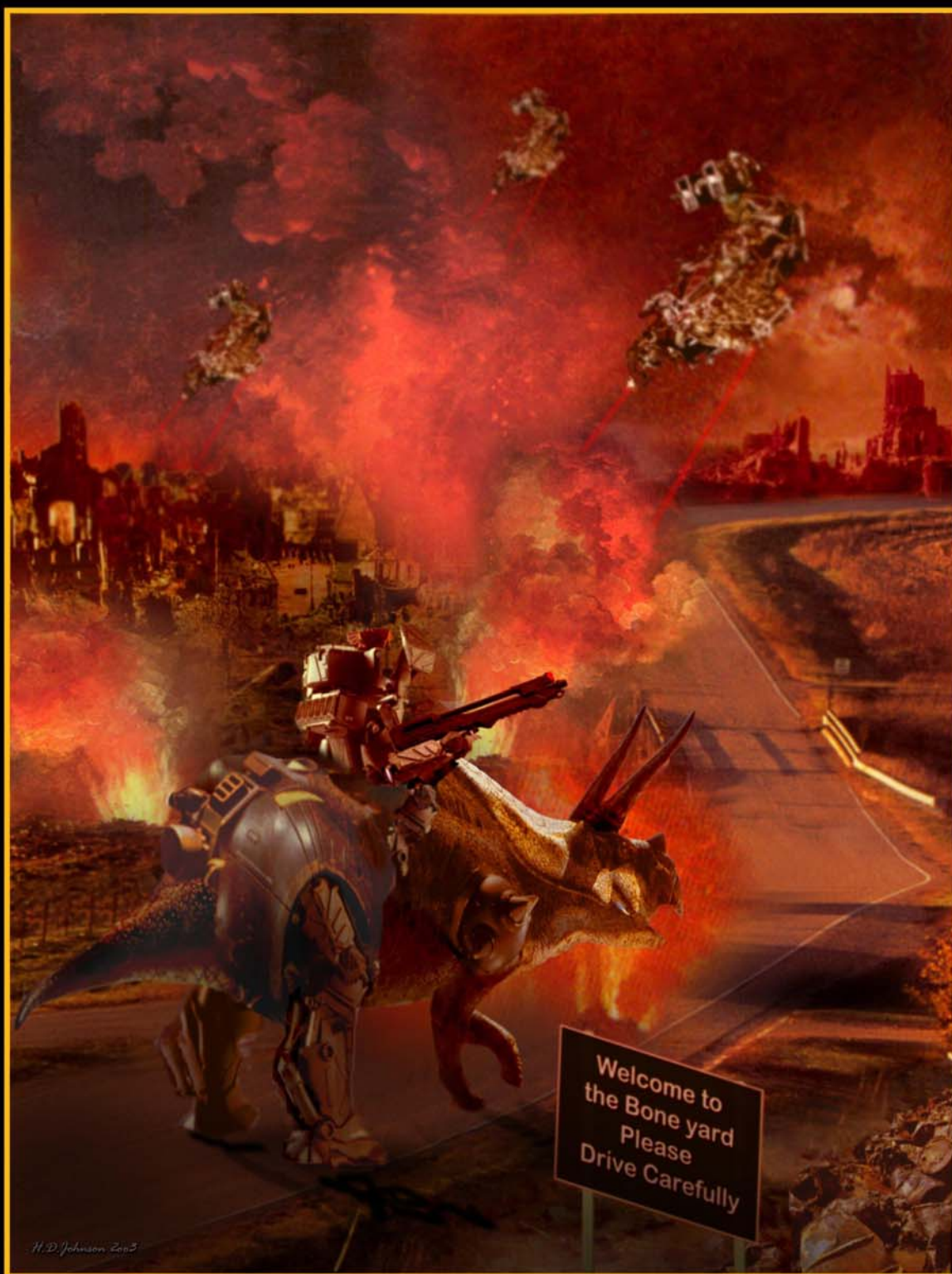




Have-Not *Ruins*

The Ruins



The skeleton of the world that once was remains even though the flesh has rotted away. The bones are the shattered buildings that still scar the vistas that remain—the subterranean sewer pipes, the half buried gas stations, and still-dangerous militarized zones.

SADD Zones

Skitter mines reposition and wait. Search And Destroy Drones lie quietly but then come to life and come out to find you. The Age of War scattered thousands of them.

Skitter Mines

Mines are the bane of ... well ... everyone. They lay undetected for years, still deadly—they're hard to disarm and damnably hard to destroy safely. An area, once mined can yield unexpected and unintended death for years.

Skitter Mines take what's bad about mines and square it. They hop, crawl, and dig their way around a battle field. Some are anti-vehicular. Some are anti-personnel. All are quiet, stealthy, and deadly.

DRIADS

Dispersed Radar-Integrated Air Defense Systems: why you don't fly in the ruins. The DRIADS system (well, there are scores of systems—but they're all pretty similar) were created in the Age of War to target aircraft (which were usually weak and susceptible to guided munitions. They were small, often-dormant, and, when awakened extremely potent. Anything vehicular and moving above a hundred feet risks running into concentrated DRIAD fire.

What are the ruins like?

Early in the Age of War the cities were abandoned by all those who could (who had places to go and means to get there) and were unwilling to kill and die for them. They were fought over by those who would. For the next age, they became fortresses, strategic objectives, and mass graveyards.

The wars that raged through them saw widespread deployment of every weapon mankind could envision – everything from mundane guns and bombs, to the more esoteric energy weapons and robotic soldiers, up through the truly exotic (biological weapons, tectonic nukes).

When the fighting finally stopped, *no one* owned them. They're dead now. *Ruined*.

The ruins are ghosts of what they used to be. There are still skylines—a few great buildings stand, here and there surrounded by broken shards. But mostly, the towers have fallen and there's nothing but lower structures and rolling foothills of rubble and garbage.

The ruins have a smell to them—burnt and metallic—and there is a beautiful haze that hangs over everything. Approach the ruins at sundown and you'll see that the light breaks into a spectrum of amber and burnt sienna with hints of jade and deep purple. When you have traveled in the ruins, you carry that smell with you—the smell of arid, desiccated history.

The cities also appear timeless, ageless, and changeless. This is not true, for they settle, they collapse. Things move within them. But they are so very nearly still that one might be forgiven for thinking they have always been *exactly* as they are now.

So, you wonder, what are the ruins like?

Quiet. Except for the distant cry of carrion eaters, circling far overhead. And quiet, except for the faint whistle of wind traveling through something narrow left open. Quiet, except for the almost inaudible settling of the stone and the soft rumble as tiny fragments of gravel seek equilibrium over slow centuries. Quiet. Because the things that *can* make noise are watching, and lying in wait.

Bleached. That is, without hue or tone. The sun has been merciless in these past centuries and the bright colors of the Age of Wonders have faded until almost everything washed out.

Burnt. Because during the Age of War fires raged unchecked here, rolling for miles, consuming everything that could be consumed and blackening everything they touched. The sun and

1 Megaton Surface Blast

Crater	200ft deep, 1000ft diameter
Total Destruction	3,200 ft (0.6 miles)
Massive damage	1.7 miles
High damage	2.7 miles
Heavy damage	4.7 miles
Moderate damage	7.4 miles

Crater: Highly radioactive (still dangerous). Nothing remains but dust and fused glass.

Total Destruction: Civilian structures are obliterated (nothing left but charred *foundations*). Highly re-enforced bunkers are destroyed, but rubble remains.

Massive Damage: Most civilian structures collapsed. Some buildings (reinforced concrete) still stand. Walls and windows are blown out. Hardened military installations still exist in some form. 98% of the population within this radius would be dead.

High Damage: Walls of typical (civilian) multi-story structures are blown out leaving only bare, structural skeletons. Single family homes are gone (only foundations remain). Fifty percent kill at impact.

Heavy Damage: Single family homes are devastated (collapsed) but not burnt away. Office structures have their windows and some walls blown out. Massive structural collapse but the area still *looks* recognizably like a city.

Moderate Damage: This is comparable to bad storm damage (broken windows, damaged roofs, etc.) Subsequent damage may come from fires. Massive injuries (especially from thermal radiation) but few immediate fatalities.

NOTE: These damage ratings and kill percentages refer to the damage *at the time of the blast*. In the next 200 years, a lot of buildings in the high and heavy damage zones will have undergone subsequent collapse.

the wind have washed away the soot and the blackened walls have faded to gray with age, but there is still ash everywhere.

Labyrinthine. The big ruins go on for miles and miles and miles. Walk in the right direction and you can walk for hours without ever seeing the horizon—just walls on either side. And through the cracks and broken places? Other walls. And walls behind those, more walls. These are walls of buildings. They have openings where there were once windows and doors and within walls, there are narrow, dark expanses of hallways and rooms, long purged of any meaning. You can get lost there, easily because collapse has rendered the roads impassable and each way looks very much like the other. And for the bravest, the cities go *down*, indefinitely. For that is where the *real* labyrinth lays—underground.

Hallowed Ground. For countless thousands have died here. They died under all manner of circumstances in all manner of ways. Age and blistering light and relentless heat have burnt away almost all *physical* traces of the dead (there are still bleached bones, easily uncovered, if one digs), but the *sense* of what happened here remains. And in the built up canyons between the deserted buildings, the ruins feel very much like a vast cathedral or a monument. To walk in the ruins is to *remember*.

Fascinating, because there is endless variety. Here, there is a sidewalk worn smooth by rain and wind. Polished white, like bone. There, to the left, is a sloping hill of shattered cement and brick. It was once a building, now fallen. There are still sharp fragments and rusted metal girders poking up from the broth of rubble. The metal columns are streetlights. The great rectangular open spaces were once display windows from small stores. Those alcoves held kiosk-machines. In every square inch, there is history. Every piece of rock has a story to tell—a dramatic one. Stories of cataclysm and tragedy (destruction). Stories of tranquility and domestic life (a framed photograph. A coffee mug. The wheel of a skateboard). The ruins tell wonderful stories to those who know how to listen.

Deadly. In the vast, serene spaces of the ruins, you might expect to forget that death is here. You won't. Your body won't let you. Your primitive instincts are not tricked by the depth of the quiet or the intensity of the stillness. Before anything else, perhaps, the ruins are dangerous. Why? What lurks there? All manner of things—the weapons used here left them poisonous (radiation. Heavy metals) and infected (bacteria, spores, viral agents). And many of the weapons, themselves, still remain—autonomous systems still following orders given centuries ago. Machines are very, very patient and very, very good at what they do. But if it were just the machines or just the pollution, the ruins would have been retaken long ago and would have, again, become *cities*. So. So, it is not just these things that are well understood. Simply, it is this: there are things in the ruins so dangerous that there is no record of them. No one—no thing—has encountered them and returned. They swallow armies as

NBC Hazards

Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological hazards come in 5-degrees in Have-Not from background to incredibly (and quickly) lethal. Here's how to run 'em. Although the hazards are listed here, they're *everywhere*—not just in the ruins.

Radiation

From still-glowing craters to failing robotic power-plants to scattered dust that can kill, Nuclear Radiation is one of the scariest hazards out there. It can't be felt, seen (mostly), or smelled.

Radiation poisoning accumulates in what's called *Rad-Points*. How often you get Rad Points is determined by the area you're in.

Rad points may be removed by medical treatment but will go away on their own: you lose 1 RAD point each hour if not in a radioactive (Cat 0) zone.

Points	Effect
½ CON	Slightly Ill. Nose-bleeds, fatigue, some hair loss. Lose Minor Wound's worth of DP until Rad pts go away.
CON	Rad-poisoned: Fatigue, vomiting, dizziness. Operate at -3 to all rolls until RAD points drop below CON. Suffer a Minor Wound's worth of DP loss until Rad pts are below CON. Dangerous dose: As above but make CON rolls at -3 to lose each point. If the roll is missed: gain one. If missed by 5, with the -3, so a normal roll missed by 2, faint. Suffer a Major Wound's worth of damage until Rad pts are below CON.
2x CON	Coma and death. Roll at CON -5 each hour to lose a point. If you lose CON worth of points you will recover. If you fail one roll, you will die. Suffer critical Wound's worth of DP.
3x CON	

Cat	Effect
Cat 1	<i>Background noise.</i> Gain 1 Rad pt per 2 days. People don't live there: animals that do tend to be highly mutated.
Cat 2	<i>'Warm:'</i> Gain a Rad Point each 6 hours.
Cat 3	<i>'Hot:'</i> Get 4 Rad pts immediately and gain a Rad Point each hour.
Cat 4	<i>'Burning Zone:'</i> Gain 10 Rad pts immediately and 1 each minute
Cat 5	<i>'Chernikov Blue:'</i> Gain 20 Rad pts immediately and Gain 1 Rad pt each second. The air glows.

quickly and effortlessly as they swallow men alone. The ruins are deadly because they are *haunted* by things merciless and voracious without measure and without compare.

Rich. The ruins are filled with miracles. There are things there, lying in the rubble, covered with ash and dust, that will change your destiny if you find them. There are treasures hidden in garages, now covered with sand, waiting to be excavated. There is a building with a thousand empty rooms, and in its attic there is a child's toy that can cure plague and raise the dead. On a 61st floor balcony, set against the wall, there is a radio that, if turned out, would answer questions that have consumed the new age. And this is only the beginning. Remember *this*: In the Age of Wonders, anything that could be *imagined* was possible. In their greatest cities, imagination was unchecked. In the Age of War, all of that was washed away but even the faintest fragments carry the taste of Wonder upon them, and the ruins are nothing but great seas of fragments.

So. These are the Ruins. This is the Garden of Eden after The Fall.

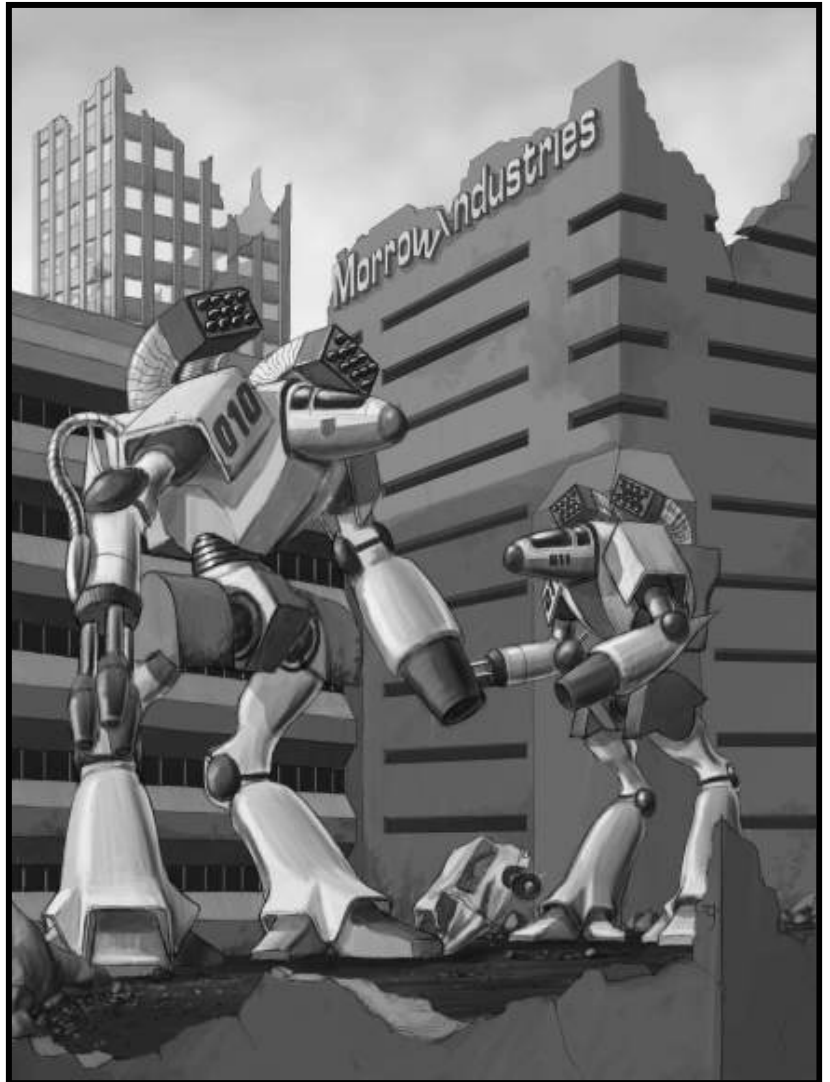
Welcome to it.

Rates of Decay in the Information Age

Things built in the Age of Wonders were built to *last*. Things built in the Information Age ... *weren't*. Here are some estimated times of decay:

Aluminum Soft drink Can	50-100yrs
Plastic Bag	10-20yrs
Newspaper	A few weeks
Glass bottle	1 million years
Scrap metal	50 years
Plastic Tire	Unknown
Railroad crosstie	30 years
VHS Tape	3-25 years
CD or DVD	25-100 years

On the other hand, being buried in a landfill *can* make things last a long time. Reports have been made of finding decade old sandwiches 'archived' in county landfills.



X-SYSTEM PATROL

A pair of X-System Robots patrol a ruined downtown section of LA. If you're in a section that's free of Skitter Mines, SADD activity, or DRIAD fire, be on the look-out for something like this.

Note: despite their size, they're programmed for stealth and careful approach. It's amazing how well a six-story robot can hide in the LA Ruins when it tries.

Rules in the Ruins

There are ruins and then there are *ruins*. Not all ruins are the same—and in most cases, they're not even close. There are entire cities that have been swallowed whole by the desert. If you know where to dig, you might find perfectly preserved wonders just beneath the surface. Other ruins were obliterated; pulverized by nuclear strike after nuclear strike until there's nothing left but faintly glowing craters.

The Great Ruins lay along the Pacific Rim. They are the ruins (in the south) of Los Angeles and San Diego and Tijuana and (in the north) of San Francisco and San Jose. These are the best known because they are the most extensive and the most notorious. The rules here cover the Great Ruins specifically, but they apply reasonably well to other places.

Just don't get cocky. Making assumptions will get you killed.

Quiet? *Too quiet* (meeting company in the ruins)

All the talk of renegade robots and ravenous mutants tends to make the Ruins sound like a busy market like midday. The reality is that the most likely thing you're likely to run into in a trip to the ruins is *nothing at all*. No mutants. No raiders. No psychotic robots. Just long, empty streets covered with ash and buildings that were looted by people a lot more desperate than you are a long, long time ago.

That isn't to say that the ruins aren't *dangerous*. They're minefields (literally—there are anti-personnel and anti-vehicular mines *all over the place*) and they're radioactive and they're infected by all manner of nasty bugs. But your average trip to the ruins doesn't involve shooting and it doesn't involve finding anything of real value either.

Activity	Chance of a meeting engagement
Moving slowly, quietly (searching/scavenging)	-1 / hour
Not moving, concealed	-1 / 3 hours
Moving normally (incautious)	-2 / hour

25 Megaton Air Blast

Crater	NA
Total Destruction	NA
Massive damage	6.5 miles
High damage	10.7 miles
Heavy damage	20 miles
Moderate damage	30.4 miles

The air burst does not leave a crater that would remain hot for multiple centuries.



Bio-Hazard

Radiation will kill you quickly and surly—but Bio-Hazards are *scary*. The illnesses can be truly horrific—but worse, they can be *infectious*.

Contagious Disease

When exposed (which could be from eating or drinking contaminated water or food, breathing contaminated air, or touching a contaminated surface) the character will make an Infection Save: this is a CON roll vs. a disease's Infection Strength. If the roll is not made by more than the strength, the character is infected. Some actions may increase or decrease the chance (not touching your eyes and washing your hands will decrease Infection Strength by 3).

Chronicality

How often a "lethality" roll need be made is the measure of Chronicality. A super-lethal advanced militarized disease might require a roll each second. Cancer, one roll each year.

Lethality

Lethality is the killing power of the disease. All diseases have different effects—but here is the basic table.

Result	Effect
Minor	Discomfort, sniffles, pain.
Standard	Impaired: -1 to most skill rolls. Seriously Impaired: -4 to skill rolls, weak (WIL rolls to perform labor).
Major	Incapacitated: Unconscious or otherwise bed-ridden
Critical	Dying: will perish within a day.
Catastrophic	

Encounter Modifiers	
Large or loud (mounted) party	+2 for more than 4 people, +4 for vehicles or more than 10 people
Combat	Roll immediately, after combat completes, +1 to roll

Surviving NBC Hazards

The sidebars tell you about the hazards you'll likely encounter. This section tells you what you can do about it. Most people go into the ruins traditionally—they walk or ride in. They look around (carefully—frightened usually) for a few minutes or hours, and *leave*. But that's just the outskirts. If you're going in deep, get a map. Have a support base-camp a mile or two back to fall back to—or call for help from—bring radios ... and for *Their sake* bring filter masks and Rad-Pills and anti-toxin.

Rad Pills

Taking Rad-Pills regularly makes you feel kinda icky but removes 2 Rad Points every six hours. It will keep you fine in a Category 1 or Category 2 Rad-Zone but will only mitigate effects beyond that.

System Scrub

Field hospitals can perform a *System Scrub*. This takes a bunch of skin off, filters the blood, and takes about 4 hours. It will prevent a character from dying for those four hours and will remove 15 RAD pts. This can only be done once per exposure.

Blood and Bone Replacement

If you can get to a well stocked medical facility they can remove 30 Rad points. This takes 4 days in intensive care (it costs 150c).

Anti-bacterials

Sterilization sprays can be used to "sterilize" an area. A spray will reduce the Contagion Strength (the amount by which a CON roll must be made or contract the disease) by 5pts. If it drops below 0, the contamination is destroyed.

Sample Hazards

Here are some examples of the hazards you might run into in the ruins (or, really, almost anywhere else if you're not careful).

Morrow Industries Cryo-Labs Viral Zone

Inside the Great Ruins are reports of a "freeze tank" full of people from the end of the Information Age. Survivors have reported that if one could penetrate the robotic defenses, the deadly automated guns, and the other hazards of the ruins, one would find a bolt hole with armed vehicles, weapons, and other wonders ... and then there are the people. There's another hazard there: a persistent viral warfare agent.

Infection Strength: Spores (inhaled/airborne).

Strength 7. Being in the same room with an infected person will be a 4 Strength hazard.

Chronicality: Roll each 10 minutes.

Lethality: 17 Power.

Gamma Terra Crater

Sometime late during the Age of War dirty "cobalt" micro-nukes were used out in the Mojave desert. The craters remain—but filled with water, have become a dangerous oasis. This has resulted in an incredibly high rate of mutation in the area and (oddly) some of the strangest and most fantastic mutations ever recorded.

Cat 3: 100 yard radius. Drinking from the water, Cat 4.

Octane Industrial Plant Chem-Zone

Up north in the wilderness is a massive, ancient, refinery. It was probably toxic at the end of the Information age. It has become worse. The ground is impregnated with heavy metals, the processes that were left running and have been dumped beneath its foundations have left it a hazard to any who come.

Skin-Absorbed Toxin

Strength: 14 Power

On-Set: 6 hours

Concentration: 4pts per hour.

Antibiotics

Simple antibiotics give +1 to +3 to CON rolls against disease. This applies both vs. catching it and fighting it. They must be taken regularly.

Smart Antibiotics

Special new antibiotics designed by fabrication plants are much better. These will give +1 to +5 to CON rolls against disease. They also prevent spread: the Contagion Strength of a disease a character has falls off by 3pts for purposes of spreading it.

Counter-Bio

Medical technology allows for the creation of viruses that only attack bacterial agents—or work against the viral process itself (in this case a synthetic immune system is pumped in). Both of these require a medical facility (120c for a 3 day treatment, usually). This will stabilize the subject and then give three CON rolls at +3, +5, and +8.

General Anti-Toxin

The general Anti-toxin is a chemical that will keep the body functioning until the toxin is cleaned out—it's unpleasant and can even be fatal if taken when not in danger. It gives a +2 to CON rolls against Lethality.

Anti-Venom

A chemical designed specifically to counteract a given toxin family (usually "industrial waste zones" or "chemical weapon zones"). It gives +4 against toxins if used before a roll is made.

Smart-Anti-Toxins

Pills that can be taken before entering a toxin zone—they are tailored viral agents that set up short lived toxin repair systems. They make you feel sick—but you will gain 4pts of armor vs. toxins for 12 hours.

Filter Masks

Filter Masks are a good idea against both chemical and biological airborne agents. Filter masks reduce Infection Strength by 2. Heavy Filter masks reduce it by 4. They reduce Concentration by 4pts.

NBC-Suit

A bio-suit will reduce Rad-Level by 4, screen out all chemical and bio-toxins, and otherwise protect the wearer. Most cannot be worn effectively in full protective mode for more than 6 hrs.

Scalar Weaponry (tectonic nukes)

Nuclear weapons were *not* the scariest things humanity had its arsenal. That honor probably goes to some of the more vicious biological and psychological weapons.

Surprisingly, they weren't the most destructive either. The *Haves* gifted mankind with *scalar weapons* (that's what those big "anti-alien" towers probably are).

Electrogravitation

Scalar weapons are poorly understood, but they appear to articulate (control) naturally occurring gravitational waves (the "gravitational field" of objects such as the earth, the sun, etc.)

Normally, gravitational waves ripple though the universe constantly, unnoticed by mankind. When controlled for specific effect, they can be focused to cause electromagnetic "events" in target locations.

To be clear—there is no "beam." Scalar weapon effects do not travel through space from the source to the destination; rather, naturally occurring gravitational patterns are "adjusted" from control towers so that waves meet and "cancel" in unexpected ways.

The effect can be similar to a nuclear weapon detonating—a spontaneous, immensely powerful explosion at the target point with no warning and way to defend (scalar control towers could cancel an oncoming wave, but no conventional mechanism would work, and scalar waves travel at the speed of light giving very little time to respond).

Bury Them

The explosive effects of scalar attacks are the most dramatic, but they are difficult to control and can result in chain reactions. The men in charge of the scalar weapons systems were understandably in fear of accidentally destroying the planet. Instead of simply vaporizing their targets, they used a more exotic electromagnetic effect—the ability to scalar weapons to change the energy level of surface atoms in loosely bonded substances. In English, this means that the ground in an area roughly a mile in radius turns to "soup" for several minutes and structures heavier than water sink up to a mile depth. These effects were both more reliable and more terrifying. Many of those facing scalar weapons systems found themselves suddenly and irrevocably buried alive.

Rules in the Ruins

You want a random ruins encounter table to see what shows up on that 1-in-a-hundred encounter? Here ya go. Roll twice to specify a grid-square on the threat-level table. Designations are made relative to a small group (5-7) armed characters.

Threat Level Table

Roll	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
0-5	Ultra Deadly	Deadly	Deadly	Ultra Deadly
6-10	Weak	Average	Average	Weak
11-15	Weak	Average	Average	Weak
16-20	Ultra Deadly	Deadly	Deadly	Ultra Deadly

Threat Determination

Ultra Deadly

Roll	Threat
0-5	Indexer
6-10	N-Mass (100 Mass)
11-15	12 Radiation Princesses
16-20	Mech-Abomination

Very Deadly

Roll	Threat	Alternate Threats
0-5	Sand Demon	Messengers of Namtar
6-10	Terror Bot	Executive System Capital Unit
11-15	Radiation Princess	Exile Cyborg (Advanced Cybernetic Infection)
16-20	C-Rex	Radiation Princess

Deadly

Roll	Threat	Alternate threats
0-5	Sand dragon (old, big)	Assassin bot
6-10	Snake creatures (Children of Aphosis)	Nest of apocalypse roaches
11-15	Executive System patrol	Mass grave of plague zombies
16-20	Highly dangerous exile	Serket (Huge Scorpion)

Average

Roll	Threat	Alternate threats
0-5	Lone, psychotic (Exile)	Singleton machine (exSystem)
6-10	Vector Wolves (and plague zombies) (5x 4d-4 zombies, 2d wolves)	Bandits or well-armed scavengers
11-15	Plague Zombies (5 x 4d-4)	Small, young sand dragon
16-20	Sand Trolls (5 x 4d-4)	Vastum Lubrica (1d6)

Weak

Roll	Threat	Alternate threat
0-5	Giant spiders	Vastum Lubrica (1)
6-10	Plague zombies (2 x 4d-4)	Harpies (2-6)
11-15	Scavenger party (hostile)	Stalking Adad
16-20	Giant scorpions	Gladiator Roaches

Things of Great Interest

Things Found In the Ruins

1. Radar-Coffee Mug: ceramic drinking mug that uses some sort of radiant energy to heat fluid. Gives 1 Rad point per cup.
2. Glossy paper center-staple bound all pages blank. Faint flickering images appear with lettering saying "Cosmos Magazine for Females. 51st way to leave your lover discovered pg-link 292"
3. Forever Bar--once colorful, now faded, still-wrapped chocolate bar in un-openable half-millimeter thick neonium foil wrapper.
4. Wedding ring with synthetic diamond. Emits tracking signal and contains tiny microphone with holographic crystalline storage.
5. Cute Stuffed Tiger with power-socket. When recharged, repeats "*Don't be afraid of the explosions, Susan*" over and over in broken voice.
6. Un-erasable marker. Really. If you write on yourself you need genetic tattoo removal. On a surface the marks will re-appear and even move around to unbroken surfaces ... or bleed through up to 3" of covering material. Day-glo colors (on a 1-2) or black (3-6).

was left after all of that has been being scavenged and looted for at least a hundred years.

Finding things of great interest means digging, getting lucky, or going places people haven't really (or successfully) been.

Scavenging v. Treasure Hunting

To the casual observer these activities appear about the same. Both involve setting out into dangerous terrain with a decent chance of getting killed and poor chance of finding something worth going for.

The difference is the preparation. Scavengers search at random, digging and sifting through rubble hoping to find broken fragments and remains they can sell for little better than scrap. Like miners panning for gold, they hope to get rich but few ever will.

Scavenging is more of a way of life than a profession. It's a nasty, dirty, opportunistic endeavor. It requires mindless persistence, obstinacy, and a willingness to screw you

With all those dangerous things running around the ruins, why would anyone go there? The obvious answer is salvage (also called swag, loot, and, generically, *treasure*). In case you got the feeling the streets are filled with gold coins, though, forget about it.

The cities were blown up, burnt down, washed out, and caved in. They've been through all-out thermonuclear war. That got rid a lot of what you'd consider valuable. They were also abandoned and the people leaving took a lot of the best stuff (especially things like weapons) with them. Finally, what

Things Found In the Ruins

7. Bottle of pills that make you talk in a "funny voice" for 25 minutes. A really funny voice. Under normal conditions most people require a WIL roll not to laugh at it.
8. Bottle of pills that make you change skin color (in blues, greens, maroons, etc.) Lasts 10 days.
9. Breath Spray that makes you breathe purple minty-fresh gas for the next two hours. It was stylish 300 years ago. Go figure.
10. Chargo-Matic Credit Card. Looks like a standard plastic key-card of some sort but in an area with broadcast power it goes into hard-sell mode for all kinds of products that no longer exists, often insulting the holder loudly to try to force a sale.
11. Desk Cube Toy. Rotate the colors so they all match on each side. Colors appear painted on but are actually electronically rendered--and change on sides facing away from the holder. Frustrating and unsolvable.Laughs snidely when put down.
12. Hover Chair. Wicked looking black office hover-chair. Needs power-cells. So ergonomic it's uncomfortable.
13. Data Tablet. Broken, requires repair (25c). Contains cookbook for "Extinct species resurrected through genetic manipulation." The Raptor surprise is decent. The Blue-Whale Burger is a little fatty.
14. Data Tablet. Broken, requires repair (25c). Contains photos of Beautiful 'Hollywood celebrities' and a dating game where you can pair them up and watch them fight. Graphic and vulgar!
15. Data Tablet. Broken, requires repair (25c). Contains to-do list which includes "Ritual Suicide" followed by "Shopping in the Ulti-mall" and "Maybe take in a street performance." All are checked "completed."
16. Ancient hardcopy pamphlet (plastic, not paper): The Aliens Amongst Us. Contains ways to identify those compromised. Lists Funny walk that cannot be described but 'you'll know it when you see it.' Deadly serious.

partner over to get ahead. Successful scavengers share personality traits with rodents.

Scavenging Table

Your chance of finding something worth scavenging depends on where you're looking. The more beat up the place, the lower your *risk*, but the lower your gain, also.

The chart below shows the *percent chance* of *finding* something. The GM should roll (secretly) when the scavengers enter an area to find the chance of a score. For each hour spend scavenging, roll against the score chance.

Terrain	Description
Obliterated	Rolling fields of rubble. Few, if any recognizable structures. Concrete rock garden.
Mostly Gone	A few walls, here and there. Sidewalks and roads visible. Underground structures available
Still Standing	Built up areas (buildings you could take shelter from a storm in)

Score Chance

	Obliterated	Mostly Gone	Still Standing
0-5	Nothing to find	1% (2-); -4 to value roll	5% (4-); -4 to value roll
6-10	1% (2-); -4 to value roll	5% (4-); -4 to value roll	10% (5-); -2 to value roll
11-15	5% (4-); -4 to value roll	10% (5-); -2 to value roll	25% (7-); no negative to value roll
16-20	10% (5-); -2 to value roll	25% (7-); no negative to value roll	33% (8-); no negative to value roll

Score Value

0-2	Highly unstable, unexploded ordinance
2-5	High Radiation pocket / plague pocket / unexploded round
6-10	Unexploded round
11-14	Worthless junk (.10c to .50c)
15-16	Worthless but cool (.50c to 1c)
17-19	Good stuff (1c to 10c)
20	Loot!

Treasure Hunting

Treasure hunting is what people who are too well off to be called scavengers do. The difference between scavenging and treasure hunting comes in knowing what you're looking for and knowing where to look. Scavengers go out every morning and spend all day crawling through the rubble, looking for something that might be worth taking.

Things Found In the Ruins

- 34.** Broken bright colored "Go-Ped" (80c to repair). Cheap plastic sit and ride (max speed 20mph, you don't actually pedal). Has credit slot for rentals.
- 35.** Broken Tast-E-Scanner (15c to repair). Hooks up to tongue. Scans object, relays taste to mouth.
- 36.** Dance Sub-derm: Your close to the surface veins glow like cylum light-sticks for 4 hours. Bizarre looking. Many colors available.
- 37.** Broken Data-cube (1" deep green 'glass' square. Contains may exo-bytes of holographic data).
- 38.** Whole data-cube. No reader (useless).
- 39.** Whole data-cube with fractal directory map. Contains all the works of Bill Shakespeare-prime, a talent less hack who was apparently the clone of some dude who could write. Documents drip with self loathing.
- 40.** Whole data-cube. Astrological maps. Cartographer's comments get nastier and nastier as he fails to find "intelligent life who will get me away from these idiots ... or at least blow up the planet."
- 41.** Broken DataTablet. Contains all the video for a story-show called "Turnip and Grick" about two cops and the weird super villains they battle. Highly entertaining--but annoyingly keeps saying it's targeted for 8-year olds.
- 42.** Broken cell-com which rings at random intervals with a different tune each time. No message or connect.
- 43.** Silver lighting sphere (broken, 10c to repair). Has a ultra-light hover unit and will follow a "master" around, providing reading light.
- 44.** Broken Pocket Cam (professional quality, 25c to repair). Shows kid. Shows girlfriend. Shows nice apartment. Last shot is a huge mushroom cloud outside window of nice apartment.
- 45.** Holo-Phone: small platform where a holographic image of the caller will stand. Last image is a hand with the middle finger extended.
- 46.** Broken DataTablet (8c to repair). Lists a variety of no longer existent bars and clubs and pick-up lines that failed to work in each one. Towards the end of the data "Hey baby, If I was the last guy on earth and it was the end of the world would you do me?" still isn't working. NOTE: "WHAT IS WRONG WITH THESE GIRLS!?"

Treasure hunters spend their time looking for *leads*. They study old maps. They buy rumors. They search through newswire reports. They read, listen to, and remember everything they can about the past so that they can figure out where something might have wound up in the present.

And when they have a good lead, they move with a purpose—they hire security. They rent vehicles. They understand what they're likely to face and they're prepared for contingencies. They go in, spend as little time as possible on the "objective" and get out before the threat shows up.

It's still gambling—and the odds are still bad—but it's the difference between playing the slots and betting on a chess match. Luck is still the predominant factor and plenty of "treasure hunters" go bust, but a little skill, a little wisdom, and a lot of common sense and patience can tilt the odds noticeably in your favor.

There aren't random treasure find tables. Treasure hunting is an art you practice every morning, waiting and listening in the café for a lead. It's something you practice at night, reading through old records on the news-net archives.

The Great Ruins

All ruins have stories. Most people grew up within view of a ghost town or a crater. Everyone knows a story or two about the kids who decided to cut through the old refinery on the way home and were never heard from again. Everyone knows someone with a wild story about the kinds of things you might find out there.

But the *great ruins* are the *real* ruins. When you say "Ruins" they're what everyone imagines. There are two Great Ruins – the L.A. Stretch and Bay Area.

The L.A. Stretch: Los Angeles to Tijuana

The Los Angeles Ruins are the first of the Great Ruins and the most accessible (they're *in* the Middle Ring) and perhaps the most impressive. They include the greater Los Angeles area itself, but stretch north along the Pacific Shelf to Santa Barbara and south through San Diego to Tijuana. These points all lie within what is properly called the Middle Ring.

Ruins > L.A. > General History

During the Age of Wonders, this region's 26+ million people were served by no less than four massive distribution points—two in L.A., itself, a third in San Diego and a fourth east, in San Bernardino. The megalopolis of Los Angeles encompassed a huge range of cultural and civil zones and some of the most desirable real estate in North America.

It was also well prepared in many ways for the abrupt hyper-militarization that occurred at the end of the Age of Wonders: San

Things Found In the Ruins

47. Plastic tool that looks a little like a fire-place lighter. No known function.

48. Maintenance tool (looks a little like a metal detector). Repairs "micro-cracks" in any surface. 15c to repair.

49. UBI-Net Radio: runs on micro-volts of Tesla power. there are still a few sub-ether robot-stations playing in the grand ruins. The music is an infinite, fractally generated non-repeating hauntingly sweeping anthem.

50. Data-Cube. Collected works of Philip K. Dick-prime. A computer simulation of someone from the past who could write. Stories are clever and paranoid. Author's note: "I always knew something like this would happen."

51. Holo-Crystal: 1 meter tall purple-pink crystal. Materializes a ghostly image of an "assistant girl" who will help you figure out where to Fluxulate your Krenos-Center or Ditalgate your Neuro-chatter. Cheerful if a little ditzy. Keeps calling you Shirley.

52. Roll of Nu-Dollars. Multi-colored money with seals and cryptograms on them. Adorned with happy slogans.

53. Theater Token, executive seating. Play is Chess 2: Deepest Blue vs. Chessmaster V5.5

54. Burnt fragment of a store mannequin. Tons of micro-circuitry visible inside (no longer functional)

55. Digital Watch-Com. Contains several messages from annoyed people who feel "stood up" by "Chad" and say things like "You weren't caught in that blast radius were you!? That's *really* unacceptable!"

56. Crypt-Cracker: sealed cookie. When you eat it (stale but still sealed in vacuum packed foil) you suddenly know a 256 character key code. You'll never forget it. What's it to? You must eat the whole thing.

57. Mag-Tape (size of VHS tape, molecular storage media). Word and image salad (if you can even find a reader).

58. Inflatable "air toy." Like a pool-toy inner tube but, in an area with working tesla power, the wearer will float about a yard off the ground and bob pleasantly.

59. Tram-Sig: black handheld unit that calls for a vehicle pickup (the vehicles no longer exist). Believed by many to summon aggressive robots that key in on the signal.

Diego was a historical naval port and the site of several symbolic but effective civil-defense projects (public works projects created to address the widespread public delusion that humankind faced unspecified threats from space aliens). Los Angeles civil authorities invented the Executive System (a robotic army that was copied widely) and relied heavily on robotic sentries and mechanized police forces long before War broke out. Finally, much of the region has a long-standing culture of rebellion and defiance (not quite as bad as the Bay Area), and there were numerous paramilitary ideological groups and spiritual or religious movements whose doctrine included being well armed.

This pre-arming and the capability to make war actually kept the region stable in the early phases of the collapse of civilization. Large parts of the city and the surrounding area burned as the population panicked and suffered tremendous chemical withdrawal, but the most important parts of the civilian infrastructure were spared and the city balkanized into regions of autonomous control under martial law.

It was not until the domes within the city began to fail (20 years and 60 years after the initial darkness) that Los Angeles faced the full effect of all-out war. By this time successive, massive ecological catastrophes had taken their toll on the city anyway and civilization had regressed into warlords ruling over violent tribes.

The final wars were incredibly destructive and involved numerous light nuclear weapons as well as more exotic tools. The result rendered the city and the entire metropolitan region as they are now: toxic, deadly, and unlivable.

Ruins > L.A. > The Legends

This is just a sample of the stories that are told about the LA ruins. These aren't necessarily the stories "everybody knows" and they're certainly not the absolute truth. They're just samples of things you might have heard, growing up in the Middle Ring.

Ruins > L.A. > The Apocalypse Convention

One of the greatest legends and myths surrounding Los Angeles does not concern what might be there, but rather what might have happened there during the very end. As the world fell apart, it is said that men of unknown origin and purpose came to Los Angeles to meet in its convention center and discuss the end of everything. There are records of the center being used (and very heavily guarded) and beyond that, in the official record, there is nothing.

Beyond the official record, there is, of course, speculation.

What is known is that while the Haves lost all interest in ordinary humankind, they still respected their own past. They enjoyed the icons and histories they had left behind and the culture they had long ago shed. It amused them, maybe. Los Angeles was one of the centers of that culture. It is said that the *Haves* visited LA to pay their respects.

Things Found In the Ruins

60. Worn fire-proof jacket (stylish).

Absorbs radiant energy at an amazing rate. Gives Coverage 4, 30 Armor vs. fire.

61. Key card. Non-Functional. Says "Account Closed" in red letters on the front.

62. Key card. Semi-Functional. Contains a locker number at [Fairview Station]. Likely the station nor the locker exist any longer.

63. Spray on clothes: a can that sprays a "mimetic polymer" that takes the form of a black, liquid outfit (one piece but looks like a body suit and a trench-coat). Takes 40 seconds to apply and is destroyed when taken off. User must be virtually naked and of no more than 11 BLD (humanoid form only).

64. ID Party bracelet. Broadcasts "facts" about wearer that can be picked up by a properly tuned nearby data tablet. You like rainstorms, synthi-kittens (cute!), and partners who don't take life too seriously. You think the current "delay in supply" is a 'bummer' and plan to vacation to 'Lanka if you can find someone who'll take you.

65. Broken Data-Specs. 15c to repair. Keep saying "UBI Net Not Found: This shouldn't be happening."

66. Package of freeze dried round white pellets. Foil wrapper shows weird writing and a brightly colored fish. If put in water the eggs will hatch creating 9 brilliantly colored freshwater fish. The fish are sluggish and friendly. They're tasty and hallucinogenic too--but the squirm a bit going down.

67. Black box with play, record, rewind, and fast forward buttons. It's telepathic and records one's "inner monologue." Playback is interesting: "Look at me, babe--not the explosions--I'm *hawt!* I'm--ooh. Explosions--" and then it abruptly cuts off.

68. Broken electronic Survivalist handbook (15c to repair). Mainly concerned with where to buy stylish 'survival gear' after the "Shopping Net" goes down. Makes no mention of food, water, or medicine.

69. Satchel containing 15 Nu-Chocolate candy bars that makes you *happy*

70. Postage-stamp sized plastic pack. A 50 molecule thin translucent hyper-plastic hydrophobic raincoat snaps out of it. Fits up to 13 BLD. Decays after 2 days.

If this is true then it is just possible that some element of their being—some clue as to what happened and why, may have been left there. If it is true that Haves walked amongst the palm trees and under the neon lights of the City of Angels, then they might have come one last time to say goodbye.

The truth is unknown, but the legend has a certain appeal and there are those who believe it. The Congregation believes it. The University believes it. Members of the Hierarchy believe it. And they believe that somewhere within the ruins of LA lies a key to what might have happened.

These groups don't talk much (openly) about their beliefs in this regard. Everyone knows there are perfectly ordinary reasons to be interested in Los Angeles—for the treasure that lies buried under its shattered surface, if nothing else. But treasure alone would not explain their *interest* in what is learned there. This legend and some of its children (that one *Have* remained, that in that convention center, they never left through the *doors*, but rather through a *hole* or *vortex* that remains open, that one of their number made a phone call from that meeting to a *payphone* in the Bone Yard, and then there are more rumors and legends about who might have *answered it...*)

But it is this legend that gives Los Angeles its greatest mystery and its greatest meaning.

Ruins > L.A. > The Great Machine Hives

One thing L.A. will never be forgiven for is the creation of the Executive System. An wicked idea in the Age of Information, the System matured to become a genocidal atrocity on an unparalleled scale in the Age of War.

The Executive system was envisioned as an effective way for municipal authorities to maintain control of dense urban areas. While robotic troop systems had been in use for years, the Executive System was the first one designed for law enforcement in a civilian environment.

To be fair, the "civilian" environment of Southern and Easter L.A. was more like zone than the antiseptic "video game" battlefields of the late Age of Information, but robotic troops that *could* be used inevitably were.

During the Age of Wonders, the System was less necessary (psychoactive drugs and sophisticated social and cultural controls kept the population mostly in line) but the militia/terrorist/one-crazy-guy-with-a-laser-gun threat kept its existence justified and it's owners desire for power ensured that the System, rather than being phased out was upgraded with the gifts of the New Age.

Ruins > L.A. > The Great Machine Hives > Self Aware and Self Sustaining

Initially the System 'components' (robots) rolled out of traditional, if automated factories. Their masters—the mayors, corporate

Things Found In the Ruins

- 71.** Broken Desk-Com set (8cr to repair). Contains auto-secretary that will make poor excuses for the owner not being there, implying some kind of affair. Technical computer analysis will indicate that the phone *HATES* being owned.
- 72.** Broken Desk-Com set (3cr to repair). Final message: "Share a document!? Share a DOCUMENT!? The world's about to blow up and you ... oh ... hell, why not, it's all I enjoy any more anyway. Pick a good one."
- 73.** Story Disk: Contains a story about a man who is pushed off a bridge by his guardian angel.
- 74.** Story Disk: Contains a story wherein young student types are stalked by a mad robot. Acting is terrible. No one seems interested, even during violent battle scenes. Claims to be a documentary.
- 75.** Story Disk: Contains a story about a woman who gets lost in some kind of self-reconfiguring shopping structure. She clearly can't get out and can't get home--but other than mentioning it, doesn't seem to mind.
- 76.** Story Disk Set: On going story about a man's quest to be on some sort of "game show." He finally succeeds but the show is pure psychedelia and no one knows if he 'wins' or not.
- 77.** Story Disk: Disturbing black screen with a little static. Viewers make WIL rolls at -4 or have nightmares.
- 78.** Story Disk: Advertisement clips. Psychologically addictive (subliminal images, psy-war options, etc.). WIL roll at +2 or view again and again until stopped. Lust after products that no longer exist.
- 79.** Smart Hair-Gel (engineered bio-slime in a tube). It picks the hair it thinks you should have. Often wild--but if you treat it nicely (compliment yourself in mirror/stroke hair) it'll change for +1 to Entrance rolls. Piss it off and you look like the statue of liberty on a *bad* day.
- 80.** Tagger: configurable paint gun. Lets you spray 5x5 graffiti images in less than a second. Computer screen to generate your own art. Comes with 4-color mixer paints. Cartridges may be found too.
- 81.** Security remote control for "E-Bridge." Some places in the city will extend a force field bridge to reach restricted areas. Fortunately someone set it for "un-coded biometrics"

executives, and police chiefs—recognized the inherent vulnerability of their system: raw materials and high-precision machined parts required a supply chain that could be manipulated or even shut down.

The *Hives* were the solution: the robots would be capable of reproducing themselves; each System unit would have, in its programming, plans for a “Hive” – a complex “society” of machines that could scavenge for raw materials, develop construction and repair facilities, and finally full production systems.

The System was re-envisioned and re-designed as a self-sustaining organism.

Ruins > L.A. > The Cult of Perfection

One of the defining social ideas of the Age of Wonders was the concept of physical perfection. If mental perfection was out of reach for the vast majority of Mankind, then at least technology could give you a perfect body. But what is a perfect body?

Strong. Fast. Resilient. That seems obvious. But is a body made of chrome and stainless steel still a body? At what point does improvement cross the line and become cheating? And the most defining characteristic of all is the most elusive – for if a body is to be perfect, it must be beautiful. And what is beauty?

Ruins > L.A. > The Cult of Perfection > Klas and Nibas Retrovirus

One side of the debate – the “biological purists” defined humanity in the language of DNA. Metal and glass fiber might be strong and fast, but it was not *human*. And beauty – the concept itself – was defined as *perfect health*. The Purists defined *the code* – a canonical DNA sequence that made a man or woman of perfect height, perfect health. They stripped away everything that wasn't key and *re-designed it*. That code could be injected through use of a viral vector that would reprogram the target's body at a cellular level, rewriting the code to build a new body one organ at a time.

The process was traumatic and nearly always incomplete or fatal. The changes were extreme, and when the process failed, the results were terrifying. The Purists were not “genetic supremacists” – *they* didn't let their creation out of the lab and unleash it on an unready and unsuspecting world. Someone else did that.

Now they're out there – two retro viruses that dramatically effect living creatures. They haunt deserted places, laying dormant until a subject inhales them. They *can* make you stronger, but they might kill you trying.

Ruins > L.A. > The Cult of Perfection > Klas and Nibas Retrovirus > Effects

Both Klas and Nibas have three phases. The first is the *latency* phase, during which the subject is contagious. The chance of spreading the virus varies with potency of the strain – those who come in contact with an infected person must make a CON roll to avoid catching it.

Things Found In the Ruins

- 82.** Ear rings that cast holographic rainbows around the wearer. Generate 1 RADpt per hour they're turned on.
- 83.** Party Teeth (designer). Mouth piece that's a bit like dentures. Each tooth is a tiny television. Tongue studs let them “sing” or talk. Unit fits over normal teeth.
- 84.** Beautiful glass ball with colored glass rods sticking out of it. It's a puzzle (RES-4 to solve, roll once per hour, a Math roll at -2 will solve as well). When finished, pops like a soap bubble and releases mild hallucinogen.
- 85.** Dazzling bracelet. Spreads a day-glow tattoo virus from where worn (geometric shapes). fades in two days. One charge left.
- 86.** Data-Glove Control: Broken. It's cool though—you wonder why it never really caught on.
- 87.** 'Where's the Party? Wand' hand unit with arrow that will “find” the nearest party (some signal that no longer exists). Beeps mournfully. 'NO PARTY--NO PARTY--NO PARTY'
- 88.** Colors. Necklace that electronically identifies the wearer as a member of the Trevanians (whatever they were). Glows faintly. growls at rival-color bands. Traceable by telecom units.
- 89.** Virtual Pet container: A red-and white striped ball that, when activated, displays a hologram of a pastel-colored rodent. The image babbles in an gleeful but incomprehensible language for 5 minutes and then disappears.
- 90.** Portable Emergency Monorail Anchor. Handheld device with STOP switch. Disclaimer says “*For Psychological comfort only. Will not stop Monorail.*”
- 91.** Party Webber Jewelry Bracelet. Fires brightly colored “putty string” out to fifty feet. Very weak but impressive looking. Once it dries on something it becomes fiercely adhesive. 30 shots.
- 92.** Data Tablet (broken, 14c to repair): program for “Finding your perfect mate.” Asks lots of personal questions. Returns “perfect mate profile” says factory order is submitted.
- 93.** Bottle of tablets. When eaten, user will smell *strongly* like a fresh food (often a desert) of some sort for 4 hours. Absolutely *delicious*.
- 94.** Self Piercing Stud jewelry. Makes noise like a wind-chime.

1d days after contracting the virus, the virus becomes *active* and begins to re-write the subject's physiology. At this point things become tricky. Both Klas and Nibas interact with the central nervous system as well as the immune system; the subject has a fair amount of *control* over the progression of the virus. Here's how it works:

For each 24 hour period that the character is ill, the he may *bet* either CON (for Klas), WIL (if he has Nibas) or unspent archetype points (if he has any). These points are *bet* on a hand of standard blackjack (the rules, if you're not familiar, are posted at <http://www.blackjackinfo.com/bjrules.htm>). The "house" (the virus) pays off in stat points or archetype points, an the winner's discretion. The character's CON or WIL may *not* go above normal levels – in other words, if the character has lost CON or WIL points on previous hands, he may win them back; once CON and WIL are at normal starting levels, the character can only win Archetype Points.

The character *must* play one hand per day of latency – if the initial roll was a three, the character was *latent* and infectious for three days, followed by three days of nearly incapacitating misery (while the virus is active, the character behaves as though *injured*).

The character may continue to bet after the minimum number of hands, and may stop after any hand after the minimum number.

At the end of the "game" the virus becomes *potent* and the character must make one PWR v. STAT roll for each hand played

Minor	Character suffers a single point of damage
Standard	Character suffers a minor wound
Major	Character suffers a minor wound + 1 point
Critical	Character suffers a major wound
Catastrophic	Character suffers a major wound and this roll does not count

The rolls are made against the character's modified statistic. If the character survives, he will heal normally and will recover lost statistic points at a rate of 1 per day during which he rests.

During the recuperation period, the modifications wrought to the character's body become apparent; the character may use any Archetype Points earned to buy cybernetics; generally characters who have contracted Klas purchase cybernetic-skeleton-based abilities, while Nibas tends to build a cybernetic nervous system.

Note that these "cybernetic" modifications are *not* metallic in nature; they are wholly organic – simply very advanced and efficient. Once a character has caught Klas or Nibas, he is *immune* and cannot catch it again. You get one shot at the big time, and that's it.

Things Found In the Ruins

95. Tungsten-Neonium attaché case.

Almost indestructible with 5-digit numeric crypto-lock (un-crackable). 5-digit numeric code. The code to unlock it is "12345", and inside are cans of fresh air with inhalant tops.

96. Command Chit-Reader (broken, 12c to repair). Scans a "chit" (see below) and tells the holder what it's for. These were apparently handed out by social service agencies on some kind of basis.

97. New Life Chit. A red plastic chit (plastic token smaller than credit card): gets the user on a bus to a new location where they will begin a new life with a new name and new memories. Contains happy send-off notes from the persons' former fake parents.

98. You're A TV Show Chit. access and directives to set the user up so his life is a new broadcast TV show. Contains order directives for demographic monitoring and 'GREEK CHORUS' community feedback to be delivered 'ironically' after mistakes are made.

99. You're an All Star Chit. Contains directives to go to a 'sports clinic' and get hooked up with athletic cybernetics grid. Then your new body will play for a sports team designed to make you feel/look good. Directs AI's to generate fake 'fan feedback.'

100. Date From Hell Chit. Chit arranges dinner, a show, and a gorgeous date (from some agency). The directives ensure that everything that can go wrong will and that your date is directed to insult you viciously at the end of the night (personal facts provided). Guarantees 'Satisfaction' with the abysmalness of the experience.

101. Life of the Party Chit. Arranges volunteers to show up and have a party where you're the center of attraction. Provides copious amounts of drugs and personality coaching prior to the event. Holographic teleprompter will beam jokes and conversation to the holder. Creator's Comment "he's hopeless!"

102. They're Watching You Chit. Arranges amateur observers to stalk the principal, tail them, look through windows with telescopes, etc. Instructs the persons fulfilling the paranoid fantasy to wear dark clothing and dark vid-shades--but move a lot and adopt a 'funny walk' to stand out enough to be seen.

Ruins > L.A. > The Cult of Perfection > The Perfect Zombies

Everyone knows the ruins are full of zombies. Radiation zombies. Plague zombies. Robotic zombies. In the quiet rubble, the dead walk. And while *all* zombies suck, perhaps the Perfect Zombies suck most of all. During the Age of Wonders, those who sought perfection and beauty in all its forms weren't satisfied with changing their bodies. They wanted *new* ones – every day. And so they built the *Container People*. Container people are beautiful bodies; the forms of Greek Gods, with fully developed central nervous systems, and lower-order brain functions (to keep the plumbing pumping), but no brains.

Container People were grown in tubes and shipped throughout Los Angeles and the surrounding area. With a Container Person and a do-it-yourself brain transplant kit, you could put yourself into a perfect body. And people did.

There were drawbacks; people whispered that the Container People suffered degenerative psychosis – that they were, over time, corrupted until they were incurably insane and irredeemably cruel and evil. It might be true. Or it might be that those elements were long within them, and the realization of their dreams of perfection gave them the confidence to wear their inner corruption on their sleeves.

Whatever the case, the Zombies were manufactured by the thousands and great indoor nurseries were developed to grow never-ending crops of Container People. It was only after perhaps a million Perfect Zombies had been stockpiled that they discovered that, in fact, they did have a rudimentary intelligence. Brainless, but with an instinctive understanding of their perfection, they are capable of destruction. Every ten years or so (the Zombies sleep and do not age or expire from lack of food or water), a Zombie has a chance of "awakening." It recognizes itself and it realizes that it is surrounded by the ugly and the weak.

Awakened Zombies can awake the sleepers, and when one rises often hundreds do. Then they hunt. They torment and kill those they catch—the ugly are eaten. The average are simply slain, and the beautiful are disfigured.

Ruins > L.A. > The Vortices

That the *Haves* could weave the fabric of space is a great mystery but not a legend. It has been confirmed. Their reasons for doing this are less clear. The simple explanations (instant travel between previously distant points) don't quite hold: perhaps they *could* have used the vortexes for that, but it seems they chose not.

Instead, they created networks or *lattices* of openings throughout the world. These vortexes existed in three dimensional space and they can be entered, but they do not appear to be (primarily, at least) doors or gateways.

There are theories. One is that they are a *side effect* of some great project of the Haves. That the vortexes do not exist for their own

Things Found in the Ruins

103. Broken Robot Escort (120c to repair). Male or female model. Mostly destroyed. If powered on, stubbornly refuses to do 'anything else' until some Nu-Dollars are deposited in its no-longer-existent bank account.

104. Broken Waitron Robot.(30c to repair). Moving tray with optical sensor and long legs. Snide personality.

105. Broken Rickshaw Robot (150c to repair). Offers tours of the Virtual Star-Corridor where you can see and interact with simulacrum of famous people, most of whom will mistreat you.

106. Broken Scour Bot (20c to repair). Sphere with two hands and garbage sack. Would hover along the ground picking up dropped stuff (magneto-vacuum attachment as well). When examined wakes up, looks around (presumably at the ruins) and goes into 'cyclic shock' at how much work there is to do.

107. Broken Matchmaker Robot (35c to repair). Floating black brick with Video Screen. Attaches itself to one character and sets about finding him or her a mate. Makes up facts or preferences (doesn't quite know what's happened to the world). Annoying, insulting, and persistent. Hard to get rid of unless deactivated.

108. Broken Drug Dealer Robot (70c to repair). Floating tetrahedron with View Screen. No longer has merchandise but is "getting some real soon." Cheerfully offers dazzling array of aphrodisiacs, beauty enhancers ('you need it, sister!'), performance enhancers, narcotics, anti-depressants, hallucinogenic, and placebos.

109. Chem-hygiene-Scrub Suit: two-layer plastic suit, unfolds from a tube. Pumps chem-cleanser against the skin (one size fits up to 18 BLD) and then, after a few seconds, osmosis the fluid (now nasty) to the second layer. Disposable. Works pretty good. Leaves you smelling a bit like vanilla cookies.

110. Broken Brain-Corder Story Disk Player (120c to repair): will play story disks directly into brain (looks like walkman with "headphones" for the temples).

111. Broken Pleasure-Stim Brain-Corder(120c to repair). Promises 'Hawt, Hawt, sexx0r action' infected with virus, of old woman screaming at you in a language you don't understand and beating you with umbrella.

purposes—that they are (in effect) simply another kind of *pollution* unleashed upon the world of men by uncaring haves.

Another theory is that they are anchor points: that the haves built a great fortress that lies outside of time (an eternal, mathematically unreachable castle?) and that each vortex is an intersection point that connects The Castle to reality. In these theories, the vortexes lead, quite literally to *nowhere*—a timeless null space in which nothing can be said to exist, and the glittering castle looms above it all, looking down on an infinitely vast sea of nothing.

A third theory offers this suggestion: the vortexes offer those who find them a glimpse of the possible. They are a gift and a puzzle left behind so that if any human ever finds within his mind the capability to understand even a fraction of the splendor of the Haves, he might be able to follow them. The vortexes, then, are a temporal/spatial koan the answer for which is enlightenment.

All of these are wild speculation (and there are thousands of other theories as well) and all of these (the ones presented here) have a body of evidence and philosophical backing that suggest they might be correct (can they *all* be correct? Is that self-contradictory? Is the self-contradictory possible for the *Haves*?) What is known for certain is this: the Vortices open without warning and they swallow what lies near them. They float about 3' above the ground and they can be as small as a few inches (not big enough to consume a man) or several yards across. They can grow and shrink and move in a small area.

And it is believed that whatever comes through them never returns. It is also said that things come *out* of them—unusual things, sometimes. Sometimes commonplace things. This suggests, common-sensibly, that they *are* gates and what comes out here must have come in elsewhere, but those who have made a life study of the Vortexes suggest this is not likely the truth: certainly it *may* be possible, but in many cases what emerges *never existed* until the moment it came.

And this is known: there may be for Vortexes in the Bone Yard. All are in their own buildings (guarded, patrolled, sealed off. They are a like silent temples) but there may be *hundreds* of them in the Los Angeles ruins.

Why? Of what *importance* is Los Angeles that there was so much construction there?

Items from the vortex (called *gifts*) are valuable to those who study and worship such things. Scavengers who find a vortex often follow it, never wanting to be near when it opens, but waiting to see if it has left gifts behind when it closes.

Ruins > L.A. > The Black Cubes

Another artifact of the Haves are the black cubes. These are perfect squares, most about five inches on a side. Some larger. Their dimensions are curious. Attempts to measure them accurately are impossible: the *length of each edge of the cube appears to be an*

Things Found In the Ruins

120. Broken Arcade Game (25c to repair). Hover-screen with two controls. Player plants flowers with digital cursor. Waters, fertilizes, plucks weeds. Insects and birds come by—but nothing damages the flowers. The weeds don't grow that fast. Eventually the screen is covered with pretty colors and the game ends.

121. Suicide Candy. Presumably made during the early Age of War to bring painless death to innocents who would otherwise be savaged, it's brightly colored and delicious (the markings don't in any way reveal its nature without a History roll at Lvl 3). The candy will never decay—but the toxins have. You get very, very sick—and it's tasty (mildly addictive!) Comes in chocolate and fruit flavors.

122. Freeze Dried Gold Fish. The little things come in plastic packages—covered with a dry fine white powder—but drop 'em in water and they come-to-life swimming happily. One pack holds 3.

123. Plasti-Paper brochures for Off-World Vacations. Colorful packets offering voyages to the Jungles of Venus, the Domes on the Moon, and the Pyramids of Mars. Features exotic dancing women, low gravity escapades, and wonderful sightseeing. There is no mention made of the technology in use to travel in space nor do you recall any history of off-world colonization. The company is Vitrua-Travel. Their "space-port's" mailing address is the sub-basement level of the Macro-Mall-Plex2141.

124. Book. Ancient, leather bound tome. Feels wonderfully solid in one's hands, the pages still, somehow, have a crisp feel. The text-quality is easy on the eyes (unlike some of the data-tablets you've seen). Has a comforting substantial feel to it. Attached inside is a card that says "Happy Original Day To Our Favorite Bibliophile." It's really just a dressed up story-disk deck (disk goes in a secret compartment in the back). The words all say "Blah-blah-blah. I'm-an-old-style-book. Blah-blah-blah."

125. Dovorak Computer Keyboard. It's ... just *better*—or at least when you use it you feel better. Or at least better than everyone else.

irrational number. Their structure is neither molecular nor even atomic—they are monolithic objects that do not decompose: atoms the size of breadboxes, if you will.

They are strange things, these cubes. Like all of the Have artifacts, their purpose is unclear, but one can make observations about them.

The first is that they are physically impossible (as has already been established: their length, width and height makes no sense in our physical world—physicists who have studied them suggest they are far more of an insult to creation than the Vortexes are).

The second is that they are impervious. They do not break nor shatter nor crack. They are infinitely hard and infinitely *sharp*. Under extreme conditions (nuclear detonation, pressure of several tons), they simply vanish. Otherwise, they cannot be harmed. They block radiation of any kind. They reflect and absorb equal amounts making them *black mirrors of reality*.

Finally, they are *fascinating*. To look at one (at first) is to be unimpressed. It is a black cube that reflects (vaguely) the world around it. They look like cheap art objects at best. Paperweights at worst. But the longer one studies a cube, the more *interesting* it gets. The reflections are *suggestive* to humans (watching video of them, for example has no effect). They give people *ideas*. Some have claimed to see the future in the cubes. Others claim that they reveal truth (about one's self, primarily). Still others who have studied them suggest that they create a series of loops and paradoxes in intelligent systems (sentient beings like humans as well as artificial intelligence's) that cause psychotic dementia beginning with hallucinations and delusions about enlightenment.

Their source is unclear—they were given for reasons that have never been documented, to humans outside of *Have* society. Why? For what purpose?

They are some of the rarest and most valuable artifacts available. There are a handful in the Bone Yard. There might be *two* within the Congregation. Another four or so have been found, traded, passed around, and lost.

There were seven given to the Lords and Ladies of Los Angeles centuries before the end of the Age of Wonders. Even in that gilded age, they were artifacts of great power and mystery. Those who owned them feared and cherished them. There were vaults built—two in buildings blown to rubble, but the rest lost to history.

Whether one is seeking mystery or treasure, the Black Cubes are a *compelling* reason to enter the ruins of LA.

Ruins > L.A. > The Pits

There were a *lot* of nuclear weapons used in the Los Angeles area. One megaton ground-bursts were the most common for a variety of reasons. These devices leave a crater 1000 feet in diameter and 200 feet deep. Two hundred years later, these craters are still *hot*—dangerously radioactive.

Things Found In the Ruins

125. Rube's Hypercube Looks like a standard puzzle cube where you rotate the colors so they match on each side. An observant person will notice that there are seven colors to match up. Further examination (by rotating the 'Cube on its axes) will reveal that, despite the fact that the puzzle is a three-dimensional cube, there is a seventh side. If someone actually manages to solve the 'Cube, it records that person's genetic signature and beams the information to an unknown location. Any solved Hypercubes found are usually in their original boxes.

126. A Collection of Seeds. An assortment of mixed seeds of now-extinct fruits and vegetables. Also among the lot are seeds for fruits and vegetables that have never existed (including snozenberries).

127. A Collection of Seeds. An assortment of large seeds. When planted, a seed will grow into a small tree that sprouts avocado-like "fruit." The "fruit" has the consistency, flavor, and nutritional value of meat and can be cooked, grilled, and ground like such. If allowed to get overripe, the fruit will begin to putrefy and stink like rotting meat. Flavors include beef, chicken, pork, venison, lamb, coney, and others. On rare occasion, seeds are found that produce fruit that have an indefinable yet deliciously succulent flavor (designed for cannibals who can't get the real thing).

128. A Towel. A large, fluffy bath towel. It is highly absorbent (several gallons worth) and pleasantly soft. If wrapped around a person, it provides 12/30 Coverage 3 armor. If wrapped around a fist, it will do +1 IMP (+2 if wet). Wrapped around one's head/face, it filters all toxins. Water strained through it will be completely purified (radioactivity will be harmlessly dissipated). Used as a blanket, it will keep someone toasty warm in sub-zero weather and comfortably cool in desert climates. If unraveled or cut into smaller pieces, it becomes completely useless.

They represent or (perhaps more accurately) *are the embodiment* of a great insult against life. Those who have traveled to the ruins and looked upon the craters have described feelings of awe, terror, violation and indescribable rage and sorrow.

In a literal sense, they are just bomb craters. For all of the nuclear weapons that were used, there were plenty of terrifying conventional weapons... and in a sense, the biological weapons—man-made diseases horrific, cruel, and ingeniously sadistic *by design*—are more horrible than "mere" nuclear weapons.

And yet, there is something about those softly glowing holes in the earth that suggests a greater violence. A more awesome tragedy. It is as if they are somehow *spiritual* wounds in world.

Much has been made of this "poets conceit" but even hardened cynics and battle-scarred warriors have reported feeling their hearts moved when they look upon the pits. Perhaps it is this: so many terrible things happened here—so much tragedy—that all of that pain, panic, despair and anguish had to go somewhere. And it "settled"—like an invisible, viscous film, in the nuclear pits.

People who visit the pits have been moved to do strange things. There are offerings. There are small shrines and primitive *cairn* at the edge of the pits. There are markings on the rocks and on the shattered walls—"I was here." There are weapons, discarded. And there are bodies where the visitors chose to join the nameless dead within.

Some of the desert tribes send their young shamen into the city ruins. One might understand *what was lost*, but one cannot understand *what was done* until one has seen them. Others bring their captives here to sacrifice them—offerings to the dark gods of destruction.

And if most of the world things of dark gods and epicenters of tragedy as metaphors, there are those who take them quite literally. There are suggestions (crazy? They must be—they make no sense) that something within the softly glowing craters can *hear* these supplications and can *answer*. There are psychotic tribes that worship the manicidal "spirits" of the pits as actual diets. They have *names* that are surprisingly and frighteningly *primal* and will not be repeated here.

Nuclear blasts fuse silicon into glass. This is called Trinity Glass or Trinitite. It is a smoky green in color and slightly radioactive. There are those who find items made of Trinitite ironic or amusing and there is a trade in it (it is not so rare that it is highly valuable). Desert nihilist tribes form their idols from it. Others study it or keep it as a reminder of what happened.

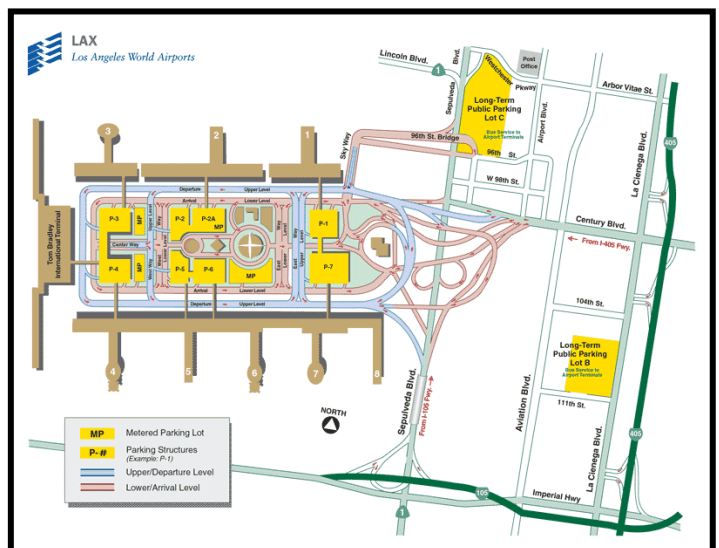
Ruins > L.A. > LAX Fortress

The Los Angeles international airport moved from being a major transportation hub (in the Age of Information and the Age of Wonders) to being a

Things Found In the Ruins

129. Data Chit. Loaded with a virus that pervasively disseminates itself through an information network. Once fully downloaded, it proceeds to subtly suggest and post germs of an idea (programmed at its creation) that, in gestalt, will promote a meme that will be slowly, invisibly, firmly, and inexorably adopted by the public connected to the affected network. Most of these Designer Memes have a limited range (a school network, a neighborhood) but rare ones are far-reaching. The majority have trivial memes ("Sally Winters is a stuck-up bitch." "Michael Winsmythe would be a great class president." "The Psi-Life is the worst movie EVAR!"). Some are mercenary ("If I don't buy Plak-B-Gone, my teeth will fall out and no one will like me."), a few are political ("The Haves can do no wrong."), a couple are social engineering ("Life sucks and there's nothing that can be done about it."), several are criminal ("The Nigerians need our help so respond to that e-mail."), and an odd amount are just plain bizarre ("The ultimate high a human being can experience is to be at ground zero of a nuclear explosion.").

130. A picture of the person who finds it. They are smiling for the camera with a bored looking significant other in tow. Behind them is a massive, still living super-city. The watermark is "Karmic Wheel Photography."



militarized fortress in the Age of War. The details are sketchy and highly unreliable, but there is general agreement concerning a principled warrior and his followers against combined might of the city's Warlords and their armies of robots, a retreat to the fortified airport infrastructure and a heroic, ultimately doomed last stand against the relentless hordes of the machines.

Ruins > L.A. > The Studio Systems

The development and rendition of stories was one of Los Angeles' greatest exports and (arguably) the source of its greatest influence on human culture. Stories, in the Age of Wonders, were watched, passively and communally in great halls, like Age of Information movies, but they were *immersive* in ways that old fashioned Age of Information movies never were.

Stories were experienced with an immediacy that went beyond mere suspension of disbelief. The viewer believed that they were real; that they were happening as they played out. And with some stories, the viewer might even believe that the events in the story were happening *to him*. A good story might have the impact of a great love affair, a real relationship. Fictional characters who died in tragedies would be mourned like the loss of a real person.

Stories were *addictive* to many people. They evoked and invoked powerful emotions that had been all but bled out of ordinary life.

The stories were digital creations, but *rendering* them (taking them from a script to a real story that could be *played*) required considerable computing power—computing power that was rare even in the Age of Wonders.

Enter the Studio Systems—five great mainframe intelligences that were capable of rendering stories and distributing them. The Studio Systems were commercial enterprises and selected stories based on their salability, but they also had personalities and they greatly influenced the kinds of stories they would accept. It is said that each studio's *mark* was indelibly upon the work the way a director's might be on a movie. A story rendered and distributed by RKO would be different from the same script rendered by MGM.

The Studio Systems were power brokers. Independents could render and distribute their own stories at great cost and financial risk, but that rarely happened. The Studios controlled the play-theaters and protected their turf with an invisible, interlocking web of business deals and legal contracts. The Studio Systems were the great storytellers and that was accepted.

The Studio Systems were underground—well protected and even hidden, but they were important and valuable targets and it is assumed that they were, eventually, all destroyed. Still, the culture they were at the heart of remains as a memory and its artifacts are still there, buried under the rubble, waiting to be found and used again.

Story Tellers

L.A. sold stories, and although L.A. is in ruins now, but the stories are timeless.

Story Sets

Stories were "played." (not "seen" or "watched"). More accurately they were "experienced." To experience a story, the player would connect to the story server (usually housed in a play-hall or play-theater) through a cybernetic set—a slender device that would insert a biological computer into the player's central nervous system. These applicator devices looked a bit like ball point pens and many of them have survived. Over the ages, though, the biological payloads may have deteriorated, causing strange effects if used.

Story Disks

The stories themselves were stored on holographic disks meant to be read by special server machines. These were encrypted and carefully protected making them useless without the *keys*. Even unreadable, they are valuable for what they represent (the more important the story, the more valuable a disk of it would be).

Story Servers and Play-Halls

Stories were experienced in great halls (like movie theaters), communally. The hall would project images from the story on the domed roof while the players lay back in padded chairs, staring up in awe and wonder. The story would be broadcast to their minds (and to the project equipment) from a computer system—a "server" usually stored in a secure office. A working story server would be a great find and very valuable to the aristocratic members of the hierarchy who appreciate the art of the past.

Ruins > L.A. > The IP Mausoleum

Intellectual property is a curious concept. It refers to the counterintuitive notion of the ownership of ideas. In the Age of Information ideas and knowledge were the currency of the day and IP was protected by clumsy if effect legal systems. Especially protected were renditions of ideas: a song could be copyrighted—a small measure protection—but a perfect recording of a song could be rigorously protected and tracked: true IP protection.

The Studio System's stories and the characters within them were ultra-valuable ideas. The ones that resonated the most deeply with consumers were worth countless millions to their owners. This the IP Mausoleum was born—a physical building which housed the digital records of characters, their memories, their bodies of work, their personalities, and so on.

It was a strange place—miles of marble-lined halls with silk plants and arching skylights and terminals which connected to the servers that held the rendered characters. Visitors could "interact" with the characters through the terminals, talking to animated product spokespeople or purely digital superstars from bands and stories.

There were even archives of less dynamic IP—recordings of movies and songs. The text of scripts and written word documents. Photographs. Anything and everything. Even memories could be recorded and "owned." The Mausoleum was a great repository of digital trivia.

The materials were stored in a *holographic* format—physically, they were writ on crystals and read with laser beams. Holographs are very resistant to damage: the entire image is distributed throughout the media. Even during the early stages of the Age of War, a great deal of the material survived (the Mausoleum was fought over and eventually damaged by nuclear weapons, but it was extensive and built like a military installation).

Today, it is a ruin—and a dangerous one: the security systems that defended it centuries ago are still active. It is possible to find a "visitors pass"—a VIP genetic ID that the system will recognize. Those who have visited it report that it is a truly spooky place: hallways and great chambers filled with tributes to dead icons, long forgotten cartoon characters, and commercial ideas. The icons themselves, are intelligent. Alive, even, in some sense. They long to be loved and remembered and wait, hoping that someday they will be called on again, to explain the joys of the products made by the corporate masters they served, or dance and sing for adoring children.

Ruins > L.A. > The University

The University is not *within* the ruins of Los Angeles, but rather just beyond it. The University can be found atop the Santa Cruz Mesa 60 miles from the Pacific Shelf. The University Was commissioned to study history and its access to history is through the ruins of Los Angeles. There are those who believe that if there is hope yet that civilization will recover from the great chaos of the new Dark Age, that it will emerge from within The University. Others disagree. They

Party like a Rock star

Southern California in the Age of Wonders (and before) was an aristocracy. To be influential and entitled there, even at the end, wasn't about merely *having* money. And it wasn't just about fame. In fact, money and fame were the *result* of being an aristocrat, not a requirement. To be "in" you just needed to have "it."

What, exactly, "it" is remains a matter of debate. Some people prefer the word "charisma" but that answers nothing. Others suggest that confidence combined with good looks will give you "it" but there are so many counter examples that this simple formula fails (many of those with confidence and good looks failed, while many with neither were adopted by the aristocracy and made part of their own).

Others have added more factors. They suggest "talent" may be a necessity. Or maybe "flair" (whatever that is) and even (ludicrously) "a sense of humor." Certainly many of the brightest stars in the Southern California constellation were enormously talented. They sparkled with wit. They shimmered with flair. But as one adds more and more adjectives, the definition of "it" swells and thins and slips away and one is left, again, with nothing but the question.

What is known is that those with "it" led dream lives. In the Age of Information, they were super-stars. They were famous, wealthy beyond imagining.

In the Age of Wonders they were post-modern gods. Their perspective—their *ideas* became religions and philosophies. They might have only lasted a few years (or even a few hours or even a few frenetic days), but those in their thrall were as enraptured with them as the monks of a previous age who would sacrifice themselves for the cause.

No one has ever properly *defined* "it," but the Age of Wonder scientists (the humans, even—the *Haves* never worshiped at that altar) isolated, analyzed, and bottled it. And at some point, when "it" had been molecularly identified, they bottled it for mass production and then everyone could be a star in the sky, if just for a little while.

say that The University is simply another avenue of escape from a hopeless and unbearable present. The University, they say, is nothing but an intellectual escape: an escape into the mind and into the past.

Whatever the truth, it is clear that The University has made great strides in its primary mission: to understand and catalog the past. The Encyclopedia project has re-learned and uncovered many scientific and engineering secrets thought lost. They have a working play-theater and it is said that in their most secret laboratories, they have a black cube under study.

It is even suggested that The University is not truly interested in divining the secrets of the world of men, but of going further, seeking answers to the dark truth about the Haves.

In any case, there is much there of value and so The University is remote and well defended. It prefers to carry on its work in secret, only connecting to the outside world when necessary. The Bone Yard and the University sometimes work together out of mutual respect, if not trust.

The social climate at The University is unique: it is said to be a calm, ordered place (there is an Honor Guard—a special group of professional mercenaries who have defended The University for generations) who provide security along with significant Executive System forces. Culturally, there is a President who oversees the Department Heads. The University cares for its teachers and students but expects considerable work from them. Articles must be written and reviewed. Thesis must be tested. Those who are unable to keep up are put on "probation" and may be eventually expelled.

Out in the wasteland, most people have *heard* of The University and respect it. They know that important work is going on there. That perhaps someday an announcement will be made that the secrets of tranquility and prosperity have been re-discovered and a golden age will arise once again.

And there are those who have met traveling researchers. From time to time proving a theory means going "on site"—leaving the University and traveling into the world. These expeditions are carefully planned and executed but those who have encountered them suggest that even well armed and supplied with body-guard robots and Age-of-War energy weapons, the academics of The University are not well suited for the "real world."

Ruins > L.A. > San Diego

South of Los Angeles, but still part of the same "Great Ruin" lies the wreckage of San Diego and Tijuana. The San Diego area is best known for one of the most incredible and inexplicable relics of the past—the Viaduct. It is also known for its shipyards, the Klas retro-virus, and its great, terrible Mutant Zoo.

Party like a Rock star (continued)

In the Age of Information consumer chemicals were packaged in disposable injectors (think of ballpoint pens). They were branded (covered with colorful logos and instructions) and artfully packaged. The "it" serum is no different. In the Age of Wonders, superstar treatment rolled off the presses by the hundreds of thousands. And while it was never *physically* addictive, it was quickly and irrevocably *psychologically* enchanting.

Those who lived in the Southern California area were its greatest users and during some times, the whole city was filled with super stars. The injectors still exist and they can be found.

The drug itself makes one intimidating, impressive, radiant, captivating, engaging, and (oddly, without changing the appearance at all), sexually attractive and beautiful. The effects are stunning and last for hours. The user feels a sense of importance and power. He is not *arrogant*—simply realistic about his status compared to those around him. While under the influence worship and adoration are his *due*.

The very-odd nature of these chemicals is worthy of study, but the main interest in the injectors is commercial. There are many within the Bone Yard who would like to become addicted to Party Like A Rockstar if they could.

Ruins > L.A. > The Viaduct

The Golden Gate Bridge was supposed to be impressive. According to history it went across the bay. According to history it was something to be proud of; something for others to envy.

Maybe that explains the Viaduct. It's hard to imagine what else would. Imagine the Great Wall of China as a suspension bridge with the Pyramids for pylons. Imagine it starting in San Diego, at the precipice that used to be a beach, and imagine it stretching into the distant haze of the west. Imagine it disappearing over the horizon, and imagine it keeps on going.

It's a great bridge, a 100-lane super-highway that goes, as far as anyone knows, forever. It appears to follow the curve of the earth (rather than jutting out, incomprehensibly, into space), so it must stop *somewhere* (otherwise, it would come back around, right?), but no one who's ever come back has found its stopping point. Something like 2000 miles out (around the middle of the Pacific Ocean), reports get hazy (people stop coming back). There's no evidence that anyone has ever gone further than 2500 miles.

Oddly, expeditions that *have* come back report simply losing their nerve (or running out of supplies). No one that has ever come back has encountered violence that would trouble the well-armed convoys that have vanished over the years. What dangers lie in the deep Pacific Desert remain a mystery.

The Viaduct shows some evidence of being a *Have*-inspired artifact. Firstly, it *regenerates*. Damage to its concrete and steel heals over a season. There have been several attempts (including nuclear ones) to destroy it and it has always grown back. Secondly, there is *no record* of its construction or even its existence.

Ruins > L.A. > The Shipyards (and Civil Defense Towers)

During the Age of Information the concept of the sovereign nation-state collapsed on itself rendering concepts that had held for millennia obsolete. The symbols of the state (colors and pageantry, flags and anthems) lived on as cultural indicators even as the underlying basis for their independent existence (different legal systems, different currencies, different languages and cultures) vanished in an orgy of globalism and multi-lateral consolidation.

The transformation was chaotic; in many cases change was met with violent resistance in the form of armies, militias, and terrorists. This didn't last, though. Eventually the resistance was finished, the globalists triumphant.

By the middle of the Age of Information war as it had previously been known was all but obsolete. Military organizations and systems still existed as private security forces, municipal police forces, freelance intelligence services, and even subcultures, clinging to their obsolete identity without a nation to defend.

While armies could disband (or become their own communities) navies and air forces often had significant and costly infrastructure. In the San Diego naval yards, there were entire fleets of sentient

The men who claim to understand the Viaduct and translate its hieroglyphs in secret call themselves The Bridge Builders.

They are the carriers, they tell their initiates, of knowledge-passed-down by the Eastern Ones who built the Viaduct so long ago, and will, one day, return.

They are secretive because they carry secrets. The Viaduct itself keeps secrets, they point out: its construction, its purpose, its end. These are secrets it keeps – could its children do any less?

The Bridge Builders learn in private. They worship in silence, in robes that hide their faces. Of all the groups that claim ancient secrets, they are considered benign by most – their Bridge does not require sacrifice. Their rituals are ones of building and return, not destruction and oblivion.

What's left of the shipyards?

Not much. Off the cliffs of San Diego, in the great salt flats, there are hulks of ancient sea-going vessels rusting in the sand. Much of what was built (rocket towers, great cannons, smart missiles) was used against very terrestrial, very human enemies during the Age of War. The carrier groups out at sea were lost, probably obliterated by simultaneous nuclear exchanges on the high seas. The ones in port were damaged beyond repair and largely beyond recognition

The Ship Yard

The Ship Yard is a place to visit and scavenge. The defensive fleets were built for effect and pageantry: while microscopic machines would have been more effective, the fleets preferred floating cities with great conning towers and sleek outlines. Even shattered, they are magnificent (although be careful—they're also radioactive).

machines running fusion-powered vessels (carrier groups, submarines, special-use craft). In the absence of a civilian application for these dedicated war systems many of them were decommissioned.

The details of this period of time are largely lost. It is known that the computers and the men and women who serviced them resisted the orders of their new authority for emotional and cultural reasons. The sense of drama surrounding the possibility of a nuclear mutiny in an age of intelligent machines must have been terrifying and intense compared to what had come before but it pales beside the realized worst-case nightmares of what came after and has been largely forgotten.

What is left, however, is the compromise that saved the war-ships and allowed them to continue their existence: in the absence of a real threat requiring a thermonuclear deterrent, a false threat was created—a justification for the considerable expense required to maintain the naval force. Exactly how calculated this was is unknown—there is no credible evidence of any kind that a threat from outer space ever existed. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged (now, as well as by critics at the time) that if space men were to turn a hostile eye toward earth mere nuclear weapons would likely be as impotent as conventional arms (or, for that matter, slingshots).

Still, the fantasy of an enemy in the depths of space stuck a deep, almost religious chord with the men and women whose world was being wiped away and reconfigured around them, and so the Space Defense Fleet was born from the wreckage of the world military powers.

Details include the development of an array of outward-looking satellites (an "early warning system") and the direction of vast amounts of super-computing power to analyzing the background noise and interstellar static of deep space. Nothing was ever found. No enemy (or friend, or hint of intelligence, for that matter) was ever discovered. Still, the idea of science-fiction enemies took root and as the Age of Information gave way to the Age of Understanding, it flourished with even greater vigor.

There are records of alien cults (for invasion), the human militia movement (anti-alien), children's crusades (beaming the voices and hopes of millions of children around the globe into space in a plea for galactic peace) and unscrupulous fear mongering and opportunism (sales of worthless "mind shielding" protective gear and space in "chromosome banks" that would store the client's genetic code in a deep underground bunker in case humanity was ever annihilated).

The Haves may have seen some utility in directing the rest of humanity's attention toward these circuses—or they may simply have been amused. In any event, they encouraged the least destructive of the Earth Defense movements and supported the construction of a sophisticated anti-alien military complex. The remaining Age of Information military infrastructure was just the

The Ship Yard (continued)

Many of the largest are small communities—oasis of life in the vast Pacific Desert—where the inhabitants live their lives at odd angles in the halls and chambers of ships listing or flipped over in the sand. Others are too hot to live in but can still be visited (a common University field trip). And for those who are both persistent and very, very lucky, there may still be AI Cores or live fusion warheads in ships yet-undiscovered, hiding under the sand.

The Towers

The Towers were built throughout the Southern California metro zone. They were smooth, black obelisks designed to detect and repel alien war craft. They were connected to their own geothermal generators—vast "root structures" that went down through the earth's crust, into the mantle where tectonic lava flow would power their cannons (municipal power would have been cheaper and easier, but as a matter of symbolism defending Mother Earth with her own authority and force was a master stroke).

The towers were part of a scalar weapons system designed to stand against a potential alien invasion. Although potentially capable of annihilating the planet, most of the use they saw during the age of war was as surgical weapons; they could turn solid earth to liquid, burying the forces arrayed against them alive.

Today, there are four of them—they are tall (about 50') but not overwhelming, and they are dark (the earth still moves, so it is likely the failure is one of software and not lack of power). Their command and control codes are long lost in any case. Still, they remain as curiosities—almost alien artifacts themselves, really, among the ruins of the city they were never actually expected to defend.

place to begin and they revitalized the fleets and built new structures.

Ruins > L.A. > The Mutant Zoo

It is widely believed that the bizarre biological confusion of the new era is the result of genetic damage done by weapons of war—mutation from radiation, for example, or from the plagues. This is not the case: while the weapons used certainly cause genetic damage, the offspring of those damaged are rarely viable (reference: infant mortality rate in the Bone Yard; Middle Ring). And besides—there is ample evidence that the genetic code was deconstructed well before the Age of War.

The Mutant Zoo in San Diego might have started its life as a science project but it was, in the end, an *art* project. The original zoo grounds—the San Diego Zoo, itself, was long defunct—was purchased toward the end of the Age of Information by a private group calling themselves The Artists who intended to use it to make a statement about man's place in nature in an age where the basics of life had become just more information.

Or something like that.

The nature of their message and objectives are unclear—The Artists are credited as the forefathers of a variety of virulent and effective eco and bio terrorist groups that operated throughout the Age of Wonders. It is apparent that their "message" was incredibly successful: they opened the zoo (selectively at first) and then to the public with a nightmare menagerie of "imaginary creatures."

Records suggest that they created a number of beasts from legend (dragons, unicorn, and so-forth) as well as far stranger and more disturbing variations.

The Exiles came from the Mutant Zoo. So, too (probably), the Chinese Kitten. The Artist's creations were all fertile and would all breed true.

Today the zoo is a ruin, the strange animals long go (now simply other members of a warped and disturbed biosphere), the secret labs where the "art" was conducted smashed and looted. Still, there are hints of what was there and the zoo grounds are said to be *haunted*—not in the ghost sense of the word but in the *feeding ground* sense. Best not to be close at nightfall. Strange things live in the dust and shadows.

The Bay Area: San Francisco – San Jose

The ruins of Los Angeles and San Diego and Tijuana lie within the Middle Ring; they may be mysterious, but they are – inevitably – accessible. Just as great in scale, but far more distant in the minds of those who live in the Middle Ring are the North Ruins. San Francisco. San Jose. These are not distant places, but they might

Living Diamonds

During the Age of Information somebody figured out how to make diamonds. Then they figured out how to grow them. Before the Age of Information ended, they figured out how to make them grow themselves. Living Gems, as they're called, appear as flawless diamonds—they usually begin as tiny chips and can grow as large as a carat or more (some have grown to the size of a *dozen* carats).

To grow, these gems need a supply of organic carbon. Compost will do, but their affinity for living material adds the element of danger that makes many people fear them and makes their most ardent collectors consider them *simply perfect*—under conditions that are not entirely understood they can become infectious.

Those who handle them and work with them tend to risk infection, but simply owning them seems to be risky (keeping them locked in a sealed box and never, ever taking them out is safe, but what's the point?).

Organisms infected with living will begin to experience faintness and dizzy spells followed by a rapid and complete collapse of the central nervous system (over the course of several days), coma and finally death. The cause of death is tiny (microscopic) gems growing in between neural passageways, obstructing transmission of nerve signals. And almost always, there is a flawless stone, a single carat, of insurmountable beauty nestled in the brain stem of the victim.

There are some who crave them for their beauty and appreciate them for their danger. They will *not* pay a premium for "average" living diamonds, but are interested in those of *mortis* origin. Regular diamond brokers will not trade in living gems if they identify them (any flawless stone is immediately suspect) but there is no definitive test.

Their more dangerous aspects (contagion) seem not to have been a problem during the Age of Information and Wonders, and Living Gems were quite popular in Southern California. Scavengers still find them there, perhaps more frequently (although still quite rare) than other manmade artifacts.

as well exist in another time. Why are they that much more mysterious?

It might be the danger; as deadly as the Ruins of L.A. are, the Bay Area ruins have a much darker reputation.

But it may also be that the Bay Area was a legend in its own time – a mythical place, back when people could go there.

North of the middle ring, along the Pacific Shelf lies the second of the Great Ruins – the San Francisco / San Jose ruin.

History and Legend

While Southern California was a producer and exporter of entertainment for mass consumption, the Bay Area was known as a producer of culture. It was also far more philosophic than its sister to the south. While Los Angeles (it was said) concerned herself with appearances, The Bay was focused on what might lie beneath. Much of the Bay Area's

San Francisco

True Telepathy

As the Age of Information drew to a close science paved the way for an explanation of psychic abilities including the possibility of a direct connection between two human minds. In the dawn of the Age of Wonder telepathy (true telepathy—not just the transmission of words thought, but not vocalized) became a reality.

True Telepathy proved horribly, invasively intimate: far worse than anyone had expected. Humans attached in that way were traumatized (embarrassed to death came close to being a literal medical condition). There were other disturbing side effects as well—"cross pollination" which personality traits and memories were transferred unpredictably between the telepathically connected and telepathic contact seemed to cause the onset of various unusual mental illnesses.

Telepathic Communion

Even in its early stages there were those who found it thrilling. True telepathy was expensive and non-portable. Its enthusiasts gathered in underground clubs to experience the "ultimate" form of communication. They called it the *intermingling of souls*. How spiritually significant True Telepathy was has never been determined. Its advocates were irrevocably changed by the process making them far from objective analysts. There is some evidence that they had a special understanding of the *Haves* and even some (unsubstantiated, but somewhat credible) evidence that the *Haves* were interested in them. If so, it would lend some credence to the idea that True Telepathy created a form of heightened consciousness.

These communion machines look like jukebox hubs connected to a web of wires and light headsets. Operating the box requires more than simply putting on the headset and turning on the machine—an operator has to cycle through the 'patterns' (stored on optical disks) in response to the user's reactions until contact is made (Telepathic Communion requires active consent by all parties).

The machines were highly regulated (illegal outside of research and psychiatric institutions) and as a result, they tend to be found behind hidden doors in the burnt-out basements of fringe clubs where their adherents gathered. Some of them may still be around and would be valuable to the right audience.

The Aquarian Society

As telepathic science matured researches found ways to prevent the *total immersion* caused by earlier efforts. Light telepathic contact was not nearly as profound or disturbing as communion had been but still fostered a deep sense of identification and empathy between the users. The Aquarian Society was founded in the Bay Area as "Mankind's Last Hope"—its founders believed that the deep understanding that came from mind-to-mind contact would re-make the world as a peaceful, loving place.

They weren't right, but they weren't wholly wrong. The churches offered a light telepathic ambience in which people felt incomparably understood and (usually) accepted. In the often radical, counter-cultural population the Society served acceptance and understanding were rare and valuable commodities and the Society flourished.

Sanctuaries (also called *retreats* or *monasteries*) were built where people could live their lives in close mental contact with one another. The Aquarians developed significant independent psionic ability as well

The Origin of the Haves

No one knows exactly when the first Have was born. There were probably intermediate stages: boys and girls who were *smart* or even *brilliant* but lacked true understanding. The first Have to achieve enlightenment is similarly lost to history (but at least he—or she—would have recognized the stupendous importance of his existence). What is recorded is the first *conference*. They came all at once, and in a world where electronic communications were archived, stored, and decoded, there is no record of organization, pre-planning, or other communication. They came because they knew the others would. They came because they knew that they recognized that the world was theirs and they chose to accept it.

The early Haves lived in the Bay Area as they developed their public personas and as they gradually let the world guess what they were. During this time, they advanced technology, science, and civilization a hundred or a thousand fold, and these advances flowed out of the Valley – gifts from the new pantheon.

The AI Nursery

One of the great puzzles that the Haves *didn't* solve was that of artificial intelligence. Good, old-fashioned human know-how achieved that late in the Age of Information. Those first intelligences were crude things by modern standards but they advanced quickly, each generation designing the *next* generation of AI's. The crucial discovery was the need for a great nursery—a server farm in which hundreds of millions of small, simple, independent programs could interact on a massive scale. While no single program was intelligent (or even very smart at all), with proper stimulation and an interactive (if virtual) environment, the programs would suddenly "arrive", acting in unison, and blossoming into primitive, but self-aware creatures.

These server-farms were the breeding place of millions of artificially intelligent computers. In fact, it is considered *impossible* to simply write an AI program. The "magic" of self-aware intelligence occurs only under run-time conditions of tremendous complexity. This means that the AI's are a non-renewable source; the nurseries are demolished. The mega-broad-band datapipes that served as information umbilical cords for the nascent programs are gone. Even in the Bone Yard, AI machines cannot be made. There have been projects and attempts, but no one has ever developed a nursery of the scale required.

So that is what the nurseries mean to humans – a source of AI systems. To the AI's themselves, they mean something more. The Nurseries are symbols of life and community. They are symbols of everything that has been lost (with the collapse of the nets, AI's that are not in the Yard are often completely disconnected from each other, and sometimes from the world, entirely). They are symbols of the possibility – the *potential* for continued evolution. In a very real sense, the Nurseries are spiritual places for Artificial Intelligences and suggest – in a way that is hard for humans to understand – the possibility of being part of something greater.

As much as humans mourn the loss of the great nurseries, the AI's mourn it infinitely more.

Culture

Machines made everything, but the great megalopolises of the West Coast manufactured culture. In the South Ruins they made *pop culture* – media, dreams, stories. They created celebrities and brand intelligences: demigods for the modern age. They spread trends like viruses. They used hyper-advanced medical techniques to re-write human ideologies in flesh.

To the north, they manufactured *deeper* cultures—the cultures of *ideas*. Pop culture is loud and aggressive. Like a virus or a genome, it seeks to spread itself indiscriminately. Ideologies take a different approach. For one thing, they are *meaningful*. This makes them *dangerous*.

The ideologies that spawned in the Bay Area frightened people, and some legends say the frightened even the Haves.

Because they have meaning and because they have enemies, ideologies spread covertly. They spread under the guise of quiet thought. They slip into other media and underlie simple (ultimately, not-so-simple) entertainment. They spread in coffee houses and chat rooms.

And they live on. Because an ideology is a concept tied to nothing but a frame of reference. It can never be disproved or destroyed. The ideologies here may have even survived the collapse of civilization. They were important in the Age of Wonders and some people whisper that they live on, today.

The Congregation

The Congregation didn't come from the Bay Area, but it did go there, bringing its mission to the heathens and then, when that failed, condemning them.

The Mind of a Killer

The Aquarian's purpose was to unite thinking beings. In this category, they included the Haves and the Dolphins. They were not activists; they intended to achieve their vision through study and practice of telepathy – the pursuit of *truth* within.

Their studies needed funding, though, and some of what they came up with turned out to be saleable. Perhaps nothing was more popular than the Mind of a Killer exhibit. When telepathy science was advanced, it became possible to have *unilateral immersion*. That is, one member of a linkage is totally and helplessly exposed while the other remains hidden. As horrible as *universal immersion* was (the "normal" configuration, in which both parties are exposed), unilateral immersion is unbearably worse. You're exposed. He, or even worse, *they*, remain sovereign.

The Aquarians developed that technology but renounced it. The Criminal Justice System, however adopted it and paid royalties. A year later, the Exhibit opened, and the public was invited to "enter the mind of a killer." The Age of Wonders, it turned out, generated utter psychopaths – people whose pleasure was the torture and murder of those around them. Their motives were opaque, their excuses and reasons nonsensical or ridiculously megalomaniacal. With unilateral immersion, what they said or claimed could be ignored and their brains could be exposed and examined. Experts who examined the evidence and the subjects could never agree on exactly *what* made people sociopaths, but they could agree that the public was fascinated and would pay to Enter the Mind of a Killer.

A new revenue stream for both the municipality and the Aquarians was born.

There were two Exhibit halls in San Francisco where killers were displayed. The subjects floated, paralyzed but aware, in great glass bubbles, while tourists filed path to fill observation rooms where they could sit and explore the murderer's psyche. The results of this experiment were profound on a couple of levels. The most obvious was the discovery that psycho-pathology can be transmitted. All of the visitors were titillated. Most were repulsed.

But some discovered they *liked* it. For every two or three hundred exposed, another killer was born.

The less accepted effect was the *stain* of the exhibit. The *haunting* of the exhibit halls. No one could really agree on whether things were really haunted, or if they were, what it meant, but over the years, the Halls were torn down. And the buildings built in their place abandoned. And eventually, there were parks built there—but not parks people used—parks that had great iron fences around them with no gates and within them the weeds were allowed to grow tall and wild. Those places were *stained* and they were *quarantined*.