	Medium	#
Assault rifle	+3	2	Short	Long	#
Heavy machinegun	+3	3	Short	Long	#
Neodymium cannon	‡	4	Medium	Long	#

### Does not cause direct damage, instead triggers explosion in targeted zone

Molotov cocktail	-	Blast Power 6	Engaged	Medium	-
Hand grenade	-	Blast Power 8	Engaged	Medium	#
Mortar	+2	Blast Power 12	Medium	Extreme	#

\* Causes no damage but target needs to roll for Strength with -2 dice or lose their next turn.

# Cannot be purchased commercially.

‡ Can only be fired using a neurocaster and uses its Network attribute as a gear bonus (page 92).

### Single-Shot

Some firearms are marked as single-shot. Such weapons must be reloaded after each shot. Reloading is an action.

### Full Auto

Some weapons can fire bursts of bullets. When you fire a burst and hit, you can immediately fire another burst, at the same target or another. If you hit again, you may roll a third time. A burst (no matter how many rolls are made) always empties the magazine of the weapon (except in the case of larger belt-fed weapons). Reloading is an action.

# AMBUSHES

**IF YOUR TARGET** is unaware of your attack, they must take the hit / stand tall and cannot fight back or dodge. You can achieve this by ambushing your opponent with an Agility roll. To sneak up close enough to attack in close combat, you get -3 dice. You can't ambush someone involved in active combat.

# DAMAGE

**DAMAGE FROM ATTACKS** and other hazards reduces your Health score. Mark off damage points on your character sheet.

## ■ INCAPACITATED

When you reach zero Health, you're Incapacitated and collapse to the ground. You can mumble in pain and crawl slowly (one move per turn) but not roll for any attributes or use any talents.

### Death Rolls

When Incapacitated, you need to roll four dice on every turn. This is called a death roll. It cannot be pushed. Mark down the number of **■** you roll. Once you have rolled a total of three **■**, you're stabilized and stop making death rolls. If you fail three death rolls before this happens, you're dead – time to make a new Traveler.

### Instant Kills

If you suffer damage equal to twice your maximum Health score in a single hit, you die instantly. No death rolls, no chance of surviving – you're done for.

### Rallying

When you are Incapacitated, someone else in the same zone can try to get you back on your feet. This requires an Empathy roll by them (an action). If it succeeds, you regain a number of Health points equal to the **■** rolled and can continue to fight. Rallying does not mean you're stabilized – you still need to keep making death rolls.

If no one else rallies you, you rally on your own after a Stretch (assuming you're still alive) and recover 1 point of Health, unless you are affected by something that blocks recovery like disease or hunger (page 89). Note that rallying rolls are only allowed on Incapacitated persons.



### Stabilizing

A person with the Medic talent can stabilize an Incapacitated person with a Wits roll (an action), with bonus dice from a first aid kit (page 109). If this happens, the victim doesn't need to make any further death rolls. They are still Incapacitated though and need to be rallied to get back on their feet.

### Additional Damage

If you suffer additional damage while Incapacitated, even a single point, you must start making death rolls again.



### Incapacitated NPCs

NPCs can be Incapacitated in the same ways as Travelers. An NPC can rally and stabilize a Traveler and vice versa. However, dice are usually not rolled when an NPC aids another NPC - instead, the GM decides what happens. The GM can also decide that a minor NPC who is Incapacitated simply dies.

### Body Armor

Body armor is rare but can protect you from harm when worn. A few types are listed below, each with an Armor Level. When hit by an attack, roll a number of dice equal to the Armor Level - each  $\blacksquare$  rolled for the armor eliminates one point of damage. As a drawback, armor is clumsy and gives you a negative modifier to all Agility rolls.

Body Armor	Armor Level	Agility Modifier	Price
Soft vest	2	-1	\$150
Plate vest	4	-2	\$300
Riot gear	6	-3	\$500

## Serious Injuries

D66	Injury	Effect
11-36	None	-
41	Broken finger	-1 die on all rolls that normally require two arms, such as shooting a rifle, driving, or climbing. Healing time: D6 days.
42	Ear torn off	-1 die on Wits rolls for hearing things. Healing time: 2D6 days.
43	Broken toe	You can either move or make an action in a round, not both. Healing time: D6 days.
44	Broken ribs	-2 dice on Strength and Agility rolls. Healing time: D6 days.
45	Teeth knocked out	-1 die on Empathy rolls. Healing time: 2D6 days.
46	Concussion	-2 dice on Wits rolls. Healing time: D6 days.
51	Broken nose	-1 die on Empathy rolls. Healing time: D6 days.
52	Busted knee	You can either move or make an action in a round, not both. Healing time: 2D6 days.
53	Traumatized	Roll once on the table for mental trauma (page 87).
54	Gouged eye	-2 dice on Wits rolls for spotting things. Healing time: D6 days.
55	Damaged throat	-2 dice on Empathy rolls. Healing time: D6 days.
56	Infected wound	You are afflicted by a disease of Virulence 6 (page 88).
61	Broken arm	-3 dice on all rolls that normally require two arms, such as shooting a rifle, driving, or climbing. Healing time: 3D6 days.
62	Broken leg	You can either move or make an action in a round, not both. Healing time: 3D6 days.
63	Disfigured face	-2 dice on Empathy rolls. Requires surgery. Healing time: 2D6 days.
64	Punctured lung	-2 dice on Strength and Agility rolls. Requires surgery. Healing time: 2D6 days.
65	Cracked skull	-2 dice on Wits rolls. Requires surgery. Healing time: 2D6 days.
66	Internal bleeding	-2 dice on Strength and Agility rolls, and every such roll inflicts D6 points of damage. Requires surgery. Healing time: 2D6 days.

## RECOVERY

As long as nothing blocks your recovery (such as disease or hunger, see page 88) you will automatically recover 1 point of Health per Shift, as long as you don't perform any physically strenuous activity (like combat). Dedicated care from someone with the Nurse talent increases this rate to 2 points per Shift.

## NEUROCASTING DAMAGE

As described on page 97, you can become Incapacitated by damage suffered inside a neuroscape. If this happens, you don't make death rolls – instead, you automatically rally after a Stretch and recover 1 point of Health. You must also roll for a mental trauma (page 87) instead of a serious physical injury.

## SERIOUS INJURIES

If you've been Incapacitated but survived, you have been knocking on death's door and that can come with consequences. Roll on the table above to see what serious injury you suffered, what effect it has and how long it will take to heal.

### Surgery

A few serious injuries require surgery before they can start to heal. Surgery takes a Shift of time and can only be performed by someone with the Surgeon talent (page 57). Surgery can be performed with improvised instruments, but actual surgical gear gives bonus gear dice. A failed surgery makes the patient Incapacitated.

## Traumatic Events

Event	Hope loss
Watching a friend be Incapacitated or killed by physical damage	1
Being attacked by something horrible	1
Realizing you are contaminated by something terrible	2
Seeing mutilated corpses	2
Being cornered by your worst fear	3
Being tortured	3

## Hope & NPCs

The GM doesn't track Hope for NPCs, instead roleplaying their reactions as dramatically appropriate. NPCs never push rolls.

## Reducing Tension

When you and another Traveler have an interaction where your tension comes into play in a way that solves matters between you, you can reduce Tension and recover Hope. This could mean that you forgive each other, argue to let out steam, or bond over memories of your former lives.

You don't need to announce beforehand that you want to reduce Tension. Anyone at the table can suggest that you are reducing Tension if the scene calls for it. To reduce tension, the scene must indeed feel like you are reducing tension with each other - heated arguments should instead lead to increased Tension with the other Traveler (page 65).

# LOSING HOPE

**YOUR HOPE SCORE** is reduced by pushing rolls (page 53) or traumatic events as indicated by the GM or the Stop text. Mark off your lost Hope on your character sheet.

## TRAUMATIC EVENTS

When your Traveler suffers a traumatic event, the GM indicates the potential loss of Hope (see the adjacent table for examples). You then make an Empathy roll. Each **█** rolled reduces the amount of lost Hope by 1. You may push this roll, but that comes with an additional risk as pushing may further reduce Hope.

### Freeze

If you lose 1 or more points of Hope from a traumatic event (not from pushing a roll), you also freeze, losing your next turn (in the next round, if you already had your turn this round).

## BREAKDOWN

When your Hope is reduced to zero, you suffer a Breakdown. You can't bring yourself to continue any further. You may talk, move and flee the scene, but you cannot roll for any attributes or use any talents.

### Rallying

When you are having a Breakdown, someone else in the same zone can try to motivate you to press on. This requires an Empathy roll by them (an action). If it succeeds, you regain a number of Hope points equal to the number of **█** rolled. If no one else rallies you, you rally on your own after a Shift and regain 1 point of Hope. Note that rallying rolls are only allowed on persons who are having a Breakdown.



## ■ RECOVERY

As opposed to Health, Hope is not automatically recovered beyond the first point after a Breakdown. There are several ways to recover Hope, listed below. Note that you cannot recover Hope in any way if you suffer from hunger or sleep deprivation (page 89).

### Reduce Tension

When you and another Traveler talk things through in a situation where there is no immediate threat, you can reduce Tension (page 65). This requires at least a Stretch of time.

No more than two Travelers can reduce Tension in the same scene. Both of you decrease your Tension toward the other by 1, to a minimum of 0. When you reduce Tension, you also regain 1 point of Hope. You can only relieve tension (and regain Hope) in this manner if you have Tension 1 or 2 toward the other Traveler.

### Gear

Certain items, like a pet dog, a Walkman, or even a religious book, can restore Hope. Some examples are listed on page 109. You can never recover more than 1 point of Hope per Shift using items.

### The Hope Loop

When the Travelers arrive at a Stop, they will be pushed by their Dreams and Flaws to act and take risks, responding to conflicts and escalating Threats. This eventually reduces their Health and Hope scores.

To recover Health, the Travelers need Shifts of rest. The most effective way to recover Hope is to reduce Tension with another Traveler. To do that, they first need to increase Tension between each other, thus encouraging interpersonal scenes and roleplaying, which can be done when resting.

Therefore, it's crucial that the players remember to set interpersonal scenes that increase and then reduce Tension between the Travelers. Without Tensions going up and then down, it will be much harder to regain lost Hope. The GM and other players can suggest scenes for other players to set, to keep the Hope loop going.

When the Travelers are up to strength, they can start confronting Threats again, taking risks, which again leads to lost Health and Hope. This cycle will make the Travelers experience both action scenes with horror and drama, and interpersonal scenes along the journey.

## Mental Trauma

If you've had a Breakdown but rallied, you may suffer serious mental trauma that may take a long time to recover from. Roll on the adjacent table. Each week, you can make one Wits or Empathy roll (your choice) to recover from a mental trauma.

D66	Trauma	Effect
11-36	None	—
41	Confused	-1 die on Wits rolls.
42	Apathetic	You cannot push any dice rolls.
43	Reclusive	You cannot recover Hope by reducing Tension.
44	Obsessive	You must push every dice roll - even if it was successful.
45	Overwhelmed	-2 dice on all rolls to resist traumatic events.
46	Alcoholic	You can only recover Hope by drinking a dose of alcohol (page 109), but never more than 1 point per day.
51	Depressed	You cannot be rallied by another person when you have a Breakdown.
52	Worrisome	Even minor concerns (GM's choice) count as traumatic events for you, with a potential Hope loss of 1.
53	Changed personality	Randomly generate a new Dream (page 59).
54	Phobic	You become phobic of something connected to your trauma (GM's choice). Every contact with your phobia counts as a traumatic event for you, with a potential Hope loss of 2.
55	Speech loss	You cannot speak at all and need to communicate using written notes or hand signs.
56	Nightmares	Every Shift you sleep, you suffer a traumatic event with a potential Hope loss of 1.
61	Flashbacks	The potential Hope loss from all traumatic events is increased by one.
62	Panic attacks	When you lose 1 or more points of Hope due to a traumatic event, you automatically have a Breakdown.
63	Violent	When you lose 1 or more points of Hope due to a traumatic event, you attack the nearest person in close combat instead of freezing. You'll fight until you take damage.
64	Psychotic	At some point every Shift (GM's choice), you experience hallucinations that count as traumatic events with a potential Hope loss of 1.
65	Amnesiac	You cannot remember who you or the other player characters are. The effect must be roleplayed.
66	Personality split	Create a new character with a different name, Wits and Empathy scores, a Dream, a random talent, and separate Tension scores (starting at zero). You switch personality every time you lose a point of Hope for any reason.

## Playing Trauma

We strongly recommend that you discuss mental trauma in the group before using these rules. If anyone in the group prefers not to make mental illness a part of the game, be sure to respect that and simply ignore the rule that a Breakdown of Hope can trigger a trauma.

# OTHER HAZARDS

## ■ EXPLOSIONS

When something explodes, it hits everything at Short distance from the impact point, i.e. in the same zone. Explosions have a Blast Power. Roll a number of dice equal to the Blast Power – each ■ rolled means one point of damage to all targets. The Blast Power roll cannot be pushed.

### Dodging

If you're aware of an explosion nearby, you can dodge just like when attacked in ranged combat (page 80). Roll Agility – each ■ rolled by you reduces the damage by 1. You lose your next turn if you do this, but you are allowed to make defensive Agility rolls against any number of explosions or ranged attacks until your next turn.

### Explosive Weapons

Attacks with explosive weapons are rolled using Agility as normal. If you hit, all targets within Short range of the impact point suffer blast damage as per above. Extra ■ on your attack roll increase the damage on all targets. A failed skill roll means that you hit a random zone adjacent to the intended target zone.

## ■ FIRE

Fire is measured in Intensity. A typical fire has an Intensity between 4 to 8. When exposed to fire, roll a number of dice equal to the Intensity. For each ■, you take 1 point of damage. The roll cannot be pushed. If you stay in the flames, or if you keep burning, you keep taking damage. As the fire spreads, Intensity increases, typically by 2 points each round. An Agility roll can stop a fire from spreading. It is handled as an opposed roll against the fire's Intensity.

Explosive	Blast Power
Molotov cocktail	6
Hand grenade	8
Rocket launcher	10
Mortar	12
Howitzer	14

Fire	Intensity
Torch	4
Burning furniture	6
Burning room	8

## ■ COLD

When it's cold and you don't have adequate clothes or shelter (GM's discretion), you must roll for Strength every Shift (every Stretch in extreme conditions). If you fail, you become hypothermic and suffer 1 point of damage. You also cannot heal naturally. You must keep rolling for Strength at the same interval, suffering more damage each time you fail. Only after you have warmed up, if only by a campfire, are you able to heal again.

Disease	Virulence
Flu	4
Pneumonia	6
Ebola	10





## ◻ DISEASE

Diseases have a Virulence rating, typically between 4 to 10. When you are exposed to a disease, make an opposed roll for Strength against the Virulence of the disease. If you win, your body fought off the disease and you are well. If it is a draw, you are infected but don't take any damage.

For each ◻ rolled for the disease more than you rolled to resist it, you take 1 point of damage. Make an opposed roll against the disease each day until you manage to successfully fight off the disease by winning a roll, or you are Incapacitated. While you are sick, you can't recover any lost Health.

A person with the Nurse talent treating you for at least a Stretch can make a Wits roll when you roll for Strength to resist the disease. The ◻ from both rolls are added together. A first aid kit (page 109) gives bonus dice to the Wits roll.

## ◻ FALLING

Falling on a hard surface automatically inflicts damage equal to the height in meters divided by two, rounded down. In a controlled jump, roll for Agility. Each ◻ reduces the damage by 1.

## ◻ HUNGER & THIRST

You need to eat and drink something every day. For each day without enough food or water, make a Strength roll. If you fail, you take 1 point of damage. Also, while starving you cannot recover any lost Health or Hope in any way.

## ◻ SLEEP DEPRIVATION

You need to sleep for at least one Shift every day. After a full day (four Shifts) without sleep, you become sleep deprived and cannot recover Hope in any way. Also, you must make a Wits roll after each Shift – if it fails, you fall asleep wherever you are, and sleep for a Shift. When you have slept for one Shift, you are no longer sleep deprived.

# NEUROCASTING

**USING YOUR NEUROCASTER HELMET**, you can enter a neurographic network known as a neuroscape. The neurographic networks are described in more detail in Chapter 2. Here, you'll find the rules for neurocasting, which can be very useful to reach your goal, but also dangerous, as you risk losing yourself in the Electric State. Inside a neuroscape, you can perform three types of tasks:

- ◻ Find information.
- ◻ Use or hack systems linked to the neuroscape, such as drones and alarms.
- ◻ Interact with other avatars inside the neuroscape, including attacking them.

## ◻ THE NEUROCASTER

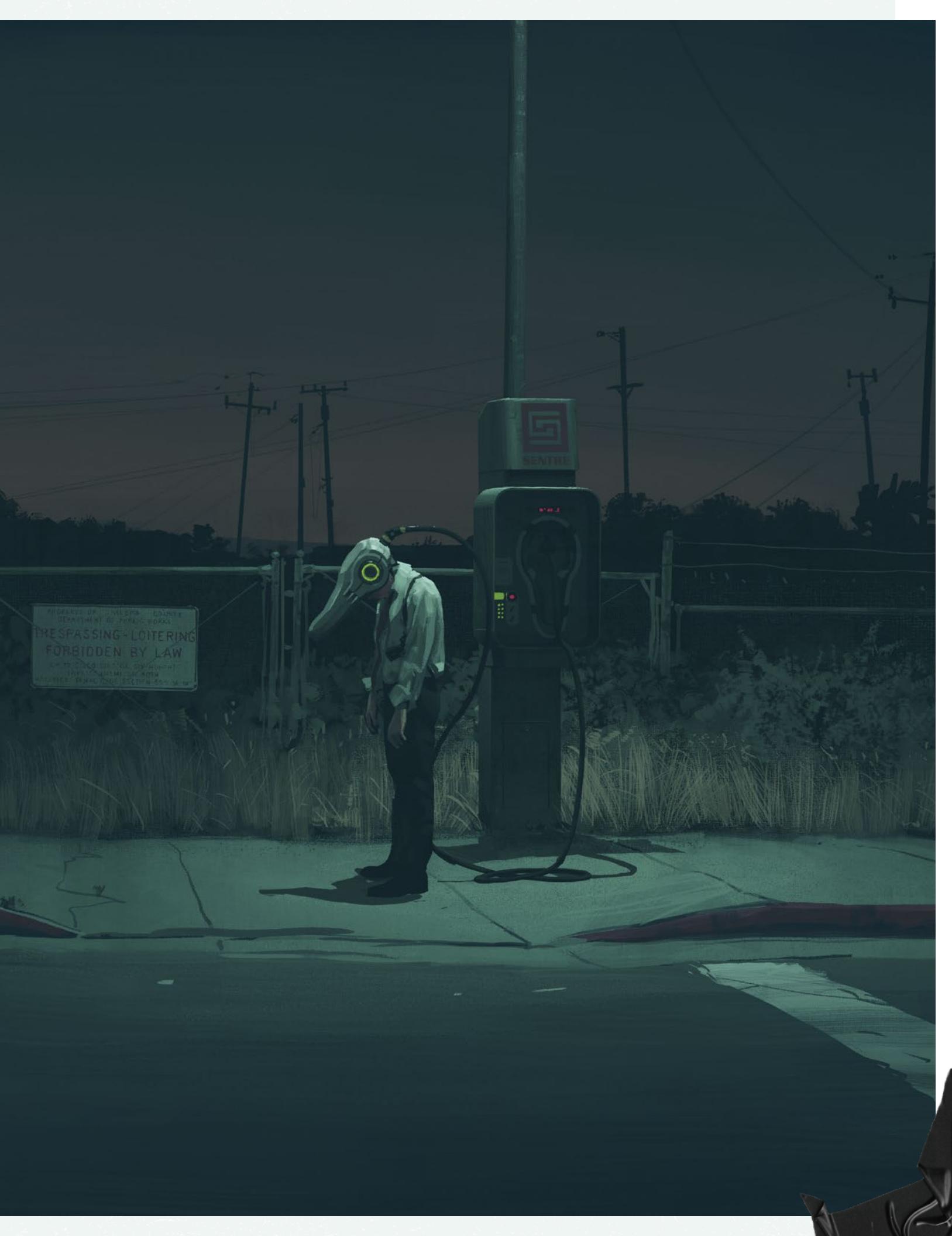
Most Travelers have a neurocaster helmet as part of their starting gear. Neurocasters come in a range of models, see the list on page 92. They have three attributes, each giving you a gear bonus when performing specific actions inside the neuroscape:

- ◻ **Processor:** The raw computing power of the neurocaster, mainly used when processing large amounts of data.
- ◻ **Network:** The neurocaster's ability to connect with other systems linked to the same neuroscape and manipulate them.
- ◻ **Graphics:** The ability of the neurocaster to present the neuroscape to the user and the user itself in lifelike and enthralling detail to other avatars.

### Damage

Each of the three attributes give a gear bonus from the neurocaster and can be decreased when pushing rolls (page 53). If any of the three attributes is reduced to zero, the neurocaster is Busted and needs repairs before it can be used again (page 108). If you are inside a neuroscape when your neurocaster is Busted, you are immediately disconnected. This immediately reduces your current Hope to zero and inflict a mental trauma (page 87).





## WIRED & WIRELESS

Most neurocasters can be used wirelessly, connecting to the neuroscape via the massive neurograph towers seen across *Pacifica*. Neurocasters are more effective when directly plugged into a neurocaster terminal however – this gives +2 dice to all rolls for using the neurocaster, unless stated otherwise.

### Local & Global

Some neuroscapes are local, limited to a certain location or system. Others are global, linked to a worldwide network of neuroscapes all interconnected to each other.

### Network Access

Wireless access to neuroscapes varies depending on your physical location and the local network towers. In some areas, you have full access to the global neuroscapes. In others, you can only access a local neuroscape, and in some remote locations you cannot access any neuroscapes at all. The same goes for the wired neuroscape terminals – some give global access, some only local.

## INSIDE A NEUROSCAPE

Neuroscapes have quickly evolved from very rudimentary visual representations of data networks to enthralling virtual worlds. Neuroscapes come in endless varieties – from hyper-realistic renditions of paradisical locations on Earth or its history to fanciful vistas of imagined fantastical worlds where the laws of nature don't apply.

### Helping in Neuroscapes

Other Travelers or NPCs connected to the same neuroscape as you can help you to perform all types of tasks when neurocasting. Each person helping you gives +1 die to your roll. The helpers cannot do anything else while assisting you.

### Common Neurocasters

Name	Processor	Network	Graphics	Cost
Stimulus TLE Standard	+2	+2	+2	\$700
Stimulus GO*	+2	+2	+1	\$600
Johnny Jolt Theme	+1	+2	+3	\$500
Stimulus TLE-PRO	+3	+3	+3	\$1,300
Jury-Rigged	+1	+1	+1	–

\* Only gives -1 die to actions in the real world.

Most neuroscapes offer blissful environments directly targeting the brain's pleasure centers, but there are also nightmarish "darkscapes" for individuals eager to explore the more sinister sides of humanity. In Chapter 5, the GM can find tools and guidelines for designing neuroscapes.

Due to their fleeting and varied nature, neuroscapes are handled in an abstract manner in the game. There are no maps for neuroscapes – instead, activities in them are managed via a series of interactions and dice rolls for Wits or Empathy as outlined below.

## BLISS & HOPE

After Sentre's Mode Six update, the neuroscape experience has become so addictive that many users simply become unable to leave it – some even die from dehydration or become enslaved by strange and powerful entities in the neuroscapes.

### Accumulating Bliss

Using neuronics causes you to accumulate points of Bliss. Each time you fail a dice roll inside the neuroscape, before pushing the roll, your Bliss score increases by 1. Pushing the roll carries further risk, as it can reduce your current Hope.

Specific experiences inside a neuroscape can also give you Bliss. The GM indicates the amount of potential Bliss points inflicted. You then make a Wits roll. Each **█** rolled reduces the amount of Bliss from the experience by 1.

### The Electric State

If your Bliss score ever equals or exceeds your current Hope, you're fully lost in the Electric State, and you will be unable to leave the neuroscape on your own – dying from hunger and thirst (page 89) unless someone

### Wearing a Neurocaster

When wearing a neurocaster, you can still move and act in the real world, but all actions requiring mobility or vision get -2 dice (except with the Stimulus GO, which only gives -1 die). Also, you cannot act both in the real world and inside the neuroscape in the same round – you need to choose one or the other.

Stimulus TLE-PRO

Stimulus TLE Standard

Stimulus GO

Johnny Jolt Theme

else forcibly removes your neurocaster first. Doing so will however immediately reduce your current Hope to zero and thus inflict a mental trauma (page 87). The same thing happens if your neurocaster is Busted or if you are Incapacitated.

Note that you can continue helping the group and performing tasks inside the neuroscape after being lost in the Electric State – you just cannot disconnect on your own. Your Bliss score continues to accumulate by 1 point per failed dice roll made.

### Reducing Bliss

Your Bliss score is automatically reduced by 1 point per full day without using a neurocaster, as the vivid images of the neuroscape fade from your memory like a dream. However, you must roll a die for each point of Bliss you're about to lose. If you roll a 1, this point of Bliss is not lost and instead becomes permanent. Mark your Permanent Bliss on your character sheet.

Note that you can enter a neuroscape with a Bliss score (temporary or permanent) already equal or higher than your current Hope, knowing full well that you will not be able to leave the neuroscape voluntarily.

### Neuroresistant

If you have the Neuroresistant talent, you get to make a Wits roll to leave a neuroscape even if your Bliss equals or exceeds your Hope. Only one roll is allowed.

## ■ FINDING INFORMATION

The most common task performed in a neuroscape is to find information. Global neuroscapes can give you access to an endless plethora of books, recordings, transcripts, floor plans, media and more. Even local neuroscapes can offer very useful information, only much more limited in scope.

### Difficulty

When you search for information using a neurocaster, the GM (or the Stop text) sets a Difficulty from 1–3, depending on how rare, specific, and sensitive the information is. This number indicates the number of separate Wits rolls that you need to make in order to find the desired information. The Data Miner talent gives you +2 dice. Also, add your neurocaster's Processor attribute as a gear bonus to the rolls.

Some information may be impossible to find even inside a global neuroscape – the GM will tell you as much, and no roll is made.

### Time Consumption

Typically, each dice roll used to find information inside a neuroscape takes one Stretch of time. However, if a roll fails (even after pushing), subsequent attempts to find the same piece of information take one Shift of time each.

## Information in Neuroscapes

Type of Information	Difficulty
City maps or blueprints	1
Common knowledge about a person or location	1
Security information about a building	2
Sensitive information about an individual	2
Classified military information	3
Information about who or what controls the neuroscape	3

## Hacking Systems

Type of System	Difficulty
Consumer security system	1
Consumer drone or robot	1
Advanced security system	2
Police drone	2
Local neuroscape	2
Military-grade security system	3+
Military drone	3+
Global neuroscape	3+
Taking control of the system	+1
Extending time period to a Shift	+1

## ■ HACKING THE NETWORK

Another common task inside the neuroscapes is to use or hack into systems connected to them, such as drones, robots, security systems, and more. Doing so, you can bypass obstacles in your way or even take control of them. You can even change the appearance and physicality of the neuroscape itself.

The GM, or the Stop text, will determine which systems are possible to access from a given neuroscape. Using a system to which you have authorized access, such as your own drone (page 98), requires no dice roll – instead, you roll to perform tasks using the system.

### Difficulty

When you try to hack a system, the GM (or the Stop text) sets a base Difficulty from 1–3, depending on how secure and complex the system is. This number indicates the number of separate Wits rolls that you need to make in order to disable the system for one Stretch of time. The Hacker talent gives you +2 dice. Also, add your neurocaster's Network attribute as a gear bonus to the rolls.

If you want to take control of the system for a Stretch in order to fully manipulate it, the Difficulty is increased by one. If you want to increase the time the system is disabled or controlled to a Shift of time, the Difficulty is also increased by one.

### Time Consumption

Typically, each dice roll used to hack a system takes one Stretch of time. If a roll fails (even after pushing), subsequent attempts also take one Stretch of time each.

### Failure

The effects of failing a roll to hack a drone or security system depends on the situation but will typically trigger some kind of alarm or warning. After a failed roll, you can still continue to try to hack the system.





## Drones

The above rules apply to hacking into drones that are not currently controlled by another person or entity. In order to take over control of a drone from someone else, you need to duel that entity (see below).

## ■ INTERACTING WITH AVATARS

Inside a neuroscape, you can encounter avatars of other persons and entities connected to the same network. Avatars may appear in many different ways according to the wishes of the user, and typically adapt to the general appearance of the neuroscape. For example, in a neuroscape designed like a town in the Old West you'll look like a person of the era, but the details are up to you.

### Avatar Communication

Typically, you can communicate with other avatars by simply speaking to them just like in the real world.

If you want to persuade, charm, or trick another person or entity inside a neuroscape, roll for Empathy just like you would in the real world, adding +2 dice for the Gamer talent and gear dice equal to the Graphics attribute of your neurocaster. If your opponent actively opposes you, they roll for Wits with gear dice for their neurocaster's Network attribute.

Remember that each failed roll inside a neuroscape gives you a Bliss point (page 92). Only failing an opposed roll as the active party will give you Bliss points, however.

### Avatar Manipulation

The powerfully immersive effects of the neuroscape make it possible to affect others in more fundamental ways than in real life.

Inside a neuroscape, you can convince another avatar that their core beliefs or fundamental views of the world are wrong. This requires several interactions over a period of time – typically two to four successful Empathy rolls, depending on the scope of the manipulation. One roll can be made per Shift.

Even non-human entities inside the neuroscapes can manipulate people in this way, turning them into zombie-like followers of their machine god.

### Avatar Combat

You can fight avatars inside a neuroscape just like enemies in the real world. The specifics of the neuroscape determine what the combat looks like – it can be anything from a gladiator

fight in ancient Rome to an intergalactic space battle – but in game terms, it's always treated like close combat at Engaged range (page 78) but using Wits (instead of Strength). All rolls get +2 dice for the Gamer talent and gear dice equal to the Graphics attribute of your neurocaster.

Since combat typically involves quite a few dice rolls, you risk gaining many Bliss points. Again, only failing an opposed roll as the active party will give you Bliss points.

### Avatar Damage

Due to the immersive nature of neuroscapes, attacks against avatars inflict damage just like real world attacks, reducing the Health of the user. If you are reduced to zero Health due to an attack on your avatar, you are Incapacitated (page 82) and immediately disconnected from the network. You don't risk dying, however – you automatically rally after a Stretch and recover 1 point of Health. You must also roll for a mental trauma (page 87) instead of a serious physical injury.

### Dual Combat

Combat can occur simultaneously inside a neuroscape and in the real world. For example, you could be controlling a drone in the real world while your avatar is being attacked in the neuroscape. In such cases, on your turn you must decide whether to act in the real world or inside the neuroscape. In the realm in which you don't act, you are considered completely inactive until your next turn and cannot respond to attacks.

## Intercerebral Intelligences

Most avatars you encounter in a neuroscape are controlled by other people, also connected to neurocasters. But there are rumors of strange sentient entities, created or spontaneously grown inside the neuroscapes themselves, called Intercerebral Intelligences. There are even claims that such entities can affect neurocasting humans on a physical level, slowly changing their genome.

Intercerebral Intelligences have Wits and Empathy attributes just like humans, and sometimes higher scores than humans can reach. Intercerebral Intelligences don't use (and don't need) neurocasters.

# DRONES

**REMOTE-CONTROLLED DRONE ROBOTS** have become ubiquitous in Pacifica and elsewhere, ranging from simple consumer models to massive military drone ships. For more about drones and their function in society, see page 31. To control a drone, you need to use a neurocaster allowing you to see and hear everything the drone does, effectively making the drone an extension of yourself.

## Power

Drones are typically powered by Vanadium Redox batteries. They last for months, meaning you will not likely need to worry about power for your drone during a Journey, but you might need to find Vanadium Redox batteries to power up a drained drone.

## █ USING A DRONE

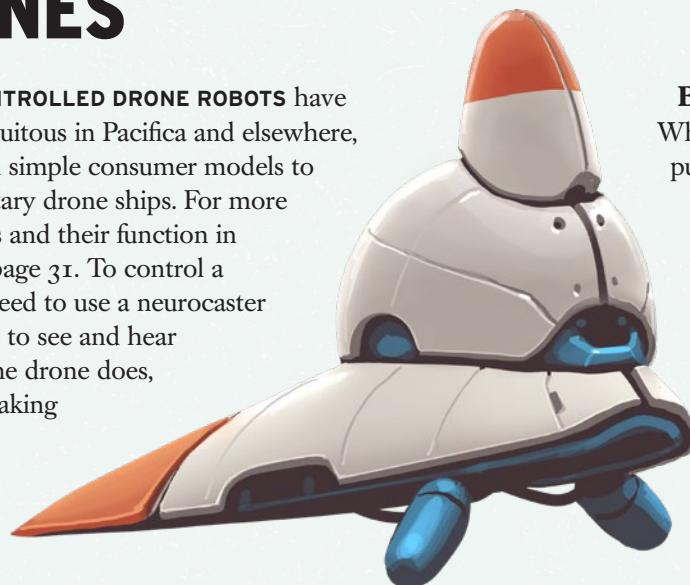
Drones typically have their own Strength and Agility scores, used for dice rolls instead of your own attributes. You still use your own Wits and Empathy scores when controlling a drone. For all rolls, even Wits and Empathy, you get bonus gear dice equal to your neurocaster's Network attribute.

## Weapons

Armed drones, both of the gaming and military varieties, typically use built-in weapons. Such weapons have a base Damage rating and a minimum and maximum range just like other weapons, but no gear bonus – instead, the neurocaster's Network attribute is used.

## Damage

Drones have a Hull rating, similar to Health but separate from its operator. If the drone's Hull is reduced to zero, the operator is immediately disconnected, and the drone cannot be used until it is repaired (page 108). Most drones have a metal or plastic casing, providing some protection in the form of an Armor Level (page 83) without giving any negative Agility modifier.



Civilian Flyer Drone

## Bliss

When using a drone, every failed roll (before pushing) gives you a point of Bliss, just like any other roll when using a neurocaster. This means that you risk accumulating a high amount of Bliss when operating a drone. Many drone operators become unable to unplug.

## █ CONSUMER DRONES

Drones designed for consumers have a wide range of purposes, from practical matters to pleasure – and gaming. The Sentre corporation's annual Neuro Battles, the modern equivalent of ancient gladiator arena battles, are massively popular. The adjacent table lists a few popular drone models.

## █ MILITARY DRONES

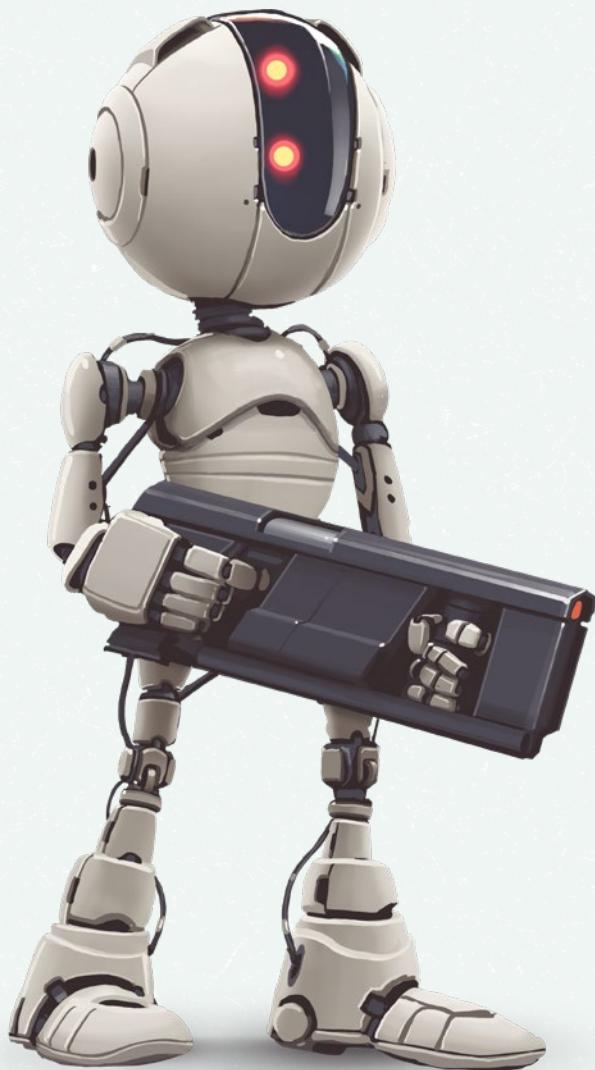
The military spearheaded the use of drones, and developed the massive drone ships whose decaying wrecks litter the landscape of Pacifica and elsewhere since the civil war. Military drones and drone ships are often heavily armed and armored, but few remain operational today.

## █ DRONE GROWTHS

Rumors are spreading about monstrous, seemingly jury-rigged drones appearing across Pacifica, often huge in size and sometimes connected to people in neurocasters. Some say these drone growths are the physical representations of sentient Intercerebral Intelligences inside the neuroscapes (page 97). Such drone growths also have Strength and Agility ratings and can act simultaneously in the real world and inside a neuroscape. They can also be attacked in both realms. For more about drone growths, see Chapter 6.

## █ ROBOTS

Automated machines without human pilots are called robots, often used for menial tasks but also guard duty. In game terms, robots are handled like drones, but most lack Wits and Empathy scores. There are claims that some advanced robots have begun to spontaneously evolve into sentient beings. For more on robots, see Chapter 6.



Elite Trooper Gaming Drone



Classic Gaming Drone "Wally Wayne"

### Consumer Drones

Name	Strength	Agility	Hull	Armor	Damage	Min. Range	Max Range	Cost
Kids Drone "Kid Kosmo"	3	5	8	2	1	Engaged	Engaged	\$650
Classic Gaming Drone "Wally Wayne"	4	5	9	2	1	Short	Medium	\$850
Civilian Flyer Drone*	3	6	9	2	1	Short	Medium	\$1,200
Battle Gaming Drone "Johnny Jolt"	5	4	9	3	2	Short	Medium	\$950
Elite Trooper Gaming Drone	5	6	11	4	2	Short	Long	\$1,150
Jury-Rigged	3	3	6	1	1	Engaged	Short	-

\* Capable of flight.



# VEHICLES

**YOUR VEHICLE IS MAINLY** a means of transportation between Stops, and a potential safe place while staying there, but situations may arise where you end up in a chase or use your car in combat. You can find a number of vehicle types in the table below.

## ■ VEHICLE ATTRIBUTES

A vehicle has five attributes:

- **Passengers** is the number of people who can ride in the vehicle, excluding the driver.

■ **Maneuverability** is the number of bonus gear dice you get when driving the vehicle. The Maneuverability can be reduced by pushing rolls.

■ **Speed** is the number of zones the vehicle can travel per round in combat.

■ **Hull** determines how much external damage the vehicle can take before being Wrecked.

■ **Armor** determines the Armor Level the vehicle offers.

The rating of each attribute is the same for all vehicles of the same type but may be altered by traits. When you find or buy a vehicle, the GM may pick (or roll up) one or several traits for it using the table on page 102.

### Typical Vehicles

Vehicle	Passengers	Maneuverability	Speed	Hull	Armor	Cost
Horse	1	-*	2	3	-	\$1,000
Wagon	4	+1	2	6	2	\$200
Bicycle	-	+1	2	3	-	\$300
Motorcycle	1	+2	3	4	2	\$5,000
Dirt bike	-	+3	2	3	-	\$3,000
2WD Car	4	+2	3	6	4	\$10,000
4WD Car	4	+3	2	6	4	\$15,000
Pickup Truck	5	+2	2	8	4	\$20,000
Van	7	+2	2	8	4	\$25,000
Light Truck	14	+1	2	12	4	\$30,000
Heavy Truck	16	+1	2	14	4	\$50,000
Bus	50	+1	2	12	4	\$40,000
Rowboat	4	+1	1	5	2	\$500
Small Sailing Boat	7	+1	2	6	2	\$5,000
Small Motorboat	7	+2	3	5	2	\$12,000
<b>Very rare</b>						
Helicopter	4	+3	4	6	3	\$200,000
Light airplane	3	+2	4	5	3	\$100,000
Small commercial drone ship	10	+2	4	9	3	\$200,000
<b>Cannot be purchased commercially</b>						
Military drone ship	-	+3	5	12	8	-

\*When riding, use the horse's Agility rating instead of your own. A typical horse has Agility 6.

## Fuel

When driving your vehicle, you need to keep approximate track of the fuel spent. The gas tank of a typical car holds 20 gallons of gasoline and will allow it to run about 400 miles. The GM has final say about when and where your fuel runs out.

## Vehicle Traits

To give a vehicle some unique traits, the GM can roll a D66 or choose from the list below.

### D66 Trait

- 11-13 **Fast:** Increase Speed by 1.
- 14-16 **Roomy:** Increase Passengers by 2.
- 21-23 **Reliable:** +2 dice when repairing the vehicle.
- 24-26 **Slow:** Reduce Speed by 1 (re-roll if Speed is already 1).
- 31-33 **Heavy:** Increase Hull by 1.
- 34-36 **Powerful:** Increase Maneuverability by 1.
- 41-43 **Luxury model:** Increase Cost by 1.
- 44-46 **Boneshaker:** Decrease Cost and Maneuverability by 1 (minimum +1).
- 51-53 **Light frame:** Reduce Armor by 1 (minimum zero).
- 54-56 **Cheap model:** Decrease Hull by 1 (minimum 1).
- 61-63 **Loud:** Attracts attention.
- 64-66 **Custom paintjob:** Stands out.



## Aircraft & Boats

After the introduction of drone ships, they replaced most other aircraft for both civilian and military use. Now, most drone ships are rusting wrecks littering the countryside, but a few operational ships might remain, as well as old models of traditional aircraft.

Boats of various kinds are more common in Pacifica, but neither watercraft nor aircraft should be used as the Travelers' main means of transportation unless the GM specifically allows it.



## ■ VEHICLE MOVEMENT

When driving in combat, you can make one move and perform one action on your turn, just like on foot, but your choices are more limited. Note that certain talents give bonus dice to Agility rolls for maneuvering specific types of vehicles.

### Riding Animals

Horses and other riding animals also count as vehicles in these rules. They have an Agility rating of their own however - roll for this instead of your own Agility when riding.

### Movement

When driving in combat, you can make a number of moves equal to the Speed rating of the vehicle. Each move is just like a move on foot (page 78) - one zone or between Short and Engaged range of a person or another vehicle in the same zone as you.

### Stunts

Performing any kind of special maneuver with a vehicle, such as jumping, driving through hard terrain, breaking through something, or hitting something, is called a stunt and uses your action for the round. A stunt typically requires an Agility roll with gear dice added for the Maneuverability attribute of the vehicle. If the roll fails, you have an accident (page 104).

## Accidents

If you fail an Agility roll to control your vehicle, you suffer an accident.

Roll a D6 on the relevant adjacent table - there is one each for ground vehicles, boats, and aircraft.

### D6 Road Accidents

- 1 **Skid:** Everyone inside the vehicle gets -2 to all actions for the rest of the round.
- 2 **Spin:** The driver needs to make another Agility roll (no action) to bring the vehicle under control. If it fails, immediately roll again on this table with a +2 modifier.
- 3 **Blowout:** The Maneuverability of the vehicle is reduced by 1.
- 4 **Collision:** The vehicle crashes into something solid and suffers damage equal to its own Speed rating.
- 5 **Flip:** The vehicle flips over on its side. To get it upright requires an action and a Strength roll (for bicycles and motorcycles, no roll is needed, only the action).
- 6+ **Tumble:** The vehicle tumbles over multiple times and is Wrecked (Hull reduced to zero). Everyone inside (or on it) suffers damage equal to the Speed rating of the vehicle but can roll for Agility (no action) to reduce the damage - each  rolled eliminates 1 point of damage. The vehicle armor provides no protection against this damage.

### D6 Boat Accidents

- 1 **Splash:** Everyone in the boat gets -2 to all actions for the rest of the round.
- 2 **Broach:** The driver needs to make another Agility roll (no action) to bring the vehicle under control. If it fails, immediately roll again on this table with a +2 modifier.
- 3 **Capsize:** The vehicle flips over. To get it right side up requires an action and a successful Strength roll at -2 dice. One attempt can be made per round.
- 4 **Engine loss:** The boat's Maneuverability is reduced to zero.
- 5 **Collision:** The boat crashes into something solid and suffers damage equal to its own Speed rating.
- 6+ **Sinking:** The boat keels over violently and starts to sink. Everyone inside (or on it) suffers damage equal to the Speed rating of the vehicle but can roll for Agility (no action) to reduce the damage - each  rolled eliminates 1 point of damage. On the driver's next turn, the boat sinks.

### D6 Air Accidents

- 1 **Roll:** Everyone inside the aircraft gets -2 to all actions for the rest of the round.
- 2 **Spiral dive:** The altitude is reduced by one zone. If this brings the aircraft to the ground, see result #6 in this table.
- 3 **Spin:** The pilot needs to make another Agility roll (no action) to bring the vehicle under control. If it fails, roll again on this table with a +2 modifier on the pilot's next turn.
- 4 **Engine loss:** The aircraft's Maneuverability is reduced to zero. It also loses one zone of altitude per round, starting on the pilot's next turn. The pilot can make a controlled landing.
- 5 **Stall:** The altitude is reduced by two zones. If this brings the aircraft to the ground, see result #6 in this table. Also, the pilot needs to make another Agility roll (no action) to bring the vehicle under control. If it fails, the aircraft stalls again on the pilot's next turn.
- 6+ **Crash:** The aircraft crashes violently to the ground and is Wrecked. All people inside suffer damage equal to the altitude (in zones) multiplied by 3. You can brace yourself for the hit by rolling Agility (not an action) - each  rolled reduces the damage by 1.

## Ramming

A special kind of stunt is to ram a person or another vehicle. It can only be done at Engaged range from the target. This works similarly to a ranged combat attack (page 80) allowing your target to stand tall or dodge (even if in a vehicle). Roll for Agility, adding gear dice for your vehicle's Maneuverability attribute.

The base Damage from a ramming attack equals half the starting Hull rating of your vehicle, rounded up. However, the ramming vehicle also suffers damage equal to half the Hull rating of the target vehicle. After a ram, your movement ends immediately. The armor of the vehicle can reduce the damage taken.

## Other Actions

When driving, you can perform other actions that don't directly involve maneuvering the vehicle, such as firing a gun. Any such action gets -2 dice, however.

## ■ VEHICLE DAMAGE

Vehicles suffer damage just like people. Most vehicles have an Armor Level (page 83). When a vehicle has suffered damage equal to or in excess of its Hull rating, it is Wrecked. This means that the vehicle is inoperable – you'll need to keep going on foot. Wrecked vehicles can be repaired (page 108).

### Component Damage

If a vehicle takes damage equal to or higher than half its Hull rating (round up) or more in a single hit it suffers component damage. Roll D6 on the adjacent table. This means a vehicle can suffer component damage once without being Wrecked, but a second component damage will always Wreck a vehicle.

### Maneuverability

Just like for other pieces of gear, the gear bonus provided by the Maneuverability of a vehicle can be reduced when pushing rolls (page 53). If the Maneuverability rating is reduced to zero, the vehicle becomes inoperable and needs to be repaired.

### Shooting at Occupants

Using a weapon with Short range or more, you can attack an occupant of a vehicle instead of the vehicle itself. This is resolved as a normal attack, but the target gains the benefit of the vehicle's Armor Level.

## ■ AIRCRAFT

Aircraft are handled in much the same way as other vehicles, with some exceptions:

### Altitude

At all times you must keep track of the vehicle's altitude, measured in zones. When moving, you distribute the zones moved on vertical and horizontal movement. When on the ground, the Speed of the aircraft is typically 1.

### Crashes

If an aerial vehicle is Wrecked, it crashes violently to the ground. All people inside suffer damage equal to the altitude (in zones) multiplied by 3. You can brace yourself for the hit by rolling Agility (not an action) – each ■ rolled reduces the damage by 1.

### Component Damage

#### D6 Effect

**Driver hit:** The driver is hit and suffers damage equal to the damage inflicted on the vehicle.

**Passenger hit:** A random passenger is hit and suffers damage equal to the damage inflicted on the vehicle. Re-roll if no passengers are present.

**Severe spin:** The attack rocks the vehicle. The driver must make an immediate Agility roll (not an action) – failure means that the vehicle is Wrecked.

**Weapon disabled:** A random weapon mounted on the vehicle is disabled. Re-roll if no weapons are present.

**Engine disabled:** The engine is disabled, and the vehicle's Maneuverability is reduced to zero. An aircraft can make a controlled landing, losing one zone of altitude per round.

**Fuel explosion:** The vehicle explodes in a ball of flame. All people inside it are immediately exposed to Intensity 8 fire, and the vehicle is destroyed beyond repair.

## Multiple Participants

If there are more than two participants in a chase, there are two ways to resolve it. The simplest way is to divide the participants into two sides. Only the slowest person/vehicle on each side - the one with the lowest Agility / Speed (free choice on a tie) - rolls for the chase movement.

A more complex way to resolve chases with multiple participants is to let each roll separately. You then need to keep track of the relative distances between each participant. A sheet of paper indicating range bands can be useful for this. In this model, each  rolled will move you forward relative to all other participants in the chase. You count as pursuer in relation to all participants in front of you, and as prey in relation to all participants behind you.

# CHASES

**IN A CHASE SITUATION**, on foot or using vehicles, movement is managed abstractly and does not use zones. Instead, only range categories (page 78) are used.

A chase can either start from a roleplaying situation, or it can follow directly after combat if a person or a vehicle leaves the combat map. In either case, the GM declares that a chase is now in progress and decides the starting range between the participants, up to a maximum of Long range.

Most chases are between just two parties – the pursuer and their prey, on foot or driving vehicles. For guidelines on using multiple participants, see the adjacent sidebar.

## RESOLUTION

Chases are played out in rounds just like combat, but each round starts with resolving movement before other actions. This is done as an open opposed roll for Agility, with bonus dice from relevant talents





and Maneuverability ratings for vehicles. The Speed attribute is not used in chases.

The winner of the roll increases or decreases the range by one category for each  more rolled than the loser. If the range goes beyond Extreme, the chase is over. If it goes to Engaged, the pursuer can ram the prey (if in a vehicle) or perform a close combat attack (if on foot). If the range goes below Engaged, the pursuer can choose to stay Engaged or overtake the opponent and become the prey.

## ACTIONS

After the chase movement has been resolved, everyone on the prey's side gets to perform an action each, followed by everyone on the pursuing side. The prey and pursuer may themselves perform actions, including ramming (if at Engaged range) or a stunt (to avoid an obstacle), but any action not connected to the chase movement gets -2 dice.

## Chase Obstacles

To spice up a ground vehicle chase, the GM can roll on the table below at the start of each round to generate an obstacle that the drivers need to face. Re-roll any results that don't fit the environment. Agility rolls made to navigate an obstacle consume the action of the round for a driver. Such rolls are made right before the opposed roll for the movement. The prey rolls first, then the pursuer.

### D66 Obstacle

- 
- 11-36 **The road is clear!**
- 41-42 **Dead end!** The prey needs to double back, automatically failing their chase movement roll in this round (no push possible).
- 43-44 **Downpour!** Visibility is reduced for the rest of the chase. All further Agility rolls to control a vehicle get -1 die.
- 45-46 **Pedestrians!** Only the prey needs to make an Agility roll - failure results in an accident (page 104).
- 51-52 **Roadworks!** Both prey and pursuer need to make Agility rolls - failure results in an accident (page 104).
- 53-54 **Huge potholes!** Prey and pursuer need to make Agility rolls - failure results in 1 point of damage to the vehicle (armor gives no protection).
- 55-56 **Oil slick!** Prey and pursuer need to make Agility rolls - failure results in a spin (accident result #2 on the table on page 104).
- 61-62 **Fallen tree!** Prey and pursuer need to make Agility rolls - failure results in damage equal the vehicle's own Speed rating.
- 63-64 **Wildlife!** The prey needs to make an Agility roll - failure results in an accident (page 104). If the prey's roll succeeds, the pursuer also needs to roll.
- 65-66 **Dust storm!** Visibility is severely reduced for the rest of the chase. All further Agility rolls to control a vehicle get -2 dice.

# GEAR & REPAIRS

WHILE *THE ELECTRIC STATE RPG* is a game about people, equipment and gear can sometime mean the difference between life and death. As described in Chapter 3, gear can give you bonus gear dice to roll in attribute rolls (page 53). Sometimes, specific gear is needed to be able to perform an action at all, such as neurocasting (page 90).

You will find lists of weapons, neurocasters, and vehicles earlier in this chapter. At the end of the chapter, you'll find lists of other useful gear.

## █ DAMAGE TO GEAR

When you push a dice roll using gear, the gear bonus is reduced one step for each ★ you roll. If the gear bonus reaches zero, the piece of gear becomes Busted and cannot be used until it is repaired.

### Common Services

Service	Cost	Comment
Cheap motel	\$20	Per night.
Fancy hotel	\$100	Per night.
Coffee & pie	\$5	Covers half of your need of food for one day.
Junk food	\$3	Covers your need of food for one day.
Decent meal	\$10	Covers your need of food for one day.
Fine dining	\$40	Covers your need of food for one day.
Surgery	\$1,000	Required for some serious injuries to heal (page 84).

## Vehicles

The gear bonus for vehicles is called Maneuverability and can be reduced by pushing rolls, just like for other gear. In addition, vehicles can suffer external damage to their Hull rating (like Health for living beings). If either Maneuverability or Hull is reduced to zero, the vehicle becomes inoperable.

## █ REPAIRING GEAR

To repair a piece of gear, you need tools, a Shift of work, and a Wits roll. Talents and specialized tools can give you bonuses to the roll. For each █ you roll, the gear bonus (Maneuverability for vehicles) is increased by one, up to its maximum starting value. You can spend several Shifts on repairs.

## Vehicles

If a vehicle has suffered external damage, you can repair its Hull rating in the same way – each █ rolled restores one point of lost Hull. You need to state before your roll if you are repairing Maneuverability or Hull.

## Spare Parts

To repair a vehicle with Maneuverability or Hull zero, you need a spare part of some sort to be able to repair it. This only applies to vehicles, not other types of gear, and only if the vehicle has become inoperable.

## Costs

The lists of weapons (page 81), vehicles (page 101) and other gear (page 109) indicate approximate costs in US dollars for brand new items. For items not listed, assume a cost of roughly half of today's 2020s equivalent. Used items will be cheaper than the list price but may also have a lower gear bonus.

<b>Gear</b>	<b>Bonus</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Tools, general	+1	\$25	Can be used for any repairs (page 108).
Tools, vehicle	+2	\$50	Can be used to repair vehicles.
Tools, weapon	+2	\$100	Can be used to repair weapons.
Tools, neurocaster	+2	\$50	Can be used to repair neurocasters.
First aid kit	+3	\$25	Used to stabilize an Incapacitated person but requires the Medic talent. Five uses.
Surgical instruments	+2	\$100	Gives gear bonus to performing surgery (page 84).
Pack of cigarettes	-	\$2	Can be used once per Shift to recover 1 point of Hope, but also reduces Health by 1. Four uses.
Bottle of beer	-	\$2	Can be used once per Day to recover 1 point of Hope. One use.
Bottle of hard liquor	-	\$5	Can be used once per Shift to recover 1 point of Hope, but also reduces Health by 1. Three uses.
Pack of chewing gum	+1	\$1	Gives bonus to Empathy rolls when trying to be cool. Three uses.
Binoculars	+2	\$100	Used for Wits rolls to spot something at a distance.
Neurine	-	\$20	Can be used once per Shift to recover 1 point of Hope. Roll for Wits after each use - if you fail, you become addicted and can only recover Hope in this way. One use. Also known as "dream glint."
Food, canned	-	\$5	Covers the daily food need for one person (page 89). One use.
Clothes, outdoor	-	\$50	Keeps one person warm. If you don't have adequate clothes, you suffer the effects of cold (page 59).
Clothes, fine	+1	\$200	Gives bonus to Empathy rolls when trying to impress someone.
Sleeping bag	-	\$25	Allows one person to sleep comfortably outdoors, preventing sleep deprivation (page 89).
Shades	+1	\$20	Gives bonus to Empathy rolls when trying to be cool.
Musical instrument	+2	\$100	Gives bonus to Empathy rolls but requires a Stretch of time and the Musician talent.
Dog, pet	-	\$100	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch with the dog to recover 1 Hope.
Dog, guard	-	\$250	Attacks on your command (action). Has Strength 5, Agility 4, Health 9, and bites with base Damage 2.
Book, fiction	-	\$10	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch reading to recover 1 Hope.
Book, religious	-	\$10	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch reading to recover 1 Hope.
Book, medical	+1	\$30	Gives bonus to rolls for performing surgery (page 84).
Book, non-fiction	+1	\$20	Gives bonus to Wits rolls if the subject is relevant.
Newspaper	+1	\$0.50	Gives bonus to one Wits roll for anything related to current events.
Walkman	-	\$45	Once per day, you can spend a Stretch listening to recover 1 Hope.
Spare part	-	\$100	Needed to repair an inoperable vehicle.
Camera	-	\$200	Needs film.
Pain reliever	-	\$3	Heals 1 point of Health once per day, if not Incapacitated. Ten uses.
Crowbar	+2	\$10	Gives bonus to Strength when breaking something. Can also be used as a weapon (base Damage 1).
Tent	-	\$75	Allows four people to sleep comfortably outdoors, preventing sleep deprivation (page 89).
Walkie-Talkies	-	\$50	Allows communication up to about one mile.
Gasoline (gallon)	-	\$1	A typical car runs about 20 miles per gallon.
Jerrycan	-	\$20	Holds 5 gallons of gasoline.
Vanadium Redox battery	-	\$50*	Powers drones, neurocasters and other electronic devices.

\*Not commercially available.

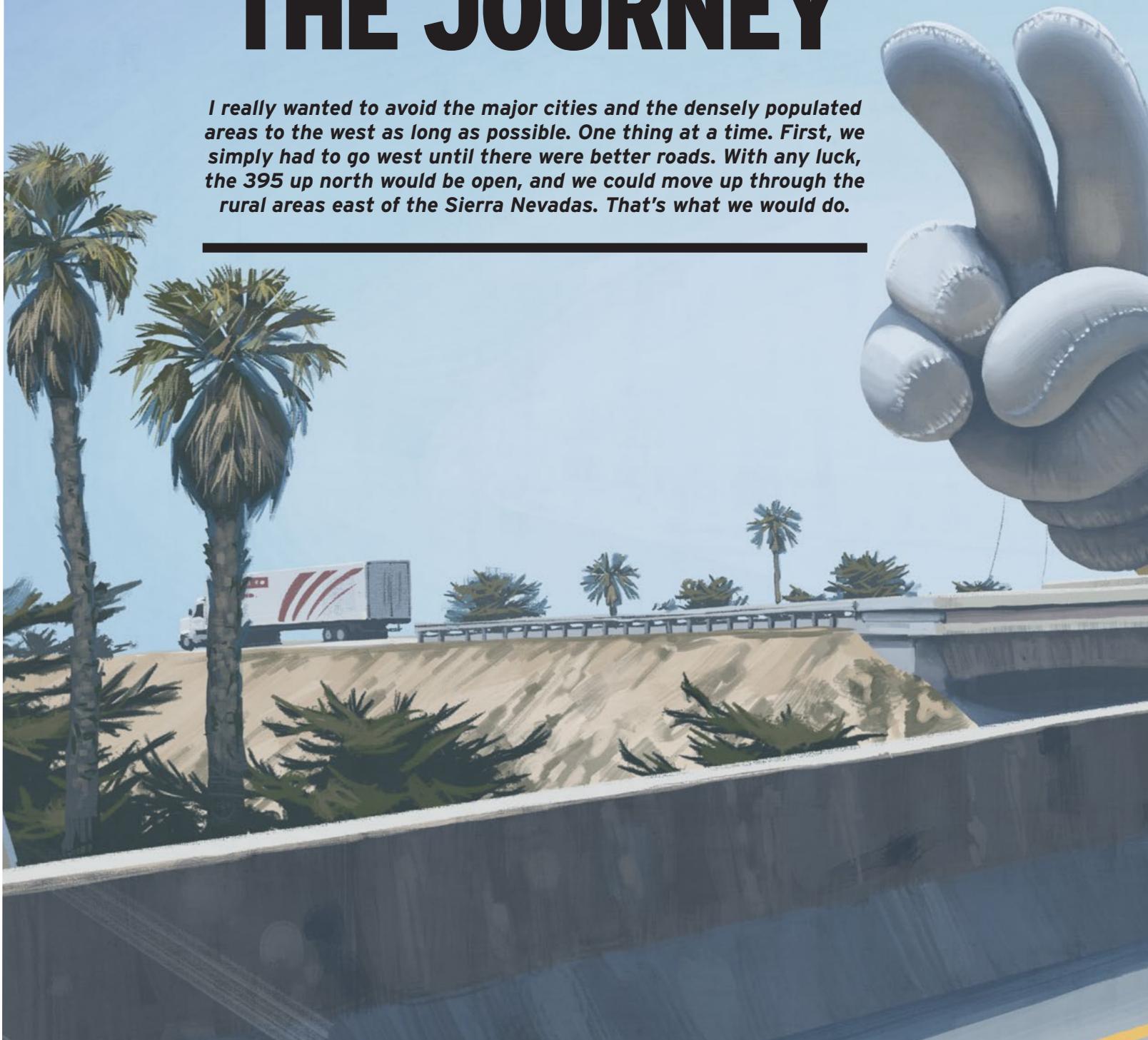


CHAPTER FIVE

# THE JOURNEY

*I really wanted to avoid the major cities and the densely populated areas to the west as long as possible. One thing at a time. First, we simply had to go west until there were better roads. With any luck, the 395 up north would be open, and we could move up through the rural areas east of the Sierra Nevadas. That's what we would do.*

---





# PLANNING THE JOURNEY

**THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES** how the GM prepares and plays the Journey and the Stops along the way. As this chapter and the rest of the book is primarily intended for the GM, the text is addressed to them. When you prepare Stops, you might use information from the next chapter, which is filled with examples of Threats for the Travelers to face.

## Preparing the Journey

To prepare your Journey, follow the steps below. The players can be involved in steps 1-7. Steps 8-10 should be done by the GM alone.

1. Choose the Starting Point.
2. Choose the Destination.
3. Choose the route.
4. Decide the number of Stops on the Journey.
5. Decide each Traveler's personal Goal for the Journey.
6. Decide each Traveler's personal Threat.
7. Describe the vehicle used for the Journey.
8. *Create a personal Threat Countdown for each Traveler.*
9. *Create the Stops on the Journey.*
10. *Create a few minor Encounters.*



## Into the Dust

A complete Journey, called *Into the Dust*, can be found in Chapter 7. It can be played right out of the book to save you the prep work, but it can also serve as a reference and inspiration for your own Journeys.

**PLANNING THE JOURNEY** is done through a number of steps, outlined in the adjacent sidebar and explained in this chapter. This work can be done all by the GM, but it can be very rewarding to do parts of it together in the group as a collaborative process.

The Gamemaster plans the journey, either before the Travelers are created, or afterwards. One of the most important decisions is how long the Journey should be.

Another decision is to come up with a goal for the Journey. You must also decide where it starts and where it ends, and take some time to think about what communities, nature scenes, or oddities you would like the Travelers to encounter on the way.

## ■ STARTING POINT & DESTINATION

The state of Pacifica, described in Chapter 2, is the focus of the game. Use the information there to choose a suitable starting location and an end point for the Journey. You might already want to start thinking about why the Travelers are heading out on the Journey – their personal Dreams (page 59) are a great resource for that. But you don't need to settle this just yet.

We recommend that your Journeys at least start within the borders of Pacifica. Nothing is stopping you from letting the Travelers head into unknown lands, but you will need to do a lot more world-building on your own.

## ■ JOURNEY ROUTE

When you plan for the Journey, you should mark the route on the map so that you can show it to the players. Next, decide where you should place the Stops. Try to let them be varied. If you have one Stop in the desert, the next could be in the woods or in a town. Don't tell the players where the Stops are placed – let them find out in game.

You also need to decide the amount of control the players will have over the Journey. Will the Travelers follow your pre-planned traveling route no matter what



happens, or can they decide to take another route to their goal? If you allow them to go wherever they want, you must be prepared to move Stops around or come up with new ones.

The amount of freedom the players are given is connected to how you want to prepare Stops. If you prefer to prepare all Stops ahead of the game, you're fine to decide that the route is set and that there is no room for deviations. Just make sure to tell your players this before the game starts.

Should you prefer to prepare one Stop at a time, you can, at the end of each session, let the players decide where they go next. This way, you have until the next session to prepare a new Stop. If you like to rely on improvisation, you can roll up a new Stop minutes before play and wing most of the content. This way, the players can decide where they go at the start of the session.

### **Roaming the Land**

It is possible to play a Journey without a set Destination, with the Travelers roaming Pacifica freely. Even for such a Journey, you and the players should still choose the length of it, as this decides how many Stops will need to be prepared. These kinds of Journeys often play out in a better way if the players have more input in creating the Journey and deciding where to go.

## ■ JOURNEY LENGTH

A Journey's length is not the number of miles from start to finish, but how many Stops it has. The purpose of deciding how long a Journey will be beforehand is that you and the players can get a rough estimate of how many sessions it will take to finish. One Stop typically takes one to three sessions to play.

Knowing when a Journey will end has many advantages. It is often easier to complete the Journey if there is a stated end, rather than feeling it could go on forever. Knowing the length of the Journey also helps the players roleplay and pace their Travelers' development and relationships to other Travelers. When the Journey is about to end, the players know that it is time to finally address those issues.

The length of a Journey impacts how it will play out. This is especially true of one-shots. Since the Travelers' personal Threats should always enter play at some point during a Journey, a one-shot means a more personal and Traveler-focused game. Everyone will have to deal with their personal Threat at the same time.

On a long Journey, on the other hand, the personal Threats will likely be divided across several Stops, letting one player at a time feel as if their Traveler is the protagonist for a particular Stop. You can let a personal Threat enter the game at several Stops, depending on how the Threat countdown (page 125) is designed.

## ■ PERSONAL GOALS

As discussed in chapter 3, the Journey plan includes a personal Goal for each Traveler – their reason for going on the Journey. The Goal is typically something that will happen at the end of the road. Regardless of whether the personal Goals are decided by the GM alone or together with the players, remember these four key points:

- A personal Goal should reflect the Traveler's Dream.
- A personal Goal should be very clear and specific (unlike the Dream).
- The Goal is often connected to the Destination in some way, but it can also relate to another Traveler or NPC.
- The Travelers' Goals are often, but don't need to be, connected to each other. Even if several Travelers have a common motivation for going on the Journey, try to make each personal Goal a little different. And some Travelers can have completely unrelated Goals for reaching the Destination.

If you're stuck for ideas for a personal Goal, you can choose or roll on the adjacent table. Just make sure to adapt the result to the Traveler's Dream, and, if you want, the Destination and the Goals of the other Travelers. And don't forget – the purpose of the game is the Journey, not the Goal, so don't hurry too much to get there.

### Keep a Record

As the Travelers progress along their Journey, it's a good idea to keep a record of which Stops they have visited and when. Name the Stop, write the date and add key events, such as if a Traveler died.

### Journey Length

Length	Stops
One-shot	1
Short journey	2-4
Medium journey	4-7
Long journey	8-12

### Random Tables

This book is full of random tables used to create content and make decisions. Remember to not rely blindly on chance. Use the results wisely, as possible input to the story. A result that doesn't make sense in the story will stand out in a bad way. Roll again if a result seems out of place or come up with something of your own. That said, first try to twist and turn the random result as far as possible. An odd result can become something unique and interesting, if handled in the right way.

## The Kicker

Each personal Goal should have a Kicker – an event that happened just before the Journey started, creating urgency and drama and forcing the Traveler to go on the road to reach their Goal. The Kickers can also connect the Travelers to each other and explain how they met. If you like, you could even play out or narrate the Kickers before the proper Journey starts.

### Kicker Examples

- ◻ Gangsters raid the community where the Traveler lives and burn it to the ground.
- ◻ A sibling who has been gone for months contacts a Traveler and asks for help.
- ◻ The Traveler finds a corpse in a car loaded with bags of neurine (page 109).
- ◻ A revolutionary leader tells the Traveler that it is time to strike back.

## ◻ PERSONAL THREATS

In addition to a personal Goal, each Traveler has a personal Threat on the Journey – something or someone who will try to harm them or stop them from reaching their Goal. Each Threat should be directly connected to the personal Goal of the Traveler. Just like the Goals, the Threats are typically decided by you when planning the Journey, but it can also be done collaboratively between you and the players.

### Shared Threats

Travelers with very similar Goals may share the same Threats (and Countdowns). This is perfectly fine. Such shared Threats will typically play a more prominent role during the Journey than individual Threats.

### Countdowns

To help you introduce the Threats during play, each Threat has a Countdown – an escalating series of events (typically three in number) that bring the Threat into play. Even if the Threats were set collaboratively with the players, the Countdowns should always be designed by you, the GM – the players should never know beforehand how their Threats will materialize during the game.

“

*The road fought its way over the ridge into the next empty valley, where a sign informed us we were passing into a military restricted zone. Skip had fallen asleep, and remote-operated machines moved around out there in the valley, their long radio masts waving like antennae above the underbrush as they worked their way across the rocky terrain*

### Why Stick Together?

As part of setting up the personal Goals of the Travelers, the GM or the group should figure out why they share the same vehicle. In some cases, and if their Goals are closely related, the answer will be obvious. In other cases, it's not. Maybe some of them are related or know each other in some way? Are they siblings, lovers, employees, or did some of them respond to an ad asking for people to share gas money for the journey?

You can even let a die roll decide the reason for sticking together:

1. To split gas money.
2. You were all stranded together at a bus station.
3. It is the only car available at the place where the Journey starts.
4. A relative or friend asked if the others could come along as a favor.
5. Only a fool travels along this road alone and without guns.
6. One of you owns the car and the others are hitchhikers.





# STARTING THE JOURNEY

**TO KICK OFF THE JOURNEY**, tell the players – or let them describe – where they are, where they are heading, and what route they are planning to take. Show the players their planned route on the map.

## Ask Group Questions

Next, ask the group these joint questions, on which they must come to an agreement:

- ◻ Who is driving?
- ◻ Where are the others sitting?
- ◻ What music are you listening to?

## Introduce Goals

Unless the players came up with their personal Goals themselves, make sure to inform each player of them now. You can even print these out as notes and hand them to each player, in case they want to keep their Goals secret from the other Travelers at the start of the game. Then, let each player in turn answer the following questions:

- ◻ What do you look like?
- ◻ How did you meet the other Travelers?
- ◻ What have you told them about yourself?
- ◻ How do you feel about them?
- ◻ What are you doing right now?

## Set Tension Levels

Now, ask each player to set their Tension levels to the others. Remember, each Traveler should start the game with Tension 1 toward two other Travelers, and Tension 0 toward the rest.

## Roleplay

Next, put on some '90s music and start roleplaying! Let the players talk, getting a feel for the Travelers and who they are. Let them discuss their personal Goals if they want to, but don't force it. Describe the landscape passing by. Let the players describe how the Travelers feel.

## Introduce Threats

If the right moment presents itself, you might even introduce one of the Travelers' personal Threats and start someone's Countdown at this early stage. But again, don't force it.

# ENDING THE JOURNEY

**AT THE END** of the last Stop, the Travelers have reached their Destination – and possibly their personal Goals. Let the players take turns describing this, as a story told collaboratively.

If you like, each player should also say something about how life plays out for her Traveler in the time following the Journey. This can be done by letting each player roll three base dice. Each die is a significant event in the Traveler's life. A high result means good fortune, wealth, or happiness. Low results mean that bad things happen.

The player may place the events in any order and may also decide how much time passes between them. Now, the players take turns going round the table, telling one event at a time. When the last event is told, the game is over.

## PREPARING STOPS

**IF THE JOURNEY IS THE “CAMPAIGN”** of this game, the Stop is this game’s version of an “adventure.” Each Stop has six main elements:

- ☒ **Setting:** Where is the Stop located and what’s the general environment?
- ☒ **Blocker:** What makes the Travelers stop here and keeps them from just moving on?
- ☒ **The Situation:** What has happened at the Stop and what are the main conflicts?
- ☒ **Countdown:** How will the situation escalate during the Travelers’ visit?
- ☒ **Locations:** Which are the key locations at the Stop? You will also need a map of the area.
- ☒ **Threats:** Who are the key NPCs and other beings at the Stop?

If the group wants to play more collaboratively, you can ask the players to help you come up some ideas for the Setting and even the Blocker and Locations, but the rest of the content should not be known beforehand by the players.

### What Is a Stop?

A Stop is a limited area where the Travelers can walk from one end to the other in an hour or less. Some Stops have clear borders, such as a prison or a hotel complex, others have more vague borders such as a remote village or a neighborhood in the middle of a city. The Stop is where the game takes place. If the Travelers leave the Stop, the session typically ends. This is not a hard rule – the game can go on outside the Stop if it’s interesting for the group.

### ☒ SETTING

The setting of the Location is where it is located, what it looks like, how large it is, what kind of people live there, and what the general mood is like. You can use your imagination to create the setting or use the tables on the following pages. There are tables for terrain, population, communication, size, prosperity, and weather.

Think about the borders of the Stop – are there mountainsides hindering the Travelers from leaving or are the borders vague and easy to cross, such as a landscape that keeps going in all directions? Don’t forget to sprinkle the setting with a little ’90s nostalgia and other Electric State elements.

**D6 Terrain**

1. Desert
2. Mountain
3. Plains
4. Coast or riverside
5. Forest
6. Town

**D6 Population**

1. **Desolate.** Few if any people live here.
2. **Quiet.** 10 to 50 people.
3. **Active.** 50 to 100 people.
4. **Lively.** 100 to 300 people.
5. **Crowded.** 300 to 500 inhabitants.
6. **Densely populated.** Hundreds or even thousands of people.

**D6 Communications**

1. **Dead end.** No stationary neurocasters.
2. **Isolated.** Small road passing by. One neurocaster terminal (page 92).
3. **Connected.** Several small roads or paths. One or two neurocaster terminals.
4. **Well-traveled.** A main road and several small roads or paths. Several neurocaster terminals.
5. **Junction.** A main road and several small, and some other means of transportation such as a harbor, airport, or train station. Several neurocaster terminals. Possibly a radio or TV station.
6. **Main hub.** Several main roads, a harbor, airport, or train station, lots of neurocaster terminals.

**D6 Size**

1. **Tiny.** One house or part of a larger facility.
2. **Very small.** A handful of houses.
3. **Small.** Several houses and facilities, within easy walking range.
4. **Medium.** Houses and other buildings scattered over a large area.
5. **Large.** The key locations are connected by roads.
6. **Very large.** Travel between locations needs to be done by some form of vehicle.

**D6 Prosperity**

- Impoverished.** People are struggling to survive. Houses and roads are in very bad shape, everything is about to fall apart or be overgrown.
1. **Poor.** The inhabitants live in hardship. Houses and facilities are old and broken.
  2. **Run-down.** People are working hard to get by.
  3. **Thriving.** Most inhabitants have a decent standard of living. Houses are in good shape, some even newly built.
  4. **Prosperous.** People live well in nice houses with gardens and roads that are cared for.
  5. **Rich.** Most people live well in grand buildings with many luxury items.

**D6 Weather**

1. Storm
2. Rain or snow
3. Windy
4. Clear blue sky
5. Unusually hot or cold
6. Mist and heavy cloud cover

## Electric State Elements

### Roll D66 or choose:

- 11 Old assault ship
- 12 Endless boneyard
- 13 Jury-rigged robot
- 14 Kids with parents lost in the neuroscapes
- 15 Infected animals with rotten bodies
- 16 Drone ship gutted by scavengers
- 21 Broken drone animals
- 22 Scavenger drones looking for loot
- 23 Burnt-down houses
- 24 Abandoned roadworks
- 25 Skeletons attached to neurocasters
- 26 Neurograph towers
- 31 Black wires across the landscape
- 32 Abandoned neurodrome arena
- 33 Gigantic scrap-tower being built by robots
- 34 People with neurocasters being eaten alive by vultures or rats
- 35 Service robots hauling cable rollers
- 36 Massive spherical buildings connected with black wires
- 41 Horse or other animal without eyes
- 42 Robot with long radio masts
- 43 Half-finished mass grave for people who starved to death while wearing neurocasters
- 44 Abandoned and broken commercial drones in the shape of smiling children with big yellow heads
- 45 Robot walking in circles
- 46 Enormous drone or robot crashed into a bridge
- 51 Sentre commercial billboards
- 52 Hundreds of people with neurocasters walking by
- 53 Drone ships passing by
- 54 Memorial place for war heroes of the second civil war
- 55 Commercial billboard for the Pacifica president
- 56 Large batteries of magnetic neodymium cannons
- 61 People with scars after anti-neuronic surgery
- 62 Burnt corpses
- 63 Anti-neuronic protesters
- 64 Pleasure drones
- 65 Robotic animals
- 66 Voices coming from the mist

## 1990s Nostalgia

### Roll D66 or choose:

- 11 A vending machine with chewing gum
- 12 "Smells Like Teen Spirit" played on repeat
- 13 A brown Dodge Caravan
- 14 Sony Walkman
- 15 Shiny lip gloss
- 16 A mix tape starting with "In Your Eyes"
- 21 Slinky toys
- 22 Tamagotchi graveyard
- 23 Video rental store
- 24 Nokia cellphone antenna
- 25 Plastic see-through raincoat
- 26 Dancing the Macarena
- 31 The TV-series "Pacifica Friends"
- 32 Flared jeans
- 33 Sun-dried tomatoes and focaccia
- 34 "Closer" by Nine Inch Nails
- 35 Black trench coat
- 36 The TV series "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"
- 41 CDs
- 42 Hoop earrings
- 43 Bart Simpson t-shirts
- 44 A Billabong shirt
- 45 "It's Oh So Quiet" by Björk
- 46 VHS tapes
- 51 A Tickle Me Elmo
- 52 Nintendo Game Boy
- 53 Cameras with film that needs to be developed
- 54 Smoking indoors
- 55 News and entertainment in paper magazines
- 56 Nothing but ordinary coffee and decaf
- 61 Phone booths
- 62 Handwritten letters
- 63 A Rave
- 64 Overhead projectors
- 65 CD-ROMs
- 66 Civilian HumVee



## ■ SETTING THE SCENE

Every session where the Travelers come to a new Stop starts by you setting the scene. This is typically done by reading a prewritten text out loud or improvising it. This scene takes place while the Travelers are still on the road, about to arrive at the Stop. Its purpose is to describe the scenery and set the stage for what the Travelers will meet at the Stop. It could say something about:

- The landscape
- The weather
- Time of the year and day
- Smells and sounds
- Other cars on the road
- The Travelers' needs
- Names of roads and businesses
- Odd details

### Introduction Example

As you travel along the Golden Chain Highway, through Bear Valley, you are surrounded by hills on all sides. It is a beautiful day in the middle of summer without a cloud in the sky. You are alone on the road except for a caravan of trucks with "Electro Wanderers" written on their trailers. They are heading the same way as you. When you pass them by, you notice that their windshields are tinted.

As you stop at the side of the road to take a break and change driver, you smell the fresh mountain air. There is a family of squirrels in a nearby pine tree. But then you are on the road again, and as the hours go by, you all start to feel hungry and eager to stretch your legs.

## Blocker Examples

### D66 Blocker

- 11 Military roadblock
- 12 Earthquake
- 13 Fire
- 14 Vehicle malfunction
- 15 Roadworks
- 16 Medical Quarantine
- 21 Military Operation
- 22 Out of fuel
- 23 Road covered by sand or fallen rocks
- 24 A beautiful must-see sight
- 25 Nightfall
- 26 Bad weather
- 31 Accident blocks the road
- 32 A Traveler falls ill
- 33 Out of food
- 34 Lost, and the map doesn't help
- 35 Threatening presence at the horizon
- 36 Road has collapsed by mudslide

### D66 Blocker

- 41 Herd of animals
- 42 Police roadblock
- 43 Extreme heat or cold
- 44 A Traveler grew up here
- 45 The Travelers cause an accident
- 46 Gunfire against the vehicle
- 51 Home-made warning signs
- 52 Highway robbers
- 53 Huge sinkhole
- 54 A heated argument between Travelers
- 55 Someone on the roadside needing help
- 56 Local roadblock demanding money for passage
- 61 Something valuable that must be investigated
- 62 A personal Goal leads a Traveler here
- 63 Last shelter before a dangerous part of the journey
- 64 A letter is expected to arrive at this place
- 65 Sentre crew blocking the road
- 66 A huge drone has crashed on the road

### D6 Need Example

- 1 Food or water
- 2 Safety
- 3 Vehicle repairs or spare parts
- 4 Medicine or medical gear
- 5 A place to sleep
- 6 Information

### Threat Types

- ▣ **Armed Threats:** Murderers, thieves, police, militia, soldiers
- ▣ **Manipulative Threats:** Liars and agitators
- ▣ **Technological Threats:** Robots, drones, drone growths, the Convergence
- ▣ **Environmental Threats:** Storms, earthquakes, animals, diseases
- ▣ **Past Sins:** Unfinished business from another Stop
- ▣ **Personal Threats:** One Traveler's personal Threat (page 115).

## ■ BLOCKER

The blocker is what makes the Travelers stop their car and get out, ready to take on whatever the Stop throws at them. A Blocker can be hard in the sense that it is impossible to go any further, for example if the road is blocked by soldiers preventing anyone from driving on.

A Blocker can also be soft, for example a group of people surrounding the car and asking the Travelers to help them search for some lost kids. Soft Blockers should preferably be connected to the Dreams, Flaws or Goals of one or more Travelers, to give them incentives to engage with them.

You can determine what the Blocker is by rolling on the adjacent table or decide for yourself – or you can ask the players to come up with something.

When you start playing, the players should not try to unblock the Blocker the first thing they do. This is a necessary understanding between the players and you as the GM. The players should understand that if they pass the Blocker, the session ends. This does not mean that the Travelers are not allowed to try to pass the Blocker, and even manage to do so, but this is not the purpose of the game.

If you play with people who are new to the game, it is often better to start with a Stop with a hard Blocker that cannot be passed.

## ■ NEEDS

A need can be added to the Blocker. This is something the Travelers want or must have. It could be a matter of great urgency or something less drastic. The Travelers could for example start the session hungry or tired – or they must find medicine as one of them has become sick. Players may help you come up with a need.

A need pushes the Travelers to interact with NPCs at the Stop, for example buying food at the local diner or renting a room at the motel. While playing the Stop, you should be on the lookout for new needs, or needs that become urgent, such as night falling and the Travelers needing to find a place to sleep.

## ■ THE SITUATION

The Situation is a summary of what has happened at the Stop before the Travelers arrived, what's going on behind the scenes, and which Threats are present at the Stop. This Situation will often involve a key conflict of some kind between rival groups at the Stop, but this is not strictly necessary.

## ■ THREATS

Threats are a people, groups, or phenomena that might hurt NPCs, the Travelers, or both. It is directed at them and will continue attacking or wreaking havoc until it is handled or until the Travelers leave the Stop. Take a moment to think about what the Threats have done before the Travelers arrive. Often the Threats are connected to the Blocker. You can find a list of common types of Threats in the adjacent sidebar and a range of example Threats are included in the next chapter.

## ■ MINOR NPCs

All NPCs who are not Threats are considered NPCs. In game, they can function as victims of the Threats, and they may ask the Travelers for help, or aid the Travelers when they are in need.

### Past Sins

When the Travelers leave a Stop, you should take a moment to think about if there were NPCs or creatures at the Stop that would be interesting to meet again later during the Journey. Which adversary did the players love to hate, what business was left unfinished, who wants to take revenge on the Travelers?

These people and creatures can become past sins – Threats that will follow the Travelers on their Journey and re-appear one or several times. Never tell the players that an NPC will become a past sin. Instead, just let them appear at another Stop. Try to change some detail about the Threat between Stop, to show that the world changes as time goes by.

## Conflicts

Often, a conflict of some sort will be at the core of the Situation that the Travelers will be embroiled in at the Stop. To help you create a conflict, you can roll D66 three times on the table below. Roll twice to generate the parties involved and once to determine what their conflict is about.

D66	Party	Subject
11	Farmer	Piece of land
12	Cult members	Religious differences
13	The Convergence	Newborn baby
14	Biker gang	Drug factory
15	Scientist	Stolen information
16	Young troublemaker	Important life decision
21	Soldier(s)	Racketeering
22	Robot designer	Robot factory
23	Drone	Drone ship
24	Intelligent robot	Robot
25	Artist	Piece of art
26	Mobster	Casino
31	Family	Love
32	Rich investor	Natural resource
33	Politician	Political power
34	Landowner	Forest or beach
35	Bank robber	Money
36	Environmental activist	Pollution
41	Musician	A gig
42	Political extremists	Control over people's life
43	Cult leader	Control over others
44	Scavengers	Scrap site
45	Neurine addicts	Neurine
46	Army scientist	Drone growth experiment
51	Techno cult	Neurograph tower
52	Detective	A murder
53	Pacifica rioters	An election
54	Deserted soldiers	Bunker or weapons
55	Journalist	A hideous truth
56	Store owner	Store or restaurant
61	Hotel owner	Hotel
62	Labor union	Salaries
63	Racecar driver	Expensive car
64	Doctor	Corpse
65	Hunter	Sick animals
66	Sheriff	Warrant

## ■ COUNTDOWN

The Travelers' arrival at the Stop triggers a series of events that can end in drama and even violence. Each Stop should have a Countdown of events that you as GM can use to push the action forward when needed, but don't rush things – set a creepy mood and build up the action slowly. The Threats want something specific and will try to get it step by step. This should be the basis for the Countdown.

The specific events of the Countdown might need to be modified – or removed entirely – as a result of the players' actions. This countdown is only meant as a guide and support for you. You can also use the individual Travelers' personal Threat Countdowns whenever you want, but again, be careful not to overload the players.

### Closing Distance & Increasing Harm

A good way to create a Countdown is to use the principle of closing distance and increasing harm. Each step brings the danger closer to the Travelers, either in physical distance, or by letting victims first be unknown NPCs, then known NPCs, then loved NPCs, and then the Travelers themselves.

Harm can also increase with each step. First, an abandoned cottage is destroyed, then a farmhouse, then the community school – and then the entire town is burnt to the ground.

## Countdown Elements

Below is a range of actions taken by a Threat that can be a part of a Countdown:

- **Presentation:** The Threat shows itself or does something that makes the Travelers understand that it is present at the Stop.
- **Attack:** The Threat attacks an NPC or the Travelers.
- **Lies:** Lies are spread, either by the Threat or about it.
- **Forces gather:** The Threat gains new followers, gathers its powers, or arms itself.
- **Victims appear:** Victims of the Threat are seen by the Travelers, or they are told about them. The Threat might even willingly show the Travelers its victims, maybe to scare them.
- **Accusation:** An NPC or the Travelers are blamed for what the Threat is doing.
- **Plead for help:** The threat, or one of its victims, asks the Travelers for help.
- **Sabotage:** Something is damaged, possibly a vital piece of infrastructure, family heirloom or other important object.
- **Someone is captured:** This could be done by a human Threat, but also by a flood that sweeps away some of the NPCs or the Travelers.
- **A deal is offered:** A compromise is offered, but are the parties involved willing to pay the price?
- **Missing item:** Something goes missing. Who took it, and why?
- **A location is seized:** Some person or group takes control of a place of significance.
- **Tactics change:** A group that was formerly using covert means might start to act, or attack, openly, or vice versa.
- **Loyalties shift:** A formerly turns enemy, or otherwise switches sides.
- **An alliance is formed:** The PCs have a chance to make a new ally, or formerly opposing groups join forces against them.



## LOCATIONS

Each Stop has a number of key locations, which all should be marked on a map. It could be a hotel, a bunker, or a place where the Travelers can repair their car. If the Travelers are bank robbers, some Stops should have a bank. You could add potential resources at the Stop, such as a library with information or a weapons cache.

### Example Locations

If you are stuck for ideas for locations, roll D66 or choose from the list below:

#### D66 Location

- 11 Boat community
- 12 Burnt forest
- 13 Café or diner
- 14 Casino
- 15 Clinic
- 16 Convention
- 21 Crashed drone ships
- 22 Cult headquarters
- 23 Dead beach
- 24 Garage
- 25 Greenhouses
- 26 Harbor
- 31 Hospital
- 32 Industrial area
- 33 Isolated hotel
- 34 Kennel
- 35 Library
- 36 Market

#### D66 Location

- 41 Military base
- 42 Militia base
- 43 Mine
- 44 Music festival
- 45 Neurograph tower
- 46 Park
- 51 Place of worship
- 52 Racetrack
- 53 Residential area
- 54 Restaurant
- 55 Roadside zoo
- 56 Shooting range
- 61 Sinkhole
- 62 Theme park
- 63 Trailer park
- 64 Truck stop
- 65 Underground facility
- 66 Wetland or river delta

## Drawing the Map

When drawing the map of the Stop, consider adding the following elements:

- ◻ Roads and paths
- ◻ Key buildings
- ◻ Difficult terrain such as hills
- ◻ Lakes and rivers
- ◻ The borders of the Stop, if there are any
- ◻ Neurocaster terminals
- ◻ Locations where the Travelers can find food or shelter
- ◻ A place where the Travelers can park their vehicle

Do not show secret things on the map. When playing, the map should be displayed in the middle of the table for all to see. You can even annotate the map with things that will be clearly visible to the Travelers, such as the names of local businesses. This will help the players navigate the area.



# PLAYING THE STOP

WHEN YOU PLAY A STOP, your job is to follow the Travelers around and react to what they do. Let the NPCs act and react to what the Travelers say and do, point out needs, and paint a picture of what the Travelers see, hear, and smell. Use the rules only when needed. In situations not covered by the rules, you are responsible for making plausible and fair rulings.

Don't try to make certain things happen, or to show different aspects of the Stop. This can mean that a Threat you really wanted the Travelers to meet doesn't even come into play, or that a minor NPC you thought would ask the Travelers for help becomes their enemy. Your preparations, the players' choices, and the dice decide what happens. When you want to push the story along, activate the Threats and the Countdown. Play to see what happens.

## ■ STARTING A SESSION

Before the session starts it is a good idea to go through the Travelers' Tension levels and let the players remind each other how the situation is in the group. Who are friends and who can't stand each other?

Whenever the Travelers arrive at a new Stop, the game starts a little while before they get there. The Travelers are still on the road, sitting in their vehicle as the landscape passes them by. Follow these steps:

- 1 Set the scene for the players.
- 2 Ask the Travelers where they sit, what they look like, what they are talking about.
- 3 Let the players roleplay a scene. This is a good time to play a Traveler's favorite song.
- 4 Describe how the Travelers at the Stop and finds out about the Blocker.
- 5 The Travelers stop and start exploring the area.

If the session continues at the same Stop as last session, simply pick up where the session ended. Remind the players of the situation and ask the players what they do.



### What To Do?

At any given moment in game, you can choose one of the following things to do as GM:

- Sit back and enjoy the game. Give the players room to roleplay and take actions, answer their questions, and add details and descriptions. React to what they do.
- Activate a Threat or the Countdown. Decide if what happens is close or distant to the Travelers and describe the effects.
- Let an NPC tell a rumor.
- Let an NPC ask for or offer help.
- Point out a need.
- Cut in time and/or space to a new scene.



### Pacing the Game

Pacing as about when to activate a threat or the conflict and when to hang back and let the players take center stage. There is no right answer to how this should be done - different groups prefer different tempo. But if it doesn't feel right, it is most often because the Gamemaster activates too much, too soon. This could be out of stress, thinking that the players aren't enjoying themselves. Do not activate when the players are engaged in

what happens, when they have interactions with each other or NPCs, when they describe details, and absolutely don't do it when they are about to act out a plan. Let them do what they intended without interfering.

Situations when you should activate is when the players seem uninterested or confused, when they don't know what to do, or when they want to skip ahead in time or summarize what is being done.





## ■ NPC REACTIONS

In most situations when the Travelers interact with an NPC, it will be obvious what they say or do – a hotel owner will give the Travelers a room and ask to be paid, a sheriff will want to know who they are and what they are doing here. But sometimes you might not know how to play an NPC, or you need to add a little flavor. This is a good time to use the adjacent table for NPC reactions.

### NPC Reactions

#### 2D6 Reaction

2	Hostile
3-5	Unfriendly
6-8	Neutral
9-11	Friendly
12	Eager to help

## Combat Morale

In combat, NPCs will at times flee or give up. If you like, you can roll on the table for combat morale whenever an NPC watches a friend get Incapacitated. You can also use the table when an NPC gets scared or faces something hard to understand or accept.

### Combat Morale

#### 2D6 Reaction

2	Flee
3	Surrender
4-5	Retreat or negotiate
6-12	Keep fighting

## ■ POINTING OUT NEEDS

You should constantly be on the lookout for needs that must be fulfilled – hunger, thirst, sleep, lack of fuel, and so on. When you have identified a need, point it out to the Travelers. This is a way to poke the Travelers into taking contact with NPCs and explore the Stop area.

## ■ IMPROVISING

A part of being GM is improvising things that are not covered by the preparations or the rules. This can seem daunting at first. But it is no different from improvising as a player and deciding what the Traveler says and does. The player has their Traveler as a basis for improvisation – the player knows the Traveler and reacts and acts in a way that seems in line with who they are. Your “Traveler” that you use to improvise is the preparations. Handle it the same way – what would plausibly happen, how would an NPC likely react, who would want to know about something or get something? The story that emerges from the game is neither yours nor the players’ responsibility. Play the preparations and see what happens.

### Make It Come Alive

These are tips on how to make the game world come alive:

- **Give details, but not too much.** Describe the world, but don't lose yourself in long monologues. Instead, describe a few details – the strange color of the police officer's eyes, a sticker with a smiling clown, the smell of roasted potatoes, black mold on the walls etc.
- **Use a theme.** Let everything about a house, a threat, or even a Stop be in a certain way, for example run-down, decadent, or unpleasantly nice.
- **Ask questions.** Ask the players what their Travelers think and feel.
- **Add a twist.** Give people and locations an odd or contradictory detail. A teenager with old eyes, a robot with a human voice, a gang leader who sings to his plants, etc. Mix the well-known and familiar with strange or even unexplainable things.

### The World Is Falling Apart

A theme that should be present in all Journeys, is that the world as we know it is ending. One way to do this is to let things at the first Stop be fairly stable and more or less like in our world. As the Travelers move on, the people they meet are being more affected by the fact that world is falling apart – shops are looted, houses are burning, corpses with neurocasters are found, and militias have replaced the police force.

Toward the end of the Journey, there might be communities or even cities that are deserted. The Travelers walk around in abandoned buildings. Computer screens flicker at them while strange sounds are being emitted from all electric components in the building. The sky is darkening.

## ■ LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

The Travelers will often look for information about a Stop, a Threats, and other things. If they would reasonably know the answer, simply tell them. If not, encourage them to talk to NPCs or use neurocasting to find information. Sometimes, they will look for information that isn't a part of the preparations. Then you'll need to improvise an answer. This way, the Stop will be built one dice roll or one question at a time.

The players will probably ask you questions about the world. Some answers can be found in Chapter 2. But most often you will have to come up with an answer. You can always ask the players for suggestions. This is part of the shared world building. As the journey goes on, your version of the Electric State will get more details and become more "firm" and "deep" in structure and content.

## ■ PLAYING SCENES

Setting scenes means cutting the story in time and place. Sometimes this is done without anyone even noticing it, such as when the Travelers leave their car and go to the mall. First, the Travelers are in the car and then they enter the mall. You don't describe or play out every single step between the car and the mall. Other times you will cut several hours or miles. This is most often done when the Travelers sleep, eat, or drive somewhere, or when you need to speed up the tempo of the game. "So, you have been spying on the house for almost five hours, when suddenly someone opens the door."

Cutting in time and space is also something you should do if the Travelers don't act, either because they want to hide or run away from the Threats or because they can't find motivation to do anything. Then you make a mental note of which Threat is activated and cut in time until the moment the Travelers learn about it.

## ■ PLAYING IN NEUROSCAPES

Only set a scene inside a neuroscape is when a Traveler uses an avatar to explore it or interact with other avatars. You don't need to describe the neuroscape if a Traveler just uses it to find information (page 94) or hack a network (page 94).

When a Traveler does venture into neuroscape, the scene should be kept short and to the point, as the Traveler is likely alone, and the other players might have to wait for the scene to end before they can be a part of the game again.

To describe a neuroscape, you can use the three features below are used. Using the adjacent table, you can create the main features of a neuroscape with dice rolls. Roll a D6 three times or choose from the table.

- **Type** is whether the neuroscape is well-known, central, and important, or peripheral, shadowy, and forgotten.
- **Theme** is the main environment of the neuroscape. All aspects of the neuroscape are built around its theme.
- **Mood** is what feelings flow through the neuroscape and affect its visitors.

### Creating a Neuroscape

Roll a D6 for each of the three features of the neuroscape, or use the table as inspiration. These are just examples - neuroscapes can look like literally anything you can imagine:

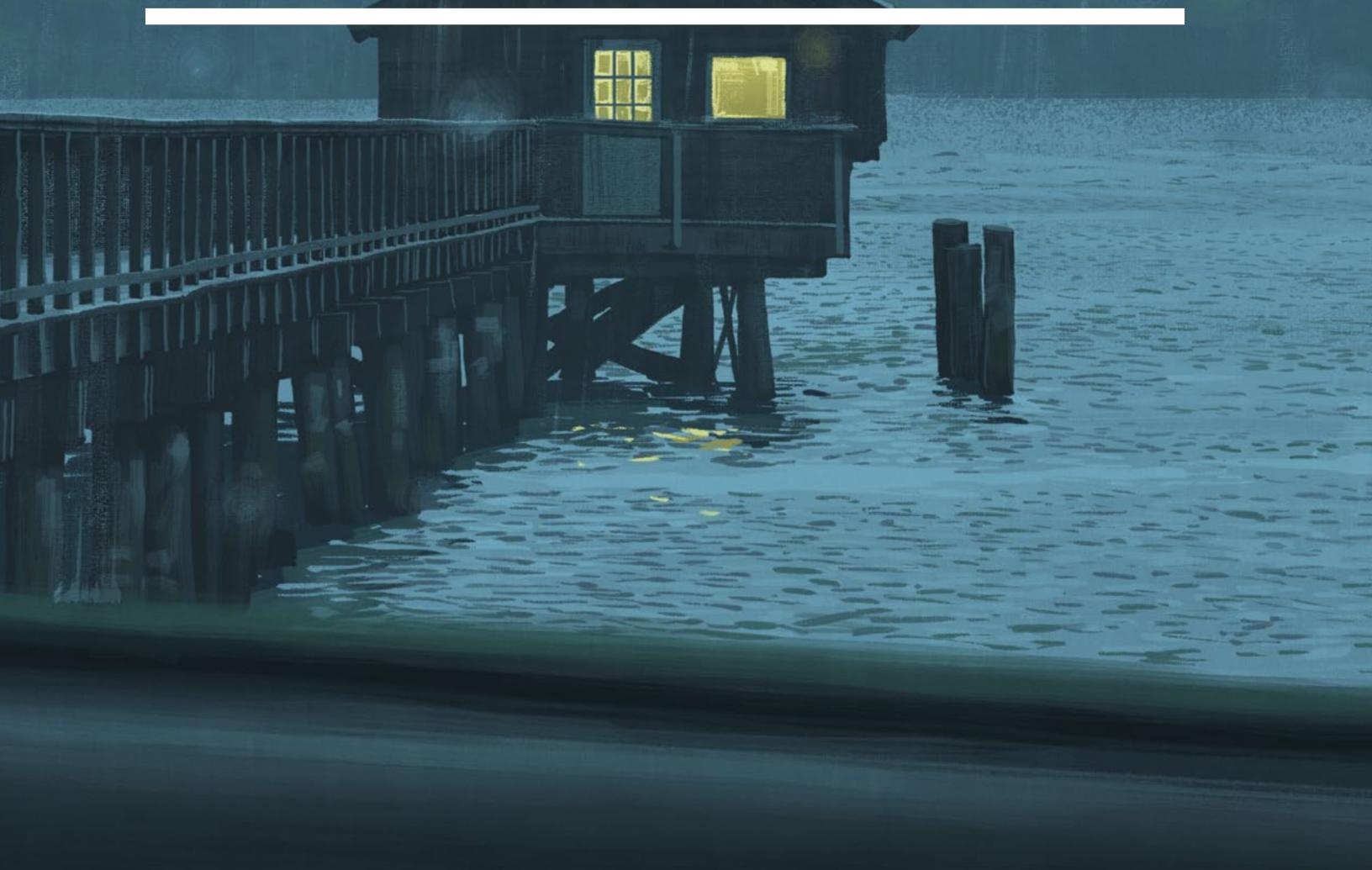
D6	Type	Theme	Mood
1	Major global, constantly upgraded, many visitors, famous	Ancient Rome	Euphoria
2	Important and central neuroscape, well-known	Heaven	Mystery
3	Global neuroscape with many visitors	Beach party	Chill
4	Local popular neuroscape	Space station with aliens	Indulgence
5	Local peripheral neuroscape, odd and unused	Stone age	Nostalgia
6	Local peripheral neuroscape, almost deserted, bad reputation	Deep sea	Surreal



CHAPTER SIX

# THREATS

*I was scared. But I also felt something else when that thing strode out of the mist in front of our car. I was in awe. Like when you suddenly realize that you have walked into the wrong part of the woods and come face to face with a huge wild animal. In its wake, hundreds of people linked together, their neurocasters connected to the oily god in the mist.*





**A THREAT IS A PERSON**, group or entity that may cause harm to NPCs or Travelers. Threats might also prevent their progress along their Journey. Threats exist in the physical world, in neuroscapes, or both. A Stop may have several Threats, but one Threat is usually the main adversary. The Threat(s) should always connect directly to the Countdown of the Stop site (page 125).

This chapter describes a variety of Threats that you can use at a Stop adventure site or use as inspiration for your own creations. The chapter also includes random tables to create NPCs and other entities.

# TYPES OF THREATS

**THREATS CAN BE MANY DIFFERENT THINGS.** The categories listed in the adjacent sidebar are intended to help jumpstart your creativity and include different types of threats at your Stop sites.

## ■ LOCATION

Most Threats have a home turf – a location where it feels safe and in control. When you decide a Threat's home base, consider what defines the Threat. What location is at the core of who this person or thing is? The home base might also serve as the site where a final confrontation takes place.

## ■ GOAL

All Threats want something. Each Threat has a Goal, just like the Travelers do. Desire moves the world. If you have a hard time getting the Travelers and Threat to interact, consider what the Threat really wants. What does it crave, lust for, have ambition to do, or want to destroy? Be specific. Make it obsessive even.

There are two types of Threat Goals – those that are focused on the Stop and its NPCs and those focused on the Travelers themselves. A Threat Goal directed at the Stop and its NPCs can be achieved whether the Travelers are there or not. This poses a question to the players – what are you going to do about it? Threat Goals directed at the Travelers themselves are more direct but give the players less freedom. Such Goals often work better with less experienced players.

## Threat Types

- **Violent Threats:** Law enforcement officers, secret agents, gangs, and crazed killers
- **Manipulative Threats:** Cultists, local strongmen, and business leaders
- **Technological Threats:** Robots, drone growths, and systems
- **Environmental Threats:** Extreme weather, earthquakes, diseases
- **Past Sins:** Unfinished business from another Stop. You cannot outrun your past forever.
- **Personal Threats:** One Traveler's personal Threat (page 115)

## Reactions

Based on the Goal of the Threat, consider how the Threat reacts to the Travelers when initially meeting them or learning of their arrival.

## ■ CHARACTERISTICS

Most Threats have attributes, talents, and gear just like Travelers – see Chapters 3 and 4. Remember that NPCs cannot push rolls. Some Threats can have special gear or abilities not available to Travelers, though.

## ■ HEALTH & HOPE

Threats can typically be Incapacitated in the same ways as Travelers. However, you generally don't make death rolls for Threats – instead, you decide whether an Incapacitated Threat is killed or survives. Threats don't have Hope scores.

## ■ MODIFYING THREATS

The Threats in this chapter can be modified and combined to create a multitude of varieties. A Threat that you used can be recycled and used again by changing its game statistics, the steps on its Countdown, or by giving it a different goal.



# VIOLENT THREATS

**THREATS WHICH ARE VIOLENT** or have a potential for using violence are easy to use in the game – simply give a thug a gun and something to point it at. When stuck, this option works. Raymond Chandler said, if a writer gets stuck have someone enter the room with a gun. This may seem predictable, but complications can arise when the Travelers start interacting with the Threat and its victims. Especially if the Threat is weak in other ways – maybe it can be helped or befriended?

Note that if you have a Threat so dangerous that the Travelers have no chance to defeat it in a fight, don't let it attack them directly. Instead, let it vent its aggression on others. It may even try to befriend the Travelers. Let their actions affect the Threat's view of them as friends or enemies. Remember, this is the Travelers' story first.

Below, four examples of violent Threats are described: law enforcement, secret agents, gangs, and crazed killers.

## ■ LAW ENFORCEMENT

Though not necessarily violent, law enforcement officers certainly have a potential for violence and can become Threats to the Travelers. There are several different law enforcement agencies in Pacifica, from local police to the Pacifica Highway Patrol. Their first duty is to enforce the law, at least that's what it says on their vehicles. Yet many are corrupt, tired, prejudiced, or possess other, personal agendas. The further out from a city the Travelers go, the more variable the law enforcement's adherence to the law. Remember, Pacifica isn't that old, and new nations cannot yet monitor everything.

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving law enforcement officers:

1. The Travelers are accused of a crime.
2. Officers question the Travelers in a rough manner.
3. The officers provoke the Travelers, trying to start a fight.
4. The officers try to arrest the Travelers.



## ■ SECRET AGENTS

These range from Pacifica Bureau of Investigation agents to secretive men and women in black who work for the military, Sentre, or worse. They are trained in deception, espionage, and a host of other unpleasantness. Ironically, they adhere to their mission statement more than the average police officer in Pacifica. When recruited, screening for loyalty is the first and last step.

### Example Countdown

1. The agents follow the Travelers and surveil the Travelers.
2. An agent contacts a Traveler, asking for something. They may well pose as civilians.
3. The agents arrest or kidnap an NPC.
4. The agents attack the Travelers. Agents have a broad definition on the need for lethal force. And sometimes they are flat out ordered to take people off the battlefield – their friendly term for assassination.



### Law Enforcement

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 3 **Empathy:** 3  
**Health:** 4 **Talent:** Pistoleer **Typical Gear:**  
Handgun or shotgun, patrol car (4WD car with the Powerful and Heavy traits), \$100

### Secret Agent

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 5 **Wits:** 3 **Empathy:** 2  
**Health:** 5 **Talent:** Stealthy **Typical Gear:**  
Handgun or assault rifle, black van (with the Powerful and Fast traits), \$200

“

*My first thought was that we should park somewhere private and just wait in the car, but it occurred to me that the police love disturbing people sitting in parked cars. Our second option was to check into a motel, but that was expensive and we didn't have that much money left and worst case they would want to see some ID. Down here where there was a semblance of law and order, I didn't want to attract any attention at all. It didn't feel good at all, we were so close now.*

## ■ GANG MEMBERS

When a society begins falling apart, some people manage to stay away from the neurocasters. But in a world getting ever more unrelenting, people often must choose between being a victim or a predator. Violent gangs plague places all over Pacifica. Some of them are hardened criminals, others just try to survive. These gangs don't tend to be ethnic in nature. Now, they form around common places, goals, and sometimes the level of sociopathy popular with said gang. As mentioned above, some just want to survive. Other want to inflict harm and terror.

### Gang Member

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 3 **Health:** 4 **Talent:** Knifeman  
**Typical Gear:** Knife, baseball bat or handgun, a dose of neurine, D6 × \$10 in stolen cash, stolen motorcycle or a car

## ■ CRAZED KILLERS

There are plenty of aggressive and unstable people in Pacifica. Some of them have or claim to have connections with higher power – human or otherwise. As the slow-rolling apocalypse moves on, some people lose it. Couple that with the flexible reality caused by neurocasters, and you get a lot of crazed and edgy people looking for any excuse to commit violence.

### Crazed Killer

**Strength:** 5 **Agility:** 5 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 4 **Health:** 5 **Talent:** Knifeman  
**Typical Gear:** Knife, shotgun, 2WD car, \$50

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a gang:

1. Someone asks the Travelers to rescue someone kidnapped by the gang. The employer might also ask the Travelers to drive the gang out of town. For inspiration, check out old American Westerns. A failing society has much in common with the chaotic and violent Old West.
2. The gang kills someone or burns something to the ground. Either make it matter to a Traveler, offend their morality, or bring them in via the needs of an NPC.
3. The gang throws a party which ends in a bloodbath. The Travelers may well ignore the aftermath. That is their decision, but you can draw them in by having an old friend among the dead.
4. The gang believes they were betrayed in some way by the community and launches a full-scale attack to take revenge. If the Travelers need a hook, they are targeted as part of the community. Paranoid people don't stop to figure out who is new after all.

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a crazed killer:

1. The Travelers witness the brutal acts of the killer or see the aftermath.
2. An NPC asks the Travelers for help in handling the killer. This NPC might not have the courage to face the killer or might have other reasons to seek help. Flesh out the NPC enough to make their request believable and not simply “another job.”
3. The NPC is killed or kidnapped. By fleshing out the NPC as suggested above, the Travelers might have cause to find the killer.
4. One of the Travelers is attacked. It could be a random attack. But consider that the mad killer might be manipulated by a higher-level threat.

...Uh...Peg?

FRITZ!

SEASON FINALE  
AUG 24 | SUNDAYS 7PM

EVIRSTREAM

NEVER UNPLUG



# MANIPULATIVE THREATS

**ANYONE WHO SPREADS LIES** and stokes conflict at the Location is a manipulative Threat. They often make minor NPCs work and fight for them. Manipulative Threats may work together with, or be opposed by, violent Threats.

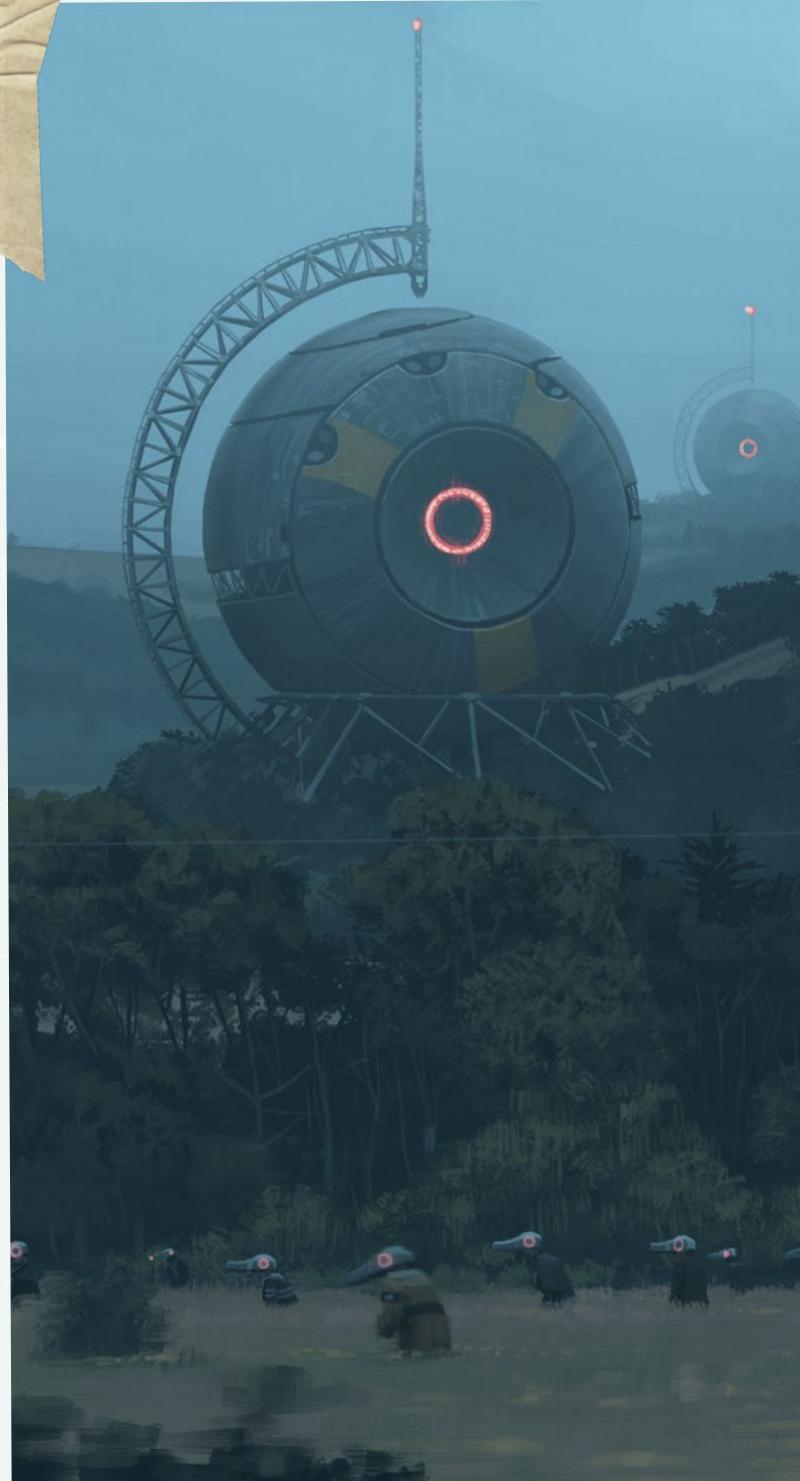
A Stop with a manipulative Threat should introduce it early in the Countdown, so players take notice of it and understand it means trouble. Charismatic manipulators, liars, con artists, and users are nothing new. But they flourish in a world where authority is weak or distrusted. People want an easy answer. A quick buck. A new chance that sounds too good to be true. Most people have some kind of trauma these days. Anyone with a snake oil cure for that, well, they do well in this new world.

Below, three examples of manipulative Threats are described: cultists, local strongmen, and business leaders.

## ■ CULTISTS

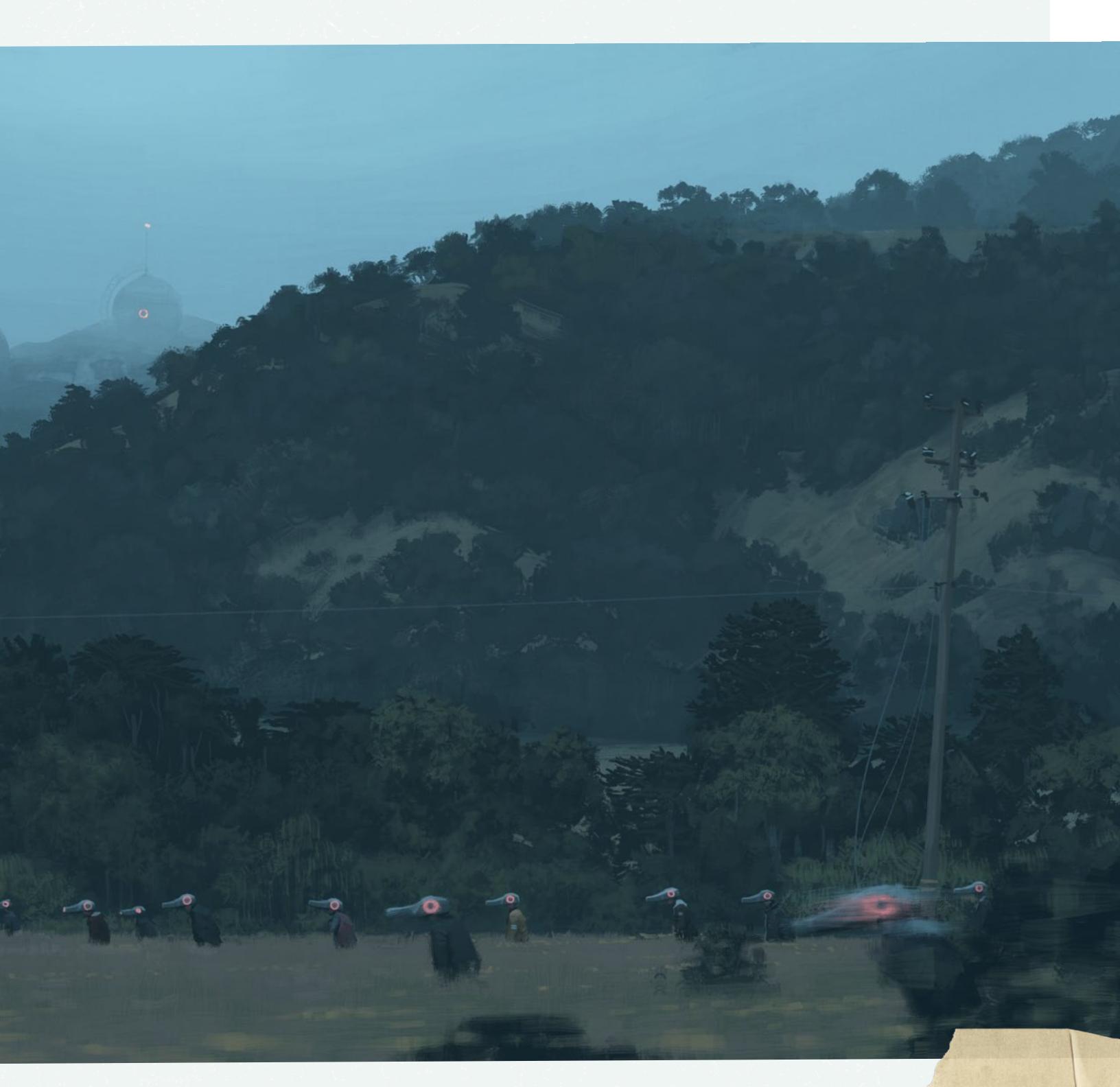
Cults often have a charming and manipulative leader (or leaders) controlling their followers. Newcomers, such as the Travelers, are seen as potential threats and either attacked, driven off, or approached to make them join the cult. Many cult members would die for their leader and beliefs. Those trying to recruit the Travelers use enticing offers of stability, safety, even sex. While media portrays cultists as just loony, the ones who recruit have manipulative skills and know how to hide the burning belief inside.

Cult leaders have much in common with conmen, but they add the fire of belief to that skill set. A cult offers not only answers to personal problems, but explains the very workings of life, the universe and existence. Cult members are slowly encouraged to cut themselves off from friends and family. Once isolated, the cult leader becomes the missing parental figure and the cult members become family. A cultist's fanaticism doesn't come overnight. Each was manipulated slowly to reflect the worldview of the leader. They are Threats for sure, but you might offer one or two as sympathetic victims of an evil leader.



### Cultist

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 5 **Health:** 4 **Talent:** Charmer  
**Typical Gear:** Holy symbol or writings, knife



### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a cult:

1. NPCs opposed to the cult tell the Travelers about it. The NPCs may, if the GM wants, mention something related to a Traveler's dream or personality.
2. NPCs are driven out of town or captured by the cult. This has more emotional punch if the Travelers made friends in town first or an NPC they need for their goals is among the missing or abducted.

3. The cult captures NPCs for a large gathering with strange rituals. Travelers might need to know more about the cult and therefore observe them. Or they might need an NPC that will be at this strange gathering.
4. The cult sacrifices many NPCs. If the Travelers have any moral compass, this hits them. A friend or needed NPC might also be among the victims.



## ■ LOCAL STRONGMEN

Local strongmen (or women) are individuals taking advantage of the collapsing society to manipulate others in their community. They tend to be egocentric, greedy, and sometimes violent. As a community descends into chaos, many people thirst for a return to social order. Being desperate, they either don't care who offers the new order, or can't think further ahead than surviving the day. This is how tyranny starts. Strongmen play on fear, offering protection. They use prejudice to assign blame to those they don't want to be recruited. Simply put, strongmen stoke existing fear and drag out latent anger. The combination sounds awful to most, but it can grab even the person who believes they are intelligent and reasonable. Of course, those who believe neither are the first to back the rising strongman.

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a local strongman Threat:

1. The strongman approaches the Travelers in an unusual way, charming them or threatening them. The strongman has a knack for reading people. If they think the Travelers are weak, the strongman uses threats. If he believes them strong, he treats them as equals, needed for his cause.
2. The Travelers witness the Threat harm NPCs, by chance or as a demonstration of power. The GM might make this harm brutal, shameful, or otherwise emotionally devastating. If you want to give motive to the Travelers, play up how the strongman doesn't simply hurt, but humiliates the harmed and often assaults them publicly as a display of power.
3. An NPC asks the Travelers for help against the strongman. If the location had the means to oust the strongman, they would. They might lack the skills and weapons. However, they might have more unique reasons. Maybe they took an oath of pacifism or believe violence is never justified.
4. The Threat becomes obsessed with one of the Travelers and does anything to control them, or failing that, kill them. Strong Travelers are seen as potential rivals. Strongmen don't suffer competition. The strongman might fall for a Traveler and decide to take the person by force. Think of what motivates the strongman. Make the Threat three dimensional.

## ■ BUSINESS LEADERS

Shifty entrepreneurs trying to scam people out of their money, or risking their health to enrich themselves, are not uncommon in *Pacifica* – some may even say such people are responsible for the collapse of the world as we know it.

When presenting the business leader, consider their motives. It's easy because most of them only have one: profit. Money, money, money. Whatever they pitch, whatever promise they make about the potential return on investment, their first duty is to make more money. They hide this using the Con Artist talent but remember that is a façade.

That said, not everything a business leader says is a lie. They do make people money. Usually they make people who already have money more of it. But a business leader could pitch something to the Travelers that would enrich them. In that case, make the way the profit is extracted morally dubious or counter to the Travelers' goals.

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a business leader Threat:

1. The business leader turns members of the community against each other. An NPC asks the Travelers for help.
2. The Threat makes a group of NPCs attack, or steal from, other NPCs.
3. The business leader drives some NPCs from their homes.
4. The Threat gains full control over the entire Stop area.

### Local Strongman

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 3 **Wits:** 4  
**Empathy:** 5 **Health:** 4 **Talent:** Menacing  
**Typical Gear:** Handgun, \$200

### Business Leader

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 3 **Wits:** 5  
**Empathy:** 4 **Health:** 3 **Talent:** Con artist  
**Typical Gear:** Handgun, \$500

# TECHNOLOGICAL THREATS

**SOME BELIEVE TECHNOLOGY** is the prime driver for cultural change. From the bow to the gun to neuronic tech, our inventions alter us in ways we cannot possibly predict. William Gibson observed, *“The street finds its own uses for things.”* Some uses are bad. In the world of Electric State, they’re causing the downfall of an already broken America. Technological Threats in your game represent a microcosm of one of the larger conflicts and themes. But they also work just fine as good old narrative obstacles.

Many technological Threats exist in the world of *The Electric State*, and the biggest of all is the neurronics technology and the omnipresent Sentre corporation. Sentre does whatever it takes to expand the network and make more people connect to it. Its agents can be a threat at any Stop.

Technological Threats can range from murderous robots and drone growths to malicious Intercerebral Intelligences (page 97). Often, technological Threats are connected to a human person in some way – the person who created the Threat or believes that they can control it. Often, technological Threats are confronted inside a neuroscape instead of – or in addition to – the real world. Occasionally, the Threat might remind the Traveler (not directly of course) that our creations seek now to hurt or alter their creators.

Below, three examples of technological threats are described: robots, drone growths, and systems.

## ■ ROBOTS

Automated machines without human pilots are called robots. Robots are often used for menial tasks but also guard duty. They lack a will of their own and are not smart enough to be reasoned with, but they can be hacked or otherwise used by humans to further their own ends. However, some rumors suggest robots approach true self-awareness. The GM might use that in their game. In game terms, robots are handled like drones (page 98) – they have Strength, Agility, Hull, and Armor ratings, but most lack Wits and Empathy scores. They generally don’t have talents.

## Special Abilities

Technological Threats may have abilities unavailable to normal NPCs. Below are a few examples.

- It can fly.
- It has a Hull (Health) rating higher than normal.
- It is armored and has an Armor Level.
- It has one or several built-in weapons of some kind. Such weapons don’t have a gear bonus.
- It can enter neuroscapes without need of a neurocaster.
- It controls one or several avatars inside a neuroscape (page 97).
- It draws on collective intelligence from a network, thus knowing things it itself did not observe.

### Robot

**Strength: 6 Agility: 4 Hull: 5 Armor: 6**

**Mounted Weapons:** Vice grip (max range Engaged, base Damage 2), taser (page 81)

## Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a robot Threat:

1. A robot starts acting strangely, not following normal protocol. It might just be glitched, but it could also appear to be following a new program that interests any tech-oriented Traveler.
2. More robots appear, and start acting in a threatening manner. This is unusual behavior. Also, they might target the Travelers. Who programmed them?
3. The robots enforce a strict lockdown, attacking anyone who tries to leave. This creates tension. Play it up. Being a prisoner is a universal motive for Travelers.
4. It turns out an NPC controls the robots, and orders them to attack the Travelers. Insert the NPC earlier and tie them to one of the personal countdowns of a Traveler to up the stakes.





## ■ DRONE GROWTHS

Drone growths are mechanical beings not built by human hands but brought into existence by some other process. Rumors spread about these jury-rigged mechanical monstrosities appearing across Pacifica. Often huge in size and sometimes connected to people in neurocasters, some say these drone growths are the physical representations of sentient Intercerebral Intelligences inside the neuroscapes (page 97).

If they are spontaneously created AIs, they could act human should you wish. Consider the opposite – these new machines have a sentience humans cannot understand. Make them alien and therefore scary. Much sci-fi uses AI as just another human character. You are invited to make it something outside human experience.

Drone growths generally have Wits and Empathy scores (in addition to Strength and Agility) and most can act simultaneously in the real world and inside a neuroscape. They can also be attacked in both realms.

### Drone Growth

**Strength: 9** **Agility: 6** **Wits: 8**

**Empathy: 3** **Hull: 10** **Armor: 6** (only in the real world, none in the neuroscapes)

**Physical Weapons:** Stomp (max range Engaged, base Damage 2), electric blast (min range Short, max range Medium, base Damage 2).

**Neuroscape Weapon:** Ray gun (base Damage 2)

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a drone growth Threat:

1. A victim of the drone growth is seen by the Travelers. The victim might be held aloft by a ganglia of wires, or have cables connecting his head to other body parts. Make it scary and odd.
2. An NPC asks the Travelers for help. The drone growth is taking over a location at the Stop. If you want to play a reversal, the NPC might be in league with the growth. Otherwise, besides just tying the growth to the stop, try to tie it to a Traveler's backstory.

3. The NPC who asked for help is killed. The Threat extends its control over the Stop area. Was the NPC a friend? Did they have some vital item or piece of information the Travelers need?

4. The Drone Growth attacks the Travelers after gaining full control. Obviously a matter of survival, but what motivated the Drone Growth to eliminate them?

## ■ SYSTEMS

Systems are bodiless entities existing inside the neurographic networks. They may be manmade security systems or entities spontaneously evolved inside the neuroscapes – so-called Intercerebral Intelligences. Intelligent systems often have a need to control others, grow, and protect themselves.

Yet whether evolved in the network or made by people, they are not human. They can feign human motive and often use human agents. But they are likely far more intelligent than people and in ways we cannot even guess at. Play the NPCs they use or control but remember AI might well be far more alien than actual extraterrestrials. This is a new species we created, by design or chance, and we're losing control of it.

Systems can only be directly confronted inside neuroscapes (page 92) by hacking them or by interacting with their avatars. Systems can have Wits and Empathy scores, and their avatars can have Health ratings which can be degraded during avatar combat (page 97).

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a system Threat:

1. The system imprisons an NPC. Did the NPC threaten the system's existence? Did it need something only this NPC knows?
2. The system sabotages important functions at the Stop. Perhaps they system did this to stop the Travelers. If so, why?
3. The system forces or manipulates someone to do its bidding. The Travelers might know the person and notice they're not acting like themselves. Possibly, the system manipulated someone they know to get their guard down?
4. The system seizes control over the Stop site. Is the system only interested in this Stop? Does it intend to create a network with other locations?

# ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

**ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS AT A STOP** can take many forms, such as storms, diseases, floods, a wildfire, or an animal invasion of some kind. Such Threats can often be effectively used to set the mood and create tension at the Stop. Environmental Threats may be caused or controlled by an NPC or other entity. Below, we take a closer look at two types of environmental Threats – extreme weather and disease.

## ■ EXTREME WEATHER

Extreme weather Threats can take the form of hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, or heatwaves. Such Threats can impact the Stop area and its locations directly, by destroying buildings, injuring or killing minor NPCs, or shutting down communications or resources such as electricity or water.

As weather has no personality or motive, the tension comes from survival and the Tension (page 64) between the Travelers. An old dramatic technique is to trap characters who have issues with each other and see how that plays out. Encourage the players to play their Tensions while trapped.

Extreme weather Threats don't have game stats in themselves – instead, they expose the Travelers to hazards such as fire, falling, hunger, and thirst (see Chapter 4).

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a weather Threat:

1. The wind picks up.
2. An NPC is buried by debris in a collapsed building and needs to be saved.
3. The winds threaten the lives of the Travelers and NPCs.
4. The hurricane tears the town apart, killing everyone still present.

## ■ DISEASE

Disease Threats can be naturally occurring epidemics or designed biological weapons. See the rules for diseases on page 89 in Chapter 4.

### Example Countdown

This is an example of a Stop Countdown involving a disease Threat:

1. A minor NPC shows symptoms of the disease. Any Traveler who saw the diseases that swept the world has reason for alarm.
2. Several NPCs become seriously ill. The Travelers could be next. Or, what if they are immune and the people who aren't want to pick them apart for a cure?
3. The Travelers are exposed to the disease. Since they are ill, likely dying, their clock is ticking. They only have so much time. Remind them of that often.
4. Many inhabitants of the Stop are dead from the epidemic. Grief wracks the survivors. Empathy might motivate the Travelers to investigate.

# PERSONAL THREATS

**PERSONAL THREATS** are the most effective way to engage the Travelers in the story, so make the most of them. Handle them carefully and never leave them out the Journey. You might even briefly discuss each Traveler's personal Threat with the player before the game. Some of the things the Traveler (and the player) believe about it may be false – or things may be even worse than they imagine. During the game, you can even connect a personal Threat to a Threat at a Stop. Threat is motive. It drives the Traveler. In so doing, you can use it to create all kinds of dilemmas and great, tense Stops.

## ■ COUNTDOWNS

Each personal Threat has a Countdown, unconnected to any specific Stop. The Countdown events can occur at any Stop, or even on the road between Stops. Each step on the Countdown should bring the Threat closer to the Traveler. Maybe they first hear about it being in the area, then it makes contact, and as the third step, it attacks.

The threat might also serve as a personal demon. In many stories, a villain or obstacle represents the hero's psyche needing to move past something they hold in their mind. Growth comes from confronting these things... if the Traveler survives.

### Ending a Personal Threat

You or a player may at any time suggest that a personal Threat has played itself out and is no longer a part of the Journey. The player can then decide if they want to come up with a new personal Threat or play the rest of the Journey without one. The end of a personal Threat is a victory. It might make the Traveler grow. If it does, they may realize they have issues the Threat hid. Or the now gone Threat might reveal it was just the tip of something larger now after the Traveler.

# MINOR NPCS

**ALL MINOR NPCS**, (i.e. not Threats), are assumed to have a score of 3 in all attributes, unless otherwise specified. They may also have a talent, indicating any specific proficiency.

Minor NPCs that are not Threats and are described with very little detail. It's enough to include just a name and a function, for example: Valeria Rocca, Mayor of Hartville. You may also add a quirk, such as "smiles nervously." This little detail causes the players to imagine more. It also makes the NPC stick in the brain. They might not remember Greg the Mechanic, but his slow Southern drawl is unforgettable.

When the Travelers interact with a minor NPC, you may need to improvise additional information about them, such as what they look like, what they are wearing, and what they think about what is happening at the Stop.

## NPC Quirks

### D66 Quirk

- |    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| 11 | Bloodshot eyes       |
| 12 | Wears neurocaster    |
| 13 | Poor                 |
| 14 | Rich                 |
| 15 | Bitter               |
| 16 | Odd hairstyle        |
| 21 | Boastful             |
| 22 | Hungry               |
| 23 | Afraid               |
| 24 | Quiet                |
| 25 | Drunk                |
| 26 | Chain smoker         |
| 31 | Sick                 |
| 32 | Flirtatious          |
| 33 | Violent              |
| 34 | Well-dressed         |
| 35 | Short                |
| 36 | Thoughtful           |
| 41 | Loud                 |
| 42 | Shoeless             |
| 43 | Worried              |
| 44 | Dirty                |
| 45 | Shy                  |
| 46 | Curious              |
| 51 | Babyface             |
| 52 | Old                  |
| 53 | Angry                |
| 54 | Oddly shaped glasses |
| 55 | Gambler              |
| 56 | Smelly               |
| 61 | Wise                 |
| 62 | Armed                |
| 63 | Hyperactive          |
| 64 | Tired                |
| 65 | Grieving             |
| 66 | Neurine addict       |



CHAPTER SEVEN

# INTO THE DUST

*May is the time of dust. Gusts of wind rise and ebb through the haze, carrying huge sheets of dun-colored dust that seethe and rustle across the landscape. It slithers across the ground, hissing among the creosote bushes and on until it piles up in billowing dunes and waves that wander unseen and grow in the constant static.*

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**THIS CHAPTER INCLUDES** a complete framework for a sample Journey, including a Destination, a main Threat, three Stops, and several minor Encounters. It also includes suggested personal Goals and Threats for all ten archetypes listed in Chapter 3. You can play this Journey out of the box, extend it by adding more Stops to it, or take it apart and just use it as inspiration for your own Journeys.

### Travelers

This Journey can be played with the pre-generated Travelers included at the end of this chapter or with Travelers created by the players.

### Replacement Travelers

Society is falling apart and Pacifica is a dangerous place. It's not inconceivable that a Traveler might die on the Journey. If that happens, a good solution is to replace them with an NPC who the group meets on the road. There are many such NPCs described in the Stops on the following pages.

# DESTINATION & ROUTE

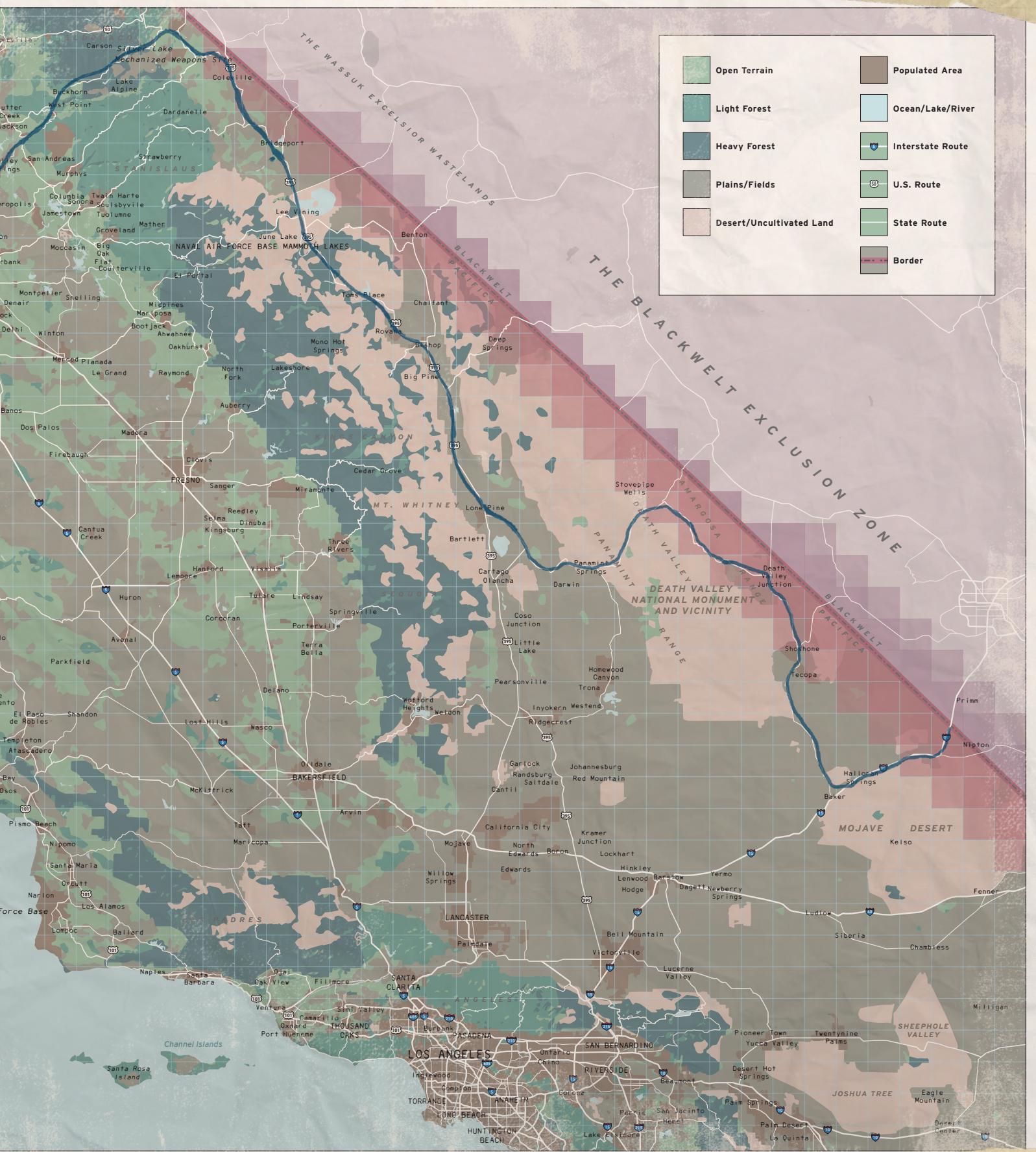
**IN THIS JOURNEY**, the Travelers are headed from San Francisco Memorial City into the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone. All border crossings are closed except the Primm Border Crossing in the south – this is the Destination. For various reasons, the Travelers want to stay off the main highways, and thus first head east into the Sierra Nevadas, then south into the Mojave desert. See the adjacent map.

### VEHICLE

The Travelers ride in a run-down 1993 Buick Roadmaster Estate. It is a 2WD car with the traits Roomy and Heavy, and has the following attributes:

- ☒ **Maneuverability:** +2
- ☒ **Speed:** 3
- ☒ **Hull:** 8
- ☒ **Armor:** 4





# PERSONAL GOALS & THREATS

**BELow, BRIEF BACKSTORIES** and suggested personal Goals, Threats, and Threat Countdowns for each of the ten archetypes of the game are listed. You can give the players their Goals and Threats as handouts before the game starts – but not the Countdowns.

If you are playing Travelers created by the players, you might want to tweak the Goals a little to fit the characters better – or you can inform the players of their Goals while they are creating the Travelers. Some of the personal Goals and Threats for the archetypes are interconnected. If you have several such archetypes in the group, inform the players about this.

How to use Countdowns during the Journey is discussed in Chapter 5.

## Shared Countdowns

A few archetypes below have similar Threats and share a single Countdown. If several of these archetypes are in play, make sure you give this Countdown ample room.

## NPCs

Some of the Travelers' personal Threats include specific NPCs that may appear during the Journey. Descriptions and attributes for these NPCs are also found on page 160.

## ARTIST

So what if the world is falling apart? The show must go on, until the very end. You have a gig in Las Vegas in two weeks, and you intend to be there for it, if it's the last thing you do. Also, you owe some people in San Francisco some money. A lot of money. So it's time to leave. This will be the show of a lifetime.

**Goal:** To play one last show in Las Vegas in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** Bad people want their money back from you.

## Countdown

1. A couple of rough-looking bikers (equal in number to the Travelers) pass by, on the road or at a Stop.
2. The bikers come back, this time actively looking for the Artist. If they find their prey, they demand the money and beat the Traveler up if they don't get it. They threaten to kill the Traveler next time they meet.
3. The bikers attack and try to kill the Artist and anyone helping them.

## CRIMINAL

You thought you'd never breathe free air again. After what you did, you assumed you would spend the rest of your life behind bars in a supermax prison. Then came Mode Six. Not that they let you use a neurocaster and drift off into the neuroscape, oh no. But the guards did. And whenever there is a moment to seize, you seize it. Now, you're out again. And you won't let them take you alive. You are never going back. Never.

**Goal:** To start a new life in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** You are hunted by the law.

## Countdown

1. A California Highway Patrol car passes by, on the road or at a Stop.
2. The road ahead is blocked by the Highway Patrol, looking for the Criminal.
3. The Criminal finds themselves surrounded by the Highway Patrol, twice as many officers as Travelers.

## DEVOTEE

You and your circle of truth seekers never wanted to harm anyone. You just sought the truth – the real truth inside oneself, not the synthetic dreams in Sentre's neurocasters. But your cult's public rejection of neurronics must have angered someone. One night, your meditation center burned to the ground. You think it was the Convergence, a crazed neurocult worshiping the Intercerebral Divinity, born inside the network. You have had enough of this. It's time to go.

**Goal:** To start a new cult in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** The Convergence – but what do they really want?

## Countdown

1. A phone booth near the Traveler suddenly rings. If they pick up, a voice tells them to stop running and join the Convergence. "The time of reckoning is near."
2. If any Traveler neurocasts, a shadowy Convergence cultist appears, whispering the Devotee's name, saying they must join the Convergence. If the Devotee neurocasts, the cultist attacks.
3. The mysterious Mr. Pink (page 160) appears with a group of Convergence cultists, twice as many as Travelers, and tries to kidnap the Devotee.

## ■ DOCTOR

With so many of your patients wasting away on their neurocasters, you were desperate to do something about it. By coincidence, you met a researcher at a small pharmaceutical company, who said they were working on a drug that would block neurocasting completely. A cure. It sounded too good to be true, and it was. Soon, the researcher was shadowed by government operatives, Sentre agents, or worse. They asked for your help to leave San Francisco with the research. You felt you had no other choice.

**Goal:** Keep the research material safe, and eventually bring the zip drive to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Note:** If there is a Scientist on this Journey, this is the researcher you're helping. If not, the researcher has been killed. If there is a Drone Pilot or Investigator on this Journey, they are aware of your goal and they help you.

**Countdown:** The Doctor shares the Countdown with the Scientist.

## ■ OUTCAST

For you, being on the road is nothing new, it's been your lifestyle as long as you can remember. Normies might not see it, but San Francisco is falling apart. It's time to leave.

**Goal:** To leave town and maybe go to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** Your old neurine dealer Carlos wants you back in town.

### Countdown

1. Carlos lets the Outcast know he is nearby, either by placing an object in their room, or showing himself at a distance, or letting an NPC deliver a message.
2. Carlos corners the Outcast and tries to make them come along with him back to the city. He first offers a spiked drink (requiring a Strength roll to avoid being knocked out for a Stretch), then tries to persuade the Traveler, and then he tries to force them into his car.
3. Armed with a shotgun, Carlos seeks out the Outcast. He is prepared to shoot anyone who prevents him from taking them with him.

## ■ DRONE PILOT

You are not here. Your flesh body is somewhere in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone, hooked up to a neurocaster day and night, controlling a drone in faraway Pacifica. You are on a mission. A researcher in San Francisco Memorial City has come up with a potential cure for the rampant neurocaster addiction. Many interested parties want their hands on the research.

**Goal:** Keep the research material safe, and eventually bring the zip drive to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** You are being followed – by government operatives, Sentre agents, or worse.

**Note:** If there is a Scientist on this Journey, this is the researcher you're helping. If not, the researcher has been killed. If there is a Doctor or Investigator on this Journey, they are aware of your goal and they help you.

**Countdown:** The Drone Pilot shares the Countdown with the Scientist.

## ■ INVESTIGATOR

It seemed like a simple enough job. Help out this eccentric scientist who thought they were being followed. Watch them to see if they were being watched by someone else. They seemed a little unhinged, probably paranoid. Easy money, you thought. Not so easy, it turned out. Suddenly, you were being shadowed by shady people who wanted the scientist's research. It's too late to get out now. You need to follow this through to the end. Your life in San Francisco is over anyway.

**Goal:** Keep the research material safe, and eventually bring the zip drive to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Note:** If there is a Scientist on this Journey, this is the researcher you're helping. If not, the researcher has been killed. If there is a Doctor or Drone Pilot on this Journey, they are aware of your goal and they help you.

**Threat:** You are being followed – by government operatives, Sentre agents, or worse.

**Countdown:** The Investigator shares the Countdown with the Scientist.

## ■ RUNAWAY KID

Your foster parents Todd and Elaine were no parents of the year, but at least they provided for you. Until Mode Six. After a while, they lost all interest in the world outside the neuroscape. In you. Slowly, they wasted away in their neurocasters. In the end, you had no choice but to leave. You found someone to hitch a ride with, and now you're on your way.

**Goal:** You think your real father is in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone, in Las Vegas. You'd like to meet him one day.

**Threat:** The social worker Jo Watts from Pacifica Social Services is trying to find you.

### Countdown

1. A green AMC Pacer marked Pacifica Social Services appears and slows down as it passes the Traveler's vehicle.
2. When the Travelers have stopped somewhere, Jo Watts suddenly appears. She says the foster parents have kicked their neuronics habit and are in much better shape. Watts asks the Runaway Kid to come back.
3. The road is blocked by the Highway Patrol, together with agent Jack Simone of the Pacifica Bureau of Investigation, demanding that the Traveler returns.

## ■ SCIENTIST

Working at a small pharmaceutical company, you did research on a rare congenital neurological condition that seemed to make it impossible to use neuronics. Realizing that this discovery might be used against the rampant neurocaster addiction, you presented this to your managers triumphantly.

The reaction was not what you had hoped for. They told you to bury it. You did, for a while. But soon, strange cars appeared outside your house. Your mail was checked. Your home was ransacked. Someone was watching you. Police? The Sentre corporation? Or worse, that crazed neurocult they call the Convergence?

When you complained to your managers, you were fired. On the same day, your wife was killed in a strange car accident – in your car. Now, you had no choice. You had to leave. But you're taking your research with you. You're gonna show them.

**Goal:** Keep the research material safe, and eventually bring the zip drive to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone. You've heard there is a sanctuary in Las Vegas.

**Threat:** You are being followed – by government operatives, Sentre agents, or worse.

**Note:** If there is a Doctor or Drone Pilot on this Journey, they are aware of your secret and they help you.

### Countdown

1. A black van marked Sentre appears nearby. Such vans are not uncommon, but this one contains agents (equal in number to the Travelers), looking for the Scientist.
2. Agent Jack Simone of the Pacifica Bureau of Investigation (page 160) appears and asks the Scientist to turn themself in, before things get ugly.
3. The Travelers meet a roadblock. Agent Simone is here, as is the mysterious Mr. Pink and a large contingent of Sentre agents (twice as many as the Travelers). The Travelers need to fight, double back and flee, or plead with agent Simone. He might turn against Sentre if the Travelers are convincing.



## ■ VETERAN

You thought the nightmares from the war would end, eventually, but they never did. You keep dreaming about your fellow soldiers, dying in the dust. But did they all really die? Could some of them still be out there? Did you abandon them? Could you have saved them? Could you still? In the end, you had to leave, even if it meant going AWOL and abandoning your spouse. This is all that matters now.

**Goal:** Find your missing comrades in arms. They must be out there, maybe in the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone.

**Threat:** Your spouse wants to you to come back home.

## Countdown

1. The spouse contacts the Traveler somehow, via a payphone or by having an NPC deliver a message, and pleads with them to come home.
2. The Traveler finds one former fellow soldier dead, or learns of their death.
3. There is a roadblock ahead, with soldiers (equal in number to the Travelers) ordering the Traveler to turn themselves in. The spouse is there too, pleading.



### Pacifica Soldiers

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**Strength: 4** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 3**  
**Empathy: 3** **Health: 4** **Gear:**  
Assault rifle, \$50

### Agent Simone

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Agent Jack Simone of the Pacifica Bureau of Investigation has always been a man of duty. These days, though, he's increasingly unsure what that means. Hunting some poor bastard to the ends of the world on the behest of Sentre isn't what he signed up for.

### Pacifica Highway Patrol

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**Strength: 4** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 3**  
**Empathy: 3** **Health: 4** **Gear:**  
Handgun or shotgun, patrol car (4WD car with the Powerful and Heavy traits), \$100

**Strength: 5**, **Agility: 6**, **Wits: 5**,  
**Empathy: 3**, **Health: 6**, **Gear:**

Chrysler Vision (2WD car with the Roomy and Reliable traits), handgun, \$500

### Bikers

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**Strength: 5** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 3**  
**Empathy: 3** **Health: 5** **Gear:**  
Handgun or shotgun, motorcycle, \$100

### Carlos

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Carlos is a brutal thug, loyal only to himself and completely ruthless.

**Strength: 5** **Agility: 5** **Wits: 3**  
**Empathy: 4** **Health: 5** **Gear:**  
Shotgun, 2WD car, \$50

### Sentre Agents

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**Strength: 4** **Agility: 5** **Wits: 3**  
**Empathy: 2** **Health: 5** **Gear:**  
Handgun or assault rifle, black van (with the Powerful and Fast traits), \$200

### Mr. Pink

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This lean man in a suit and dark, round glasses under his very receding hairline is often seen around Sentre agents, giving them orders. Some say he's also deeply connected to the Convergence cult, worshiping their Intercerebral Divinity. Who knows? But you definitely don't want to get in his way.

### Jo Watts

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**Strength: 3** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 5**  
**Empathy: 6** **Health: 4** **Gear:**  
AMC Pacer (2WD car with the Bone-shaker and Cheap model traits), \$200

**Strength: 4** **Agility: 6** **Wits: 6**

**Empathy: 5** **Health: 5** **Gear:**  
Handgun, Stimulus TLE-PRO neurocaster, Elite Trooper Gaming Drone, \$500

# STARTING THE GAME

TO KICK OFF THE JOURNEY, let the players know that they are on the road in a beat-up Buick Roadmaster Estate, having just left San Francisco Memorial City and heading east into the mountains. It's May 6, 1997, and the world is ending.

Their goal is the Primm Border Crossing to the Blackwelt Exclusion Zone, some 650 miles away. They are staying off the main interstates, instead driving through the Sierra Nevadas. Show the players their planned route on the map. If they want to deviate somewhat from this route, they can.

## Group Questions

Next, ask the group these joint questions, on which they must come to an agreement:

- ◻ Who is driving?
- ◻ Where are the others sitting?  
(The Buick Roadmaster Estate has a rear-facing fold-down bench seat in the cargo area.)
- ◻ What music are you listening to?

## Personal Goals

Inform each player of their personal Goal. You can even print these out as notes and hand them to each player, in case they want to keep their Goals secret from the other Travelers at the start of the game. Then, let each player in turn answer the following questions:

- ◻ What do you look like?
- ◻ How did you meet the other Travelers?
- ◻ What have you told them about yourself?
- ◻ How do you feel about them?
- ◻ What are you doing right now?

## Tension Levels

Now, ask each player to set their Tension levels to the others. Remember, each Traveler should start the game with Tension 1 toward two other Travelers, and Tension 0 toward the rest.



## Roleplay

Next, put on some '90s music and start roleplaying! Let the players talk, getting a feel for the Travelers and who they are. Let them discuss their personal Goals if they want to, but don't force it. Describe how the roads pass massive neurograph towers as they slip by the suburbs, into the California hills. The traffic thins out as they descend into the vast Central Valley. An hour passes. Let the players describe how they feel.

## Personal Threats

If the right moment presents itself, you might even introduce one of the Travelers' personal Threats and start someone's Countdown at this early stage. But again, don't force it.

# ENCOUNTERS

**DURING THE TRAVELERS' JOURNEY**, you can add minor Encounters along the way. One such Encounter is listed below. These are much briefer than the main Stop sites and might not even require the Travelers to leave their vehicle. The purpose of the Encounters is just to set the mood and immerse players in the world of *The Electric State*. If the Travelers want to engage with the Encounters, let them – if not, don't force it.

## THE ROADWORKS

The road ahead is blocked by construction. A crew with a large truck and blinking yellow warning lights seems to be laying new tarmac. But as the Travelers draw closer, they see that no work is being done. The crew all have neurocaster helmets on and are all lost in some neuronic daydream. One is standing in the middle of the road, another just sitting on the ground, and the third lying flat on his back. All are unresponsive. If the Travelers forcibly remove the neurocaster from a worker, he flies into a rage and attacks in close combat, fighting until Incapacitated. To continue, the Travelers need to climb into the truck and drive it aside or pass the very narrow patch of road next to it (a stunt requiring an Agility roll, see page 103).

### Construction Crew

**Strength: 4** **Agility: 3** **Wits: 2**  
**Empathy: 3** **Health: 4** **Gear:**  
Improvised club, neurocaster, D6 x \$10





## THE STACK

A towering structure of mobile homes sits along one side of the highway. Draped from the top is a huge, pre-war American flag. The mobile homes are slotted into a steel skeleton meant for another structure that was never completed. Huge power nodes flank the vertical community, clearly taken from elsewhere. The homes draw energy from these immense pylons – a lot of energy. Certainly, more than this small community needs.

The residents are wary of strangers but come out if the Travelers stop their vehicle. A man in a puffy orange vest carrying a shotgun approaches first. He explains that the Travelers must state their business if they're to enter "America." If pressed further, he tells them that this area is a sovereign nation. "We have two acres of the **REAL** America here," he says. At this point more of the community appears, many with guns. After that, they ask the Travelers "whose side are you on?" An Empathy roll is needed (with Con Artist and Charmer adding a bonus) to satisfy these "patriots."

### Puffy Vest

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 3 **Health:** 4 **Gear:** Shotgun

## DRONE FATIGUE

A black sedan sits along the shoulder of the road. As the Travelers approach, they see it has **Pacifica** government plates. Passing the car, they notice a downed drone dating from the war – not an unusual sight. However, a fed-looking type stands near a teenage girl. They are in a field of small drones made in the image of the mascot of a prominent fast food-chain. All the drones lay on the ground.

The girl fiddles with one drone's head while the man scratches his. The fed's eyes track the group, and one hand moves slightly toward the pistol in his shoulder holster. He lowers his hand if they seem innocuous.

If the Travelers ask what's going on, the fed, **Special Agent Carlton Whitfield**, tells them that these drones marched to the girl's (Irene Valdez's) home, surrounded it, and made noise until she came out. The drones then led her here and dropped dead. Irene's parents called the police who informed the **PBI** (Pacifica Bureau of Investigation).

### Special Agent Carlton Whitfield

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 5  
**Empathy:** 5 **Health:** 4 **Gear:** Handgun

### "American" Citizens

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 3 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 3 **Health:** 3 **Gear:**  
Handgun or shotgun

### Irene Valdez

**Strength:** 2 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 6  
**Empathy:** 4 **Health:** 3 **Gear:** A Trapper Keeper binder in her backpack.





## THE BARN

An old barn, ill-kept, appears off the road. Inside one can see a large figure. As the Travelers' vehicle gets closer, the image refines – it's a huge drone, bent over to fit in the barn. It smiles and waves at them in a tentative, almost sheepish manner.

If the Travelers stop, the drone makes a come here motion with its fingers. It still has the smile, inviting them into the barn. If the Travelers enter, the drone wants to play hide-and-seek with them inside the barn. It's not very good, its body far too large to hide inside the small barn. If the Travelers want to leave, the drone won't let them, blocking them with its body. It can listen, but no speak. To get out, the Travelers need to immobilize the drone using force, hack it using a neurocaster, or make an Empathy roll to convince or bluff the unknown operator to let them go.

### Smiling Drone

**Strength:** 8 **Agility:** 6 **Wits:** 3

**Empathy:** 3 **Hull:** 6 **Armor:** 3 (only in the real world, none in the neuroscapes)

**Physical Weapon:** *Grab* (max range Engaged, base Damage 2)

**Neuroscape Weapon:**

*Ego Drain* (base Damage 2)

## TRAVELING CLOTHES

It starts with a beach blanket on the highway, one corner fluttering in a low wind. A pair of shorts next, those loud colored ones popular at the start of the decade. Eventually, the Travelers see a 2WD car topped with an open storage pod. Other clothes and personal items are strewn across the road, creating a trail leading to the car. Beside the car lay two dead people, their bodies desiccated, neurocasters still on their heads.

Inside the vehicle is a collection of CDs, mostly 1980s music. Two fast food drinks sit in the cup holders. Both drinks are still cold. If the Travelers search the pair, they find their Pacifica drivers licenses. In the glove box is a folded paper map of Pacifica with a route marked on it. The route is quite far from where the car is now. The registration, also in the glove compartment, doesn't match either name on the IDs. The car has half a tank of gas and is in working order.

## MIGRATION

With surprising grace, a huge, four-legged robot crosses the road ahead. Two more already crossed the road, all camouflaged and looking vaguely like large, extinct dinosaurs of some sort. They move in clear patterns, and, on a successful Wits roll, a Traveler recognizes it as animal herd behavior. The one finishes crossing and raises its metal, beak-like head, letting out loud noises like an animal. The others stop, look at it, then turn their heads in unison towards the Travelers' vehicle.

Each of these robots has a military ruck on its back, like a soldier might have had on a horse 100 years ago. But these beasts have no riders, at least not anymore. Two long, springy antennas come up from the back of one. Another Wits test, or any Veteran archetype, recognizes these as a military communications array. But this isn't the way any military robots would move.

### Quadruped Military Robot

**Strength:** 8 **Agility:** 7 **Hull:** 10 **Armor:** 4

**Weapons:** *Beak* (max range Engaged, base Damage 3)





STOP ONE

# THE ANGEL IN THE MACHINE

*A crowd stood in the parking lot, gathered around something huge, neurocasters glittering everywhere. It seemed to be an enormous rebuilt drone. Its head and arm looked like they came from one of those big action drones you see in Neurodrome arenas, and bundles of cables poured out of its open head.*

**THIS STOP IS DESIGNED** to be the first one on the Journey *Into the Dust*, but it can also be used as a stand-alone one-shot or incorporated into another Journey of your own design. This Stop is meant to be placed in the suburbs of Stockton in the Central Valley of Pacifica but can easily be used elsewhere with some minor tweaks.

## ■ THE BLOCKER

When the players have had enough time to get into their characters and get to know the other Travelers a little, introduce the Blocker of this Stop by reading or paraphrasing the following:

*You're driving through another cloned American suburb, this one somewhere near Stockton in the Central Valley. The rhythmic thumping of the Buick's wheels against the concrete joints of the four-lane road feels almost soothing as you pass run-down roadside buildings and huge billboards for the Sentre corporation. The setting sun behind you dabs the Sierra Nevada mountains in a dull red. [The current driver] is almost dozing off when the streetlights suddenly flicker and then go out. Next, a tire suddenly blows out and the Buick careens out of control!*

Let the driver roll Agility to avoid an accident (page 104). No matter the outcome, the Buick comes to a stop, its Maneuverability reduced to zero and unable to drive on. Also, the car battery is completely dead and the engine won't start.

Let the Travelers get their bearings. They are on a wide four-lane street in the outskirts of Stockton, and the street lights flicker back on. Show the map on page 171 to the players. From their position, they can see

a liquor store (Ramona's), a hamburger joint (Burger Box), and a few other businesses along the roadside. Between those, streets lined by low residential houses with small gardens shoot off from the main street. There is not a person in sight.

### Where Are We?

If the Travelers want to know where they are, allow a Wits roll. On a success, they believe they are in Littleville, a low-income suburb known for little else than a high number of neurine addicts. They can also find this information by neurocasting (page 94) – that also gets them information about the local businesses and restaurants.

### Explore

Let the Travelers explore freely from here, using the map and the location descriptions listed below.

### The Car

The Buick is inoperable and needs repairs. The blown-out tire can be replaced in a stretch of time, but a Wits roll (with bonus dice from the Mechanic talent) reveals that the car battery strangely is completely dead and needs to be replaced. The Travelers will need to find a spare battery or a way to charge it – or a new car.

### The Road

If the Travelers investigate the road, or the streetlights, they find nothing out of the ordinary. The road is generally in bad repair, which may be what caused the tire to blow, but there is nothing to suggest foul play.

## Food & Sleep

It's the beginning of the Evening Shift (page 17) when the game starts, and soon the Travelers will need food and sleep (page 89). Unless they have food in the car, they will need to find some. Four people can sleep in the Buick if needed, but not very comfortably.

## The Countdowns

Use the Stop Countdown on page 171 to push the action forward when needed, but don't rush things – set a creepy mood and build up the action slowly. You can also use the individual Travelers' personal Threat Countdowns whenever you want, but again, be careful not to overload the players.

## The End

Point #6 in the Countdown suggests a final scene for this Stop. But remember, the end is never set beforehand – you are playing to find out what happens.

### Cars in the Streets

There are a few cars in the streets nearby. If the Travelers try to steal one, they will soon notice that it doesn't run. A careful examination and a Wits roll (with a bonus for the Mechanic talent) reveals that the battery is dead. It's the same with all the cars nearby. All of the batteries have been drained by the drone growth, but the Travelers have no way of learning this now. They can be repaired, but not without a spare battery. The only functional vehicles in the area are Jimmy's pickup (page 178), the Torres' sedan (page 175), and Doug's 4WD car and dirtbike (page 175). Hotwiring any of these requires a Wits roll and Stretch of work, and will likely attract the attention of Jimmy and his thugs, who are the de facto law of the neighborhood.

## THE SITUATION

For many years, Father Marcos Hernandez was struggling to keep his local Church of the Angels alive in Littleville. In an area struggling with neurine addiction, Father Marcos did provide help for some, but his congregation was dwindling.

After the introduction of Sentre's Mode 6 update, things turned even worse. His Sunday masses emptied

out, people staying at home with their neurocasters instead of coming to listen to his words of God. Some, like so many across Pacifica, lost themselves entirely in the Electric State.

Thinking "if you can't beat them, join them," Father Marcos took drastic measures. Taking a final loan against his house, he purchased a batch of Sentre neurocasters and offered to let all churchgoers use them during his sermons – also held inside the local neuroscape. Jorge Lopez, a local kid skilled at computers, helped him redesign the local neuroscape into a virtual representation of Heaven.

After some initial hesitation, it was a success. Never before had the congregation experienced such vivid sermons – it was like being in Heaven, witnessing the actual angels speak directly to them. Neurine addicts and others who couldn't afford their own neurocasters flocked to the church, and soon others joined them too.

A few months later, something strange stirred in the local neuroscape. An Intercerebral Intelligence (page 179), grown inside the network, took notice of the gathering inside the neuroscape and appeared to the congregation in the form of a magnificent golden angel. Filled with religious fervor, Father Marcos believed it to be the archangel Gabriel, and rejoiced.

The congregation was awestruck. Some were so immersed in the heavenly neuroscape that they stopped eating, wasting away in their neurocasters until they perished. The few who realized that this neuronic entity was no angel and wanted no part of it left Littleville, which slowly emptied out. With a few exceptions, only the most zealous – some would say fanatic – worshipers remained.

The "archangel" was revered, but it was not satisfied. It wanted to take physical form in the world and instructed the congregation to build it a body – a huge drone growth built from spare parts, cables and junk found in the area. When it was completed, the congregation connected directly to it with their neurocasters, following the behemoth on nightmarish marches through the neighborhood.

Now, Father Marcos has started to become paranoid. Any outsiders coming to Littleville must be assimilated into the cult – or eliminated.



### Keeping the Travelers Involved

Some players might be eager to fix the car and have the Travelers leave Littleville as quickly as possible, without resolving the situation. If this happens, play on their Dreams and Flaws to engage them, and have NPCs like Daisy or Ramona ask the Travelers for help. If none of that works, remind the players directly of the game principle that the journey is the goal (page 17).

### ■ COUNTDOWN

The Travelers' arrival at Littleville triggers a series of events that could end in drama and violence. Below, you will find a Countdown of events that you as GM can use to push the story along – but don't rush it! Also, the specific events below might need to be modified – or removed entirely – as a result of the players' actions. This countdown is only meant as a guide and support for you.

1. An NPC (most likely Jimmy, Daisy, or the Torres family) invites the Travelers to the sermon at the Church of the Angels that same Evening.

2. If the Travelers go, the mass starts out commonly enough, but soon Father Marcos asks the few dozen worshipers (including Jimmy, Jorge, Daisy, and the Torres family – see Locations) to put on their neurocasters. The Travelers can comply or refuse as they like. If they comply, they will experience the Heavenly Neuroscape (page 179) but not meet the archangel. This is a test by Father Marcos – if they join him in the neuroscape, he sees them as potential recruits. If not, he considers them threats. The sermon ends without drama unless the Travelers cause it.
3. At Night, the congregation meets up again outside the church to meet the archangel. They all wear neurocasters. Soon, the drone growth appears, and the worshipers connect their helmets directly to him. Father Marcos and his flock follow the behemoth into the streets, a strange procession taking place in the real world and inside the Heavenly Neuroscape at the same time. The streetlights flicker as the drone growth sucks the electricity right out of the local power lines. Any Traveler who is awake can hear the heavy thuds of the drone's steps and see the flickering streetlights. They might even see the lights from the neurocasters, but they won't be able to see the drone growth nor confront the procession at this time – it disappears into the night before they can approach.
4. If the Travelers are on friendly terms with Ramona or Daisy, one of them approaches the Travelers the next day and ask for help. Ramona wants her son Jorge out of the church, while Daisy is just scared and doesn't know what to do.
5. Unless the Travelers have antagonized the congregation, Father Marcos or one of his followers invites the Travelers to mass again the next Evening. This time, they are asked to stay after it ends – to meet the archangel in the flesh, in the parking lot outside the church. Father Marcos asks them to connect their helmets directly to the hulking body of the drone growth. Doing so runs a high risk of sealing their fate (page 179). Refusing it triggers a violent response from Jimmy and his thugs.



6. During point #5 above, or at some other appropriate moment, Ramona appears with a shotgun, demanding that her son Jorge leaves with her. He tells her to leave but she won't have it. The risk of violence is very high. If Ramona is hurt, Jorge changes sides, and possibly Daisy as well. If the Travelers help Ramona, they are targeted too. Only the drone growth and Jimmy and his thugs, and Father Marcos as a last resort, will fight. The others are frozen in fear and disbelief. If the Travelers try to flee, Ramona and/or Daisy beg them for help, and Jimmy and his thugs chase them in his pickup. The Torres' can also join the chase in their sedan.



## LOCATIONS

### Ramona's Food & Liquor

A low sheet metal building with barbed wire on the roof and a metal gate at the entrance. During open hours (all Shifts except Night), the manager Ramona Lopez sits behind metal bars with a shotgun under the counter. The shelves are half empty, but the Travelers can buy liquor, beer, some canned food, and snacks – as long as they don't antagonize Ramona. She is very suspicious of newcomers (see her NPC sidebar on page 176). Breaking into the store requires a Strength roll at -2 dice (bonus dice from a crowbar and the Thief talent).

### Burger Box

This squat brick building with a large sign on the roof offers decent meals at decent prices. During most open hours (all Shifts except Night), the waitress Daisy Williams serves the few guests that come in the door. She'll be friendly to the Travelers and chat with them, even inviting them to the church (page 175). A few other locals are usually here, part of the congregation and watching the Travelers intently. They won't answer questions and soon leave (to inform Father Marcos about the newcomers).

## Residential Houses

### D6 House

- Deserted and looted.** The windows are broken and the walls are covered by graffiti. Inside, dirt covers moldy furniture. There is nothing of value inside and nothing to eat, but the Travelers can sleep here.
- Dead neurocaster.** A shriveled body sits in a garden chair in the tall grass in the garden. The body is cold and dead but its neurocaster is still switched on. Inside, there is a little canned food (D6 daily rations) and \$10 × D6 in cash.
- Living neurocaster.** No matter the time of day, someone is sitting in a garden chair with a neurocaster on, lost in a dream. If the Travelers forcibly remove the helmet, the person flies into a wild rage and fights until Incapacitated. Inside the house, there is a little canned food (D6 daily rations) and \$10 × D6 in cash.
- Prepper.** When the Travelers approach, a shot rings out over their heads and someone shouts at them to get lost, or he'll shoot them. His name is Doug, and he has seen Littleville fall under the spell of Father Marcos' neurosermons and refuses to be part of it, but he also refuses to leave. He has seen the drone growth at night and is very scared of it. Doug believes, rightly, that the rest of the townsfolk are out to get him, and he's very hostile to the Travelers as well. Talking him down will require some smooth talk and an Empathy roll at -2. Doug has stats like a typical resident but has a hunting rifle, lots of ammo and canned food to last a month. He also has a 4WD car in the driveway and a dirtbike in his garage, both functional - see the adjacent sidebar. Doug reacts with extreme violence if someone tries to steal his vehicles.
- Happy family.** As the Travelers approach, they hear children laughing in the garden (except at Night). The parents, Lucas and Maria Torres, are also there, tending to the garden or barbecuing, depending on the time of day. They greet the Travelers and ask them to join them for a coffee or a beer. They will chat happily and describe Littleville as a lovely little community. They will also invite the Travelers to the church sermon the same night. If the Travelers openly express distrust in Father Marcos, Lucas and Maria will suddenly turn on them and try to kill them with kitchen knives. The couple have a functional 2WD car inside their garage - see the adjacent sidebar.
- Someone you know.** A named NPC lives here, like Jimmy Shute or Daisy Williams. They may or may not be at home, depending on the time of day.



### Jimmy's Auto Parts & Hardware

A white sheet metal building with graffiti on the walls and a large parking lot outside. During open hours (the Morning and Day Shifts), the manager Jimmy Shute is typically here, along with a few employees (among them is Ramona Lopez' son Jorge, see page 177). Jimmy's beat-up 1987 Dodge Ram is parked outside.

Inside, there are spare parts for cars and general hardware (anything reasonable from the list on page 109). Charged car batteries are available here, but Jimmy won't reveal that during their first visit - see his NPC sidebar on page 178). Breaking into the store requires a Strength roll at -2 dice but triggers an alarm sending Jimmy and his thugs to intervene within a Stretch.

### Residential Houses

Littleville has hundreds of houses, mostly single-family homes with small gardens surrounded by low wire fences. Most houses are in poor condition with overgrown gardens. If the Travelers visit the homes, choose or roll on the adjacent table.

### Dollar General Market

This once well-stocked supermarket closed its doors five months ago, its doors now bolted. Breaking into the store requires a Strength roll. There is nothing of value inside.

### Joe's Pizza & More

This place is closed and boarded up. If the Travelers break in (Strength roll), they'll find the manager, dead and decomposed with a neurocaster on his head. Apart from kitchen utensils, there is nothing of value here.

## Stockton Fire Station 15

Pacifica's Bear Flag hangs limply from the pole outside this building belonging to the Stockton Fire Department. This is the only official building in the vicinity. When the Travelers approach, they notice that the door is ajar. Inside, they'll find three firefighters in full uniform – all dead and decomposed, with neurocasters still on their heads. If the Travelers loot the place, they can find a couple of fire axes, a set of general tools and a first aid kit. A fire engine rests in the garage but doesn't work.

## Valero Gas Station

This dusty old gas station actually works and is open Mornings and Days. The bored kid Carlos (part of Father Marcos' congregation) attends to the customers. The Travelers can get gasoline here if they have cash and a functional car. If they are being hunted by Jimmy Shute and his thugs (page 178), he will tell Carlos to shut the gas station down.

## 564 Auto Sales

This used car lot is filled with wrecks of old cars. Climbing over the wire fence requires an Agility roll, or a Strength roll to break the padlock. None of the cars here work – the battery is completely drained on every single one. It is possible to get other replacement parts from one of them, but this requires a Shift of work, tools, and a Wits roll – and it will attract the attention of Jimmy and his thugs, who are the de facto law of the neighborhood.

## Church of the Angels

The only thing about this low, wooden building signaling that it's a house of God is the roadside sign saying Church of the Angels. Next to it, there is a large parking lot and a large ash tree. Inside, the simply decorated main hall is filled with chairs, with a neurocaster helmet resting on each. There's a small altar at the far end. In the Evenings, it's busy here, with dozens of locals turning up for Father Marcos's neurosermons every night. In the Morning and Day, the reverend is mostly here, preparing the next sermon. He typically has a few timid assistants with him, and Jimmy Shute comes by several times a day.

## Doug's Vehicles

Doug the Prepper (see residential house #4) has two vehicles: a 4WD car in the driveway and a dirtbike inside his garage. Both are functional.

### 4WD Car

Doug's car is a 1994 Jeep Cherokee – a 4WD car with the **Loud** trait.

**Maneuverability: +3 Speed: 2**

**Hull: 6 Armor: 4**

### Dirtbike

Doug's Kawasaki dirtbike has the **Powerful** and **Loud** traits.

**Maneuverability: +4 Speed: 2**

**Hull: 3 Armor: 0**

## The Torres' Sedan

Lucas and Maria Torres (see residential house #5) have a functional Oldsmobile Cutlass Ciera in their garage.

**Maneuverability: +2 Speed: 3**

**Hull: 6 Armor: 4**



**Ramona Lopez**

The chain-smoking Ramona has been the manager of the liquor store since the 1970s and is now well into her sixties. She is not part of Father Marcos' congregation and is very hostile towards it, having lost her son Jorge to the neuronic bliss in the church (page 179). Ramona knows most of the backstory described under The Situation above except the existence of the archangel. She's seen the behemoth drone growth walk the streets at night, but only at a distance. She doesn't know what it is, and she is terrified of it.

**Location:** The liquor store. When the store is closed, Ramona sleeps in a back room.

**Reactions:** Ramona is very suspicious of newcomers, as she believes they are likely spies from Father Marcos' congregation sent to kidnap or kill her. At the same time, she depends on what little business she can still make, so she can't close the store. At their first meeting, Ramona is very curt with the Travelers and might even accuse them of being "spies from Father Marcos." If the Travelers manage to converse with her and make an Empathy roll or two, she might open up to them. She will not, however, reveal all she knows at their first meeting.

**Strength: 3** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 5**

**Empathy: 4** **Health: 4** **Gear:**

Shotgun, \$250 in the cash register



**Daisy Williams**

Daisy is part of the congregation and was initially mesmerized by Father Marcos' heavenly neuroscape and the archangel. Over the months however, doubts have crept in. Her deep trust in Father Marcos is shaken, and she is not sure that the entity is truly an angel. She has seen members of the congregation wither away and die and no one is allowed to leave. Daisy knows all of the backstory described under The Situation but will not easily share it.

**Location:** When not working at Burger Box, Daisy is either at the church or at her house.

**Reactions:** If the Travelers visit Burger Box, Daisy is friendly and chatty. If they are amiable enough, she invites them to mass at the church that same evening. This is partly because she's instructed by Father Marcos to talk to newcomers and report back to him, but she's also asking for her own sake - she wants to get a sense of whether the Travelers are to be trusted. She also wants to know if they could potentially help her escape from Littleville. If given the right nudge (and an Empathy roll), she might change sides and help the Travelers - or ask them for help.

**Strength: 4** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 3**

**Empathy: 5** **Health: 4** **Gear:**

Kitchen knife, \$200 in the cash register



**Father Marcos**

The reverend Father Marcos Hernandez is a devout Catholic and deeply believes that the entity he met in the neuroscape is the archangel Gabriel. He sees himself as chosen by God to receive his angel and will do anything to protect it. The reverend has become increasingly paranoid of outsiders, seeing them as a threat to his heavenly domain who need to join him or be eliminated.

**Reactions:** When first meeting the Travelers, probably during a sermon at the church, he turns on the charm and tries to get them to join in. If anyone threatens his congregation or the archangel, he changes personality and becomes totally ruthless. Under no circumstances will Father Marcos resort to violence himself, but he will implicitly encourage Jimmy and others to attack the Travelers if he sees them as a threat.

**Strength:** 5 **Agility:** 6 **Wits:** 4  
**Empathy:** 6 **Health:** 6 **Gear:** None



**Jorge Lopez**

Jorge Lopez was always a smart kid with big dreams, and hated the idea of taking over his mother's liquor store. When Father Marcos asked him to design the Heavenly Neuroscape, he jumped at the chance and soon became one of the congregation's most devoted followers. This caused a rift with his mother, and in anger, Jorge left home and went to work for Jimmy. Now, he is torn by doubt. If Ramona is hurt or threatened, he will change sides.

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 5 **Wits:** 5  
**Empathy:** 3, **Health:** 5 **Gear:**  
Handgun, neurocaster, \$30

### **Littleville Residents**

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 3 **Wits:** 3  
**Empathy:** 3 **Health:** 4 **Gear:** Improvised club or knife, neurocaster, D6 × \$10



### Jimmy Shute

Jimmy was never much of a believer. Having inherited his father's hardware store after the war, he didn't see many prospects for the future and got himself addicted to neurine. All that changed when he, for no particular reason, visited one of Father Marcos' neurocasting sermons. He believes he was saved that day, and he has been the reverend's most loyal servant since. Jimmy will do anything to protect the congregation and the archangel. Anything.

**Location:** When the store is closed (Evenings and Nights), Jimmy is either at the church or at his house.

**The Thugs:** Jimmy is almost always accompanied by his employees, one fewer in number than the Travelers. One of them is Ramona Lopez' son Jorge (page 177). He's loyal to Jimmy and Father Marcos but will turn on them if Ramona is hurt.

**Reactions:** If the Travelers enter Jimmy's store to get their car fixed, he's very friendly, but claims that he unfortunately doesn't have any functional car batteries. They were all discharged in a strange power surge in the area lately. He might be able to get one the next day though and offers to tow the Buick to his parking lot. He also invites the Travelers to the church sermon that same night. In fact, Jimmy is following Father Marcos' orders to keep any newcomers from leaving Littleville and bring them to the church. If, at any point, Jimmy feels that the Travelers are threatening the reverend - or worse, the archangel - he will try to kill them without hesitation. If they try to flee from Littleville, he chases them in his Dodge RAM, his thugs shooting from the back.

**Strength:** 5 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 2

**Empathy:** 2 **Health:** 5 **Talent:** Driver

**Gear:** Handgun, \$500 in the cash register

#### Jimmy's Thugs

**Strength:** 4 **Agility:** 4 **Wits:** 3

**Empathy:** 3 **Health:** 4 **Gear:**

Handgun, D6 x \$10

#### Jimmy's Pickup

Jimmy's car is a beat-up 1987 Dodge Ram - a pickup truck with the **Heavy**, **Loud**, and **Powerful** traits.

**Maneuverability:** +3 **Speed:** 2 **Hull:** 9

**Armor:** 4 **Gear:** Magnum revolver and hunting rifle

## The Archangel

No one in Littleville knows where the Intercerebral Intelligence came from, nor if it was designed by someone or evolved spontaneously within the neuroscapes. Regardless of its origins, the "archangel" is a vain and vengeful deity, demanding worship and accepting no apostates.

Inside the neuroscape, the "archangel" looks like a huge and magnificent golden angel wielding a fiery sword. In the real world, its physical body looks like an enormous, jury-rigged drone, with bundles of cables pouring out of its open head.

## The Heavenly Neuroscape

Father Marcos' heavenly neuroscape is connected to the larger Pacifica network but doesn't see much traffic from outsiders. The reverend has redesigned it, with the help of Jorge Lopez (page 177) into a virtual representation of Heaven itself, as in a Renaissance painting come to life. Glorious rays of bright sunlight shoot through lofty clouds in a massive hall lined by huge white columns. The visitors all appear as lesser angels dressed in airy robes, able to glide through the air and walk on the clouds with ease. Experiencing the neuroscape for the first time is so mesmerizing that it potentially inflicts 1 point of Bliss (page 92).

**Bliss & Fear:** Just seeing the archangel inside the neuroscape for the first time is such an impressive sight that it potentially inflicts 1 point of Bliss (page 92). Seeing the monstrous physical drone growth form of the entity in the real world is terrifying and counts as a traumatic experience with a potential Hope loss of 1.

**Connecting:** If a Traveler connects their neurocaster directly to the drone growth, they take 2 more points of potential Bliss. If the roll to resist the Bliss fails completely (no ☐ rolled), the Traveler is also enthralled by the entity. This turns the Traveler into an NPC under the GM's control, joining Father Marcos' worshipers. The control can be broken by another Traveler who rallies the victim (page 85), or if the victim is Incapacitated.

**Combat:** The archangel gets just one turn per round and needs to decide if it acts in the physical world or inside the neuroscape. It can suffer damage in both realms but is more vulnerable in the neuroscape.

**Strength: 9** **Agility: 6** **Wits: 8** **Empathy: 3**  
**Hull: 8** **Armor: 6** (only in the real world, none in the neuroscape)

**Physical Weapons:**

Stomp (max range Engaged, base Damage 2),  
Electric Blast (min range Short, max range Medium, base Damage 2).

**Neuroscape Weapons:**

Flaming Sword (base Damage 2)



## STOP TWO

# ROADSIDE MURDER

**Right outside the town, two police cars were parked across the road. A roadblock.**

*I sat paralyzed and squeezed the wheel hard. After I slammed on the brakes, the car keys swung back and forth in the ignition, ticking like the hands of an old clock. I couldn't take my eyes off the police cars, and I waited for a crackling voice from a loudspeaker to start yelling at us at any second. Skip threw himself at me and grabbed my arm. It's alright, Skip. If we're nice then they'll be nice.*

**THIS STOP IS DESIGNED** to be the second one on the Journey *Into the Dust*, but it can also be used as a stand-alone one-shot or incorporated into another Journey of your own design. This Stop is meant to be located in the Sierra Nevada mountains. It may be relocated, but the mountainous location should remain.

### ■ THE BLOCKER

When driving through the mountains, the Travelers are stopped by a police roadblock. Read or paraphrase the following:

*The majestic Sierra Nevada mountains, as picture perfect as a postcard. You passed the small town of Liberty a mile back. Just outside it stood a Sentre neurosphere, a massive spherical building where the minds of thousands might dwell in a crafted neuroscape.*

*You press on. As the darkness of night sweeps down the valley you're driving along, you suddenly see blue and red lights from a roadblock ahead. Several police cars block the road. Drawing closer, an officer with a big red glow stick motions for you to stop. Behind the roadblock, shadowy figures rake the roadside with xenon flashlights, clearly searching for something.*

The officer tells the Travelers that the area is a crime scene and will be blocked until morning at least. He tells them to turn around and recommends they go back to Liberty, where there is a hotel, the Amador Inn, they can stay at for the night.

### Murder Most Foul

- The deceased is James Anderson, a 23-year-old biology student from Los Angeles.
- In his car, the police found a map with the location of the murder marked with red ink, a neurocaster, and an unfinished jury-rigged robot - probably built to be used for collecting specimens of checkerblooms.
- James Anderson still had his wallet with 23 dollars in it.
- The victim was killed by a sharp blow to the back of the head, probably from an axe. The body was hacked to pieces, probably after he died, and spread out over the road. The corpse was reported by a truck driver who contacted the police department in Bishop.
- This is the third murder around Liberty in the last two months.
- The investigation is led by sheriff Toby "Old Toby" Henderson.



### Asking Questions

The Travelers may interact with the police officers, but they must make an Empathy roll (with a bonus from the Charmer talent) to learn that a murder was committed. If multiple  are rolled, the Travelers can learn additional information from the adjacent “Murder Most Foul” sidebar. The police officers will not take kindly to attempts to sneak around the crime scene.

### Going to Liberty

It’s getting late and the Travelers don’t have much choice other than to return to Liberty, just a mile or two back down the road. Once they get there, they are free to explore as they wish, but you should remind the players of their need to find a place to eat and sleep. The Amador Inn is the obvious choice.

### THE SITUATION

The main conflict at this Stop is between the sheriff Old Toby and Lolly and Jack Harney who own the Amador Inn, a key location and gathering point in Liberty. It relates to the string of murders being committed in and near the town. With the Harneys being the most prominent residents in town, Sheriff Toby believes that they know something about the murders but refuse to say anything out of fear of damaging their business.

The Harneys, for their part, believe that Old Toby is not who he claims to be. They think he is a man named Allan Brown who, in his 20s, murdered his sister here in Liberty. Lolly and Jack think that Allan came back from prison in Los Angeles, in disguise, to keep on killing. The fact that the sheriff started to harass them and blame them for the murders since they shared their suspicions with others is proof enough for the Harneys.



PACIFICA GOLDEN  
HOTELS

FREE STIMULUS  
BREAKFAST  
BAR  
SENIOR DISCOUNT

AMADOR INN

## The Murderer

Both the Harneys and Old Toby are mistaken. In fact, the real murderer is a woman named Ranielle Ganaway, the janitor at the Amador Inn. Ganaway has for a long time been interested in neuronics and was a talented neurocaster. She took an interest in the large Sentre neurosphere right outside of Liberty and one day went there to link up to the neuroscape inside. That's when she had an encounter which would change her – and Liberty – forever.

The neurosphere was malfunctioning, and the central operating system controlling it went – for lack of a better word – insane. The system, called the Fear System by Ranielle, started to self-destruct and attack everyone and everything inside it, tearing them to pieces. The Fear System infiltrated Ganaway's mind and instructed her to help deconstruct the system and everything entering it.

## The Fear System

Neither Ganaway nor the Fear System can distinguish between the neuroscape and the real world around it – the town of Liberty. Ganaway feels a compulsive need to “deconstruct” everyone in Liberty – especially people entering the area from outside, since they might influence the neuroscape. Ranielle won’t abide that.

Ganaway kills with a stun gun and an axe. She will go after visitors but may also kill residents. The victims are mutilated and left where they were killed, unless the location of their death could reveal that she is the killer.

## COUNTDOWN

After arriving at Liberty, the Travelers become embroiled in a series of events that could end in drama and violence. Below is a countdown of events that you as GM can use to push the story along. Remember that the specific events below might need to be modified – or removed entirely – because of the players’ actions. You might also want to shift the order of events around. This countdown is only meant as a guide and support for you.

1. Old Toby’s officers force everyone at the Amador Inn out of the building for questioning regarding the murders. While the police outside conduct the questioning, other police search the rooms inside.
2. The Harneys put up posters at the inn and around town with photos of the sheriff and the killer Allan Brown side by side, to show how alike they look.

3. Ranielle strikes again, killing a minor NPC (anyone in the list on page 188) at or near the Amador Inn. She tases the victim with her stun gun and then mutilates the body with her axe. A Traveler or an NPC nearby discovers the murder. Seeing the victim up close is a traumatic event with a potential Hope loss of 2.
4. The sheriff sets up a second roadblock south of Liberty, effectively trapping everyone inside the town. He claims he knows that the murderer is somewhere in the community. One minor NPC is beaten and arrested as he tries to force his way through the roadblock.
5. The Harneys gather townspeople at the Amador Inn, telling everyone about Allan Brown and trying to convince people that they must fight their way through the roadblocks or be murdered, sooner or later. A police officer who happens to walk in for coffee is attacked and locked into a walk-in refrigerator.
6. All lights are turned off at the Amador Inn, and all doors and windows are locked. A Traveler can override the system with a Wits roll and a stretch of work. If not, the Harneys manage to do it after a shift. This is the Fear System infiltrating the hotel.
7. Ranielle attacks again, this time going after one of the Travelers. If the attack fails, the Travelers may catch her. If interrogated, she sounds nonsensical, saying that the “Fear System” must be obeyed.
8. A waiter robot enters a locked suite and kills a guest with an electric wine opener. The robot then starts to damage itself until it stops functioning. The Harneys shut down all robots and lock them into a storage room in the basement.
9. Old Toby gets shot by one of the townspeople. He is wounded but manages to get back to his officers. They declare a curfew and patrol the town with weapons drawn, ready to shoot any suspects. Since one of their own was shot, they apply the term “suspect” very loosely.
10. Ranielle frees many robots at the Amador Inn. The Fear System frees the remaining robots. Robots start haunting the halls of the hotel looking for bodies to deconstruct. One or both of the Harneys are killed. Several fires start, and the doors are locked. If the Travelers escape onto the streets, the robots follow, killing everyone they meet.
11. NPCs start to attack others in fits of murderous rage, just like Ranielle. The Fear System has begun to corrupt their minds. The Travelers are targeted and forced to defend themselves. The police may or may not be able to help. The only way to stop the attacks is to destroy the Fear System itself – from inside the neuroscape or from the outside, by blowing up the neurosphere.

## LOCATIONS

### The Amador Inn

The hotel is owned and managed by Lolly and Jack Harney. The building has a high-tech profile with several service robots (page 189). All functions such as lights, doors, air conditioning, and the water system are controlled by a computer. The rooms cost \$50 per night. Two stationary neurocaster terminals are available, booked by the hour at no cost.

In the corridors, simple waiter robots can be instructed to fetch things, leave messages, make beds, and wake up guests on request. The plan was to replace all staff with robots, but the robots can't really handle any complex tasks and are instead used to create a high-tech air of luxury.

There is a restaurant on the ground floor with a bar and stage. All food is allegedly eco-friendly and very exclusive, sometimes even bizarre. The menu includes such items as minced ants or poisonous flowers used as spice. In the grand foyer, guests can book guides for birdwatching or hiking.

The Harvey's have a private suite with an office facing the mountains. There are three guards at the hotel, a janitor (Ranielle) and about a dozen other non-robot staff.

### The Basement

Ranielle uses the large basement under the Amador Inn. She has rooms filled with half-built robots and neurocaster components. There are many ways to enter and leave the basement, and Ranielle uses the basement's labyrinthine qualities to escape from, or attack, intruders.

### Hot Springs

Behind the hotel are hot springs where customers can bathe. Sometimes at night, teenagers break in and have parties in the water until the guards chase them away.

### Valley Oil

A gas station.

### Lorry's

A shabby motel, fully inclusive with rats, cockroaches, leaking pipes and an aggressive and alcoholic owner. The cost for a room is \$20 a night.

### Rumors

During the Travelers visit to Liberty, you can let an NPC spill a rumor at any time:

- The Sheriff Old Toby is in fact a man named Allan Brown. He was born and raised in Liberty but killed his sister in his 20s and was sentenced to jail. He has now returned from prison, disguised as a sheriff and with a different name. He's the killer and everyone who knows his true identity is in danger.
- The Amador Inn's janitor Ranielle Ganaway is the real owner of the hotel. She can make flesh robots that can't be distinguished from a real human.
- The reason people in Liberty avoid using neurocasters is that there is a sickness in the neuroscape outside of town - a system that corrupts anyone that comes near it.
- The owner of Al's Food & All, Al Perez, hates everyone in Liberty. That is why he lets the police officers stay there. Some say he has hidden weapons in his mansion, and he waits for an opportunity to use them against his own neighbors.

### The Golden Sun

A diner and gathering point for residents and tourists alike.

### Pots & Perfumes

A store selling locally produced goods.

### Eagle Hill

A lookout point.

### Liberty Creek

A creek running from the mountains into the river.

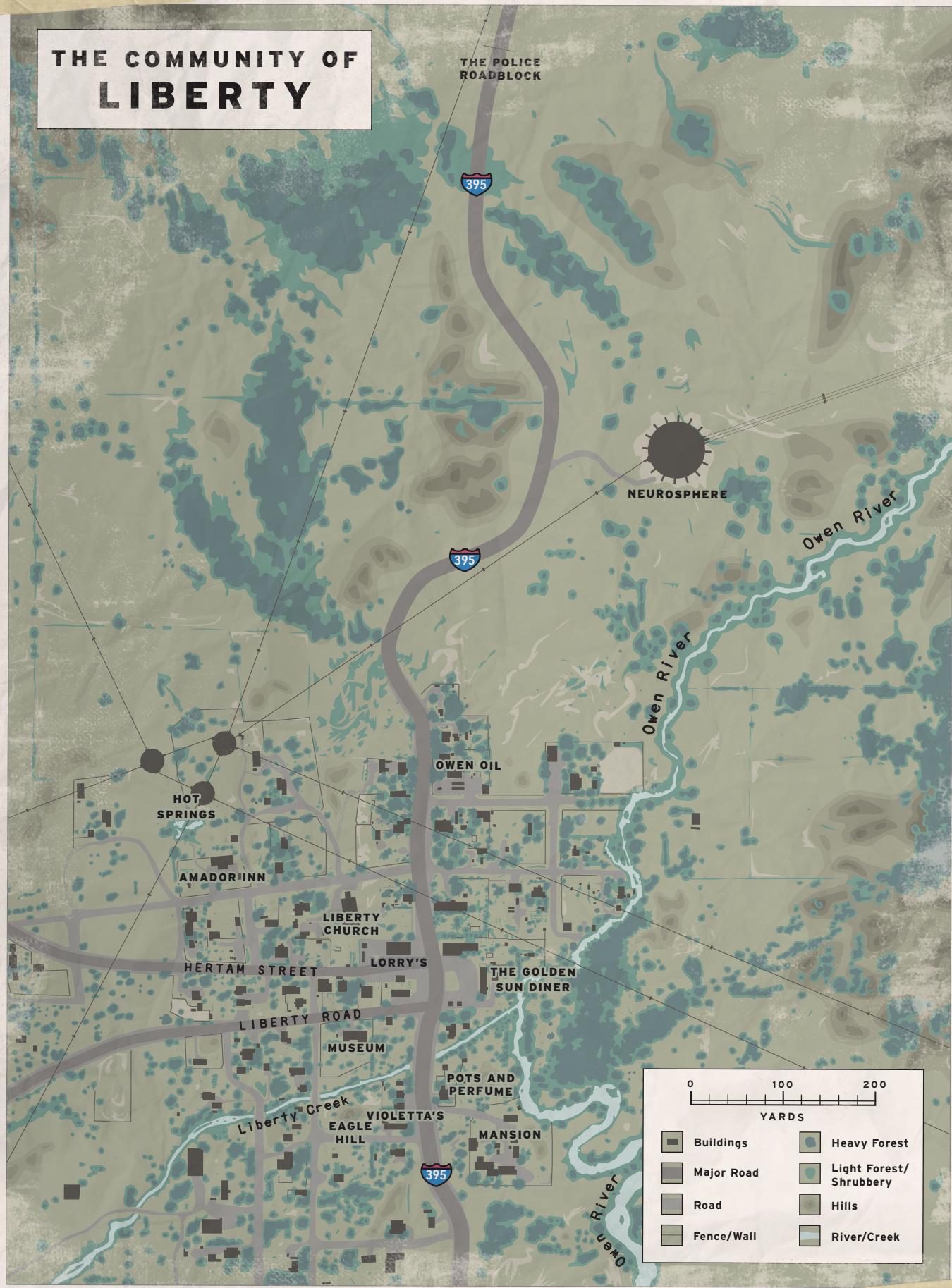
### Violetta's

An Italian restaurant, bankrupt and abandoned two years ago. It currently serves as a meeting place for the few teenagers in Liberty, at least when they don't break into the hotel compound at night to swim in the hot springs.

### Al's Food & All

A small supermarket. Includes one stationary neurocaster for use by the hour. Sells a wide variety of revolvers and hunting rifles. Owned by Al Perez, who lives in a nearby mansion (below).

# THE COMMUNITY OF LIBERTY



0		100	200
YARDS			
Buildings	Heavy Forest		
Major Road	Light Forest/Shrubbery		
Road	Hills		
Fence/Wall	River/Creek		

### The Perez Mansion

This large villa is the home of Al Perez, owner of Al's Food & All. Al is a childhood friend of Old Toby and knows that he is not Allan Brown. Perez is somewhat paranoid and hates the Harneys. The mansion is built like a fort, ready to withstand an invasion. Al keeps two army mortars from the 1960s hidden in a stable. There are several stables surrounding it, with cattle, sheep, and horses. Al and the police officers arranged improvised lockups in the basement.

### Liberty Valley Museum

The museum isn't a grand affair. It focuses primarily on the California Water Wars (a period when L.A. took water from smaller communities, including diverting the local river), and relics of the Native American Paiute tribe who inhabited the basin long before settlers arrived. The museum also features the fire that destroyed the old church known as "The Miracle of Liberty." If any Travelers ask any employees about the "miracle," they all believe the town staged the fire and the alleged miracle to attract tourists.

### Liberty Church

First founded with the town in the late 1800s, the Liberty Church serves mostly Protestants but welcomes anyone. It was rebuilt after a fire in 1899, but the original crucifix didn't burn and remains inside today. That was considered a genuine miracle at the time and attracted some tourists at the turn of the century.

### Police Roadblock

The roadblock consists of two police cars and at least one officer. If the second roadblock was triggered in the Countdown (page 183) than the first roadblock and the second are reinforced with semi-trailers across the road.

### The Neurosphere

This huge spherical structure sits on the side of the mountain, looming over the town. Sentre's name and logo are clearly visible, perhaps as ominous as the facility itself. No service personnel have been here for months.

The neurosphere hosts a local neuroscape controlled by a system that is slowly losing its mind. It is possible to access the neuroscape remotely or by using direct terminals at the neurosphere. For more on the neuroscape and the neurosphere, see below.

## THE FEAR SYSTEM

The Fear System is a peripheral neuroscape hosted in the neurosphere outside Liberty (above). It recently became corrupted and is no longer part of the global network. Now, it can only be accessed locally. Access is by wireless, wired access from the Amador Inn, or direct terminal access at the neurosphere itself.

For a neurocasting visitor, the Fear System neuroscape appears dark and smells like rotting meat. Strange creatures of flesh and metal scream at visitors and even attack them. It's somewhere between a Boschian and Gigeresque nightmare. The neuroscape's sun is black and burns with a chemical, lilac light. While inside, everything falls apart, even the ground gives way. All sounds echo, and other visitors can only be seen as transparent shadows. In the background, something moans in terrible pain.

As most landscapes are paradisiac, this system is probably something the Travelers never encountered before. Just entering it is a traumatic experience with a potential Hope loss of 1.

### Bliss

A Traveler neurocasting inside the Fear System suffers Bliss normally, but if their Bliss score equals or exceeds their current Hope, they become corrupted by the Fear System. They then become a murderous maniac under your control as the GM. This continues for the poor Traveler until the Fear System is destroyed.

### Hacking the System

A Traveler connecting to the Fear System can hack it (page 94) from the inside, to destroy it. This requires three separate Wits rolls, with a bonus from the Hacker talent. However, a Traveler doing this is attacked by increasingly aggressive machine flesh creatures and likely needs to be protected by other Travelers while doing so.

### Destroying the Neurosphere

The neurosphere (and with it, the Fear System) can be destroyed by physically destroying the neurosphere, but this can only be done with explosive weapons, such as a Molotov cocktail or even better, the mortars in the Perez Mansion. The neurosphere has Armor Level 3 and can take 15 points of damage before destruction.



### Machine Flesh Creatures

These strange, unnatural creatures - now only remotely reminiscent of human beings - are what's left of the tormented inhabitants of the local neuroscape, now forever twisted and lost due to the Fear System's corrupted nature. They only exist inside the neuroscape.

**Strength: 7 Agility: 4 Health: 6**

**Weapon:** *Metal Claws* (Base Damage 2)

Being attacked by a machine flesh creature is a traumatic experience with a potential Hope loss of 2.

### Minor NPCs

Below is a list of several minor NPCs that might appear at this Stop. They are all assumed to have a score of 3 in all attributes, except the police officers in the adjacent sidebar. Feel free to flesh these out further if needed.

- ◻ **Al Perez:** Owner of Al's Food & All and the mansion where the police are based.
- ◻ **Aisha Fitoussi:** Pots & Perfumes' owner.
- ◻ **Chung Nguyen:** Neurine-addict and long-time guest at the hotel.
- ◻ **Diane Hearts:** Waitress at the Golden Sun diner.
- ◻ **Father Dominguez:** Priest in the church.
- ◻ **Officers Dann, Dylan and Harper:** Police officers.
- ◻ **Rebecka Tall:** Works at the front desk of the Amador Inn.
- ◻ **Maria Evans:** Leader of the local teen gang, illegally selling neurine.
- ◻ **Mark Brown:** Manager of Liberty Oil.
- ◻ **Sebastian Miller:** Manager at Lorry's.
- ◻ **The Bakers:** A wealthy British couple who are staying at the Amador Inn.
- ◻ **Maureen Kohle:** The curator of the Liberty valley Museum.



### The Sheriff, Old Toby

Sheriff Toby actually was a criminal in his youth, and he did change his name several times as he moved around Pacifica. But he is no murderer. Now, he has settled down in Liberty as a sheriff and he has earned a reputation for being tough but fair. Old Toby is a tall man with long black hair and a small mustache. He smells strongly of aftershave, and he speaks slowly, often in a loud voice.

**Location:** Old Toby and the three officers he brought along to investigate the murder move around Liberty and can appear anywhere. They are based in the Perez Mansion.

**Strength: 5 Agility: 4 Wits: 5**

**Empathy: 3 Health: 4 Talent:** Pistoleer

**Gear:** Handgun, patrol car (4WD car with the **Powerful** and **Heavy** traits), \$200

### Officers

**Strength: 4 Agility: 4 Wits: 3**

**Empathy: 3 Health: 4 Talent:** Pistoleer

**Gear:** Handgun, patrol car (4WD car with the **Powerful** and **Heavy** traits), \$100



### Lolly & Jack Harney

Lolly and Jack Harney returned from Los Angeles five years ago, after having made a fortune selling fake IDs and then investing in the stock market. They built the Amador Inn to attract wealthy tourists, but visitors have so far been few and far between.

Now they are afraid that the murders and the police investigation will scare their few visitors away and put them out of business. They want the situation solved as quickly as possible. One morning, Lolly saw a picture of the murderer Allan Brown next to a picture of Old Toby and found them remarkably similar - this was pure coincidence, but Lolly is convinced they are one and the same. Jack is not so sure but afraid to question Lolly.

Lolly and Jack both have curly black hair and large eyes. They are similar enough to be mistaken for siblings. Both have a good head for business, and they know how to manipulate people to get them on their side. Most people in Liberty think of them as community leaders but a small minority hates them and wants them to leave.

**Strength:** 3 **Agility:** 2 **Wits:** 4 **Empathy:** 6  
**Health:** 3 **Talent:** Charmer, Con Artist  
**Gear:** Handgun, 2WD car, \$2,000 in cash



### Ranielle Ganaway

Ranielle Ganaway kills with a Taser and an axe. She mainly goes after visitors but may also kill locals. She dismembers the bodies and leaves them where they were killed unless doing so threatens to reveal her as the killer. She is a small but strong woman dressed in a denim jumpsuit and a yellow cap that hides her shaved head and several black wires she uses to connect to her jury-rigged neurocaster.

**Location:** Ranielle typically stays in the large basement under the Amador Inn, except when going out to kill.

**Strength:** 5 **Agility:** 6 **Wits:** 4  
**Empathy:** 2 **Health:** 6 **Talent:** Blade Fighter, Hacker  
**Gear:** Taser, axe, jury-rigged neurocaster \$10

### Waiter Robots

**Strength:** 6 **Agility:** 4 **Hull:** 5 **Armor:** 6  
**Gear:** Knife or improvised club





STOP THREE

# DRONESHIP GRAVEYARD

*The scattered carcasses of drones rise like high mesas against a desert sky. Their long shadows cover chaparral and cacti, dust, and sand. It might be the world's biggest roadside attraction, as strange an American art installation as one finds along lonely desert highways. But this is a reminder of the war, like rusted tanks encased in European mud remind people of the Blitzkrieg or Kursk. So many of the battles of this country's war didn't even have names.*

**THIS STOP IS DESIGNED** to be the third one on the Journey *Into the Dust*, but it can also be used as a stand-alone one-shot or incorporated into another Journey of your own design. This Stop is meant to be located in Death Valley within viewing distance of a large festival gathering in the desert. It may be relocated, but the desert location must remain.

## ■ THE BLOCKER

When driving through the desert, the Travelers find the road is blocked by a huge sand dune. Read or paraphrase the following:

*Death Valley. Well-named based on the cycling, cartoon matte background loop of empty, flat land. You're driving through eddies of sand blowing across the highway like beige clouds. In the distance loom flat-topped drone derelicts. Your eyes return to the road in time to break. Before you lies a huge sand dune covering the road. There is no way the car can get through or around, as sand dunes rise on either side like suede mountains.*

The driver doesn't need to make any dice rolls. They stop before hitting the dune. Getting out and looking around makes it clear the vehicle isn't going forward until the sand gets moved.

### Where Are We?

The Travelers know they are somewhere in Death Valley. The name fits. Sand and scrub run to the horizon where the last star turns to night. Night reveals lights in the distance. They form abstract constellations against the sky. It takes a moment to realize it's a settlement of some kind, because it lacks the regular rectilinear skyline of most small towns. Whoever lives there has an interesting idea of how to light a place.

### Explore

There's not much to explore around the stuck car. Cans flattened thin as wafers and rusted the color of autumnal leaves mix with other roadside debris. Everything in front of the car is covered in sand. They do see the back of another car poking out. If they dig, a vw sedan, clearly sandblasted by the desert, appears. An old cassette tape, with the tape spooled out from the player, is all that remains in the car. It looks like these travelers quit the car and didn't come back. The cassette is Mazzy Star, "So Tonight That I Might See." It can be ejected and rescued with a simple Number 2 pencil. The driver and passengers currently reside in Soleri (page 194).

### The Car

The road is blocked by a lot of sand. Even a truck or a 4WD car couldn't get through this. The Travelers need a large, drone bulldozer. Nothing smaller will make a dent.

### Food & Sleep

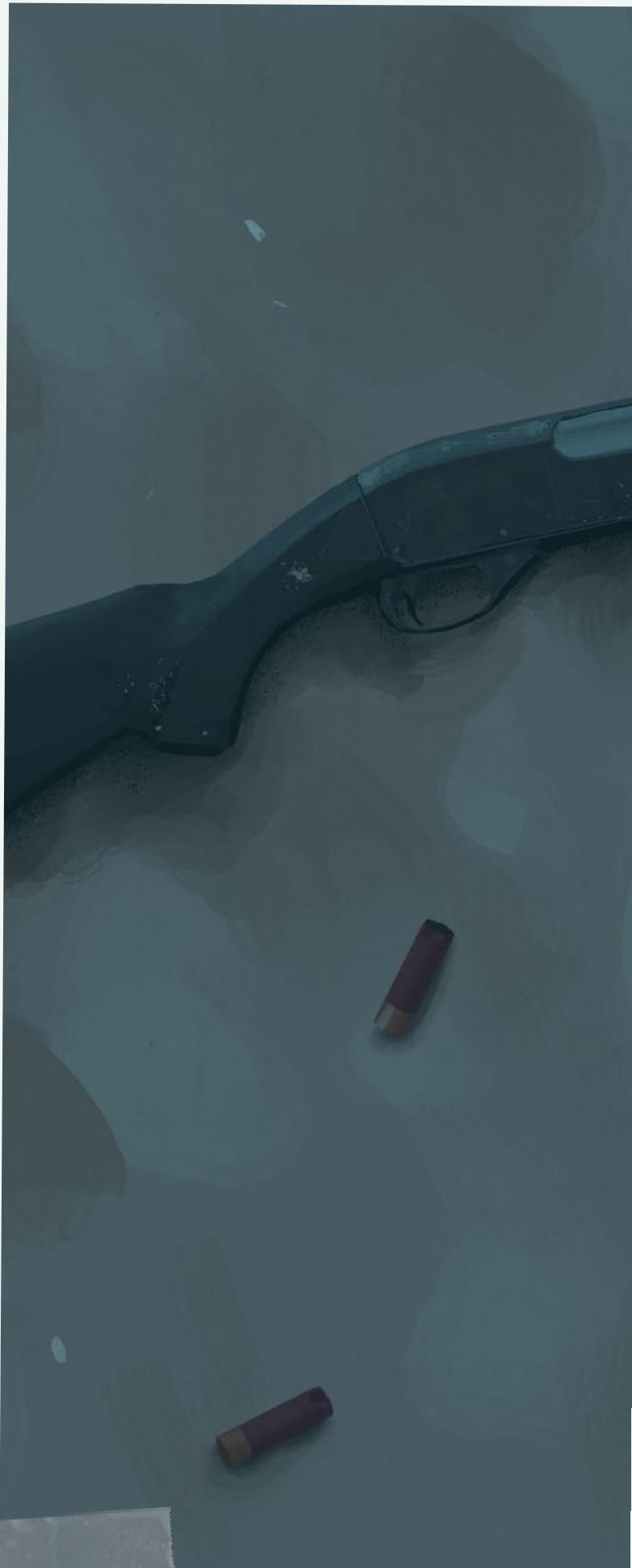
It's the beginning of the Evening Shift (page 17) when the game starts. The Travelers can find water and food by following the lights to the festival. Walking in the dark is the smartest way to go. They reach the playa, where the festival is held, but their muscles get a workout moving over the dunes. The come upon the description on page 193. Refer to the map for their entry point.

### The Countdowns

Use the Stop Countdown on page 197 to push the action as needed. Remember, though, the players determine the course of the action, and ultimately the resolution. You can also use the individual Travelers' personal Threat Countdowns whenever you want.

### The End

Point #7 in the Countdown suggests a final scene for this Stop. But remember, the end is never set beforehand – you play to find out what happens.





## ■ THE FESTIVAL AND THE PLAYA

Burning Drone week brings a riot of light. Pagodas thirty feet high are bathed in pink illumination. A flying UFO pulses with colors and sounds from an old movie. Theme cars drive by entirely covered in doll heads or painted like the drone with a giant skewed grin. People drag a twenty-foot-high glowing blue Trojan horse from an imaginary past. This strange carnival turned rave stretches over what is easily a couple square miles.

As the Travelers approach, the lights drawing them here resolve into a carnival of bizarre constructions that fall generally under the term: modern art. There is a tower topped with a wobbly disc whose lights blink and flare. Small drones flit like detailed schools of fish through the air, swimming in hypnotic patterns. Campers, RVs, and cars have their lights on at night, thanks to Vanadium batteries.

Entering the dry, desert basin, or “playa,” on which the community sits, one sees people of all types. Most are dressed lightly for the heat. Some paint their bodies. Some juggle. A girl on a tall unicycle whizzes past someone who built the TARDIS out here. A few old drone ships are lit up, either under their own power or wrapped in Christmas lights. Various foods entice with their scents as they are cooked over hibachis or campfires. There are newborns here and leathery old men who vaguely remember The Depression.

A huge area like a helicopter pad is marked out with lights. It looks like a landing zone for a drone ship. In fact, this is how the camp receives supplies (page 198).

### The Burning Drone

On the seventh night, the drone burns. Burning it represents rejecting the technology that brought America to its knees. Gary started the tradition with Paul, but neither runs the burning anymore. That is an act of the collective will, a psychic scream back at the crazy neurotech and crazier world that broke the country.

The people who live in Soleri are an eclectic group of artists, outsiders, angst youth, wanderers, lost souls, and others who tend not to think like the average American. When new people show up, the cults try to recruit them. Even if new arrivals don’t join one of the cults, some stay here permanently. The increasing size of the non-denominational community makes it clear that both cults’ days may well be numbered.

## THE SITUATION

Twenty some years ago, Paul Jost and Gary Bosko pioneered key technology that helped the burgeoning neuro-technology research at the time. They ran a company and made millions. They also became fast friends.

For some time, the two were inseparable, but the technology they helped usher into the world would soon divide them. Paul was the visionary of the team. Gary was the electrical engineer that made the vision real. They did very well and eventually sold their corporation to Solent.

### The Soleri

Neither man could sit idle, and in the late 1980s, they decided to found a utopian community in Death Valley. Solent's use of their technology lead, in part, to the addiction that gripped the country. Both men decided they'd use their utopia as a refuge from that kind of technology. They set Soleri in an abandoned drone ship boneyard, a kind of symbol, they thought, of a dead future to which their vision offered salvation.

But Paul could never really let go of his vision. The utopia, called Soleri, proved not enough to sate his ego. He decided that the tech he and Gary rejected simply needed refinement. Unknown to Gary, as supplies came into Soleri, Paul received deliveries of cutting-edge tech. He also began rooting for parts in the boneyard.

When Gary found out, the team split. Gary settled on one side of Soleri and Paul retreated to the other. The population split as well. Some went with Paul, some with Gary, and some decided to keep the Soleri dream alive while the two friends retreated into a broiling Cold War-like feud. That started three years ago. Today, the feud is about to explode.

### The Festival

This week is a festival, called Burning Drone, a special time for Soleri. When Paul and Gary founded the community, they marked out one week a year for celebration culminating in burning a human-like drone, yet another symbol of their intent. Gary and Paul were big on symbols and thin on results.

Paul and Gary no longer care about the festival, but the community never gave up the tradition. This is a week of partying, of putting up a light show of weird, outsider art and, most importantly, of burning a drone. Out of about 700 residents, 200 hundred joined what became Paul and Gary's cults, New Vision and Analog Heaven. The rest are still dedicated to living on the fringe of society away from the madness of the broken country.

### The Split

The two friends spent the last few months plotting against each other and repairing two drone ships intended to attack the other's cult. Neither is on this side of reality anymore, though Gary eschews neurotechnology while Paul embraces it. Gary's cult looks healthy at least, while Paul's has the emaciated look of neuro addicts.

The day before the Travelers arrive, a group from each cult (five people in each) fought over the wreck of one of the drones. One of Paul's people was shot and wounded. Now the two groups are on a collision course neither seems able to pull away from. Between the fevered heat of the desert, the conviction of their beliefs, and mutual acrimony, the two are about to tear apart Soleri.

### The Drones

Every two weeks water, food, and other needed supplies come via a drone barge. This is all paid for out of an old account Paul and Gary set up to start the community. Due to the desert around them, wheeled vehicles have a hard time making it to the playa, thus the drone barge.

The Travelers need a drone to clear the dune blocking their progress. Either Gary or Paul's drone can do it.

But Gary and Paul aren't just going to share their drones out of the goodness of their hearts. Gary wants help raiding New Vision's camp with his cult, Analog Heaven (page 197). Paul might be open to offers to help raid Gary's camp in a similar exchange. Both try to recruit the Travelers as their last disciples before the coming "apocalypse" as they call it (really just the two old friends attacking each other with drone ships and cult members).

### Other Residents

Several NPCs throughout Soleri can help the Travelers, possibly without having to accede to either Paul or Gary's crazy plans. These NPCs are briefly introduced below but see their individual entries for details.

"Wild Willy" is a burnt-out veteran drone pilot. If the Travelers get him in the drone, secretly or otherwise, he can pilot it wherever they want.

Aubrey and Hachiko are, in order, a robot made to help dementia patients and a sentient robot dog. Aubrey can be reprogrammed to interface remotely with the drone bulldozer and get it out of Gary's camp. He can't pilot it very well, though, so the Travelers need another way to use it. Hachiko is very smart and could provide all manner of distractions for stealing the drone, as well.

## The Two Drone Ships

Two drone ships among the vast boneyard figure prominently in the Travelers' escape from the Stop. One is a drone bulldozer sitting in Gary's (Analog Heaven) cult compound. It is huge and could easily move the sand. Of course, Gary won't just let them use it.

Similarly, in Paul's camp is a military drone he secretly restored. This drone ship is under a large tent, so the Travelers need to get inside the camp to observe it. This ship has no bulldozing ability, but it does have a cannon that could, quite literally, blow away the sand. If aimed offside the road, a couple of shots blast the sand away (and anything on the side of the road with it. Like Gary, Paul's not going to simply give them the drone. In fact, he won't give it up willfully at all.

The two drone ships are in working order, but any Traveler wishing to pilot one needs the Pilot talent. They also need to get access to the ship, of course, something that could be far more difficult than flying the damn thing. If the Travelers have no such talent, Wild Willy (see page 201) can fly either ship.

## Military Drone

This drone was recently restored to working condition by Paul and his New Vision cult. It's hidden under a large tent in their camp. The cannon, while made to destroy other ships, buildings, and people, could also blast the sand out of the way with concussive force. A shark's mouth is painted on the nose cone and a 1940s style pin-up girl fades on the hull.

**Maneuverability:** +3 **Speed:** 5 **Hull:** 12  
**Armor:** 8 **Gear:** Neodymium cannon

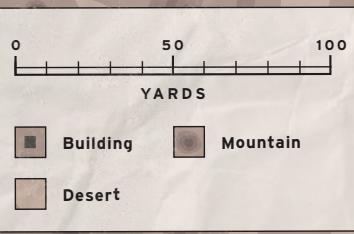
## Bulldozer Drone

Its paint peels. Rust gathers in lines along its outer panels and streaks down the sides like dried rain. It's not in great shape, but it's functional.

This particular drone was made to clear mine fields. As such, it's heavy, durable, and has a wedge-shaped attachment under the nose that would be perfect for clearing dirt, debris, or sand.

**Maneuverability:** +2 **Speed:** 4 **Hull:** 14 **Armor:** 10 **Gear:** Bulldozer blade (+2 damage for ramming attacks and protects the bulldozer drone itself from damage when ramming, see page 105 for more)

# SOLERI



The car the Travelers found at the start had passengers. They are three young women who've been here for about three months. The sand dune stopped them too. These are alternative types typical of the '90s. They were on a road trip to visit the vigil of a dead rockstar on the coast. Now, they've all rejected both Analog Heaven and New Vision. They want to leave at this point. This is a failed utopia. If the Travelers offer to help them bolt, they're more than willing to help them.

## ■ COUNTDOWN

The Travelers come upon Soleri as Gary and Paul's feud becomes violent. The Countdown below is just a guideline. The Travelers' actions can and should alter or omit steps as you see fit.

1. The Travelers are invited to visit Paul's camp. He tries to recruit them. If they refuse the invitation, he has them followed.
2. Gary tries to recruit the PCs into his cult. He won't offer his bulldozer drone to help them leave unless he is sure he can't convert them. If he cannot convert them, he offers them the drone if they lead a raid on Paul's camp.
3. A small group (five people) from each cult tussle over access to one of the drone ships. A member of New Vision is shot and killed. This fight happens when the Travelers are close enough to witness it.
4. If the Travelers met with Gary and rejected Paul's invitation, Paul believes they are spied and tries to abduct them. If the Travelers accepted Paul's offer, Gary tries to abduct them. In either case the number of abductors outnumbers the Travelers by two. If the Travelers sided with neither party, Paul and Gary decide to deal with them on the night of Burning Drone's finale when the drone burns.
5. The supply drone that drops necessities every two weeks lands. As it approaches, both New Vision and Analog Heaven fire upon each other. One or both sides also fire at the supply barge when it's clear the fight is a stalemate. The barge turns in the air and the supplies belted to it begin falling. Almost all the water containers break. At that point, people who live here year-round, and were waiting for the delivery, rush to claim anything that's left.
6. The people of Soleri turn on both cults. They won't see another drone delivery for two weeks. They need that water to live. Mobs approach both camps. Fights erupt. The residents lose the fight when Paul deploys his military drone (page 195). Many residents pack up and leave. Some beg for water. It gets ugly. The would-be utopia quickly dissolves. The Travelers are caught in the midst of a deteriorating situation.

7. The last day of the festival. The people are here to celebrate. The drone must burn! During the burning, Paul and Gary both activate their drones (if they still have them) and attack each other. If the Travelers possess one of the drones, the opposite cult attacks that ship with their own. That opposite drone is piloted by Wild Willy (page 201). The Travelers probably have a drone fight on their hands. And let's not forget the 30-foot-tall drone on fire in the middle of all of it!

## ■ LOCATIONS

### New Vision Camp

Huge, inflated tents with "airlocks" so they don't deflate sit in the center of a series of trailers, mobile homes, rvs, and jury-rigged shelters made of Sentre Charity tarps, drone ship parts, wood, Formica, pvc piping, and anything else they dragged out here. Drone ships flank the outside of the camp like ramparts.

### Analog Heaven Camp

Christmas lights loop and sag between derelict drones. Spray painted signs reject neuronic technology with various slogans. A huge mural, painted on an old billboard, shows a graveyard. In front of every tombstone is a desiccated person locked forever in their neurocaster.

### The Giant Drone

A 30-foot-tall drone, with humanoid arms and legs, and a big, round smiley face for a head. It's rusty, dented, and the paint is chipped down to the old metal. At the base is a stack of kindling four feet high. On the seventh night of the festival, the whole thing is doused in gasoline and set ablaze. It looks like the drone on the cover of this book.

### RV Row

While rvs can park anywhere on the playa, there's an area where the most tricked out, new, and otherwise interesting rvs park – kind of like a car show. The people who own the rvs come from all corners of the U.S. and encompass all ages. They may have lost everything in the war and wandered for a decade, or simply found America had no back-up plan for Social Security when the country collapsed.

### The Veteran's Tent

This is a Marine Corp tent from the Civil War. It's patterned in woodland camouflage and can fit four comfortably. Wild Willy (page 201) lives here. There are usually girls around him.

### Drone Boneyard

There are old, wrecked drones all over the festival area itself. They are huge, looming over the scrub and cracked earth like the corpses of metallic dinosaurs. People made shelters from some drone parts, or simply epoxied tarps, corrugated steel, and other shades to the drone ships themselves. Some of the drones' outlines are fuzzy with all manner of added bits – crazy art projects dreamed by minds cooked in the desert sun.

### Supply Air Drop Area

A 200 square foot area marked out in chalk and lights. It looks like a giant helicopter landing zone. It's for the drone sledge that brings supplies for permanent residents every two weeks.

### TV Obelisk

This is a 15-foot-tall spike upon which the artist epoxied dozens and dozens of old televisions. Each is operational, powered by Vanadium batteries at the base of the obelisk. They show myriad things from footage of the Civil War to music videos, to TV shows that only lasted one season. In the night, it glows with that blue light old TVs give off when seen through a window looking into someone's living room from outside.

### Windbeast

This gigantic "kinetic sculpture" is made of white PVC pipes and white sections of nylon. It looks like a giant skeletal alien. The kicker is, it moves. And it doesn't just turn or shimmy, it walks across the ground. It's wind-powered, but it's hard to understand how. It's stunning, with unlikely grace and simple beauty. Since it moves, the Travelers might encounter it anywhere. It's 20 feet high and 30 feet long.

### Random Festival Groups

As the travelers wander about Soleri, they're bound to run into all sorts of people. Some of those people appear below.

#### D6 Group

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Desert goths.</b> that rare breed that ventures into the sun! They're in their 20s.  |
| 2 | <b>Aging hippies.</b> These folks protested the war in Vietnam, the Civil War, and were totally bummed when Jerry Garcia died.  |
| 3 | <b>Ravers.</b> These young folk are here to party, expand their minds with neuronic tech and psychedelics and, most importantly, for the huge rave that starts the night the drone burns. |
| 4 | <b>Anti-Sentre activists.</b> They hand out pamphlets citing Sentre's complicity in many terrible things. They also believe Sentre conspires somehow to rewire the human mind.            |
| 5 | <b>Retirees.</b> A couple living their golden years on the road. This is their first time at the festival. They reminisce about the good old days in the U.S. of A.                       |
| 6 | <b>One of the passengers</b> from the abandoned car found sticking out of the dune at the beginning of this Stop.   |

### Playa Residents or Visitors

These folks aren't fighters. Each cult has a few pistols and rifles among its members, but no one is skilled with them.

**Strength: 3** **Agility: 3** **Wits: 3** **Empathy: 4**  
**Health: 3** **Gear:** Club, handgun, or shotgun



### Paul Jost

Paul Jost's name would become legendary in the world of neuronic technology. But neither he, nor his business partner Gary Bosko, knew that while working out of Bosko's garage back in Spokane, Washington. The two invented early tech in the field, building a company from the ground up. Paul had a vision but lacked the genius engineering smarts that Gary had.

The vision blazed a trail and Jost became more and more entitled as the company soared. He was known for verbally abusing employees, demanding outrageous benchmarks be met, and generally regarding himself as "the messiah of neuronic tech." In fact, Paul's contribution to the burgeoning field was important, but he would not go down as the father of the neurocaster.

It might have been that latter realization that caused him to sell the company. It might have been the growing rift between him and his partner, Gary. Whatever his reasons, Paul joined Gary in a rejection of the tech they'd worked on. Gary did so out of moral outrage at its use. Paul tried to redeem himself from the tyrannical CEO he'd become.

They built an intentional community (Soleri) on a playa in Death Valley. Things were good for a while. Paul lost the messianic fire behind his eyes and their planned utopian community grew. But not long after they began the festival, Paul's arrogance and God complex began to reemerge. He simply had to make the next great leap in neuronic tech. His redemption arc was cut short by his own ego.

Gary, wanting nothing to do with it, left Paul and brought a number of their community with him, thus creating the two rival cults, New Vision and Analog Heaven.

Paul is thin. The kind of thin one gets from too much neurocaster use. His eyes blaze with intensity but his face is almost skeletal. He is 47 years old.

**Location:** New Vision Camp

**Reactions:** Travelers meeting Paul Jost find him aloof, arrogant, and in denial about what neurocasters have wrought. If the Travelers ask about the servo the drone needs, he starts asking them questions about who they are, where they are from, and where they are going. If one of the Travelers is a neurocaster addict and/or a drone pilot, he gives them a brief pitch about how neuronic tech is the next leap in human evolution. He talks a lot about something called "The Singularity," and says, "Kurtzweil was right!"

Once he's done evaluating them, he may ask them to infiltrate Analog Heaven. He says all that stands between him and what he calls "apotheosis," is Analog Heaven and Gary. He's clearly pretty far out on the edge of sanity.

**Strength: 3** **Agility: 4** **Wits: 6** **Empathy: 2**  
**Health: 4** **Gear:** Jury-rigged neurocaster and assault rifle



**Gary Bosko**

An electrical engineer by schooling and by talent, Gary Bosko worked for a small company making personal computers before his friend, and eventual lover, Paul, convinced him to quit and join him in Gary's garage. There, they made tech allowing stimulation of the eye by what they called "virtual light." At first, no company paid attention, but when they demonstrated how it might apply to other technologies, companies showed interest. Gary was willing to sell then, around 1976, but Paul's vision of a world where everyone was connected by this tech stopped him as did his love for Paul.

Where Paul was the manic visionary, Gary was more practical. He stuck to the science and the limits of said science. But, when neuronic tech came along, the limits of their field broke and the company soared. They made parts for so many companies that they became rich.

As the money flowed, Gary watched his beloved become obsessed with the new technology's potential and his (Paul's) role in it. He started acting as the sole boss of their company, treating employees poorly and demanding they adhere to his vision of a world where technology made up for all the wreckage wrought by the war.

The wedge driven between them nearly broke Gary's heart, but he convinced Paul to sell the company. They took some of that money and built their intentional community on a playa in Death Valley. Within a couple of years, Paul began to obsess over the neuronic tech again, and started building his own neurocasters. He and Gary had a huge fight that split the community in two. By 1993 their cults had formed.

Gary didn't think of his group as a cult. He called it Analog Heaven. As time went on, Gary came to believe that all neuronic tech, even without neurocasters, was morally abhorrent and could be the death of all humanity. He isn't as far gone as Paul, but he's committed to ending Paul's vision for the good of humanity.

Gary is a heavy man with a beard and glasses. He favors tie-dye or Hawaiian print shirts and cargo shorts. His hair is longish and shaggy.

**Location:** Analog Heaven's Camp

**Reactions:** Gary is less paranoid than Paul. But he questions anyone wanting to join his cult or learn about them. His questions start with background information and move toward a person's stance on neuronic tech. Anyone for it is an enemy to Gary. Any Travelers who used the tech, or obviously have in the past, are grilled harder. They must convince Gary they've given the tech up or want to "get clean."

While Gary isn't running a rehab for addicts exactly, he does have a psychoactive derived from a cactus that, with meditative guidance from Gary himself, does help wean people off neurocasters and the like. In fact, the "cure" works instantly on some (his technique removes three points of Bliss with an Empathy roll success). If he weren't so obsessed with Paul's cult, Gary could probably do a lot of good in the world.

**Strength: 5** **Agility: 3** **Wits: 6** **Empathy: 5**

**Health: 4** **Talent: Driver** **Gear:** Shotgun, old personal laptop computer, a Tamagotchi



### William "Wild Willy" Hardey

Wild Willy is so named for his callsign during the Civil War. Willy had a family before the war. They weren't killed, but rather his wife took his son and daughter away from him due to his behavioral changes. The early neuronic tech that interfaced with his brain burned itself deep into his synapses. When not piloting drones for what would become Pacifica, he became obsessed with finding God in the Machine. He had a vision of God during a mission over Toledo.

Once his family left, Willy spent weeks plugged into his neurocaster and would have died had not the very same "God" appeared and told him he must leave the neurocaster behind and venture into the desert. Willy's desert journey involved no virtual reality, and that gave him time to regain some of who he used to be. He's still weird, but he's no longer obsessed with God. He simply wants to understand existence, now. Easy, right?

Willy lives in a large tent by himself (though some of the girls in the community seem inexorably attracted to him). He's kind of the older wise man among the younger folk who live here and commit to neither of the cults.

Willy has a deep tan from his time in the desert. He wears cut-off military fatigues and goes shirtless. He often sits over a fire at night, beaded with sweat, long hair held back with leather ties, chanting or maybe mumbling, looking for some insight into existence.

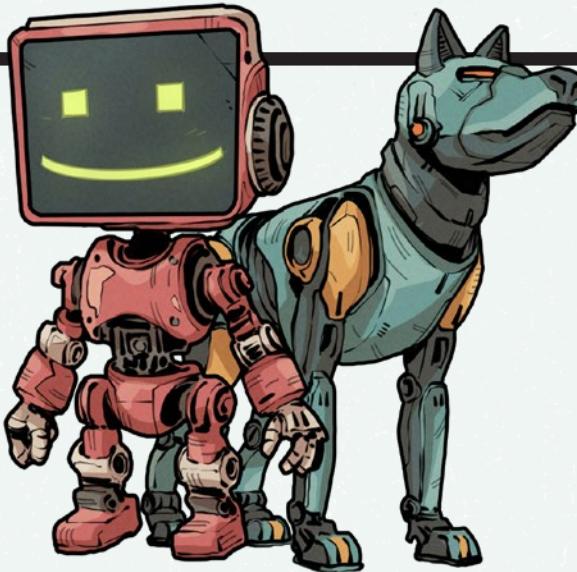
Willy can fly either drone in the camp. If the Traveler's do not get him to help them, Gary or Paul employ him to fly theirs instead

**Location:** Willy wanders around the playa like everyone else, but he is usually near his tent, or in it, at night.

**Reactions:** Willy has that burnt out hippie vibe. The sort of person you'd think did too many psychedelics back in the '60s and is just kind of grooving now, man. He's not a hippie, but he wishes he had been. He is wary of anyone who is ex-military unless they assure him they also suffered trauma during the war. Girls dig him, generally, so he tends to talk to women first. He's willing to help, but he's spacey enough that that help is gnomic.

For example, he knows a lot about Paul and Gary but likens them to Cain and Able and their struggle to "impress the All-Father, man." He might say things like, "they were entwined like a helix of DNA, man, but then the helix fell apart and they fled Babylon."

He's been here since Paul and Gary set up the intentional community. When he talks about those days, he's clear, almost wistful. The Travelers can get the full backstory found in The Situation from Willy.



### Aubrey & Hachiko

Aubrey is a three-foot-tall robot made of all white parts. His "face" is a video screen. Hachiko is a tan colored dog drone who follows Aubrey. Aubrey began life as a helper for people suffering from dementia. He's programmed to assist such people and worked with many. His last "patient" was Norman. Sadly, Norman died and, in the chaos that is much of America, no one came to claim either Norman or Aubrey. Aubrey buried Norman in his backyard garden and decided to wander on his own. He feels largely without purpose and seems almost sad. But he's just a robot, right?

When Aubrey speaks, his screen shows a simple face like a child might draw - dots for eyes and a horizontal parenthesis for a mouth. Sometimes, he glitches back to his original programming and shows brain teasers, trivia, and odd patterns designed to help his patient keep their brains as sharp as possible. When he does, he calls everyone Norman.

Hachiko is a Sentre prototype dog who escaped from one of the company's labs. He cannot speak, but he is very smart. Certainly, as smart as an adult, though he is programmed to think as a dog. Hachiko possess self-awareness but cannot express it with language. He loves his friend, Aubrey, and is attached to him as he might have (and was programmed to) attached to a child.

The pair met on the road about six months ago and have been together since. While they are sophisticated robots, and sentient, they don't have the experience yet to navigate the complexities of this world. They hitched a ride here on one of the drone ships that delivers supplies regularly.

Aubrey can give the basic rundown on the two cults as revealed in *The Situation*. If the Travelers decide to help raid New Vision, Hachiko can serve as either a guide or a distraction.

**Reactions:** Both Aubrey and Hachiko want to help and please humans. Aubrey tries to help any elderly person first, but he wants to help anyone. Hachiko wants to please people - it's literally wired into his behavior. Hachiko possesses a deeper level of self-awareness than Aubrey. Since escaping the lab, he's started to realize he has wants, needs, and dreams. He'd really love it if some human, or group of humans, would "adopt" both him and Aubrey.

#### Aubrey

**Strength:** 3  
**Agility:** 3  
**Hull:** 4  
**Armor:** 1  
**Damage:** 1

#### Hachiko

**Strength:** 3  
**Agility:** 6  
**Hull:** 4  
**Armor:** 1  
**Damage:** 2



### Molly, Shana & Pru

The car buried in the sand that the Travelers might have discovered at the start had passengers who now live in Soleri. There were three girls in the car: Molly, Shana, and Prudence (Pru). They're all in their early 20s. A Wits test allows a Traveler to notice that Shana wears a Mazzy Star shirt. In fact, the cassette was hers (page 192).

The girls have lived here for three months so far. They like it. They stay away from the cults and advise the Travelers to do the same. They seem like typical alternative kids of the '90s, but they have a secret - when they fled their suburb of Chicago to go on the road, they robbed a bank for 4,000 dollars. They still have the cash in their tent. They are wanted by the authorities.

**Molly:** Molly is a goth. She wears a black, sleeveless Joy Division shirt and black shorts. Her feet are clad in Doc Martens. She's depressed, angsty, and deep - or at least she wants people to think so. In fact, she fears she's shallow, even though she double majored in comparative theology and philosophy. Her fear is she did it to seem interesting. Inside, she feels like an imposter.

**Shana:** Shana wears the Mazzy Star shirt. She's the chilliest of the trio. At age 21, she dropped out of college in Chicago to crash with Molly and Pru who were partying their way through life. Shana's relaxed nature often keeps the group from arguing. She wears typical grunge clothes like jeans with a flannel shirt tied around the waist.

**Pru:** The group's leader, Pru is 24 and the eldest. She's suspicious of the Travelers in case they are cops. She doubts they are, but better safe than having to use the .357 they did in the bank (not that they shot anyone). Pru graduated from a liberal arts college outside Chicago. She's smart but acidic in personality, always finding an insult to throw. Most of her jeers are really funny, though.



CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE LONE TRAVELER

*I suppose you still have the typical view of the whole thing. The self is situated in the brain somehow, like a small pilot in a cockpit behind your eyes. But you're having trouble reconciling with the fact that all that is you, all your thoughts and experiences, exist inside your cranium. So, you tend not to dwell on such questions and be satisfied with a fuzzy image of a gaseous transparent Something floating around in an undefined void. Maybe you don't even put it into words, but we both know that you're thinking about an archetypal soul. You believe in an invisible ghost.*

---



**THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS RULES** and tools for playing *The Electric State RPG* alone, without the need for a GM, simulating the experience of being at the table with your friends. In that way, it's a bit like a neuroscape. You can also use these guidelines to play the game together with others, but without the need for a GM to prepare your sessions.

Using d6 dice rolls and a normal deck of cards, the solo rules replicate the work of the GM. But the simulated GM is also the player. That means you take on both the role of GM and player.

Even when playing solo, you will be managing more than one Traveler. After all, the game is primarily about the Travelers and the relationships between them. Don't worry, you'll only have to feature one Traveler as your "main character" at a time. The mechanics in these rules help you run the rest of the group.

While these rules aim to fill you with ideas and present a structure for those ideas, there is simply no substitute for your own imagination. You'll see connections between things the rules cannot predict. It cannot be stressed enough that the heart of any creative enterprise is intuitive. Follow your gut. Listen to your inner voice. Go with your first instinct above and beyond anything written in the rest of this section.

## ■ CORE PRINCIPLES

These solo rules center on a few basic principles. You use d6s and a regular deck of playing cards, minus jokers, to procedurally generate elements of your solo game.

If you generate something you don't like or that doesn't make sense based on what you've already determined about your game, skip it. The tables always take a backseat to your intuition and desires. You're the driver of this game. The tables are passengers, and you're free to kick out any you don't like along the way.

The core principles of these solo rules are:

- **Draw a card** whenever you need to get input or propel the game forward. Face cards trigger Countdown events, Conversations (page 219) and other Traveler events (page 219).
- **Use the tables** to spur your imagination, not constrain it.
- **Find connections.** Look for anything that might link one generated element to another.
- **Play one Traveler** in the group of Travelers at a time. Use the mechanics in these rules to help run the other Travelers.
- **When in doubt, go weird.** The Electric State is a strange place. Embrace it.

## ■ PREPARATIONS

Solo play shares some of the same rewards as group play. Though it lacks group dynamics, it allows a single player to be the auteur of the game. Remember, you only have yourself to please. Before you get to the meat of playing your Travelers and guiding them through procedurally generated obstacles, you need to prepare the following:

1. Create your Travelers using the normal rules found in Chapter 3. Three is a good number, but anything from two to four works.
2. Prepare your Journey. This follows the normal rules outlined in Chapter 5 but with some further considerations detailed below.

# THE JOURNEY

**PREPARING YOUR SOLO JOURNEY** largely follows the steps outlined in Chapter 5. However, as a solo player, you don't want to know too much before you embark on your Journey. Therefore, some of the steps normally taken when preparing a Journey are instead done as part of playing the solo game. To prepare your solo Journey, follow these steps:

1. Choose the Starting Point.
2. Choose the Destination.
3. Choose the route.
4. Decide the number of Stops on the Journey.
5. Decide each Traveler's personal Goal for the Journey.
6. Decide each Traveler's personal Threat.
7. Describe the vehicle used for the Journey.
8. Creating personal Threat Countdowns for each Traveler as well as Stops and Encounters, is done during play. The steps of preparations for solo play are further discussed below.

## ■ STARTING POINT & DESTINATION

Where one starts is important in any narrative. They say past is prologue, but *The Electric State* is even more about where you are going and getting over where you've been than dwelling on the past.

Look at the map of Pacifica and look at your Travelers' Dreams for inspiration about your Starting Point and Destination. Read Chapter 2. What interests you? What would interest your Travelers?

If you're having trouble, try the adjacent table. But go with your first thought where possible. It's usually right.

## Destinations

### D6 Destination

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | The former home of one of the Travelers |
| 2 | The new home of one of the Travelers    |
| 3 | One of the remaining cities in Pacifica |
| 4 | The site of a civil war battle          |
| 5 | A secret facility                       |
| 6 | The site of a popular pilgrimage        |

## ■ JOURNEY ROUTE

The shortest route between any two points is a straight line, right? The thing is, a story is rarely a straight line. Drama comes from the zigs and zags. So, look at the map and the two points you've decided on. Does a straight line work for them? Are there areas the Travelers should avoid? Are there personal reasons for the Travelers to avoid these areas or are they simply dangerous? You can use a printout of the map from the PDF and highlight your route if you want.

## ■ NUMBER OF STOPS

You know your route. In so knowing, some Stops might suggest themselves. Are there interesting places along the way? Are there areas prone to causing a Stop? Highways can fill with sand dunes or be hit by weather events. Towns might be a good place to have a Stop. Jot down some preliminary notes based on the map. Use the table on page 114 to pick the number of Stops.

## ■ PERSONAL GOALS & THREATS

Your Travelers are on the road for a reason. That reason is their personal Goal. This Goal is Journey-specific and should be something achievable on said Journey. If you can tie every Traveler's personal Goal to the Journey, do so. It makes it much easier when you are the only player.

Each Traveler also has a personal Threat. A good way to determine a Traveler's Threat is to look at their personal Goal – the personal Threat is generally what stands in the way of that goal.

Below are suggested personal Goals for each archetype. If you need further ideas, you can use the table for personal Threats on page 208.

### Artist

**Goal:** Shoot a video at an iconic Civil War battle site.

**Threat:** Veterans who saw your last video didn't much like it. A group of them hunts you now.

### Criminal

**Goal:** Find the person you shot in a robbery and pay them back somehow.

**Threat:** The sibling of the person you shot hired a bounty hunter to bring you to justice.

### Devotee

**Goal:** Find the godhead in a specific system, then plug in until the intercerebral intelligence sucks you dry as a dead bug.

**Threat:** You stole a prototype neurocaster to access the system. Sentre wants it back and puts agents on your trail.

### Doctor

**Goal:** You heard a very specific cactus in the desert may hold the cure. Find it.

**Threat:** You are yourself addicted to neurine and you're nearly out. The last time you ran out, things got very, very ugly.

### Drone Pilot

**Goal:** Your body is in a corporate lab. A well-guarded one. You must break in.

**Threat:** A virus in your drone body makes you paranoid, and it's getting worse.

### Journalist

**Goal:** You're Traveling with strangers in the hopes that you can learn to treat people as more than subjects for your camera. So far, you're not doing great at it.

**Threat:** You took a photo of a powerful politician in a compromising situation. That person put law enforcement on alert. You're wanted.

### Outsider

**Goal:** Make it to a major city where you can blend in and take time to learn how to act like other, "normal" people.

**Threat:** You're terribly depressed and fall into self-destructive bouts.

### Investigator

**Goal:** Find a missing girl whose parents counted on you. It's been six years, but you still believe she's out there somewhere.

**Threat:** Your guilt makes you drink. Heavily. You black-out and don't remember what you did. During one of those blackouts, you made an enemy you can't remember.

### Runaway Kid

**Goal:** You're pregnant. Find a safe place to have your baby.

**Threat:** The baby's father is an abuser, and he's looking for you.

### Scientist

**Goal:** You're looking for a particular cult to study from an anthropological viewpoint.

**Threat:** You stole a rival's ideas for a paper that earned you acclaim. That rival now works for Sentre and pulled some strings. Bad things are ahead in your life.

### Veteran

**Goal:** Make a pilgrimage to the Civil War Memorial.

**Threat:** A member of your squad believes you're to blame for their horrible injuries. They want revenge.

### Personal Threats

#### D6 Threat

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | An enemy from the Traveler's past.  |
| 2 | A personal demon, something that comes from within the Traveler.              |
| 3 | The Traveler is a fugitive.   |
| 4 | This could be from the law, a corporation, or even a cult.                    |
| 5 | The Traveler is sick, maybe dying.  |
| 6 | The threat is a machine. Possibly a drone growth or something more enigmatic. |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | An enemy from the Traveler's past.  |
| 2 | A personal demon, something that comes from within the Traveler.              |
| 3 | The Traveler is a fugitive.   |
| 4 | This could be from the law, a corporation, or even a cult.                    |
| 5 | The Traveler is sick, maybe dying.  |
| 6 | The threat is a machine. Possibly a drone growth or something more enigmatic. |

### Internal Threats

In the core rules, internal Threats such as grief or addiction aren't used because they rob the players of agency. Since this is a game using one player, you might consider using more emotional, intangible Threats.

An internal Threat doesn't come from outside. Often, we are our own worst enemies. If a character has an addiction, that threat can creep up anytime. When personal demons catch up, they're as bad or worse than Sentre goons. Possibly, whatever the threat is, the Journey might rid the Traveler of it.

### YOUR VEHICLE

The 1990s were filled with iconic cars. On page 62 are a series of questions to help you define the vehicle with which your Travelers navigate their journey. In the adjacent table there are some example cars from the '90s if you're stuck.

Some other questions to consider for flavor: What's on the dashboard? What's hanging from the rearview mirror (pot leaf air fresheners, anyone?). Does it have bumper stickers? Is there a cigarette lighter and ashtray (yes this was a thing). And, most importantly, what's on the radio or cassette/CD player?

### 1990s Vehicles

#### D6 Vehicle

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | 1990 Pontiac Grand Prix                        |
| 2 | 1996 Ford Explorer Eddie Bauer in Hunter Green |
| 3 | 1996 Chevy S10 Extreme minitruck               |
| 4 | 1993 SL1 Saturn                                |
| 5 | 1995 Dodge Neon                                |
| 6 | 1992 Honda Accord                              |



★★★  
WESTMORELAND  
MEMORIAL PARK  
A MAGITEC INITIATIVE

# STARTING YOUR JOURNEY

BY NOW, you've made your Travelers, prepared your Journey, and thought of the reasons that bring your Travelers to whatever lies ahead. It's time to play. Using the tools provided below, you will create the conflicts, Stops, NPCs, and other things your Travelers find along the way. The road lies ahead.

## PLAYING YOUR TRAVELERS

Over the dashboard of your vehicle, through the sand-abraded window, you see through your Travelers' eyes. While you, as a solo player, can also see from a higher level, a "bird's eye view" of the Journey and the Stops, try to settle into the Travelers' point-of-view whenever you can. No plot, no dream, no gleaming neuroscape is interesting until someone sees it through their eyes.

As a solo player, you play all your Travelers at the same time, and you need one character sheet for each. However, typically, you pick a Traveler to be "the main character" for each Stop. But since the interplay between Travelers is such an important part of the game, you should switch between your different characters. If you have three characters, try to make each one the "main character" for at least one Stop.

### Scenes

*The Electric State RPG* is played in scenes, and for a solo game this is especially important. There's no need to procedurally generate everything that happens sequentially at a Stop. Instead, put yourself in the mind of the point of view character for that Stop. What would they do first? What NPC or location within the stop creates the most interesting interaction? Start there.

### Personal Countdowns

Step	Event
1	The personal Threat appears.
2	The conflict with the Threat escalates or is tilted somehow.
3	The conflict with the Threat reaches its climax and is resolved.

## TRIGGERING EVENTS

To add the unknown in a solo game, face cards, when drawn, trigger events. You can draw a card when instructed by these rules (for example, when drawing a Tilt on page 218) or at any time when you feel you need to propel your game forward. If you draw a face card, an event is triggered, and the suit of the card determines the type of event. See the adjacent table. Don't reshuffle until you're through an entire deck, as the deck will work as a timer for the various types of events.

### Event Triggers

Suit	Event Type
Spades	Personal Threat Countdown event
Clubs	Stop Countdown event
Hearts	Traveler event (page 219)
Diamonds	Conversation (page 219)

# PERSONAL THREATS

IN THE NORMAL GAME, each Traveler has a personal Threat Countdown, independent from the Stops, with the GM in control of when the next event on the Countdown happens. When playing solo, you want the surprise.

To simulate this, each time you draw a Spades face card for any reason, a Countdown event happens for the Traveler who is the main character at the moment

(or whichever Traveler you think it fits the best).

Personal Threat Countdown events are not specified in detail when playing solo – instead, you'll need to improvise the exact event based on the personal Threat of the Traveler, and where along the Countdown the event occurs. Each step on the Countdown escalates the Threat further. See the adjacent table.

# MINOR ENCOUNTERS

**BETWEEN STOPS**, or even before the first Stop, the Travelers can have minor encounters. Such encounters aren't Stops. They're just people, places, or events you happen to come across along the way.

Use the adjacent table to determine the nature of the encounter and the Tilt mechanic (page 218) to determine if the encounter is helpful or harmful and to what degree. Remember, an encounter can simply add mood and atmosphere. The Travelers don't need to engage with it. Unlike Stops, you can just drive on by and leave most encounters in the rearview mirror.

## Encounter

Card	Encounter
2	<b>Hitchhiker.</b> Give the NPC a personality type (page 214) and a quirk (page 151).
3	<b>Roadwork</b> (page 162).
4	<b>Weather Event.</b> Choose something harsh like a downpour or sandstorm.
5	<b>Gas Station.</b> Is anyone there?
6	<b>Roadside Attraction.</b> The highways of America are rife with kitschy, looming, sometimes outright bizarre roadside attractions. From giant cows to the World's Biggest Ball of Twine, roadside attractions were popular stops before the country went sideways.
7	<b>Animal.</b> Some animal crosses your path. Can you avoid hitting it?
8	<b>Abandoned Car.</b> Did it run out of gas? Are the passengers dead or dying with neurocasters over their faces? Do tracks lead off into the desert?
9	<b>Cult Sacrifice.</b> Cults leave sacrifices on the roads of America. From an animal head on a spike to a crucifix made of old TVs, you're bound to see something odd left by a cult.
10	<b>Debris.</b> Possibly parts of a crashed car. Maybe things that fell off a drone. Whatever it is, it's not intact.
Jack	<b>Drone Growth.</b> It's far away. You only see its silhouette lumbering across the darkening horizon. Best not to follow it.
King	<b>Civil War Battle Site.</b> Drone wrecks, skeletons, craters... who knows what else. Some sites are marked. Some don't have to be.
Queen	<b>Abandoned Drone Ship.</b> Maybe it crashed. Maybe it was left to obsolescence.
Ace	<b>Drone.</b> It's not functioning. It's huge. You can see many examples in the art contained in this book.

# STOPS

**UNLIKE A GROUP SESSION** of *The Electric State RPG*, when playing solo, you have no GM on which to rely. Therefore, you typically generate the Stops as you go to preserve the element of surprise.

## ■ BASICS

First, roll some dice and use the tables on pages 119–124 in Chapter 5 to generate the general setting of the Stop, the Blocker, the main conflict, and some mood elements for extra spice. As always, re-roll results that don't work, but first spend a minute to consider if any of the seemingly incompatible elements might fit somehow and create an interesting and unique Stop.

## On What Shift Do You Start?

On a Journey, each day is broken into four Shifts: Morning, Day, Evening, and Night. If you wish, you can draw a card to determine at which time the Travelers arrive at the Stop.

Suit	Shift
Diamonds	Morning
Hearts	Day
Clubs	Evening
Spades	Night

## THREATS

Next, you need to create the main Threat (or Threats) at the Stop. It might evolve naturally from what you've previously generated. If not, use the tables below. The types of Threats and stats for them are listed in Chapter 6.

### Threat Type

#### D6 Type

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Violent Threat       |
| 2 | Manipulative Threat  |
| 3 | Technological Threat |
| 4 | Environmental Threat |
| 5 | Past Sins*           |
| 6 | Personal Threat      |

\*If you roll Past Sins and this is your first Stop, roll again and try to tie the new result to the past of one of your Travelers. If you can use their personal Threat, even better.

#### D6 Violent Threat

- |     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1-2 | Law Enforcement Officers |
| 3   | Secret Agents            |
| 4-5 | Gang                     |

#### D6 Manipulative Threat

- |     |                             |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1-2 | Cultists                    |
| 3-4 | Local Strongman (or -woman) |
| 5-6 | Business Leader             |

#### D6 Technological Threat

- |     |              |
|-----|--------------|
| 1-2 | Robots       |
| 3-4 | Drone Growth |
| 5-6 | System       |

#### D6 Environmental Threat

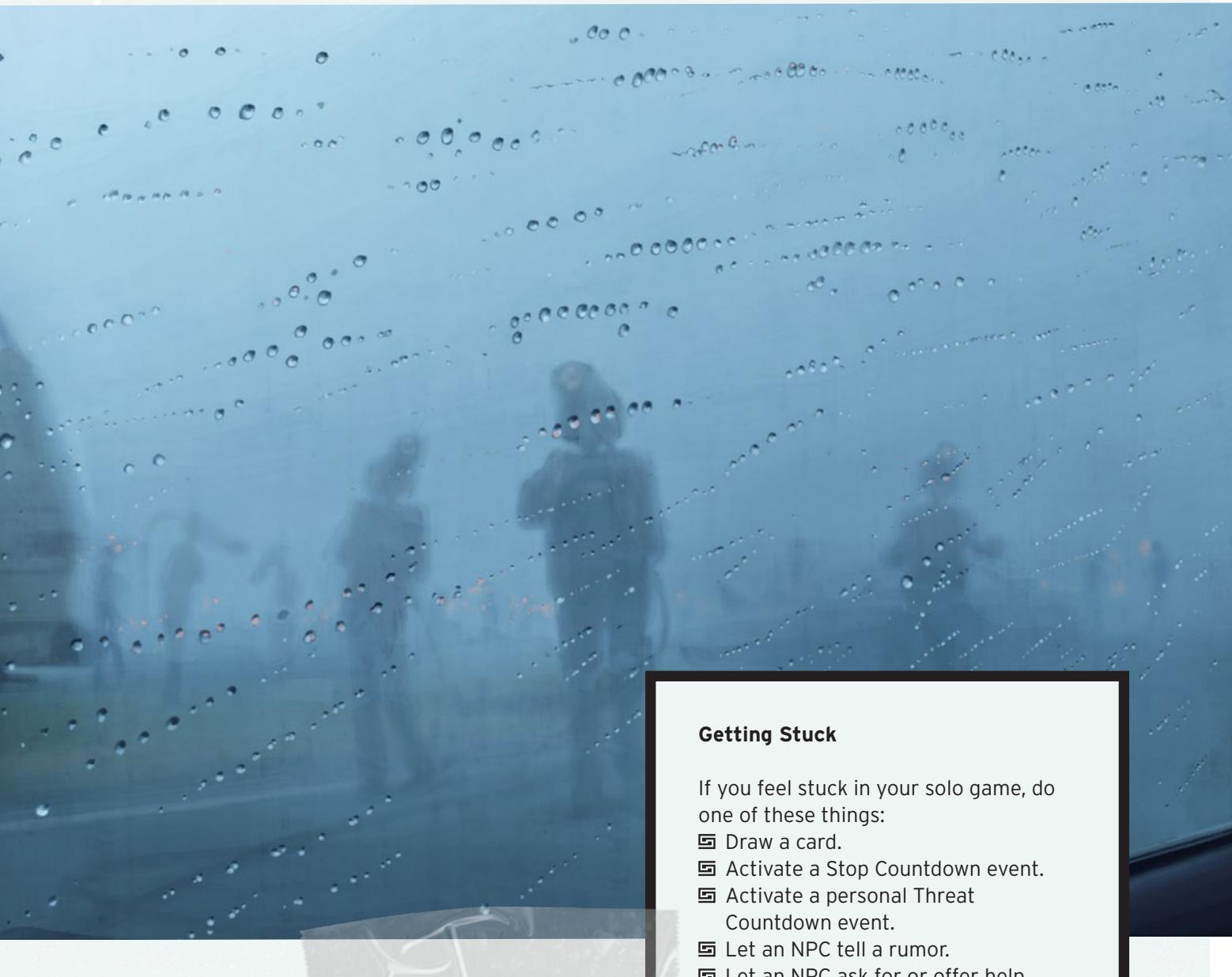
- |     |                 |
|-----|-----------------|
| 1-2 | Extreme Weather |
| 3-4 | Earthquakes     |
| 5-6 | Diseases        |



## STOP COUNTDOWN

In the normal game, the GM prepares the Stop and the Countdown of events occurring there. Playing solo, you'll generate the Countdown events procedurally as you play – each time you draw a Clubs face card for any reason, a Stop Countdown event happens.

Countdowns at Stops are connected to the Stop's Threat (or Threats). Each Threat listed in Chapter 6 has a proposed Countdown. Use those to guide your Threat. Remember, use everything you've decided on before now to inform those samples. You don't need to use them as is. Obviously, if a given Threat is unlikely to, or cannot, trigger a certain Countdown event, roll again or pick something more appropriate. If you're stuck for ideas, you can roll on the Stop Threat Countdown table on page 213. These events are further explained on page 125.



### Stop Threat Countdown

#### D66 Countdown Event

- |       |                                   |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| 11-12 | Tactics change.                   |
| 13-14 | Someone is captured.              |
| 15-16 | Something is sabotaged.           |
| 21-23 | Someone pleads for help.          |
| 24-25 | An accusation is made.            |
| 26-32 | Victims appear.                   |
| 33-34 | Travelers or NPCs are threatened. |

#### Getting Stuck

If you feel stuck in your solo game, do one of these things:

- ◻ Draw a card.
- ◻ Activate a Stop Countdown event.
- ◻ Activate a personal Threat Countdown event.
- ◻ Let an NPC tell a rumor.
- ◻ Let an NPC ask for or offer help.
- ◻ Point out a need (usually tied to the Blocker).
- ◻ Cut in time to a new scene.

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 35-36 | The Threat shows itself.                    |
| 41-42 | The Threat attacks the Travelers or NPCs.   |
| 43-46 | The Threat gathers forces.                  |
| 51-52 | A location is seized.                       |
| 53-54 | Lies are spread, by the Threat or about it. |
| 55-56 | A deal is offered.                          |

## LOCATIONS

Once you have determined the basics of the Stop, it's time to start exploring. In solo play, you typically won't have a physical map of the Stop area. Instead, you'll generate locations as you go, exploring the Stop area one location at a time.

Start by establishing 3–4 locations that the Travelers would be able to see from the Blocker, so you have some choices to start with. Start by thinking over what you know so far and write down logical locations that fit the elements of the Stop generated thus far. If you need more, use the table on page 126 to randomly generate new locations.

### Mapping Locations

Since everything in the solo game takes place inside one person's mind, a physical map isn't as useful. Instead, simply mark your location on a piece of paper with circles around it, as a mind map and lines between connected locations.

You needn't know where the locations are in physical space. You can imagine that as you go along. Just know what connects to what and follow the lines as you go. Each location can also be a scene. In this way, you build a plot and watch it unfold.

When you move from one location to another, draw a line between them. If your Travelers learn something about another location, or NPC at a given location, draw a dotted line to the location or add the NPC to your mind map.

### Neuroscapes

One of the main world elements of *The Electric State* is neuroscapes. Your Travelers probably used them in the past and may need to do so again in the future. Whether you need to gain access to a system or simply need to escape reality, at some point one of your Travelers plugs in.

Use the table on page 133 to generate the basics of any neuroscape. Remember to let the Threat inform the nature of the neuroscape. The purpose of the system might also give you ideas about what's inside.

# NPC BEHAVIOR

**BESIDES YOUR TRAVELERS,** Threats and minor NPCs are the characters of your story. Beyond the broad strokes of the main Threat(s), you don't create the NPCs of a Stop in a solo game. Instead, it is done during play.

To create NPCs during play, draw cards to make them live and breathe in your imagination.

- Personality type
- Emotional state
- Motive
- Method
- Quirk
- Predisposition

You may use any of the tables you feel you need. If a result doesn't make sense, doesn't feel right, or contradicts another element, draw again.

## PERSONALITY TYPE

This is the basic persona of the NPC. When in doubt, default to this. Is the NPC a survivor or a visionary? A pragmatist who follows logic or a reactionary that follows emotion?

### NPC Personality Types

Card	Personality
2	Survivor
3	Visionary
4	Leader
5	Pragmatist
6	Reactionary
7	Observer
8	Schemer
9	Zealot
10	Recluse
Jack	Paranoid
Queen	Addict
King	Megalomaniac
Ace	Sociopath

### **Survivor**

This type of person lived through some bad times. Whatever they encounter going forward is judged based on whether or not it's a perceived threat.

### **Visionary**

This type of person has an idea about the future and wants to see it through. They might wish to build back a devastated town, take their corporation to the top, or pioneer new forms of neurotech.

### **Leader**

This individual is a natural leader. Even if they don't want that role, they wind up filling it. Leadership is thrust upon some and sought by others. In either case, they operate from a position of power and have come to expect others to defer to them.

### **Pragmatist**

This person weighs decisions with logic. They set emotion to one side. Some may be so unemotional they seem like a robot. In any situation, they calculate different outcomes and make a choice based on what reason dictates is best.

### **Reactionary**

These types are the opposite of pragmatists. They follow their emotions wherever they lead. Such people keep nothing inside. They love fully. They also hate fully. You'll always know how a person like this feels.

### **Observer**

This personality type is reserved. They watch and collect information. Often, they seem like they make no decisions at all. That could be literally true. They might be so obsessed with the myriad possibilities of any decision that they just sit on the sidelines and watch.

### **Schemer**

These people have elaborate plans. Some might con people into doing their bidding. Others might believe their own plans and truly think everyone should come on board. Most schemers are deceptive and prone to making things up.

### **Zealot**

This person is either a staunch devotee of a religion or technology. Or a leader in either field. They believe with the intensity of a thousand suns. They know the capital T Truth. Everyone else is deluded.

### **Recluse**

This person is anti-social. They don't want others bothering them. If they live in a community, they live on the edge of it. They tend toward being laconic. If they say ten words in a row, you're lucky.

### **Paranoid**

The War was started by aliens. Neurotechnology was designed in a secret government lab to make users into sheep. Such people are being monitored by someone or something. They have enemies. You might just be one.

### **Addict**

This person is addicted to something. It could be neurine or booze or heroin. They have no personality anymore. Their self was long ago consumed by reflexive, raw need. They'll do anything to get their next fix. Anything.

### **Megalomaniac**

This person truly thinks the world revolves around them. They give no thought to how their actions affect other people. Always arrogant and sometimes aloof, it's ironic that many megalomaniacs need the attention of others to reinforce their imagined grandeur.

### **Sociopath**

This person is typically charismatic and outgoing. People might easily like such a person. But the longer one gets to know them the more they realize that the person has no moral compass. Good and evil have no meaning for them, and thus they do whatever suits them now. A lot of Sentre executives are said to be sociopaths.



## EMOTIONAL STATE

At any given moment in our lives, even while dreaming, we're in one or more emotional states. For simplicity, NPCs start with just one emotional state. The state in which the Travelers find a given NPC does more than just determine their most likely reactions – it suggests events preceding the Travelers meeting with the NPC.

NPC Emotional States	
Card	Emotional State
2	Angry
3	Obsessed
4	Cautious
5	Fearful
6	Placatory
7	Curious
8	Nostalgic
9	Excited
10	Anxious
Jack	Crazed
Queen	Joyful
King	Confused
Ace	Craving

### Angry

The character is angry. They might just be irked or they could be irate. Something or someone made them this way. What was it?

### Obsessed

The NPCs obsesses over something or someone. Are they in love? Are they plotting revenge? Have they made a technological breakthrough? Have they had a religious epiphany? That's up to you.

### Cautious

The character is careful. They don't commit easily to a given action before thinking it over. Maybe they're always like this. Better yet, some event triggered this emotion recently. They might have been betrayed, conned, nearly hit by a car, or anything else you can imagine.

### Fearful

The character is terrified. But what scared them? Is it the Threat? Is it someone from their past catching up to them? Did they just narrowly avoid grievous bodily harm or death?

### Placatory

The NPC wants to placate anyone they meet right now. They could be tired or recently browbeaten by someone else. Alternatively, their placatory demeanor may hide ulterior motives.

### Curious

This character seeks knowledge. Something recently happened that caused them to start making inquiries. They may ask the Travelers, or they may try to hide their curiosity about the Travelers. If they do, assume the Travelers see through it. Whatever they are curious about should be at the current Stop or down the road at the next one.

### Nostalgic

The country wasn't always like this. Something triggered memories of how things were before. Perhaps the character came across a pre-war magazine or watched a VHS movie from the early days of neurronics. Whatever the case, they're wistful for the past. Hey, who isn't these days?

### Excited

Something made this character very excited. Maybe they just got good news? Maybe they found the location of something, or someone long sought after. Maybe they're just high on neurine.

### Anxious

Something made this character nervous. You can feel a dark cloud hanging over them. They know something they do not want to confront is on the way. Maybe that thing involves the Travelers?

### Crazed

People in this broken America aren't all mentally fit as a fiddle. Rending apart the nation also rent minds. This person is a casualty. They may not always be in such a crazed state, but they are now. Something triggered them, and they are raving. Maybe even pacing around. Or they could have recently reached their limit and cracked. Whatever the trigger, it's clear they aren't dealing with operant reality right now.

## Joyful

Surviving isn't enough for most humans. We want to thrive. In the Electric State, thriving isn't as easy as it used to be, but this person found a way. Maybe it's very temporary joy, like finding the last hit of neurine in a pocket. It might be more emotional though. The character might have just reunited with an old friend or loved one. They might have just learned their plans are near fruition. Maybe they just fell in love. Take what you already know about the Stop and the Journey and decide what makes this person joyful.

## Confused

Anyone who isn't sometimes confused by the state of the world in the Electric State isn't paying attention. This person's confusion might relate to something in their recent or distant past. They might have just worked out that someone they thought they knew was a projection of their own desires. They might have just lost something important. Possibly, they just witnessed something miraculous or seemingly so.

## Craving

Desire is inherently immediate. Most of the things we want, we want now. With virtual realities everywhere, delayed gratification isn't a common virtue. This person wants something. Maybe they're infatuated or in unrequited love. Maybe they're an addict needing their next fix. Maybe they had lots of attention and just lost it. They have a need, and they need it sated now.

## ■ MOTIVE

Good dramatic characters have purpose. An NPC's motive tells you a lot about them and informs their reaction to the Travelers.

### NPC Motives

Card	Motive
Clubs	Narcissism
Spades	Trauma
Hearts	Community
Diamonds	Technology

## Narcissism

The NPC believes they are the center of the universe. Some suffer from solipsism, thinking they can only prove their own existence, and no one else's. In either case, they treat others as they would robots and drones – tools to be used. These people need to satiate their ego. They need attention. They need control.

## Trauma

NPCs whose motive is trauma suffered something in their past that drives them now. Whatever the trauma was, they never got past it. It clouds their life, looming like an invisible foe. They might seek to wound others as they were wounded. They might try to help others where they fail to help themselves.

## Community

The NPC dedicates themselves to building or maintaining a community. This might be a town, a group of nomads, a religious congregation, or anything else you define as a community. If the NPC is also a Threat, they might view everything they do, however immoral, as for the good of their community.

## Technology

The NPC is obsessed with new technology. Typically, this technology involves drones, neurotechnology, or robots. Whatever technology entralls them, they pursue its improvement and refinement at all costs. Perhaps they believe Americans must rely on the very tech that wrecked the country to rebuild it.

## ■ METHOD

Those who want must have a way of getting what they want. For NPCs, this is their method. How do they go about achieving their goal? Draw and find out.

### NPC Methods

Card	Method
Clubs	Power
Spades	Deceit
Hearts	Religion
Diamonds	Technology

## Power

The NPC uses power to get what they want. Power might be goons, corporate agents, or something more baroque, like leverage. Whatever it is, it must threaten the Travelers in some way.

## Deceit

The NPC uses deceit to get what they want. They might trick people, lie, or concoct elaborate schemes to entrap their victims and reach their goal. Such NPCs typically avoid combat themselves, but that doesn't preclude them from manipulating others into attacking or harassing Travelers.

## Religion

The NPC is a zealot of some sort, or at least pretends to be (that's up to you). They use their chosen religion to force others to do as they command. Such NPCs are likely cult leaders though they may be part of an official religion. In either case, they hold sway over their devotees in an almost godlike way.

## Technology

The NPC relies on technology to get what they want. They might fly drones, use robots, be in league with a drone growth or keep people enthralled in a private neuroscape. If the NPC's motive is also technology, consider them a zealot, a great innovator, a drone growth, or even an intercerebral intelligence.

## Quirk

We often remember little things about people. We recall their quirks of personality, what they wear, how they look, what they smell like. Quirks add detail to NPCs. For minor NPCs, their quirk could well be the most memorable thing about them, and that is by intent. Use the Quirks table on page 151 to add little details to your NPCs.

## Predisposition

The NPC's importance and predisposition to the Travelers is based on the suit and the card (see Tilts below). A Queen of Hearts is likely a major NPC and more than willing to help the Travelers. Given that information, you can also conclude that this NPC is directly opposed to the antagonist. This could be a staunch ally.

# TILTS

A **TILT** is what it sounds like – something that skews one way or the other. In the case of playing alone, the Tilt determines whether an event, NPC, items, or other element is helpful or harmful. It also tells you to what degree a thing hurts or helps.

You simply draw a card. Spades and Clubs are not in your favor. In fact, they may prove actively harmful. Hearts and Diamonds are good for you, representing a good turn for your Travelers.

A Tilt runs just as the cards in a suit run, from low to high. In this case, a two is the lowest and an ace the highest. By drawing one card, you determine whether an element in your solo game is bad or good for your Travelers. The Tilt is optional and should take a back-seat to anything you've already established.

### Example:

*The Travelers are checking out some ruined houses. To see if they find anything of value, the solo player draws a Tilt. The Tilt card is the Jack of Clubs. Looking at the table, the player knows that whatever the Travelers find in the ruins is bad for them. Because the card is a jack, the ruins are very dangerous. The player might decide a Threat lurks inside. They might decide one Traveler falls through a rotted floor and is injured.*

### Tilts

Degree	Low			Medium			High			Extreme			
Card	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Jack	Queen	King	Ace
<b>Clubs and Spades</b>	Bad for the Travelers												
<b>Hearts and Diamonds</b>	Good for the Travelers												

# CONVERSATIONS

**PEOPLE TALK.** We communicate. In a group game, you talk to the other players and the GM. In a solo game, that isn't possible. You also talk to NPCs in game.

We cannot hope to replicate the details of any given conversation that goes on between imagined characters in a single mind. Instead, you're best off with just the subject of the conversation and the outcome. Do two travelers talk about a chasm in their relationship? Does the group talk to an NPC about removing the Blocker causing the Stop?

If a conversation doesn't organically evolve from your game, they may be triggered by Diamond face cards.

Again, the subject may clearly present itself without random generation. If an NPC generated is likely to know how to get the Travelers back on the road, that's probably what the content of the conversation encompasses. In that case, you draw to see how the conversation goes. That draw is also a Tilt (page 218). As with other Tilts, Spades and Clubs portend poorly for the outcome while Hearts and Diamonds augur well.

## Conversation Subject

### D6 Subject

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Personal background   |
| 2 | Emotional state       |
| 3 | Religion              |
| 4 | Technology            |
| 5 | The war               |
| 6 | The stop's background |



# TRAVELER EVENTS

**SINCE YOU PICK** one Traveler to play at each stop, you need an engine that drives the other characters during that stop. The following rules outline ways to generate actions your other Travelers take. But remember, you're the player and can ultimately decide that the other Travelers act in accordance with their personalities if a result contradicts that personality.

### D6 Event

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Traveler tries to overcome a Flaw.  |
| 1 | They have a personal revelation on this Journey and face their Flaw.  |
| 2 | A Threat catches up to the Traveler. It may well pull in the entire group.  |
| 3 | Traveler pursues an aspect of their Dream. This scene probably starts as a conversation but could cause a blow up among the group if one Traveler's Dream conflicts with the current needs or personalities of the other Travelers. |
| 4 | A conversation occurs that increases tension between Travelers of your choice.  |
| 5 | A conversation occurs that lowers tension between Travelers of your choice.   |
| 6 | A Traveler wanders off. Do the remaining Travelers search for them?   |

## ▣ TENSION TRACKING

Any time a scene might increase tension between Travelers, make a choice. It's up to you when such scenes result in a change of Tension – any conversation between Travelers that goes poorly should increase Tension while a good conversation reduces it.

# THE ELECTRIC STATE



## Roleplaying Game

**NAME**

## ARCHETYPE

## FAVORITE SONG

## DESCRIPTION

## STRENGTH

AGILITY

WITS

## EMPATHY

## HEALTH

## HOPE

BLISS

## PERMANENT

## TALENTS

DREAM

# JOURNEY

GOAL

## THREAT

# TENSION

## TRAVELER 1

1

TRAVELER 2

1

TRAVELER 3

---

1

#### TRAVELER 4

1

GEAR

CASH

## INJURIES & TRAUMA

# THE ELECTRIC STATE

 Roleplaying Game

VEHICLE TYPE

MODEL

PASSENGERS

FUEL

DESCRIPTION

MANEUVERABILITY

SPEED

HULL

ARMOR

TRAITS

GEAR

# PRE-MADE CHARACTERS

## **Cade/Courtney Draper**

You were the original lead vocalist for the genre defying band Bliss. Of course, everyone knows the lead singer of Bliss, and they know it isn't you. You really were the star of that band though, before the band made it big. You had a natural easy charisma on stage and a voice that felt like an ache and angst for a whole generation. But you're a neurine addict. After Bliss cut their first demo, the band signed with a huge record company. When you missed the fourth gig, the company and your "friends" in the band cut you loose. By the time Bliss was a household name and rolling in money and fame, you were forgotten. A footnote on MTV.

## **Wilhemina/William "Willy" Carbone**

Your parents' neuro addiction landed you in the Pacifica Orphanage System. You escaped at age 12, climbing out the window of your locked room and hitting the road. You're 16 now and wiser than many people three times your age. At the same time, you retain an innocence about certain things that gets you into trouble. You want to find a family. Not a mom and dad and little brother, but a group of people you choose and trust. You and Nancy/Pascal have a lot in common. Maybe you two can find a family together.

## **Nancy/Pascal Alvarez**

You never ever fit in. You listened to Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure, Bauhaus, and Sisters of Mercy while your peers fell into hip hop and pop. You were always an outsider. After graduating high school, you were indentured to Sentre as part of their youth training initiative. You lasted a week before you climbed the fence. After that, you hitchhiked around the country making brief casual connections. But as soon as any connection got real, you bailed. You don't need anyone. Books and music all speak to you more than any human can face-to face. But what if you're wrong?

## **Francis/Billy-Lee Harker**

You joined the United States Marines at age 18 and never looked back. You fought in some of the more horrific battles of the Civil War and did things you can't bear to think about. You are on the run, not from any authority or enemy but from yourself. You seek a place where dreams aren't filled with flashbacks and your hands don't shake when you hear a loud noise. You know the war was a waste and by extension so was your life. But you miss it. You miss the bond between soldiers under fire. You miss the order. If you're honest, you miss combat.

# THE ELECTRIC STATE



Roleplaying Game

NAME Cade/Courtney Draper ARCHETYPE Artist

FAVORITE SONG Life on Mars, David Bowie

DESCRIPTION

STRENGTH

3

AGILITY

3

WITS

4

EMPATHY

6

HEALTH 3

HOPE 5

BLISS

PERMANENT

TALENTS Musician

DREAM Take the role of rock  
star that is rightfully yours.

FLAW You believe you're the  
center of the universe, even the  
small, shabby one you now inhabit.

GEAR Gibson Les Paul guitar (musical instrument)

three doses of neurine

Johnny Jolt Theme neurocaster

CASH

INJURIES  
& TRAUMA

## JOURNEY

GOAL

THREAT

## TENSION

TRAVELER 1



TRAVELER 2



TRAVELER 3



TRAVELER 4



# THE ELECTRIC STATE

 Roleplaying Game

**NAME** Wilhemina/William  
"Willy" Carbone

**ARCHETYPE** Runaway Kid

**FAVORITE SONG** Friday, I'm in love, The Cure

**DESCRIPTION**

**STRENGTH**

2

**AGILITY**

6

**WITS**

4

**EMPATHY**

6

**HEALTH** 4

**HOPE** 4

**BLISS**

**PERMANENT**

**TALENTS** Con artist

**DREAM** To belong

**FLAW** You're overeager.

The child in you often annoys  
the cynical people of the world.

**GEAR** Knife

Copy of "If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home by Now" by Chuck Palahniuk

Jury-rigged neurocaster

**CASH**

**INJURIES  
& TRAUMA**

## JOURNEY

**GOAL**

**THREAT**

## TENSION

**TRAVELER 1**

**TRAVELER 2**

**TRAVELER 3**

**TRAVELER 4**

# THE ELECTRIC STATE



Roleplaying Game

NAME Nancy/Pascal Alvarez

ARCHETYPE outsider

FAVORITE SONG Fall With Your Knife, Peter Murphy

DESCRIPTION

STRENGTH

2

AGILITY

4

WITS

6

EMPATHY

2

HEALTH 3

HOPE 4

BLISS

PERMANENT

TALENTS Lonewolf

DREAM Write "the great American novel"

FLAW Any time someone tells you what to do, you rebel and do the opposite.

GEAR Pack of Morley's cigarettes

Zippo lighter from the Vietnam War reading:  
"Bury me upside down so the world can kiss my ass."

Too many books and a walkman

CASH

INJURIES & TRAUMA

## JOURNEY

GOAL

THREAT

## TENSION

TRAVELER 1



TRAVELER 2



TRAVELER 3



TRAVELER 4



# THE ELECTRIC STATE

 Roleplaying Game

NAME Francis/Billy-Lee Harker ARCHETYPE Veteran

FAVORITE SONG We Gotta Get Outta This Place, The Animals

## DESCRIPTION

(Leave blank for now)

STRENGTH

4

AGILITY

6

WITS

3

EMPATHY

3

HEALTH 5

HOPE 3

BLISS

PERMANENT

TALENTS Hardened

DREAM Lose the memories

of the war

FLAW When faced with a  
tough decision, especially for  
the group, you freeze.

GEAR Handgun

Marine field jacket

Combat knife

Stimulus GO neurocaster

CASH

## INJURIES & TRAUMA

## JOURNEY

### GOAL

### THREAT

## TENSION

### TRAVELER 1



### TRAVELER 2



### TRAVELER 3



### TRAVELER 4



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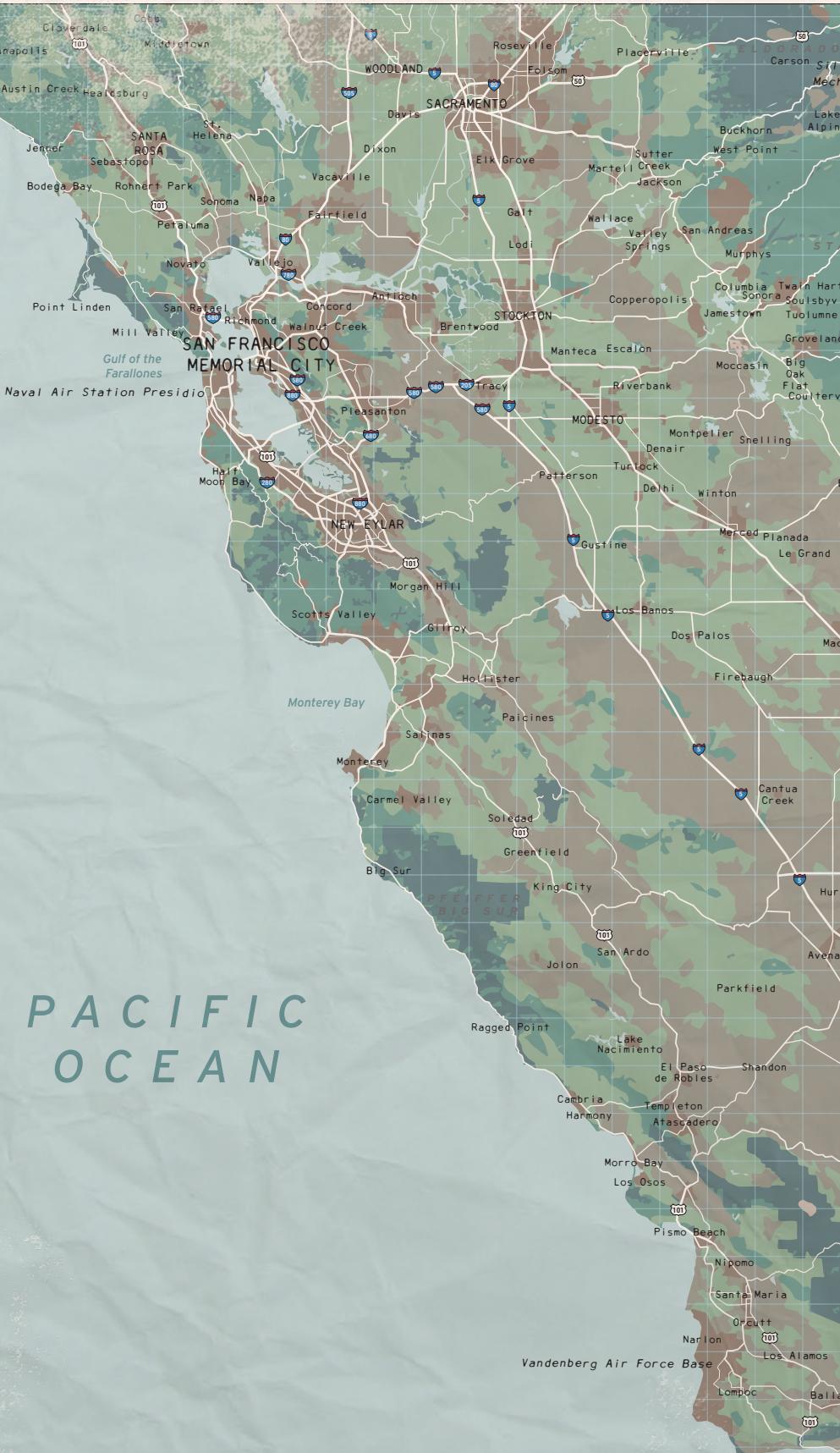
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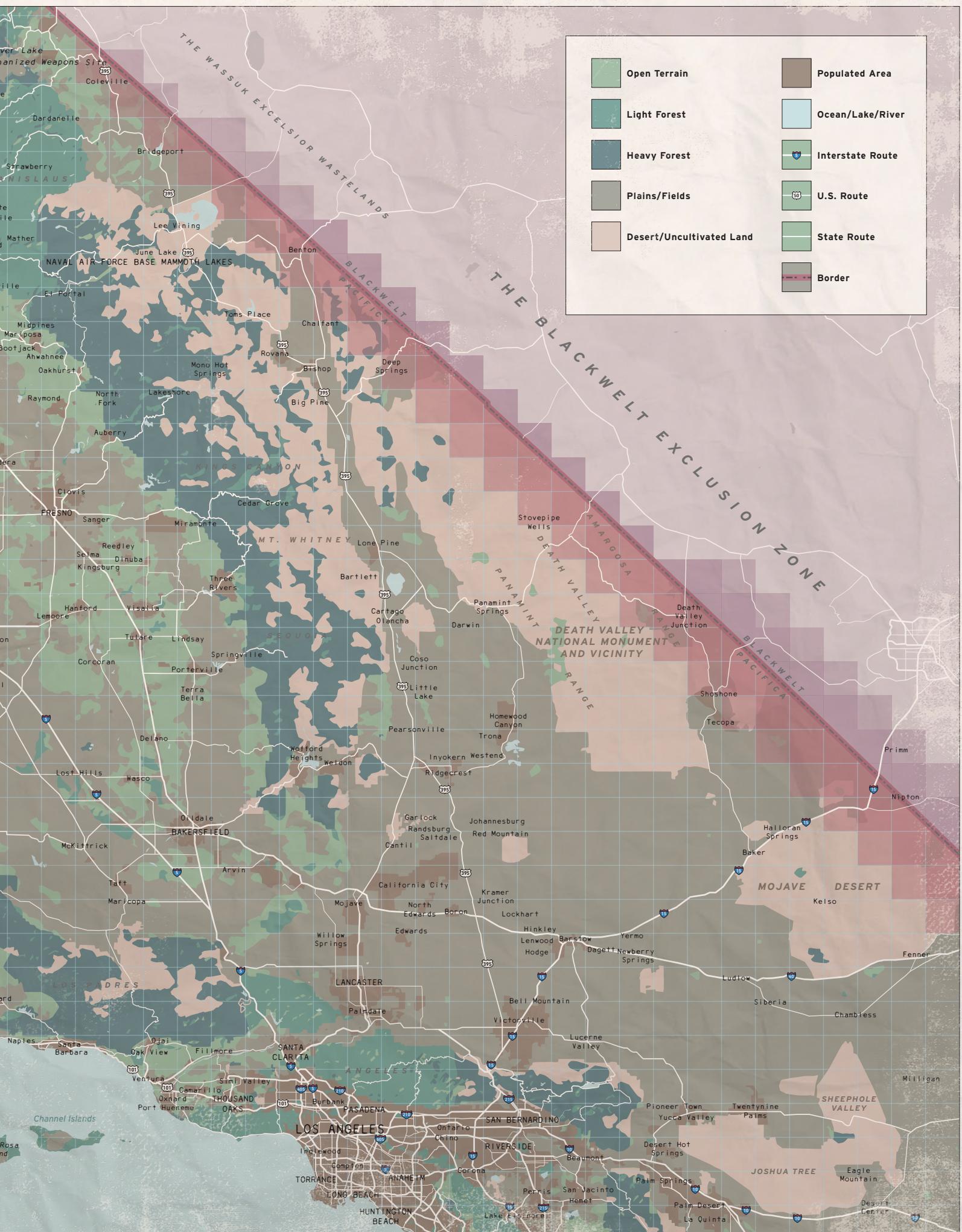
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**PACIFICA**

0 20 40 60 80 100  
MILES



# A ROAD TRIP ON THE VERGE OF REALITY

*When did it all start? I can't really remember. It started like any recreational activity, I guess. Like TV. Sometimes they watched TV and sometimes they would sit there wearing their neurocasters. I didn't care. It was after the big update of 1996 that things got weird. Mode Six.*

*The Electric State Roleplaying Game* is based on the art book *The Electric State* by acclaimed visual artist and author **Simon Stålenhag**. This tabletop RPG uses Free League's Year Zero Engine, known from award-winning games such as *Mutant: Year Zero*, *Tales From the Loop RPG*, *ALIEN RPG*, and the *Blade Runner RPG*.

This is a game about a group of travelers heading out on a journey through a strange America in an alternate 1997. The ruins of gigantic battle drones litter the countryside, heaped together with the discarded trash of a high tech consumerist society in decline.

The game is not about the goal but the journey - what the characters experience along the way and how it changes them. This is a game of exploration, of finding out who you are, who your friends are, and what you are willing to do when the world collapses around you.



**FREE LEAGUE**



#### CONTENT WARNING

*The Electric State* deals with dark and existential themes. The stories told in this game can be violent, distressing, and raise issues relating to personal morals. This is not a game for children.

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