

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #6:
Factions



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Social-political groups were one element that brought a lot of fun into the original old school science-fantasy games. This issue presents several factions or alliances Mutant Lords can easily incorporate into their existing campaigns. There are no rules covering these organizations, and decisions regarding joining/recruitment, membership benefits, NPCs, group size, and home base locations are left up to the fertile imaginations of individual MLs. That said, however, each faction has a general outlook on life and some broad goals.

This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games’ *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the “Basic” system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).

Gaian

This faction is made up entirely of aggressive, intelligent plants that believe in the complete primacy of green life. Gaians are at war — constant and total — against all other creatures.

Despite this view, Gaians do feel gratitude towards pure humans for their sciences and genetic experimentation, which hurried plant sentience by a million years. Scholars speculate that intelligent vegetation came from the same virus that created sentient animals, so the plants also have a lot in common with the other uplifted species in the post-apocalyptic world (*see the Uplifted faction, below, for more information*).

Unfortunately, the Gaians also learned the first life to ever gain a solid foothold on Earth (other than single cell organisms) was flora, which spread across nearly the entire surface of the planet. Fauna, or animal life, evolved much, much later. Because of this, Gaians believe the Earth rightfully belongs to them and only them. All other life, with the exception of some insects, and smaller animals useful in pollination, must be eradicated outright — or used for fertilizer.

The only reason this group has not become a serious threat is that it has so few members. Not all sentient plant life holds the same fanatical beliefs, and many intelligent plants simply scoff at the very idea of a planet ruled by vegetation. These beings might be content with their existence, or think in ways so alien they cannot understand what the Gaians plan for the world.



But Gaians also attack some of their own. Many plant species have mutated (or were genetically manipulated before the apocalypse) to include animal traits in their genomes, so they now have animal organs. To the Gaians, these hybrids are abominations and must be actively eradicated. As a result, the flora species are split even further.

Although a small faction, Gaians manifest powers that other sentient creatures find very disturbing.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Legion	2
Uplifted	3
Xenophobe	5

First, the most advanced and mutated Gaians seem to be masters of genetic manipulation, able to change their own genetic code at a personal level, not just a generational level. These entities initially appear as one type of plant, with one set of abilities, but when encountered later they could have a new type of biological attack, or be immune to a formerly effective weapon. Sometimes, later versions might have new weaknesses, as the genetic remapping can go horribly wrong, and some sentient flora develop a fatal defects that kill them over a short period of time. But discovering new species of hostile, sentient plants in every single encounter greatly concerns the scholars of the wastelands.

There is also the fact that many weapons used against the plants will show up weeks or months later in organic plant form. There have been recent reports of Wastelanders successfully using weapons of the Ancients, such as laser rifles, against the Gaians. Trouble arose when these warriors encountered the Gaians again and discovered that the plant creatures had developed, or grown, weapons that worked exactly like laser rifles, but were made entirely of plant matter.

The Gaians also have the terrifying ability to control many insect species, especially those that fly. Worse yet, the plants also seem able to change the insects on a genetic level and monstrous mutant insects have been sighted working with the Gaians, giving the faction both an effective armored infantry corps and an air force.

Lastly, in recent encounters with the Gaians, the plants fielded a new biological agent, useable not only on the plants' natural weapons, but on any melee or ranged weapon they use (except firearms and energy weapons). This attack appears to affect any type of fauna but is utterly ineffective against other types of flora, even those plants that have animal organs or parts. This insidious weapon first takes over victims'

minds, and turns them into puppets of the Gaians, who frequently order them to immediately attack their former comrades. In other instances, the Gaians allow infected targets to return with their allies. Later, a second, physical, change takes place. It is uncertain how the Gaians are able to control this, but many scholars believe the process is based on a telepathic trigger; within 12 hours of returning home, each victim undergoes a complete and utterly irreversible transformation into a plant weapon-entity, telepathically linked to the Gaians and existing only to spread the metamorphosing infection. These new plant-entities are incredibly fast and usually armed with spikes and thorns, which can be used for both melee and ranged attacks. Worse, when these things are killed, they explode into toxic clouds that spread the infection to others nearby, creating even more living weapons.

There are three philosophical camps within the Gaian faction: Overlords, Returners, and Changers.

Overlords: This bloc believes sentient plant life should dominate the world and that destroying all other intelligent life is paramount. As mentioned above, lesser life would be allowed to flourish solely for nourishment and pollination. Overlords see pure humans' technology as a boon, one that will help them achieve their goal of a planet run by sentient plants. They cherish and save all knowledge that they discover, knowing that one day, when they have achieved their goals, that it will help them reach the stars.

Returners: Like the Overlords, this camp wants a plant-controlled world. Unlike them, however, Returners despise technology and everything it brings. Instead, they want to restore the planet to a "perfect state," where no trace of civilization need exist and the vestiges of mankind it should be absolutely eradicated. Once the world's sentient fauna has been dealt with, Returners intend to impose their will on the Overlords, ensuring mother Earth is returned to a pristine condition, where technology and civilization are nothing more than horrible memories.

Changers: This Gaian camp is responsible for the new biological weapons. Its members have the same outlook as the Overlords but, rather than simply eradicating all other sentient life, Changers will give animals the gift of Gaia and turn them from flesh-and-blood into vegetation but have them retain their intellect and knowledge. Changers do not see the need to eradicate all other intelligent life; instead, other life forms will ascend to a new level of existence and be brought into the Gaians' embrace.

If war should erupt between the three camps, the odds favor the Overlords and the Changers, which are not above using science and technology to help achieve their goals.

Legion

After the Final Wars' nuclear dust finally settled, and the last guns fell silent, miraculously, there were still soldiers who had survived. Most dispersed into the myriad of tiny surviving communities scattered across the blasted and twisted landscape and eventually faded into obscurity.

But some kept their weapons and maintained their



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training and knew there would always be a need for them. Those who deserted their units, or those whose commanders and comrades vanished, somehow managed to find one another. Some of these encounters were brief and bloody, with one or both sides destroyed. But many survivors drew together, forming small units that would hire out their services for food, goods, companionship, or shelter.

Some of these bands would endure, and become Legion.

Although centuries passed since the final wars destroyed civilization, the Legion grew and became a political force across the wasteland. Loosely modeled after the ancient French Foreign Legion, the faction follows a similar precept: anyone who presents themselves at a Legion fortress, wishing to join, will not be turned away. Recruits who survive the often-fatal training will be brought into the Legion's fold and become part of the best fighting force found in the ruins of North America.

Enlistment is not restricted solely to warriors, as support staff are also needed. Technicians, workers, scavengers, and almost any other skill set is welcomed into the Legion, and usually no questions are asked. As a result, those fleeing from justice often try joining the Legion to escape pursuit. When the organization discovers it harbors a fugitive, a tribunal weighs the crimes committed against the skills, knowledge, or services the accused brought to the cause. If the individual is sufficiently valuable to the Legion, restitution may be made to the victim. Other times the accused is simply turned over with appropriate apologies to those seeking justice.

When restitution is paid, the legionnaire in question is expected to reimburse the faction. Typically for minor amounts, the soldier's pay is garnished but, for severe crimes, a legionnaire may be indentured to the Legion, a condition little better than slavery.

As an organization, the Legion is not beholden to any state, ruler, or political group, and is an entity unto itself that is loyal only to its legionnaires. Even those who hire the Legion gain loyalty only to a point, and the faction will not fight for despots or would-be dictators. When the Legion has discovered that it has been hired by groups with such aspirations, it has turned on its employers and destroyed them. This history has given the Legion a powerful reputation, one the group will fight to maintain at almost any cost. Should it be revealed a legionnaire acted dishonorably, that individual would suffer less with a quick suicide, as death at the hands of fellow legionnaires would be a long and pain-filled ordeal.

Even though most Legion personnel are pure humans and mutant humans, the faction has no bias against mutant animals, plants, or even artificially-constructed intelligences from joining the ranks. Units are always mixed, with legionnaires from all different genomes acting as a cohesive unit, due to strong *esprit de corps*. In the very rare event a legionnaire is unable to overcome some prejudice, the member is either transferred to another unit or, as a last resort, drummed out of the Legion entirely.

The Legion does contain several specialized detachments composed entirely of mutant humans, mutant animals, or



plants. These “Special Forces” units are considered the elite of the elite, with philosophical roots extending back to various organizations from across the globe and including SEALs, SAS, Spetsnaz, Rangers, and the like.

The Legion uses whatever weapons and equipment it can access. Some units are trained almost exclusively with primitive melee weapons, while others carry the most deadly technology ever deployed during the Final Wars. Each base also has units cross-trained with a variety of weapons. Additionally, the main Legion base (located on the great Atlantic shore of what was once called “Florida”) is known to have the largest stock of functional military vehicles and aircraft on the continent.

Should someone have the cash and is not a budding tyrant, the Legion will fight for them.

Uplifted

Decades before the Final Wars destroyed civilization and reduced the survivors to little more than scattered tribes, the Ancients delved heavily into genetic engineering. This miracle (or, as some believed, curse) allowed the great thinkers to tinker not only with their own bodies but also to modify existing creatures and even create entirely new species.

Ancient myth claims a prolific 20th century writer first envisioned the idea of “uplifting” various animal species, so they had human-level or greater intelligence. Whether true or not, many nations experimented with creating intelligent animals and the first “uplifted” species was the bottlenose dolphin. Highly intelligent creatures even before modification, dolphins quickly gained the ability to speak, and some developed powerful mental abilities far beyond the wildest dreams of scientists who helped to “birth” this new sentient race.

Following this success, other species were modified: first the great apes, followed by more aquatic mammals, including other dolphins and whales. The Ancients did not stop there, however and, the more skilled they became at genetic manipulation, the more new species they uplifted.

Currently, scholars can only speculate whether the

intelligent animals alive today were created by the Ancients' genetic manipulation or through mutation induced by the many and varied weapons used during the Final Wars. In this knowledge gap, myth again rears its head. Scholars say that during the last days of the apocalypse scientists scattered across the warring nations unleashed a plague, whether of nanotech or biology it is not certain, and this pestilence was designed with the ability to modify the genetic structure of anything it encountered. Victims were unaware of this infection but any offspring were mutated beyond recognition.

There are some who believe this weapon was created to wipe out survivors by destroying the next generation. Others think the scientists were certain that no humans would survive the horrific final conflict and so wanted to ensure some form of intelligence would go on, in the form of uncontrolled uplifts. Either way, the end result is that there are thousands of intelligent animals species spread across the globe. These are collectively known as the Uplifted, although most humans and mutant humans consider them to be nothing more than animals. Even many intelligent animals do not consider themselves to be Uplifted and are content with the world and their place in it.

Of those who chose to actively engage with others, many have formed into several different factions, each with its own beliefs and goals, which often lead to conflict between the groups.

Orwellians: Adhering to the belief that all uplifts were created equal, this group feels animals are destined to rule

the world — although opinions differ on methodology. Hardline Orwellian ideologues believe all humans and mutant humans (except those with clearly animal traits) should be completely erased from the face of the planet. Fortunately, not all Orwellians share this view. Moderates agree humans should be conquered and treated as servants, slaves, or pets but not destroyed outright; after all, their forebears created the uplifted. Ultimately, the Orwellians simply want to seize control from those who were responsible for the planet's current condition.

Apes: This faction thinks true apes, including humans and mutant humans, should be the only uplifts allowed to survive, as other sentient animals are a threat to simian greatness. Members of the Ape faction believe humanity was the original uplifted species, created from ape stock by an ancient race of beings, and that it just took a little longer for humans to get around to uplifting their cousins.

Unlike Orwellians, Apes do not want to dominate the world and instead strive for a return to the pre-apocalypse order with humans in charge and all other uplifted species stripped of their intellect, relegated back to the status of simple animals.

Truebloods: Not all uplifted species were given human traits and many were solely modified to possess human-like intelligence. These sentient animals want little to do with the humans and other uplifted species. Instead, they live as their ancestors did — in the wild. The difference now is that many live together in packs or communities, instead of as loners or mated pairs.

Of all the uplifted factions, Truebloods are the least frequently encountered. They have no desire for world domination, and usually just want to live in peace, do not rely on technology, and try to be at harmony with nature. However, Truebloods will occasionally interact with other intelligent species if these prove worthy of trust.

Anthromorphs: Of all the uplifted factions, Anthromorphs are the closest to humans and mutant humans, and members do not consider themselves to be animals at all. Instead, they believe their ancestors were humans who took on the traits of animals for reasons now completely unfathomable.

Anthromorphs study every aspect of human society and either imitate it fully or attempt to integrate themselves into any human communities close at hand. Many succeed at the latter, especially in those human and mutant human communities that tolerate mutant animal species. The Anthromorphs become, with the exception of their physical appearances, human. Many even attempt to take human or mutant humans mates, and frequently manage to find willing partners. Sometimes the pairing is accepted, but often communities are surprised, shocked, and, in many cases, disgusted by this, exiling or killing outright the couples. Even more shocking is how often offspring are produced from these unlikely matings.

By favoring humans and actively opposing the Orwellians, Anthromorphs suffer the same hate that Orwellians feel towards humans and mutant humans.



Xenophobes

Before the apocalypse devastated the planet, humanity reached the heavens, colonizing Luna, several of the Solar planets, much of the asteroid belt, and many of the moons around the gas giants. Ships were even sent to investigate other stars. There are some who believe the Ancients discovered civilizations outside the solar system, and that these aliens were less than friendly. Some even believe these entities caused the apocalypse.

No one knows if this is fact or a myth that sprung up after the Final Wars. But, some say they have files, eye witness accounts, and even the aliens themselves to prove earthlings are not alone in the universe. These claimants are collectively known as Xenophobes, and they believe the aliens are on their way to finish the job mankind began: to destroy all life on the planet.

To prevent this, Xenophobes act on their motto taken from the mid-20th century, “Watch the skies.” But they are also raising an army, recruiting as many able bodied soldiers as possible — especially those who were alive before and during the Final Wars — and amassing high-tech weapons, armor, and vehicles, especially those able to operate outside the atmosphere.

Compared to other political factions, the Xenophobes are better organized and equipped than most. In addition to an extensive world-wide communication network (which allows scattered units near-constant contact), the group controls several ancient spaceports, SETI and ground-based telescopes, and old military sky-watch installations that survived the apocalypse more-or-less intact. But none of these facilities is a central headquarters and the group is widely dispersed into smaller groups of no more than 20 or 30 individuals so as not to invite an attack that would end them, their cause, and what is left of the planet. The manpower of a typical Xenophobe cell breaks down into roughly 75% able-bodied warriors; 15% technicians who maintain the equipment, weapons, armor, and vehicles; and 10% leadership.

Except for those crews manning permanent facilities, Xenophobe cells are constantly moving and few remain in the same location for more than a week or two at a time (one



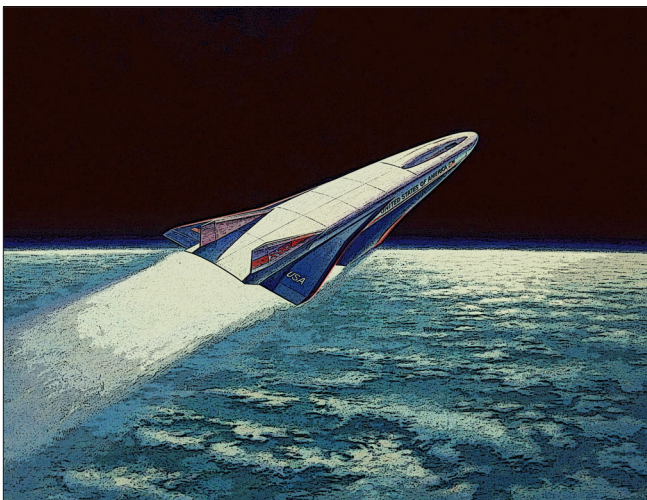
of the reasons reliable communication are required). Consequently, the group makes extensive use of vehicles; the vast majority are old civilian cars and trucks, but some cells have found and refurbished military vehicles and even some aircraft.

Valuable as these vehicles may be, the Xenophobes' greatest treasures are spacecraft. Whether operational or not, finding one of these priceless artifacts brings immense honor and recognition to a cell. All spacecraft or space-capable vehicles are brought to one of the Xenophobes' few main bases, where these items are meticulously studied and restored to space-worthiness if they are in “less than optimal” condition.

Even compared with other factions, the Xenophobes are extremely paranoid. In fact, the group has so little trust of outsiders that they have an exceptionally difficult time finding suitable recruits. Too frequently an applicant has been killed by the Xenophobes who, for one reason or another, felt the potential member was really an alien spy.

The group also actively hunts down and kills any “aliens” it hears about. Some of these creatures could very well be aliens: Xenophobes have an active and all-out war against the Brain Lashers (*see the Mutant Future core book for more details*), blaming these creatures for causing the apocalypse. The Xenophobes fully intend on destroying these horrors and their allies, but this genocidal war has caused a great deal of collateral damage, killing and wounding large numbers of innocents caught in the crossfire. Because of their physical mutations, many mutant humans have also been specifically targeted by the Xenophobes, as members of this faction believe that the mutants are, in fact, aliens.

Because of these factors, Xenophobes are almost universally disliked. That the group is on a crusade to save the world does not matter to their victims and those who lost friends or loved ones. Oddly, the Xenophobes have allied with androids. It is rumored that not only are there some androids in the Xenophobe chain of command but they have encountered the aliens firsthand — so, consequently, they are the only ones who truly understand the alien threat. Replicants, however, are universally hated by the Xenophobes, who assume these entities are alien agents. Where this idea came from is anyone's guess.



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