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FOR THE *OTHER DUST* ROLE-PLAYING GAME

GRANDFATHER'S RAIN



THE RIVER RUNS SILVER WITH A SLOW POISON AND THUNDER SOUNDS IN THE TOXIC HILLS. CAN YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS FIND THE ANCIENT PURIFICATION FILTERS THAT SAVED YOUR VILLAGE ONCE BEFORE, OR WILL GRANDFATHER'S RAIN COME TOO LATE FOR YOUR PEOPLE?

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AN INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE FOR *OTHER DUST*

GRANDFATHER'S RAIN

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A DRY RADIOACTIVE SEASON

The neighboring villages of Digger Springs and Broketree have kept a hesitant peace for almost forty years. The two hamlets have eked out a hard life amid the wreckage of their ancestors, with Digger Springs carving its way into a buried city for the precious relics of their forebears and Broketree wringing a reluctant living from a petrified forest of wireweed and rock-hard deadfalls. Traders come from far enclaves to barter for Broketree grain and Digger Springs relics, but suspicion and an uncomfortable past have kept direct trade to a minimum.

This morning, an hour after dawn, a cloud of black dust erupted from the distant hills, a pillar of powdery earth that rose in a roar of frustrated fury. One of the ancient power cores of the buried city had finally gone critical. The violence of the blast shook the earth beneath the villagers' feet and drove the birds shrieking from the trees.

Eight hours after dawn, the first silvery strands came down the river. They glittered in the water bucket like streaks of mercury, bright and shining. It didn't take the village healer to tell men and women that they were dangerous to drink. It won't kill a man quickly to drink the river water now, but it will do the job in a few weeks. The village cisterns hold enough for the children, for now, but it won't be long before they run dry.

It happened in their grandfather's time, too- the tremors in the earth, the silver streaks in the water, the poison that killed men slowly. Men from Broketree had gone up the river to the poisoned hills, had fought the things that laired in their shadows and found the house of the ancients that had been torn open by the tremor. There they had found filters that could separate the good water from the bad taint, and those filters had lasted for a generation, long enough for the silver filth to run clean at last from whatever tanks had leaked it. If it had not been for the filters, Broketree would have been a desolation before the month was out.

That was before Digger Springs was founded, but Digger Springs draws its water from the river, too. Broketree isn't the only one needing filters now, and the hard-handed mud miners of the scavenger enclave have heard the same stories. They will be sending warriors up into the hills as well to find the source of the taint and the precious filters that might save their people from a dry exile.

Time is running short. Every day the sweet water dwindles and the people grow sicker from the taint. The enclaves must have those filters if they are to survive- but who among them will dare the cursed hills and the things that haunt the dark houses there?

A MATTER OF CHOICE

For *Grandfather's Rain* the PCs are assumed to either be natives or visitors to Broketree, present on the morning when the containment tanks of the Ashbrook Research Center are broken into the local water supply. A similar catastrophe two generations ago nearly wiped out Broketree, until a small group of scouts was able to retrieve purification filters from an abandoned Old Terran treatment plant. Without some similar discovery, the natives of Broketree and Digger Springs are both facing death or forced flight.

PCs are initially presented with the disaster shortly after arrival and learn of the former solution to the problem. Broketree is sending out groups of scouts into the hills, but the worst and most dangerous parts of the terrain are reserved for the most expendable locals- which likely means the PCs. The community won't force them to go, but those that balk will be unwelcome in Broketree.

Shortly afterwards, an agent of Digger Springs will secretly approach the PCs and quietly suggest that they visit the mud miners and get a second bid on their services. At the very least, they deserve to hear whatever ideas that the techs of Digger Springs might have about the problem.

Assuming the PCs agree to hunt for the filters, they're going to have to venture into the poisoned hills east of the settlements, a dangerous wilderness of scrub forest, hot zones, vicious mutant life, and the occasional demented outlaw band. If they survive the perils of the journey, they'll reach the ruins of the Ashbrook Research Center, buried by the mudslides that destroyed the nearby Old Terran city. Numerous treasures of the ancient days wait within its darkened halls, but none more precious than the backup filtration units in its decontamination lock.

The troubles will not end with the retrieval of the filters, however. If the PCs have declined to return the filters to Digger Springs, a band of that enclave's warriors will be waiting to ambush them and take whatever loot they might have recovered. Broketree itself will be too demoralized and disorganized under its weak mayor to launch any kind of effective attack on Digger Springs, so the PCs will have to rally the enclave for war with their own charisma if they want to take back the filters.

Even assuming the filters reach Broketree, Digger Springs will be desperate enough to launch an attack before they are too parched or sickened to fight. The losing side faces only death in the dry wilds, so no mercy will be asked or given on either side.

Sufficiently creative and charismatic PCs might well be able to devise better solutions to the local troubles. Persuasive heroes might convince the two enclaves to join together if they can provide the tools Broketree needs to produce enough food for both populations. The PCs might devise some way of resealing the broken Ashbrook complex, halting the flow of toxins at the source. Their ingenuity might come up with any number of alternative outcomes for the ill-starred enclaves.

Such ingenuity will be needed. Without outside help, one of these two enclaves is going to be exterminated by the cruel dictates of the New Earth. It will be an act of heroism simply to retrieve the precious filters from their ancient rest. To save both communities will require superlative cunning and dauntless courage, not only to overcome the perils from the uncompromising wild, but to win past the suspicion, fear, and clannish isolation of both groups.

Victory will mean life for thousands. Failure will mean death for all but a wretched handful of fleeing survivors. Can the PCs save these hard-pressed communities from a dry doom, or will grandfather's rain come too late?

BROKETREE

The trees are gray here, smooth and unbarked like bones in the sun. The deadfalls lie in long tangled rows pointed westward where the blast left them two centuries ago, the wood turned to something like stone by the Highshine nanites that followed in the wake of the killing wind. Between the trees, the grasses and weeds received the same kind of perpetual unlife, the brush turned black and tough as iron wire. It ruins a metal edge to cut it, so the locals break up clots of the weed by bending the roots back and forth until the stressed wires break. Every inch of Broketree's farmland was bought that way, twist by painful twist.

The houses and buildings of Broketree are made of those deadfalls. The first settlers here still had a few functioning laser cutters that could slab the immortal trees into planks and boards, and these days some of the muties from the Buckmiller family have gifts that work the same way. They can't keep it up as long as an Old Terran cutter, though, so new buildings are scarce in Broketree. Hard times and dying have made it largely irrelevant to the locals, though. There's usually an empty house available for a new family when they want one. There aren't many new families in Broketree these days.

LIFE IN BROKETREE

The enclave is a farming hamlet, and blessed with good soil and good farmers. The wireweed is the settlement's worst enemy and best resource- chemical reactions leave it "growing" back into land it once claimed unless regularly cleared, but the wire itself is a corrosion-proof, tough resource for construction and crafting. Combined with the eternal, rocky "wood" of the Fallen Forest, Broketree has been able to maintain the basic tools of agriculture.

Two-thirds of Broketree's able-bodied adults are farmers, and most of the rest are hunters venturing west for prey in the Fallen Forest or fishermen working the Sweetwater River that flows through the enclave. Perhaps sixty of the adults aren't directly involved in food production, either maintaining tools, crafting trade goods, or providing other services necessary to the town. Even those adults usually have at least a small truck garden for growing some of their necessities.

The folk of Broketree are determinedly pacifistic by the standards of the New Earth. They may fight in individual quarrels or defend themselves personally, but they have a stubborn aversion to maintaining a formal militia or launching any kind of attack against neighbors or bandits. A disastrous reprisal raid sixty years ago almost resulted in the village's destruction, and ever since they've shunned martial solutions to their problems. It's been blind luck that none of the local raiders have really believed that they were as pacifistic as they seem to be.

BROKETREE'S GOVERNANCE

The town is largely run by the four most powerful clans- the Cass family, the Lykens, the Buckmillers, and the Brights. The dangers of the wastelands force the four to work together more closely than they might like, but it doesn't stop them from sniping and scowling at each other over quarrels that were old in their grandfathers' time. Two generations of relative peace with the outside world have made

them careless, and their leaders are concerned more with holding on to their own preeminence than doing good for their community.

Eight months ago, the major families elected Maria Montoya as the new mayor, after old John Bright died of the yellow flux. Maria was young, clever, charming, and had managed a true prodigy of social engineering in convincing all the four family's leaders to back her appointment as an impartial arbiter who could be trusted with the post.

Maria's feat was perhaps less impressive than she had imagined, as all four of the clan leaders picked her as a pliant nonentity who could be trusted to do nothing to oppose any of them. Her election was a sort of political truce, a mutual disarmament among the four families to ensure that no one would be able to tip the balance against any other.

This lack of leadership will prove disastrous during the water crisis. Maria is incapable of standing up to any of the family heads, and considers it her duty to keep them all happy until they come up with a solution for her to implement. They will never agree on a solution until it is too late to do anything. It's all they can do to dispatch scouts to search for water filters- any further complications or machinations from Digger Springs will leave them paralyzed with dissention. If the PCs don't intervene to force or persuade a decision, the town will be doomed.

OUTSIDERS IN BROKETREE

Broketree is no trade hub, but it does get a steady trickle of outsiders. Most of them are traders on their way through to Digger Springs, offering farming tools and foreign luxuries in exchange for sacks of wheat and dried vegetables. The food is bulky and hard to manage, but it's a relatively short journey to the mud miners' enclave. There the goods can be sold for the relics and salvage taken from the tunnels below Digger Springs.

All outside trade with Broketree passes through the Lyken family, and through Vincent Lyken in particular. The four families don't want any disruptive relics getting into imprudent hands, and Vincent Lyken is charged with making sure that nothing gets traded under the table. Outsiders are allowed to mingle with the locals, but must bed down in the Strangers House each night, and are encouraged to move along as soon as their business is conducted.

Those outsiders that perform great deeds for Broketree- such as retrieving water filters- will be accepted among the people and counted as a fellow citizen of the enclave. Citizens have no need of Lyken's permission to trade and need not pay the market fee for such transactions, either.

The village's laws are much the same as most other farming enclaves- thievery, adultery, fighting, reckless behavior, and possession of psychic powers are all punished with chastisement ranging from a public whipping to summary hanging depending on the severity of the crime. Imprisonment is unknown, and troublemaking outsiders are likely to be exiled. Still, old Judge Hanrahan is a reasonably fair man and outsiders are accorded most of the law's protection.

BROKETREE				TIER 1 POLITY		
POPULATION	600 adults, 1,200 children, 300 aged					
GOVERNMENT	Oligarchic, headed by an elected mayor					
ORIGIN	City refugees forming a farm commune					
TAGS	Food Supply, Peaceful			TL	1	
TIER PROG. RUIN SOURCES						
FOOD	8	6	+1	Weak mayor	1	
INFLUENCE	1	3		Feuding families	2	
MORALE	6	4	+1			
SECURITY	2	4				
TECH	2	3				
TOTAL PROGRESS			2	TOTAL RUIN		3
PERKS		Expert Farmers (The locals have learned numerous ways of dealing with the hostile flora of the New Earth)				

Broketree was founded in the aftermath of the devastation that consumed a nearby Old Terran city. When an orbital mass depot fell during the Scream, the impact and the release of its vast stores of liquid water produced a combination of flash-flood and monsoon that buried the city beneath a tidal wave of mud. A few of the more distant suburbs survived the catastrophe and they and the outlying towns sought refuge among the petrified deadfalls of what later became known as the Fallen Forest. A few of the survivors had been hobby gardeners before the catastrophe, and some scrounging in the nearby ruins was able to turn up enough supplies to start farming.

Four-fifths of the population was dead within two years from famine, plague, Highshine, or mutant attacks, but the little enclave struggled through the recurrent disasters to reach a tentative sort of stability. Their worst hour was in the aftermath of a raider attack sixty years ago, when the furious villagers had armed themselves and launched a reprisal against the clan. It was disastrous; more than two-thirds of the enclave's able-bodied adults were killed in the fighting, and the community almost perished. The catastrophe fixed a bone-deep aversion to violence among the locals, but blind luck has kept other local raider bands from doing more than light pillaging and quick thefts on the outskirts of the enclave. The bandits don't honestly believe that the villagers are as pacifistic as they seem to be. If the bandits were ever convinced of their sincerity, Broketree would rapidly come under new and less civilized management.

Broketree is naturally suspicious of outsiders and reluctant to have more contact than basic trade demands. They imagine that they won't need to fight if they don't draw attention to themselves, and outsiders are encouraged to move on rapidly after their business is complete here. The community is quite productive in foodstuffs and could likely accommodate as many as two hundred additional adults and their families, but further growth is stymied by the difficulty of clearing land in the fallen forest. The rocky tree trunks and tough wireweed require days of labor to root out of the soil, and the weed tends to reclaim land it once held if not kept back with regular clearance.

ENEMIES

Mayor Maria Montoya, a nullity of a young woman chosen by the leading families of the village chiefly because she showed no sign of making any demands whatsoever upon them. Montoya dislikes strangers and youthful troublemakers, as they threaten to disrupt the status quo that has served her so well.

Old Louie Cass, the patriarch of the powerful Cass family and a die-hard pacifist. He's convinced the world won't bother Broketree so long as Broketree doesn't bother it, and he counts anyone willing to consider violence to solve a problem as a threat to the village. Cass has no qualms about using violence to solve his own problems- he knows what he's doing, after all.

FRIENDS

Vincent Lyken, the village's liaison with traders and other outsiders. A friendly, sandy-haired man with a slight limp, Vincent can find all manner of work for outsiders willing to take a few risks for the people of Broketree.

Jackie Noguera, village hunt leader. A mutant with decidedly felinical features and powers of stealth, Jackie is bloodthirsty by Broketree standards- she actually thinks violence is a valid solution to some problems. This belief has the quiet backing of dozens of other hunters.

THINGS OF IMPORTANCE

The Big Cutter, a superior-quality huge monoblade cutting bar (2d8+4 dmg, +2 to hit) prized for its ability to clear wirevine like nothing else. Currently held by the Casses and coveted by the shady Boratko family.

Maintenance tools equal to a TL3 toolkit kept by Billy Wirewright, the enclave's best tech. They're vast overkill for sharpening rockwood hoes, but Billy guards them jealously all the same.

COMPLICATIONS

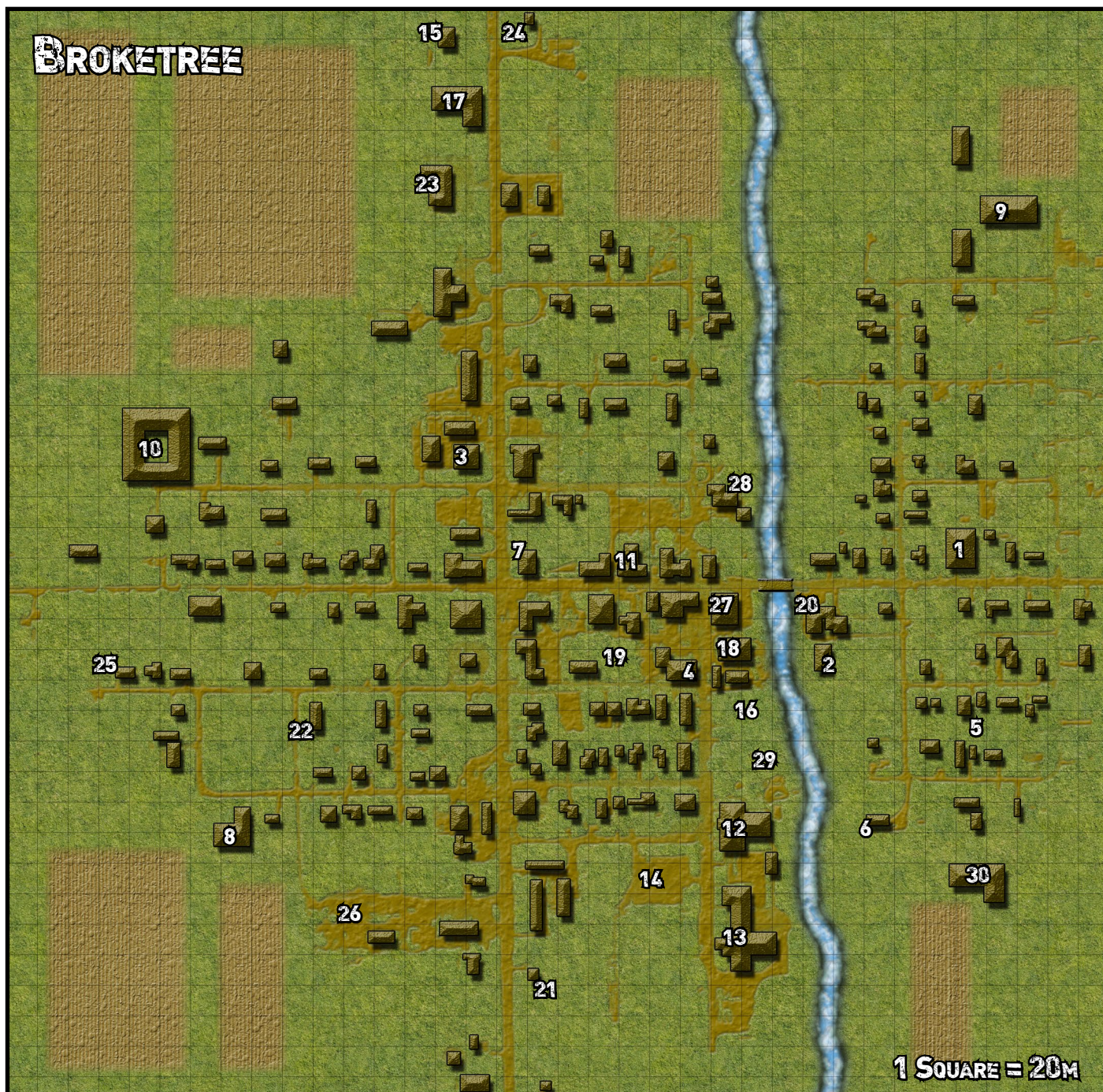
Mayor Montoya can handle the day-to-day management of the enclave, but any kind of crisis paralyzes her, and the great families that backed her can't agree without someone to break deadlocks. Montoya's a new mayor and no one has had a chance to see her crack under pressure, but the day is coming soon.

The Boratkos are prone to thievery, malingering, furrow-stealing, and debauchery. They're also the best fighters in Broketree. Whether they remain loyal will depend on the kind of inducements given to them by the village- or by Digger Springs.

PLACES CHARACTERISTIC OF BROKETREE

The Fallen Forest, a vast sweep of bare-branched, topped trees blasted flat by the orbital strike that buried the nearby city. Highshine nanites have frozen the trunks into rock-hard permanence.

Farming fields cut laboriously out of the Fallen Forest by generations of sweat and toil. The black strands of iron-tough wireweed form fences around the fields, the dead underbrush transformed in much the same way as the trees.



LOCATION		LOCATION		LOCATION	
1	American Sangha Temple	11	Cripple Joe's Bar	21	Porter Li's Home
2	Arnetta Correo, Village Healer	12	First Church of Broketree	22	Smokehouse
3	Bakery	13	Granary and Stronghouse	23	Stables
4	Billy Wirewright's Shop	14	Graveyard	24	Strangers House
5	Boratko Houses	15	Jackie Noguera, Huntmistress	25	Tanner
6	Bowyer	16	Lumberyard	26	Threshing Floor
7	Brewer	17	Lyken Trading Post	27	Town Hall
8	Bright Family Compound	18	Meeting Square	28	Waterhouse
9	Buckmiller Family Housing	19	Memorial Stone	29	Woodmasonry Pit
10	Cass Family Compound	20	Mill	30	Xia Family Farmstead

PLACES IN BROKETREE

The streets of Broketree are dirt tracks, muddy in spring and autumn and cloudy with powder-fine dust in the summer. The houses and buildings are made of roughly-slabbed rockwood planks bound with wireweed and roofed with wire-bound bundles of straw that need replacing every few years. The enclave is not a rich one, but the people obviously have enough surplus to keep their homes and farms in order.

The following are thirty of the more important locations in Broketree. A brief external description is given in the boxed text and details of the inhabitants or business are given after.

1. American Sangha Temple

Rockwood planks and pillars have been arranged to form a somewhat precarious three-storey pagoda here, sheaves of wheat-straw thatching ringing each of the three ascending levels. A carefully-carved image of a dharma wheel has been etched into the lintel above the open door.

Beside the doorway, a sign salvaged from some long-lost shrine still has the bright colors of Old Terran plastics. It bears the words "American Sangha Temple of..." and a plaque of rockwood inset where an old place name has been carved away, the word "Broketree" cut carefully into the stony wood.

This American Sangha Buddhist temple serves roughly a fifth of the families in Broketree, the rest preferring the First Church for their worship. Almost all of the hunters are members of the temple, as are the Boratko family. None of the great families worship here, and Old Louie Cass has particularly sharp words for the "bloodthirsty squawking" of **Abbot Williamson**, the temple's presiding monk and keeper. The local brand of Buddhism emphasizes the need to use "all necessary means" to resist injustice, and the resident believers are much less pacifistic than most of their neighbors.

Abbot Williamson can be found here at any hour, teaching youngsters or helping the half-dozen crippled elders who have retired to a monastic life. He is a tall shaven-headed man of impeccable moral qualities, albeit perhaps more willing to resort to violence against evil than might be strictly prudent.

2. Arnetta Correro, Village Healer

This building is a little larger than most of the family homes around Broketree, with real glass panes in the windows and fresher thatch than that of its neighbors. Beside the door, a woodmason has carved the twisting snakes of a caduceus to mark a healer's residence.

Arnetta Correro, a plump, dark woman in her late thirties, is the best healer in Broketree. She lives here with her husband, two tomboyish young daughters, and a sober-minded young Boratko boy who is in training as her apprentice, and who endures a great deal of mistrust from the other locals for his kinsmen. Arnetta has a +2 bonus for all Tech/Medical skill checks, and her apprentice has +1.

Arnetta spends most of her time visiting the house-bound sick and rushing out to tend to farming accidents. She's a crisp, businesslike woman not given to panic or free labor- those who can't pay the

core book rates for her services can look forward to working it off in her garden. She'll accept most goods at their usual barter rates in payment, confident that she can sell them along to someone else sooner or later.

She does have a small cache of stims she might be willing to sell if suitably impressed by the need. She has 5 random Lifestyle stims, 5 Patch stims, and 2 Cyst stims which she will barter at book rates to someone who puts a reasonable argument to her as to why they need them. Truly impressive eloquence or superb argumentation might get her to drop the price to a mere half usual.

3. Bakery

Rows of solar box ovens line the roof of this low, flat building, all of them on turntables that can be rotated together with a single connected rod. Loaves of wheaten bread brown inside the cookers, here and there some other family's meal heating under the force of the sun overhead.

The wood of the Fallen Forest will melt before it burns, and so Broketree is very poor in combustibles. Loggers sometimes head east to the outskirts of the hills to float timber down the Sweetwater, but such wood is saved for winter. Ordinary cooking is done with scrap-built solar ovens here at the bakery, or "cold cooking" at home. The baker is the one-legged **Robert Chapman**, apprenticed to the old baker after a farming accident left him unfit for field duties. He's fed and provided necessities in exchange for doing baking and solar cooking for the families that bring him their ingredients.

4. Billy Wirewright's Shop

A three-sided enclosure stands next to a slightly dilapidated house. Within the enclosure is a scrap-built anvil, a wall full of random fragments of salvage, and several bundles of thick wireweed.

During the day, a precious solar generator feeds power to one of **Billy Wirewright's** two valuable type A+ power cells, the other fueling a handheld laser cutter that he never lets out of his reach. Billy is a skilled tech, with an Int modifier of +1 and a Tech/Postech-1 skill rating. He has +1 blueprints for creating a scrap-built revolver and ammunition, but lacks the spare parts to assemble either. He also has a set of maintenance tools equal to a TL3 toolkit, and his shop has sufficient equipment to build TL2 equipment for those skilled enough to fabricate it.

Billy has nothing terribly useful on hand at the moment, but he can be persuaded to craft or repair objects within his ability for the standard book rates for employing a scrapsmith, provided he's given the spare parts. He won't allow anyone else to use his shop or tools unless they've proven themselves a hero to the village- or unless they can get him the spare parts he needs to fabricate a revolver for himself. Billy talks as much of pacifism as the other townsfolk, but the thought of having his precious tools stolen keeps him up at night.

Billy lives alone in his house save for a young apprentice who has yet to be trusted with anything more complicated than wire-cutting. The boy resents this mightily, and might be persuaded to make himself necessary to his mentor through the loss of certain tools.

5. Boratko Houses

This cluster of houses is decidedly shabby compared to the neighbors. The thatching is patchy and moldering, the gardens are weedy, and the few chickens pecking at the ground have a thin and dyspeptic look. A few dirty children stare suspiciously at you from glassless windows, and the occasional raucous argument rises from within the walls.

The Boratkos are the black sheep of Broketree, a family notorious for their slovenly behavior, thieving ways, laziness, and unaccountably violent inclinations. The patriarch is **Peter Boratko**, a mutant with hooved legs, apelike arms knotted with muscle, and a vast love of drink. He keeps his family more or less in line with brute force, but they unite swiftly against outsiders.

There are eight young Boratko men and women willing to hire on as extra muscle for PCs who want to recruit some hirelings. All have spears, bows, and hide armor and have tribal warrior statistics. They'll also cheerfully steal anything they think they can successfully conceal and make no effort to do anything they're not carefully supervised in doing. Still, all of them are remarkably brave, with an effective Morale of 10 and a stubborn reluctance to show themselves in any way less courageous than their employers.

6. Bowyer

Bundles of chicken feathers can be seen hanging inside this house, next to staves of seasoned wood and twined gut cordage. The pungent smell of glues and lacquers wafts out of the doorway.

Peaceful as Broketree may be, the hunters need to hunt, and many of them are talented bowmen. The bowyer is the elderly **Anna Shooter**, weak-eyed but still a skilled craftswoman. She has 60 rockwood-tipped arrows available for trade at present, and two primitive bows. She also has her own prized superior-quality primitive bow fashioned by her father from city scrap. It has a +2 bonus to hit and damage, but requires TL4 spare parts to repair it, so she used it only at necessity. Nowadays she's scarcely able to draw it, but she's reluctant to admit that she can no longer shoot.

7. Brewer

A solar collector crowns the roof of this building, and the smell of yeast and hops hangs about it like a promise. The local rockwood must not make good kegs, because a collection of mismatched Old Terran barrels and containers are stacked outside the brewery under the watchful eye of a busy apprentice.

The heat required to brew the local beer is difficult to arrange with the lack of firewood in Broketree. The brewery centralizes the effort, using its solar collector to funnel heat down into the stillworks. The arrangement is almost as old as the settlement, and the brewer, **Sylvia Mendez**, is constantly working to keep it in operating order. Local families bring her the raw materials for their brewing.

The contamination of the Sweetwater is a disaster for the brewer. The brewing process does nothing to eliminate the toxins in the water, and without a fresh supply of water the town will be teetotal in a matter of days. The fact that the town will also be uninhabitable in a matter of weeks is of lesser interest to her- the brewery is her life.

8. Bright Family Compound

The backs of several two-storey buildings are connected by high rockwood-trunk walls to form a rectangular compound here, a single gate left open to the road. The roofs of these buildings are slated in rockwood slabs rather than the usual thatching, and above the windowless first floors, the second floors show the glint of Old Terran armorglass windows.

One of the four great families of Broketree, the most important lineages of the Bright clan live within this compound. The Brights are a wary, judicious lot who are invariably reluctant to make important decisions until the last possible moment. Sometimes this tardiness turns out to make the last possible moment some time before the decision is actually reached.

The matriarch of the family is **Susannah Bright**, an elderly woman who has survived her husband, the former mayor, who died eight months ago. She has come to strongly disapprove of Mayor Montoya and finds her about as useful a mayor as a pair of empty boots- still, she won't admit that disapproval publicly unless another mayoral candidate seems likely to be viable.

9. Buckmiller Family Housing

These houses here are in good repair but have a subtly odd look to them. Some have doors too wide, or steps too short, or chairs out front that don't suit human shapes. A glance at the children playing between them gives the reason- at least half of them are Shined, with everything from hooves to scales to tentacles visible among the urchins.

The 60-odd Buckmillers are one of the four great families of Broketree, and at least half of them are mutants. Most of them are related by adoption rather than blood; when one of the local families births a Shined infant, quiet custom often sees them giving it to the Buckmillers, to be among "their own kind". Among them, they can use their unique gifts for the benefit of the community, and their particular burdens aren't strange to their kindred.

The matriarch of the Buckmillers is the relatively young **Eliza Buckmiller**, a mutant with eight arachnid legs. "Auntie Spider" is unmarried and fiercely devoted to her family. Their unique abilities make them a force beyond their limited numbers and they have a wary respect among the townsfolk. The Buckmillers have always resented the Casses, and anything that Old Louie supports is likely to find Eliza standing against.

10. Cass Family Compound

Actual stone blocks were used in constructing this rectangular compound, not the slabbed lengths of rockwood that build the rest of the town. Someone must have gone to great expense to fashion this small fortress here at the edge of town. A square tower at the south end of the building rises three storeys high, as tall as the churchspire in the distance.

The richest and most influential family in town, the Casses have been the social spine of Broketree for sixty years, ever since it emerged as the strongest family in the wake of the disastrous reprisal raid that cost Broketree most of its able adults. That history has left them as flatly uncompromising pacifists, confident that negotiation will always bring a better outcome than force.

Old Louie Cass is the family leader, the best farmer in town and the clan trustee for the finest farmland in Broketree. As many as a hundred adults owe their loyalty to the Casses, either by blood or patronage, and he makes certain they do as he wisely instructs them. He's been insulated so long by his wealth and the lucky peace of Broketree that he simply cannot imagine a situation that can really threaten his family. His health has been failing in the past few months, and it's widely known that he's prone to vicious allergies at the smallest environmental toxin. A drink of contaminated river water would kill him in seconds. His family would be confused and demoralized by his death, and likely to go along with the Lykens and Brights on any decisions made.

The Casses do have a resentment toward the Buckmillers, however. Many of the mutants have mental or physical debilities, and the Casses fear such traits will eventually threaten the village. The Buckmillers are unimpressed with this reasoning- or with the Cass family's tradition of exposing their own mutant offspring.

11. Cripple Joe's Bar

A few tables and benches are set outside this small building, an Old Terran glow-logo proclaiming the glories of some long-vanished liquor. A barkeep missing his right arm below the elbow is rubbing a cloth along the rockwood counter top inside, a half-dozen plastic casks resting on their sides behind him.

Those farmers who don't eat their midday meals in the field often gather here to share conversation, as do others after the night falls and the day's labor is at an end. Tabs are kept on a family basis, with most repayment taking the form of grain brought to the brewer to make beer for Joe. Outsiders lacking that trust can pay a ration's worth of barter for two liters of beer. **Cripple Joe** is cynical, taciturn, and makes a religion out of not getting involved in local politics.

12. First Church of Broketree

The steeple and peaked roof of this building can't be disguised, even with the rough rockwood construction and thatched roof. A cross has been carved above the doorway. In the three-storey tower above, a bell is absent, but the gleaming silvery shine of a well-kept gong sounds the daylight hours over the village. Through the open doorway, clear floors can be seen to allow standing room for several hundred worshippers.

A variant of Mandate Protestant Christianity is worshiped here by five-sixths of Broketree's inhabitants, though only four or five hundred adults and children pack in on any given Sunday. The chief cleric is **Pastor Lucretia Bright**, a relentlessly temperate and careful scion of the Bright family. Her two chief beliefs are the importance of caution in matters of village policy and the need to maintain Broketree's tradition of pacifism. Her daughter is almost of an age to be ordained, and it's generally expected around the village that the girl will be following in her mother's footsteps.

Locals respect the church and its pastor, but their belief is more practical and traditional than it is steeped in any deep theological understanding. Anything more subtle than the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount is likely to pass over their heads, though the Mandate Bible (expurgated of the more problematic passages) survives in several copies around town. All things considered, Pastor Bright likes it just fine that way.

13. Granary and Stronghouse

This broad gray building has the look of a fortress about it, the walls made of crudely-squared trunks of rockwood rather than simple planks. A heavy door wide enough to admit a grain wagon is barred shut at one end, with a smaller but equally sturdy portal beside it. There are no windows on the first floor, and even the second has only narrow slits suitable for launching arrows or bullets. The roof is flat, with raised edges for firing positions.

A relic of Broketree's more militant past, the stronghold still serves as the town granary, with totals and tallies meticulously kept by an old clerk. The stronghold is too small to hold more than half the total population of the village, and that at standing room only, but those who can wedge inside would have an excellent defense.

14. Graveyard

Most of the gravestones here are slabs of rockwood planted on this thickly-plotted ground. Crosses and simple inscriptions predominate, but perhaps a fifth of them have dharma wheels carved into the headstones. A fence of thorny wireweed keeps out animals.

Both Buddhist and Christian villagers are buried here, though a few families prefer to inter their dead on their own land. Perhaps a tenth of the stones are simple memorials to those who went out into the world and never came home again.

15. Jackie Noguera, Huntmistress

The gray rockwood of this home is decorated by bones and fearsome fangs, the remains of mutant predators wired up as trophies above the door. The house itself looks a little worse for wear, signs of decay and neglect in the thatching and the ill-tended garden.

Jackie Noguera, the village huntmistress, lives here with two young siblings. While young, her parents died of the same yellow flux that carried off the former mayor and her husband was recently killed by a flaysnake while hunting. It's left her all the more absorbed in her hunting, and nursing an anger toward the world that's apt to spill over in the first justified violence she can find.

Jackie is a mutant, with vaguely feline features, cat-quiet movement (+3 total skill bonus on all Stealth checks) and lethal aim with her advanced bow. She's idolized by the village hunters despite her relative youth, and the great majority of the hundred-odd hunters, gatherers and fishermen would follow her lead in a crisis.

16. Lumberyard

A tall stack of gray rockwood trunks is piled here. Near by, a much smaller log pile of natural timber has been sheltered beneath a thatched roof and raised up off the ground on risers of rockwood slats.

Normal wood can only be had by loggers who send it down the Sweetwater after dangerous trips into the eastern foothills. What little that Broketree can gather is carefully turned into charcoal for winter heating and other vital uses. Most locals simply make do with thick furs and good insulation as far as is humanly possible.

17. Lyken Trading Post

This squat building is long and wide, the front given over to an array of grain sacks, stacked hides, rockwood slats, and other Broketree products. Toward the back, doors along both walls suggest a dozen smaller suites built into the rear of the building, each with a small knot of children squalling and playing before the steps.

Not all of the Lyken family live here, but most of the more important or accomplished members do. As one of the four great families of the village, they remain acutely aware of the source of their influence- their trade connections and barter privileges with strangers. In exchange for making sure that the other great families have the first pick of precious relics and ensuring that the ordinary folk don't acquire troublesome implements, the Lyken are allowed to take their own share from each outside trade performed by the village. This leaves them unloved by the locals, but when it comes down to it, most of the farmers would just as soon let someone else deal with those dangerous, untrustworthy strangers who come in.

The trading post has little that's likely to be of interest to adventurers. Most of their wares are farm goods that traders take up to Digger Springs to exchange for more portable, high-value relics. The trading post boss, **Vincent Lyken**, can direct and approve trades with local artisans, but its expected that the buyer should pay a tenth of the barter price to Lyken for this assistance. Those outsiders who defy this custom risk expulsion from the village. Outsiders who prove themselves by some act of heroism are accorded the rights of locals, and need not barter through the Lykens.

18. Meeting Square

Wagon loads of small river pebbles have been dumped in this town square and smoothed down into a surface more reliable than the ordinary dirt and mud. A few overhanging eaves provide shade along the sides of the square, and the elderly and unoccupied can be seen here all through the daylight hours. An empty stage along the north side of the square is raised comfortably above the gravel.

A general promenade for the community, the meeting square also sees use when the town's adults must come together and decide on a course of action. The mayor and the great families settle most matters on their own, but points that touch on the whole community require the consent of the people.

19. Memorial Stone

A skillful artisan has carved a pillar of rockwood into a memorial depicting a woman clasping a dying spearman to her breast. The inscription below is slightly worn, but a literate eye can read the following words: "Sacred to the memory of the dead of 2810. God grant that we may never have another such lesson."

The catastrophic reprisal raid launched against the Razorback raider clan in 2810 resulted in enormous loss of life among the village's able-bodied population. For some years it seemed likely that the entire settlement would collapse, but after the worst had passed, the current woodmason's grandfather carved this memorial. The villagers learned a harsh lesson of pacifism from events, and many of them are reluctant to draw any other conclusions from it.

20. Mill

A rockwood waterwheel churns slowly in the Sweetwater, the sound of grinding stones rumbling from within this riverside mill. A door wide enough for a wagon opens into a storage shed affixed to the side of the millhouse.

The wheat grown in Broketree must be milled into flour, and the miller, **John Chang**, takes care of that duty. Chang dislikes outsiders on general principle, particularly since they so rarely have any need for his services.

21. Porter Li's Home

This little rockwood house is little more than a shack, though the planks are painted with a dark, rusty red and slashes of white for decoration. A wireweed charm sways in a glassless window.

Porter Li lives here, eking out a bare existence as a dogsbody for Vincent Lyken at the trading post. He arrived in Broketree from Digger Springs a year ago, after a quarrel with the boss there made the place unhealthy for him. Vincent took him on as a work hand after the young man showed a sharp awareness of what kind of wares would trade best to the northbound caravans.

In actuality, Li is a plant sent by the boss of Digger Springs to keep an eye on his southern neighbors. Under a loose floorboard of his house, he's hidden a carefully-wrapped *quantum comm* tuned to a matching unit in Digger Springs. He'll use the unit to coordinate his actions with Digger Springs' leadership as soon as the disaster strikes.

22. Smokehouse

A small pile of precious timber is under shelter beside this long, low smokehouse. The rockwood planks are daubed carefully with river clay to hold in the heat and smoke, and the door sports a well-kept padlock on the bar.

Limited meat and limited wood combine to make the smokehouse a modest affair by most farm standards. Still, the hunters bring in enough game to make it worth the keeping. Vincent Lyken is in charge of any outsider purchases from the smokehouse stock, and he'll trade one ration of excellent smoked meat for two rations of less savory provender- his trade fees included in the price.

23. Stables

A few lean-flanked horses slouch in the stables here, or amble over a diffidently grassy pasture. The stablemaster's house is snug against the long row of stalls.

The horses here are available for farm rental and are of working stock rather than riding beasts or trained warhorses. There are two pack ponies that **Samuel Nkweme**, the exceedingly blonde stablemaster, is willing to part with for 100 rations worth of barter apiece.

The other horses are not for sale, being too important to the village's plowing and carting to risk in expeditions. If persuaded of the absolute necessity, Samuel might reluctantly allow someone who actually seems to know how to ride to borrow a mount for the length of an expedition.

24. Strangers House

This small bunkhouse isn't the best in town, but someone's recently put on fresh thatch, and it has the faintly worn look of a place regularly occupied.

These lodgings aren't excessively comfortable, but the roof is tight, the walls are sturdy, and a solar box oven is available for slow cooking. As many as two dozen men and women can bunk here if a particularly large caravan comes through. Outsiders are required to remain here after nightfall, and a Lyken is usually here to count noses at dusk.

25. Tanner

A pungent reek shrouds this isolated shack on the outskirts of town. Various rockwood vats are filled with noisome fluids, and pelts have been stretched for scraping and softening. The stink near the vats is strong enough to make a visitor's eyes water.

The local tanner, *Spotty Jim*, is daubed with the dyes of his trade. He's a reasonably skilled leatherworker as well as a tanner, and most of the town's shoes and the hide armor of the huntsmen come from his hands. He has three suits of hide armor ready that he'd be willing to trade for suitable inducement.

26. Threshing Floor

Slabs of carefully-fit rockwood have been laid down here on a low rise of earth at the edge of the village. A few wisps of wheat straw from the last threshing still drift around the perimeter.

At harvest times, the local grain is threshed here, the beaten stalks thrown up in the air to let the wind take the chaff and brush aside the straw.

27. Town Hall

This two-storey building of rockwood and stone-block foundations overlooks the meeting square. The windows gleam with Old Terran armorglass and the door stands open during daylight hours. Some enterprising woodmason has carved "Broketree Town Hall" above the doorway.

The town hall serves as the courthouse, archives, and mayoral residence for Broketree. *Mayor Maria Montoya* can be found here during the days holding court over assorted minor quarrels and arrangements of shared village labor. Old *Judge Hanrahan* has little to do but sit and doze most days, though he can put on his dark robes and oversee a capital case if need be. Most disputes are settled more informally with the mayor's arbitration.

28. Waterhouse

This squat building is circled by a low trough fed by a half-dozen lengths of ceraplast piping that jut from within the structure. A much larger pipe dips deep into the nearby Sweetwater River. Through one of the armorglassed windows, a hand-turned pump feeds the piping.

Broketree's fields rely on rain, but the waterhouse pumps the settlement's drinking water up from the riverbank. The worn-out remains of the Old Terran filters that saved the village last time are kept in the house, and are enough to give examiners a clear idea of what the intact filters are supposed to look like.

29. Woodmasonry Pit

A sawpit and a scrap-metal whipsaw stand ready next to a stack of rockwood trunks. One of the trunks is half-carved into the smooth gray planks that make up so much of the local construction. The saw looks hard-used by the work, with triangular teeth chipped and dulled.

Beside the sawpit, the woodmason's house is an advertisement for his skill, small but perfectly joined in every particular. The walls are decorated with shallow carvings of vegetables, wheat-fields and fanciful animals.

Most able hands in Broketree can manage basic rockwood work, but *Lawrence Nakagami* is the best woodmason in town. The tough and imperishable Highshined wood has given up all its secrets to the Nakagamis over the past two hundred years, and the middle-aged woodmason is careful to keep most of them in the family. His strapping young sons Hito and Jack help him in the sawpit and learn the family trade in the process. If the PCs become accepted citizens of Broketree and wish to construct their own homes, they'll likely need to work out an arrangement with Lawrence.

30. Xia Family Farmstead

At the edge of town, this shabby farmstead has the look of recent abuse. The frames of the windows and doors are scarred as if by bestial claws, and the wireweed fencing around the fields has been torn open in several places. A young boy sits atop the two-storey farmhouse, watching the tangle of fallen rockwood trees that fan out beyond the fenceline.

The Xia (SHEE-ah) family home is a relatively recent one, founded by a small clan that found Digger Springs altogether too exciting for their tastes. They brought their grubstake to Broketree, and there was enough of it to convince the locals to allow them to settle. Only the worst land in the village was available, however, and their fields stretch south into some of the thickest rockwood tangles in the area. Even the woodmasons shun the deadfalls there, for something about the land seems to attract the unwholesome attention of mutant beasts.

Village legend talks of a ruined Old Terran laboratory an hour's march south along the Sweetwater, though it's been a generation since any villager has laid eyes on it. Something foul was in that old ruin, and it's a piece of common wisdom to stay clear of the area when out hunting or dragging rockwood. A few villagers are starting to wonder if it was wise to let the Xias settle there, as it seems to have stirred up the beasts. There's no other cleared land available for them, however, and it would take several seasons of hard work to clear enough wirevine to let them relocate elsewhere. Some of the harder-hearted of the villagers would quietly prefer the Xias to be eaten some night. They're almost outsiders as it is, after all.

The patriarch of the little clan is *Feng Xia*, who along with his wife Mei oversee a brood of two dozen descendants and relations packed within their farmhouse. Two of their adult grandchildren have already died to mutant animal attacks, and Feng is getting desperate. He has very little to offer in exchange for help, but Feng's good esteem is worth a good deal in Digger Springs. It's enough to buy a friend of his more trust and better bargains than an outsider would normally rate.

IMPORTANT NPCs AND COMBAT STATISTICS

NPC	NOTABLE TRAITS	NOTES	LOC
Abbot Williamson	Shaven head	Buddhist chief monk of the American Sangha Temple	1
Anna Shooter	Squinty eyes	Village bowyer, has 60 arrows and 2 primitive bows for sale	6
Arnetta Corroero	Perpetual scowl	Healer with some stims for sale, +2 total Tech/Medical bonus	2
Billy Wirewright	Clings to tools	Local scrapsmith, +2 total Tech/Postech bonus	4
Cripple Joe	No right forearm	Taciturn and absolutely apolitical barkeep	11
Eliza Buckmiller	Eight arachnid legs	Buckmiller matriarch. "Auntie Spider" detests the Casses	9
Feng Xia	Short white beard	Patriarch of the small Xia clan, hard-pressed by mutant beasts	30
Jackie Noguera	Catlike mutant	Village huntsmistress. Felinical mutant inclined to violent action	15
John Chang	Sour, puckered mouth	Village miller. Dislikes outsiders because they have no need of him	20
Judge Hanrahan	Constantly falling asleep	Town magistrate; oversees jury trials for serious crimes	27
Lawrence Nakagami	Burn marks all over	Best woodmason in town and the man to talk to for construction	29
Mayor Maria Montoya	Serenely confident	Compromise mayor of Broketree; looks competent, but is useless in a crisis	27
Old Louie Cass	Chews wheatstraws	Cass family patriarch. Violently pacifistic, mistrusts Buckmillers	10
Pastor Lucretia Bright	Very slow talker	Pastor at First Church of Broketree. Determined pacifist.	12
Peter Boratko	Backslapper	Boratko patriarch- hoofed and ape-armed, willing to hire out his boys	5
Porter Li	Wireweed-scarred hands	Vincent Lyken's dogsbody and a secret spy from Digger Springs	21
Robert Chapman	Flour-streaked	Village baker involved in nothing but baked goods	3
Samuel Nkweme	Blondest man in town	Stablemaster. Will sell two pack ponies for 100 rations apiece.	23
Spotty Jim	Smeared with dyes	Town tanner and leatherworker. Has three suits of hide armor to trade	25
Susannah Bright	Unflappably calm	Bright clan matriarch. Cautious to a fault	8
Sylvia Mendez	Smells of hops	Brewer who cares only about her brewery	7
Vincent Lyken	Always smiling	Lyken clan leader. Controls all trade with outsiders	17

BROKETREE VILLAGER

No. Enc.	1d4 (3d6)
Movement	20'
Armor Class	9 (unarmored), or 6 (hide armor) for hunters
Hit Dice	1
Attacks	+0/knife or club for most +2/spear or bow for hunters
Damage	1d4 for most, 1d6 for hunters
Save	15
Morale	7, or 8 for hunters
Loot Type	None (G1)
Skill Bonus	+1

The inhabitants of Broketree are poor combatants. Most of the 600 adult residents lack the ordinary martial ability of a wastelander and don't have the hide armor or spears that are common elsewhere. About sixty of the villagers are hunters, often self-selected from among those locals who refuse to abide by the tradition of pacifism. They are unusually good warriors by the standards of their fellows, though they require the direction of Jackie Noguera to truly coordinate their efforts for war.

Peter Boratko: AC 6 hide armor, Move 20', HD 4/20 hit points, Atk: +5/axe, Dmg: 1d8+2, Save 13+, Morale 10, Skill +2. Peter's no strategist and enjoys friendly fisticuffs with strangers, taking on two or three at a time. He also has no special love for Broketree. If convinced to aid the PCs, however, he can dragoon twenty of his boys and girls to help, each with hunter statistics.

Jackie Noguera: AC 6 hide armor, Move 20', HD 3/15 hit points, Atk: +5/knife or bow, Dmg: 1d4+2/knife or 1d6+2/advanced bow, Save 14+, Morale 9, Skill +2 or +3 for stealth purposes. Noguera doesn't pick fights or stick around for losing battles, but she's itching to fight someone after the recent deaths of much of her family.

Billy Wirewright: AC 4 scrap mail, Move 20', HD 3/10 hit points, Atk: +3/semi-auto rifle, Dmg: 1d10+2, Save 14+, Morale 8, Skill +2. Wirewright has no love of fighting, but he feels an obligation to the village and will turn out to defend it if he must. He has a semi-auto rifle stored away in case of great need, and a suit of scrap mail he pieced together quietly some years ago. Under no circumstances will he sell either of them, and he doesn't have the necessary blueprints to reproduce the rifle. At most times he won't be carrying any weapon more fearsome than a handheld laser cutter which serves as a monoblade- Atk +2, Damage 1d8+1.

FURTHER ADVENTURES IN BROKETREE

Assuming Broketree survives the impending disaster, there's still a good deal of play to be had among the locals. Village quarrels and unsatisfied needs have a way of involving outsiders, and an extra pair of hands that know how to use a spear can always find some sort of employment around the town.

DOWN ON THE FARM

The Xia farm is a hardscrabble affair, up against a stretch of the Fallen Forest that's notorious for its dangerous fauna. Something about that patch of forest seems to attract the worst kind of pests, and occasionally it gives forth a real man eater. The land went fallow for generations until the Xia clan turned up from Digger Springs, and the town elders agreed to let them stake it out for their homestead, and two dozen of them promptly moved in.

It was the only cleared land available, and the Xias had to get in a crop in time to feed the family. Now that they've planted it, they're spending all their time tending it and fending off the regular incursions of dangerous mutant animals. The other families could work together to clear fresh land for the Xias, but their past as outsiders has left the neighbors less inclined to helpfulness than might otherwise be the case. As it stands, two of the patriarch Feng Xia's adult grandsons have already died fighting the beasts.

The Xias are poor, having sunk all their resources into preparing the ground and fencing it as best they can against the animals. Anyone who could find and dispatch the source of this plague would have their gratitude and a safe haven in their home, albeit little more.

The source of the trouble is a dangerous Old Terran medical production facility an hour's march south of the village. The locals are aware of the ruin's existence, but no one has ventured there in a generation. They suspect its nature, but the beasts are so dangerous around it that even the huntsmen keep clear of that patch of forest. For a map, a GM can use the generic factory map provided in the *Other Dust* rulebook and stock it with a suitable array of mutant beasts tainted by the still-active mutagens pooling within the lab.

SUCCESSION CRISIS

After the disaster has passed, it will be obvious that Mayor Montoya is utterly unfit for her position. The four major families- Cass, Buckmiller, Lyken, and Bright- will have to pick a replacement. Unfortunately, they will be unlikely to come to a peaceful conclusion without some outside help.

The Casses detest the often-mutated Buckmillers because of the tendency to mental illness and physical debility possessed by many of the clan. They're as good as their word about it, and mutant infants of their clan are left to die in the forest. They reason that it's not violence to simply withhold the resources of their clan.

The Buckmillers detest the Casses in turn, so much so that they're willing to see the village suffer if they can get in a dig at their rivals. The Brights are cautious and noncommittal to a fault and will never advance a specific candidate or endorse one until at least two other families have done so. The Lykens are mercenary, and will cut a deal with the candidate or family that gives them the best offer for their assistance.

The Casses will advance one of their senior members, George Cass, as their candidate. A leathery old farmer who is strong on tradition and custom, he'll appeal to the townsfolk who want things to back to the way they were before. The Buckmillers will put forward Jolene Buckmiller, a feathered young woman who is both intelligent, charismatic, and far more loyal to her family than she is to the village. She'll be campaigning based on the inadequacy of the old customs of pacifism and promise a stronger Broketree. The Lykens offer Vincent Lyken as a compromise candidate focused on forming outside alliances, but they're willing to be bought out. The Brights will offer and endorse no one until they are forced to by necessity or familial debts.

The electorate is composed of all the adult population, but in practice most families vote with their patrons or relations. If the PCs do nothing effective to back a particular candidate, roll 1d10: on a 1-4, George Cass is elected, on 5-8, Jolene Buckmiller is chosen, and on 9-10 Vincent Lyken is picked. Action by the PCs will tilt those odds as circumstances suggest. If three families can be brought to back a single candidate, their success is assured. Bribes will most likely need to take the form of favors to an entire family or goods divisible enough to share out over an extended clan, as single items of value are too hard to share with other voters.

JUST REWARDS

A GM may need to quickly figure out just what a given family can pay for the PCs' help, or what sort of trade goods the community has available.

Billy Wirewright can manufacture any TL0/1 item with sufficient time. He has a substantial supply of TL0 and TL1 spare parts, to whatever amount you think appropriate, and he's willing to sell these to outsiders. He can also manufacture TL2 revolvers with the blueprints he possesses, though he lacks the spare parts to make them. He'll sell the guns to anyone, but copies of the blueprints will be sold only to confirmed friends of Broketree.

Vincent Lyken has 400 rations worth of grain and dried foodstuffs available for buying trade goods. Given that each ration weighs 2 kilos, PCs may find it difficult to carry all of this, even with pack animals. He may or may not have TL0/1 travel gear available from the last caravan to pass through- 50% chance of any given likely item, and only one example of each at most.

The tanner, stablemaster, brewer, and bowyer can sell goods as noted in their location entries- standard price for hide armor, two pack ponies at 100 rations apiece, hard liquor at five rations the bottle, and standard price for primitive bows and arrows at the bowyer.

The four great families each have 400 rations worth of grain to offer to outside helpers for their services, along with a selection of random goods. Roll 1d20+5 five times on the Random Loot table in the rewards section of the core book to see what valuables they can offer. Smaller clans have only 50 rations worth of food at most, and only two rolls at 1d20+5 for scavenged relics.

DIGGER SPRINGS

Digger Springs is a town of mud and rust, built on the grave of a city and surviving by what it can pick from the bones. The mud miners who live there are a raucous and sullen lot, always dreaming of the next big strike and spending what they can find on bad booze and worse company. Every day's journey down into the tunnels might be the last, and few of Digger Springs' citizens care to die with any living left undone.

The buildings of the town are made of mud, bricks fired in the town's solar kiln to resist the rains that sometimes sweep the nearby hills. Here and there, panels of excavated sheet siding or ceraplast roof shingles form splashes of smoothness and brighter color on the buildings, with a few shacks rigged together out of a patchwork of dug-up construction debris. The mud houses are more temperate than the scrap shacks, but the walls and earthen floors often end up riddled by a zoo of mutant vermin.

Everything is more slapdash in Digger Springs- the buildings are tenuous, the streets badly kept, the flow of people disorderly and impatient. Some of this comes from Digger Springs' youth, as the enclave was founded less than forty years ago. The rest of it comes from the hard-driving, hard-living locals, many of whom drifted in to make their fortune in the mudholes and have little interest in anything but the next big strike.

Digger Springs is relatively rich in tech and salvaged relics, but the locals are indifferent farmers and poor hunters at best. Some townsmen run hardscrabble farms on the mud flats and some miners take occasional trips to hunt, but a significant portion of their food comes from trade with outsiders. As much as a quarter of the community is fed on grain brought in from Broketree.

LIFE IN DIGGER SPRINGS

The great social divide in Digger Springs is between the mud miners who make their living excavating the Old Terran city buried during the Scream and the townsfolk who provide the services and goods that the miners need for their work. The townsfolk sometimes view the miners with a jaundiced eye for their disruptive ways, and the miners are prone to grumbling about gouging and shoddy goods, but the Boss keeps both groups quiet and cooperative.

Townfolk live relatively orderly, upright lives- wedding, birthing, and maintaining the enclave for the next generation. Many of them were mud miners in their youth before they hit a lode rich enough to set them up in a safer and more reliable trade. Mud miners live in tents and shacks and dugouts in the hillsides, their miserable squalor leavened by the marvelous artifacts of the ancients. A dirty hole in the hill might be lit by a perpetual Old Terran lamp, or a sick miner in some fetid shanty might be revived by a dose of Old Terran stims. Still, there are times when a chieftain's ransom in ancient tech doesn't seem as appealing to these hard souls as a bottle of rotgut liquor and a none-too-discriminating companion.

Town laws are lax in some regards, with ordinary fighting largely ignored unless it results in death or maiming. Property rights, claim

rights, and theft are protected ruthlessly- a stolen grain sack that would earn a man a public whipping in Broketree would likely get him hanged in Digger Springs. Those who can't pay the fines for bad behavior are indentured to the Boss or the aggrieved party for as long as it takes to pay off the debt. So long as these indentured wretches don't end up dead, the community doesn't especially care what their owners do with them. Malefactors owing a public debt can expect to spend a lot of time as the first men into unstable mud caves to check for danger.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The head of Digger Springs is the Boss, presently Benedict "Big Ben" Rao. Big Ben lives up to his name, more than two meters tall and almost as wide across, with a thick layer of scales covering his body and the strength of a bullman in his massive thews. His election was a matter of general agreement in the wake of his predecessor's death in a mine collapse. When he dies in turn, the community will argue, bribe, and shoot it out for another week as a new Boss is elected.

Big Ben's word is law in Digger Springs, and he's got several dozen tough miners and townsfolk to make sure that any troublemakers come to understand that fact. Rao is ruthlessly Machiavellian in his political calculations, but he resents the duty in the first place. He would much sooner spend his days with his beautiful young wife and two young children rather than in the endless hours of petty disputes and mine claims he's obliged to resolve.

Big Ben's only interests are his family and the continuing prosperity of Digger Springs, in that order. While he would regret the necessity, there is no depth to which he will not sink to protect his family and his community. Whoever needs to be sacrificed, whatever needs to be done, he will do it and worry about its moral consequences later.

The "bossmen" are his minions, and range from petty bullies versed in managing men as bad as they are to more respectable souls who prefer to operate by persuasion. All of them are armed with revolvers, and they're almost never seen on duty in groups smaller than three.

DIGGER SPRINGS AND OUTSIDERS

Digger Springs likes outsiders far better than Broketree does, and most of its inhabitants are ex-raiders, wanderers, exiles, and castoffs who made their way here to make a big strike in the mines. Most mine teams will be willing to give a likely-seeming stranger a run as a worker. An outsider who fails too many team bosses and can't find a townsman to employ him is moved on briskly, however, before desperation starts driving him to theft and the hanging that must follow.

Outsiders can go and live wherever they please in Digger Springs, and cut whatever deals they care to make with the locals. Digger Springs relies too much on trade to permit outright fraud on traders, but buyers are advised to keep their wits about them when dealing with the miners and their unpredictable finds.

DIGGER SPRINGS				TIER 1 POLITY		
POPULATION	600 adults, 1,000 children, 100 aged					
GOVERNMENT	Monarchic, ruled by a dictatorial Boss					
ORIGIN	Ex-raiders seeking the plunder of a buried city					
TAGS	Trade Hub, Buried Treasure			TL	1	
TIER PROG. RUIN SOURCES						
FOOD	1	6		Trouble at the mines	1	
INFLUENCE	1	3		Corrupt bossmen	1	
MORALE	5	4	+1	Local squabbling	1	
SECURITY	6	4	+1			
TECH	8	3	+1			
TOTAL PROGRESS			3	TOTAL RUIN		3
PERKS		None, as Digger Springs hasn't any specially advantageous traits.				

Digger Springs isn't much to look at with its mud-brick buildings and scrap shanties. The first settlement here took place less than forty years ago, with a small band of raiders settling down to make a go at excavating the buried Old Terran city beneath the nearby mudflats. A crude sort of order coalesced out of their bickering and the steady accretion of farmers and other camp followers, and now Digger Springs almost looks respectable, if you squint and turn your head just right.

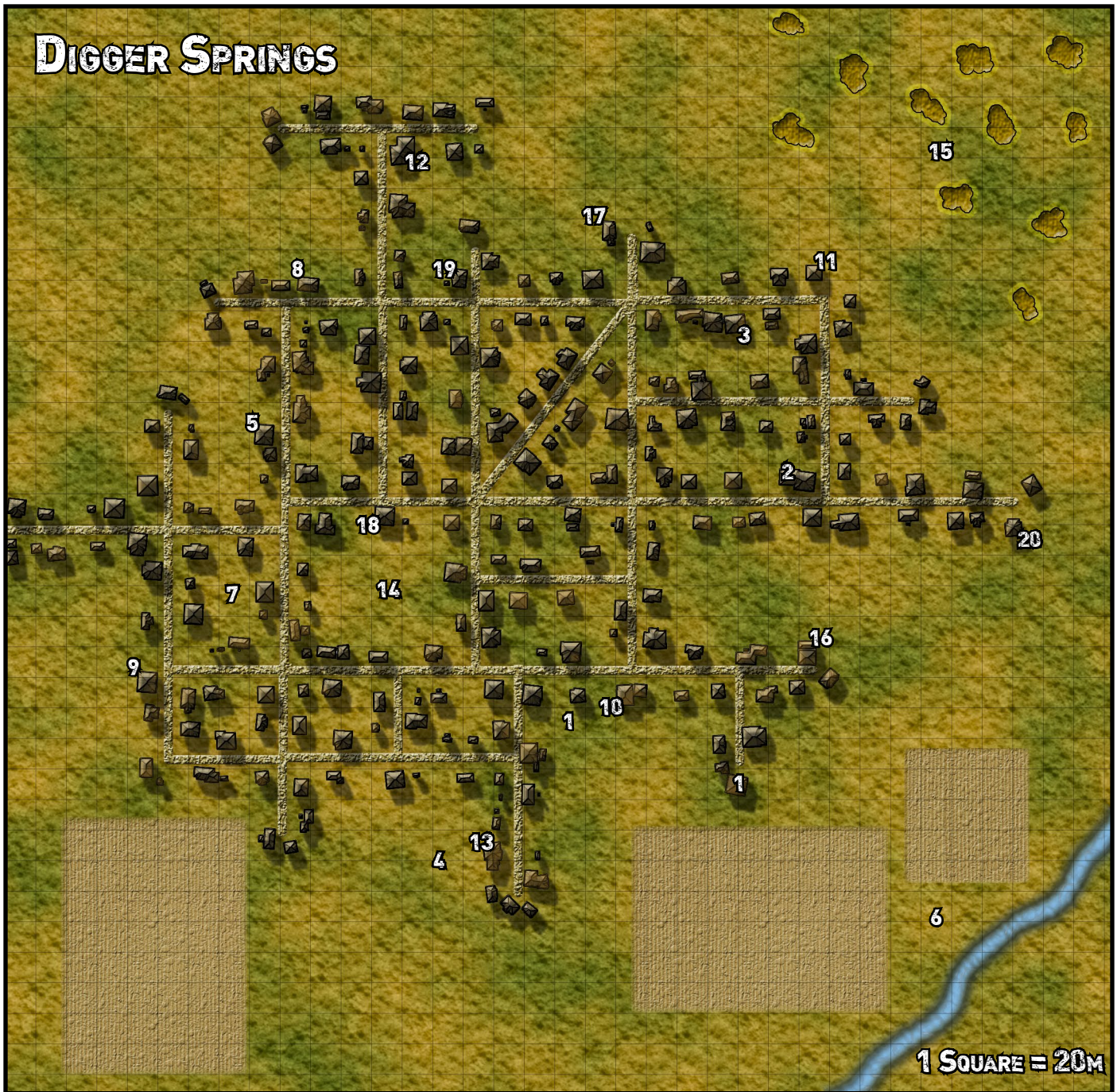
Their past and their raucous ways do little to endear them to their neighbors, however. To the south, Broketree will deal with them only at arm's length, relying on outside trade caravans to bring up the supplies of grain that Digger Springs needs for survival. The mining town is relatively rich in tech, and outsiders come from far around to barter their primitive staples for scavenged wealth.

Digger Springs is not a particularly pressing danger to its neighbors, being more absorbed in digging for treasure than raiding the other human settlements in the region. Castoffs who can't cut it in the mud mines or who are exiled by Big Ben Rao often seek to make their living by plundering nearby homesteads and enclaves, however, and such behavior has given the place a bad name with the locals. Outside traders tend to be less fastidious about such things, though they do put on extra guards when they make a run for the town.

The town's great weak point is its lack of a self-sustaining food supply. There are farmers and hunters in town who provide most of what the town needs, but a quarter of its people are fed on grain brought up from Broketree by the traders. Without Broketree's farmers, the town would rapidly be torn apart by fighting over the remaining food sources.

With the contamination of the Sweetwater River threatening both enclaves, the town's leader, Big Ben Rao, is forced to make some hard decisions. Peaceful solutions don't seem to be forthcoming, and he's willing to do whatever he has to do to ensure the survival of his people. If that means stealing the water filters, enslaving a quarter of Broketree's farmers to work Digger Springs' mudflats, and driving the rest into the badlands to die... well, he's going to feel real bad about it all when it's over.

ENEMIES
<i>Benedict "Big Ben" Rao</i> is the town leader. While not naturally disposed to buy trouble with the PCs, if they mean to bring Broketree the water filters he's going to do whatever he must to change their minds or relieve them of the burden of the tech.
<i>Mother Claire</i> is a Marianite Catholic priest with a grudge against sin and against insufficiently upstanding women of any stripe, but particularly against the local whores and any outsider women. The town would be much better off without any of them, and such cleansing sometimes needs to be helped along a little.
FRIENDS
<i>Lucky Frank, team boss for the Radmoles.</i> Famed for his good fortune in picking claim sites and his bad luck in keeping his team alive. Frank's always looking for new hires, whether to secure a remote claim site or go down and check a buried building.
<i>Lazy Sally Panchayat</i> is the leathery, gaudily-dressed owner of the town's brothel, and generally despised by the married women of Digger Springs. Barely tolerated for her house's services to the unmarried miners and traders, her girls only get what justice they can hire- and outsiders make convenient hires. Big Ben is sympathetic to their situation, but doesn't dare buy that much trouble with Digger Springs' "respectable" womenfolk.
THINGS OF IMPORTANCE
<i>A claim map</i> leads to the location of a buried Old Terran factory filled with precious salvage- and still-operational bots. The remoteness of the claim left it vulnerable, however, and the team working it hasn't been to town in a month.
<i>A ground-penetrating radar unit</i> has been cobbled together by a now-dead scrounger. The team that gets their hands on the device will be able to drive their tunnels to the richest lodes in the flats, but it has vanished after the inventor's suspicious death.
COMPLICATIONS
A mine tunnel has accidentally disturbed the burial location of a dangerous robot security detachment or the lair of a burrowing mutant menace. The town is attacked by the peril, and its nest needs to be cleared before the rest of the menace digs itself out.
A raider clan has set up between Broketree and Digger Springs, and has captured one of the precious food caravans that brings up vital supplies to the settlement. They won't release the food unless they're paid off in salvage, and threaten to destroy it if their demands aren't met. Some of them are discontented local miners, and are able to recognize other locals- for delicate handling of their demands, outsiders would stand the best chance of infiltrating the vicious group.
PLACES CHARACTERISTIC OF DIGGER SPRINGS
<i>The mud flats,</i> pocked with mining pits in varying states of disrepair, mining teams watching each other warily.
<i>The market square</i> on the day a caravan comes in, men and women hawking plundered tech and gaudy trifles for life-giving food and vital equipment.



LOCATION		LOCATION	
1	Bannerjee Mining Supplies	11	Jail
2	Big Ben's House	12	Lazy Sally's House
3	Bossmen's Place	13	Marianite Catholic Church
4	Burying Ground	14	Meeting Square
5	Claim Office and Archives	15	Mineshafts
6	Cutting Yard	16	Pumphouse
7	Digger Springs Market Square	17	Red Earth Kilns
8	Doc Boswell's House	18	Sweetwater Saloon
9	First Bank of Digger Springs	19	The Scrap Pile
10	Granary	20	Tom's Eats

PLACES IN DIGGER SPRINGS

Digger Springs is less sophisticated than Broketree in some ways and more advanced in others. Reliant as it is on small farms and traded food, the town lacks a community mill, threshing floor, bakery, and other food-processing institutions. Its recent founding only forty years ago has also deprived it of much in the way of elaborate construction, with sun-fired mud bricks and excavated Old Terran scrap forming the bulk of its buildings.

Still, the relics and plunder found within the buried Old Terran buildings allow for flashes of luxury amid the general muddy squalor. Lifestyle stims to keep the user immaculately tidy, Old Terran glowbugs to shine at night without fuel, and a sizable number of well-kept scrap guns can all be found in the mining village.

1. Bannerjee Mining Supplies

A crossed pick and shovel have been crudely painted above the doorway of this low residence. Behind, a broad sweep of flat earth is furrowed with the marks of agriculture, a scanty crop of maize pushing its way up between the clods. Through the open doorway, a scrap-metal shovel and a coil of rope can be seen among other odds and ends.

Henry Bannnerjee runs this depot, when he's not busy tending the fields behind his shop. Enough gear is lost in mudslides and tunnel falls to require a steady supply of fresh kit, and Henry makes a good portion of his living rounding up picks, shovels, and glowbugs for aspiring mud miners.

Henry himself looks every inch the mud miner- short, wiry, and with red earth ground into every pore. He'll sell a pick or a shovel for ten rations, and primitive rope, oil, and lanterns are available at usual prices- along with a cache of a half-dozen glowbugs for the high rollers. His supplies are limited at any one time to no more than fifty rations worth of goods- once the PCs have bought that much, he'll run out of stock for a month.

2. Big Ben's House

This low brick house is much the same as the others that neighbor it. Only a painted plaque depicting the scales of justice serves to indicate that it's the home of the settlement's Boss. In the dusty yard behind the ochre bricks of the house, a young boy with lizard-scaled arms swings back and forth on a rope sling.

Benedict "Big Ben" Rao can usually be found here during daylight hours, handling a steady parade of small issues and disputes. He's a mountain of a mutant, more than two meters tall and covered with greenish scales over a massively powerful build. Most of the locals are reluctant to bring matters to him until they've hammered out all other possibilities- Big Ben has a natural genius for coming up with solutions that leave both sides feeling equally wounded. As a consequence, most of the locals are satisfied with his judgments, consoled in the knowledge that their opponents suffered as badly as they did.

Ben's lovely young wife Lakshmi and his children Betty and Joseph stay largely out of sight when Big Ben is talking business, though one of the young children will race in now and then to demand paternal

attention. Both children show traces of Big Ben's mutations- Joseph has streaks of scales down his arms like those that cover his father, and little Betty's dense musculature leaves her moving very slowly, but with the strength of a grown man.

3. Bossmen's Place

The sound of raucous laughter and casual cursing echoes from within this mud-brick building. A glance through the open windows shows a few double bunks against one wall and a table commonly occupied by rough-looking men throwing down cards.

The "bossmen" are the muscle for Big Ben, the on-call defenders of order in this rough mining camp. There are twenty in total, with five on immediate duty at any one time. Shifts run for a week at a time, during which the bossmen reside here when not out keeping order in the mining fields.

The moral qualities of the bossmen vary substantially. Some are honest and decent lawmen, while others are nothing more than bullies with scrap-metal badges. All of them are implicitly obedient to Big Ben, however, that quality being non-negotiable with the Boss. Active extortion or bullying of newcomers is rare, but those who break minor rules in Digger Springs can expect to "contribute to the public stores" by way of a bossman's pockets.

4. Burying Ground

Scrap-metal crosses and monuments of baked brick mark the resting places of Digger Springs' many dead. A slab of Old Terran ceraplast stands against the low brick wall that encloses the graveyard, its surface etched with hundreds of names.

The mud mines often eat their dead, and nothing is left to inter but a name and a quick-fading memory. When a body remains, it's interred here in the burying ground, while those lost forever beneath the earth are scratched into the Burying Wall by their spouses, children, or team boss. By village custom, the person who does the scratching is considered the executor of the dead miner's estate.

5. Claim Office and Archives

One of the larger buildings in town, the claim office is a long, wide, low-slung brick building with a small solar oven and a row of drying tables atop its flat roof. Through the doorway, long racks full of clay slabs are visible.

Any mine team has the right to stake one claim up to fifty meters square on unoccupied land. Claims can be inherited or sold, but only to other team bosses, and a miner can't belong to more than one team at a time. Most teams simply stake their land and work it until no further profit is to be had before turning it loose again.

The clay records of these claims and releases are kept here, under the watchful eye of old **Josephine Santander**, the town archivist. Old Josephine hardly needs the tablets to know every inch of land within a kilometer of Digger Springs. Her advice as to which areas have yet to be fully exploited is valuable- and she charges accordingly for her insight. She receives a small stipend from the taxes collected by the Boss, but otherwise relies on fees for her counsel.

6. Cutting Yard

Stacks of timber await cutting by the powered whipsaw that trembles above the sawpit here. Techs and tenders scramble over it, babying the jury-rigged lumber cutter and feeding it fresh logs to be carved into mine supports and logwood for the Sweetwater Saloon's still.

Timber is hard to come by in Digger Springs, albeit somewhat easier than in Broketree. Loggers upriver cut and roll the trunks into the Sweetwater to be fished out when they pass Digger Springs.

7. Digger Springs Market Square

This broad square is desolate on most days, a few scrap-built booths and empty awning frames standing in the general emptiness. Traders up from Broketree or parts more distant make use of it when it comes time to offload their wares of food and more exotic luxuries in exchange for the salvage dug up by the mud miners.

Digger Springs has no standing market, but this square serves when a trading caravan comes into town. Such events happen perhaps once a month, and usually bring the village to a standstill for a day or two as miners sell their finds and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Most such caravans are bringing food bought in Broketree up to the Springs, or coming from far parts with luxuries unknown in this region of the New Earth. Expensive hardware and advanced tech is uncommon, but not unknown.

Any given caravan will have 1d2 Type A power cells, 1d2 x 20 rounds of ammunition, three rolls at 1d20+5 on the Random Loot table in the core book, and one roll at 1d20+10. Prices will usually be at least double the standard book prices, and the caravans don't give much in the way of change. Large caravans with wheeled carts might bring 2d8 x 1,000 rations worth of food up from Broketree. The locals need at least 8,000 rations worth of food a month from outside traders in order to survive, and any attempt to interfere with this purchase is apt to be met unkindly by the locals.

8. Doc Boswell's House

An awning of tough Old Terran cloth shades a number of simple cots on which maimed miners groan and shift. Most of them look to be recovering from broken limbs, knife wounds, or the gashes that come from slipped mine gear. Beside the awning, the squat residence of the local healer stands with its door open for business.

Doc Boswell is a skeletally thin man with an inordinate fondness for strong drink. He's quite competent at the work required of him, however, with a +2 total bonus on all medical skill checks. This skill remains with him even when he's noticeably drunk, which is his usual condition from about noon onward.

Doc has 5 Purge stims and 10 Lifestyle stims he'd be willing to part with at standard barter rates, provided at least half of any payment comes in the form of liquor. He also has a spare medkit that has been painstakingly assembled from scavenged ingredients, but he has no intention of handing it off to some "gibbering back-country tech-fetishist" who has no idea how to use it properly. Any buyer will have to demonstrate at least Tech/Medical-1 skills to convince him to part with it.

9. First Bank of Digger Springs

The typical mud brick of Digger Springs has given over to bolted scrap over a framework of timber and earth, the building having more of the look of a vault than a business. Broad sheets of ceraplast and reinforced composites leave only a few slit windows and a thick scrap-metal door to pierce the walls.

The First Bank of Digger Springs is a local response to the difficulty that mud miners experience in guarding their stashes. In exchange for a modest fee, the miners can store their precious loot in one of the many metal lockers that line the interior, with clerk and a pair of armed guards on duty. The bank is open only in daylight hours, and charges one ration a week for the use of a man-sized locker.

All of the lockers are fastened with difficulty 9 locks, and the clerk's keys are intentionally misnumbered in a pattern known only to him. A panic button next to his desk will trigger a whooping alarm that's sure to bring every adult in town running- most of them have goods stored at the bank. Someone who succeeds in looting the place will find fifteen Common, eight Uncommon, and two Rare items, in amid random detritus of value only to its owners.

10. Granary

A tall brick silo stands over the village, its shadow stretching long over the market square.

The granary is guarded around the clock, and receives most of the local farms' harvests. It's not much compared to the richness of Broketree's fields, but more could be grown if more of Digger Springs' locals were interested in farmwork rather than mud mining.

11. Jail

This ramshackle building is loosely fashioned of scrap and worn-looking mineshaft timbers. Inside, a handful of sullen men and women slump on bare-boarded "beds".

Miners and townsmen working off an infraction are housed here at the jail in between their work shifts. There is no guard on the door. Any of them can walk out any time they please... but they'd best not come back to Digger Springs.

12. Lazy Sally's House

Gaudy stripes of blue and yellow have been painted around this two-storey building, and a few lanterns of translucent red scrap plastic dangle from the upper balcony rail. A pair of tired-looking young women can usually be seen fanning themselves on the balcony at any particular hour.

Lazy Sally Panchayat is a hard-bitten old procuress whose half-dozen girls (and one or two boys) take care of the unattached local miners or caravaners, as the "respectable" local girls are vigorously opposed to any behavior that might spoil marriage prospects. The townsfolk's women tolerate them as a necessary evil, but they remain social outcasts among the wives of the village. Every crust of bread or useful bauble passed into a harlot's hands is one more resource stolen from them and their children, as the womenfolk see it.

The malice of Digger Springs' wives ensures that the Boss doesn't look too hard at offenses against the local whores, lest he buy himself trouble with the married women. He will also turn a blind eye

to any reasonable justice they might purchase for themselves among outside muscle.

13. Marianite Catholic Church

A salvaged statue of the Virgin Mary stands before this unprepossessing structure of mud brick and etched crucifixes. The structure is of a size that suggests no vast flock, but a few miners and townsmen can be seen within on any day, their head bowed in prayer before the female Christ over the altar.

Mother Claire is the long-suffering priest of the local Marianite Catholics, a sect popular in the decades before the Scream. The Marianites hold beliefs largely recognizable by their Catholic ancestors, but maintain the physical femininity of Christ and her apostles and the greater spirituality of womankind. It is that gender's duty to guide and direct the more passionate urges of men to a nobler and more virtuous condition through counsel, example, and prayer.

Mother Claire has been working in Digger Springs for ten years, since her predecessor died in a bandit raid. She has two young acolytes who are being groomed to follow her, but this field is an unpromising one. Perhaps a quarter of the locals are nominal Marianite Catholics, with the rest being agnostics or votaries of other sects. Most locals will come to her to officiate at funerals or weddings, but they largely ignore her spiritual advice, to her long-suffering frustration. She takes it out on Lazy Sally and her girls in the main, one target that the local wives are perfectly glad to help excoriate. If it weren't for the miners and the quiet influence of Big Ben, she'd have run the prostitutes out of town years ago.

14. Meeting Square

Benches of scrap and mud brick ring this dusty square, with a raised platform at one end awaiting a speaker's presence.

Most local business is decided by the Boss, but there are times that festivals or grave matters require a general meeting. Wealthy miners and townfolk often hold weddings here, making a boast of their riches in the food given to guests.

15. Mineshafts

The mudholes are grubbed out with basic hand tools and shored up with lengths of scrap composite delved up from below. Most tunnel mouths are passages no taller than a man and a little more than a meter wide, with rope slings to lower down miners into the dark. Each one is well separate from the other, with claim-posts hammered in to mark the boundaries of each team's excavations.

The ruins of a suburban satellite of the city below are a good ten or twenty feet down through layers of solidified mud. The earth is damp and unstable, and collapse is a constant threat in the mines-work is slow and death comes fast to the careless or unfortunate. The shafts burrow down until they hit the old street level, and then horizontal shafts reach out toward the ruined buildings. Some of these ancient ruins are still structurally intact, and a lucky strike can hit an Old Terran home packed with still-usable tech.

Most mines are dug near the village for the sake of caution and the protection of numbers. Wildcatters sometimes strike off into the wilderness to hit less picked-over areas, but many of these reckless

souls find themselves prey to the beasts of the wastes or their own greedy comrades.

16. Pumphouse

The stuttering groan of machinery sounds from within this scrap-built shack, and a well pipe thrusts deep into the rusty red soil beside the pumphouse. A dusty solar panel powers whatever lies inside, and a weak stream of passably clear water pours perpetually from a spout into a runoff trough.

The simple water purification system is powered by salvaged solar panels, and the fountain provides potable water for anyone in need. Watchful old **Rufus Clayton** tends the machinery and sleeps inside the shack, for which he receives rations from the Boss and consideration from the other locals. He's a fairly skilled tech when it comes to keeping the pumphouse running, and he'd be able to integrate the nanite filters if Digger Springs can lay hands on them. Without that advanced tech, however, there's no chance his primitive filtration system would be able to purify nanocontaminated water.

17. Red Earth Kilns

A solar collector is mounted on a swivel, the better to direct the sun's rays at a fanned array of red mud bricks laid out for firing. Near the collector, a handful of sullen prisoners mixes a thick cob of river clay and wheatstraw in a hammered metal vat. A few others smooth the gluey mess into brick forms.

Lacking rockwood and without much in the way of timber, most structures in Digger Springs are made of sun-fired mud bricks. The rains wear them down over the course of decades, but there's never any shortage of material with which to make more. The best brickmaker in town is **Tobias Billingsly**, an exceedingly laconic man who can also make other forms of pottery at need.

18. Sweetwater Saloon

A patched curtain keeps the flies out of this two-storey bar, the prosperity of the owner evident in the armorglass windows that pierce the mud brick walls. A small knot of men and women can always be seen inside, throwing back bad liquor, playing cards, and trading away the results of their hours in the mudpits. Now and then a scarfaced bouncer helps one or more of them outside, some with more vigor than others.

A combination distillery and bar, the saloon is run by **Long Jake Groot**, a lank barkeep who splits the duties with his two adult sons. His wife and daughter mind the still in back, transforming Broketerree grain and numerous local weeds and roots into a "whiskey" that makes up in strength what it lacks in charm. Unbreakable bottles taken from Old Terran ruins are filled with the wares, and form an unofficial currency in town. One bottle can be acquired for five rations of food.

A certain amount of shouting and fisticuffs are inevitable at the bar, but **Moses Hook**, the bouncer, has a shotgun and a billyclub on hand to encourage such brawlers toward the door. Moses is a quiet, scar-faced man who is reasonable as his situation allows and utterly smitten with Jake's daughter Lena. Lena may well be the most eligible bachelorette in Digger Springs thanks to her distilling skills, and Moses is largely resigned to the hopelessness of his cause.

19. The Scrap Pile

A wall of mud brick is topped with vicious spikes of jagged, cracked composite. Through the open gateway, a scrap shack can be seen at the back of the yard; on either side, great mounds of discarded composite sheeting, ceraplast fragments, and miscellaneous pieces of Old Terran construction material all lie scattered about. Most of it looks every bit as worthless as its condition implies, but a clever eye might be able to find some fragments that aren't hopelessly corroded or decayed.

For every intact, functional relic that gets lifted out of the mud mines, a quarter-ton of Old Terran junk gets pulled out to clear the way. The vast majority of it is totally useless, long since nano-corroded or decayed into a crumbling shell. A few pieces have enough structural cohesion to have a potential future as building material or metal substitutes, and the miners sell these to the scrap pile.

The pile's owner is **Thaddeus Miller**, perpetually accompanied by his two ill-tempered mutts, Sledge and Chipper. Thaddeus is probably the best scrapsmith in town, with an effective Tech/Postech-1 skill and a +1 Intelligence modifier. His scrap piles allow for an abundant supply of TL0/1 spare parts, to whatever amount the GM considers appropriate. He'll sell these at the going rate, though the buyers have to disassemble and process the scrap on their own, which will take about two hours for every unit salvaged.

Thaddeus is a sour and unhelpful man, and any attempt to get him to repair or build objects for the PCs will cost at least twice the usual going rate. If they've saved the town- or if Big Ben is doing the asking- Thaddeus will work at the usual rates and with substantially less grumbling. His workshop can build up to TL1 gear from scratch, and he has repair tools sufficient for TL2 maintenance.

20. Tom's Eats

An awning juts out from the front of this well-scrubbed scrap-built building. The panels that make up the walls shine in the sunlight, and the half-dozen plastic tables and chairs set out front all haven't so much as a speck of red dust on them. The smell of fresh-baked bread wafts from within the open doorway.

The "Tom" of Tom's Eats is **Tomasina Weissmuller**, a dark-skinned local woman known for her new-obsessive cleanliness. Her husband Morris can expect to make half a dozen trips daily to the pumphouse, as Tomasina is too fussy to even do her cleaning with unpurified river water. The man puts up with the extra trouble for the sake of her cooking, which is remarkably good.

This culinary talent and her cleanly habits have made Tom's Eats a favorite place for those miners rich enough to afford some care in the preparation of their food. Most of them bring in their own ingredients for Tomasina to prepare, though she has some of her own stock in for traders who have non-edible wares to exchange for her cooking.

Tomasina is a devout Marianite Catholic, and spends much of her free time helping out Mother Claire, and she hopes her own daughter Jasmine might eventually take her place once the priest chooses to retire from active service. She also shares Mother Claire's prejudices against the girls at Lazy Sally's. None of them are welcome around Tom's Eats, and she never tires of cataloging their "dirty ways". She'd feel better if they were driven out of town entirely, but she's not certain the mud miners would stand for it. Mother Claire is patiently working to convince her that the men would come around in time.

JUST REWARDS

Digger Springs is substantially richer than Broketree in the kind of things that appeal to adventurers. While the locals might not have the vast sums of food that the Broketree settlers possess, they have a great many relics and found artifacts available to reward those outsiders who do the town a good turn. Most of these artifacts are domestic in nature, the sort of things that Old Terran families would have lying about their house the day before they were buried in a tsunami of superheated mud.

Big Ben extracts a chunk of the trading done at the market square, charging the merchants for their trading privileges. The merchants pass along the cost to the locals, which suits Big Ben just fine- the miners are thus induced complain about the traders rather than him. This exaction is used to pay Rufus Clayton for minding the pumphouse, supply the bossmen with the rewards of public service, and otherwise facilitate Big Ben's control of Digger Springs. Paying off helpful outsiders falls under that heading of the ledger.

To determine what sort of artifacts Big Ben has in his private stash, roll 1d10+10 on the Weapon table, 1d8+4 on the Energy Weapon table, 1d8+12 on the Armor table, twice on the Rare Items table, and four times on the Uncommon Items table.

To get his hands on the nanite filters, he's willing to hand over the entire stash, though the PCs will be expected to stick around until after the filters have been proven to work. Lesser jobs will involve offering a pick from the weapons, armor, or uncommon items. The rare gear is sufficiently uncommon that he'll hold it back for anything short of a serious threat to his family or community's survival.

Conventional purchases or rewards from ordinary townsfolk are substantially less exotic. If the PCs are around for one of the roughly once-a-month visits of a trading caravan, they can purchase items as described in the Market Square location. Outside of those occasions, mining gear can be acquired from Henry Bannerjee at the usual prices, and Thaddeus Miller might be convinced to build or repair TL0/1 gear at twice the usual inducement in rations. He hasn't got the facilities to build TL2 equipment from scratch.

Local miners and townsfolk usually have little to spare. A roll on the Common Item or Uncommon Item table might serve to determine what possession they can afford to give away to some stranger, but the tables on the next page can also be used to generate a fast reward.

QUICK REWARD GENERATOR

The Minor Relic and Plunder table can be used to find whatever object the local might be willing to offer for a relatively minor job- one dangerous enough to require outsiders to handle it, but not one requiring more than the usual degree of skill and courage. Many locals won't have more than this to spare, whatever their request. Well-off denizens might merit more than one roll on the table.

The table for prized possessions reflects the sort of thing that most locals don't find more than once in a decade, if that. Only wealthy or important locals will have access to relics and treasures of this kind, and they won't part with them for any ordinary service. Only tasks that involve a likelihood of death- either for the PCs or for the employer himself- will be enough to wring these treasures from their owners. Of course, any local can be expected to use their possessions in a crisis or combat.

These tables can be used for Broketree at the GM's discretion, but the natives of that farming village will have far fewer relics than the mud miners of Digger Springs. What few things they do have, they bought from trade caravans for their own use, and most such relics are of limited use or interest to adventurers.

1d20	MINOR RELIC OR PLUNDER
1	A sack with 40 kilos of grain, 20 rations worth.
2	A Type A energy cell
3	A random Lifestyle stim
4	A glowbug
5	1d4 units of TL1 spare parts
6	An almost-expended medkit that can be used only one more time.
7	A shoddy monoblade in Worn condition; condition damage to it cannot be repaired.
8	Holopad that shows grainy, scrambled images of Old Terran dance routines. Needs no power and can be salvaged for 1 unit of TL4 spare parts with a diff 9 check.
9	20 meters of TL4 rope
10	Kinetic channel glove that helps the wearer cheat at dice; +1 to Gambling checks. Also works as a kinesis wrap.
11	A somewhat battered, fully-loaded revolver in Lightly Damaged condition. (-1 to hit/damage)
12	A satchel of 20 bullets
13	A well-loved pack pony
14	A magnetic compass
15	A TL4 backpack with no encumbrance cost
16	Sheaf of notes on bladesmithing; +2 blueprints for making swords, spears, and knives
17	Tube of Old Terran superglue- automatically repairs one level of damage on TL0/1/2 gear.
18	Hyperdense crowbar; counts as 2 items for encumbrance, but unbreakable by anything short of pretech weaponry.
19	A suit of Old Terran clothing (AC 7)
20	A unit of TL2 spare parts

1d10	PRIZED POSSESSION
1	A TL3 chipped armorglass machete that functions as a Good-quality monoblade (+1 to hit/damage)
2	A geiger counter in Perfect condition
3	A metatool
4	+1 blueprints for making a semi-auto rifle
5	A Lightly Damaged laser rifle (-1 hit/damage)
6	A battered suit of Harmony Armor, Heavily Damaged. (No penalty, but the next condition damage will reduce it to Broken)
7	TL4 water filter- unable to filter the Sweetwater nanite contamination, however.
8	A fully-equipped TL2 toolkit
9	A fully-loaded combat rifle in Perfect condition
10	A functional solar cell

1d12	WHERE DID THEY GET IT?
1	Inherited from a parent
2	Got it from a deceased spouse
3	Found it while mud mining
4	Won it while gambling
5	Stole it from a former lover
6	Traded for services rendered
7	A child or relative found it before they died
8	Got it as damages for a crime against them
9	Found it out hunting
10	Gift- or theft- from a stranger passing through
11	Got it for aiding a crime
12	Gift from an aspiring lover

IMPORTANT NPCs AND COMBAT STATISTICS

NPC	NOTABLE TRAITS	NOTES	LOC
Benedict "Big Ben" Rao	Green-scaled titan	Boss of Digger Springs. Utterly ruthless, but not malicious.	2
Doc Boswell	A very lucid drunk	Local sawbones who often requires payment in liquor	8
Henry Bannerjee	Crusted with red earth	Sells simple mining gear to newcomers	1
Josephine Santander	Answers nothing for free	Archivist and claim registrar; knows volumes about the hills	5
Lazy Sally Panchayat	Gaudy-colored dresses	Brothel madam; hard-bitten but protective of her girls	12
Long Jake Groot	Uncommonly tall	Barkeep and distiller, sells liquor at 5 rations the bottle	18
Lucky Frank	Always rubbing luck charms	Secretly psychic mud miner team boss who's often hiring new help	15
Moses Hook	Scarred face	Bouncer and handyman, smitten with Groot's daughter Lena	18
Mother Claire	Crucifix with female Christ	Steely-eyed Marianite Catholic priest. Despises loose women.	13
Rufus Clayton	Patchy tufts of hair	Pumphouse operator who'll install the nanite filters if obtained	16
Thaddeus Miller	Always with dogs	Sour scrapsmith who demands twice the usual rates for his work	19
Tobias Billingsly	Exceedingly laconic	Potter and brickmaker; the man to talk to if building is to be done	17
Tomasina Weissmuller	Scrupulously clean	Devout Marianite Catholic, detests the "dirty" whores at Lazy Sally's	20

DIGGER SPRINGS MUD MINER

No. Enc.	1d4 (3d6)
Movement	20'
Armor Class	9 (unarmored), or 6 (hide armor) for ex-raiders
Hit Dice	1
Attacks	+1/knife or club for most +2/spear or bow for ex-raiders
Damage	1d4 for most, 1d6 for ex-raiders
Save	15
Morale	7, or 8 for ex-raiders
Loot Type	None (G1)
Skill Bonus	+1

The mud miners and townsfolk of Digger Springs are a hard lot, and many of them are only scantily distanced from former lives as raiders and badland marauders. Of the 600 adults, almost all are at least minimally capable fighters, and 200 are former raiders. The latter are all experienced at assaulting ill-defended settlements and remote compounds, and their expertise may come in handy if Digger Springs has to be firm about acquiring the nanite filters.

While they are far more experienced combatants than the denizens of Broketree, they're also far less disciplined and less accustomed to community-wide teamwork. Close bonds form within mine teams, but a general spirit of mistrust often poisons relations between different teams. Groups of mud miners will fight well alongside their comrades, but coordination between groups will be minimal to nonexistent. Big Ben can force a certain modicum of cooperation, but he can't work miracles on short notice.

Fights are fairly common in Digger Springs, but rarely go to the death. The punishment for murder is harsh and abrupt, so most miners rely on fisticuffs to settle their disagreements rather than pickaxes or scavenged guns.

Big Ben Rao: AC 4 scaled hide, Move 20', HD 5/28 hit points, Atk: +6/hammer, Dmg: 1d8+3, Save 13+, Morale 10, Skill +3. Big Ben is a fearsome warrior when he takes the field, reliant on his favorite Old Terran sledgehammer and his tough scaled hide. He has a semi-auto rifle he'll use when range is necessary, but he's not as skilled with it; +3 to hit, 1d10+2 damage.

Bossman: AC 6 hide armor, Move 20', HD 2/10 hit points, Atk: +3/revolver, Dmg: 1d8, Save 14+, Morale 9, Skill +1. The bossmen are Big Ben's picked minions, numbering about 20 in total. A third are on duty at any given time, and never patrol in numbers fewer than three. Individually, they range from genial, reasonable lawmen to arrant bullies who have a knack for keeping troublemakers in line. When in doubt, roll 1d6; the lower the number, the more venal the bossman. Even the most corrupt won't conspire directly against Big Ben, however; the Boss' charisma and personal prowess intimidates even the worst of them.

Mother Claire: AC 7 Old Terran robes, Move 20', HD 4/20 hit points, Atk: +6/shotgun, Dmg: 3d4, Save 13+, Morale 11, Skill +2. Mother Claire has spent the past decade preaching a matriarchal religion in a mining town full of ex-raiders. She's tough as baked rawhide and is perfectly willing to express her displeasure with buckshot. Even during Mass, she keeps a revolver under her robes. In a pinch, she has a hidden suit of Harmony armor she can wear.

Moses Hook: AC 6 hide armor, Move 20', HD 3/15 hit points, Atk: +4/fist or knife, Dmg: 1d2+3 fist or 1d4+2 knife, Save 14+, Morale 9, Skill +1. A bouncer for Long Jake Groot, Moses is an even-tempered, middle-aged man with a badly scarred face who spends most of his time trying unsuccessfully to conceal his yearning for Groot's daughter Lena. Lena's almost as good with a still as her father is, which makes her possibly the most eligible bachelorette in town; she views Moses fondly, but is too practical to consider marrying him unless he comes into a great deal of wealth.

FURTHER ADVENTURES IN DIGGER SPRINGS

Granted that Digger Springs survives the poisoning of the Sweetwater River, there's still likely to be a good deal of work for adventurers among the townsfolk. Even if Digger Springs gets wiped out in the hostilities, you can always just tweak the details and recycle the town for later use in your campaign. If the players haven't explored it and gotten involved in its local intrigues, the content will remain fresh and useful under a different name.

CLEANING UP THE TOWN

Mother Claire won't stand it any longer. This town has abided the scourge of venery and the defilement of the marriage bed for too long, and it's those damnable slatterns at Lazy Sally's who are to blame for it. The men can't be expected to help themselves with the natural weaknesses of their sex, but the way those girls abuse and manipulate them is a shame that must be erased from Digger Springs. She intends to do the erasing.

The local miners wouldn't stand for Mother Claire's parishioners simply tearing down the brothel and driving the women out into the badlands, so Mother Claire is obliged to ease them into it. She's made arrangements with her faithful to frame the girls for thefts and vandalism against their accusers, each public upbraiding of the whores followed by the smashing of an outbuilding or the death of livestock. In truth, Mother Claire is paying off the faithful to wreck their own property, and one or two of them are perhaps not completely thorough about spoiling their own goods before collecting her recompense. She rationalizes it as simply expressing in metaphorical action the substantial truth of the girls' thefts from upright wives and children.

However, one of the farmers she's enlisted is actually secretly smitten with Annabelle, a shiny-skinned mutant who works in the house. He knows his wife might well kill him if he admitted as much, so he's played along- but he knows those girls are dead if Mother Claire succeeds in having them exiled, so he's looking for an opportunity to reveal the plot to someone he knows isn't under Mother Claire's influence- like an outsider, perhaps.

Meanwhile, Lazy Sally is deeply afraid. She's reasonably sure her girls aren't responsible for the vandalism, but the crimes and the aggressive manner of the Marianite faithful are dissuading the local miners from coming to the girls' defense. Most just shrug and assume that a newer and less troublesome batch will take their place soon enough from the ranks of wanderers who don't care to get mud under their nails all day long. She's particularly worried about Annabelle, who's been slipping out to discreet liaisons with certain local notables who can't afford to be seen visiting the house. She's worried the girl will end up beaten or worse on one of these trips.

If the PCs don't intervene, Mother Claire's brutal campaign of intimidation and violence will make Digger Springs uninhabitable for Lazy Sally and the girls. They'll gather what supplies they have, close up the house, and strike out south for Broketree in vain hopes of finding refuge there. Broketree's women will ensure that appeal fails, and the little band will die somewhere in the western wastes. If the PCs do get involved, Big Ben will be inclined to turn a blind eye to their actions, whichever side they support. This business has been festering for years, and he wants it settled one way or another.

A CHECKERED VICTORY

If Broketree is destroyed or rendered disinclined to trade grain with Digger Springs any longer, the town is in grave trouble. Miners can be dragooned from the mud pits to break new farmland on the silt flats, but they lack the expertise to do much with it. Existing farmers can act as overseers and foremen, but such a shift in social standing will cause serious problems with the free-spirited miners. In an immediate sense, however, the settlement has to survive long enough to expand its cropland, and it can't do that without a major new source of food.

Somewhere in the eastern hills there might be a buried storehouse or distribution center with enough Old Terran rations to keep Digger Springs fed until the new crop comes in. There may be nomad bands or small holdings willing to relocate to Digger Springs and work the fields, granted suitable inducement. It may simply come to a brutal internal purge, with a quarter of the mining populace forced out to seek their sustenance elsewhere. Such an exile is unlikely to happen without violence, and the castoffs can be expected to nurse a bitter hatred for their former neighbors- along with a need to raid them for the vital necessities they otherwise lack.

Without the PCs to intervene, Digger Springs is likely to face the latter outcome. Their shady reputation isn't the sort to attract upright farmers, and presumably Broketree has been destroyed or is unwilling to send them its own trained growers. Sufficiently bold and successful adventurers might just find the food or friends that Digger Springs needs to see another harvest season.

DOWN IN THE DARK

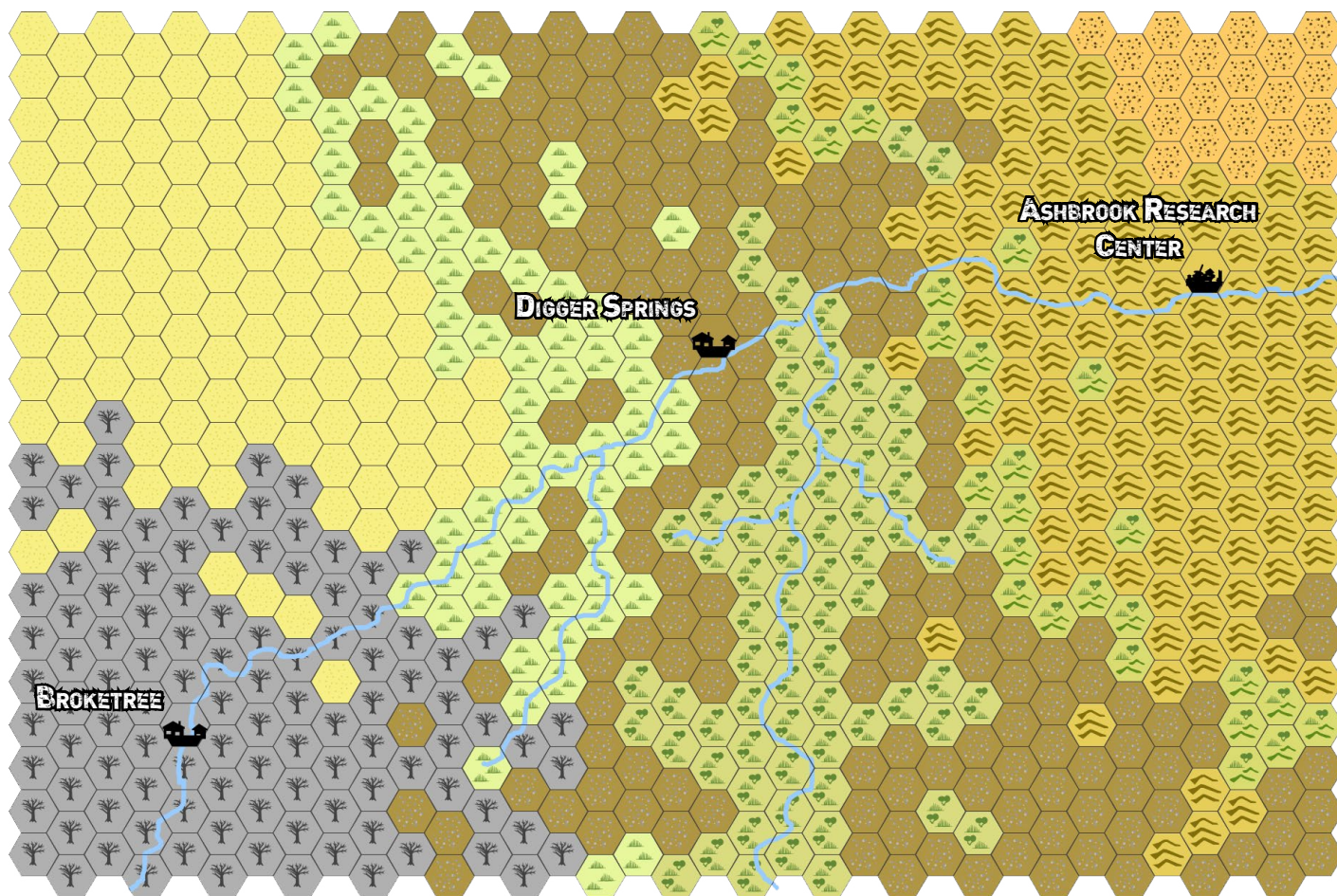
Mud mining is a dangerous pastime under the best conditions, and the miners in Digger Springs haven't got such luck. They work with primitive tools, crude lamps, scrap support beams, and simple reckless courage. These often prove insufficient for survival, and so new wanderers are always being recruited for the mining teams.

Lucky Frank is one such recruiter, running a small team known as the "Radmoles" out at the far edge of town. He earned his nickname for the richness of his strikes, but his team is more commonly known as the Gravediggers for their disturbing habit of dying while acquiring those riches. Frank's luck evidently extends only to him, personally.

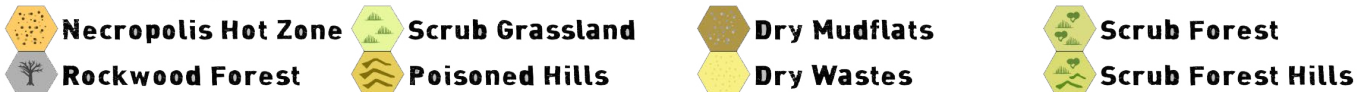
In truth, Frank is a feral psychic with powerful precognitive abilities. They give him a hint as to where he should drive his pits, but repeated use of these powers has gradually burnt a hole in his sanity. He's convinced that luck is a fungible commodity, and the worse the misfortunes he inflicts on others, the better his own fate will be. His powers allow him to strike victims with sudden fits of extremely bad fortune- forcing rerolls on successful skill checks or applying as much as a -4 penalty to hit rolls or saving throws. He often taints a victim with this evil probability shortly before they go down into the pits or enter a buried building.

If the others in town knew that Frank was a psychic, he'd be lynched before nightfall. The truth is unlikely to come out, but the PCs might still catch Frank arranging for some more mundane ill fortune to "accidentally" strike one of them.

THE SPACE BETWEEN



1 Hex = 12 Km



The land surrounding Digger Springs and Broketree is harsh and unforgiving. Small tribes of nomads and furtive raider clans can be found scratching a living from the desolation, and the occasional trade caravan is brave enough to dare the wastes for Digger Springs' salvage and Broketree's precious grain. The exact location of this North American region is left unspecified, but if you plan to use it with the Bonelands described in the *Other Dust* core book, you might locate it north of the Altoona Deathlands.

For every day of travel, roll 1d6. On a 5+, the PCs will have an encounter at some point during the day's journey. Some of these encounters are harmless, while others might well imperil a party's survival if they're reckless enough to stand and fight. If the encounter is of a place or special location, they'll come upon it during daylight hours. If the encounter is one that might take place at night, a roll of 4+ on 1d6 means that the strangers approach the PC camp at night- hopefully the wasteland wanderers had the good sense to post a night watch. Unless otherwise specified, encounters start with the participants at 2d6 x 10 meters distance.

If the encounter involves a location of interest, mark the encounter's number down in the hex where it occurred, so as to have a record of its location for later use. If the encounter involved the successful

TERRAIN BEING TRAVELED	HOURS/HEX
Scrub Grassland, Dry Mudflats Dry Wastes	2
Scrub Forest, Rockwood Forest	3
Hot Zone, Poisoned Hills	4
Travel times are for an unencumbered party. Most groups can manage up to 10 hours of travel each day.	

evasion of some group of dangerous foes, mark that down as well. If the PCs try to cross that hex again later, make another encounter check to see if the run into the group once more, unless it seems likely that they've moved on in the interim.

If the same encounter is rolled multiple times, you might choose to use the next unused encounter. Alternately, if the encounter involves a group of intelligent creatures, they might be affiliated with the earlier result of the dice. By letting the dice control the composition of the wasteland's threats, you can end up discerning the existence of dangerous bandit clans, mutant nests, and cult strongholds simply by the way they keep popping up in your own wilderness. If such seems likely, just use the generic maps in the *Other Dust* core book to whip up a quick stronghold.

WASTELAND ENCOUNTERS

1. Raider Scouting Party

A group of raiders are out scouting for likely targets for the rest of their clan. The main group probably numbers 1d20+20 adults.
2d6 **Raiders**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

2. Hungry Wolfmen

Beastmen are uncommon in this region of the wastes, but these lean, yellow-eyed hunters sometimes haunt the edges of settled communities, stealing livestock and careless children.
2d4 **Wolfmen**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8

3. Cultists of the Crazy

These demented servants of the Still Lady prefer to take prisoners back to their camp, there to "persuade" them to cast their lot in with the servants of the Defiler.
2d4 demented **Cult Warriors**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d4 club, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10

4. Digger Springs Exiles

Some men and women just can't behave decently around civilized people. Even the rough folk of Digger Springs have their standards, and these vagabonds don't measure up. Most are nothing but thieves, murderers, and claim jumpers, but a few of them are unjustly exiled innocents guilty only of offending the wrong bossman.
1d6+2 **Exiles**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

5. Skulking Flaysnake

A vicious flaysnake lies in wait beneath large stone or thick tangle of bracken. Hunger will drive it to attack even large bands of humans.
1 **Flaysnake**: AC 7, Move 20, HD 3, Atk +4/1d6 bite+poison, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 8. Poison is Toxicity 8, Virulence 3, Interval 2 rounds and does 1d6 Constitution point damage per failed save.

6. Trader Caravan

If met near Broketree, these traders and an equal number of pack ponies will be on their way there to trade tech salvage for grain. Near Digger Springs, the commerce will be running the other way. They're wary of strangers, but might be persuaded to trade some easily-spared goods; roll three times on the Minor Relic or Plunder table on page 19 to see what they can offer.
2d4 **Traders**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 3, Atk: +3/1d6 spear, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 8

7. Hunters

These far-ranging hunters from Digger Springs or Broketree are wary, but can be friendly to suitably peaceful groups.
1d4+2 **Hunters**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear or bow, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8

8. Nomad Warriors

A savage band of warriors are out hunting for their tribe. Most are perfectly willing to harvest a likely-seeming group of PCs, and some of the more savage nomad clans are openly cannibalistic.
1d8 **Nomad Warriors**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8

9. Hot Zone

Unless the PCs are equipped with a geiger counter, they'll unwittingly pass through a small hot zone, forcing a Radiation save for each PC.

10. Ancient Minefield

These mines might have been planted by ancient Mandate officials to discourage illicit overland travel, or they might be an old rebel snare. Either way, they've gone unstable over the past 200 years. The lead PC must make a Luck save or they and anyone else within 3 meters will take 2d6 damage from the blast. PCs must spend an hour retracing their path or suffer another chance of an explosion.

11. Natural Sinkhole

The lead PC must succeed in a Wis/Perception skill check at difficulty 9, or plunge into a 6 meter deep sinkhole that gapes beneath a thin skin of turf and scrub. The victim will suffer 2d6 damage, with a Luck saving throw for half.

12. Country Villa

This remote domicile once belonged to a powerful Mandate official with a fondness for "rural living". Most of it has collapsed since the Scream, but others might be camping here- roll 1d6. On a 4+, roll 1d8 and use the listed encounter as its current inhabitants. Valuable loot might still be lying within it; roll on the Prized Possession table on page 19 to see what can be found with an hour's search through the rubble.

HUNTING AND FORAGING

This is a dry country. Finding water away from the Sweetwater River requires a foraging check as given in the *Other Dust* Systems chapter. If the Sweetwater is contaminated, all water drawn from it will be Dirty. Food can be hunted in most of the region at the usual difficulty ratings.

The radioactive hot zone is completely unserviceable for foraging, however, and forces a Radiation save for every two hours spent in the zone. The poisoned hills are laced with nanite contamination and the spall of a shattered city, and any food and water gathered there is automatically Dirty.

Each successive attempt to forage in the same hex adds a cumulative +1 difficulty penalty that decreases by one for each day the hex goes unharvested.

THE ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER

The Ashbrook Research Center is a shadowed place. In the days of the Mandate, horrible things took place within its buried laboratories and unsanctified vivisection rooms. The surrounding populace knew nothing of this, of course, and those who demonstrated excess curiosity about the “important social development research” conducted within received kindly visits from Harmony agents to discuss the importance of upholding society’s need for temperate discretion. Those who persisted became subjects for the next round of research, their loved ones informed only that they had been shipped offworld for “disruptive behavior”.

The true purpose of the center was as a maltech research nexus focusing on “improving” the human genome. These improvements all tended toward making the subjects more tractable, obedient, and reverent toward their leaders, and the errors and dead ends were horrific. Entire generations of humans were force-grown in a matter of months simply to investigate their response to certain coded stimuli, only to die bewildered after the experiment was complete.

The majority of the scientists at the center failed to realize what they were working on. As far as they were concerned, they were conducting standard human improvement research, the steady and incremental pursuit of physical and mental augmentation that had been sought for centuries. In truth, they were simply performing the basic research and facilitating studies necessary to equip their more enlightened brethren with the tools necessary to create a new human race of slaves.

This caste of “senior management” lived on-site, constantly under the surveillance of each other and the Mandate officials charged with their keeping. The facilities were quite comfortable and the entertainment provided by their wretched victims was of a sort normally restricted to the most jaded and powerful Mandate officials. Most of the senior researchers were quite content with their lot, particularly given the alternative of being made the next research subject.

It’s unclear whether or not the Crazy who destroyed the nearby necropolis was actually aiming at the research center. Whatever their chosen target, the falling orbital water tank hit with a cataclysmic release of water, steam, and reaction-mass slurry. The resulting wave of mud swept what was left of the city and buried the research center as well. Now the only obvious entry into the complex is a gaping hole in what was once its uppermost level.

Many of the scientists were killed in the initial blast, but others died later, trapped in the darkness of the buried building. The facility director, Dr. Armand Calder, was able to throw together a makeshift cold sleep pod from materials he scavenged from the lab. In order to ensure his undisturbed rest until the rescue he expected to eventually arrive, he methodically murdered the remaining survivors before climbing into the pod.

Two hundred years later, the detonation of an unstable power core somewhere nearby gave the buried building another savage jolt. Aside from breaking open the lab’s reserve tank of catalytic nanites, it also jarred Dr. Calder’s cold sleep pod into deactivation. When he

awoke and realized the amount of time that had passed, he understood that no rescue would be forthcoming. He would have to save himself from this savage, bestial world.

In the days since the blast, he’s been powering up the forced-growth biogenesis tanks using the uneven power supply provided by the facility’s unstable nanopower core. He intends to use any available genetic material to quickly produce a swarm of obedient warrior-creatures which he will use to subdue any nearby settlements. Once the locals are cowed by his mutant servants, he can “process” them at his leisure, applying the control treatments he helped to devise before the cataclysm. True, the fatality rate was enormous and the end results were practically lobotomized, but it’s not like these savages are using their brains in the first place.

Into this situation will arrive the PCs. A group focused purely on retrieving the nanite filters will be able to do so without confronting Dr. Calder directly, and might never even notice his presence if they don’t descend to the lowest level of the complex. Such a group will be able to bring back the filters to their chosen community and solve the short-term problem. Dr. Calder’s swelling army of mutant servants will eventually pose a serious threat to the surroundings, particularly to communities crippled by fighting over control of the filters.

More thorough or more foolhardy groups might come to confront Calder in his lair and succeed at stopping the nanite contamination at its source. Such a victory would save both communities and shatter Calder’s mad plans of dominion. Such a feat is far more difficult than simply retrieving the filters, however, and even groups aware of Calder might choose to fix the problem at hand before worrying about more distant perils.

MAPPING THE CENTER

Running adventures in a massive, half-buried Old Terran research facility can present a few technical issues that don’t arise in outdoor and small-building exploration. In those settings, the scope of the area is either clearly constrained or largely homogenous. In a massive ruin complex or a tumbled necropolis, there could be kilometers of passages, rooms, rubble-choked streets and other terrain to navigate.

Drawing precise maps of such sprawling locations is impractical. While modern-day street maps can be helpful in laying out a necropolis and floor plans of vast contemporary structures can be mined for useful ideas, most such places are simply too big and too complicated to be compressed down into a format that’s usable at the table. How would you write a room key for the city of New York?

The Ashbrook Research Center is one such sprawling locale, a huge ruined complex stretching out over almost a quarter-kilometer of land. Piles of slumped earth are heaped above a maze of collapsed passages entombed by the wave of mud rippling outward from the orbital strike. Rather than try to map each corridor and connecting tunnel, this section uses a “point of interest” map style to keep things manageable during play. You can use the same techniques when building your own vast ruins.

Using Points of Interest

The basic building block of these maps is the “point of interest”. This might be a room with something interesting in it, a dangerous spot in the ruins, the lair of a beast or savage, a cache of usable salvage, or anything else that might justifiably absorb some of the PCs’ attention. Some points need no mapping at all, with “a small room” or “a closet off a crumbling hallway” describing everything of consequence about their layout. Other points might have a more complicated configuration, with a mini-map sketched of their arrangement and adjoining spaces.

These points are then arranged in a rough grid in whatever pattern you find reasonable. A box is drawn, a key number is written inside, and connections are drawn between the point and its adjacent points. It’s easiest to keep things arranged in cardinal directions, with potential connections running north, south, east, and west. You can add in the other four ordinal directions if you wish, and use small spiral squiggles up and down to reflect changes in elevation. For convenience, it’s usually best to keep all rooms of a single level on the same sheet of paper.

Between these points is one of two things: nothing of interest, or an obstacle. In most cases, there’s nothing of interest between the points. There may be three hundred meters of rubble and ruined corridors between the places, but nothing there is worth the time it would take to describe navigating it. You should make it clear to the PCs that when you gloss over connections like this, you’re making it clear that nothing there is important. They’re not going to be punished for not mapping every nook and cranny of a half-collapsed structure.

In the other case, an obstacle might exist between the points. Maybe there’s a bad floor, or a roof about to collapse, or a mutant waiting in ambush, or a dangerous radiation spill. If you do put in an obstacle, write it up as a mini-point of interest and mark it down on the connecting line. The PCs are likely to try to get around physical obstacles, so think about the nearby corridors and whether or not there’s a way to sidestep the danger. Be ready to sketch the immediate surroundings so the players have a clear idea of the geometry of their peril.

Once you’ve laid out your point map, take a final moment to go through and note down how long it takes to navigate a particular

At The Table

Experienced GMs usually have their own preferences for setting up their papers for a game, but here’s one arrangement that’s useful for running the Ashbrook Research Center. First, print out the quick system reference sheet and keep it separate for easy reference. Next, photocopy or print the room key pages and staple them to form a thin sheaf. Scrawl notes or updates on the sheets as you play, and at the end of the session you can use the notes for a quick digest of events to note down in your campaign log. This setup will allow you to run the entire session with little or no reference to the core book.

connection. If your ruin has wandering mutants or other random dangers, the longer the party spends climbing rubble piles, the more likely they are to run into trouble. The Ashbrook Research Center requires a check for random hostiles for every hour of exploration—keeping track of time inside is important for both GMs and players. After a group has traveled a particular connection, they’ll know the way and can usually cut the transit time in half.

Once this point map technique hits the table, make sure the players understand the idea behind it and that the glossed-over portions of their exploration are simply those areas that aren’t worth their time to investigate. Simply telling you “Okay, we’re leaving the cafeteria and trying the northern corridor.” is all the detail they need to provide. Once you start describing specific rooms and arrangements of corridors, they can start paying attention to those details again.

Note that if there’s no connection in a particular direction, you should make the choked passageways or impassable streets clear before the players decide their next direction of investigation. It can seem like a good idea to make them spend game time exploring each way, but in the absence of useful information on which to base their decisions it turns into a simple guessing game that only serves to bog down progress.

It may also be that fights or other activities might spill over into undefined areas. In those cases, just sketch out something that fits with the local terrain. Crude strokes and rough approximations are fine, since the assumption is that there’s nothing particularly fascinating in those areas in the first place.

THE ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER, TOP LEVEL

A single rooftop spire pierces the lifeless, contaminated mud that has long since buried the research center. Only molds and fungi can grow in the poisonous soil of the hills, and heavy patches of stinking life clot the ground around the spire. An armorglass window has been smashed in, a rope has been tied to the frame, and there are signs of recent human activity around the makeshift entrance. The footprints are still fresh in the cracked mud. A careful inspection might suggest that as many as a dozen man-sized humanoids have entered the window. There are no signs of footprints leading *away* from the spire, however.

The Sweetwater River is no more than a stone's throw away from the spire, and the silvery streaks of contamination start only a bowshot away downstream. Wherever the silver poison is coming from, it seems likely to be located somewhere within this buried structure. Groups who waded out far enough from the toxic riverbank can fill their canteens from the clean, fresh water to be had upstream from the ruin.

Each of the areas that follow include a boxed text description indicating what can be noticed by a brief examination. You might choose to read it verbatim to the PCs or simply use it as a guide to the most obvious aspects of the location. The text after the box describes details that can only be discerned by more careful inspection, along with notes on any hostile mutants that might be lurking in the place. If the precise layout of an area becomes important in play, just sketch something plausible on a piece of scrap paper and let the players describe their actions in relation to that layout.

A1 Security Station A

Banks of dead monitors line the far wall of this room, and beneath them a row of control panel desks is crusted over with black mold. A stairway winds downward in the far corner of the room, a peeling "Authorized Access Only" sign painted over the landing.

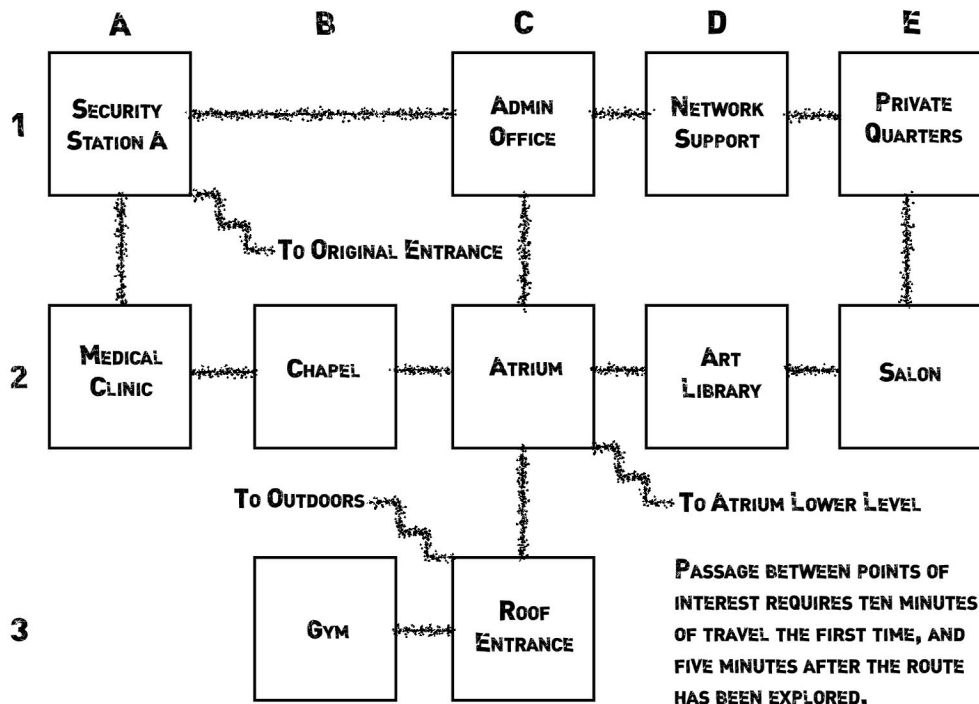
A humanoid figure of tarnished golden metal is rising from a chair in front of the panels. The thing's left hand is a whirring mass of glittering silver blades.

A reprogrammed **Maintenance Bot** (AC 4, Move 20', 20 HP, Atk: +4/1d8+2 Monofist, Skill +1, Save 14+, Morale 12) halted here after slaughtering the security staff on duty. Dr. Calder could afford no interference with his cold sleep from his colleagues, so he subverted the center's robotic helpers to execute his erstwhile companions. He didn't worry about turning them off afterward- real Harmony assault squads could take care of them easily enough, and he knew they'd come for him and his research soon.

If the bot is destroyed, someone with Tech/Postech skills can salvage it for 1d6 units of TL4 spare parts, though it requires 30 minutes per unit salvaged. The panels and monitors are worthless, long since ruined by the mold.

A check beneath the control panel desks will reveal a magnetic case fastened beneath one of them. A successful Int/Security check will open it, revealing a fully-loaded laser pistol and 3 Patch stims.

ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER, TOP LEVEL



A2 Medical Clinic

A dozen small cubicles project from the far side of this long chamber, each one with a rotting bed and a few moldy trifles of decoration set upon the walls. Here and there the hectic brilliance of some artificial flower or wall holo gleams from the sickly shades of mold-green or putrescent yellow that streak the walls. The larger chamber is dominated by a set of circular metal frameworks and scanning pads, most of which have the torn-down appearance of tech long since scavenged by other hands.

From the left most cubicle, a humanlike figure with puffy, hairless flesh shambles toward you. You might almost take it for a human were it not for its gigantic, slaverling jaws.

"Annalise", a Leman grown by Dr. Calder, has been searching through the medical clinic for something to resolve the persistent chest pains she's suffering. As the first Leman created, Calder was still perfecting the process and her lifespan much shorter than that of her compatriots- no more than a week more if she doesn't receive a steady supply of stims. She and her escort of Decanted will instantly attack intruders. The Clutchers and Renders will swarm the PCs, while she'll hide behind a cubicle doorway and take potshots at any PCs who push past the mob of Decanted.

The hostiles present include **Annalise** (AC 7/Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 15 HP, Atk: +4/1d6 Laser Pistol, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 9), **3 Clutchers** (AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8) and **2 Renders** (AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10)

A search of the fallen will turn up Annalise's Old Terran evening dress, laser pistol, and spare Type A cell. A scavenged plastic shopping bag will also contain a fist-shaped grip with a trigger button and a holographic display that forms at its top- an Enigmatic geiger counter that is TL4 and in Lightly Damaged condition.

B2 Chapel

This rectangular chamber is roughly twenty meters long and is set at an angle to the corridors outside. A tall niche at the far end has been enameled in graceful, stylized sweeps of color against the once-white walls of the rest of the room. Simple benches are arranged in rows facing the niche, and a low altar is raised before it. All of the furnishings in the room appear to be collapsible or easily rearranged.

One of the less-commonly used rooms in the center, this chapel provided for the religious needs of those staffers who hadn't the luxury of leaving for services. Mandate-approved variations of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Two-Lands Faith, and a half-dozen less popular religions were all preached here, and a cabinet along the near wall contains assorted crumbling vestments and religious symbols. A beautifully-wrought crucifix bearing a female Christ would be prized by Mother Claire in Digger Springs, and a traditional American Sangha collection of Buddhist sutras printed on imperishable plastic sheets would be valuable to Abbot Williamson in Broketree.

A corridor outside the chapel runs east-west. There are no other exits from the room.

INSIDE THE CENTER

Unless otherwise specified, the interior of the center is lit only by flickering white emergency lights that stutter in time with the tremors of the facility's failing power core. The illumination is sufficient to explore the place, but leaves it in a perpetual half-litten gloom.

The air is hot, humid, and reeking with the stink of mold, stale sweat, and rotten flesh. The ventilation is worse the deeper the PCs go in the complex, and on the bottom floor the air is almost stifflingly foul.

B3 Gym

Bony humanoid shapes of moldering flesh stand in a motionless row at the far side of this vast gymnasium, the mold creeping over their bodies in whorls and blotches of vivid color. A vast, empty pool stretches out between the entrance and the standing figures, while an elevated running track winds along the upper level of the high-ceilinged chamber. A glance suggests that the rectangular gymnasium is probably about a hundred meters on its long sides and fifty on its shorter, with the entrance halfway along the western side. The empty pool is perhaps half those dimensions, and a full ten meters deep.

Three berserk companion bots have long since lost their outer integuments to molds and fungi, now appearing to be little more than animate corpses. Dr. Calder programmed them to deal with his colleagues before returning to the gym, and those that have survived will dutifully attempt to rend the PCs with their skeletal metallic hands. They are too corroded to be salvaged usefully.

3 Companion Bots: AC 7, Move 20', 8 HP, Atk: +1/1d6 Talons, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 12

C1 Admin Office

The walls of this long chamber are covered in panes of broken black glass, their surfaces crazed with cracks and fallen shards. At the far end of the room, one of the panels is intact and still glows with a stuttering, looping view of a serene summer day in a long-dead forest. The floor of the room is littered with overturned desks and chairs.

The litter of the room conceals three items from the Random Finds table at the end of this section. If their search checks or specific investigations fail to give quick results, they'll find one item for every ten minutes of searching.

C2 Atrium

This vast atrium stretches over two floors, open to both the top and middle levels of the research center. A waist-high railing around the upper walkway frames a set of stairs leading down to the broad open space of the atrium floor. The floor itself is layered in an ankle-deep mire of thick, gelatinous mud, and the air is stifling with the smell of mold and rot. A central fountain has long since gone dry.

The party can reach the mid-level of the complex by descending the atrium's stairway. A great deal of traffic passes through the atrium- each time the PCs enter the room, make a random encounter check.

C3 Roof Entrance

The shattered armorglass window in the spire frames a drop of ten meters before the floor below is reached. A crude wireweed rope has been tied to the frame and uncoils down to the floor below. The chamber beneath is circular and around twenty meters in diameter, the walls decorated with empty holes and a few flickering, static-laden holoimages that still survive in the niches. A small pile of mud has accumulated beneath the broken window, but the rest of the tessellated flooring is still visible.

A corpse is face-down in the mud a meter away from the rope's end.

The body is that of a luckless Digger Springs searcher, a member of a salvage party that found the center but was unable to retrieve the filters. He died here twelve hours ago, overcome by a pack of Decanted mutants. Flipping him over will reveal that most of his internal organs have been devoured. He threw away most of his gear in flight, but a satchel at his belt still contains two Patch stims and a full canteen with one ration of clean water.

D1 Network Support

Banks of blown computer hardware line the walls of this cavernous room. Panel after panel is buckled outward as if from the force of some internal explosion, shrapnel blown into each other in a seemingly instantaneous convulsion of metal and wire.

Much of the research at the center was explicitly isolated from the Net that pervaded Old Terran society. The Mandate had no desire to expose the kind of research it was performing here to the prying eyes of the Maestros, and much of the data was managed on paper and isolated systems. This room once housed many of the servers and quantum encryption engines that maintained the discretion of the project. Dr. Calder hit the self-destruct sequence shortly before he went into hibernation to ensure that the Mandate would have to find him if they wanted to learn where he'd concealed the backups.

The panels are worthless as salvage, brittle and decayed by the nanite corrosion and their explosive end. A careful search will disturb a nest of heritor bugs that lair in one machine, however, causing five of them to wriggle out and attack.

5 Heritor Bugs: AC 7, Move 15', 1 HP, Atk: +1/1d4 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10

D2 Art Library

The room is filled with paintings in the ancient style, each done in daubs of plastic on canvas. The growths from the mud's intrusion have long since covered them, each canvas a garden of black molds and vivid streaks of colorful fungus in organic, moldering patterns. Benches and chairs stand around, overturned glasses on toppled tables speaking of a sudden end to things.

A Random Find from the table at the end of the section will be located somewhere amid the tumbled tables and chairs. If the mold and filth is scraped from the paintings, the original printed plastic that makes up the canvases will shine forth with bucolic scenes of Old Terran landscapes in unfaded colors. A dozen canvases can be rolled up as one encumbrance item apiece, if the PCs think they can find someone who would wish to barter for them.

E1 Private Quarters

A neat row of private suites flanks this broad corridor, five on a side as the passageway curves right near what was once the outer surface of the center's second floor. The wave of mud crashed through the armorglass on the north side of the building, choking those suites, but the ones with windows facing the east were largely spared.

A glance through an open doorway shows a modest hallway leading into a living room dominated by an armorglass window facing out on tons of poisonous mud. A few slow fingers of muck seep in where the seal is imperfect.

Each of the five surviving suites has a living room, kitchen area, bedroom, bathroom, and study. Most of the furnishings have been ruined by mold and nanite corrosion. Searching any individual suite for items of value will require ten minutes per suite to be sure that nothing is overlooked.

Suites 2 and 4 each have a Random Find from the table at the end of the chair. Suite 3 has a confused gut weasel that has burrowed its way into the bathroom and will attack anyone who opens the door. A charged Type A power cell is still resting on the bathroom sink.

Gut Weasel: AC 5, Move 40', 15 HP, Atk: +6/2x1d6 Claw attacks, Skill +1, Save 14+, Morale 9. Gut weasel initiative is always 10.

E2 Salon

This high-ceilinged room is lined with rows of old-fashioned paper books. Most of the shelves have vomited forth their volumes in spills of water-swollen paper and moldering covers, a fresh crack in the wall letting in a steady seep of mud. A few have been split apart by the force of the expanding volumes.

Several mold-eaten couches and chairs have been arranged in squares along the middle of the room, while a walkway along the upper level is reached by a staircase at the far end of the room. A chandelier above is almost obscured under the weight of fungal streamers draped from its dull glass ornaments.

The sudden introduction of large amounts of water into the room has combined with slow nanite corrosion to turn the chamber into a potentially lethal trap. If a human-sized character attempts to climb the staircase at the far side of the room, the additional weight will cause the walkway to collapse. Aside from costing the victim 1d6 hit points with a Luck or Evasion save to avoid it, it will cause a chain-reaction collapse of the bookshelves along the upper level of the room, raining down sodden volumes and shelves on those below.

As soon as you announce that the walkway has collapsed, state that the upper shelves are creaking and then start counting down from 5. Any PCs who have not attempted to get out of the room or otherwise take cover by the end of the count will then be pelted by the avalanche of falling books, suffering 2d6 damage with a Luck or Evasion save for half.

The books themselves are illegible or literary works of no practical value. On a diff 10 Wis/Perception check or an hour's search, a book will be shown to be a secretly rebound rebel handbook on laser rifle construction, qualifying as +4 blueprints for building one.

THE ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER, MID-LEVEL

The mid-level of the complex once served as its ground floor, where the ordinary rank and file of the complex performed their labors. Little can be found to admit of the true horrors conducted below. In life, the building maintained an aggressively bland, bureaucratic facade that lingers even in death.

A1 Original Entrance

A pair of armorglass doors exploded inward from the pressure of the mud long ago. The dried muck fans out over the floor of the entryway, piling up against the reception desk in a semicircle of filth. A door hangs off its hinges on the north side of the room, a faded "Authorized Personnel Only" sign above a spiral stairway leading upward. Behind the reception desk, a half-dozen corridors spread out eastward, deeper into the building.

Most of the passageways are clotted with earth or rubble, and the only open one will eventually break out into Security Station B. The stairway leads upward to the top level, and Security Station A.

A search of the receptionist's desk will find a still-functional dataslab, albeit it is locked with commercial-grade security. For each half-hour spent working at it, a tech can make an Int/Computer skill check at difficulty 8 to unlock it for use. The slab contains no information of value.

A2 Parking Garage

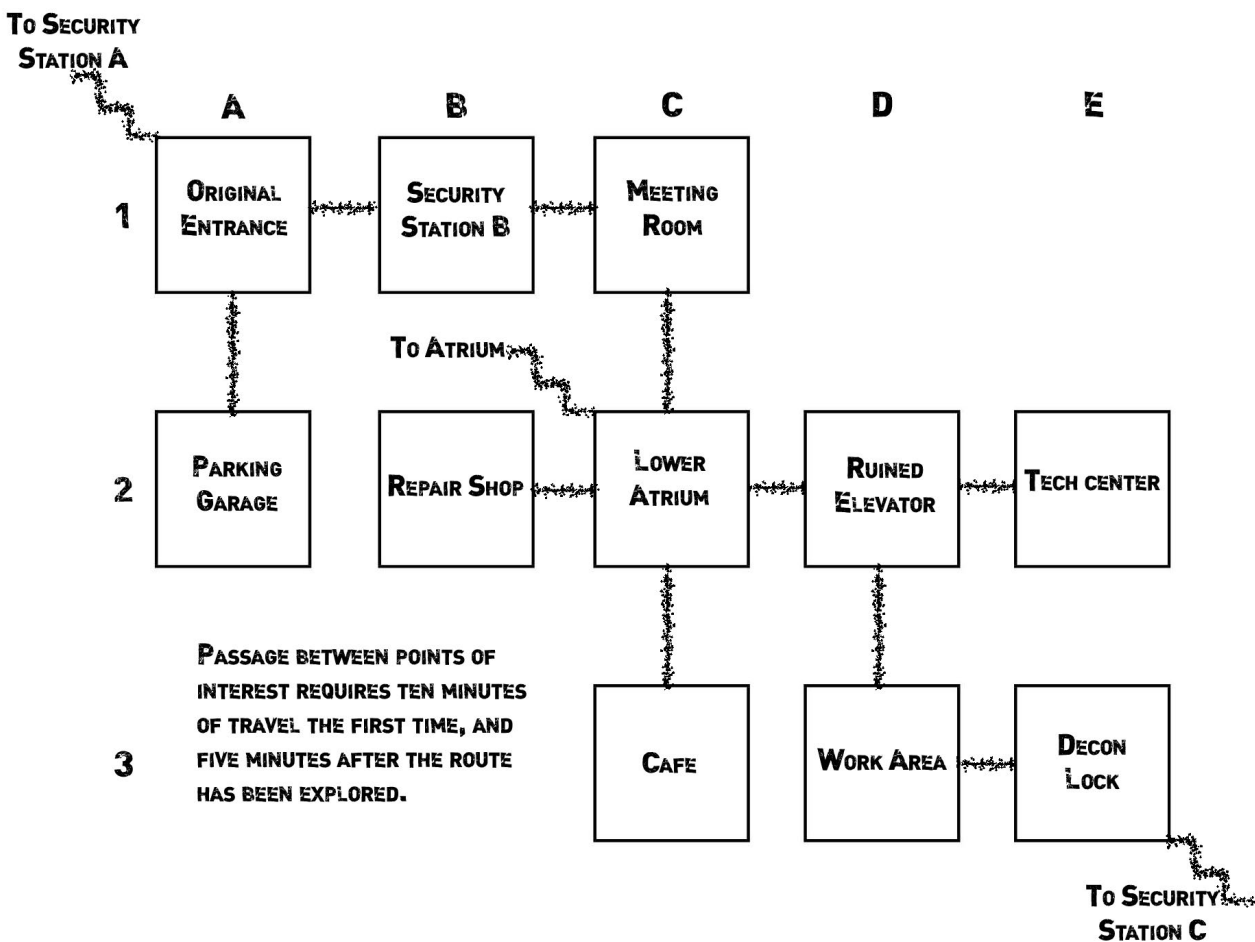
Mud and collapsed construction has crushed most of the ground-cars parked in this cavernous garage. Nanite corrosion has left the car bodies pocked and chanced like ulcerous flesh. The lighting in the garage is even worse than usual, and great pools of inky darkness blotch the concrete pillars and muddy floor.

The cars have been ruined by nanite corrosion or mud, and are worthless even as salvage. A careful inspection of the garage will reveal a groundskeeping utility tractor parked at the very back, the Type B power cell in it still holding a full charge. They tractor would be fabulously valuable to either Digger Springs or Broketree, but it would require at least one more Type B battery to get it all the way there, and a team of at least fifty men working for a week to dig out the buried garage entrance. Possession would be worth 3 points of either Tech or Security Resources for the group that gets it.

Aside from the tractor, the garage is also home to a nest of Clutchers who hunt small burrowing animals that dig into the garage. They'll pounce on any intruders that start nosing around the area, leaping from behind ruined vehicles.

5 *Clutchers*: AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER, MID-LEVEL



B1 Security Station B

A shattered doorway opens into a square room roughly fifteen meters on a side. Banks of workstations line the walls, and a blown-out wall of monitors twitches with the occasional flash of garbled light. A dozen white ceraplast lockers stand on the north side of the room.

The coppery stink of fresh-spilled blood hangs heavy in the air. A half-dozen fresh bodies are hurled over the desks, humanoid forms hunched over them to feed. One of them lifts a red-smear face from the feasting. Beneath the gore, a beautiful young woman's eyes widen in rage as she shrills an alarm to her misshapen companions.

"Bahira" and her pack of Clutchers recently overwhelmed a party of scavengers from Digger Springs in the security station, and the Decanted have paused to feed. Their hunger and the fresh meat has distracted them, and a party that makes a point of stealth has a good chance of gaining a free surprise round of action.

Bahira: AC 7/Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 15 HP, Atk: +4/1d6 Laser Pistol, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 9

6 Clutchers AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8

An unlabeled red security card is on the top shelf of the left most locker, a keycard that will allow access to the lower level through the decontamination lock. Aside from her Old Terran evening dress and laser pistol, Bahira also has three Patch stims in her pocket which she keeps in hopes of prolonging her temporary existence.

B2 Repair Shop

A disordered scatter of broken tools and scattered parts litters the floor of this large workroom. The skeletons of picked-over floor stations dot the room, including disassembled welding arrays and unclamped milling tools. Drawers and cabinets stand open, their worthless contents fanned out in skirts of broken parts around the base of each container.

Dr. Calder pillaged this room thoroughly in order to build his makeshift cold sleep pod, and little of value remains. A difficulty 9 Wis/Perception check or an inspection of the milling tools will find a case of 8 TL2 spare parts in the form of deformable memory plastic blanks and easily-worked mold alloys. If the check is failed, a ten minute search will be needed to discover the case.

Characters checking the cabinets or performing a ten-minute search run the risk of encountering one of Dr. Calder's little gifts. The interior of one of the cabinets has been rigged with a spare robotic arm that will lash out with its bladed hand attachment at anyone who opens the door. The PC who opens the cabinet must make an Evasion save or suffer 1d8+1 damage.

The arm has lacked for maintenance for the past two hundred years, and will function only for one round before it seizes up. Someone with at least Tech/Postech-0 skill can figure out how to lock the servos so as to use it as a spear with standard monoblade statistics.

C1 Meeting Room

A long black table stretches the length of this narrow room, the center of its surface transfixed by a fallen spike of dull gray structural ceramic.

The spike is a loose structural beam that's actually serving to hold up most of the ceiling. If the PCs touch the spike, have the manipulator make a Luck saving throw. On a failure, the spike slips and the ceiling starts to fall. The last PC to declare their intention to escape will be partially caught in the fall, suffering 2d6 damage.

C2 Lower Atrium

Corridors wind off in all directions from the muck-covered lower floor of the atrium. Stairs on the east side of the chamber allow access to the upper level.

This room is simply the lower level of room C2 from the upper floor of the research center.

C3 Cafe

Dishes and plates are spilled on the floor, tables overturned and the rags that were once people lie in the mold and filth of the floor. The Old Terran cloth is all that remains of them, a few decaying scraps still gleaming with forced color.

The kitchen area behind the counter is a stubborn oasis of gleaming metal and anti-fungal food handling ceramic. Past the top of the counter, a long row of cabinets is visible over the sink and stove top.

A trio of Renders are crouched behind the counter. PCs who take no special precautions in approaching it must make a Wis/Perception check at difficulty 8; failure means that they are unable to act during the first round of combat as the Renders pounce to attack.

3 Renders: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 9

The kitchen appliances could theoretically be broken down for scrap, but it would be a lengthy, noisy process requiring at least an hour to yield 1d6+2 units of TL3 scrap. A Random Find is also located somewhere in the cupboards.

D2 Ruined Elevator

A pair of elevator doors yawn open on the right-hand side of the corridor here, the spacious interior still lit by the emergency lighting and the floor of the elevator is scraped clean of mold and filth. The button for the upper floor has an "maintenance check" slashmark through the display, but the current and lower floors both read "accessible".

The elevator system was also suborned to Dr. Calder's sense of humor when he arranged to "clean out" the lab in preparation for his cold sleep. If a PC enters the elevator and presses a button, the doors will slide closed- and lock that way. The elevator will go nowhere and do nothing, remaining inert until Calder or one of the Lemans come along with the keycode to open and clean it out again.

The internal or external control panel can be hacked by someone using Int and the Security, Tech/Postech, or Computer skills against

a difficulty of 10. The doors can also be levered or bashed open by melee weapons once they've done a total of 20 HP of damage, though each attack will automatically inflict one level of condition damage on the weapon if it's not designed for such abuse.

If the skill check to open the door is failed, it means that the PCs took so long that a Leman and her Decanted minions turned up to check the elevator for intruders. They'll open the door to hungrily attack if all the PCs are inside the elevator. If the group is split, survivors can eventually open the door with another 30 minutes of effort. Attempting to cut through the floor or ceiling of the elevator is impractical, as its cabin armor is still intact.

The investigating group of Decanted will include **Danae** (AC 7/ Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 15 HP, Atk: +4/1d6 Laser Pistol, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 9), **3 Clutchers** (AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8) and **2 Renders** (AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10)

D3 Work Area

Holographic dividing panels stutter between moldering desks, cubicles of temporary light painted with moving panoramas of Old Terran life. Here a sunlit beach, there a peaceful mountain-top, and in the corner the neon glare of some ancient club floor. They flicker and fade at random intervals, denying a clear line of sight across the vast room.

Holographic dividers provided a combination of privacy and soothing surrounds for the analysts who worked in this room. Generations of management consultants had cycled through innumerable different work configurations, but the ARC's brass at the time of the Scream had hit upon this particular arrangement as being most efficient for their workers.

The flickering panels also make it impossible to see more than five or six meters in any given direction in the room, which is rectangular in shape, 30 meters long by 20 meters wide. There are at least thirty workstations arranged in staggered rows in the room, all of them topped with mold-crusting processing stations and decayed printouts. Two Random Finds are present somewhere in the room.

Four Renders are prowling silently among the desks, and will drop to hide if the PCs enter without care for stealth. They work as a pack to ambush any trailing PC, and gain a -3 bonus to their armor class against ranged attacks if they're able to get at least five meters away from the assailant. The flickering holopanel obscures a ranged attacker's line of sight.

4 Renders: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 9

E2 Tech Center

Ruined lab equipment and stripped computing devices litter the shelves and floor of this white-walled room. Mold has etched creeping blotches of filth on the walls and ceiling, with long streamers of tarry black life draping downward.

Dr. Calder systematically stripped the mid-level laboratories of almost every spare part of value in order to jury-rig his cold sleep pod. What he couldn't use, he smashed in order to discourage any casual depredations by looters who might break into the facility before the Harmony rescue team could arrive. He did not anticipate that his salvation should be so unseasonably delayed.

Dr. Calder's idea of value was substantially more elevated than the standards held by modern scroungers, however, and the hands of the New Earth can find use in things that he cast aside as worthless. A full hour spent inspecting the wreckage will turn up 1d6 units of TL2 spare parts, 1d4 units of TL3 spare parts, and 1 unit of TL4 spare parts.

E3 Decontamination Lock

A yawning metal door hangs open here, giving a view of a 5-meter square metal chamber pierced by dozens of vents along the walls. On the far side, a matching door remains sealed next to a card lock. Emergency lighting flickers unsteadily in the chamber.

On the north wall of the decontamination lock, a panel has been unbolted. Amid a maze of pumps and shunts shines the telltale silvery gleam of a circular set of lab-grade water filters.

Conventional security keys were synced to the wearer's Net implants, but the tight security at the ARC often fell back on more primitive measures that were less susceptible to Maestro interference. Dr. Calder opens the door briefly every hour to allow Decanted to enter and exit, allowing the passage of a pack equivalent to the "Rampaging Decanted" random encounter.

Those groups who would rather not bull-rush a swarm of mutants can try to break the security lock with an Int/Security check at difficulty 10, or else use the keycard that can be found at Security Station B. Successfully opening the door will allow the PCs to descend the sloping 20-meter corridor to Security Station C on the bottom level.

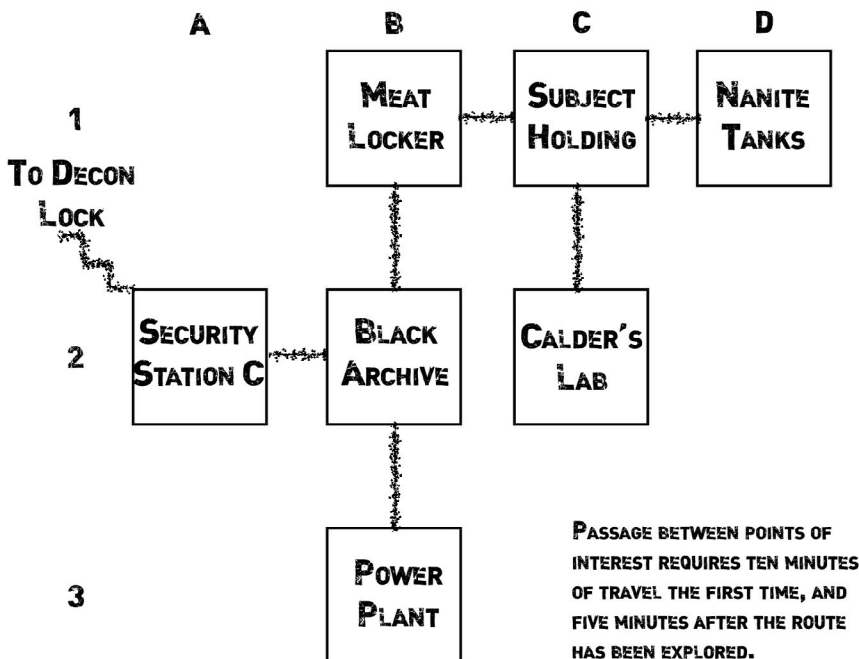
Recently, Dr. Calder has begun to extract the water filters from the decontamination lock in order to safeguard his own water supply, though the work remains incomplete. Anyone with at least Tech/Postech-0 skill and a half-hour's work can remove the filters intact. The set of filters counts as three encumbrance items.

THE ASHBROOK RESEARCH CENTER, BOTTOM LEVEL

The lowest level of the research complex is a fetid pit of creeping mold, putrescent masses of fungal growth, and the overwhelming stench of rotting flesh. The molds feed on the wastes of the Decanted and often veil the flickering light fixtures in mantles of black filth. Every step lands wetly on the carpet of fungus that mats the corridors and all but the most carefully-kept rooms.

The bottom level of the center teems with packs of Decanted and vermin. Random encounter checks should be rolled every 30 minutes instead of hourly. If an encounter results, roll 1d4 on the encounter table rather than 1d10 to reflect the more restricted variety of horrors in the corridors.

When presenting this level, be careful to underline the obvious menace of the area, even compared to the rest of the ruin. Take care that the players don't take it as a blatant "this area is far too dangerous for you" warning, but let them understand that there is no grand plot railroad which requires that they risk this undertaking. Dr. Calder's death would be a triumph, but failure is a very real possibility.



A2 Security Station C

This rectangular chamber is perhaps fifteen meters long by ten meters in width, a ladder halfway down the left-hand side leading up to a wire-mesh walkway elevated four meters above the floor. Chairs and filing cabinets have been torn up and broken along the periphery of the room, and the walkway above is papered over with fallen reports.

The mold and filth is thicker here than on the level above, the slime an inch-thick layer of soft decay beneath your feet. Every step sends up a mephitic puff of spores to join the general miasma in the hot, humid air.

If the current game time is within ten minutes of the hour, a pack of Decanted will be present, waiting for Dr. Calder to remotely open the doorway at the top of the sloping passageway to the west. Their numbers are random, varying with the hour and the number of Decanted who are goaded by their appetites to seek food on higher levels. The mutants will all be distracted by hunger and impatience, easily surprised by a group that approaches with stealth.

At other times the security station is empty of any life beyond the mold. Dr. Calder has been quite thorough about stripping the consoles of any useful parts, but a careful inspection will locate a Random Find he did not consider important.

2d4 **Clutchers**: AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

1d4+2 **Renderers**: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 9

B1 Meat Locker

Armorglass tubes run from the floor to the ceiling in glittering banks of neatly-kept tech. Each one is easily a meter in diameter and filled with a pale amber fluid. Corpses float within the tubes, their bodies scarred with the marks of the violence that killed them.

There are perhaps fifty or sixty of the tubes arrayed in five ten-meter rows along the center of the broad, square room.. The flickering light passes strangely through the glass, shadows of amber and red spilled on the spotless floor.

Dr. Calder stores the corpses of his unfortunate victims in these tubes of preservative in order to stockpile raw material for the biogenesis vats. The cellular components of the dead can be broken down and used as raw materials for the Decanted, and Calder takes care not to waste any more human flesh than he must.

The tubes will shatter if dealt a firm blow, though a weapon not designed for blunt impacts will suffer damage on a 19 or 20 on 1d20. The bodies will resume their decay if removed from the reeking amber liquid.

Approximately a quarter of the tubes are empty, a few shreds of flesh still floating in the amber medium. These bodies have already been removed by Dr. Calder and reduced to the cellular matrix base he needs to force-grow more Decanted. If a PC or familiar NPC has died during an earlier expedition into the ruins and their body was not recovered, the PCs will discover it here, awaiting new life as the sinew and muscle of some monstrous Clutcher- or as the more polished flesh of one of Calder's vat-grown companions.

B2 Black Archives

Countless thumb-sized memory chips have been slotted into the man-high storage panels that dominate this square chamber. All twenty meters of each of the four walls are covered by the storage panels, each panel home to easily a thousand of the Old Terran data storage devices. A working dataslab could perhaps read them, those that haven't been hopelessly corroded by nanite dust and the filthy mold that creeps up the walls.

The research conducted on this level was far too sensitive to be stored on a network, and so all files were maintained on physical memory chips backed up into an isolated server. Dr. Calder carefully removed the most vital data before destroying the backup server, ensuring that the Mandate would have to rescue him to learn where the information was hidden.

Ten encumbrance items worth of memory chips are still intact. Searching for useful data requires a functioning dataslab and the efforts of PCs with both the Tech/Medical and Computer skills, the former to understand the data and the latter to crack the encryption with an Int/Computer skill check against difficulty 12. The time required is one week plus two days for every point by which the check is failed.

Assuming the analysis is successful, the true nature of the ARC will be obvious. Most of the data is too esoteric to be of any use, but a detailed formula for a regenerative compound can be deduced that acts as a +4 blueprint for making Patch stims, and can be performed with only a TL3-equivalent crafting facility. However, the making of each dose requires cerebrospinal extracts from a freshly-dead, unmutated human. One corpse is required for each dose made.

B3 Power Plant

The acrid stink of ozone fills the room, overpowering the fetor of the mold. The filth seems less prevalent here, bare metal showing around the blue-glowing pit at the center of the large chamber. A fist-sized node of crystalline material flickers with erratic blue light, hanging suspended over the pit by a half-dozen wire-thin connections to various pieces of bulky hardware.

Any PC with Tech/Postech skill or Survival skill of 1 or better will immediately recognize the dangerous blue glow of potentially lethal radiation. Everyone must make a Radiation check, and then another for each 10 further minutes spent in the room. The node itself is the facility's unstable nanotech power core. Anyone with Tech/Postech skill can make an Int/Tech/Postech skill check at difficulty 9 to diagnose its irreparable decay; those who fail the check must spend a full ten minutes examining it to draw that conclusion. It would be a simple matter for a tech to sabotage the core's cooling system, resulting in the inevitable explosion of the core with a violence that would be certain to erase the entire facility.

If the PCs do so, let them choose a desired delay for the explosion, and then have the tech roll an Int/Tech/Postech skill check at difficulty 10. For every point by which the check is missed, the explosion happens ten percent faster than intended. The sabotage cannot be stopped once it begins, and the PCs are going to need at least ten minutes of distance between them and the ARC if they aren't going to be obliterated along with it by the ensuing explosion.

C1 Subject Holding

Rows of restraint boards stand upright in this room, each one a smooth ceraplast panel with bindings for a prisoner. The stink in this room is even stronger than usual on this level.

Dr. Calder's latest and favorite Leman, "Evangeline", keeps a desultory guard here along with the a pack of guardian Decanted, just in case intruders manage to get this far. They are careless about their work, clustering on the eastern side of the room to pass around half-rotten gobbets of human sweetbreads. They haven't had to face invaders in this area yet, and are too dim to make effective use of the restraint boards as cover against attacks- a failing the PCs may not suffer.

The guardian group of Decanted includes *Evangeline* (AC 7/Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 15 HP, Atk: +4/1d6 Laser Pistol, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 9), *5 Clutchers* (AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 8) and *3 Renders* (AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10)

Evangeline has a gift given to her by Dr. Calder as a token of his "affection". It's an Enigmatic device resembling an anklet of partially-invisible ceramic material with bands of jewel-bright color. When the colors are pressed in the correct order before wearing it, the nanite scrubbers it emits keep the wearer and their gear perfectly clean and dry even when fully submerged. On a failed attempt to comprehend the Enigmatic device, the nanite aggression is dialed too far up, the user's clothing or armor is destroyed, and they are permanently and totally depilated. The device requires no power source to function.

C2 Calder's Lab

Tanks of dull gray ceramic line the walls of this long laboratory, each one fronted with a transparent panel of armorglass. Within each floats a humanlike shape, soft with unformed flesh and misshapen proportions. Tubes connect each of the vats to two long overhead pipes, one pumping a quicksilver-colored fluid, and the other feeding a thick red slurry to the vats. The liquids mingle with the clear fluids inside to leave their contents a silhouette of darkness in the vats.

At the far end of the laboratory an upright steel sarcophagus yawns open, a rat's nest of wires and tubes sprouting from its rear to fix in jury-rigged profusion to the room's power feeds and the tubes overhead. The door of the coffin yawns open, and a decayed, sweat-yellowed padding lines its interior.

Between the northern entrance to the room and the sarcophagus twenty meters away at the far end, a maze of tables are covered with disconnected human body parts.

Dr. Calder slept the cold sleep of centuries here in his laboratory, and here he is building the legion that will tame the ruined world outside. His minions bring him the body parts he thoughtfully preserved against future need, and here he carves them apart for processing into the thick red fluid that feeds through the upper pipes. The silvery catalytic nanites from the other pipe combine to form the perfect growth medium for his force-grown Decanted footsoldiers.

Calder himself will be oblivious to any fighting elsewhere in the complex. He is aware that outsiders are beginning to penetrate the center, but the prisoners from earlier search parties have made clear that no overwhelming army is anywhere near the ARC- and Calder has nothing but contempt for the efforts of the benighted primitives anyway. The distance between the labs and the subject holding area outside is too great for him to hear the sounds of fighting, and only the Lemans among his Decanted are bright enough to think of warning him of impending attack.

The wicked doctor himself will be found standing behind a cutting table at the far end of the room from the lab's northern entrance, twenty meters away from the PCs. Barring some unusual acrobatics, the tangle of tables and equipment in the room renders it difficult terrain, halving the movement rate of any PC. They do provide easy cover for those not being attacked by melee combatants, granting a -2 AC bonus against ranged attacks.

The doctor himself is a tall, slim, pale man with neatly-kept black hair and lifeless black eyes. He will address the PCs in mild and reasonable tones, keeping them talking as long as possible as his implanted Link sends emergency growth commands to the vats around him. Once the PCs attack or he's had two or three minutes to prepare the vats, he'll sic his fresh creations on them.

If the PCs attack immediately, 3 Clutchers will lumber out of the vats to attack them. If they gave Calder time to prepare, 3 Clutchers and 3 Renders will spring to assault them. Every four rounds afterwards, another Clutcher and another Render will lurch out of one of the remaining vats until a full thirty Decanted have emerged.

This process can be stopped by blowing a hole in one of the overhead pipes with a ranged attack that does at least 6 points of damage. The vats can also be smashed at 5 points of damage apiece, but there's no guarantee that the next round's Decanted are going to come from a particular vat; the person who destroyed the vat should roll a Luck save. On a success, the next batch of Decanted are spoiled and no more will emerge until the next four-round interval.

All the while, Dr. Calder will be fighting for his life. He will give no quarter and will not retreat, knowing that he has no chance for survival in this world without his hapless creations. His Decanted will fight to the death as long as Dr. Calder yet lives, but his death will cause them to flee madly.

Dr. Calder: AC 7/Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 30 HP, Atk +5/Good-quality laser pistol 1d6+1, Skill +3, Save 13+, Morale 12.

Clutchers: AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 12

Renderers: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks., Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 12

A search of Calder's laboratory after his death will turn up 10 units of TL4 spare parts, 4 Cyst stims, two medkits, and a handheld Portable Expert System with Tech/Medical-0 skill.

D1 Nanite Tanks

This cavernous chamber is big enough to fit two of the Broketree stranger's houses within its walls. A tremendous roaring noise fills the air, echoing from the waterfall that spurts from the eastern wall. It starts about ten meters up where a recent crack has given entrance to the Sweetwater River and puddles in a murky, churning pool on the south side of the room. The groan of the ruin's drainage pumps throbs through the floor.

On the north side of the room, vast tanks of tarnished Old Terran metal rise to the ceiling fifteen meters overhead. Whatever cracked the walls appears to have made these ancient vessels creak as well, fine cracks lacing the sides of the nearest tanks. A steady spill of quicksilver liquid pours from these cracks, mixing with the river water before the pumps siphon it away.

These tanks are the source of the contamination, each of them filled with a catalytic nanite compound vital to the advanced biotechnical experimentation performed by the center. There's enough of the catalyst left to create a legion of Decanted, even with the leakage, so Dr. Calder has not been overly concerned about the perforations.

A tech with at least a TL2 toolkit could repair the tanks and halt the leakage. Doing so would require two hours of effort and the salvaging of some loose metal panels available here in the room. Each additional helper will reduce the necessary time by 15 minutes. Anyone who works at this project is going to get drenched in a fine mist of catalyst, however, and will accumulate 1 Toxin point for every 10 minutes or fraction spent working. Once 10 Toxin points are accumulated, a subject must save versus Physical Effect or become Sickened, taking a -2 penalty to hit, -1 to skill checks, and -1 to saves until their Toxin total drops below 10. A character suffering neither hunger nor thirst can make a Physical Effect save each day to throw off 1 point of Toxins.

The complete destruction of the facility by means of an unstable power core explosion will also serve to end the threat, though it foreclose any future chance of salvage.

In the pool at the south end of the room, a small school of fishmen have been swept into the room by the current of the Sweetwater. They have been Sickened by the water and are ravenously hungry, but fear to leave the room and face the Decanted they've seen outside. They will hide in the water with an effective Dex/Stealth bonus of +3 and attempt to ambush the PCs at the first good moment. While not naturally inclined to cannibalism, the fishmen are desperate.

The PCs can easily see the sick, hungry look of their assailants, and it's not impossible that they could persuade them to halt their attack if some sign of friendship- or more importantly, food- is offered. If persuaded to act as allies, the fishmen will even fight alongside the PCs if they offer any plausible hope of escaping the center. The fishmen all speak English, and have no useful gear beyond their spears.

6 Fishmen: AC 9, Move 20' Swim 30', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE RESEARCH CENTER

It isn't safe to linger indefinitely in the Ashbrook Research Center. Packs of dangerous mutants have burrowed into the structure since it was buried by the mud, and the Decanted created by Dr. Calder are stalking the halls. The more time the PCs spend exploring the place, the more likely they're going to run into something toothy, hungry, and irritable.

For every 60 minutes the PCs spend in the research center, roll 1d6. On a 6, roll 1d10 to determine a random encounter from the list below. If the encounter isn't appropriate for their current location, spring it on them when they leave the area. If the same encounter is rolled twice and isn't appropriate for multiple occasions, use the next one in sequence.

The purpose of these random encounters is to discourage a leisurely approach to the exploration. The PCs are in a very dangerous place, and they can't afford to take all the time in the world to sift every inch of it for valuables and information.

1. Decanted Pack

A small pack of Clutchers is shambling about, looking for anything they can eat. The PCs qualify as "extremely tasty".

2d4 **Clutchers**: AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

2. Rampaging Decanted

A large pack of Decanted have picked up the PCs' trail, and are racing to slaughter the delicious intruders.

2d4 **Clutchers**: AC 9, Move 20', 5 HP, Atk: +2/Clutch and then 1d6 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 7

1d4+2 **Renderers**: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 9

3. Render Ambush

A number of Renderers lie in wait in this abandoned corridor, waiting in a utility closet for prey to come along. The PCs can detect the ambush if one of them makes a Wis/Perception skill check against difficulty 10. If surprised, the Renderers will all get one free round of action before the PCs can roll for initiative.

1d4+2 **Renderers**: AC 7, Move 30', 5 HP, Atk: +2/2x1d6 Claw attacks,, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 9

4. Heritor Bug Swarm

The next container or closet opened by the PCs is going to turn out to be filled by a swarm of writhing, biting heritor bugs. PCs will have one free round of action before the bugs can sort themselves out to attack.

2d8 **Heritor Bugs**: AC 7, Move 15', 1 HP, Atk: +1/1d4 bite, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 10

5. Beleaguered Leman

One of Calder's Lemans, "Cynthia", has been beset by a pair of flaysnakes that have burrowed into the center. Her Decanted escorts

are dead, and she's hiding in a closet, shooting through the cracks as the flaysnakes hammer at the door. She'll shoot at the PCs after the snakes are dead, but sufficiently persuasive speech might convince her that the PCs aren't actually going to do all the things that Dr. Calder warned her they'd do. She's unlikely to directly turn on Calder, but can give vague directions to the doctor.

Cynthia: AC 7/Old Terran Clothing, Move 20', 15 HP, Atk: +4/1d6 Laser Pistol, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 9

2 **Flaysnakes**: AC 7, Move 20, HD 3, Atk +4/1d6 bite+poison, Skill +2, Save 14+, Morale 8. Poison is Toxicity 8, Virulence 3, Interval 2 rounds and does 1d6 Constitution point damage per failed save.

6. Confused Turtle

Glow turtles are some of the few life forms that can actually eat the plants that grow in the poisoned hills. This one burrowed in and became lost in the corridors- and it's not happy. It will stop and eat if thrown food- or if it downs a victim.

1 **Glow Turtle**: AC 2, Move 25', HD 5, Atk: +6/1d10 bite, Skill +1, Save 13+, Morale 8

7. Digger Springs Survivor

This luckless scavenger was part of a team that located the ARC and plunged within to look for the source of the poison. His comrades were eaten by Decanted, and he's desperate to get out. He knows the general contents of any adjacent rooms, and will bargain the knowledge for an escort out of the ruin.

1 **Desperate Survivor**: AC 6, Move 20', HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 spear, Skill +1, Save 15+, Morale 5

8. Berserk Security Bot

Dr. Calder reprogrammed this bot to eliminate his rivals. While it's smart enough to ignore Decanted, it considers PCs to be targets. Destroyed bots can be salvaged for 1d6 units of TL4 spare parts, at 30 minutes of work per unit extracted.

1 **Security Bot**: AC 4, Move 20', 12 HP, Atk: +4/1d10+2 Laser Rifle, Skill +1, Save 14+, Morale 12.

9. Crippled Clutcher

A single Clutcher lies amid his slaughtered brethren, a few dead, gear-stripped Broketree scavengers among them. The Clutcher will die soon if not aided; if healed, it will be pathetically loyal until overwhelmed by the will of a Leman or Dr. Calder.

10. Ancient Booby Trap

Calder left a number of surprises for any casual looters, trusting that Harmony elite could bypass them with minimal danger. This home-made frag grenade is connected to a tripwire that will pull when a drawer is opened or a corridor is traveled. The victim and all within 3 meters will take 2d6 damage, with a Luck save for half.

THE DECANTED

Deep in the bowels of the center, Dr. Calder is using the facility's forced-growth biogenesis vats to create a swarm of servants. These "Decanted" are grown in a matter of days from a slurry of protein stock, deliquesced human flesh, and catalytic nanites. The degree of care in their construction is reflected in their appearance; the Clutchers and Renders appear as horribly distorted humans, while the Lemans have an icy outward perfection.

All Decanted are neurally wired to respond to specific chemical compounds that Calder exudes, regarding him with an uncontrollable sense of love and awe. The overrides seriously compromise their ability to reason, however, and Clutchers and Renders are capable of only the most basic thought processes. They can operate doors, navigate physical hazards, and perform simple manual labor. Presently, Calder has them confined to the center, roaming the corridors and killing anything edible they can find.

Lemans are more intelligent, at the cost of a less perfect loyalty to Calder. Created as companions for the mad doctor and overseers for the Clutchers and Renders, most of them have near-human levels of intelligence. They exude chemicals that induce obedience in lesser Decanted, and are usually present in any sizable group. They can respond intelligently to hostile resistance and goad their sometimes-cowardly lessers into greater courage. It's not impossible for a Leman to choose to abandon Calder if given suitable inducement, though in his presence they become as helplessly overwhelmed as their bestial lessers.

Lesser Decanted can be grown in a matter of hours, while a Leman requires a full day to be born. Calder's creation process implants a basic grasp of English and a crude theoretical understanding of social mores and behavior in the Lemans. All of them understand that the outside world wishes to kill them all- and worse, it wishes to slay their beloved creator. Only by capturing and processing these horrible outsiders can they be rendered docile and obedient to the rightful master of the New Earth. Of course, those who resist too fiercely are the lawful prey and food of the faithful Decanted.

Decanted are unstable life forms. Their rapid forced growth and Calder's general indifference to their long-term survival results in eventual immune system collapse and a painful death within six months. Nothing can prevent this fate in lesser Decanted, but weekly stim use in a Leman can prevent the downward slide. Clutchers and Renders are too stupid to understand their own eventual mortality, but Lemans realize that they are temporary creatures. Calder has promised them that he will preserve the most faithful and useful among them- a promise he will keep to the extent it is convenient to his purposes.

Calder is limited in the number of Decanted he can create with the available stocks of preserved human tissue. He means to use up his reserve before sending Lemans and lesser Decanted to scout the surrounding area. Prisoners taken from earlier search parties have revealed the existence of Digger Springs and Broketree, and he plans to overwhelm the first with his mutant servitors before conditioning the healthy adults and reprocessing the children and elderly into new tissue stock for a fresh army.

	CLUTCHER	RENDER	LEMAN
No. Enc.	1d6	1d4	1
Movement	20'	30'	20'
Armor Class	9	7	7/Old Terran Clothes
Hit Dice	1	1	3
Attacks	+2/Clutch	+2/2 claws	+4/Weapon
Damage	Special	1d6/1d6	1d6/Laser Pistol
Save	15	15	14
Morale	7	9	9
Loot Type	None	None	None
Skill Bonus	+1	+1	+2

Clutchers appear as naked, hairless human figures with puffy flesh and hideously oversized jaws. They attack by grappling with a target and holding it still in order to devour it alive. They particularly savor nutrient-rich internal organs and will prefer their consumption to that of other flesh.

When a Clutcher succeeds in a clutch attack, the victim immediately suffers the Grabbed negative effect and cannot move away from the Clutcher. In addition to the usual -2 penalties to hit rolls and -1 penalty to saves and skill checks suffered by someone under a negative condition, a Grabbed character also takes a +2 penalty to their armor class. If a Clutcher hits a Grabbed character a second time, they'll bite for 1d6 damage. Only one Clutcher will try to grab a character at any one time- the rest will just swarm in and attempt to bite. Clutchers tend to greediness, however, and often they will each attempt to grab their own victim before ganging up on a single target. The only way to end the grab is to kill the Clutcher or force it to flee.

Renders are skeletally thin figures with tough, tight-stretched skin and arms that end in pointed bone spurs. They rush at their victims and attempt to skewer the prey on their spurs before feasting on the remains. They prefer to target Grabbed prey, and are more aggressive and fearless than the sometimes-craven Clutchers.

Lemans appear as icily perfect young female humans dressed in mismatched Old Terran evening dresses scavenged from the dead. Calder has trusted them each of them with fully-charged laser pistols and a spare Type A cell. When present with lesser Decanted, their inferiors gain a +1 bonus to Morale and will obey the Leman to the extent of their abilities.

None of the Lemans are terribly bright, but all have human-level intellect and can speak English. They are convinced that all outsiders seek their destruction. While they are likely to fight to the death to avoid the horrible fates that Calder has advised them await among the outsiders, it's possible for a sufficiently persuasive party to convince a Leman to aid them; their loyalty is the product of chemicals rather than reason or long conditioning. A turncoat Leman can tell a party of Calder's plans and subdue Decanted not led by other, more loyal specimens of their kind.

RANDOM FINDS IN THE RESEARCH CENTER

Certain rooms in the complex recommend the addition of one or more random finds to their contents. The following table provides one easy source of such odds and ends, most of which are fairly valuable to scavengers. A few of them are hazards, however, and could lead to unfortunate consequences for the unwary scavenger. Some of the entries include suggested locations for the items, but when in doubt, you can use the table to the right to hint as to where the item can be found in the room.

You can expect PCs to say some equivalent of “We search the room” on a regular basis when exploring a ruin. Try to get them to be more precise, asking specifically where they look. This can be difficult if they have only a general idea of the area’s layout, so be generous about their answers and err on the side of inclusion if you’re not sure if they’re specifically checking a place. If they specifically name the place where the object is being hidden, or some close approximation, they’ll find it in a matter of minutes.

If they’re less precise, have them roll a Wis/Perception skill check at difficulty 8. On a success, they find the item with just a few minutes of searching. Otherwise, it will usually take them a full 10 minutes of searching to stumble across the cached goods, if they find it at all.

1d12	LOCATION OF THE FIND
1	Inside a desk drawer
2	Taped beneath a table or under a cabinet
3	Hidden behind a picture on the wall
4	Slid beneath a blotter
5	Under the rotting remains of a mutant
6	Top shelf of a closet
7	Under a seat cushion
8	Inside a locked safe- Diff 8 Dex/Security to open
9	Sitting in plain sight
10	Clutched in a dead Broketree scavenger’s hand
11	Inside a filing cabinet
12	Inside the pocket of a crumbling lab coat

1d100	RANDOM FIND	1d100	RANDOM FIND
1-2	Type A power cell kicked under the furniture	51-52	Concealed Lightly Damaged loaded semi-auto pistol
3-4	Holoportrait of Director Armand Calder on the wall	53-54	Autopsy tools; they work like a monoblade at -1 to hit
5-6	Old Terran snack food ration stuffed in a desk	55-56	Box of six sets of full-body human restraints
7-8	A spare metatool pocketed in ruined clothing	57-58	Holoportrait of ARC softball team, Calder on the left
9-10	Sheaf of plastic research data reports	59-60	Abandoned tool pack with TL4 toolkit contents
11-12	Dataslab-compatible memory chip full of porn	61-62	Security guard’s remains with charged stun baton
13-14	Stimtab of illegal narcotic; incapacitates for 5 mins.	63-64	Sword prop; blunt, but can be made lethal in one hour
15-16	Memo on a colleague who vanished after being fired	65-66	Memo warning that Johnson’s getting too curious
17-18	Broken dataslab in the mold; can be fixed/salvaged	67-68	Invitation to seminar held by Dr. Calder in the salon
19-20	Box of 1d6 emergency glowbugs	69-70	Cafeteria menu for the week of the Scream
21-22	Compromising photos of a married colleague	71-72	1d6 stale Type A cells; 50% chance of being dead
23-24	Bin full of empty plastic drink containers	73-74	Spare maintenance brackets; 1d6 TL2 spare part units
25-26	Fresh roll of bonding tape in a cabinet	75-76	Scalpel maintenance notes: +1 monoblade blueprints
27-28	Collapsed shelving made of four telescoping poles	77-78	Insomnia stim; aid as normal, but sleep for 1 hour
29-30	Memo on the “cold as a meatlocker” lower level	79-80	Gun-like device that’s actually just a salad shooter
31-32	Rad badge in a desk- single-use warning of rad zones	81-82	Memo noting the lower level is off-limits to workers
33-34	Can of permanent-until-reversed depilatory gel	83-84	Case of wiring; 1d6 TL3 spare part units
35-36	Memo announcing mandatory Mandate loyalty rally	85-86	Plastic cutting board that doesn’t retain DNA evidence
37-38	Spare suit of Old Terran clothing on an upper shelf	87-88	Spare suit of Lightly Damaged Harmony Armor
39-40	Contaminated stim; moldy and of no help	89-90	Broken prosthetic link; can be fixed/salvaged
41-42	Box that had Old Terran snacks; eaten by Decanted	91-92	20m coil of TL4 rope with toothmarks on it
43-44	Crowbar on top of a physics discussion group memo	93-94	Two-liter jug containing countless tiny human teeth
45-46	First aid medkit undisturbed on the wall	95-96	Unfiled memo of complaint about Dr. Calder’s “tastes”
47-48	Frag grenade booby trap in drawer, left by Calder	97-98	Employee directory full of small holoportraits
49-50	Bottle of permanent hair dye in neon colors	99-100	Concealed Perfect-condition mag pistol, fully loaded

WHEN THE WATERS RUN SILVER

Catastrophe has echoed in the poisoned hills. Somewhere in those tainted lands an ancient power core finally went critical. The resulting explosion cracked the nanite holding tanks in the long-buried Ashbrook Research Center, and the spill has contaminated the Sweetwater River. Without the river's life-giving waters, the human settlements of this dry land cannot hope to survive.

The following section describes the setup for the adventure and a likely path of events. Players being players, it's inevitable that they'll leave this predicted track to follow their own plans and solutions. You should expect and welcome this, and use the information here to produce logical consequences for their efforts. The path described here simply covers those situations the GM is most likely to face in play.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

The following summary gives the sequence of events in the adventure, assuming the PCs do nothing to intervene. Even if PCs do become involved, it's important to track the dates- on July 25th, the communities will give up hope of salvation and will commence a fatal march to a nonexistent refuge. Search teams will be advised of this deadline before they set out.

On July 7th, an unstable power core near the buried Ashbrook Research Center detonated. The explosion shook the entombed laboratory and resulted in the catastrophic failure of its nanite catalytic tanks. As an underground tributary of the Sweetwater River flowed through the buried lab the silvery nanite taint was quickly picked up by the water. Within the day, the first traces appeared in the river outside Digger Springs and Broketree.

On July 8th, Porter Li in Broketree steals away to comm his superiors in Digger Springs, warning them that Broketree is sending search parties into the eastern hills to find nanite filters, just as their grandfathers did in a similar crisis. Digger Springs is closer to the hills, and Big Ben Rao, the Boss of the settlement, will marshal his own searchers. It will take Broketree's parties at least five days to reach the poisoned hills and begin searching. Digger Springs' parties can reach it in only one.

On July 17th, a few of the bravest search parties will discover the Ashbrook Research Center. All will fall prey to the mutants and perils within, with no survivors to bring word to the rest. The rest of the groups will fail to penetrate sufficiently far into the poisoned hills, and the research center will remain undiscovered by them. The other parties will fail to find any filters, as will the teams from Digger Springs. By this time, both communities are reduced to drinking the tainted water.

On July 25th, the communities will finally write off the search parties as having failed. They will gather their goods and strike out, with Digger Springs' townsfolk heading north through the mudflats and Broketree's traveling south through the Fallen Forest. Perhaps a tenth of each group will eventually find refuge in some other enclave. The rest will leave their bones in the wastes, either sickened by bad water or slaughtered by raiders and mutants.

SETTING UP THE SITUATION

The PCs are assumed to be natives or visitors to Broketree, though with a little ingenuity the GM could just as easily start this adventure in Digger Springs. The key is to give them some general affiliation with one of the two settlements, so they have some reason to get involved in the crisis. Even the most mercenary characters can be motivated by the reward involved, but it's easier to get them moving if some of them are friends and relatives of the locals.

It's best to start the adventure on July 6th, giving the PCs a day to explore Broketree and meet the local residents. Use Vincent Lyken to greet any strangers and have him assign the local PCs as combination minders and guides to the outsiders. Let them meet Mayor Montoya and catch a glimpse of the tension between the important families in Broketree, perhaps overhearing a heated argument between Old Louie Cass and Eliza Buckmiller.

Make sure to establish the group's available rations of food and water at this point. Be casual about it, presenting it as a simple check of the group's equipment. Before the contamination starts, any amount of potable water can simply be drawn from the Sweetwater. Once the river goes bad, only Dirty rations of water will be available in the vicinity of the settlements, and PCs are going to be faced with a constant tension between accepting the accumulating Toxin points from drinking dirty water or facing the rapid negative consequences of going without necessary hydration.

THE HOUR OF NEED

The PCs will awake next morning by the panic of the locals, who are meeting in the town square to talk about the contamination of the river. Old Judge Hanrahan will tell the story of the last time the river ran with silver threads, and of how the water was a slow poison to those who drank it. Only by the courage of the scouts and hunters of the village were filters from the ancient ruins found and the settlement saved. The town's able-bodied young men and women will immediately be organized into search parties and equipped as best the community can manage. The parties are small, no more than a half-dozen men and women in each, as larger groups can't travel as quickly or as quietly through the wilds.

Judge Hanrahan will be performing most of this organization. Mayor Montoya will be paralyzed by the situation, in constant conference with the leaders of the four major families and utterly unable to order anything useful unless all four family leaders agree on its necessity. The four will agree on almost nothing, and Montoya will be correspondingly useless throughout the crisis, if not actively obstructive in her attempt to maintain the status quo.

The PCs will not be obligated to help if they are outsiders, but such obviously capable wanderers will be offered membership in the community, a house to live in, and regular meals for the rest of their lives if they succeed in bringing back the nanite filters. Locals won't be offered the same rewards in so many words, their help being expected under the circumstances, but it's tacitly understood that anyone who brings back the salvation of the settlement will be supported by it for the rest of their lives.

A BETTER OFFER

Most groups are going to take Broketree up on its offer. Even if the PCs are a decidedly uncharitable lot, they need water to survive, and this job promises to give them a source of potable water if it's successful. It's possible that they'll flatly refuse the request, in which case they are advised to vacate Broketree rapidly before the locals overcome their pacifistic impulses. PCs who agree to take the mission will each be given two rations of water, five rations of food, and Broketree's prayers for their success.

Whether the PCs go intentionally or are pushed, Porter Li will intercept them outside the settlement with his quantum comm activated and broadcasting their conversation to the Boss in Digger Springs. Li has pegged the group as being the ones most likely to actually succeed in the mission, and will attempt to convince them to bring any filters they find to Digger Springs instead of Broketree. He'll offer to match whatever Broketree is offering and throw in the Boss' stash of precious salvage as well. If the PCs turn violent, Li will attempt to flee; he has the stats of a Digger Springs mud miner for combat purposes. Whether or not the PCs agree, Li will fade back into the forest around Broketree and hide out there, watching from cover to see how the village is progressing.

Big Ben Rao at Digger Springs will keep any deals that Li strikes if the PCs hold up their end of the bargain. He'll be quick to suspect treachery from Broketree natives, but outsiders are assumed to be more mercenary in their impulses.

THE MARCH UPCOUNTRY

It requires no special insight for the PCs to realize that the river contaminants must be coming from somewhere along the river, and that unplundered ruins are more common the closer they get to the radioactive crater that remains at the heart of the ruined Old Terran city nearby. If the PCs don't draw this conclusion themselves, make sure Judge Hanrahan or another Broketree local spells it out for them, as it's common knowledge among the locals. Most groups will be inclined to follow the river into the hills, and assuming they survive the random perils of the trip will eventually stumble across the Ashbrook Research Center.

Other groups will hare off in different directions. For every day the PCs march in the completely wrong direction, roll 1d6; on a 4+, they meet another Broketree party that will confirm that there are no filters to be found in the accessible ruins in that direction, and that excavating the buried ones is too time-consuming.

If you have prepared small side-adventure ruins for your region as described in the *Other Dust* region creation chapter, you might plant one such ruin in the PCs' path, and let them discover ancient notes in it pointing to the Ashbrook Research Center.

Still, don't force the PCs to head to the research center. So long as they have the clues, let them do as they will with them. They may be perfectly happy to see one or both communities die in hopes of raiding the desperate survivors or plundering what they have to leave behind. They might be profoundly misinterpreting their information and making a bad choice that will come back to haunt them. So long as they have the facts they need to have, let them act as they see fit.

DELVING DEEP

Eventually the PCs are likely to reach the Ashbrook Research Center. The Sweetwater is visibly pure and uncontaminated east of the ruins and streaked with silver taint to the west. The fresh water makes it a good occasion for them to refill their canteens.

The actual expedition into the ruins should be fairly straightforward. The place is designed so that the PCs can acquire the filters without having to delve into the lowest level of the ruin, where the dark master of the labs and his cracked nanite tanks await. Obtaining the filters is a sort of limited victory, one that will produce complications later but allows the PCs to avoid a potentially lethal confrontation.

Other groups will press on to the very bottom of the ruins and discover the cracked tanks of nanites and the foul Dr. Calder. Assuming they survive, there are several ways to deal with the nanite contamination, and the party may well devise some way of stopping the taint at its source. In many ways, this is the optimal outcome. Both communities will be saved and both will be inclined to treat any surviving PCs as town heroes.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

The trip back west will vary depending on the solution the PCs obtained and the route they take. If they simply found the nanite filters, a crew of Digger Springs mud miners will be lying in wait along the river where it leaves the poisoned hills, ready to intercept any Broketree groups and steal the filters. 1d10+10 mud miners will be waiting there under cover; a successful Wis/Perception check at difficulty 9 will spot them from a distance of 2d6 x 10 meters away.

If not detected, one of the miners will call a demand to halt once the PCs are within 30 meters. Half of the miners are equipped with breechloading rifles and a half-dozen rounds of ammunition apiece (1d12 damage, +2 to hit), and the rest are armed with spears (1d6 damage, +2 to hit). They would prefer not to kill anyone, but they'll open fire if fired upon. Downed targets will be given medical assistance, but will be left to recover or die on their own or with the help of their surviving comrades.

Those groups who surrender will be searched. Any exceptionally precious relics or advanced weapons will be stolen, as will the nanite filters, but the PCs will be allowed to keep the basic gear necessary for survival. If the PCs have made a deal with Digger Springs to turn over the filters, the mud miners will approach them openly and

BITTER MORTALITY

It's not at all impossible that multiple PCs will end up dead on this adventure, either prey to the dangers of the journey, savaged by the inhabitants of the Ashbrook Research Center or killed in the fighting that follows the acquisition of the filters. In all cases, you want to get that player back into the action as quickly as possible. As soon as they've finished rolling up a new PC, get them back into the game, even if it means stretching plausibility a little.

Potential sources of new recruits include additional strangers in town, members of a Broketree scouting party, local nomads seeking adventure, and the scattered remnants of an earlier expedition into the ruins.

EXPERIENCE AWARDS

The default rule for *Other Dust* is to award one standard level-appropriate XP award for every session in which the PCs are trying to accomplish something suitable to their prowess. For 1st level PCs, the standard XP award is 1,000 xp, and the assumption is that the PCs will reach 2nd level after two full sessions.

If you prefer to link the rewards to particular accomplishments, you might grant one award for reaching the Ashbrook Research Center, one award for getting the nanite filters back to a settlement, and an additional award if the PCs manage to solve the entire contamination problem at the source. You can also lessen or increase the standard award if you want to change the rate of the party's level advancement.

provide a "protective escort" to the settlement. Once there, the PCs will be kept under guard until the nanite filters are installed and tested; if they come through with their end of the deal, Big Ben will keep his bargain with them.

If the PCs avoid the hexes where the river leaves the hills, they'll miss this ambush entirely and will be able to reach their chosen destination without more than the usual random encounter checks.

If the folk of Digger Springs do succeed in stealing the filters, the PCs are going to have to be the ones to get them back somehow. Jackie Noguera of Broketree and thirty of her hunters will be available to assist them, but the great families will be squabbling and blaming each other too much to do anything useful to help. The locals have enough contact with Digger Springs to provide a rough map of the settlement and point out the pumphouse, but it will be up to the PCs to formulate a plan for getting in and getting out with the filters. As desperate as the Broketree hunters are, they're willing to face almost certain death for the slightest hope of success.

HALF A VICTORY

If the PCs have succeeded in completely cleansing the taint of the river, a return to Broketree will be an occasion of joyous success. The PCs will be given a house on the edge of town, permission to each draw a ration's worth of grain from the stronghouse daily, and be accorded all the rights and privileges of a Broketree native if not already of that ilk. Even if the PCs commence to wandering far, the community will always remember them warmly and serve as a refuge at need. Aside from simple gratitude, any community like Broketree is always eager to have powerful, useful protectors in residence.

If the PCs have only obtained the nanite filters, however, things are going to be more complicated. As soon as the filters are installed in the wellhouse, the skulking Porter Li will use his quantum comm to report success to his superiors in Digger Springs. If Li is dead, another spy will have been sent, but will require four days to reach Digger Springs with his report.

While the townsfolk will be jubilant at their salvation, Jackie Noguera will point out the inevitability of an attack from Digger Springs. The mud miners have no choice but to assault Broketree and take the filters, because they can't hope to survive without them. The community is going to have to brace itself for an attack.

This pronouncement will be met with a mix of disbelief and panic. Half the folk of Broketree will manufacture rationalizations as to why Digger Springs can't possibly mean to attack them and the other half will be in dread of the far better-armed and more martial miners. Old Louie Cass will demand that Broketree negotiate some sort of agreement with Digger Springs, Eliza Buckmiller will call Cass a fool for thinking that Digger Springs could mobilize enough men to threaten Broketree, Vincent Lyken will demand that Cass provide whatever supplies their negotiation might require, and Susannah Bright will refuse to make any decision at all. Mayor Montoya will do nothing but wring her hands.

It will become rapidly obvious that the only people capable of leading the locals in an effective defense are the PCs, in conjunction with Jackie Noguera and her hunters. It will be up to them to save the town or let it perish to its own confusion and folly.

PARA BELLUM

You should give the PCs the map of Broketree if they haven't already got a copy. Explain that there are 600 adults, 1,200 children, and 300 aged. Perhaps 160 adults are at all useful in a fight; the rest are either disbelieving of the danger or hopelessly pacifistic. In addition to these civilians, there are 60 combat-capable hunters, with Jackie Noguera at their lead. If the PCs can convince Peter Boratko and his clan to help the town that scorns them, they'll gain his aid and the aid of 20 of his kinsmen, all with hunter stats. If not enlisted, the Boratkos are apt to retreat from the fray and join the winners.

The townsfolk are all equipped with spears, but lack any effective armor. The hunters all have hide armor, spears, and bows.

The useful townsfolk are divided into units of 20 adults- thus, there are 8 units of townsfolk and 3 or 4 units of hunters. Splitting them up into smaller groups is inadvisable, as they need the moral support of their comrades. Let the players decide how to distribute their available manpower and whether they intend to tear down any structures or hammer together makeshift fortifications. The panicked or disbelieving townsfolk will do nothing to help, but they're too disorganized to prevent the PCs and their allies from doing whatever they think is best.

Jackie Noguera knows enough about the surrounding land to be fairly certain that when the Digger Springs folk come, they'll be coming from the north side of town, on the western bank of the river. How much time the PCs will have to fortify Broketree will depend on how long it takes word of their success to reach the mud miners. If Porter Li is alive and transmitting, they have five days before the scouts will report the miners' approach. If a spy had to physically carry word north, they have nine days.

With the desperate help of their allied locals, assume that the PCs can get up to 500 rations worth of construction work accomplished each day, as per the construction costs given on page 150 of the *Other Dust* core rules. The work is shoddy and probably won't last long after the fight, but it will hold for the moment.

Once the PCs have planned out their fortifications and placed their allied units, ask if they want to attach themselves to any particular unit. If they stay together, they can more easily work together to strike at leaders in the enemy forces, but if they personally lead a

unit they'll be able to control it during the fight and not leave it to its own devices.

During the fight, any unit personally led by a PC will gain a +1 bonus to Morale and will do exactly as ordered so long as their discipline holds. Units led by a Slayer will always do at least half damage on an attack, even if they miss their hit roll. Those led by a Speaker will never fail a Morale check. Survivor leaders are at no risk of death if their unit is wiped out, and Scrounger leaders can get their units to perform one complicated maneuver or technical procedure automatically under their direction. PCs can only lead one unit at a time, but they can take command of a unit during the battle with a successful Cha/Leadership check at diff 8.

PCs that choose to remain as individuals on the field can use stealth and superior maneuverability to strike at enemy leaders, potentially decapitating the attack before it can bring the full weight of Digger Springs to bear.

THE BLOODY HOUR

At dawn on the day of the enemy's arrival, scouts will bring word of Digger Springs' advance. The disbelievers and panicked locals will immediately turn to Jackie Noguera and the PCs for leadership. If some provenance has been made for their protection in town, they'll hide as directed. Otherwise, they'll flee into the forest, where 20% of them will die to straggling mud miners, mutants, and raiders. They won't return until after the battle is safely concluded.

The Digger Springs forces will come on plainly and directly. While more martial than the Broketree folk, they lack discipline, and Big Ben doesn't trust their coordination well enough to try anything fancy. A full 400 adults have made the trip south, almost the entire fighting population of Digger Springs. They're desperate, and they're throwing everything they have against Broketree. There's no attempt at negotiation- both sides know that survival is at stake.

Days of tainted water have taken their toll on Digger Springs' men, however. All of their units are *Sickened*, suffering a -2 penalty on hit rolls, -1 to saves, and -1 to skill checks. Big Ben and other important NPCs have gotten enough fresh water to remain strong.

For purposes of the battle, run it just as if it were an individual-scale conflict between 20 Sickened mud miners, 8 Broketree civilians, and 3 or 4 Broketree hunters, each unit with 5 hit points. Assuming the PCs did their homework, many of the Broketree civilians will be ensconced behind fortifications of some kind, forcing the miners to negotiate them in order to get to grips. Most fortifications grant at least a -2 AC bonus to units hiding behind them, if not more.

If the PCs arranged for plenty of spears for the Broketree locals, they'll throw them, while the hunters will use their bows as long as possible. Lacking better missile weapons, the Broketree townsfolk will throw stones at 1d4 damage at nearby enemy units. Broketree units will follow the instructions given by the PCs, albeit without much ingenuity or personal initiative.

The first time a unit is hit, and the first time that they see an allied unit destroyed, they need to make a Morale check. On a failure, they flee at their top movement rate and leave behind any PC leadership. In addition, if Big Ben Rao is killed, every unit of Digger Springs

forces must make a Morale check or flee in despair. Rao will hang back in the second wave of attackers, visible as a green giant at the front of his squad of 20 miners and a handsome target for snipers. He won't seek cover until he realizes he's being singled out.

If a unit is destroyed, any non-Survivor PC attached to it must make a Luck save or suffer 1d12 damage. If brought to 0 hit points without a nearby PC to aid him, he must make another Luck save; on a success, someone was able to stabilize him in time. On a failure, he perished nobly in battle.

If the PCs win the battle and Digger Springs' forces are repulsed, the survivors will flee into the wilderness. Hardly a handful will survive to return to their settlement, which will rapidly be overwhelmed by raiders, thirst, and privation. Within weeks, only the dead will remain to inhabit Digger Springs. Some of the exiles, including Big Ben himself if he lives, will offer whatever they have left to persuade Broketree to at least take in their children. Broketree can feed as many as 300 of them, but they're likely to refuse the request unless the PCs persuade the locals otherwise.

If Digger Springs succeeds in their conquest, their actions will depend on whether or not Big Ben survived the fight.

If Big Ben lives, he'll be able to control his people. They'll cull out 150 adult farmer "volunteers" and their families and take them north to Digger Springs to serve as serfs, working the mud flats and providing the vital food that Digger Springs needs to survive. They'll also plunder the granary to steal enough grain to keep the settlement alive while the new crops come in. The surviving Broketree locals will be left to make do as best they can. The bloodied survivors will gather what they have left and head south in hopes of finding refuge somewhere, but hardly a tenth of them will make it.

If Big Ben is dead, his troops will run wild in blood-mad reprisal. By the time they're done, Broketree will be an abattoir. Aside from a relative handful of young women carried north, there will be no survivors within the town and few outside it. They'll steal whatever grain they can carry and burn the rest. The plunder will keep Digger Springs going for a time, but without skilled farmers to lay in new fields, the settlement is doomed to slow starvation. Their death will simply be a longer, more lingering process in the absence of some outside salvation.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Some groups would rather not play out the Battle of Broketree in detail. They might not care for the mass combat, or they might feel clueless about appropriate responses, or it might just be tedious for them. Don't feel obligated to play it out if it doesn't suit.

Optionally, you can use a completely different ruleset for it, such as a dedicated wargame. Just translate the PCs and combatants accordingly and roll on. You can transform it into a setpiece clash between the PCs and Big Ben's vanguard, and if they win then their Broketree allies will succeed in their defense. You can even simply roll a d20 and add a number reflecting the usefulness of the PCs' preparations; a high roll means that Broketree drove off the attack with little harm, while a low one might mean they were cruelly bested in battle.

SYSTEM QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

SKILL CHECKS

Roll 2d6 and add the most relevant attribute modifier and character skill rating. Apply a -1 penalty if you lack even level-0 expertise in the skill. If you equal or exceed the difficulty number of the skill check, you succeed in your attempt.

SAVING THROWS

When the GM asks for a particular type of saving throw, roll 1d20 and compare it to the relevant saving throw number for your class and level. If you equal or exceed this number, it's a success.

COMBAT

At the start of combat, roll initiative: 1d8 plus your Dexterity modifier. The highest roll acts first with the rest following in order. PCs win ties. Once everyone has acted, the sequence starts over.

During a combat round you may move up to 20 meters on your turn. You may then either perform an action or attack, or else move an additional 20 meters. If you try to get away from a melee opponent without spending your action disengaging, they get a free attack against you. You may move before or after your action, but you can't split your movement around an action.

To attack, roll 1d20 and add your relevant Combat skill, attack bonus, the target's Armor Class, and the attribute modifier associated with your weapon- usually Strength or Dexterity. If the total equals or exceeds 20, you hit. A natural roll of 20 always hits and a roll of 1 always misses. If you have no skill whatsoever in your current weapon, take a -2 penalty to the hit roll.

If you hit, you inflict hit point damage equal to your weapon's damage die plus your relevant attribute modifier. If you're fighting with the Combat/Unarmed skill you may add its level to the total. If a target is brought to 0 hit points, it dies.

INJURY AND HEALING

A mortally-wounded character brought to zero hit points has a chance of being saved if tended within six rounds. An Old Terran stim or healing device will automatically revive him and allow him to act normally after ten minutes of rest.

If a healer is forced to use more primitive tools, they need to make an Intelligence/Tech/Medical skill check at a difficulty of 8, +1 for every round since the patient was felled. Only one such check can be made per round, but the check can be repeated until the victim is stabilized or six rounds have passed, after which death is certain.

Characters stabilized by primitive medicine are very fragile and weak, unable to act for at least 1d6 x 10 minutes. After that, they may make a Physical Effect saving throw to regain 1 hit point and act normally. Failure means 2d6 days before another save attempt can be made. Old Terran stims or healing devices can revive such incapacitated sufferers instantly.

A character who is not starving or dehydrated regains his level in lost hit points every morning when he wakes. If he spends the entire day resting, he gains twice that amount, plus 2 more for every level of Tech/Medical skill possessed by his attending physician.

SUBSISTENCE AND FORAGING

Every night, you gain one Hunger and one Thirst point. If your Hunger points reach 5 or your Thirst points reach 2, you're in trouble, and likely to suffer penalties. Letting Hunger or Thirst climb too high can mean death or incapacitation. Consuming a ration of food or drink eliminates a point of hunger or thirst. Consuming Dirty food or drink adds 1 Toxin point per ration, and negative effects start at 10 accumulated points. Nourished, rested PCs can save versus Physical Effect each day to drop 1 Toxin point.

Foraging can be attempted once per day and require four hours of gathering. On a successful Wisdom/Survival skill check at difficulty 8, the forager gains 1d3 plus their Survival skill in food rations. Clean water is available most places without additional effort. With eight hours foraging, they may add +1 to the skill check. Desperate scavengers can then make a second foraging check, but any rations gained by either roll are Dirty.

GEAR DAMAGE AND REPAIR

If you roll a 1 or 2 on your attack roll, your weapon loses one level of condition. If you're hit by an enemy who rolls a 19 or 20 on his hit roll, your armor is damaged and loses one level of condition, though this has no real consequences for armor until it becomes Broken and useless. If you roll a 2 or 3 on a skill check, any equipment you're using with that check degrades by one step. This damage can affect your weapon, armor, or gear only once per fight or scene.

To repair gear, you need at least one unit of spare parts of the same tech level as the item to be repaired and a toolkit of the appropriate tech level. The mender expends one unit of spare parts and rolls an appropriate Intelligence/Tech skill check against a difficulty equal to 5 plus the tech level of the gear. For every 2 points by which he beats the difficulty, he removes one step of damage. A minimum of one step is fixed on a success. Failure means that the spare parts are wasted, but the technician can keep trying. Repairing a man-portable item takes one hour.

EQUIPMENT CONDITION	
PERFECT	No penalty to use
WORN	No penalty to use
LIGHT DAMAGE	-1 to hit, damage, -1 to skill checks using the item
MODERATE DAMAGE	-2 to hit, damage, -1 to skill checks using the item, 2 in 10 chance to fail.
HEAVY DAMAGE	-3 to hit, damage, -2 to skill checks using the item, 2 in 6 chance of failing
BROKEN	The device is inoperable or unusable.
RUINED	The device is beyond repair and fit only for salvage.

LAMENTATIONS *of the* FLAME PRINCESS

PRESENTS



THE HOUSE OF BONE AND AMBER

WRITTEN BY
KEVIN CRAWFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL GEIER

Baltic storms crash on the salt-stained walls of Salatgriv. The crumbled ruins of the damnable fortress of Salismunde squat like a vulture above the ill-favored port town, and the wine-eyed heathens of the Tatar quarter hide within their houses of graven stone. There are savage whispers amid the townsfolk, and merchants clutch their purses at every start and shadow. Old Father Raum shrieks imprecations at the pagans from the steps of the altar, and the Tatar elder's blood pools in the amber pits outside the town's walls. Birgirmeistar Akmens is desperate to halt the bloodshed before it becomes a full-fledged pogrom, but who in the town can be trusted to save its people from their own murderous passions? It is a task for a band of red-handed outsiders, ruthless souls who'll do what they must to earn the Birgirmeistar's silver- and who have the mettle to bring bright steel to the cursed town's black past. Will your heroes prove more terrible than the darkness that gathers, or will they be yet another bloody sacrifice beneath the House of Bone and Amber?

An adventure for PCs of levels 4-7, the House of Bone and Amber includes the fully-detailed port town of Salatgriv and a full cast of NPCs, with tools for using the town even after the grim events of the adventure have rolled over its streets. The sinister halls beneath the Salismunde are fleshed out in six separate sections that can be mixed and matched within the adventure- or pulled out entirely to insert into your own campaign when you need a quick delving of ineffable horror.

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